

**Doctorado en Ciencias de la Educación
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Doctoral thesis

**An exploratory study of cultural understanding in English as a Foreign
Language (EFL) reading in Argentina**

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I am indebted to my supervisors, for different reasons. I would not be a researcher today if it were not for Dr. Miguel Angel Montezanti. He willingly agreed to supervise me in my beginnings as a research grantee and he later gave me the opportunity to enter the proper research circle within the national universities of Argentina. This was back in 2000, when I participated for the first time in a research project funded by the Ministry of Education under his supervision. I still recall my hard times finding an academic at Universidad Nacional de La Plata, within my field, ELT, who fulfilled the requirements to work as supervisor in the system of teacher-researchers at a national level. Literally translation, Dr. Montezanti's field of knowledge and expertise, did not exactly coincide with ELT. However, I can say today, after over twelve years of collaborative work, that we have found a successful way of merging our interests. To him, I am indebted the most, and will always be.

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In closing, I would like to mention that I wrote this thesis originally in English. The Spanish version is a translation, even by me. Toward the end of the process, Prof. Byram asked me whether I felt the thesis was mine and whether it was over-influenced by him as joint-supervisor – although every thesis is to some extent. I can say it definitely feels mine, as I have taken all the decisions about it. The errors that remain are therefore my own, the result of my stubbornness at times.

Melina Porto
La Plata, 30 December 2010

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

Introduction

Preface

Motivation for this thesis and antecedents

Justification for this study: focus on a culturally-specific context

Contextualization of this study: some preliminaries about the culture-specific in this setting

Overview of the study

Aim

Research question

Population, context, and gist of the study

Distinguishing features of this study

Overview of this thesis

Conclusion

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

1.1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the present study. I start with a preface where I describe the motivations and antecedents for the line of investigation in this thesis. I also offer a justification for the need for this study as I contextualize it with some preliminaries about the culture-specific in this setting. The overview includes information about the aim, the research question, the population and other relevant details. The last section of this chapter presents an outline of this thesis chapter by chapter. This section shall make evident the purpose of each chapter as well as its function in contributing to moving the thesis forward.

1.2. Preface

1.2.1. Motivation for this thesis and antecedents

I shall start this introductory chapter by describing the motivations for the line of investigation in this thesis, which dates back to 1994. This preface works as a contextualization for the reader in order to understand what it takes to carry out research in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education in Argentina, and how this research in particular has originated and evolved in the course of time. Moreover, this preface anticipates how this research is innovative in this setting, something I shall dwell upon later.

I can undoubtedly say that my postgraduate studies at the University of Essex in the United Kingdom in 1994-1995 were a turning point in my career and gave origin to the focus of all my research. Under the supervision of Professor Henry Widdowson I investigated the integration of culture and language teaching. This was a relatively incipient theme at that time (although related developments have a history as I show in chapter 2) and certainly one very much in vogue nowadays. From this perspective, it is possible to say that the current appeal of this topic may make this study interesting to others outside the local boundaries of Argentina.

Furthermore, this first encounter with this field was personally mobilizing as well because it put me in contact for the first time with the work of Michael Byram produced during the 1980s. This body of work has been strongly influential in the conceptualizations of all my prior studies, and constitutes one important pillar in the theoretical underpinnings of the present study as I shall explain in chapter 2.

A description of the local context in which I carried out my prior studies (whose summary appears later in this preface) is essential, because they can be seen as the antecedents of this thesis. I shall need to start by clarifying at this point that fifteen years ago postgraduate opportunities abroad in Argentina were rare, and what is more they were narrowed to either the Literature or the Linguistics fields. In other words, a postgraduate degree abroad in English Language Teaching (ELT) seemed like an insurmountable endeavour, very much so because the discipline was (and perhaps still is) seriously downgraded among the academic community. The little recognition of the need and relevance of research in ELT, observed in some settings in this country, contrasted sharply with the widespread popularity of other areas of development within ELT here such as materials writing, curriculum development and the pedagogic/didactic dimension. I mention this scenario in the beginning of this thesis because it reflects another reality that contributes to making the present study a useful and very much needed one, namely the scarcity of pertinent studies in Argentina in this specific area of concern, as chapter 3 with the literature analysis will show.

The period after my return from Essex was one of struggle, discomfort, and frustration. I wished to continue my research, but finding a forum to do so was problematic. Unlike some other education systems in the world, public universities in Argentina found it extremely hard to incorporate young faculty into their research staff. Openings were hard to come by. The Universidad Nacional de La Plata was no exception. This was, and still is, a highly prestigious public university, but nonetheless embedded in an educational reality overwhelmed by limiting social and economic conditions. For young, emerging researchers like myself at the time, doing research in this setting, particularly in ELT, required time, dedication, and self-funding. The antecedents of this thesis stemmed from my motivation to pursue my research interests in this context.

More specifically, I continued teaching in the chair English Language II (Department of Modern Languages) at my university as an assistant teacher then. In those times the educational environment concerning the teaching of English in this setting tended to equate learner success with grammatically and lexically accurate performance in the language (Porto, 2001b, 2002, 2007a, 2008b). During the period 1995-1999, I engaged in individual action-research, self-funded, oriented to prioritize, in my teaching practices, the conceptualization of reading and writing as genuine social and communicative practices, and to relegate an instrumental and purely linguistic view of ELT. The antecedents of this thesis grew in the midst of this context. Since then, my research projects have all emphasized the social and constructivist nature of the processes of reading and writing –a conceptualization that is fundamental to this thesis. I discuss this topic in chapter 2 which describes the theoretical framework of this thesis.

Until 2000 my focus had lain on the integration of language-and-culture teaching, stimulated mainly by the early work by Byram and his colleagues. After that the orientation narrowed toward the exploration of the interrelationships between reading and culture, in particular EFL reading in the specific setting of Argentina. I have pursued this line of investigation since then.

The support of Dr. Miguel Montezanti proved fundamental to gain access to funded research. Under his supervision I carried out several research projects which constitute the background for this thesis and at the same time, become a specific motivation for it. One first stage was materialized through a research subsidy awarded by Antorchas Foundation

(1999-2000), an initiation research grant from Universidad Nacional de La Plata (UNLP) (1999-2001) and a senior research grant, also from UNLP (2001- 2003). The aim of the first two projects was to investigate the role of the cultural content of narrative texts in reading comprehension in English as a foreign language. The specific research questions were as follows: How do readers perceive the cultural content of narrative texts? How does this perception influence the comprehension of narrative texts in EFL? In particular: a) Do readers perceive those aspects which are alien to their own cultural reality? If readers ignore these, how does comprehension proceed?; b) What happens when cultural information is covert?; c) What happens in the case of familiar cultural aspects? In the last project, the aim was to investigate the role of the cultural content of narrative texts with different perspectives in reading comprehension in EFL. This project explored the influence of two perspectives, namely an insider perspective (i.e. with a narrator who participates in the events described and is a member of the culture the text portrays) and an outsider perspective (i.e., with a narrator who participates in the events described but is not a member of the culture the text represents). Overall, in these studies the same three prompt texts were used, and they are used in this thesis as well. Data were collected in the context of regular classes in the chair English Language II, School of Humanities and Sciences of Education at Universidad Nacional de La Plata in Argentina.

A second stage in this line of investigation, also under the supervision of Dr. Montezanti, was motivated by the fact that there existed no solid models to describe the apprehension of the cultural aspects of reading materials during foreign language reading, in particular EFL reading, despite the growing importance that cultural perspectives in education in general had acquired in the last several decades, as acknowledged by theorists and researchers in the field. One research project funded by the Ministry of Education of Argentina (2001-2005) aimed at solving two important limitations: on the one hand, the lack of solid models in this direction was worrying, especially pedagogically, because implied by it was the need of many teachers to resort to their intuition in order to make pedagogic decisions regarding the cultural content of appropriate reading materials for the classroom; on the other hand, the lack of specific and clear guidelines for teachers to assess the comprehensibility of the cultural content of reading materials (in particular narrative texts) was as worrying for the same reason. This project constituted one first step to bridge these gaps through the description of the different ways in which learners may approach cultural issues during reading, especially literary narrative texts in EFL; through the description of a threshold of cultural awareness of oneself and others; and

through the design of guidelines for teachers to assess the comprehensibility of the cultural content of reading materials. This thesis addresses this issue in more depth by offering a revised *Model of Cultural Understanding during EFL reading*, described in chapter 4, a model which was originally devised for the projects that serve as foundations.

One key characteristic distinguishes this thesis from this prior body of work, and that is the nature and conceptualization of this present study. Whereas in the past I had designed quantitative studies involving two hundred participants in this setting, now I perceived the need to look at the issue from another point of entrance, a different angle of vision. With this need in mind, I re-conceptualized the project as an interpretive, exploratory study of how ten participants experienced the cultural dimension of EFL reading in this setting. This shift in conceptualization resulted in reality in a completely new research project, predominantly based on qualitative data. From this point of view, this study is in tune with current calls from TESOL professionals (Canagarajah, 1995, 2006; Vavrus, 2002) regarding the importance of the individual and the local in classroom-based or community-based research efforts that describe how literacy in English is lived in peripheral countries (for instance, Bisong, 1995 in Nigeria; Hyde, 1994 in Morocco; Matsuda, 2003 in Japan; Vavrus, 2002 in Tanzania). Argentina is an example of a peripheral country in Latin America. Such calls constitute the most powerful justification for this exploratory interpretive study: this urge in the literature to rescue the local within culturally-specific contexts.

1.2.2. Justification for this study: focus on a culturally-specific context

Overall, this thesis explores the culture dimension of foreign/second language (L2) reading, in particular EFL reading in Argentina. Theoretically, it is embedded in a constructivist view of learning, a sociocultural conception of reading in general and cultural perspectives in foreign language education in particular, narrowing the focus of attention to EFL reading. Within EFL reading, applicable to ESL reading as well, the study is grounded on schema theory, especially a conceptualization of schemata as social constructions. Attention is given to the perspective (be it insider, outsider, hybrid) with which the cultural background is presented in a text, and through which a reader enters a text. Globally speaking, this study needs to be

framed within an understanding of the complexity of reader response and its social situatedness, the elusiveness of the notion of culture as well as the difficulty to define it, and the complexity of the process of interpretation due to the overlapping sociocultural (and other) factors involved.

In other words, this thesis approaches a topic which is germane to the enhancement of foreign language education: the manner in which learners glean cultural perspectives from reading, in this specific case the reading of literary narrative texts, and the process of interpretation within this cultural dimension. Although the importance of cultural perspectives for enhancing the comprehension of L2 texts as well as for enhancing L2 education in general has been widely acknowledged by theorists and researchers in the field, studies investigating this topic in this area of the world are, to my knowledge, scarce. This scarcity constitutes a powerful justification to continue my previous line of investigation in this thesis.

In congruence with this emphasis on the local and the particular pointed out by TESOL professionals, I crafted this study with a research methodology that foregrounds the sociocultural dimension of schemata as an exemplar of research carried out in a classroom-based setting (Vavrus, 2002). The sociocultural dimension of schemata contrasts with relevant studies which also explored cultural variables in reading, but in laboratory conditions or with impoverished conceptualizations of culture, as I shall discuss in the literature analysis chapter (chapter 3). In addition, the tasks, activities and materials proposed in this research design in the methodology chapter (chapter 6) (the prompt texts and the data collection instruments) functioned as cultural mediators of the transactions of this specific group of participants with such tasks, activities and materials (McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek, 2005). This fact also stressed the importance of the social dimension of reading. The purpose therefore was to capture the characteristics of EFL reading in this particular sociocultural context by obtaining a “sense of the classroom” (Canagarajah, 1995: 592) while simultaneously focusing upon the individual and the local as mentioned before. An exploratory interpretive study is in harmony with this focus.

I therefore conceived this thesis in the midst of the rationale about the inseparability of the culturally-specific and the universal, the local and the global, the individual and the social. This rationale stresses research methodologies that foreground both this focus on the individual and the local (Canagarajah, 1995, 2006) as well as research carried out in

classroom-based settings as in this thesis (or in community-based settings as well) (Vavrus, 2002). This thesis is an example of this kind of research and therefore portrays the inseparability in this discussion between the two forces, namely the individual and the collective, the local and the global, the particular and the universal. In this thesis this link transverses the theoretical rationale (chapter 2) as well as the methodology (chapter 6).

This thesis constitutes an example of both foci regarding research methodologies (i.e. the local in a classroom-based setting), and can be categorized as “work which seeks *understanding* of the experience of people involved in education” (Byram, forthcoming, his emphasis), as opposed to work which seeks explanation or change. In other words, I am interested in discovering how these readers, in this specific sociocultural context, approach the cultural dimension of EFL reading in their encounters with English in our classroom. While my previous research endeavours had attempted to capture quantitatively what the state of affairs was like in this field with the purpose of finding a basis for generalizability within this area of the world, this thesis takes a radically different perspective. This perspective is best captured by Rosaldo (1993: 21): “the truth of objectivism – absolute, universal, and timeless – has lost its monopoly status. It now competes, on more nearly equal terms, with the truths of case studies that are embedded in local contexts, shaped by local interests, and colored by local perceptions” (see also Geertz, 1974). This thesis constitutes one such case study.

1.2.3. Contextualization of this study: some preliminaries about the culture-specific in this setting

It is possible to say that everything is culturally-specific in this study, i.e. specific to the Argentine context. For instance, theoretically, Scarano (2002) argues for the centrality of culture in education in general in Argentina, though she concludes with a pessimistic position about the difficulty or even impossibility of actually implementing the theoretical considerations involved in the notion of multicultural education in this country. More specifically, the notion of culture is nowadays embraced as pedagogically and educationally relevant within foreign language (L2) education in this country. It is accepted that education in general and L2 education in particular are framed within specific sociocultural contexts. This study is intended to capture how these unique

participants perceived and approached the cultural dimension of EFL reading in this specific setting. Through its exploratory focus, its contribution resides in the interrelationships between EFL theory and local practice, acknowledging at the same time a wider context regarding the importance of EFL in Argentina, both in society and in education. The conceptualizations of EFL education, of reading and writing, and of culture which I explore in the theoretical framework (chapter 2) are certainly relevant to this wider context at a national level.

More specifically, and as way of contextualization of this study at a national level (i.e. beyond my classroom and the local university), it is important to comment globally about the role English plays in Argentinean society, and in the education system. The scenario I describe next is not intended to be comprehensive and works simply as a contextualization for the reader so that he/she is then able to situate this study within this setting.

The new *National Law of Education (Ley de Educación Nacional)* passed in 2006 prescribes the teaching of English as a Foreign Language in primary school and extends its obligatory teaching throughout secondary school. Since 2007, English is therefore taught compulsorily as from fourth form (nine-year olds) both in private and public schools. A few new primary and secondary education curricula for English were passed in 2007 in several Argentine provinces – with a spreading effect that is having a nationwide impact. In well-off educational environments, English is offered as a service (indeed an expensive one) and is widely taught and learned from age six onwards (including college education) in private institutions and organizations in addition to the school time assigned to it by law through curricular documents. Disadvantaged populations, however, do not have access to education in English or in any other foreign language outside of school.

Let me take, as way of example, the case of the province of Buenos Aires, the biggest, richest and most populated and influential (culturally, socially, politically, economically) province in the country. So that the reader can picture this influence, I can say that this province has historically led the way as far as educational policy and curricular developments in other provinces are concerned. Taking this province as an example is relevant because this is the province where this study is framed.

Now, one classroom in this province can host learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds such as indigenous children and youth, the descendants of immigrants from neighbouring countries, from Peru, Asia (Korea, Taiwan) or some African nations, the children and youth of homeless farmers or rural workers in precarious conditions, learners from neighbourhoods stigmatized as low or dangerous, gypsies, migrants from other provinces, etc. The culture matrix is clearly complex. Since 2005, educational policies are being continuously revisited to meet the educational needs of these learners in the 21st century. Changes in the formulation of educational aims, new definitions of student profiles when leaving school, and curricular innovations respond to the theoretical considerations on culture, identity, and ELT that I discuss in chapter 2. Central to these considerations is the emergence and development of new, changing social identifications and therefore, new social needs that have to be met by compulsory schooling. One current assumption is that schools should provide a common basis to allow for a conscious and critical participation in society, i.e. schools should foster literacy development with the ultimate aim of empowering students for active citizenship (Osler and Starkey, 2005).

Current foreign language education in the country is in tune with the latest developments in the field, in particular ELT. English teachers are in general highly qualified, having to enrol in five-year graduate programs to be allowed to teach (in contrast to the short certification processes offered in the US and Europe to teach English learners). From a theoretical perspective, as I have already said, the notion of culture is nowadays embraced as pedagogically and educationally relevant within foreign language education in this country. It is accepted that education in general and EFL education in particular are framed within specific sociocultural contexts. Professional development after graduation is seen as an integral part of current efforts to transform and revitalize education (Porto, 2003a). The underlying assumption is that language teachers have *the right and the responsibility* to develop the knowledge and skills required to educate and prepare learners for the demands of the 21st century in language learning. Teacher development in the province of Buenos Aires, for instance, is free, of quality, and provided by the state. These efforts notwithstanding, the current international scenario places high demands on language educators, demands which are exacerbated by the fact that English teachers are non-native speakers of the language (Lazaraton, 2003; cf. Kramsch, 2003). Despite the foregoing scenario, I must concur with Markee (2000: 570) that in general, in the working of their everyday lives as educators, “teachers and teachers-in-training rarely pay much attention to

the larger sociocultural factors that often determine what is possible or desirable in a given classroom.” In Argentina, in particular in the context of the province of Buenos Aires, efforts in this direction have taken and are taking place (Porto, 2003c, 2010a).

Argentina can definitely be thought of as a country in which English is additive rather than subtractive (Phillipson, 2008b). Learners appropriate English (Richards, 2002), or “own” it (Widdowson, 1994: 385), each one in their own ways, to face the world, decoding its multiple systems of symbolic, social, and cultural meanings (Cots, 2006). In general, the society at large, from educators to learners, parents, the population in general, teacher educators, researchers, authorities, policy makers and curriculum designers, are all aware of the positive significance of English for their individual and social lives. Harumi (2002: 54) says that “English has acquired a new culture through its globalization.” In this respect, in our setting, English has become a form of cultural capital, which learners will use together with other forms of social and economic capital, to open up to the world and have access to knowledge and information, health, education, employability, and social and economic mobility - through different resources and means (Byram, 2001). For most learners, English becomes a resource, a tool, that they will use within the school, but also outside it (in the home, the community, and the society at large), to enrich their lives in different facets (linguistic, social, cultural, academic, moral). English is empowering and instrumental to emancipation, allowing them to fight the inequalities of their own setting (poverty, discrimination, etc.) as well as the inequalities which they may be subjected to in the course of their lives as Third World citizens. In Byram et al.’s (2009:17) words, “the advantage of lingua franca English is that it allows speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds in Europe and elsewhere to have their voices heard and to interact directly without the need of mediators or translators.” This situation is concomitant with an undeniable process of *Americanisation* observable through TV, films, and other symptoms (Phillipson, 2008a), though many here would argue that English is perceived in utilitarian rather than imperialistic terms. In a way, the high regard for English by the local actors themselves in Argentina echoes descriptions by Matsuda (2003) in Japan and Vavrus (2002) in Tanzania.

Many barriers, however, exist, and need to be acknowledged here, regarding this previous rendering of ELT in Argentina. These include a mismatch between the foregoing description and reality in several areas (due to many factors, including social, cultural, and economic aspects); the educational consequences of the increasing gap between rich and poor; the actual low performance of Argentinean students in standardized international testing; a scant emphasis on early and adult education; high drop-out rates in primary and secondary schooling; the clouding of the “equality of access” to education (which all educational policies advocate) by the failure to take account of “equality of outcome” (McKay and Warshauer Freedman, 1990: 399; Warshauer, 2000) or “equality of opportunity to achieve” (McCarty, 2003: 149) for a variety of reasons; a crisis of recruitment and retention of qualified teachers for the public school sector; consequently, poorly qualified teachers for public schools (because of low salaries and the low reputation many times associated with being a school teacher in this country); an inflexible and ineffective system of teacher regulation (regarding salaries, compensations, leaves of absence); and a teacher culture in public school contexts that tends to be dominated by a lack of commitment and dedication, absenteeism, and strikes (cf. teaching as a “sacred vocation,” Hargreaves, 2008: 29).

This scenario is accompanied by other aspects which also seem to darken the at times naïve picture portrayed above. In other words, the everyday reality of ELT classrooms in real schools many times distances itself from the scene I have described, for the reasons just outlined, in combination with others. Among these other reasons I can mention important political changes at all levels (not only education), the existence of still strong ideologies which conceive of ELT in purely functional, linguistically-oriented terms, and which are prevalent today in some districts and provinces, the co-existence of English with other languages within schools (not only the languages spoken by the learners themselves but also those taught at schools, apart from English)¹, and broader conceptualizations of foreign language education (described as *educational*, aiming at *literacy* development, not only *language* development), which are also directly relevant to the teaching and learning of these other languages, but which are not always materialized in the daily classroom realities in some settings in this country.

¹ Although Argentina is thought of as a predominantly Spanish-speaking country, there exist several immigrant languages (Italian, German, Levantine Arabic, South Bolivian Quechua, Catalán, Mandarín, Japanese, Korean, Welsh and others) (Gordon, 2005) and as many as sixteen or more living indigenous languages (Censabella, 1999).

1.3. Overview of the study

1.3.1. Aim

The general aim of this study is to describe and comprehend how the specific population investigated in this context, college students at Universidad Nacional de La Plata in Argentina, comprehended the cultural content of literary narrative texts in EFL reading.

1.3.2. Research question

The research question is

What processes, techniques and behaviours do EFL college readers in this setting use to comprehend the cultural content of literary narrative texts during and after reading?

1.3.3. Population, context, and gist of the study

This study was framed in the context of my chair, English Language II, at Universidad Nacional de La Plata in Argentina. Ten former students of mine participated voluntarily. They were Argentine college students (nine female, one male), prospective teachers and translators of English in their early twenties. A detailed description of how this study was implemented appears in chapter 6. They had to read three literary narrative extracts and perform a number of tasks based on their reading of that material. Data were collected in three different sessions (on different days) in November 2009.

Prompted by three literary narrative texts with a common theme (Christmas celebrations), different perspectives (insider, outsider, hybrid), and different cultural loads (relatively culturally familiar, culturally distant, and totally culturally remote) (described in chapter 5), these participants responded to the texts by producing two written tasks (among several others) in their native language, Spanish: a reading response and a visual representation. One text presented a relatively close (familiar) cultural reality to the participants, in a Brazilian

context, with an insider perspective (i.e., with a narrator who participates in the celebration described and is a member of the culture the text represents) and was written in Spanish² (selection from *Mi planta de naranja-lima*, Vasconcelos, 1971: 39-43). Another text, written in English, portrayed a different cultural reality from the participants', in a Canadian-American context, with an insider perspective (fragment from *Cat's Eye*, Atwood, 1998: 137-140). The third text, also in English, presented a totally distant cultural reality as it described one Christmas celebration in a Native American context with an outsider perspective, i.e., with a narrator who participates in the celebration described but is not a member of the culture represented in the text (fragment from *Desert Wife*, Faunce, 1961: 173-181). The reading response and visual representation tasks were analyzed using a taxonomy of cultural idea units, a list of specific reader behaviours in the approach of the cultural content of the texts, and the theoretical *Model of Cultural Understanding during EFL reading*, an antecedent of this thesis which was re-designed for the purposes of this thesis (chapter 4).

1.4. Distinguishing features of this study

I shall explain next how this thesis, on the basis of an analysis of several weaknesses in the field (which I discuss in the theoretical framework, chapter 2, and in the methodology, chapter 6), constitutes an attempt to fill some open gaps and thereby make an original contribution. The distinguishing features of this study can be described as follows.

- It focuses on literary narrative, unmodified, authentic texts, while short, contrived expository texts are more frequently explored in the research literature. From this perspective, it investigates cultural understanding in a natural reading context, or “ordinary reading” in a natural setting (Allington and Swann, 2009: 224).
- It considers the impact of the perspective (insider, outsider, hybrid) with which the cultural background is presented in a text and through which readers enters a text in the process of L2 reading.

² In fact this fragment is a translation from the original in Portuguese. See chapter 5 for details.

- The modes of response to the prompt texts are new and are called here reading response task and visual representation. As I explain in the methodology chapter (chapter 6), they contrast sharply with the immediate recall protocol, a traditional and widely used and accepted instrument.
- The use of reader behaviours related to the cultural content of the texts (i.e. the textual modifications produced by the participants in their response to the fragments) as a measure of analysis is something that I have not observed in the literature. The list I propose in this study is more comprehensive than available others, and it is also exclusively tied to behaviours related to the *cultural* dimension of reading.
- Along similar lines, the exclusive focus on *culturally significant* idea units as a measure of analysis is something original. As I explain in the chapter on methodology, previous studies have quantified *all* the idea units present in readers' recall protocols.
- This study is singular in that it uses prompt texts in the native language (L1) and in the foreign language, English.
- In this thesis culture is not limited to an isolated aspect to be controlled as an independent variable (e.g. race, ethnicity, nationality, religion). Rather, this study takes account of the complexity of the sociocultural context in which it is carried out.
- This thesis undertakes a study which is consistent with a sociocultural perspective on schemata as I shall explain in the literature analysis (chapter 3).

1.5. Overview of this thesis

This thesis is divided into twelve chapters and five appendices. Chapter 1, which is this introduction, explains the motivation for this thesis as well as some antecedents from my previous body of work in this same setting. On finishing this chapter, the reader will have a clear idea of the justification for this study with its focus on a culturally-specific context. In particular, this chapter will also contextualize this study by offering some preliminaries about the culture-specific in this setting. The brief overview of the thesis by chapter will help the reader visualize what each chapter is about and how each one contributes to moving the thesis forward.

After this introduction, chapter 2 presents the theoretical tenets that guide this research. The purpose of this chapter is to frame this study theoretically. Central to this thesis is a sociocultural conception both of the learning process and of reading. This chapter is important because these theoretical underpinnings contrast sharply with the traditional and long-standing conceptions of reading which have dominated EFL education in Argentina for years in some settings, which I described in this introduction earlier. The discussion involves several specific aspects involved in conceptualizations of reading. Of all these, I wish to highlight here the philosophical notion of the existence of a horizon in what can be understood in any reading encounter. Epistemologically, this notion, again, presents a totally different view from predominant conceptions in some settings in the country which have tended to assume that the complete meaning of a text can be derived from simply inspecting the language in it with sufficient detail. This chapter also takes up a discussion I have only hinted at here, which is the inseparability between the individual/personal and the social dimensions in cultural understanding. In this sense, it works as an explanation of how this thesis takes account of both dimensions, the individual and the social, and as a justification for this study in the first place. By the end of this chapter, the purpose is to have set out the relevant connections and interrelationships across these theoretical underpinnings in order to stress the most powerful justification for this exploratory interpretive study, namely the urge in the literature to rescue the local within culturally-specific contexts.

Chapter 3 presents schema theory, in particular culturally-specific content schemata, which frames this thesis theoretically. The purpose here is to offer a brief historical account of the theory as it pertains to this study. By the end of this chapter, it will be clear that this thesis distances itself from other schema-based studies, past and current, in many respects. In the process of showing this, the chapter intertwines theoretical concepts previously discussed in chapter 2 with methodological considerations to be expanded in chapter 6.

Chapter 4 describes the *Model of Cultural Understanding during EFL reading*, which I propose as the theoretical innovation of this thesis. Its purpose is to justify the need for this model in the specific context of a study of *reading* in this setting. It does so by offering a brief and general overview of other existing models in the literature and drawing resemblances and points of departure. This contrastive analysis becomes the main function of this chapter, because it highlights the specificity of this model for the context of EFL reading in this setting. Another purpose of this chapter is to explain and describe each of the six levels in this model in detail, and to specify the uses it has been put to in this study. Everything that I say in this chapter is intrinsically tied to the theoretical underpinnings of this research described in chapter 2. By the end of this chapter, the interrelationships between this model and the theoretical framework will have become apparent, and the notion of understanding or comprehension which underlies this model will have been clarified.

Chapter 5 describes the process of selection of the materials used in this study, namely the texts that served as prompts for the investigation of the participants' cultural understanding. The justification for this chapter as an individual chapter (i.e. not part of the methodology chapter, chapter 6, for instance) is that my text selection constitutes itself in one of the distinguishing features of this study. Because of this, the aim of this chapter is to present a detailed rationale for the use of literary narrative texts in this study. On finishing this chapter, the reader will have a clear picture of the issues involved in the process of text selection and related aspects. The chapter also includes a brief overview of the selected fragments, principally around key cultural issues, with a consideration of some of the potential comprehension difficulties posed by them. This analysis, expanded in Appendix I, will be especially useful and relevant to the data analysis because, as I have already mentioned, the cultural idea units are one measure of analysis exclusively based on textual information with a cultural focus.

Chapter 6 describes the research design of this exploratory-interpretative study in detail and includes the rationale for the methodological decisions made. Its purpose is to provide a critical analysis of how this design constitutes an advance over previous research in relation to the available data collection instruments and data analysis measures in the literature. By the end of this chapter, specifically through the description of serious inadequacies observed in both respects in the literature, it will become evident that the instruments of data collection and measures of analysis that I propose in this study are coherent with, and more responsive toward, the views of reading and cultural understanding on which the study as a whole rests.

Chapter 7 describes the process of data analysis as it took place in this investigation. Its aim is to describe procedural aspects in connection with data analysis, such as how I organized and arranged data, how I actually went about analyzing the data, what processes lie beneath what got reported in this thesis, what problems I was faced with at different points in data analysis and how I solved them, etc. On finishing this chapter, the reader will have an idea of the interrelationships among the proposed measures of data analysis through the description, illustration and exemplification of the workings of the cultural idea units, the reader behaviours and the *Model of Cultural Understanding* in the array of data collection instruments, namely the prior knowledge task, the immediate reflection log, the reading response task, the visual representation task and the delayed interview. A final section of this chapter will present the supporting role of interview data. Overall this chapter offers a procedural and integral account of how data analysis has proceeded in this study.

Chapters 8 and 9 present the results of this study. They are structured around the research question which was: What processes, techniques and behaviours do EFL college readers use to comprehend the cultural content of literary narrative texts during and after reading? In other words, I use information from any data collection instrument and measure of analysis in an integrated account in responding this question. I present findings in two separate chapters for the sake of clarity and readability, even though the process of cultural understanding in this setting was integral, i.e. it cannot be said to be composed of independent and discrete elements. Results are organized around propositional statements which capture the process of cultural understanding in this setting, in all tasks and texts, and by all participants.

Chapter 8 focuses the attention on findings related to the specific understanding of otherness, while chapter 9 inspects more general processes. These processes were embedded within cultural understanding here, simply because this study was designed to explore it and therefore foregrounded the cultural throughout. By the end of these chapters the reader shall be able to picture the findings of this study within the field as I compare and contrast these findings with others in the literature as reviewed in chapter 3. On finishing chapter 9 the reader will also have an idea of how the findings in chapters 8 and 9 can be seen from a theoretical perspective which resumes key concepts from chapter 2.

After finishing chapters 8 and 9 the reader will have seen the research question answered by recourse to multiple examples by all participants from all data types. Multiple examples, as argued in chapter 7, contribute to showing the breadth and variety of the responses to the selected fragments offered by these readers in this setting.

By contrast, chapter 10 portrays an integral and holistic interpretation of one reader, Tess. On finishing it, the reader will have obtained a sense of the individual and social factors around this reader's multiple and fluid social identifications and how these identifications were ingrained in EFL reading in this setting. Because all the participants in this study enacted multiple identities as they read each prompt text, depending on the aspects that they chose to give prominence to on each occasion (language, religion, ethnicity, gender, social class, etc.), in chapter 10 the reader will see the research question answered in an integral and holistic way by analyzing the case of one individual in greater depth.

Chapter 11 presents the conclusions and explores the significance of this research. Further lines of research are also mentioned. I argue that this study may be seen as a contribution to the field in theoretical and methodological terms. From a theoretical perspective, the most significant contribution of this study resides in its *Model of Cultural Understanding during EFL reading*, which is a six-stage model intended to describe the different ways in which EFL readers in this local context approach the cultural dimension involved in reading. As I describe in chapter 4, this model is specific about reading, and within this umbrella term, it is specific about EFL reading and its cultural dimension in one particular setting within Argentina. From a methodological perspective, I argue in this thesis, specifically in chapter 6, that the reading response task and the visual representation task are better data collection instruments for the investigation of this area of concern than the

traditional and widely accepted immediate recall protocol. In addition, this model also becomes innovative in its use as a measure of analysis in this study. The chapter concludes with some reflections on the process of carrying out this study. This element of reflexivity shall also focus upon the effect of the research on myself as the researcher. On finishing chapter 11 the reader will have a clear idea of the conclusions and significance of this study.

Chapter 12 includes the reference list.

There are five Appendices in this thesis. Appendix I includes a comprehensive textual analysis of the selected fragments used in this thesis. Although these analyses may be contested, given the considerations around the reading process discussed in chapter 2, they are intended to help the reader familiarize with the prompt texts. I include these texts here (despite the fact that they also appear in chapter 5) for the reader's convenience.

Appendix II presents the complete research instruments exactly as they were administered in this study.

Appendix III is composed of tables which summarize research findings.

Appendix IV contains specific information about the interviews, in particular the process of how they were transcribed. Details regarding interview duration by text and by participant appear here as well.

Finally, Appendix V includes raw data corresponding to the key research instruments, namely the immediate reflection log, the reading response task, the visual representation task and the interview. I also provide a rationale for the inclusion of this Appendix in the thesis. To save space, this Appendix appears in a CD.

1.6. Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overall overview of the present study. I have described the motivations and antecedents for the line of investigation in this thesis. I have also offered a justification for the need for this study as I contextualized it with some preliminaries about the culture-specific in this setting. The overview has included information about the aim, the research question, the population and other relevant details. The last section of this chapter has presented an outline of this thesis chapter by chapter, whereby the purpose of each chapter as well as its function in contributing to moving the thesis forward have been explained.

After this introduction, the following chapter presents the theoretical framework with the theoretical tenets that guide this research.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE SOCIO-CULTURAL IN THIS RESEARCH

Introduction

Conception of reading in this study

Indeterminacy of meaning

Identity issues

The inseparability between the individual and the social in reading

Cultural perspectives in L2 reading

Culture: toward a definition

Culture, literature and imagination

Terminology problem: culture vs. cultural

A bit of history: culture and identity in EFL education

Cultural understanding in EFL reading

Cultural bias, stereotypes and reading

Cultural understanding and schema theory

Conclusion

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE SOCIOCULTURAL IN THIS RESEARCH

2.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical tenets that guide this research. Central to this thesis is a sociocultural conception both of the learning process and of reading. Within current understandings of reading, I foreground aspects such as the indeterminacy of meaning, the double structure of interpretation alongside the competing drives of familiarity and unfamiliarity, and the philosophical notion of the existence of a horizon in what can be understood in any reading encounter. After this exploration of the social and cultural aspects involved in comprehension, I then walk around the individual dimension by discussing some issues related to identity as they pertain to this thesis. This discussion concludes with an examination of the tension between the individual and the social in cultural understanding, and an explanation of how this thesis takes account of both dimensions.

The last section in this chapter is devoted to an inspection of the cultural dimension in EFL reading. Here I present the conception of culture that permeates this research, discuss issues of cultural visibility, cultural difference and cultural perspectives, and end with an analysis of schema theory as it contributes to a conceptualization of this study as classroom-based research. Though not explored in depth, I nonetheless touch upon the political and ideological agendas (more or less) hidden behind ELT as reflected in the discourse of imperialism. My aim here is to connect this line of thought with one characteristic of this research that is very much in tune with current calls from all actors in such discourse: the importance of the individual and the local in classroom-based or community-based research efforts that describe how literacy in English is lived in peripheral countries, of which Argentina is an example. At all times I strive to make relevant connections and interrelationships across these theoretical underpinnings in order to stress the most powerful justification for this exploratory interpretive study: this urge in the literature to rescue the local within culturally-specific contexts.

2.2. Conception of reading in this study

Generally speaking, in this thesis learning is conceived as a situated, culturally-contextualized activity (Luke, 2003; Hosking and Teberg, 1998; Jarvis and Robinson, 1997). Human learning presupposes a social nature as individuals grow into the cognitive and affective life of those around them. The knowledge that the participants in this study had about reading was partly constructed through social interaction with group members in the classroom. As they collaboratively constructed the environment in which they performed, that is, the social context of reading, they constructed literacy processes and practices socially.

Reading is nowadays undoubtedly acknowledged as a multidimensional and multivalent process (Bernhardt, 2003, 2005; Koda, 2005; Paris and Paris, 2003). Complexity is involved here because “textual meaning is (...) a set of mutually modifying relations” (Widdowson, 2000: 16). The possibility of diversity in reader response to textual content is related to many complex and interrelated factors (Goodman, 1967, 1994). In the realm of the individual, the questions to be answered during reading vary from reader to reader, depending on idiosyncratic and personal characteristics, and purposes for reading, among other aspects. Widdowson (1980: 242, 1984, 1995, 2007) expresses: “The reader reconverts this product [the textual product] into a process and so derives a discourse from text. This discourse, however, is reduced and this reduction yields not the underlying macro-structure of the writer's original formulation (...) but whatever conceptual content corresponds with the reader's state of knowledge and his purpose in reading.” In addition, there exist contextual factors both at a mental level (background knowledge, schemata, world view) and a situational level (specific limitations of the context in which a text is read). This context includes assumptions about the preceding text, the immediate context, cultural knowledge and common sense knowledge (Bernhardt, 2003). It also involves social, cultural, economic, political, geographical, religious, historical and ideological aspects (Berg, 2003; Burgess, Hecht and Lonigan, 2002; Gee, 2001; Fitzgerald, 2003; Labbo, 2000; Luke, 2003; Jiménez, 2003; McCallister, 2002; Moje, 2000; Pennycook, 1994; Peyton Young, 2001). Overall, the implication is that we cannot remove reading from the complex contexts in which it is embedded, thus becoming a genuine social and communicative practice (Berg, 2003; Griswold, McDonnell and Wright, 2005;

Widdowson, 1984). I shall describe how this thesis takes account of this conception along this chapter.

2.3. Indeterminacy of meaning

The conception of the interpretation process as indeterminate (Moreiras, 1991) is at the heart of this research. Any reader may obtain different meanings from the same text if this is read at different times and with varied intentions because as participant-observer, a reader has different purposes, different perspectives, different foci of attention, and different affiliations with the characters and the events in a story which he/she can exploit in each reading (Byram and Grundy, 2002; Kramersch, 2001, 2003). In reference to reports of empirical studies of learners, Byram and Grundy (2002: 194) say: “the reading of literature is determined by the learners’ response as social actors with specific cultural identities. Thus each learner individualizes the learning experience and comes to very different conclusions about the meaning of a common text.” In this view, any act of reading is necessarily idiosyncratic. The perspective that a reader adopts affects his or her assessment about the importance of textual content, and therefore has an impact on interpretation. In sum, “there can never be any definitive interpretation” (Widdowson, 1992: 24).

Beyond reader characteristics, language itself plays a fundamental role in this indeterminacy of meaning: “the multiplicity of meaning (...) is not a question of cultivated ambivalence and ambiguity; it does not derive from a lack of determination or incisiveness. It radiates from language, whose fictional nature is precisely what tends to be denied in every attempt to subject it to the ideological norms of clarity and accessibility (...) Not only does language radically lend itself to multiple readings, but the plurality of meaning here is also bound to the readers’ different socio-political contexts” (Minh-Ha and Morelli, 1996: 8-9). However, although this notion of textual freedom means that any interpretation is provisional (Gadamer, 1992), the reader’s task is to find the interpretative boundary for a text or, in other words, to reach an interpretation which is anchored to textual information.

Philosophers and sociologists have also pointed out that it is hard to get from a text more than what one is willing or able to know, because what is not understood tends to be lost in

the interpretive process (Archer, 1997; Derrida, 1994; Gadamer, 1992; Moreiras, 1991). The opaque portions of any text – where the opacity is in part a function of what the individual brings to the text – may remain incomprehensible because they require extreme perception to be accessed. These portions, in general, do not allow for the activation of the readers’ prior horizons of ideas, and therefore create an open area, a gap in understanding (Gadamer, 1992). This tension between familiarity and unfamiliarity reflects the double structure of interpretation (Moreiras, 1991). On the one hand, it familiarizes what is strange and makes understanding possible. All readers approach what is different starting from what they already know. On the other, it makes the familiar look different, strange, unfamiliar, allowing readers to distance themselves from their everyday realities and to reflect. In this double structure of interpretation, what is different (alien, strange) reveals itself as a potentially threatening obstruction (Moreiras, 1991).

In the field of literary criticism, Jeffries (2001: 341) emphasizes the need for “a model of meaning that incorporates a range from the most general shared understandings of texts to the most individual experience-based meanings. Most importantly, this model needs to incorporate meanings that can be derived from multiple group identities such that any individual reader may read from a number of (conflicting) viewpoints at any one time.” Worth pointing out here is the interconnection between the individual (personal) and the social dimensions of identity in reading, something that I take up later in this chapter. It is relevant to add too that Jeffries (2001) focuses the attention on the reading of literary texts – the centre of this study. I shall also pursue identity issues as they pertain to this thesis in the following section.

The importance of the multiple nuances of this line of thought in this thesis is that any interpretation is provisional because whoever interprets is prepared to know certain things, and not others. The cultural anthropologist Rosaldo (1993) narrates his own experience in this respect in order to show the strength that a simple emotion can have in a certain culture and the incapacity of an outsider to understand it, no matter the effort invested to this aim. The author describes his own inability to conceive the power of the fury experienced by the Ilongots in the Philippines when faced with the death of a beloved. He portrays his inability to explain the Ilongots’ wish to cut human heads under the circumstances. This is because Rosaldo’s life experiences had not offered him the means to imagine the rage and anger that can be associated with such a devastating loss. For the

Ilongots, this practice of cutting human heads constituted one way of alleviating their grief and suffering.

The point is that even a knowledgeable anthropologist like Rosaldo, who had the ability to move comfortably within and across alien cultural worlds, experienced limitations in approaching the cultural in the Ilongots' community. The author could only visualize the strength of their emotions through his own losses, first of a young brother and later of his wife. After these personal experiences, he was able to recognize the sobbing of the Ilongots as a form of rage. What remains in his description for those who have not gone through similar experiences, however, is an anecdote about the decapitating Ilongots which seems to reinforce stereotyped conceptions of them by outsiders as savages in need of blood.

The participants in this study met in textual form the phenomena which they may not have been able to comprehend, in the way that Rosaldo met 'incomprehensible' phenomena. The perspective explained here so far has guided each step in this study, particularly the data analysis stage. Clearly this philosophical dimension in cultural understanding, i.e. the existence of a horizon beyond which something always remains incomprehensible, may become a deep limitation in a study like this one. This limitation was resolvable to the extent that in my role as researcher, and data collector and data analyst in particular, I was fully conscious of the foregoing discussion.

2.4. Identity issues

One aspect of the sociocultural dimension of reading that is relevant to this thesis comprises all the factors which influence how people see themselves and others. Language plays a key role here because it is "a carrier and shaper of individual and group identities" (Guiora, 2005: 185). The understandings that individuals have of themselves and others are important in a study of cultural understanding in EFL reading like this one because they translate into the ways that students appropriate or reject specific forms of reading (Jiménez, 2003). In other words, these conceptions influence what and how students actually read. In addition, just as readers can come to understand themselves in particular ways as a result of a reading experience, each reading experience plays a role in their identifications and positionings in their own society (McCarthy and Moje, 2002; Tsui, 2007).

A sociocultural conception of reading foregrounds information about the reader from different groupings such as the home, the community, the school, the university, work, church, club, etc. (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000) that reveals who these readers are, what they believe in as regards EFL reading, how they engage in reading, and what family, community, and educational environments make a difference in how they read (Burgess, Hecht and Lonigan, 2002; Norton and Toohey, 2001). Who readers are as individuals in terms of race, gender, social class, educational, historical, and cultural backgrounds, religion, sexual orientation, physical appearance, special capacities, and many other factors simultaneously influences and contributes to how they conceive of reading in this setting (Chen, 2005; Chien-Hui Kuo, 2003; Gallas and Smagorinsky, 2002). Concomitantly, these multiple identities (Thisted et al., 2007) or social identifications (Byram et al., 2009) may shift as a result of reading new material within a particular context, especially material that challenges some of their beliefs based on their social and cultural identifications (McCarthy and Moje, 2002).

Overall, the interest in and the importance of identity issues as they relate to intercultural competence is well documented (Byram, 2008, forthcoming; Byram et al., 2009; Byram and Grundy, 2002). Therefore one aspect of the investigation with these participants involved asking them about their identifications and related issues.

Identity is important, therefore, because it is an aspect of how humans make sense of the world and their experiences in it, including their experiences with reading (Kramsch, 2003; McCarthy and Moje, 2002; Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000). Because identities are multiple, hybrid, complex, fluid, and contradictory (Chen, 2005; Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2002; Dlasaka, 2003; Starkey, 2007), it is always possible to enact more than one of such identities in each reading experience, or different ones in different reading acts, depending on the relationships, interactions and identifications in a reader's life that one chooses to foreground: "these multiple identifications are never all activated simultaneously. Instead, the subjective salience of any particular identification fluctuates and changes in a dynamic and fluid manner as the individual moves from context to context, according to the specific contrasts which are present within the situation and according to the individual's own personal expectations, motivations and needs in that situation" (Byram et al., 2009: 13). This is an important factor involved in the indeterminacy of meaning that I mentioned before.

Seen in this light, the exploration of identity in the context of globalization as is relevant in EFL reading in this setting is an exploration of multiple identifications at local, national, and global levels, or in other words, “the cultural dimensions of social identity” (Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2002: 65). In this thesis, identities are viewed as social constructions (Norton, 2000, Norton and Toohey, 2001): “the aspect of ‘construction’ of identity implies that a self-image does not rely on essentialist formulations but is in need of a difference against which it can be defined” (Genetsch, 2007: vi). Here is where the relation between identity issues and a sociocultural conception of reading becomes manifest. All the participants in this study enacted multiple identities as they read each prompt text, depending on the aspects that they chose to give prominence to on each occasion (language, religion, ethnicity, gender, social class, etc.). In addition, this view of identity as identifications which become manifestly salient when in confrontation with a different culture highlights the relevance of the intercultural contact which the texts used in this study made possible. I shall explore the linkage with the notion of difference later.

Obviously, personal life events play an important role in reading (Berg, 2003). In the course of life, experiences such as new contacts with people, new interests, journeys (abroad), and discoveries influence and transform a reader’s literacy identity (Berg, 2003). This is a notion I take up in the next paragraph. In this study, the exploration of relevant personal experiences provided the foundation for the understanding of how participants conceived of reading in this specific setting. This thesis takes account of these views theoretically, as developed in this chapter, and methodologically as I shall explain later. Suffice it for the moment to say that as an educator and researcher in this study, I put effort to discover which life events and turning points in my learners’ lives made them choose or drop certain reading behaviours and concurrently, how far the choice of a specific reading behaviour represented a turning point in these participants’ lives. In this study, the questionnaires about reading in English and in Spanish, the questionnaire with personal information, and the individual interviews were particularly good sources for this analysis.

The concept of literacy identity is useful for this thesis (Anstley and Bull, 2006). The notion can be seen as a way of summarizing the various factors which I have discussed so far and how they can be brought to bear on the texts that the participants read in this study. Specifically, it includes the life experiences mentioned before together with a reader’s cultural knowledge and experiences in his/her process of literacy within a wider matrix.

The notion involves a reader's previous experiences with texts, his/her knowledge of texts, his/her social and technology experiences and knowledge, and his/her cultural experiences and knowledge, among other aspects. These resources of a reader's literacy identity interact in a dynamic way in reading and writing, in this case in these participants' reading of the selected texts as well as in their writing of the required tasks. Put differently, these resources influenced their reading and writing experiences in this study. In addition, a reader's awareness of this identity (i.e. in what terms a reader perceives it) is as important as the identity itself. Again, the questionnaires about reading in English and in Spanish, the questionnaire with personal information, and the individual interviews were devised to obtain useful information in this respect.

Finally, as language learning (in this case through reading) offers a new window on experience, readers are offered the possibility of perceiving things in new ways (Dlaska, 2003). Within foreign language literacy, any new reading experience is challenging because it may entail an identity modification through self-analysis. "The cultural identity profiles of second language learners could be regarded as a resource or a hazard in the second language learning process" (Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2002: 63). If readers find the new experience in the foreign language threatening, self-analysis may be a source of identity-based anxiety (Stroud and Wee, 2006) and stress, with accompanying feelings of insecurity and discomfort, and psychological and behavioural problems (Tong, Huang, and McIntyre, 2006). Conversely, if readers find the experience positively challenging, self-analysis may provide them with new insights into their identities (Byram 1988, 1989 a, 1989 b), a "new sense of self" (Tong, Huang, and McIntyre, 2006: 203), strengthening their identities (Byram and Morgan, 1994) and leading to self-confidence and security. In this sense, reading (and literacy in its broadest sense) is a tool for representing and/or performing particular identities (Hammond Stoughton and Sivertson, 2005; McCarthy and Moje, 2002; Oikonomidou, 2007). It is therefore evident that identity issues permeate all reading experiences and are consequently relevant to this thesis.

2.5. The inseparability between the individual and the social in reading

The uncovering of identities that I describe here is congruent with the sociocultural conception of reading on which this study rests. TESOL scholars have recurrently stressed the need for classroom-based research as well as research on how individuals in different parts of the world live their literacy experiences in English (and in any language for that matter). In fact, the sociocultural cannot exist without this individual or personal dimension as portrayed by these considerations on identity (Kramsch, 2003; Norton, 2000; Vavrus, 2002). A decade ago, Atkinson (1999: 643; 2000) argued that “knowing students individually also involves knowing them culturally,” or put differently, having “articulated knowledge of who students are *individually-culturally*” (my italics). This interrelationship and inseparability between the local and the global, the individual and the social, has been expressed in the past by the ethnographer Malinowsky (1923) with his notions of context of situation and context of culture, followed by the linguist Firth and later the anthropologist Hymes (1964: 41; 1967): “the ethnographic study of communication makes closest contact with the social, political, and moral concerns with communication, conceived as value and a determinant *in society and in personal lives*” (again my italics). This line of argument is dominant at present as well and constitutes a strong justification for a study of this kind, namely an exploratory interpretive study. In Byram’s (forthcoming) words: “This [research which is focused on understanding] is nonetheless an important area because it situates the didactics of intercultural competence in social contexts. Lantoff (1999, 2000a and 2000b) has argued for a theoretical position which recognizes the value of understanding processes of culture learning from the perspective of learners in informal learning contexts (...) It is also important to understand how learners in the classroom interpret their experience of [culture] learning.”

This inseparability of the individual and the communal has also been expressed by Kramsch (1995: 83), who argues for a deferral of an apparent dichotomy individual-social in language education: “The theoretical framework I propose here for teaching culture through language suspends the traditional dichotomy between the universal and the particular in language teaching. It embraces the particular, not to be consumed by it, but as a platform for dialogue and as a common struggle to realign differences.” The apparent tension between the individual and the universal, the personal and the cultural, the local and the global, Kramsch (1995) argues, has been captured by the notions of

interculturalism and *multiculturalism*. The former has been advocated by Byram (1997), refers to cultural understanding in different settings beyond national boundaries, and is framed in the European context. Risager's (2006) metaphor that languages and cultures flow globally has provided an interesting insight on the issue. What the metaphor means is that languages flow or spread across cultures in much the same way that cultures flow across languages (which is the predominant perspective in discussions about interculturalism). The latter, by contrast, stresses diversity exclusively within national borders, and is paramount in the US.

Depending on which perspective one adopts, this thesis can be said to constitute an example of research along both dimensions. On one side, the intercultural dimension of language education, because these participants read literary texts set in foreign cultural contexts. In this study, this contact with other cultures was made possible through literature (cf. the direct experience through immersion as in the Year-Abroad requirement in Europe). On the other side, the multicultural dimension, because this study also foregrounded different aspects of these participants' multiple cultural identities (through different means as I described before) within this specific sociocultural context.

In this line of thought, i.e. the inseparability of the culturally-specific and the universal, the key lies in research methodologies that foreground this focus on the individual and the local (Canagarajah, 1995, 2006) as well as research carried out in community-based or classroom-based settings (Vavrus, 2002) with tasks, activities and materials which function as cultural mediators of the transactions of a given group of students with such tasks, activities and materials (McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek, 2005) to obtain a "sense of the classroom" (Canagarajah, 1995: 592). This thesis is an example of this kind of research and therefore portrays the inseparability in this discussion between the two forces, namely the individual and the collective, the local and the global, the particular and the universal – a link which pervades in this thesis not only in the theoretical rationale but in the methodological aspects involved in this discussion as well.

This inseparability local-global has been expressed in cultural anthropology by Rosaldo (1993), in TESOL (in relation to discussions about culture and the field) by Atkinson (1999, 2000), Kumaravadivelu (1999, 2003) and others as well as by scholars from outside TESOL such as Byram (forthcoming), Kramsch et al. (1996) and McVee, Dunsmore and

Gavelek (2005), in all cases with the same call: classroom-based research and the study of the individual using insider methodologies. This thesis constitutes an example of both, and can be categorized as “work which seeks *understanding* of the experience of people involved in education” (as opposed to work which seeks explanation or change; Byram, forthcoming, his emphasis). “The truth of objectivism – absolute, universal, and timeless – has lost its monopoly status. It now competes, on more nearly equal terms, with the truths of case studies that are embedded in local contexts, shaped by local interests, and coloured by local perceptions” (Rosaldo, 1993: 21; see also Geertz, 1974; Widdowson, 1997), or what Widdowson (2006: 96) calls the “domains of folk experience.”

The drives toward the particular and the universal and the suspension of this apparent dichotomy as suggested by Kramersch (1995) foreground three final aspects. One is the need to conceptualize foreign language education as a third space, which is something that I explore later in this chapter. Another is the fact that this study has not escaped the limitation that “representing the multiple layers of human experience is fraught with challenge, alternative, and limitation” (Freeman et al., 2007: 30). A final aspect concerns the focus on a dynamic conception of culture, i.e. a view that emphasizes processes rather than facts, that distances itself from monolithic and static perspectives, and that stresses its nature as a social construction: “the objectives that are to be achieved in intercultural understanding involve processes rather than facts” (Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002: 27).

This study emphasizes processes at two levels: theoretically, as reflected in this chapter; and methodologically, in a research design conceived to embody this focus (chapter 6). In this research the questionnaires about reading in English and in Spanish, the questionnaire with personal information, the prior knowledge task about the content of the selected texts, the reflection log and the individual interview were particularly good research instruments for the concurrent exploration of the individual and the social. These data collection instruments allowed for the discovery of the individual, social, historical and other issues that had an impact on my students' reading in this setting.

Apart from these data collection instruments designed to take account of the sociocultural dimension of reading as well as the participants' individualities, the measures of analysis were also designed to capture the dynamic and procedural aspects of cultural understanding. For

instance, the *Model of Cultural Understanding* on which this thesis rests (chapter 4) conceptualizes cultural understanding in reading as a flexible trajectory along stages. This is a six-stage model which attempts to describe the different ways in which EFL learners in this context approach cultural issues during reading. One fundamental aspect of this model is that readers can move back and forth among levels, at any point during the reading process. In addition, the measure of analysis that I call *reader behaviours* refers in fact to behaviours (such as simplifying, distorting and generalizing cultural information) that capture more or less sophisticated processes in the understanding of the cultural in reading. These measures of data analysis counterbalance the more static and factual aspects of a third one, namely the *cultural idea units*. As I argue in chapter 6, product and process are integrated in this model, therefore distancing this research from previous studies which focused solely on the product of reading in the form of accurate recall of all the idea units present in a text. Such distancing concurrently switches the focus to the *process* of reading or, in other words, to what readers do *during* reading as portrayed in the index of reader behaviours used in this thesis.

2.6. Cultural perspectives in L2 reading

In this section, I describe the conception of culture on which this study rests. I also present the problem of terminology that exists in studies of this kind and propose an alternative. I then explore cultural and identity issues as they pertain to this thesis, and continue to address some aspects of stereotyping, bias, and prejudice. I also relate the individual and social dimensions of reading through a brief discussion of hybridity and third space. The section concludes with some considerations about schema theory as a theoretical underpinning of this study.

This investigation attributes an important role to cultural factors in the process of EFL reading and in literacy education in general (Berg, 2003; Byram and Grundy, 2003; Byram, Nichols, and Stevens, 2001; Klingner and Edwards, 2006; Kramsch, 1993, 1998; Labov, 2003; Moje, 2000). The cultural dimension of foreign/second language education began to be given attention at the beginning of the 20th century in Germany with the concepts of *Landeskunde* (or Area Studies) and *Kulturkunde* (or the Study of Culture and Civilisation) (Byram, 2000b). The reasons for its rise were mainly political (for example, to stress Germany's national identity) rather than educational. Further political and military events in Europe during the second half of the 20th century led to discussions about the nature of

Landeskunde (purposes, context, content, characteristics, etc.). In the second half of the 20th century, social, political and cultural factors (migration, communication beyond national borders, etc.) paved the way for an increasing awareness about the importance of cultural aspects in language education. In Britain in the 1990s this need was materialized in what is known as *Cultural Studies*, which foregrounded the cultural dimension of foreign language education with the aim of developing students' intercultural competence (Mountford and Wadham-Smith, 2000).

This cultural dimension has been explored and developed since then (and so continues to be) by scholars in the European context, such as Michael Byram and his colleagues, as well as by scholars in the US such as Claire Kramsch. Such investigations have involved English as a foreign and second language as well as foreign languages other than (or in addition to) English. These developments have produced a significant body of work dealing with its theoretical and pedagogic underpinnings as well as issues of assessment and educational policy, among others.

2.6.1. *Culture: toward a definition*

Despite this accumulation in foreign language education on the topic of culture, defining the term *culture* is problematic, because definitions come from the humanities and the social sciences and involve disciplines such as history, ethnography, sociology, anthropology, sociolinguistics, literature and cultural studies, among others (Atkinson, 1999; Kramsch, 1995). Both descriptively and methodologically, the concept is too wide, vague and complex (Berry, 2009; Byram and Grundy, 2002; Deveney, 2007; Kramsch, 1995; Schulz, 2007; Trujillo Sáez, 2005) and there exist very few solid models to aid in its description (Archer, 1997).

The Argentine anthropologist García Canclini (1990, 2003, 2006) sets out to differentiate various senses of the term *culture*. First, he presents the meaning given to the word in everyday use: "Culture is the accumulation of intellectual and aesthetic knowledge and skills" (Garcia Canclini, 2006: 30). This conception of culture is based on idealist philosophy. In the 19th and 20th centuries, German philosophers like Spencer and Richter reflected on the differences between *culture* and *civilization*. Richter's characterization "naturalizes the division between body and mind, between the material and spiritual worlds

and therefore the division of work between classes and social groups that engage in one or another dimension" (García Canclini, 2006: 31). This line of thought favours Western knowledge and therefore results in an inadequate conception when faced with other world views that tend to integrate mind and body.

García Canclini attributes the emergence of other scientific uses of the word *culture* to the everyday use of the word. From there, some conceptions were characterized by the separation of *culture* (as created by man) from *nature* (the natural world), as well as by the separation of *culture* (world of meaning and sense of social practice) from *society* (all the structures that organize the distribution of the means of production and power at individual and social group levels and determine social, economic and political practices). Then, from the discussion of Bourdieu's position on the distinction between culture and society (García Canclini, 2006: 32-34), the author proposes a social-semiotic definition of *culture*: "Culture embraces all social processes of production, circulation and consumption of signification in social life." Such a view of culture can explain "how the same object can be transformed through social customs and appropriations" and how the relationship with other individuals and objects transforms us into intercultural beings (García Canclini, 2006: 34-35). This perspective stresses this intercultural dimension that is of utmost importance in this thesis and is in tune with the conception of identity that I explored at the beginning, i.e. a conception of identity as social identifications that simultaneously embodies individual and social factors.

From this anthropological perspective, culture refers, in general terms, to the ways in which people conceive their lives and attribute importance to human experience by selecting and organizing it. Culture is everywhere and mediates all human behaviour (Rosaldo, 1993). Geertz (1974) sees culture as a control mechanism and distances himself from the view of culture as a collection of patterns of behaviour (habits, customs, uses, traditions) in the classic sense (Benedict, 1935; Parsons, 1966). Human beings need such mechanisms of control in the form of plans, rules and instructions so as to organize their behaviour. The reason is simple: human nature cannot exist in isolation from culture.

No analysis of human actions can ever be complete, even when the views of the insiders are considered (Rosaldo, 1993). It is impossible to impose one's categories to the lives of other people because the informal practices of everyday life acquire meaning in their own

context, and can therefore always appear to be worse, inferior, or brutal to an outsider. Although they may seem subjective, thought and feelings are culturally determined and are influenced by one's own biography, the social situation, and the historical context, among other factors (Rosaldo, 1993). This is where the issue of the uniqueness of the individual discussed above plays a role. Each individual builds his or her own story, but on the basis of conditions which are not of his/her choice and which certainly exceed his/her control. The complexity of cultural understanding lies in the fact that social life is simultaneously inherited and in permanent movement. The individual, the local, and the idiosyncratic mingle with, and cannot be separated from, the social, the global, the universal. As argued previously in this chapter, this thesis takes account of both perspectives in its conceptualization as well as in its methodological design.

Another interesting concept from cultural anthropology that is useful for the purposes of this study is that each culture is so unique that it is impossible to compare one to another (Rosaldo, 1993). The reasoning is that no culture is superior or inferior, richer or poorer, bigger or smaller than any other. Theoretically, this thesis adheres to this conception, as well as to the complexity involved in the exploration of the cultural (from any discipline, not only EFL reading) as previously described. This acknowledgement of the impossibility to compare cultures in a truly deep way can become a serious limitation in a study of cultural understanding such as this one. This drawback notwithstanding, my desire to pursue the exploration of cultural understanding in EFL reading meant that as researcher, I needed awareness of these considerations throughout each step in the study in the framework of the best feasible design that took them into account (Byram, forthcoming).

One way of contributing to this feasibility resides in the notion of cultural visibility (Rosaldo, 1993). Clearly all the ways of perceiving and organizing reality are culture-specific, and no aspect of life is more or less cultural than another. Nevertheless, in all cases, there are always visible and invisible elements in all cultures (Erez and Gati, 2004; Rosaldo, 1993). In practical terms, this means that certain human phenomena may appear to be more susceptible of cultural analysis than others. On the basis of this notion, one measure of data analysis in this study, the cultural idea units, constitute an attempt to capture the most visible elements of the cultures in question in the prompt texts (see chapter 6 for details). At the same time, the limitation mentioned in the previous paragraph points to the inherent difficulty of these

cultural idea units (or of any other measure of cultural analysis for that matter) to really capture the essence of any culture at all.

Added to the preceding argument is the relation between cultural visibility and the idea of difference. Following Rosaldo (1993), to study one culture is to look for differences, and then show how it makes sense in its own terms. This notion of difference is useful because it contributes to making cultures particularly visible to external observers. At the same time, it is problematic because such differences are not absolute but relative to the cultural practices of the observers themselves. “If it is agreed upon that identity should not be a matter of essentialism, then this must apply to difference as well. (...) difference is a category which can be filled differently (...) difference is no intrinsic quality or an objective factor in a social relationship but the definition of such a relationship. The decision to regard someone as different is always a positioning or an interpretation” (Genetsch, 2007: x). This is linked to the brief discussion about how difference is related to prejudice that I mention later. The *Model of Cultural Understanding* designed as a measure of analysis in this study incorporates the notion of cultural difference in its first two levels (called levels 0 and 1). Level 0 reflects the erratic perception or omission of cultural aspects during EFL reading, while level 1 focuses on the perception or identification of cultural differences. Both levels are critical, because they involve the perception, or lack of perception, of cultural elements (cultural details, similarities, differences), always on the basis of the reader’s own culture. The perception of the different, exciting, and attractive elements of a given culture is possible through the identification of key vocabulary, and works as a bridge for levels 2, 3, 4, and 5 in the model (see chapters 4 and 6 for details).

The connection between key vocabulary and culture is close (Byram, forthcoming; Goddard and Wierzbicka, 1994; Kramsch, 2007; Lehrer, 1974; Salzmann, 1993; Sapir, 1963; Sercu, 2001; Whorf, 1956; Wierzbicka, 1992, 1986) and is something I shall come back to when I describe this model in chapter 4. It is enough to say at this point that this link constitutes one rationale for levels 0-1 in this model because “some ‘key words are particularly heavily connoted and reveal shared meanings of another society (...) The acquisition of these words and their connotations is not simply a cognitive process but one which can threaten the affective attachment to the world one knows” (Alred and Byram, 2002: 342). In addition, the role of vocabulary in the perception, storing, recall and comprehension of information has

also been shown to be crucial (Carmichael, Hogan, and Walter, 1932; Clarke et al., 1984; Loftus, 1979).

This notion of difference brings us back to the interrelationship and the tension between the forces of familiarity and unfamiliarity in cultural understanding which I discussed at the beginning. I let Rosaldo (1993: 39-40) speak for himself at this juncture: “In presenting culture as a subject for analysis and critique, the ethnographic perspective develops an interplay between making the familiar strange and the strange familiar. Home cultures can appear so normal to their members that their common sense seems to be based on universal human nature. Social descriptions by, of, and for members of a particular culture require a relative emphasis on defamiliarization, so they will appear - as they in fact are – humanly made, and not given in nature. Alien cultures, however, can appear so exotic to outsiders that everyday life seems to be floating in a bizarre primitive mentality. Social descriptions about cultures distant from both the writer and the reader require a relative emphasis on familiarization, so they will appear – as they also in fact are – sharply distinct in their differences, yet recognizably human in their resemblances.” The *Model of Cultural Understanding* in this thesis captures both similarities and contrasts, in particular in levels 0 and 1, through processes of familiarization and defamiliarization as described by Rosaldo here.

Overall, there is agreement in the literature from anthropology and L2 literacy not to see cultures as objective, stable, monolithic, and homogeneous entities but rather as social constructions, i.e. the result of the perceptions of oneself and others in the context of a multifaceted reality representative of different subcultures such as social class, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, and education, among others (Blanco, 2000; Geertz, 1974; Hugo, 2002; Labbo, 2000, Mahar, 2001; Shah, 2004; Warley, 2003). “In contrast with the classic view, which posits culture as a self-contained whole made up of coherent patterns, culture can arguably be conceived as a more porous array of intersections where distinct processes crisscross from within and beyond its borders. Such heterogeneous processes often derive from differences of age, gender, class, race, and sexual orientation” (Rosaldo, 1993: 20-21). Other authors like Genetsch (2007) also refute the notion of culture like essence and postulate it like “negotiation,” i.e. as mutable and inherently diverse (Genetsch, 2007: 26). This thesis embraces this conception.

Given the complexity of the foregoing aspects involved in definitions of culture, one limitation is that discussions about the concept tend to be simple, with utopian appeals to the tolerance of ideas different from one's own and the avoidance of prejudices. From the perspective of readers, the appreciation of the significance and importance of certain cultural aspects presupposes the capacity for abstraction and analysis (Alred, Byram, and Fleming, 2003; Byram and Fleming, 2001; Byram and Grundy, 2003; Neuner and Byram, 2003). From the side of educators and researchers, the area of culture may be unfamiliar (Byram y Morgan, 1994; Kramsch et al., 1996; Sercu, 2006). There exists a gap in the knowledge of teachers (and researchers) about other cultures. This knowledge tends to be intuitive and unsystematic (Byram, 2000a, 2001). Considering that teachers and researchers go through the same process as the readers themselves in the understanding of a different culture, they also have an inadequate basis for comprehension. The risk of inappropriately assigning meanings to the behaviours, attitudes, motivations, values and beliefs of the members of other cultures (for instance, those portrayed in the texts used in this study) or subcultures (e.g. the participants' themselves) is always latent.

Another important problem in relation to this discussion is the issue of the textual representations of a given culture, in this study encompassed in the text selections made. Rosaldo (1993) affirms that even though there exist no unique recipes to represent other cultures, the standardization of descriptions may reveal as well as hide aspects of a certain social reality. The author suggests the need to open up and ask ourselves not only how our descriptions of others would be read if they were applied to ourselves but also how we can learn from the descriptions of others about ourselves. This procedural analysis (i.e. the focus on processes) emphasizes that cultures must be studied from a number of perspectives, which cannot necessarily be added one to the other in a unified sum. One limitation of this study in this respect is that the representation of each culture offered by the prompt texts used here presented a given cultural reality from one dominant and explicit perspective, regardless of the fact that other perspectives were susceptible of foregrounding.

2.6.2. Culture, literature and imagination

Now that the view of culture which pervades this study is manifest, it is useful to make explicit one justification for a study about cultural understanding in EFL *reading*. This

justification can be found in Kramersch's words: "One of the major ways in which culture manifests itself is through language. Material culture is constantly *mediated, interpreted and recorded – among other things – through language*. It is because of that mediatory role of language that culture becomes the concern of the language teacher. Culture in the final analysis is always *linguistically mediated membership into a discourse community that is both real and imagined*" (Kramersch, 1995: 85, her emphasis). I italicized *reading* before to stress the linguistic within the overall framework of cultural understanding, the communion between language and culture. This connection between language and culture pertains to all languages, whether foreign, second, or native. In connection with native language acquisition, Guiora (2005: 187) says: "Years ago (...) I proposed that native language is the prime vehicle for the transmission of psychological and cultural essence, it is an ever-present embodiment of self-representation incorporating a view of the world and of ourselves, carrying a national-cultural epistemology." Kramersch's explanation of why culture *is* the business of the language teacher also constitutes a powerful motivation for conceptualizing this study as classroom-based research. I have mentioned other justifications in this respect previously in this chapter.

A deeper nuance of a definition of culture that is of utmost relevance to this thesis concerns its imaginative dimension. As Kramersch (1995: 85) puts it, "Culture, then, constitutes itself along three axes: the diachronic axis of time, the synchronic axis of space, and the metaphoric axes of the imagination." She moves the argument forward to claim that "culture is therefore also literature, for it is literature that opens up 'reality beyond realism' and that enables readers to live other lives – by proxy." Emotion and affect are a key aspect in this imaginative dimension of culture (Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey, 2002; Guiora, 2005) as Rosaldo's (1993) personal anecdote with the Ilongots testifies. Shanahan (1997) highlights the relegation of imagery, emotion and affect in language learning as well as the need to foreground it through literature. "The cultural features of literature represent a powerful merging of language, affect, and intercultural encounters and often provide the exposure to living language that a FL student lacks" (Shanahan, 1997: 168). Current ecological approaches to the study of language and culture maintain that "culture is no longer to be found in behaviours or events but in the symbolic construction of reality through discourse" (Kramersch, 2003, 2007: 245).

This thesis takes account of both characteristics of culture: on the one hand, its imaginative dimension, through the use of literary texts as suggested by Kramersch (1995) as well as

through one specific data collection instrument, the visual representation task, especially designed to capture this dimension (chapter 6). On the other, its dynamic and socially constructed nature, through the conceptualization of this study as classroom-based research with a focus on multiple aspects of these participants' individualities (cf. the cultural studies reviewed in the literature analysis in the following chapter, which have tended to isolate one or two of these aspects of identity such as ethnicity, nationality or religion).

2.6.3. Terminology problem: culture vs. cultural

There is agreement in the field of TESOL on the predominance of “received but critical” and “critical” views of culture as Atkinson explains (1999: 629). According to the author, a “received” view sees culture as a static, monolithic, homogeneous and essentializing entity, usually associated with geographical and national boundaries. “Received but critical views” distance themselves from such essentializing conception in some aspects but nonetheless adopt the concept. “Critical” views, by contrast, challenge the notion by incorporating issues of identity, hybridity, difference and others into the discussion. This thesis embraces this last view.

This agreement notwithstanding, terminology weaknesses abound in the field. Terminology is laxly used in the literature within this cultural dimension of foreign/second language education. There is a significant difficulty in the available terminology to capture the complexity of the issues involved in this cultural dimension of ELT. This difficulty reveals itself in the variety and multiplicity of currently available terms. The following ones, used loosely and interchangeably (when appropriate), are some examples:

- native and foreign text and culture (Kirch, 1973: 343; Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson, 1979: 10; cf. Galbreath Jernigan and Moore, 1997, who point out the inappropriateness of the term “native culture”),
- culture in the singular (despite the impossibility of singling out any culture as a homogenous construct as the authors themselves acknowledge; Bennett, 1998: 2; Byram, 2001: 98; Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002: 9; Byram and Grundy, 2002: 193; Byrnes, 2008: 108; Cordier, 1946: 362; Erez and Gati, 2004: 585; Kirch, 1973: 340; Kramersch, 1995: 85; Kramersch et al., 1996: 100; Garner, 2008: 117; Rivas, 2007: 303; Scarano, 2002: 159; Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson, 1979: 17; Trujillo Sáez, 2005: 25),
- cultural representations (now in the plural; Kramersch et al., 1996: 106),

- cultural content (Abu-Rabia, 1998: 203; Smith-Maddox, 1998: 312),
- cultural meaning (Byrnes, 2008: 108),
- cultural identity (in the singular) (Eliggi and Germani, 2005: 109);
- cultural significance (Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson, 1979: 12),
- cultural difference (Deveney, 2007: 311; Kramersch et al., 1996: 100; Rollin, 2006: 58),
- cultural types (Deveney, 2007: 313),
- cultural patterns (Cordier, 1946: 362),
- cultural discontinuity (Deveney, 2007: 311),
- cultural presuppositions (Kramersch et al., 1996: 106),
- cultural contexts (Kramersch, 1995: 90),
- elements or features of a cultural schema (Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm, 2004: 206),
- cultural understanding (Byram, 2001: 100; Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002: 27; Kramersch, 1995: 88; Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm, 2004: 222),
- understand otherness/diversity (Alred and Byram, 2002: 348; Garner, 2008: 118; Rollin, 2006: 58), and
- comprehend (Lipson, 1983: 448; Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm, 2004: 204; Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson, 1979: 19).
- comprehension of the foreign culture (Kirch, 1973: 341).

At no moment do these authors define these terms. Therefore, their meaning is not clear. Overall, this brief overview of terms reveals the lack of unifying terminology in the field and the difficulty of capturing the complexity of the topic through specific terms when writing about it. This difficulty has not escaped this thesis, but has been resolved as follows.

Faced with this difficulty, García Canclini proposes to refer to *the cultural* rather than *culture* (García Canclini, 2006). This simple terminology change from the noun *culture* to the adjective *cultural* has a significant implication: it reflects a conception of the object of study not as an essence or something that each group carries within itself, but rather as a subgroup of differences. These differences are selected and mobilized in order to articulate the “boundaries of difference” (García Canclini, 2006: 39). This resort to the adjective *cultural* constitutes a useful solution to an intricate problem, and is one I adhere to in this thesis.

2.6.4. A bit of history: culture and identity in EFL education

The emergence of culture as a key component in foreign and second language education is not new, as the discussion above about the *Landeskunde* tradition in Germany shows. More recently, almost fifty-five years ago, Cordier (1946) made a case for intercultural education in schools. Between twenty and thirty years ago, the debate about cultural issues in ELT was radical. The discussion centred around the assumption that learning a second language meant learning a second culture and that patterns of thinking and feeling had to be re-directed (Brown, 1986). Learners were to be schooled into new values and moulded into new behavioural patterns (Trivedi, 1978). "To acquire and use a foreign language is to enter another way of life, another rationality, another mode of behaviour" (Byram, 1988: 17), to acquire a different personality (Guiora and Acton, 1979). Second language learning was many times viewed "as a clash of consciousness" (Clarke, 1976: 382), i.e. as a distressing and confusing experience which might result in an "environmentally induced schizophrenia" (Clarke, 1976: 379).

Some authors have noted, however, that learners might indeed be unwilling to assimilate and accept the cultural burden of the target language (Alptekin and Alptekin, 1984), preserving their identities (Dunnett et al., 1986; Kabakchy, 1978), or adding new insights to them (Byram, 1989b). In 1979, Guiora and Acton pointed out that learning a foreign language does not mean losing one's identity and assuming new cultural roles, but rather having a clearly defined identity, a strong sense of self, a "healthy ego" (Guiora and Acton, 1979: 199). It is worth noting that still thirty years after this discussion was taking place, the debate in TESOL nowadays continues, in substance, along similar lines, materialized for instance in the discourse of English as a form of imperialism which adopts a more deterministic view now (Bhatia, 2008; Bolton, 2008; Dendrinos, 2008; Canagarajah, 1995, 1999; Esseili, 2008; Kontra, 2008; Meierkord, 2008; Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992, 2001, 2008a, b, 2009; Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996; Saraceni, 2008). Specific discussions are taking place in this regard, in different areas, such as the literary field for instance (Rourke, 2003). Whereas in the past it was assumed that it was the teacher's role to change his/her learners' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours as necessary (with the pertinent caveats as in Byram and Morgan, 1994), now it seems that English *per se* carries with it a more or less overt, a more or less covert, political and ideological agenda (Byram, forthcoming, 2001; Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992, 2001, 2008a, b, 2009). English cannot possibly be dissociated from the

social, cultural, historical, economic, political, religious and other relations in which it exists (Osler and Starkey, 2000; Pennycook and Coutand-Marin, 2003; Starkey, 2007). Byram (2001, 2010), Byram and Grundy (2002), Edge (2003), Markee (2000), Singh and Doherty (2004) and others take up this matter of agenda, bringing forward the political, ethical and moral decisions and dilemmas that language educators face nowadays given the current international scenario in the 21st century. Byram (2001: 91) posits that “foreign language teaching inevitably involves the teacher in a political force-field and, whether they are aware of it or not, language teachers are involved in a political activity” and argues that “language teaching as foreign-language education cannot and should not avoid educational and political duties and responsibilities” (Byram, 2001: 102).

These theoretical discussions were accompanied by pedagogic developments that are relevant to this thesis as well. Between 1972 and 1979, for instance, Morain developed several techniques to incorporate culture in the language classroom, such as the Culture Cluster, the Cultoon, and the Audio-Motor Unit (Elkins, Theodore, Kalivoda and Morain, 1972; Meade and Morain, 1973; Morain, 1976, 1979; Taylor and Sorensen, 1961). More than twenty-five years ago, Byram was already bringing cultural issues to the attention of educators in Europe, and since then he and his co-workers have put forward a solid case for what is now known as language-and-culture education (Byram, 1981, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1989a, b; Byram and Morgan, 1994). Harumi (2002: 36) has recently proposed “a new trichology of culture around language, culture in language, and culture through language.” Allington and Swan (2009), Bredella (2000, 2003), Burwitz Melzer (2001), Byrnes (2008), Carter (2010), Jeffries (2001), Kramsch (1995), Matos (2005) and others have put forward the integration not only of language and culture but also of literature as well in a tripod: language-literature-culture. This integration works as a justification for the use of literary texts in this study, and for carrying out this research in the framework of the chair English Language II at Universidad Nacional de La Plata. This chair uses literary narratives as a core element of the syllabus.

The intercultural dimension of foreign language education favours certain pedagogies, which this study, as classroom-based research, was congruent with. For instance, the course I teach - the pivot of this thesis - focused on learners as researchers, learners as ethnographers, experiential learning, consciousness-raising (Alred, Byram, and Fleming, 2003, 2006; Barro, Jordan and Roberts, 2001; Byram and Grundy, 2002, 2003; Byram,

Nichols and Stevens, 2001; Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002), critical cultural awareness (Alred and Byram, 2002; Byram, 1997, 2001; Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002; Kramsch, 1995; Kramsch et al., 1996), situated learning (Kramsch et al., 1996), the use of situated texts (Byrnes, 2008) and literature (Kramsch, 2003), the five Cs approach (communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, communities; Byrnes, 2008), culturally responsive teaching (Garner, 2008) and critical discourse analysis (Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002).

Within TESOL in particular, these pedagogies have been given different names but in essence amount to the same thing. Instruction in the setting in which I carried out this study was in harmony with what in the field of TESOL is referred to as a focus on learners as cultural researchers and ethnographers (Atkinson, 1999), critical language awareness and critical reflexivity (Kumaravadivelu, 1999; Murray, 1998), critical classroom discourse analysis (Kumaravadivelu, 1999), project-based pedagogies (Warschauer, 2000), and the incorporation of diverse cultures and local Englishes in the classroom (Matsuda, 2003; Warschauer, 2000).

As mentioned before, this study was conceptualized as classroom-based research in a classroom that was by all means in tune with these pedagogic recommendations in all respects. The critical and reflexive element, common to these pedagogic approaches, was a characteristic that transmuted our classroom practices in the course English Language II. Similarly, the research design in this study was conceived with this rationality, and consequently ingrained these elements of criticality and reflexivity purposefully in most of its data collection instruments, particularly the prior knowledge task, the immediate reflection log, the reading response and the visual representation tasks as well as the individual interviews. Following Byram (1997: 35), “in an educational framework which aims to develop *critical* cultural awareness, relativisation of one’s own and valuing of others’ meanings, beliefs and behaviours does not happen without a reflective and analytical challenge to the ways in which they have been formed and the complex of social forces within which they are experienced.” In addition, the literary texts used in this study also favoured this element of analysis, reflexivity and criticality which leads to an understanding of one’s own culture as well as others’ (see chapter 5 on materials selection).

What I intend to show here is that the course English Language II was coherently linked, from theory to pedagogy, to the rationale in this thesis. This consistency is important

because to carry out a study like this one in a context that was behind pedagogically (i.e. not in tune with the theory) would have been a contradiction. The purpose therefore is not to focus on teaching *per se* here, or the origins of the competence of the participants, but rather to show that the practices in this setting add to the overall coherence of the line of thought in this thesis: because the study is classroom-based, it is fundamental to point out that that this classroom was pedagogically in tune with the theoretical underpinnings mentioned in this chapter, and that precisely because of this, the practices that took place inside it made cultural understanding viable in the first place.

2.6.5. *Cultural understanding in EFL reading*

Narrowing the focus to cultural understanding now, in order to capture the cultural aspects in a text, it is essential to have attitudes of curiosity, openness, and willingness to suspend disbelief and value judgments with regard to other people's beliefs and behaviours (Byram, 1997; Byram and Morgan, 1994; Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002; Citron, 1995; Mountford and Wadham-Smith, 2000; O'Byrne, 2003). There must also exist willingness to approach the unfamiliar, recognizing the importance of understanding the manifestations of a different culture in the context in which they are framed (Shah, 2004). In this respect, Atkinson (1999: 641) points out the "basic human urge to categorize those in some ways different from oneself as radically, irreducibly other." Similarly, Byram (1997, 2001), Byram, Gribkova and Starkey (2002), Palfreyman, (2005), Ridgeway (2006: 12) and others agree that "to define self and other in order to act, actors first must develop a way of categorizing the other on the basis of comparison and contrast – that is, as different from or similar to known, socially predictable objects such as the self." As a first layer of understanding (levels 0 and 1 in the *Model of Cultural Understanding* mentioned before), the three prompt texts included multiple instances where these readers would be able to demarcate their selves in this way (see the analysis of each text in Appendix I).

Important contributions to this topic of categorizing have come from the field of psychology. Allport, in his work on prejudice in the 1950s, had already pointed out the human need of forming categories that enable people to interpret reality. These categories are usually based on data from reality and represent a simplification of the empirical world. But they can also form "from rumours, emotional projections and fantasies" (Allport, 1977:43, 1954; Allport and Postman, 1966). This generates "irrational categories" (Allport, 1977: 37) that form wrong prejudgements. These differences can only be modified as long

as the evidence on which they originate is questioned. When there is no will to consider the evidence that may question a certain category, prejudice emerges. The process is complex and escapes the domains of this thesis.

However, two aspects are directly relevant to this study. First, Allport claims that human beings have a natural tendency to prejudice (Allport, 1977). This is closely linked to the notion of cultural bias that I explore next, which is central to cultural understanding as investigated in this study. As we shall see in the reporting of the findings of this study in chapters 8 and 9, the process of denial of evidence, which leads to prejudice, became evident in the reading response and visual representation tasks. Second, the author attributes importance to the role of emotions and fantasies in this process. This can be taken as an additional element in support of one data collection instrument in this study, namely the visual representation, which aimed at offering readers a forum for the manifestation of this imaginative dimension of comprehension. As I have already mentioned, this significance of the imagination was put forth by language educators and researchers between thirty and forty years later (Byram and Morgan, 1994; Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey, 2002; Kramsch 1995, 2003). Theoretically, I have already described in this chapter the link between culture and imagination pointed out by scholars such as Kramsch and Byram.

Overall, this thesis, conceptualized as classroom-based research, was designed so as to bring different individualities and cultures into contact through the study, namely the participants' and the characters', making "connections and comparisons between cultures and communities" (Sercu, 2006; Starkey, 2007: 69). The more profound reflections (and caveats) about the notion of difference that I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter are in order here. Beyond such considerations, the prompt texts used in this thesis allowed for the observation of the idiosyncrasies, languages and cultures present in them by comparing and contrasting (Imhoof, 1968; Lado, 1957; cf. Kramsch, 2003). This contact with difference, or otherness, through reading was there to make possible a shift of perspective which would ideally allow participants to abandon their monocultural awareness and adopt an intercultural perspective (Byram, 1984) in the writing of the prior knowledge task, the immediate reflection log, the reading response and the visual representation tasks as well as in the individual interviews. In cultural understanding, this is the most desirable response, and one that I anticipated the selected texts would allow.

More specifically, the prompt texts were chosen in order to allow readers to move beyond dichotomies or binary divisions such as upper and lower, rich and poor, Western and Eastern, White and Black, Occident and Orient - dichotomies which produce an idealized, essentialized, and static vision of the Other (Genestch, 2007; Kumaravadivelu, 1999). It was perfectly possible of course that these readers contented themselves with the exploration of such dichotomies, because the prompt texts clearly sanctioned such exploration as an obvious approach to textual content. That is, the texts undeniably involved two or more cultures coming into contact.

Nonetheless, I argue here that this study explores cultural understanding with a design that makes it possible to happen in the first place, by distancing itself from these dichotomies toward a “Third Space” (Chien-Hui Kuo, 2003: 234; Kramersch, 1993, 1998; Kramersch et al., 1996). All the data collection instruments, particularly the prior knowledge task, the reflection log, the reading response and the visual representation tasks as well as the individual interview, allowed readers to move beyond superficial contrasts “by opening up a space of translation, a place of hybridity (...), a transformative and subversive force by which the production of cultural difference is mobilized (...), an ongoing process of relating to otherness” (Chien-Hui Kuo, 2003: 234), “a hybrid space in which a writer may refuse to be either same or Other” (Genestch, 2007: 11).

This possibility of moving toward a third space was secured not only by the data collection instruments but also by the very prompt texts. Beyond the superficial exploration of dichotomies which the texts certainly made viable, and which these readers could of course content themselves with, the texts did portray a conflux of cultural perspectives in constant interaction, in addition to the participants’ own perspectives as well. That is, the texts themselves captured, as well as ever possible, the dynamic and fluid nature of culture in the conception embraced in this thesis. More specifically, this was achieved through the presence of a number of cultural perspectives in each prompt text (see chapter 5 and Appendix I).

The *Model of Cultural Understanding* (chapter 4) designed for this thesis is a measure of analysis that takes into account the readers’ different perspectives in the understanding of otherness, in particular insider, outsider and hybrid perspectives in the apprehension of the cultural dimension of reading. One of its vantage points, as I shall describe in chapter 4, is that

it explicitly attempts to capture the double angle of vision (us-them) through imagination, attributing importance to both aspects: the capacity of movement in and out of different perceptions, and the significant role of imagination in cultural understanding. I push the argument forward in this thesis and claim that in fact this *double* vision needs to be stretched to reach *multiple* perspectives, simply because the porous nature of the identities of the “we” or “they” does not allow for such a notion of clear-cut, homogenous, dichotomous categories. The point is that this *Model of Cultural Understanding* can in fact be thought of as a vehicle for the creation of a third space in cultural understanding, a space that foregrounds the fluid, the relative, the dynamic, the unstable.

This element of criticality and reflexivity in relation to the Other permeates the research design as a whole. On the participants’ side, both the prompt texts as well as all the data collection instruments made this critical reflection susceptible to take place. Considering García Canclini’s (2003) and Genetsch’s (2007: 15) view that “identity is not an essence but a positioning,” in order to carry out the tasks in this study, participants needed to critically ask themselves who that Other was against whom an identity was sketched and how that otherness, that is, difference, was evaluated. On my side as researcher, the measures of analysis also foregrounded both elements of criticality and reflexivity.

2.6.6. *Cultural bias, stereotypes and reading*

One of the reasons why this process of cultural understanding is complex is because cultural bias is unavoidable (Bereday, 1964). We all feel and act in accord to our ethnocentric principles and the outcome is a sort of "cultural egocentricity" (Byram, 1989a: 50): we "identify our own local ways of behaving with Behaviour, or our own socialized habits with Human Nature" (Benedict, 1935: 7; Kramersch, 1995). Cultural bias results in honest and subtle differences of perception. In relation to reading, cultural bias is important because these readers, as members of a specific culture, shared an understanding of the goals, assumptions, and practices behind EFL reading in our setting. This shared understanding made reading possible in our culture (Gallas and Smagorinsky, 2002). The exploration of these participants’ individualities and cultures in this classroom-based research brought about issues related to identities, stereotyping, empathy, cultural bias and prejudice (Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002; Kramersch, 1995), which emerged in the reading of the prompt texts, through the writing of all the data collection tasks as well as through the interviews.

Let me at this point briefly take up the notion of stereotype from this previous discussion. This is a concept that was useful in the data analysis phase as we shall see later (chapters 7, 8 and 9). Theoretically, the notion is relevant and important because the ideological construction of otherness is produced when what is different (in racial, cultural, historical or other terms) is perceived as rigid, static, degenerate and inordinate (Bhabha, 1994). In the field of literary criticism, and within the manifestation of stereotypes in colonial discourse, Bhabha points out that in a colonial situation stereotypes would be conformed as rigid, fixed and even wrong conceptualizations of the Other. I have previously described how this conceptualization has permeated discussions in the field of intercultural competence. I would also like to remark here that this view of stereotypes can be associated with the “received” view of culture by Atkinson (1999) that I mentioned earlier, i.e. culture as a monolithic, static, and homogenous entity. However, what Bhabha offers is an alternative conception of stereotypes which would be in tune with the notion of culture on which this study rests, namely stereotypes as judgements based on *fluid* categorizations, *loosely* dependant on the comparative context in which they originate. I italicise the terms *fluid* and *loosely* here to stress the dynamic and flexible nature of stereotypes, just as I have emphasized these characteristics in relation to the definition of culture that I adopt in this investigation.

Bhabha (1994: 66) argues that a stereotype is constituted discursively as “a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always ‘in place’, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated.” Perceiving the Other in this way makes this stereotyped vision persist over time despite historical changes. It enables marginalization and, above all, it brings about a high degree of predictability that always surpasses logic and proof. This idea is related to Allport’s (1954) inclusion of an irrational, unsupported element in the formation of prejudices, which I discussed before. In this view, a stereotype is no longer a simplified vision of the Other but it becomes a “false” vision of a given reality, a false representation (Bhabha, 1994: 75): it is a partial vision, fixed and simplified, which does not leave room for the recognition of difference as a representation of oneself and others as individuals with multiple identities in a network of multiple social relations. This break in the perception of otherness foregrounds ambivalences and points to a moment of disjunction that allows multiple visions, beyond dichotomies, as previously discussed.

The concept of stereotype is widely used in the social sciences, though seldom is a concise definition proposed from each individual discipline. Psychologists have explained that stereotypes result from normal cognitive processes which are necessary for the individual construction of the mental schemata that enable us to interpret reality at large and social relations in particular. This is where the connection between stereotypes and this thesis becomes clear. In addition, the attribution of a stereotype is related to socially acceptable interaction patterns between members of social groups and, thus, “stereotypes, even the positive ones, define the places these groups have in the social scale and enable power relations between groups to be legitimized” (Smith Castro, 2006). This process by which stereotypes are assigned seems to explain why there is a greater attribution of negative stereotypes to minorities or exo-groups. In the prompt texts, for different reasons, Zezé and his family, Banerji, and the Navajos could be perceived by these readers as examples of such exo-groups. I therefore anticipated that stereotypes would emerge as these participants approached the cultural in the prompt texts through the required written tasks, in particular the reflection log, the reading response and visual representation tasks, and finally, in the individual interviews.

The complexity of the notion of stereotype is evident from the foregoing discussion. Many specific aspects have been investigated in this area (for instance, Burkley and Blanton, 2008), including interrelated notions such as bias (Hinsz, Tindale and Nagao, 2008), attitudes, and prejudice (Smith, Dijksterhuis and Chaiken, 2008). What is most important for this thesis in this discussion, however, is that stereotypes can be seen as another aspect of those schemata which enable us to understand reality. Considering the dialogic nature of the processes of reading and writing (in terms of the assumptions about prior knowledge, schemata, and patterns of behaviour related to the world view taken as given in any text), it has been argued that some degree of empathy may be essential when it comes to understanding what others say or do (Quintanilla Pérez-Wicht, 2004). I have myself touched upon this issue of empathy in connection with cultural understanding on the basis of Byram and Morgan (1994) elsewhere (Porto, 2001a). What is necessary to rescue from this work here is that interpreting the Other in reading does not mean that readers rebuild their feelings or mental states “but it is rather the creative activity of building a shared territory: a community of beliefs, desires, meanings, values and real objects” (Quintanilla Pérez-Wicht, 2004). In other words, in order to understand the Other we need to perceive this Other as someone who is at once similar to and different from us (Byram and Morgan, 1994; Byram, 1989 a, b; Quintanilla Pérez-Wicht, 2004) and build a place, a third space,

common to both in which to interact and reformulate those parameters within which we interpret reality. The previous discussions on difference are relevant at this junction, as are those about schema theory next.

Self-understanding appears to be inevitably linked to understanding otherness (Byram and Morgan, 1994; Byram, 1989a, b). In this way, this active role of the reader acquires a philosophical dimension in cultural understanding as different levels of comprehension reflect the degree of empathy as well as the broadening of the reader's mental schemata after incorporating what was different. I shall say more about this in my description of the *Model of Cultural Understanding* in chapter 4. For the moment, what is essential is that this transformation is highly beneficial for the reader as a 'decoder' of *the cultural* (in García Canclini's suggestion) and as an individual with multiple cultural identities in a globalized world.

Once again, the issue of otherness is related to cultural difference as discussed at the beginning. Part of the difficulty in cultural understanding is that the Other can be "represented in ways that could suggest difference as well as sameness, depending on who did the defining and for what purposes" (Genetsch, 2007: 16). "The Other can never be authentically represented but only translated" (Genetsch, 2007: 19). Put shortly, ultimately, at some point or another, there is a limit to what can be culturally understood.

2.6.7. *Cultural understanding and schema theory*

Closely linked to the discussion of difference, prejudice and stereotyping, this study also subscribes to schema theory (Yarlas and Gelman, 1998) that posits that to be of interest, new information must be assimilated to an existing schema (resulting in the elaboration of the schema through the inclusion of explicative information) or accommodated by means of restructuring (producing the modification of the schema, i.e. the new information makes individuals change their ideas). The relevance of schema theory in this study lies in the fact that comprehension can be either aided or hampered by the content (thematic) schemata in texts. This is something that I shall explore in detail in the following chapter with the analysis of the literature. It is worth mentioning at this point that the relationship between schema theory and the cultural dimension of comprehension is a complex one, not only because schemata are underlying and culturally derived structures but also because readers constantly

adapt their reading habits, behaviours, motivations and performance to their textual, social, cultural, and physical surroundings (Sarroub, 2002).

This unconscious and pervasive adaptation has been referred to in the literature as in-betweenness (Sarroub, 2002), which signifies that readers live and participate in multiple worlds and as they do, they occupy the in-between spaces of two (or more) cultures. To make sense of the world and to make sense of written texts, individuals in a given culture draw on multiple resources, experiences, funds of knowledge and Discourses (Moje et al., 2004). Being in-between different resources, funds of knowledge and Discourses affects one's literate, social, and cultural practices, including one's encounters with reading. The notion of in-betweenness is close to that of tertiary socialization as described by Byram (1997, 1989b, 2008) and Alred and Byram (2002), which in turn is related to schemata. In addition to the processes of assimilation and accommodation mentioned before, Alred and Byram (2002:342-343) note that "where tertiary socialization takes place however, it is not that one set of beliefs and schemata are replaced by others but that new beliefs and schemata are held side by side with existing ones, the individual being ready to operate with whichever is relevant in a given context." In Sarroub's (2002) terms, individuals are in-between multiple worlds and move back and forth as need arises.

In tune with a sociocultural view of reading as described at the beginning of this chapter, this thesis captures the *developmental*, *social*, and *cultural* dimensions of schemata. These dimensions do not restrict reading to what happens within individuals' minds but stress the mediating function of schemata in linking an individual's mental structures with the external world. Historically, as I mention in the following chapter, these dimensions were associated with schemata in the work of Plato, Aristotle, and Kant in philosophy and Bartlett and Piaget in psychology (McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek, 2005). What is important to rescue from this historical overview in chapter 3 is that "the concept of a memory schema had a strong social or cultural component very early in its history" (Rice, 1980: 153). The underlying idea is that "schemas were necessary to explain the constitutive role of culturally organized experience in individual sense making" (McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek, 2005: 535). Consistent with this view of schemata, this thesis will allow us to inspect the functioning of the Christmas schema as an exponent of how the experience with these three prompt texts reveals details about EFL reading in this particular sociocultural context.

The sociocultural perspective of schemata present in Piaget, Kant and Bartlett as constructs which extend beyond the individual to comprise the social and the cultural was lost in contemporary conceptions of schema as derived from cognitive psychology in the 1970s, mainly because this early work by cognitive scientists was done in artificial intelligence (Minsky, 1975; Schank and Abelson, 1977). This thesis recovers this sociocultural dimension through a methodological design that takes explicit account of such perspective, and is materialized as classroom-based research. In other words, given the nature of this thesis as a study that conceptualizes reading as a social, contextualized practice, the reworking of schema theory from a sociocultural perspective (McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek, 2005) foregrounds a sociocultural perspective on schemata that rethinks both their *nature* and *use*. “Schemas, as traditionally conceived in relation to reading, were limited to in-the-head categories, in part because they were removed from materiality connected to cultural context and processes” (McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek, 2005: 546). “If we think of schema as embodied and not just in the head, then it becomes clear that patterns of enactment, ways of engaging the world, both shape our interpretation of cultural activity and are shaped by cultural activity” (McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek, 2005: 550).

This study crafted a research methodology that foregrounded the sociocultural dimension of schemata as an exemplar of research carried out in a community-based or classroom-based setting (Vavrus, 2002) with tasks, activities and materials (the prompt texts and the data collection instruments) which functioned as cultural mediators of the transactions of this specific group of students with such tasks, activities and materials (McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek, 2005). The purpose was to capture the characteristics of EFL reading in this particular sociocultural context by obtaining a “sense of the classroom” (Canagarajah, 1995: 592) while simultaneously focusing upon the individual and the local (Canagarajah, 1995, 2006) as mentioned before.

2.7. Conclusion

This chapter has presented the theoretical tenets that guide this research. Central to this thesis is a sociocultural conception both of the learning process and of reading. Within current understandings of reading, I have in particular foregrounded the indeterminacy of

meaning and the philosophical notion of the existence of a horizon in what can be understood in any reading encounter. I have discussed some issues related to identity as they pertain to this thesis. I have also put forward the inseparability between the individual and the social in cultural understanding, and I have offered an explanation of how this thesis takes account of both dimensions.

I have then proceeded to explore the cultural dimension in EFL reading more specifically, starting with a brief historical account. I have then presented the conception of culture on which this research rests. This has involved a discussion about issues of cultural visibility, cultural difference and cultural perspectives. I have concluded with an analysis of schema theory as it contributes to a conceptualization of this study as classroom-based research. Throughout the chapter I have made explicit the link and the congruence between the rationale behind this research and the research design as a whole, providing specifics about relevant connections and interrelationships in data collection and analysis where appropriate. Finally, the chapter stresses the fact that this study is in tune with current calls from TESOL scholars regarding the importance of the individual and the local in classroom-based or community-based research efforts that describe how literacy in English is lived in peripheral countries, of which Argentina is an example. Such calls constitute the most powerful justification for this exploratory interpretive study: this urge in the literature to rescue the local within culturally-specific contexts.

The theoretical foundations in this chapter have paved the way for the literature review that comes in the following one around the cultural dimension of EFL reading in general and schema theory in particular.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE ANALYSIS: A LOOK AT STUDIES INVESTIGATING THE CULTURAL DIMENSION OF READING

Introduction

The investigation of reading comprehension

A historical perspective on schema theory

Studies which use bizarre and ambiguous texts in support of schema theory

Studies which use culture as an independent variable

Studies investigating cultural understanding in Spanish-speaking contexts

Studies exploring background knowledge with expository texts

Dichotomy product-process in reading comprehension

Distinguishing features of this thesis

Conclusion

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE ANALYSIS: A LOOK AT STUDIES INVESTIGATING THE CULTURAL DIMENSION OF READING

3.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews studies in the field of reading comprehension as they are pertinent to this thesis. I start by pointing out the wideness of the field and proceed to narrow the focus of attention here to schema theory. I then offer a historical perspective of this theory, which is necessary and useful to justify and frame the present study. In particular, I review four types of investigations: a) studies which use bizarre and ambiguous texts in support of schema theory; b) studies which use culture as an independent variable; c) studies which investigate cultural understanding in Spanish-speaking contexts; and d) studies which explore background knowledge with expository texts. After this detailed review of the literature, I highlight the underlying dichotomy product-process in reading comprehension observed in all the reviewed studies and propose an alternative perspective based on a different conception of the notion of understanding. I conclude by remarking the distinguishing features of this study on the basis of the literature review undertaken in this chapter.

3.2. The investigation of reading comprehension

Reading comprehension in native and foreign/second language contexts has been studied for years in different disciplines, from psychology (social and cognitive) to linguistics, applied linguistics, cultural studies, literary studies, second language acquisition and others. There are as many studies as the variables involved in the processes of reading comprehension in L1 and L2. Some studies explore specific linguistic aspects, such as cohesion in the recall of native and foreign texts (Steffensen, 1988; Cohen et al., 1988), vocabulary (Cohen et al., 1988) and sentence-context (Briggs, Austin and Underwood, 1984; Stanovich, 1980). Others focus on miscues (Rigg, 1988), cognitive aspects of reading skill through information-processing and language comprehension tasks (Bell and Perfetti, 1994), linguistic and social-cognitive factors with special populations (Tager-

Flusberg and Sullivan, 1995; Hemphill, Picardi and Tager-Flusberg, 1991) and other factors beyond the exploration of decoding abilities and vocabulary knowledge, for instance in ESL reading contexts (Proctor et al., 2005). A vast amount of research has focused upon specific aspects of content and rhetorical schemata (chronologically, Carrell, 1983a,b, 1984a,b,c; Kimmel and Magginitie, 1984; Chihara, Sakurai and Oller, 1989; Robins and Mayer, 1993; Stromqvist and Day, 1993; Wright and Rosenberg, 1993; Allen et al., 1994; Chen and Donin, 1997; Sasaki, 2000; Chu His-Chin, Swaffar and Charney, 2002; Sharp, 2002; Van Hell, Bosman, Wiggers and Stoit, 2003; Florencio, 2005; among many others).

Theoretically, this thesis is framed within schema theory, in particular culturally-specific content schemata. Let us now inspect this theory in detail. What follows, however, needs to be understood with the caveat that “even the contemporary schema theories explain only part of the data and that other models will be required for a full theory of the human mind” (van der Veer, 2001: 227).

3.3. A historical perspective on schema theory

A schema is an abstract knowledge structure that represents generic concepts stored in memory (Anderson and Pearson, 1984; Rumelhart and Ortony, 1977). It has been given different names such as frame (Minsky, 1975), script (Schank and Abelson, 1977), plan (Schank, 1975, 1982) and macrostructure (Kintsch and van Dijk, 1978). Historically, the notion of schema to refer to the structure of human knowledge as represented in memory can be traced back to Plato, Aristotle and Kant in philosophy, and Bartlett and Piaget in psychology (McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek, 2005). The contributions of Kant, Bartlett and Piaget are particularly relevant for this thesis because they stress the *developmental*, *social* and *cultural* dimensions of schemata, not restricted to what happens within individuals' minds. Piaget's (1952) theory of the origins and development of cognition explains how people learn by processes of assimilation and accommodation of new experiences to existing schemata. Kant (1929) refers to schemata as mediating structures which link an individual's mental structures with the external world. Bartlett (1932) prefers the term “pattern” and also highlights the functional role of schemata as adaptations between individuals and the environment. “The young Bartlett's main interest was to study how individuals and groups borrow, modify and adapt foreign materials. To this end he

studied, among other things, how people adopt stories from different cultures in a process of assimilation and accommodation” (van der Veer, 2001: 226). Because Bartlett was influenced by the anthropologists of his time, “the concept of a memory schema had a strong social or cultural component very early in its history” (Rice, 1980: 153). The underlying idea here is that “schemas were necessary to explain the constitutive role of culturally organized experience in individual sense making” (McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek, 2005: 535). In cognitive anthropology back in 1980, Rice explains that a schema is related to both structural and processing aspects of knowledge, operates in perception, memory, and recall, and is “a theory of the comprehension *process*” (Rice, 1980: 155, my italics). She distinguishes three types in a continuum: universal, such as Piaget’s cognitive schemata (at one end); idiosyncratic, highly variable according to each individual’s experience (at the other end), and culturally derived schemata, along the continuum, which are associated with what anthropologists call “world view.” Two aspects are central to this thesis here, as we shall see: the focus on the *process* (as opposed to the product) of comprehension, and the notion of a *continuum* in contrast with the usual dichotomy of available versus unavailable schemata.

McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek (2005) offer a useful overview, which will be the basis of this discussion, and convincingly argue that the sociocultural perspective of schemata present in Piaget, Kant and Bartlett as constructs which extend beyond the individual to comprise the social and the cultural was lost in contemporary conceptions of schema as derived from cognitive psychology in the 1970s. This loss is not surprising, I think, because this early work by cognitive scientists was done in artificial intelligence (Minsky, 1975; Schank and Abelson, 1977) and involved the exploration of knowledge construction using computers. Other scholars applied and developed this work in the area of reading in the late 1970s and during the 1980s, producing a vast amount of research that contributed to foregrounding the cognitive paradigm of schema theory in reading research (Anderson, 1977, 1978; Anderson and Pearson, 1984; Bransford and Johnson, 1972, 1973; Rumelhart, 1975, 1980). The marginalization of the sociocultural in favour of the cognitive in the schema notions that dominated the scene at the time does not mean that the social and cultural dimensions were not being explored. In fact, Lipson (1983), Steffenson, Joag-Dev and Anderson (1979), Reynolds, Taylor, Steffensen, Shirey and Anderson (1982), Harris, Lee, Hensley and Schoen (1988), Pritchard (1990), Anderson (2004, study undertaken in 1984), and many others investigated the influence of cultural background and background

knowledge, acknowledging the power of social and cultural factors in reading comprehension. However, as McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek (2005) point out, in these studies cultural variations were taken as an independent variable in reading rather than as a constitutive and integral component of schemata in their own right. This caveat notwithstanding, there is a lot to be learnt from this group of studies in relation to this thesis, as I will show later.

By the mid 1980s the influence of schema theory was so powerful that it became the driving force in reading models, empirical investigations of the reading process, and the educational field in general (Pearson and Stephens, 1994). Schema theory turned the attention away from bottom-up models of reading and re-oriented the discussion toward the role of the reader as well as his/her background knowledge in the construction of meaning and the comprehension process. Its pervasive presence continued with vehemence during the early 1990s to give way to sociocultural theories (Vygotsky, 1978) as the framework of literacy investigations toward the end of the 1990s and the following decade. Even though a lot of work continued to be produced in this period, it did not have the same impact as that of the early cognitive scientists. Evidence of this is the decline in the use of the terms “schema” and “schema theory” in academic journals (Gaffney and Anderson, 2000), gradually substituted by others such as *topic knowledge*, *content knowledge*, *background knowledge* and *previous knowledge*. However, McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek (2005) see the continued featuring of schema theory today in textbooks for teachers and teacher educators as testimony of its current influence in the field.

Many criticisms have surfaced in different aspects of the theory. These involve the vagueness in the definition of the term (Alba and Hasher, 1983; Sadoski, Paivio and Goetz, 1991; Taylor and Crocker, 1981); the epistemological issue of reification, i.e. giving actual existence to an abstract construct (Sadoski, Paivio and Goetz, 1991); the lack of precision in the description of the schema processes of selection, abstraction, interpretation, and integration (Sadoski, Paivio and Goetz, 1991); the lack of empirical verifiability (Alba and Hasher, 1983; Sadoski, Paivio and Goetz, 1991; Taylor and Crocker, 1981); the marginalization of the role of imagery in comprehension (Alba and Hasher, 1983; Sadoski, Paivio and Goetz, 1991; Taylor and Crocker, 1981) and the strong influence of western thought in the early work in psychology and artificial intelligence in the investigations of the form and content of schemata (Rice, 1980), among others.

Other alternative theories have been advanced, with limited impact on the literacy and educational fields. In fact, none have been taken up enthusiastically, though each proponent can offer a satisfactory trajectory of empirical studies in their support. One useful example for this thesis is Dual Coding Theory (Paivio, 1971; Sadoski and Paivio, 1994, 2004), a theory of cognition like schema theory (rather than reading), which is intended to account for imagery in comprehension. However, Sadoski, Paivio and Goetz (1991: 472) themselves acknowledge that “although the origins of dual coding theory are closely contemporaneous with those of schema theory, dual coding theory, like imagery itself, has generally been neglected by reading researchers.” I shall nonetheless take up the theory to justify one data collection instrument in this study, the visual representation, in chapter 6.

Given the nature of this thesis, i.e. a study that conceptualizes reading as a social, contextualized practice, it is useful at this junction to consider McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek’s (2005) reworking of schema theory from a sociocultural perspective. The authors take up the original sociocultural dimension of schemata in the initial conceptions of the term by Kant, Bartlett and Piaget to argue that a sociocultural view of reading necessitates a congruent view of schema, or in other words, a sociocultural perspective on schemata that rethinks both their *nature* and *use*. McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek (2005: 546) say: “Schemas, as traditionally conceived in relation to reading, were limited to in-the-head categories, in part because they were removed from materiality connected to cultural context and processes.” They add: “If we think of schema as embodied and not just in the head, then it becomes clear that patterns of enactment, ways of engaging the world, both shape our interpretation of cultural activity and are shaped by cultural activity” (McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek, 2005: 550).

Most of the empirical investigations carried out by cognitive scientists in the 1970s and 1980s were experiments done in laboratories, in complete dissociation from the social and cultural world. Even though some schema theorists and researchers did take social and cultural factors into account, culture became a variable within mental representations, explored in the lab, rather than one constituent of them in its own right. The empirical studies which did include these factors portrayed an impoverished and limited conception of culture, in dissonance with the complex views that were emerging from the fields of anthropology, cultural psychology and educational anthropology in the 1980s (McVee,

Dunsmore and Gavelek, 2005). Evidence of this narrow conception of culture is the fact that these studies confined the cultural dimension to one aspect of an individual's "integrated cultural identities" (Dunnett et al., 1986; Kabakchy, 1978; Maloof, Rubin, and Neville Miller, 2006: 255), namely race, ethnicity, or nationality (occasionally religion), leaving aside a view of culture that takes account of the complex interplay of multiple and varied aspects of one's individuality (Rosaldo, 1993), or in other words, idiosyncrasies in terms of gender, social class, educational, historical, and cultural backgrounds, religion, sexual orientation, political orientation, physical appearance, special capacities and many other factors (Thisted et al., 2007).

Before McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek (2005), other scholars had pointed out the dynamic and flexible nature of schemata. For instance, Van Hell, Bosman, Wiggers and Stoit (2003: 298) said that "cultural schemata tend to be conceived of as static entities, encapsulating cultural background knowledge (...) we propose that cultural background knowledge is not a static entity shared in memory. Rather, we propose that cultural background knowledge reflects a dynamic and flexible constellation of concepts retrieved from memory, which is sensitive to cultural variations, for example, in terms of the task to be performed." However, these researchers seemed to fall into the same simplification of the notion of culture that I mentioned before as one isolated aspect of an individual's social identifications such as religion. They state: "In this study religious and cultural background are collapsed together" (Van Hell, Bosman, Wiggers and Stoit, 2003: 287) as if this were possible at all.

Other scholars like Malcolm and Sharifian (2002), Sharifian (2001, 2004, 2006) and Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm (2004), drawing on work from cognitive anthropology, also propose a view of schemata similar to what McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek (2005: 452) call "sociocultural perspectives on schema." They contend that "cultural schema theory is a variation of schema theory that regards schemas as largely dwelling in cultural experience (Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm, 2004: 205)." Sharifian's (2003) model of cultural conceptualizations presents schemata as properties of the interactions between the members of a cultural group, which are not equally distributed in their minds. Although the model is appealing, it suffers from some of the problems and limitations of schema theory in general. As way of example, the concept of cultural schema is described and defined in a very general and at times vague way, the features or

properties of schemata are not identified or defined, and the distribution of these properties in the minds of people is not explained in depth. The research technique used in Sharifian (2002) in order to list and describe Aboriginal cultural schemata in Australia (mainly event schemata such as travel, hunting, family schemata) is one of association-interpretation of stimuli in open-ended responses resembling the lab conditions in the early cognitive scientist era. In addition, the link between schema as an in-the-head phenomenon and as related to the social and cultural worlds of individuals is not explored. Bartlett is not acknowledged as one of the pioneers in bringing the sociocultural to the foreground in schema discussions (though he is of course acknowledged as a pioneer of the theory).

These shortcomings notwithstanding, I concur with Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm's (2004) concept of a *continuum* in varying degrees of familiarity with cultural schemata, instead of the notion of absent (non-available) vs. present (available) schemata most often associated with the beginnings of schema theory. It is interesting to notice, however, that the authors do not trace the origins of this concept of *continuum*, which was proposed at least thirty years ago by Rice (1980).

There are two more aspects that I find useful for the purpose of this thesis in this model of cultural conceptualizations. One is the identification of *image* and *emotion* schemata (together with event, role and proposition schemata), something that helps take account of the imaginative and emotional dimension of reading – an area in which schema theory has problems (Sadoski, Paivio and Goetz, 1991). The other aspect, in agreement with McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek (2005), is the acknowledgement that cultural schemata are not a static characteristic of an individual's cognition (are not an in-the-head phenomenon) but rather are shared by members of a cultural group, are constantly being negotiated and renegotiated through time and generations, and are instantiated (materialized) in cultural artefacts like rituals, paintings, narrative, video, discussions, etc.

One way in which it is possible to take account of a cultural perspective on schemata, McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek (2005) propose (i.e. schemata as sociocultural and historical constructions that appear through transactions with others in real contexts and are mediated by cultural activities, materials and artefacts - Kamberelis and Bovino, 1999-), is to engage in research carried out in community-based or classroom-based settings with tasks, activities and materials as cultural mediators of such transactions (cf. laboratory-

based research). This argument constitutes, as I shall show later, a powerful justification for carrying out the study in this thesis in this specific context despite its limited generalizability to other settings.

3.4. Studies which use bizarre and ambiguous texts in support of schema theory

Focusing the attention on empirical studies framed around schema theory within the specific field of L1 reading, in particular English as a native language, Sadoski, Paivio and Goetz (1991) classified the usual studies used as evidence of the existence of schemata into three groups: sentence integration studies, which have examined subjects' recall of related sentences; perspective studies, which have assigned subjects different perspectives (schemata) to be assumed during reading and have examined their recalls; and bizarre text studies, which have used bizarre texts as prompts. Taken together, these studies have popularized the use of schema theory in reading research and have shown that the more background knowledge a reader has about the specific content schema presupposed by a text, the more he/she will be able to comprehend, keep in long-term memory, and recall that text.

Close to the concerns in this thesis is the third group, bizarre text studies, which I shall inspect in more detail now. For instance, Bransford and Johnson (1972, 1973) showed that prior knowledge was essential in order to understand texts that had been especially designed to be completely obscure without such knowledge. An obscure, non-transparent text includes general words such as "things," "elements" and "stuff," instead of words or other clues that allow readers to activate their prior knowledge regarding textual content. The authors used an obscure text ("Washing Clothes"), among others, with and without this title as clue, with two groups of subjects and concluded that those who had read the passage with the title had understood the text better and had recalled it better than those for whom the title had not been available.

Another similar study by Anderson, Reynolds, Schallert and Goetz (1977) used ambiguous texts instead of bizarre texts. Ambiguous texts are designed so as to simultaneously allow two different but incompatible interpretations. In this case, one of the selected fragments could be interpreted either in the context of a prison break or a wrestling match. The same text was presented to two different groups of subjects, one of which had a background in

weightlifting. These subjects interpreted the text in a way that was consistent with this prior knowledge and were unaware that there was another possible interpretation, i.e. the prison interpretation.

Both types of studies, with bizarre and ambiguous texts, have been replicated continuously, with multiple and subtle modifications in the variables considered as well as in the experimental texts and methods used. As I said before, they have contributed to bringing schema theory to the foreground in reading research and in the development of reading models during the 1970s and 1980s. However, serious methodological objections have been raised against these studies, namely that the use of contrived texts with experimental purposes generates serious validity problems and does not allow for the generalization of results to real life-like situations of reading (Sadoski, Paivio and Goetz, 1991).

3.5. Studies which use culture as an independent variable

Much less research has been carried out to investigate the role of content schemata in reading comprehension in English as a second language (ESL). This group of studies use cultural differences as the independent variable. Taken together, they have shown that ESL readers have a better understanding and recall of texts from their own cultural background, i.e. texts for which they possess a relevant or appropriate culturally-specific content schema (Chihara, Sakurai and Oller, 1989; Malik, 1990; Sasaki, 2000; Van Hell, Bosman, Wiggers and Stoit, 2003).

There are two types of studies here, with subtle variations existing in replicated studies. One type can be called cross-cultural studies because informants belonged to two different cultures. The most influential one here was Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson's (1979) study, which stimulated other investigations with similar designs (Carrell, 1983a b; Halasz, 1988; Noda, 1980; Pritchard, 1990). Overall, these studies have found strong support for the crucial role of culture-specific schemata in reading comprehension.

The other type can be called sub-cultural studies because informants belonged to two or more subcultures within a dominant culture. The exemplar study here is Reynolds et al. (1982). Instead of having participants from two cultures respond to two matched texts (one from their own culture and one from a different culture), in this study participants came

from two different subcultures and responded to the same text. While Reynolds et al. (1982), together with other studies using similar designs (Hooper-Weil, 1989; Lipson, 1983; Spears-Bunton, 1992), strongly supported the positive influence of culture on reading comprehension, other studies had mixed results, i.e. they showed that culture was a powerful factor but not unequivocally positive (Altieri, 1995; Baker, 1990; Beach, 1994; Busch, 1994; Jordan and Purves, 1993). More recently, Van Hell, Bosman, Wiggers and Stoit (2003: 297) concluded that “the results of this study (...) suggest that specific properties of the task or proficiency in the language may modify the influence of cultural background knowledge, in terms of the direction of the effect (facilitatory or inhibitory), or its size.”

One problem with these studies, as mentioned before, is the narrow conception of culture they embrace. The cultural dimension is confined to one aspect of an individual’s multiple identities, namely race, ethnicity, or nationality (occasionally religion in Lipson, 1983), leaving aside a view of culture that takes account of the complex interplay of multiple and varied aspects of one’s individuality (Rosaldo, 1993) such as gender, social class, educational, historical, and cultural backgrounds, religion, sexual orientation, political orientation, physical appearance, special capacities and many other factors (Thisted et al., 2007). However, there is accord in their value in the field of education (McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek, 2005; Sadoski, Paivio and Goetz, 1991; Webster, 2001). In addition, in their critique of schema theory, Sadoski, Paivio and Goetz (1991) do not pose any serious objections to these cultural studies, as they do with the sentence integration studies, the perspective studies, and the bizarre text studies. Also, when Sadoski, Paivio and Goetz re-analyze and re-interpret these three groups of studies from the perspective of dual coding theory (DCT) (their own theory, which they propose as a better alternative to schema theory) and argue that DCT does a better job in interpreting the results of these studies, they disappointingly make no reference to those studies that “used cultural differences as an independent variable” (Sadoski, Paivio and Goetz, 1991: 470). I see this omission as additional evidence of their overall appeal. In other words, the fact that Sadoski, Paivio and Goetz (1991) themselves choose *not* to reinterpret these studies from the perspective of DCT (which is one of the manifest aims of the paper) may mean that their theory lacked interpretive power when it came to these cultural studies, leaving us with schema theory as the best framework in this case.

Before reviewing these cultural studies in detail, I should mention that in all cases, the focus is on reading comprehension. Other studies, however, have focused on the role of cultural familiarity with a topic in text production rather than comprehension. For instance, in Van Hell, Bosman, Wiggers and Stoit (2003), forty 10 year-olds with different backgrounds participated in this study in the Netherlands (twenty with Dutch Catholic background and twenty with Islamic background). They were presented with the beginning of three stories in Dutch, one focusing on Ramadan (Islamic), another on carnival (Catholic) and another on school (neutral). These beginnings were short, about five sentences or fifty words. Using a within-subject design, all children had to retell the given beginning and then continue and finish the story (i.e. spoken text production). Van Hell, Bosman, Wiggers and Stoit (2003: 283) concluded that in this bilingual and bicultural setting, “findings indicate that cultural familiarity with a topic influences story telling performance in terms of story length and coherence.”

Let us inspect some of the cultural studies which investigate the role of cultural background in text comprehension in more detail now. Some take the case of English as mother tongue, as a second language, or as a foreign language. Others explore other second/foreign languages (Hebrew, Spanish, Italian, French).

In a pioneering study almost thirty years ago, Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson (1979:10) used letters (with a narrative component and written in English) about Indian and American weddings with nineteen adult Indian and twenty adult American subjects who lived in the US to investigate the influence of culture on reading comprehension. A questionnaire about the subjects’ prior knowledge of the different weddings was administered. Prior knowledge was investigated in the form of recall consistent or inconsistent with the subjects’ own culture. The required recall was *verbatim*, i.e. informants were told to “maintain the same order and use the same words,” to “write down every bit” they could remember and if they could not remember the exact words, to write down the sentence “as close to the original as possible” (Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson, 1979: 16). The measures of analysis were the following: reading time, gist (main idea or global coherence measure), and the observation of some protocol elements (elaborations, distortions, other overt errors, omissions) (cf. the wider variety of textual modifications examined in this thesis, as I describe in chapter 6). Their analysis involved the mean frequency of occurrence in free recall of these types of protocol elements, or put

differently, the changes their participants made when recalling the passages. Overall, I should remark at this point that there is agreement in the design and measures of analysis, with subtle variations, across the majority of the studies that I review in this chapter. I shall comment towards the end of this chapter, however, on their methodological limitations.

In addition, in Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson's (1979) study no text written in the participants' home language(s) was used to take into account the language factor (again, cf. this study, chapter 6). It is also relevant to point out that even though the prompt texts were letters *with a narrative component*, the rhetorical structure of informal letter writing is substantially different from that of the literary narratives that I use in this study. Furthermore, the context of the production of the letters is not provided (who wrote them, to whom, under what circumstances, etc.). The reader is not informed whether they were produced with experimental purposes, which I presume to be the case because of the heavy descriptive nature (rather than narrative) of both weddings. It is not clear why letters were used, instead of stories, considering that the authors explicitly framed the study around schema theory for the comprehension of stories. The authors claim that theirs is a cross-cultural study with a complete design (and therefore better than others with an incomplete design), i.e. both Indian and American subjects read two letters, each describing one wedding (Indian or American).

I do not think, however, that this is a pure cross-cultural study because although the Indian subjects were natives of India, they resided in the US. No contextual or background information is provided to allow further conclusions (e.g. language and cultural practices in the home, the school, and the community, and the interrelationship between native language/heritage culture and second language/foreign culture in those settings). All the limitations mentioned so far clearly leave crucial and interesting nuances unexplored. However, they do not shadow results, which revealed that subjects recalled more textual information and generated more culturally appropriate elaborations of the "native passage" (that required less reading time), and that they produced more cultural distortions of the "foreign passage" (which required more reading time) (Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson, 1979: 10). The authors interpreted these results as indicative of the power of content schemata in reading comprehension.

Rice (1980) carried out one experiment with sixty English-speaking subjects at the University of California to investigate the role of rhetorical schemata, namely the story schema, and found that participants used three strategies to deal with the missing or unclear structural aspects of the experimental texts in order to accommodate them to the story schema: they imported information to fill the gap, they completely deleted an episode if it was incomplete, or they elided or condensed two or more episodes. As I show in this chapter, the observation of intrusions (imported information), omissions and distortions is a common methodology choice in all these studies.

In another experiment by Rice (this one and the previous one actually carried out in 1976), seventy subjects from the same university read and recalled two versions of three Eskimo stories. One version was the complete, original, Eskimo story, and the other was an “Americanized” version, modified to suit the story schema, respecting the length and content of the original. Worth noticing again is the use of experimentally modified texts (cf. this thesis). Each subject was given one version of one story, i.e. each version was read by about eleven subjects. After reading the text, participants recalled it immediately and at a one week interval. Hollingsworth and Reutzel (1990: 199), ten years after this study, suggest that “the qualitative results also may emphasize the need for a delayed test of recall in future studies. As the interval between reading and recall increases, students’ recall relies more heavily on their schemata for particular content.” Rice, however, offers no explicit rationale for such delayed recall. Participants were instructed to write the passage from memory as accurately as possible and to use their own words if they could not remember exact words (i.e. with more flexibility than in Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson, 1979). Results showed that when the content of the text did not meet the participants’ cultural norms, confusion arose to the point that some extremely foreign material became unintelligible. Heavy stereotyping and distortions to fit cultural expectations occurred. Rice, disappointingly, does not offer enough examples here and therefore the paper remains thin in this respect. The qualitative analysis of the recalls revealed semantic and pragmatic changes, the author claims, but again neither the measures of analysis nor the changes are identified, described or exemplified. These flaws (in the reporting, one assumes) notwithstanding, Rice concludes that “the study has demonstrated that a theory of comprehension based on assimilation to, or by, cultural schemata can account for the stereotypical or characteristic form of cultural interpretations of meaningful materials” (Rice, 1980: 168).

Lipson (1983: 451) explored the influence of religious affiliation on reading comprehension among thirty-two American children, between ten and twelve years old, with Catholic and Jewish backgrounds and practices, i.e. subjects who possessed culturally specific prior knowledge. The explicit aim of the study was precisely to investigate the impact of culturally specific prior knowledge on reading comprehension. The author used three expository passages (cf. this thesis), one culturally neutral, one entitled *Bar Mitzvah*, and the other, *First Communion*. One could easily question the possibility that a culturally neutral passage can actually exist. Using free recall protocols, data were analyzed considering, among other aspects, accuracy and errors in recall as well as implicit and explicit recalled information (see the section *Dichotomy product-process in reading comprehension* towards the end of this chapter for comments). Results suggest that subjects recalled more text-based propositions and generated more implicit recall, with fewer errors, for the culturally familiar passage. Accuracy decreased and distortions increased in the comprehension of the culturally unfamiliar passage. Lipson (1983: 456) points out that readers produced “constructivist errors of omission, elaboration, and distortion.” Considering that these were good readers, then Lipson (1983: 456) argues that problems in comprehension (e.g. misunderstandings, etc.) “can often be viewed most productively as a clue to a reader’s expectations or prior beliefs rather than as a measure of competence alone.”

One problem is that presumably Lipson is thinking exclusively of linguistic competence here, while nowadays the notion of cultural, sociocultural, and/or intercultural competence is widely acknowledged (Byram, 1997). It has to be taken into consideration, however, that Lipson carried out this study before the development of this notion. A final and important concern is that although this study has been and continues to be widely cited as evidence of the positive influence of culturally-specific schemata on reading, other researchers such as Hollingsworth and Reutzel (1990) are cautious about this line of interpretation as they propose an alternative explanation of Lipson’s results. This alternative explanation is based on Matthewson (1985, 2004): the children may have recalled less of the religiously unfamiliar text due to their negative attitudes toward that content, which may have led them not to attend to such content. Conversely, the children may have recalled more of the religiously compatible material because their favourable attitudes toward it may have heightened attention to, comprehension and recall of such material.

Abu-Rabia (1998) investigated the relationship between the attitudes and cultural background of Arab students in Israel and their reading comprehension of stories from the Jewish and Arab cultures. Participants were seventy-four Arab students from Israel, aged fourteen-fifteen, of low socio-economic level, who were learning Hebrew as L2. They answered multiple choice questions in their L1 (Arab) about stories from both cultures, written by writers from each culture. They also responded to a questionnaire constructed to examine their attitudes toward learning Hebrew. Arab was the dominant language in the home and the school. The Arab stories were translated to Hebrew, and the Jewish stories to Arab, in both cases by local teachers. Students were assigned to one of four conditions: Jewish stories in Hebrew, Jewish stories in Arabic, Arab stories in Arabic, and Arab stories in Hebrew. Results indicate that the students' motivation was mainly instrumental and that they performed better in the reading comprehension tasks with the stories from their own cultural reality, irrespective of the language in which the stories were presented. Even though the design of the study is congruent with a pure cross-cultural study, it presents the difficulties associated with translation. Translations constitute themselves as cultural mediators, i.e. they represent a mediation in the interpretation of the culture under analysis through the translator, who mediates the view of that culture that reaches the students. I shall address this limitation again in chapter 5 where I describe the process of text selection in this thesis.

In an earlier study, Abu-Rabia (1996) investigated the effect of cultural schemata on second language and third language readers, aged fifteen, in different social contexts, namely a problematic social context (seventy-four Israeli Arabs, a minority learning Hebrew as L2 in Israel), a dominant one (eighty-three Israeli Jews learning Arabic as their L3 in Israel where these Israelis are the dominant cultural group), and a multicultural one (fifty-two Canadian Arab students learning English as L2 in Canada). The design of the study is complex and involved the use of eighteen cultural stories (six culturally Arab, six culturally Jewish, and six culturally English/Western), all supposedly equivalent in length and difficulty (something questionable given the number of stories) as evaluated by local teachers. How this equivalence was reached is left unexplained. No indication is given of what is meant by an "English" or "Western" story. Participants answered ten multiple choice questions in forty minutes for each story, one per day in three consecutive days, with the texts available during task completion (cf. absolutely all the other studies reviewed in this chapter). This instrument, a multiple-choice questionnaire, is not in keeping with the agreement that exists in the literature about the need to use multiple instruments and about the limitations of multiple-

choice tests like this one in assessing comprehension (see chapter 6). The design was as follows: a) the Arab students in Israel read three culturally Arab stories (in Arabic and in Hebrew translation) and three culturally Jewish stories (in Hebrew and in Arabic translation); b) the Israeli students in Israel read three culturally Jewish stories (in Hebrew and in Arabic translation) and three culturally Arab stories (in Arabic and in Hebrew translation); c) the Arab Canadian students in Canada read three culturally Arab stories (in Arabic and in English translation) and three culturally English stories (in English and in Arabic translation). The limitations of the use of translation mentioned before are relevant here as well.

The results of both Israeli social contexts are consistent with schema theory, i.e. relevant prior knowledge facilitated text comprehension in L1 and L2. Put differently, performance lowered with the texts that were unrelated to the participants' culture, even though both Arabs and Jews had lived in the same country for fourteen years. The presentation of the foreign content in the students' L1 did not have a facilitating effect. Results were different for the Canadian Arab students, who performed higher on the English language texts irrespective of the cultural content of the stories. The author interprets this finding as being a result of the multicultural social policy of Canada, arguing that it provided a supportive social atmosphere which encouraged the students to be open to other cultures and to want to learn more about them, despite the fact that they had lived in Canada for only two or three years. Both Abu-Rabia's studies reviewed here are, to my knowledge, among the few that explicitly consider the effect of different social contexts on comprehension. Their results are relevant to this thesis because I can argue in the same way about the positive influence of the penetration of the American culture in Argentina on the comprehension of the American-like Christmas celebration in *Cat's Eye* (see chapters 8 and 9 with findings).

Hollingsworth and Reutzel (1990) investigated the effect of content-related attitudes on comprehension. Adhering to Matthewson's (1985) alternative interpretation of Lipson's (1983) study, the researchers contend that the fact that subjects recalled less of the religiously unfamiliar text may be due to their negative attitudes toward that content, which may have led them not to attend to such content in the first place. They therefore designed a study to control for the effect of prior knowledge and pre-existing attitudes on reading comprehension. Seventy-eight sixth-grade students were assigned to three conditions, each using an invented expository passage about a fictional country called Titubia, designed so as to generate three different experimentally induced attitudes: favourable, unfavourable and neutral. The use of

an artificial passage is justified here (while it is not justified in all the other studies reviewed here, as I have already pointed out) so as to control for prior knowledge, i.e. the participants could not have had any prior knowledge about Titubia precisely because the text was contrived. Each group in each condition was taught a sequence of five lessons on the Titubia unit, with all the teaching materials aligned with the corresponding experimentally induced attitude. The complexity and difficulty of experimentally inducing attitudes, and then controlling them in and through teaching, appears here. One can question whether the participating teachers could have possibly controlled their own and their students' attitudes so meticulously as the researchers claim, despite their deliberate interventions to do so in the study.

The children performed various tasks, among which was a written free immediate recall protocol. The students were instructed to write everything that they could remember from the passage. As in most of the studies reviewed here, the recall protocols were analyzed quantitatively (in terms of number of idea units) as well as qualitatively (in terms of memory intrusion errors) (see the section *Dichotomy product-process in reading comprehension* towards the end of this chapter for comments). Results showed that the content-related attitudes did not significantly affect the subjects' reading comprehension when measured quantitatively and in recall immediately after reading. Hollingsworth and Reutzel attempt different explanations for this result to conclude that more research is needed in the area of the affective dimension of comprehension. This thesis will make a contribution here, through the use of one specific instrument, the visual representation (see chapters 8 and 9 with findings and chapter 11 with the conclusions and research significance).

Hammadou (1991) investigated prior knowledge in the context of Italian and French as foreign languages in the USA. Authentic, unmodified (cf. most of the reviewed studies in this chapter) newspaper articles were used to explore the interrelationships among prior knowledge, inference, and language proficiency. This study is interesting in that it attempts to capture prior knowledge in terms of *degrees* of familiarity with a scale most-mid-least. Other studies have proposed one to five scales (from most to least familiar) which subjects used to rate their perceived familiarity with different topics (for instance, Spyridakis and Wenger, 1991). This most-mid-least scale goes beyond the dichotomy of present or absent prior knowledge. Participants self-reported in this way their familiarity with the topic in each text

used after reading and recalling it. That is, the researcher did not decide *a priori* which topic was more or less familiar.

Results are relevant to this thesis in two ways. First, findings indicate that the most proficient participants recalled more textual content than the less proficient, but that qualitatively there were no significant differences between the recall of familiar and unfamiliar texts in both groups. This finding reassures my assumption that the language factor, which I discuss in chapter 6, would have no effect on comprehension in this study, considering the high level of linguistic proficiency of my participants. Second, Hammadou (1991) insists on the difficulty of identifying prior knowledge accurately as her results showed that the participants' self-reports about topic familiarity (using the most-mid-least familiar scale) were unable to predict the ability to recall a certain topic. She gives the example of one reader who rated AIDS as the most familiar topic, but never recognized it while reading. Overall, the researcher foregrounds the importance of the qualitative analysis of the recalls (not only quantity in the form of percentage of recall of idea units, also used in the study), i.e. the observation of "vestiges of the reading *process* that were unique to the reader that remained in the written recall protocols" (Hammadou, 1991: 35, my emphasis). Finally, I agree with Hammadou on the many limitations which surround the investigation of the reading process.

Bernhardt (1991), also within second/foreign language reading, mentioned that it would be possible to distinguish levels of prior knowledge. For instance, a level three would refer to considerable prior knowledge, with readers who are capable of providing superordinate concepts, definitions, analogies as well as their connections. A level two would reflect the existence of some knowledge, where the reader can offer examples, attributes, and defining characteristics. Finally, a level one would refer to scant knowledge. However, the researcher argues that a three-level prior knowledge measure (like Hammadou's scale above) would not be sufficiently sensitive to predict reading performance. Although prior knowledge is undeniably an important variable, it is possible that a three-level scale fails to differentiate knowledge. Bernhardt (1991) warns that this does not mean that there exist no differences in prior knowledge among readers but rather that such a scale cannot capture them appropriately. The researcher further affirms that it is possible that a number is not enough to describe content or knowledge. In this thesis, although I concur with the notion of degrees of familiarity and unfamiliarity, I use a prior knowledge instrument, but I analyze it in terms of cultural idea units and reader behaviours rather than in terms of

present-absent prior knowledge or levels of prior knowledge as in Hammadou (1991) (see chapter 6).

Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm (2004) explored the cultural schemata of four Aboriginal and six non-Aboriginal educators in the comprehension of oral narratives produced by Aboriginal children in Australia. The oral narratives were taken from the Aboriginal English Database held at Edith Cowan University. Participants listened to a series of eight passages and recalled each passage orally immediately after listening. They listened to each narrative twice and produced two oral recalls of each passage (listening 1-recall 1, listening 1-recall 2; listening 2-recall 1, listening 2-recall 2; etc.) (everything recorded on tape). Finally, participants read a transcript of each passage and made oral think-aloud comments on their previous recall ability or accuracy (also recorded) after the recall process. The methodological decisions to use oral narratives and oral recalls, unexplained and unsupported by the researchers, call my attention because of the typical use of written prompt texts and written recall in the literature. Put differently, I find difficulty in understanding and justifying these decisions, especially considering that the study was not intended or designed to explore this modality issue (oral-written) in particular (cf. Mecartty, 2001). As Mecartty (2001) points out, the use of aural stimuli has an impact on comprehension because this modality presents special processing characteristics as well as many limitations, none of which are considered by the researchers. In addition, there is no mention of why the think-alouds were collected in the first place, how they were analyzed, and why they were produced on the basis of the transcripts rather than the listening passages.

The immediate recall protocols of the educators were analyzed in terms of idea units recalled in order to observe content schemata as well as “general patterns or strategies recruited during the recall” (Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm, 2004: 203) (what I refer to in this thesis as reader behaviours: correct recall, partial recall, distortion/reinterpretation, addition, omission). The authors concluded that different degrees of familiarity with the cultural schemata in the oral narratives were observed. As mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, this view of a continuum of cultural familiarity with certain cultural schemata, which Rice (1980) brought to the foreground thirty years ago, diverts the attention from traditional dichotomies of present vs. absent schemata.

More recently, Garth-McCullough (2008) explored the relationship between the cultural orientation of literature and reading comprehension to determine its effect on low, mid, and high level readers. Participants were one hundred and seventeen African American eighth graders in the US, who read short stories from three different cultural orientations (African American, Chinese American and European American). Several aspects in this study are similar to this thesis. One is the use of literary narratives and therefore a focus on authentic, natural texts as well as on reading in natural contexts. Another is the conception of schemata as active, functional, social, embodied constructions (described at the beginning of this chapter). Finally, the study is framed as classroom-based research in congruence with current calls in the literature, also addressed in this chapter. Garth-McCullough strives to emphasize these three features, which distinguish the study from most available others – something that I also do in this thesis.

One detail in Garth-McCullough (2008) that I have not observed in the studies reviewed in this chapter so far is the identification of the cultural elements in each text used. What is found instead in the research literature is the identification of all the idea units, whether cultural or not (see chapter 6). Garth-McCullough recruited a panel of representatives from each cultural orientation, who coded the cultural aspects in the stories. These cultural items could be comparable to the cultural idea units that I propose as a measure of analysis in chapter 6. Although I did not resort to a panel of representatives for coding purposes, I had the possibility of checking some key cultural idea units in *Cat's Eye* with a native speaker, in particular those that I judged to be potentially problematic such as the Jello salad and the Jolly Green Giant for instance. The overall merit I find in this study is that it constitutes an example of how literacy is lived by a minority, in this case, a particular group of African American students in a specific US local context. From this point of view, both this study and this thesis extend the knowledge in the field regarding the cultural dimension of reading in specific local contexts, particularly in peripheral contexts.

Garth-McCullough's (2008) study, however, does not escape the series of theoretical and methodological flaws which I have pointed out for most of the studies reviewed in this chapter. Theoretically, an incongruence between reading comprehension and reading performance emerges in the following claims: "The present study explores this relationship between the cultural schema embedded in literary narratives and *reading comprehension performance*. In particular, the study analyzes aspects of *reading comprehension* to

determine how culture affects literacy acquisition during adolescence” (my emphasis) (Garth-McCullough, 2008: 2); “Their [the participants’] *reading comprehension performance* was analyzed to determine the role that culturally-bound prior knowledge plays in the *comprehension process* for low, medium, and high performing students” (again my italics) (Garth-McCullough, 2008: 1). Methodologically, while the study is grounded on re-visited conceptions of schema theory (just as this thesis is), the instruments chosen for the investigation of the cultural dimension of the reading process were binary-choice, free association and multiple choice. I argue in chapter 6 that instruments of this kind are inappropriate for the investigation of reading comprehension (as distinct from reading performance) or the reading process (as different from the product of reading, such as a recall).

3.6. Studies investigating cultural understanding in Spanish-speaking contexts

The investigation of the cultural dimension of EFL reading in Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America is limited and insufficient. The search for research on the role of cultural background in comprehension in Spanish-speaking contexts has been incessant since the beginning of this study in December 2008. However, no relevant studies have been found. I shall review one study set in Spain, another one in the context of English learners (known as English language learners, or English learners, or simply ELLs) of Spanish background in the US, and finally, my own research in Argentina.

Lahuerta (1992) carried out a study to investigate the relationship between the use of linguistic signals of semantic relations in the recall of both familiar and unfamiliar texts. Participants were thirty EFL college learners in Spain. The researcher used adaptations of Bransford and Johnson’s (1983) texts, *Washing Clothes* and *Balloon Serenade*, in four conditions: opaque familiar, opaque unfamiliar, transparent familiar and transparent unfamiliar. She found that participants included signals in their recalls in the case of the familiar and transparent texts and when the text was attractive because of its novelty. She interpreted results as indicative of the beneficial effect of salient or novel information on recall. However, the study is thin in all fronts, including the theoretical framework, the design (with the limitations mentioned elsewhere regarding the bizarre text studies of the cognitive scientists -limitations that the researcher does not acknowledge-), and the lack of specificity of the methodology, among others. Added to this, investigations carried out in

Spain, i.e. a Spanish-speaking country, which would be relevant to this thesis in Argentina, need to be taken with caution because of the concrete possibility of direct, first-hand contact with English speakers available to Spaniards through education, social life, entertainment, tourism, and other means – a much weaker possibility in this setting.

Martínez-Roldán and Sayer (2006) investigated the role of language in young Latino bilinguals' (third graders) reading comprehension of narrative texts in Spanish and in English in a two-year longitudinal study in the US. The focus therefore laid on the language factor rather than the cultural dimension of reading. Four Spanish-dominant and four English-dominant students read and responded to narrative texts, alternating Spanish and English both in reading and in responding to the texts. Among other research instruments, the article reports the children's individual read-alouds and retellings (with a researcher) of the stories used. The researchers chose two places in each text to pause the reading and elicit the retellings, using the reading response strategy called 'stop and say something,' "mirroring the purpose of the think-aloud protocol" (Martínez-Roldán and Sayer, 2006: 305). In addition, there were unaided oral retellings, prompted by questions such as *Can you tell me everything that happened in the story?* Distinct from Van Hell, Bosman, Wiggers and Stoit (2003), who used retellings to investigate spoken text production, this study centred on the use of retellings to research narrative text comprehension. The overall findings of this investigation showed that more complete retellings, and more comprehension occurred, when the children read and discussed the texts in Spanish than when they used English.

Several aspects in this investigation are relevant to this thesis, despite its focus on the language factor rather than the cultural factor. One is the use of texts in the participants' native language, Spanish, as was the case in this thesis. Another is the fact that readers showed more comprehension when they were allowed to use Spanish (rather than English) to mediate their reading and retelling of the texts. This finding supports the use of Spanish in this thesis for all the tasks undertaken by the participants. Finally, the explicit distancing from the widely used recall protocol as a research instrument is also pertinent. The researchers use retellings and claim that "retelling has become an effective way to collect data to examine readers' comprehension of both narrative and expository texts" (Martínez-Roldán and Sayer, 2006: 297).

However, I wish to stress that one key difference (besides the medium, spoken vs. written) between retelling as done in this reviewed study and the retelling that may be involved in writing a reading response and/or a visual representation task (the proposed research instruments in this thesis) is that Martínez-Roldán and Sayer themselves chose the places where to stop the reading aloud and elicit the retellings. By contrast, no intervention of this kind exists in this thesis. I nonetheless agree with Martínez-Roldán and Sayer's focus on the children as authors of their own retellings when they state: "the analysis of retellings should not emphasize recall in the form of repetitions or paraphrases but (...) the focus should be on the reader as author of his own version of the content" (Martínez-Roldán and Sayer, 2006: 297). In chapter 6 I emphasize that the proposed research instruments in this thesis, namely the reading response task and the visual representation task, involved participants in the reading of the selected texts as well as in producing their own texts simultaneously.

Within Argentina and in the same sociocultural context that frames this thesis, my previous line of research constitutes the background for this study (Porto, 2010 b, 2009 a, c, d, 2008 a, 2007 b, 2005, 2003 b, c, 2001 a, c; Porto and Barboni, 2008; among others). This thesis, however, is a major advance compared to this prior body of work, mainly because of its methodological design as well as its innovative data collection instruments and data analysis measures (see chapter 6 on methodology). In many respects, several of the criticisms that I have put forward with respect to the studies reviewed in this chapter apply to my own work. This critique has revealed that this prior work was substantially flawed in the following areas, for the reasons explained elsewhere in this chapter: the main instrument of data collection itself, which was the recall protocol (or variants such as the summary or the synthesis, depending on the study), focused upon recall rather than comprehension; the withdrawal of the prompt texts to perform the written tasks transformed them into a memory exercise; and the collection of such instruments both in Spanish and English contradicts all the existing research, at least as reviewed in this chapter – research which has highlighted the importance of using the mother tongue to preserve the focus on comprehension or understanding. Several other methodological pitfalls pervade my own work and I discuss them in chapter 6.

Nevertheless, there are several aspects in my previous work which allow a smooth continuation of the line of investigation in this thesis. Firstly, as I mention in the chapter

about materials selection (chapter 5), the prompt texts are the same. The most important reason of all here is that I was interested in using these three texts because I had already carried out research on this topic, and the use of the same texts would allow me to tie results to my previous studies. The fact that this thesis uses the same three prompt texts as my previous studies has secured interesting results and interrelationships, relevant to this setting, which I explore in chapters 8 and 9 with the findings. Secondly, all projects including this thesis were set in exactly the same context (same country, city, university) and with a similar profile of participants (college students, prospective teachers and translators of English, mostly female, middle class, Spanish-speaking, in their early twenties). Thirdly, the order of presentation of the texts for data collection is the same (*Mi planta de naranja-lima*, *Cat's Eye*, *Desert Wife*) as well as the justification for this order: the participants would approach the most complex text about the Navajos in *Desert Wife* with some familiarity about what was required of them in terms of the tasks, because they would have done them before. Fourthly, some data collection instruments remain the same, specifically the questionnaires about reading (in Spanish and in English), the questionnaire about biographical information, the prior knowledge task in writing about the cultural content of the fragments, the underlined texts with the difficult or confusing parts as the participants perceived them during reading, the visual representation, and the cultural comprehensibility grid. However, all the instructions for these tasks were modified for the purposes of this thesis. The complete instructions in previous studies appear in Porto (2005, 2003c, 2001c). The specific instructions for all the research instruments in this thesis appear in Appendix II. Finally, the *Model of Cultural Understanding during EFL reading*, proposed for the studies that serve as foundation of this thesis, keeps its original essence and has become a theoretical contribution in all cases.

Those weaknesses notwithstanding, my previous studies, taken as a whole, have revealed the following useful results in the following areas, on which this thesis builds:

- *Cultural comprehensibility of the prompt texts.* With respect to the text selection from *Mi planta de naranja-lima*, it was comprehensible because it described a celebration similar to one in Argentina (including the religious ingredient) but it offered some difficulty as the celebration is not prototypically Argentine. The selection portrayed a wider view of Christmas, applicable to the Latin American context and, in particular, to the Brazilian context. Considering that the fragment offered the perspective of a poor Brazilian family, it

posed difficulties to middle class university students in Argentina. Both fragments in English (from *Cat's Eye* and *Desert Wife*) offered difficulties because of the different cultural realities, alien to these participants in this specific sociocultural context. The fragment from *Cat's Eye*, which described the Christmas celebration of a Canadian family with an insider perspective, presented itself as problematic despite the fact that these learners were familiar with the American culture through their contact with the English language in their course of studies as well as through its penetration in the national culture in their everyday lives (in the form of films, TV, artwork, literature, music, Internet, street visuals, advertising, newspapers, the media, etc.). Finally, the Navajos text from *Desert Wife* presented a totally distant cultural reality materialized in the description of a Christmas celebration by the Navajo Indians of the USA with an outsider perspective. It was therefore the most challenging to the participants' capacity to approach otherness in this particular cultural context.

- *Apprehension of cultural aspects during reading.* Different levels of apprehension of cultural aspects during reading were revealed, which did not mean different kinds of comprehension but different degrees of depth, complexity and details (which emerged in the analysis of the syntheses and the visual reformulations). In general, the approach to otherness was limited to the perception of what was exotic or exciting about a culture or subculture, without a genuine effort to become familiar with what was strange or different.

- *Openness and difficulty to investigate new horizons of ideas.* The pervasive perception of different, exotic and attractive features in the cultural content of the three texts helped participants focus their attention on the differences between themselves and others. This result, together with the interest and the strong and varied emotional reactions awoken by the fragments, reveal the openness of these readers to investigate new horizons of ideas, despite their manifest difficulty to do so, also revealed in these projects.

3.7. Studies exploring background knowledge with expository texts

This final section highlights the fact that prior knowledge and background knowledge have also been explored using expository texts with different academic content from different disciplines (Alderson and Urquhart, 1984; Brantmeier, 2005, Malik, 1990; Mannes, 1994). For instance, Alderson and Urquhart (1984) designed two studies in which thirty-seven

English-speaking, university-based students in the UK read discipline specific texts (engineering, economics, science and mathematics, and liberal arts). They found support for the background knowledge hypothesis that readers perform better with texts from their own disciplines.

Mannes (1994), from the field of psychology, also tested this background knowledge hypothesis in two experiments with forty-five and twenty American participants respectively using expository, domain specific texts. The participants' summaries of an article as well as their answers to cued-response tasks showed the presence of response types such as elaborations, restatements, metastatements, and intrusions (among other reader behaviours). Mannes found that when students read about familiar topics, they retrieved this familiar knowledge from long-term memory more easily.

Finally, Brantmeier (2005) examined whether including analogies in scientific passages facilitated the comprehension of unfamiliar L1 and L2 texts using a variety of assessment measures, among which was a free written recall test in the L1, with the instructions also in the L1. Four contrived texts were used (two topics and two versions each, with or without analogies, one in Spanish and the other in English). Participants were all college students, specifically fifty-three Costa Rican EFL students, one hundred and two American students of Spanish as a foreign language at intermediate level, and one hundred and thirty-eight at advanced level. Once more quantitative analysis involved counting the number of correct idea units recalled (see comments in the next section). Results showed that the addition of analogies did not facilitate the comprehension of unfamiliar texts.

Taken together, these studies, as well as many others available in the field, have provided solid evidence for the powerful influence of content-specific knowledge on the comprehension of expository, domain-specific texts, and will be useful in the discussion of the methodological decisions taken in this thesis (chapter 6).

3.8. Dichotomy product-process in reading comprehension

In all the cultural studies reviewed in this chapter, I observe a persistent and strong dichotomy product vs. process in reading comprehension, manifested in most methodological decisions. The opposition is between the quantitative analysis of the

recalls through the mean frequency of occurrence of previously identified idea units in the prompt text and the qualitative analysis of those recalls through the observation of the changes readers make in recalling passages. This dichotomy that I point out here is not mentioned in any of the reviewed studies. In all cases, both product and process happily coexist in the methodology with no discussion whatsoever of the underlying views of reading involved. I observe this flaw even in Rice (1980) and Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm (2004) where, despite the acknowledgement of a *continuum* of cultural familiarity, the methodology no doubt reinforces such polarity.

The tension between product and process that I observe in all cases depends, as a starting point, on how comprehension (understanding) is conceived and investigated in the first place. The problem is that this conceptualization is not defined in any of these studies. This thesis questions the underlying idea in all these studies that the ability to reproduce exactly what is in a text is a reliable indicator of comprehension. The required recall is in general *verbatim* or at best as close as possible to the original, and comprehension is assumed to have occurred when a text is recalled as accurately as possible. The qualitative dimension is generally explored in terms of important versus unimportant idea units, with the quantification of deviations from the original in the form of errors, omissions, intrusions, distortions, etc. That is, the fewer errors, omissions, intrusions, and distortions observed, the more a reader is said to have comprehended a text. Also, the underlying assumption in all cases is that a measure of recall, which is a *product* of comprehension that takes place *after* reading, is an adequate measure to describe what happens *during* the comprehension *process*.

In this thesis I propose instead a notion of comprehension based on levels or degrees of understanding as described in the following chapter. This view distances itself from the focusing on how much is remembered from a text (manifested in the quantification of idea units as well as in the polarity product-process) and brings us to a notion of understanding framed within a constructivist view of learning as a modification of something that is already present (rather than as the acquisition of new knowledge on a *tabula rasa*). The notion of levels or degrees of comprehension allows me to investigate the whole process of comprehension, i.e. both *during* and *after* reading, breaking with the polarity product-process until the process of reading is complete. The proposed design for this study, described in chapter 6, allows me to capture both the *during* and *after* reading. The

distinction between process and product falls away in this case until the process is complete, as this investigation captures the *during* and *after* and how the existing (pre-knowledge) is modified by the process itself.

3.9. Distinguishing features of this thesis

I shall explain next how this thesis, on the basis of an analysis of several weaknesses in the field (which I discussed in chapter 2 with the theoretical framework and to which I shall come back in chapter 6 with the methodology), constitutes an attempt to fill some open gaps and thereby make an original contribution. The distinguishing features of this study can be described as follows.

- It focuses on literary, narrative, unmodified, authentic texts, while short, contrived expository texts are more frequently explored in the literature. From this perspective, it investigates cultural understanding in a natural reading context, or “ordinary reading” in a natural setting (Allington and Swann, 2009: 224). This contrasts with the artificiality and experimentally contrived characteristic of the texts used in the majority of the reviewed studies in this chapter – which Allington and Swann (2009: 224) refer to as “bibliographically idiosyncratic texts (or ‘textoids’).”

Furthermore, regarding the artificiality of the experimental tasks which readers are asked to perform on the basis of such contrived, non-natural texts, I agree with Allington and Swann (2009: 224) when they say that “psychological experiments on literary reading, with their ‘think-aloud’ protocols, their rating tasks, their tests of recalls, etc. – not to mention the exam-like environments in which they often take place, and the bibliographically idiosyncratic texts (or ‘textoids’) at their heart – might be thought signally unsuited to the task of building up a model of ‘ordinary reading’: it may be better to treat such practices as indicative of the competencies on which particular groups or individuals *are able to draw when pressed* than of how reading “normally” proceeds” (their emphasis).

By contrast, this thesis undertakes a study of cultural understanding in an EFL natural reading setting in view of aspects such as the type of study carried out (classroom-based), text authenticity, and task authenticity (considering the congruence between the research

instruments in this thesis and the pedagogic practices in the chair English Language II at Universidad Nacional de La Plata - described in chapter 2 under the subheading *A bit of history: culture and identity in EFL education*).

- It considers the impact of the perspective (insider, outsider, hybrid) with which the cultural background is presented in a text in the process of L2 reading and through which readers enter a text. The *Model of Cultural Understanding during EFL reading* (chapter 4) distinguishes six levels, each portraying different perspectives through which a text may be accessed. All the studies reviewed in this chapter do not emphasize this specific difference (insider, outsider, hybrid) *explicitly*. The line of thought here is that the perspective of the prompt texts will affect what readers comprehend of their cultural content and how. Sharifian, Rochecoste and Malcolm (2004) discuss this distinction in theoretical terms, though not methodologically (there is no mention of perspective in the fragments used in their study for instance).

- The modes of response to the prompt texts are new and are called here reading response task in writing and visual representation. As I explain in chapter 6, they contrast sharply with the immediate recall protocol, a traditional and widely used and accepted instrument. A reading response task is a variation of immediate recall that allows readers to project their own interpretations of the prompt texts (cf. summaries and syntheses). The rationale that the visual representation collects affective data or data indicating response to literary texts (allowing to capture the affective dimension of EFL reading) is also a distinguishing feature of this study.

- The use of reader behaviours related to the cultural content of the texts (i.e. the textual modifications produced by the participants in their response to the fragments) as a measure of analysis is something that has not been observed in the literature. In this study, an extensive list of sixteen reader behaviours to be observed is proposed, while a range of between two and five behaviours are predominant in the literature (see chapter 6). Not only is this list more comprehensive, but it is also exclusively tied to behaviours related to the *cultural* dimension of reading.

- Along similar lines, the focus on *culturally significant* idea units as a measure of analysis is something original. As I explain in chapter 6, previous studies have quantified *all* the

idea units (previously identified in the prompt texts) that are present in readers' recall protocols. By contrast, in this thesis the emphasis resides in *cultural* idea units exclusively.

- This study combines prompt texts in the L1 and the L2.
- Contrary to those studies which use cultural variables (reviewed in this chapter), in this thesis culture is not limited to an isolated aspect to be controlled as an independent variable (for instance race, ethnicity, nationality, religion). Rather, this study takes account of the complexity of the sociocultural context in which it is carried out. The acknowledgement of the complexity of this context works as a justification for two aspects: one is the justification of the type of study carried out, i.e. an exploratory and interpretative investigation; the other is the justification of the objective itself, which is to comprehend how these students, in this specific context, understand the cultural content of literary narrative texts in EFL reading.
- Distinct from most of the studies reviewed in this chapter, this thesis undertakes a study which is consistent with a sociocultural perspective on schemata in two ways: first, it is classroom-based research as McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek (2005) recommend; second, it uses tasks, activities and materials (reading response task and visual representation task, among others, as opposed to multiple choice questions, *verbatim* recall, probed recall, sentence integration tests, and other instruments) which function as cultural mediators of the transactions of these readers with the selected texts, with the cultures portrayed in them, and with myself as the teacher-researcher. Such mediation is non-existent in laboratory-based or laboratory-like research. In classroom-based research with paid participants or outside researchers, there is no real sense of "classroom community." In the three cases (laboratory-based, paid participants, outside researchers), the sociocultural dimension is left in the background. As I discuss in this chapter, a sociocultural view of reading as held in this study necessitates a congruent view of schema, i.e. schemata as sociocultural and historical constructions that appear through transactions with others in real contexts and are mediated by cultural activities, materials and artefacts.

3.10. Conclusion

In this chapter I have reviewed studies in the field of reading comprehension as they are pertinent to this thesis. I have pointed out the wideness of the field and I have narrowed the focus of attention to schema theory. I have offered a historical perspective of this theory. This historical overview is necessary and useful to justify and frame the present study. In particular, I have reviewed four types of investigations: a) studies which use bizarre and ambiguous texts in support of schema theory; b) studies which use culture as an independent variable; c) studies which investigate cultural understanding in Spanish-speaking contexts; and d) studies which explore background knowledge with expository texts. One conclusion from this detailed review of the literature resides in the underlying dichotomy product-process in reading comprehension, which I observed in all the reviewed studies. As I have pointed out the weakness of this dichotomy, I have also proposed an alternative perspective based on a different conception of understanding centred on degrees of comprehension along a continuum. I have concluded by remarking the distinguishing features of this study on the basis of the literature review undertaken in this chapter.

In the following chapter I explore this alternative view of understanding centred on the notion of degrees of comprehension along a continuum – a notion which is captured by the *Model of Cultural Understanding during EFL reading* proposed as the main theoretical contribution of this thesis.

CHAPTER 4

MODEL OF CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING DURING EFL READING

Introduction

Overview of the model

Antecedents of the model

Model of Cultural Understanding during EFL reading: developments

The Model of Cultural Understanding in data analysis

Some clarifications

Conclusion

CHAPTER 4

MODEL OF CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING DURING EFL READING

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I describe the *Model of Cultural Understanding during EFL reading*, which I propose as the theoretical innovation of this thesis. I start with a brief and general description of the model, which allows me then to present other existing models in the literature and draw resemblances and points of departure. After that I explain and describe each of the six levels in this model in detail. Everything that I say in this chapter is intrinsically tied to the theoretical underpinnings of this research. I attempt to signal interrelationships with this theoretical framework throughout this chapter. Finally, I stress the notion of understanding or comprehension which underlies this model, and the uses it has been put to in this study.

4.2. Overview of the model

I propose the *Model of Cultural Understanding during EFL reading* which I describe in this chapter as the theoretical contribution of this thesis. Consistent with Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm (2004), I suggest that the apprehension, comprehension or understanding of the cultural aspects of (literary narrative) texts during EFL reading is not an all or nothing affair, but rather a question of degrees as well as increasing levels of complexity, accuracy and details. This conceptualization of comprehension based on levels or degrees of understanding distances itself from the focus on how much is remembered from a text. The review of the literature in the previous chapter has shown that this focus on accurate recall of textual content is pervasive in all the reviewed studies. As I argue in the methodology chapter (chapter 6), product and process are integrated in this model, therefore distancing this research from previous studies which focused solely on the *product* of reading in the form of accurate recall of all the idea units present in a text. By contrast, this model rests on a notion of understanding framed within a constructivist view of learning as a modification of what is already present (rather than as the acquisition of new knowledge on a *tabula rasa*). The notion of levels or degrees of comprehension allows me to

investigate the whole process of comprehension, i.e. both *during* and *after* reading, breaking with the polarity product-process (that I explore in chapter 6) until the process of reading is complete.

More specifically, this *Model of Cultural Understanding* is a six-stage model which attempts to describe the different ways in which EFL learners in this context approach cultural issues during reading. It is congruent with the theoretical perspectives that frame this study. In this sense, it is important to observe that this model acknowledges the multiple and varied factors (at the level of the individual, the context in which reading occurs, and the sociocultural context, including the historical and global context) which influence reading in a given culture, in particular the aspects identified as central in this theoretical framework (chapter 2): the perspective (insider, outsider, hybrid) through which cultural aspects are portrayed in a text and through which a reader enters a text; the crucial influence of a reader's native culture on reading (through the enactment of multiple and simultaneous social identifications in each reading encounter such as race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, socio-economic status, religion, sexual orientation, educational background, special capacities and others); and the flexibility of reader responses given this interplay of factors. On this basis, I suggest here that this *Model of Cultural Understanding* offers a solid framework for the exploration of the cultural dimension of reading in a foreign language, especially the stages through which the cultural aspects of a given text may be approached during EFL reading.

Underlying this model is a dynamic conception of culture as described in chapter 2, i.e. a view that emphasizes processes rather than facts, that distances itself from monolithic and static perspectives, and that stresses its nature as a social construction: "the objectives that are to be achieved in intercultural understanding involve processes rather than facts" (Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002: 27). In this sense, this model is designed to take account of the sociocultural dimension of reading as well as the readers' individualities. In other words, it is intended to capture the dynamic and procedural aspects of cultural understanding. For instance, this *Model of Cultural Understanding* conceptualizes cultural understanding in reading as a flexible trajectory along stages, which means that readers can move back and forth among levels at any point during the reading process.

The *Model of Cultural Understanding* that I designed for this thesis works in two ways. On the one hand, I shall argue in this chapter that it constitutes a theoretical advance over other

available models, and in this sense it could be seen as contributing to moving the field forward. On the other, I use it as a measure of analysis – something that I dwell upon in chapter 6. This allows me to take into account the readers’ different perspectives in the understanding of otherness, in particular insider, outsider and hybrid perspectives in the understanding of the cultural dimension of reading. One of its vantage points is that it explicitly attempts to capture the double angle of vision (us-them) through imagination, attributing importance to both aspects: the capacity of movement in and out of different perceptions, and the significant role of imagination in cultural understanding. I push the argument forward in this thesis and claim that in fact this *double* vision needs to be stretched to reach *multiple* perspectives, simply because the porous nature of the identities of the “we” or “they” does not allow for such a notion of clear-cut, homogenous, dichotomous categories. The point is that this *Model of Cultural Understanding* can in fact be thought of as a vehicle for the creation of a third space in cultural understanding, a space that foregrounds the fluid, the relative, the dynamic, and the unstable.

This possibility of exploring *multiple* perspectives means a rebuttal of the notion of culture as essence and its postulation as “negotiation” (Genetsch, 2007: 26). According to the author, cultures are not authentic and pure but mutable and inherently diverse. Cultures can be seen as “horizon” rather than limitation (Genetsch, 2007: 20). This concept of horizon becomes a metaphor that refers to the multiple perspectives to overcome binary differences. “A horizon is not only potentially infinite but also an endlessly productive spectrum of possibilities” (Genetsch, 2007: 203). The *Model of Cultural Understanding* allows for the emergence of multiple perspectives (from the point of view of readers) as well as for their exploration (from the point of view of myself as researcher in this study).

4.3. Antecedents of the model

This *Model of Cultural Understanding* makes sense as a conceptual, non-empirical model which is derived from what we know about what happens psychologically when people meet otherness and what we think *ought* to happen i.e. is desirable from a humanistic viewpoint when people meet otherness (such as perspective change for instance).

Other models exist in the literature. Some have been designed for the teaching and learning of language and culture in an integrated way, and are for the most part conceptual. Such is the

case of Seelye (1981, 1994), Crawford-Lange and Lange, (1984), Byram (1997), Byram and Morgan (1994), Kramsch (1993, 1998), and Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein and Colby (2003), all of which tend to prescribe what *ought* to happen. There exists another theoretical model, Bennett's (1993, 1998), intended to reflect what *does* happen in reality. It describes the stages people go through when confronted with otherness. Collectively, this body of work has stressed common or shared agreements in the literature (Deardorff, 2009) in relation to the following assumptions, to which this thesis adheres:

- a dynamic, fluid and heterogeneous view of culture, as opposed to classic conceptions as an accumulation of facts, something I have explored in chapter 2;
- attention beyond observable behaviours, involving attitudes, beliefs, skills, and value orientations;
- the interrelated nature and inseparability of language and culture (cf. Risager, 2006);
- a focus on interaction and communication in naturalistic settings (classroom settings less often);
- the integration of affective, behavioural and cognitive aspects of learning (attitudes, skill, and knowledge);
- a focus both on culture-specific aspects (i.e. those particular to a specific culture) and culture-general aspects (i.e. those generalizable and transferable aspects of culture);
- a focus on one's own culture as well as on other cultures (self-awareness of one's cultural parameters is as important as consciousness of other cultures);
- a reliance on the notion of difference on the basis of cultural similarities and contrasts;
- an emphasis on processes rather than facts (for instance, processes of observing, describing, analyzing, relating, interpreting, etc.);
- a recognition of the importance of empathy, perspective taking, and adaptability, stressing not only the individual or personal dimension (through identity issues) but also the relational facet;
- a central role attributed to language: "Language in this process plays a fascinating and complex double role: it is a medium for as well as shaper of culture" (Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein and Colby, 2003: 176). In Kramsch's (1998: 3) words, "language expresses cultural reality (...) language embodies cultural reality (...) language symbolizes cultural reality"; and fundamentally,
- a recognition of the difficulty and complexity involved in the field of culture learning.

Bennett's (1993, 1998, 2009) model, called Intercultural Development Model, conceptualizes intercultural competence as a developmental process in which affective, behavioural and cognitive factors interplay. At the heart of this model is the notion of cultural difference, and how it is perceived and interpreted. The model consists of six stages. The first three are ethnocentric (monocultural) and are referred to as denial, defense, and minimization. The last three are ethnorelative (intercultural) and are called acceptance, adaptation, and integration. Although this is a model intended to account for the intercultural experience in naturalistic settings, the tenets above, which this model stresses (Bennett, 2009), are pertinent to the *Model of Cultural Understanding during EFL reading* that I propose in this thesis. In addition, there are other areas of convergence, such as the recognition of the existence of *levels* in intercultural understanding (levels of understanding in my proposed model and stages of adaptation or adjustment in Bennett's), the distinction between upper-case Culture and lower-case culture, the concurrent drives toward unity and diversity in cultural understanding, the focus on stereotyping and generalizations, issues related to the relativity of perceptions and experience, and the emphasis on a *continuum* in the *process* reflected by the model (as opposed to present-absent stages).

Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein and Colby (2003: 178) claim that theirs is a "more detailed model of culture learning." The authors explicitly state that what is specific about this model is a distinction between culture-specific and culture-general characteristics which transverse its three layers, namely knowledge, behaviour, and attitudes. Notice, however, that others have already dwelled on this distinction social-individual, universal-particular, as I describe in the theoretical framework (chapter 2; see also Bennett, 2009). In their model, the authors identify:

- culture specific knowledge (little c target culture knowledge, big C target Culture knowledge, pragmatics, sociolinguistic competence) and culture general knowledge (cultural adjustment stages, culture shock, intercultural development, culture learning, cultural identity, cultural marginality);
- culture specific behaviour or target culture skills (little c culture or appropriate everyday behaviour, big C Culture or appropriate contextual behaviour) and culture general behaviour or intercultural skills (culture learning strategies, coping and stress management strategies, intercultural communicative competence,

- intercultural perspective-taking skills, cultural adaptability, transcultural competence); and
- culture specific attitudes (positive attitude toward the target culture and target culture persons) and culture general attitudes (positive attitude toward different cultures, toward culture learning, and ethnorelative attitude regarding cultural differences).

This model shares many of the specific features previously described in Bennett's model as well as the overall characteristics common to all related models. Although the *Model of Cultural Understanding* proposed in this thesis does not distinguish between culture specific vs. culture general orientations, this is nonetheless an interesting and potentially useful distinction. One of the perhaps insurmountable drawbacks in this respect, however, is that everything related to the specific dimension is intrinsically tied to factual cultural knowledge and information, and in this sense this comes as a contradiction in terms, given the overall principles which I listed before, and on which Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein and Colby's (2003) model supposedly rests.

Kramersch (1993: 210) proposed "a four-step approach to cross-cultural understanding." In addition to the underlying common guidelines which I listed before, there are other basic notions which the author clarifies, and which are useful to bring to the discussion. One is the concept of context. I have already touched upon it in chapter 2. What is interesting in Kramersch's (1993: 46) discussion is that "context should therefore be viewed not as a natural given, but as a social construct, the product of linguistic choices made by two or more individuals interacting through language." This active construction crucially depends on the processes of reception (interpretation) and production (enunciation, communication) of reality (cultural or other), which are in permanent interaction. Just as culture is viewed as dynamic, fluid and relational (involving an individual interacting with others), context is too. What is crucial in Kramersch's perspective are the perceptions that individuals have of themselves, of their own cultures, of others, and of others' cultures. This emphasis on perceptions foregrounds the fact that cultural understanding is a process centred not so much on the discovery of the factual and objective characteristics of another culture but rather on the exploration of how other cultures relate to one's own. In this process, the notion of difference, which I mentioned before and which I discussed in chapter 2, is fundamental. Given the foregoing, culture can be seen as a multifaceted reality involving different layers of perception

of oneself and others in relation to various subcultures such as gender, age, religion, race, education, work, etc.

At this point Kramersch remarks the difficulties ingrained in this concept of perception, because perceptions may end up being caught in misperceptions. Her solution resides in the notion of a “third perspective that would enable learners to take both an insider’s and an outsider’s view on C1 and C2” (Kramersch, 1993: 210). I have already discussed this notion of third space in chapter 2. It is perhaps useful to repeat at this juncture that “the culture that emerges through cross-cultural dialogue is of a different kind from either C1 or C2. (...) it [cultural understanding] appears at various levels of understanding at a much later date, from personal reflection and repeated attempts to bring together for oneself the various pieces of the cultural puzzle, and compare its emerging picture with that of others” (Kramersch, 1993: 232). It is important to note once again the emphasis on the process as well as on the notion of levels or degrees, which is something that I shall take up when I describe my *Model of Cultural Understanding*.

Using this notion of third perspective as a springboard, Kramersch’s four-stage approach consists of:

- 1) the reconstruction of the context of production and reception (of a text) within another culture (not one’s own), i.e. culture C2 (including the perception of self as well as of members of C2);
- 2) the construction (by the learners, or the individuals involved in communication) of their own contexts of reception. This involves relating an aspect of C2 with an aspect of C1 in context (including the learners’ own perceptions of self);
- 3) the examination of how individuals perceive their own cultures, and how these perceptions affect how they see other cultures and their members;
- 4) interaction and dialogue leading to possible change.

Central to this approach are shifts of perspective by all the participants involved, the need for critical distancing in the perception of reality, and the discovery of points of contact among cultures (what Kramersch calls cultural bridges), with the concomitant revelation of boundaries regarding the different subcultures (gender, age, etc.). In this process, Kramersch (1993: 226) highlights the inseparability between the universal (global) and the particular (local) that I discussed in chapter 2: “Cross-cultural communication seems to require both at the same

time: the universals can get their proper meaning (or weighting) only from the particular voice of the writer and the particular voice can be listened to and understood only through the universal.” The exploration of points of contact brings together the universal and the particular and contributes to the understanding of boundaries, where the focus of cultural understanding lays.

Another framework for the investigation of cultural understanding which is particularly relevant to this thesis has been advanced by Byram (1981, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1989a, 1989b, 1997), Byram and Morgan (1994), Alred, Byram, and Fleming (2003, 2006) and Byram and Fleming (2001). It is widely known as the Model of Intercultural Competence (Byram, 1997, 2009), which consists of four *savoirs* or dimensions of knowledge, skills and attitudes. The reason why this model is particularly relevant to this study is because it was conceived for foreign language education contexts. These *savoirs* are *savoir être* (e.g. attitudes of curiosity and inquisitiveness), *savoirs* (knowledge of different aspects of life in a certain society, such as work, education, traditions, etc.), *savoir comprendre* (involving the skill of interpreting and relating those *savoirs*), and *savoir apprendre/savoir faire* (involving the skills of discovery and interaction). Later a fifth *savoir* involving critical cultural awareness (*savoir s’engager*) was added. This last *savoir* is central to make foreign language teaching *educational* (chapter 1), is captured by the notion of education for intercultural citizenship (Byram, 2008; Osler and Starkey, 2005; Starkey, 2007) and takes account of the ideological and political dimension involved by necessity in foreign language teaching (Byram, 2001). Another important element that Byram and colleagues foreground is the *relational* aspect in cultural understanding, which Kramsch (1993, 1998), Bennett (1993, 2009) and others also highlight, and which has gained life in the figure of the intercultural speaker or intercultural mediator (Byram, 2009).

This body of work has been very influential from a theoretical and pedagogic perspective. Theoretically, through the Model of Intercultural Competence itself. Pedagogically, through the suggestion and description of relevant methodologies, materials, assessment options, etc. Pertinent to this thesis at this point are the discussions about issues of difference, stereotyping, bias, prejudice and perspective, which I have developed in chapter 2.

4.4. Model of Cultural Understanding during EFL reading: developments

This model constitutes the core of this thesis, both theoretically and methodologically. Theoretically, it provides a guiding rationale for this study. The list of common assumptions shared by all the models I have reviewed here (which I list at the beginning of this chapter) works as the theoretical underpinnings of this study. Methodologically, I have already pointed out the fact that I have used it as a measure of data analysis. Although overall there may be nothing new in this model, it is the special configuration of those shared assumptions as captured here that is insightful.

It seems necessary to introduce this model now. It may be represented schematically by the following chart, although the dynamic interaction and the interrelationship among all levels is an important factor that this chart fails to capture.

Model of Cultural Understanding during English as a foreign language reading

Level 0. Erratic perception or omission of cultural aspects.

Level 1. Perception/identification of cultural differences. Access to levels 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Level 2. Identification of own values and ideas. Identification of the cultural assumptions behind one's own culture (insider perspective).

Level 3. Perception of culture C2 from one's own frame of reference (C1) (outsider perspective).

Level 4. Perception of culture C2 from the frame of reference of members of culture C2 (insider perspective).

Level 5. Perception of culture C1 from the perspective of culture C2 (outsider perspective).

One feature which distinguishes this model from the others reviewed in this chapter is the fact that its focus is narrower or more specific. By this I mean that this model is originally intended to capture cultural understanding in *EFL* contexts in particular, and within it, in *EFL reading*. This contrasts with the origin of Bennett's model in the framework of face-to-face intercultural communication, Kramsch's rationale for language education in general and foreign language education in particular (though not restricted to English), and Byram's thoughts on foreign language education in the particular contextual scenario of the European Union and some other settings (such as the USA). In other words, each model has arisen from peculiar culture-specific conditions (historically, politically and socially tied to specific

settings) and has been intended to cater for specific and local needs. The *Model of Cultural Understanding* that I propose in this thesis suits the context of EFL reading in Argentina for the moment. Whether it can potentially be relevant to EFL reading in other parts of the world, or to other foreign language education settings in the country or elsewhere remains to be studied.

The specificity of this model to reading satisfies the needs of the uses of English in Argentina. I have already mentioned elsewhere that the possibilities of direct contact with the language in settings where English is spoken are scarce for learners in this context for a variety of reasons, mainly economic. The impact of globalization and the internationalization of English have made these direct contacts feasible in the first place in Argentina, particularly through technological developments. In this sense, this model may potentially be suitable to attend to these newer contexts of use of English in this country.

Of all the commonalities observed in the reviewed models, I would like to particularly highlight that this model acknowledges the multiple and varied factors (at the level of the individual, the context in which reading occurs, and the sociocultural context) which influence reading in a given culture, especially the aspects identified as central in the theoretical framework on which this thesis rests (chapter 2): the perspective (insider, outsider, hybrid) through which cultural aspects are portrayed in a text and through which a reader enters a text; the crucial influence of a reader's native culture on reading (through the enactment of multiple and simultaneous social identifications in each reading encounter such as race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, socio-economic status, religion, sexual orientation, educational background, special capacities and others); the flexibility of reader responses given this interplay of factors; the critical distancing that is necessary to approach otherness; and the processes of familiarization and de-familiarization involved in the process of approaching otherness.

I turn now to an explanation of each level in the *Model of Cultural Understanding*.

Level 0. Omission, total rejection, or total acceptance of cultural aspects.

In this level readers may fail to perceive cultural aspects, which leads to their omission; or they may perceive them erratically, either accepting or rejecting them.

There is an underlying theoretical tension here between a view of difference-blindness oriented toward universal values as opposed to the recognition and appreciation of difference in its own right (Genetsch, 2007). More profoundly, perhaps, a reference to the conception of the indeterminacy of meaning that I discussed in chapter 2 is in order at this point. The idea is that any interpretation is provisional because whoever interprets is prepared to know certain things and not others (Rosaldo, 1993). Clearly this philosophical dimension in cultural understanding, i.e. the existence of a horizon beyond which something always remains incomprehensible, underlies this first level in this model.

Another concept from cultural anthropology is useful for a description of what this level involves, namely that each culture is so unique that it is virtually impossible to compare one to another (Rosaldo, 1993). The reasoning is that no culture is superior or inferior, richer or poorer, bigger or smaller than any other. Theoretically, this thesis adheres to this conception, as well as to the complexity involved in the exploration of the cultural (from any discipline, not only EFL reading) as described in the theoretical framework (chapter 2). However, this acknowledgement of the impossibility to compare cultures in a truly deep way does not preclude the investigation of cultural understanding in this study. It is proposed here that this model may become a useful tool in this respect.

Assuming now that the investigation of cultural understanding *is* feasible despite limitations, let me bring to the foreground now a relevant concept which I have already developed in chapter 2, namely the notion of cultural visibility (Rosaldo, 1993). This is an important notion, in particular for this level in the model, because it contributes to the feasibility that some aspects of another culture become potentially noticeable (and therefore more or less likely to be noticed). In spite of the fact that all the ways of perceiving and organizing reality are culture specific, and that no aspect of life is more or less cultural than another, in all cases, there are always visible and invisible elements in all cultures (Erez and Gati, 2004; Rosaldo, 1993). In practical terms, this means that certain human phenomena may appear to be more susceptible of cultural analysis than others. From this perspective, this level in the model constitutes an attempt to capture the most visible elements of a certain culture (in this study, the cultures in question in the prompt texts; see chapter 6 on methodology for details). At the same time, the philosophical dimension in cultural understanding that I mentioned before points to the inherent difficulty of this level in this model (or any other conceptualization, element, model or notion for that matter) to really capture the essence of any culture at all.

Level 1. Perception/identification of cultural differences.

This level involves the perception of cultural differences, with the identification of the different, exciting, attractive, etc. elements of a given culture. This level is accessed through the identification of key vocabulary. The perception of cultural differences through comparison, confrontation and contrast works as a bridge for the other stages in the model (levels 2, 3, 4, and 5).

The connection between key vocabulary and culture is close (Byram, forthcoming; Goddard and Wierzbicka, 1994; Kramsch, 2007; Lehrer, 1974; Salzmann, 1993; Sapir, 1963; Sercu, 2001; Whorf, 1956; Wierzbicka, 1986, 1992). This link constitutes one rationale for levels 0-1 in this model because “some key words are particularly heavily connoted and reveal shared meanings of another society (...) The acquisition of these words and their connotations is not simply a cognitive process but one which can threaten the affective attachment to the world one knows” (Alred and Byram, 2002: 342). In addition, the role of vocabulary in the perception, storing, recall and comprehension of information has also been shown to be crucial (Carmichael, Hogan, and Walter, 1932; Clarke et al., 1984; Loftus, 1979).

Atkinson (1999: 641) points out the “basic human urge to categorize those in some ways different from oneself as radically, irreducibly other.” Similarly, Byram (1997, 2001), Byram, Gribkova and Starkey (2002), Palfreyman (2005), Ridgeway (2006: 12) and others agree that “to define self and other in order to act, actors first must develop a way of categorizing the other on the basis of comparison and contrast – that is, as different from or similar to known, socially predictable objects such as the self.” As a first layer of understanding, i.e. levels 0 and 1 in this *Model of Cultural Understanding*, the three prompt texts used in this study included multiple instances where these readers would be able to demarcate their selves in this way (see Appendix I).

The focus on difference is useful in this level because it contributes to making cultures particularly visible to external observers. At the same time, it is problematic because such differences are not absolute but relative to the cultural practices of the observers themselves. The decision to regard someone as different is always “a positioning or an interpretation” (Genetsch, 2007: x). In other words, part of the difficulty in cultural understanding is that the Other can be “represented in ways that could suggest difference as well as sameness, depending on who did the defining and for what purposes” (Genetsch,

2007: 16). This means that “the Other can never be authentically represented but only translated” (Genetsch, 2007: 19). Put shortly, ultimately, at some point or another, the perception or understanding of the Other is always problematic.

Concurrently, this notion of difference brings us back to the interrelationship and the tension between the forces of familiarity and unfamiliarity in cultural understanding which I discussed in chapter 2. Social descriptions about cultures distant from both the writer and the reader require a relative emphasis on familiarization so that they will reveal themselves as clearly distinct in their differences but still recognizable through their resemblances. This level in this *Model of Cultural Understanding* captures both similarities and contrasts, in particular in levels 0 and 1, through processes of familiarization and de-familiarization as described in chapter 2.

Level 2. Identification of own values and ideas. Identification of the cultural assumptions behind one's own culture.

Comprehending culture C1 from an insider perspective means visualizing one's behaviours, values, ideas, etc. in the light of one's cultural parameters. Given its excessive familiarity, observing one's cultural reality is not easy. The access to this level requires guidance (e.g. the teacher's) as in general, access is accompanied by ethnocentric positions and the lack of cultural sensibility.

There is interest in the discovery of alternative perspectives in the interpretation of familiar and unfamiliar phenomena within one's cultural practices as well as disposition to question the values and assumptions within those practices. Reflecting on one's culture reveals one's attitudes toward it. In this process, one distances him/herself from the familiar, and this distance makes the familiar look different, strange, unfamiliar. In this process, the identification of the stereotypes about one's culture leads to awareness of oneself and one's cultural reality.

This level is important because self-understanding appears to be inevitably linked to understanding otherness (Byram and Morgan, 1994; Byram, 1989 a, b). In this way, the role of the reader acquires a philosophical dimension in cultural understanding as different

levels of comprehension reflect the degree of empathy as well as the broadening of the reader's mental schemata after incorporating what is different.

Theoretically, this level rejects the possibility of establishing pure or authentic identities (one's own as well as those of others). When an identity is defined through a process of abstracting features (language, traditions, some stereotypical behaviour), there is a tendency to separate related practices from the history of mixing in which they were formed and to prescriptively present their use as absolute. By contrast, this level represents heterodox ways of speaking a language, enacting cultural performances or interpreting traditions. In this view, "identity is not an essence but a positioning" (Genetsch, 2007: 15; García Canclini, 2003). In other words, at this level individuals critically ask themselves who they are, who that Other is against whom their own identity is sketched and how that otherness, that is, difference, is evaluated. In chapter 6 I shall explain in detail how this theoretical underpinning is taken care of in the research design as a whole. It may suffice to say at this point that both the prompt texts as well as all the data collection instruments encouraged this critical reflection in the participants in this study. This element of criticality and reflexivity in relation to oneself and the Other permeates the overall research design in this thesis as I shall show in chapter 6.

One's own process of socialization generates knowledge about social groups and the different subcultures in the country where one lives. This process facilitates awareness regarding how one acquires one's individual and social identities. I have already discussed issues of identity in chapter 2, and I shall not repeat myself here. The interesting thing that this model highlights in this respect is that these identities are always defined "in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us" (Kamboureli, 2000: 32-3). This dialogue is the starting point in relation to understanding oneself and understanding otherness. Kamboureli (2000: 34) states that identity is negotiated "through dialogue, partly overt, partly internal, with others" and in this sense it coexists with the communal and the social. It might be argued that in this dialogism, the individual in communion with the others ultimately reaches a new, shared horizon.

Level 3. Perception of culture C2 from one's own frame of reference (C1).

This level involves comprehending culture C2 from an outsider perspective and requires awareness of how the behaviours, values and ideas of others are interpreted from the perspective of one's cultural frame of reference, i.e. as an observer.

Although there exists factual knowledge about culture C2 (social, historical, geographical, political, etc.) as well as about its norms of social interaction, the comprehension of culture C2 from an outsider perspective tends to be stereotyped. Theoretically, the notion of stereotype is relevant and important because the ideological construction of otherness is produced when what is different (in racial, cultural, historical or other terms) is perceived as rigid, static, degenerate and inordinate (Bhabha, 1994). Initially, the identification of stereotypes constitutes one way of classifying culture C2 in manageable categories (Widdowson, personal communication, 1995), is the first step toward the appreciation of the unknown, and makes access to levels 4 and 5 possible. However, the mere accumulation of stereotypes helps comprehend another culture only superficially, analyzing and explaining from the outside, i.e. as an observer.

Stereotyped visions are distinct from genuine cultural understanding because in order for it to take place, it is essential to have attitudes of curiosity, openness, and willingness to suspend disbelief and value judgments with regard to other people's beliefs and behaviours (Byram, 1997; Byram and Morgan, 1994; Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002; Mountford and Wadham-Smith, 2000). There must also exist willingness to approach the unfamiliar, recognizing the importance of understanding the manifestations of a different culture in the context in which they are framed (Shah, 2004). At this level, this does not happen, and the approach is basically stereotyped.

Level 4. Perception of culture C2 from the frame of reference of members of culture C2.

This stage involves the comprehension of culture C2 from an insider perspective. How members of another culture behave is interpreted in the light of their own cultural norms.

Awareness about how others behave according to their own cultural norms is partly gained through information about the private world of the Other. The perceptions that the members of another culture have of themselves make the access to their cultural codes possible, even though they influence the selection of content and the perspective adopted by outsiders.

Different areas can be analyzed, in particular those directly related to the experiences of the members of a given culture (such as the home, work, the community, food, dress, celebrations and festivities, traditions, etc.). There exists the capacity to describe the phenomena of contemporary life in this culture and explain the connotations and semantic fields of key words revealing cultural schemata - always from an insider perspective. However, this level amounts to more than information in these areas, adding layers of description and interpretation with the aim of leading to the identification of the value systems, social norms, and expectations of the members of culture C2.

Level 5. Perception of culture C1 from the perspective of culture C2.

This means apprehending culture C1 from an outsider perspective. This level involves awareness of how one's own behaviour is seen through the eyes of the members of other cultures.

The capacity to recognize and articulate the difficulties found in the process of perceiving a culture from inside (level 4) is present here. Also, there is the capacity to accept that one's cultural perspectives and one's values and expectations influence one's visions. The decentralization in relation to one's cultural parameters allows for awareness about their cultural relativity. One is able to explore one's reactions to one's behaviours as well as the behaviours of others. It is possible to place oneself in the shoes of the Other through imagination. This level matches Kramsch's "third perspective" (Kramsch 1993: 210), which permits the adoption of insider, outsider and hybrid perspectives in the apprehension of C1 and C2.

A critical and reflexive attitude is present. Facts are not accepted without critical analysis about their validity. One is able to go beyond description, appreciating diversity and exploring different, alternative interpretations in the representation of another culture.

What is specific about one's culture is used to explain aspects of the other culture. One can critically observe one's culture and one's society, evaluating them from the perspective of culture C2, which guarantees the critical distancing and the decentralization of one's beliefs. Seeing one's cultural norms through the eyes of an outsider facilitates the understanding of how an outsider might react to these norms. This level is crucial since there cannot possibly be negotiation of shared meanings or understanding of the Other's world if the relationship

between one's views and those of others is not captured. The validity of culture C2 is acknowledged and appreciated in its own terms.

Reaching this level is hard. The profound strife is that this recognition of the Other is always also the failure to know that Other (García Canclini, 2003). I have already discussed in chapter 2 the philosophical notion of the existence of a horizon beyond which there is always something that remains opaque, unapproachable, obscure. Kamboureli (2000: 130) expresses: "Failure to know the Other means failure to accommodate existing stereotypes and failure to produce new ones. It means failure to assimilate the Other into cultural and political discourses that appropriate its differences. It also means failure to accept universal principles in good faith, and failure to see the Other as a fully knowable entity." This caveat echoes the discussion in chapter 2 regarding the existence of a horizon, or a threshold, in the understanding of what is different.

4.5. The Model of Cultural Understanding in data analysis

This previous section has described this *Model of Cultural Understanding* and it has presented its theoretical importance. I shall now turn to a brief description of how I have used this model as a measure of data analysis (for more details, see chapter 6).

I started by assigning at least two different levels to each reading response and visual representation task. First, a choice exclusively between level 0 or 1. These levels were critical, because they involved the perception, or lack of perception, of cultural elements (cultural details, similarities, differences, always on the basis of the reader's own culture). The perception of the different, exciting, and attractive elements of a given culture was possible through the identification of key vocabulary and worked as a bridge for the other stages (2, 3, 4, and 5) in the model.

Second, I allocated responses to one of levels 2, 3, 4, 5. In working toward this aim, what I discovered was that participants in fact slipped backwards and forwards along the continuum of this model, not only among the written texts they had produced but also at different points in the same text (see chapters 8 and 9 with findings). In other words, exploring where these readers were on the continuum of this model revealed their dynamic and fluid approach in their apprehension of the cultural in the prompt texts used in this study.

As a theoretical representation of levels of understanding, I have used this model to analyze and explain the collected data (categorizing, showing connections within the data, etc.) (chapter 7). I have also used it to show the ways in which it has been successful in handling the data, specifically the reading response and the visual representation tasks. In this process, the flaws that this model has in this respect have also emerged, and this is something that I shall come back to in chapters 8 and 9 with findings.

4.6. Some clarifications

Some clarifications are in order at this point. The most important one is that models “can also represent reality in a schematized and simplified way” (Byram, 2009: 325). That is, no model spells everything out, and because of this, the model proposed in this thesis necessarily becomes a simplification too. In addition, also following Byram (2009), this model works as a descriptive tool developed on the basis of conceptual analysis. In contrast to Byram’s (2009) model of the intercultural speaker (framed within a broader model of intercultural communicative competence), however, there is nothing prescriptive in my proposed model. In other words, it does not intend to frame its stages as teaching objectives. Another similarity with Byram is that this model does not specify the interrelationships among its levels. It only stresses that these interconnections exist. I describe such interrelationships as they are observable in the collected data in chapter 7 with the data analysis as well as in chapters 8 and 9 with findings.

Finally, as I have mentioned previously in this chapter, I have used this model as a measure of analysis, or in Byram’s (2009: 326) words, “analytically, to determine the presence or absence of subcompetences, and hence to predict the success or failure of individuals in intercultural interaction.” Although I do not specify competences or subcompetences in my model, and recalling that this model is about cultural understanding in EFL reading rather than about intercultural interaction, there is an important underlying idea here, which is that this model reflects the process of readers toward their relative “success” in cultural understanding in this setting. Notice the inverted commas in the word “success,” because framed as it is in sociocultural and constructivist conceptions of foreign language reading, this study does not accompany the notion that success or failure in reading are tenable notions in the first place (for more details see chapter 2). Furthermore, that this model could potentially be used in this way, i.e. to predict, does not mean that this study is

intended in this way. The exploratory, interpretive nature of this study has been sufficiently emphasized already.

4.7. Conclusion

In this chapter I have described the *Model of Cultural Understanding* especially designed for this thesis. I have briefly reviewed other relevant models existing in the literature, and I have drawn useful points of contact and departure in relation to this proposed model. I have also emphasized the common theoretical assumptions behind all of these models, on which this thesis rests.

After the description of the theoretical foundations of this thesis in chapter 2, the review of the literature in chapter 3 and the description of the *Model of Cultural Understanding* in this chapter, the way has been paved to begin with the specifics of this study. The following chapter shall address issues concerning the materials used in this investigation while chapter 6 shall include a detailed presentation of the methodology.

CHAPTER 5

MATERIALS: SELECTION AND DESCRIPTION

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The selected texts

Motivation for the choice of materials

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Choice of theme

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Insider, outsider and hybrid perspectives in the portrayal of otherness

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A limitation

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Fragment from *Mi planta de naranja-lima*

Fragment from *Cat's Eye*

Fragment from *Desert Wife*

CHAPTER 5

MATERIALS: SELECTION AND DESCRIPTION

5.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the process of selection of the materials¹ used in this study, namely the texts that served as prompts for the investigation of the participants' cultural understanding. It is organized as follows. First, I include a rationale for the use of literary narrative texts in this study and explain why my text selection constitutes itself in one of its distinguishing features. Then I explore some issues involved in selection and describe my decision-making process in this respect. I specifically consider the following aspects: choice of theme; text characteristics; prior knowledge; insider, outsider and hybrid perspectives in the portrayal of otherness; perspective and cultural understanding; and surprise, novelty or abnormality of textual content. I conclude with an overview of each selected fragment. I offer a comprehensive textual analysis of each fragment in Appendix I, where I present some of the key aspects in relation to the dominant reading, basically cultural issues, that I expected from the participants in this study. These analyses also involve a consideration of the potential comprehension difficulties posed by the fragments, from the point of view of the cultural.

A caveat is order from the beginning. Everything that I say about the analysis of the selected texts in this thesis, and in particular in this chapter and in Appendix I, needs to be understood within the debate about where meaning resides (discussed in chapter 2), and more specifically, about where meaning resides in literary reading. Allington and Swann (2009: 219) say that in literary criticism, "a reader –'the reader'- has been at the heart of 20th century criticism, and is key to its conception of meaning." In this sense, the underlying implication in this chapter that the notion of dominant reading or preferred interpretation can exist in the abstract, or in a cultural vacuum, is misleading. The reason here may be that some literary critics (including myself as I fulfilled this role in this chapter in my analyses of the selected fragments) sometimes "ignore the conditions of literature's material production and consumption, because the reader in whose encounters

¹ The following terms are used interchangeably in this thesis to refer to these materials: texts, prompt texts, text selections, fragments. Even though they are selections from novels, the fact that they are self-contained permits the reference to "texts" for convenience.

those critics locate meaning has no ‘specific cultural situation’ – and indeed, no particular identity” (Allington and Swann, 2009: 220). By contrast, in chapters 8 and 9 with findings, and in chapter 10 with the in-depth analysis, I shall bring this ‘specific cultural situation’ to the foreground, i.e. one that includes “not only the politically and socially dominant in a state or power bloc, but also the shifting and overlapping dominance of micro cultures on regional, local, personal and even textual levels” (Jeffries, 2001: 341).

5.2. The selected texts²

Three literary narrative texts on a common theme (Christmas celebrations) were used. Their cultural content is presented through different perspectives, namely the eyes of insiders or outsiders (including hybrid perspectives) to the culture in question. One text, written in Spanish, presents a relatively close (familiar) cultural reality to the participants, in a Brazilian context, with an insider perspective (i.e., with a narrator who participates in the celebration described and is a member of the culture the text represents) (selection from *Mi planta de naranja-lima*, Vasconcelos, 1971: 39-43)³. Another text, written in English, portrays a different cultural reality from the participants’, in a Canadian-American context, with an insider perspective (fragment from *Cat’s Eye*, Atwood, 1998: 137-140). The third text, also in English, presents a totally distant cultural reality as it describes one Christmas celebration in a Native American context with an outsider perspective, i.e., with a narrator who participates in the celebration described but is not a member of the culture represented in the text (fragment from *Desert Wife*, Faunce, 1961: 173-181).

The fragment from *Mi planta de naranja-lima* is set in Brazil and portrays the Christmas celebration of a low class family narrated from the insider perspective of Zezé, one of the children in the family. Many typical elements of a Brazilian Christmas celebration are present, such as the mention of midnight mass, church bells and fireworks. Zezé describes the bewilderment of the youngest members of the family, disappointed because, unlike those of the rich families in town, they are not to receive Christmas presents. The

² I wish to bring the attention once again to the caveats surrounding the notions of ‘culture’ (in the singular, see discussion in chapter 2) and ‘reader’ (as pointed out by Allington and Swann, 2009, in the previous section in this chapter).

³ The fragment is, in fact, a translation from Portuguese. Vasconcelos, J. M. de (1968). *Meu Pé de Laranja Lima*. São Paulo, Edicoes Melhoramentos.

perception of such inequality leads the characters to question some ideas inherent in Christianity such as the belief in the fairness of Jesus Child.

The fragment from *Cat's Eye* is set in a Canadian-American context. The scene introduces a family in the West, particularly in Canada, celebrating Christmas. There is a visitor who has joined them, a biology student from India called Banerji. The culture matrix is complex here as Mr. Banerji, a student of the narrator's father, is a guest in this celebration. Both cultures, the Canadian-American and the Indian, conflux and mingle through the eyes of Elaine, the professor's daughter and narrator. The typical elements of a Canadian-American Christmas celebration are present, such as the turkey, the abundance of food, the snow, the snowmen and religion. The reader notices cultural tension: the visitor has been placed in a context where he does not understand the significance of the reunion and can only fully interact in conversation when he and his professor, the head of the family, talk about biology and science and use scientific language. Interestingly, this whole tension is only perceived through the eyes of the child of the family who narrates the story, and the reader is never sure whether the Indian visitor ever felt anything like that at all.

The fragment from *Desert Wife* is set in the context of an Indian reservation in the United States. It describes a Christmas celebration in a Native American context, presented to the reader through the eyes of the narrator, Hilda, and her partner, Ken. Hilda and Ken are Americans who work in the place and introduce the idea of Christmas to the natives. The Navajo and the American culture mingle in the celebration. The typical elements of an American Christmas celebration are missing. The narrator is confronted by the different cultural codes of the Navajos, which motivate Hilda's nostalgia and homesickness with regard to her native soil.

5.3. Motivation for the choice of materials

Several reasons motivated the use of literary narrative texts in this study as a means of investigating the main issue of this thesis, i.e. the exploration of these participants' cultural understanding in a natural reading context. Some reasons were pragmatic, others theoretical. I begin with the pragmatic.

First, the syllabus in the subject which frames this study, English Language II, is literature-based and has an exclusive focus on narratives. The writing of anecdotes is a course requirement. All participants had already taken and passed this course before data collection.

Second, participants were well accustomed to reading and responding to literary narrative texts in all the Language and Literature subjects (including this subject) throughout the two five-year programs (Teaching and Translating). Both programs include several obligatory literature courses (Argentine, English, American and several other literatures). Those enrolled in the translation program had literary translation courses as well. On this basis, it is possible to argue that the need for literary competence would not pose a threat to their cultural understanding of the fragments. However, although these students had a background in reading literary texts, particularly in the narrative genre, throughout their schooling and undergraduate education, it is also a fact that the analysis tends to be more oriented toward the linguistic and the literary rather than the cultural.

Third, the belief, both popular and academic, about the preference of students for the narrative as well as about the motivating power of stories seems convincing, at least intuitively (Kamberelis and Bovino, 1999).

Fourth, more theoretically oriented, because the prompt texts were narrative, I anticipated that the required tasks (reading response task in writing and visual representation) would be heavily oriented toward the narrative. It is therefore important to point out that many L2 learners already possess the relevant pre-requisites for the narrative task, or in other words, they possess the rhetorical schema of the short story as well as the capacity to use it (Paris and Paris, 2003; Singer and Donlan, 1994; Strömquist and Day, 1993). In particular, adults have the pre-requisites for the production of short stories and only need to acquire a small portion of the foreign language to be able to apply the strategies that they already have. Considering that these participants were highly proficient in English, I expected that they would be equipped with these pre-requisites. This background allowed control over the effect of the rhetorical text structure to focus the attention on content schemata, in particular its cultural dimension, which is the aim of this study.

Fifth, the narrative genre is close to our daily experiences in contextually specific situations (Graesser et al., 1994). Both narratives and daily experiences involve people performing actions to achieve their aims, the existence of obstacles to these objectives, emotional reactions to events, strong motivations and powerful feelings (Bruner, 1986). The implication is that the inference mechanisms and the knowledge structures about the world that appear during the comprehension of daily experiences will also probably appear during narrative understanding (Graesser et al., 1994) and vice versa. Given the foregoing, there existed no reason to suppose that these participants would leave aside these interpretative mechanisms that are so frequent in daily life during their reading of the narrative texts used in this study. Conversely, what can be learned from their interpretation of literary narratives may throw light on how they might interpret everyday narratives. This is something that might be worth exploring in the future.

On the basis of this argument, i.e. that the narrative socialization through the oral discourse of our daily lives is significant (Paris and Paris, 2003), many researchers have suggested that narrative genres are easier to learn and more natural than informative genres (Kamberelis and Bovino, 1999) and that they are fundamental to beginning reading (Paris and Paris, 2003). Besides, in general, formal education privileges the narrative genre, perhaps because the interpersonal experience that children and adolescents bring to school rests on their capacity to organize and communicate their experience through narration (Bruner, 2002), all of which contributes to its familiarity (Byrnes, 2008; Duke, 2000; Kamberelis and Bovino, 1999). This acquaintance with the genre allowed the assumption that potential difficulties related to the specific genre would be rare or, put differently, that I would be able to focus on the participants' cultural understanding within the genre.

Sixth, literary texts allow readers to bring to the surface the feelings and thoughts that guide the values and beliefs of their life styles and encourage awareness of them (Ooka Pang, Colvin, Tran, and Barba, 1998). The structural elements of stories and their organization are related to their functioning in a certain culture. As Bruner (2002) explains, stories transform individual experience in collective experience and allow the reading of the minds of others by facilitating access to the intentions and mental states of characters. This is why stories cultivate personal and interpersonal understanding through the exploration of what motivates characters, how different characters interact, and how their objectives and ways of reaching them conflict, for instance (Kamberelis and Bovino,

1999). Narrative genres model their messages so as to express inferences about human beliefs, attitudes, values, motivations and objectives (Kamberelis and Bovino, 1999). Narratives constitute an exemplary mode of understanding (Gallie, 1964) as well as a cognitive tool (Hexter, 1971) by emphasizing retrospective intelligibility through the demonstration of how later events were conditioned, caused or facilitated by previous ones.

Seventh, stories are always told from a particular perspective or standpoint, which allows for cultural understanding because the uncovering of a certain perspective simultaneously reveals another one (Bruner, 2002). Narratives allow readers to become aware of alternative perspectives and to de-centre their own thinking by placing themselves in somebody else's shoes and therefore to understand the reality of this Other. In this sense, narratives are powerful because they help readers define themselves, build bridges toward others by offering contrasts with different perspectives (Boyle and Peregoy, 1998; Joseph, 2005) and understand different views of reality (Burwitz Melzer, 2001). The cultural information present in almost all the narrative elements facilitates access to information rich in details (Harris, 1999; Yakota, 1998), which give life to a short story and offer readers a window on the life of the culture they are reading about (Eliggi and Germani, 2005; Marianne, 2007; Yakota, 1998). Literature provides "this imaginative leap that will enable learners to imagine cultures different from their own" (Kramsch, 1995: 85) and can therefore "be used to develop an understanding of otherness" (Burwitz Melzer, 2001: 29; Matos, 2005). Cultural details appear in the world models presented, in what characters do and say, in the problems that take place and the suggested solutions. Following Bruner (2002: 31), "narration is constitutive of cultural life." Stories show cultural patterns as they delineate what is expected of the members of a given culture, but they also show the transgression of the norm and thus make both memorable: the norm and the deviation. In this respect, the argument here is that the narrative genre allows for the openness of mind that is necessary for cultural understanding to take place.

Closely connected with the foregoing, Carter (2010: 116) refers to "the primary authenticity of literary texts and of the fact that more imaginative and representational uses of language could be embedded alongside more referentially utilitarian output." This authenticity contributes to the high ecological validity of this study reported in this thesis because "narratives enable an investigation of contextualized language use" (Van Hell, Bosman, Wiggers and Stoit, 2003: 299). Furthermore, Marianne (2007) carried out a

comparative analysis of racism in two versions of *The Clay*, namely the original version and a modified, simplified version. Ten high-school ESL students in a city in New Zealand intensively studied both versions. On the basis of classroom discourse data, findings showed that students were unable to perceive the themes of racism and prejudice in the modified version. In this sense, Marianne (2007) offers additional support for the use of authentic (unmodified) literary narratives in this thesis. By contrast, the literature review in chapter 3 has revealed the prevalent use of short, artificial, experimentally manipulated texts in most studies. As I have mentioned in chapter 3, this authenticity of the literary materials used here becomes one of the distinguishing features of this study.

It is interesting to note that what I am arguing for here, i.e. the advantages of literature for the development of an understanding of otherness, has been advocated by scholars from other disciplines. For instance, in psychology, Allport, in a discussion of prejudice (see chapter 2), argues that one of the methods that may be effective in the treatment of prejudice is the “method of vicarious experience” (Allport, 1954: 523), which involves exposing individuals to works of literature in order to foster the identification with members of minority exogroups. According to the author, literary fiction is a particularly good option in intercultural programs.

Finally, what the foregoing means, too, is that narratives are particularly good vehicles for making the strange familiar. This process of becoming familiar with the different, the peculiar, the exotic, is necessary for cultural understanding to take place (see chapter 4 about the *Model of Cultural Understanding*). Narratives offer the challenge of finding new problems, i.e. they show readers a reality that they already know, but with a strangeness that makes them see what used to be familiar through new eyes (Moreiras, 1991). Something different from what the reader expects always happens. Narratives allow for new ways of solving problems and looking at reality. This requires imagination, something that the narrative genre fosters, in particular in children’s and youth’s literature in which the images that accompany the texts are significant (Arizpe, 2001; Pope Edwards and Mayo Willis, 2000). The integration of textual and visual information is related to the comprehension, integration, and appreciation of reading material (Pope Edwards and Mayo Willis, 2000; Sadoski and Paivio, 2004) and contributes to the process of strangeness in which what happens challenges what readers expect. It is this opportunity of openness to other alternatives, to other possibilities, which makes cultural understanding possible.

5.4. Text selection: distinguishing feature of this study

The use of natural, authentic texts (i.e. not experimentally modified) is one of the distinguishing features of this study. Precisely because of this, the prompt texts in this thesis are considerably longer when compared to those used in other studies. The review of the literature in chapter 3 has revealed that in all cases the prompt materials used in different studies were extremely short (for instance, between two hundred and fifty and five hundred words, between ten and forty lines, with only one case in which a one-page text was used). In this thesis the selected texts are between one and three pages long. This length issue is consistent with the fact that this study is about cultural understanding in naturally occurring reading. Put differently, the purpose is to investigate what impact cultural difference has on general comprehension, more specifically how readers deal with cultural issues within their process of reading a natural text. The line of thought here is that readers, unless their purposes are tied to the search for specific information, are generally involved in the reading of longer materials, even more so in the case of literature. Also, given the argument above, experimentally modifying and shortening the texts to pinpoint the cultural aspects I was interested in was judged to be inappropriate.

In addition, the fact that unmodified texts in naturally occurring reading are used here distances this study from others also interested in cultural understanding. I am thinking about studies investigating intercultural experience through study abroad. In these studies, the prompt texts are called incidents or cultural incidents (Cohen et al., 2003; Paige et al., 2002, 2006; Paige, 2009, personal communication; Petri, 1995; Steglitz, 1993). They are different from my texts in this thesis in that these cultural incidents present an interaction between two or more interlocutors (a dialogue in written form) where something has gone wrong. The participants in such studies are required to explain what has gone wrong and why. These incidents are a different phenomenon from my interest in how people understand text which is culturally different because they focus upon pre-conceived specific cultural aspects. Therefore, the notion of incident as an exemplification of how people read literary narrative texts was deemed to be inadequate.

5.5. Choice of theme

Choosing the theme of the prompt texts was a problem. Although the theme is a crucial aspect related to comprehension, it is more dependent on the readers' prior knowledge and their reasoning capacity (Singer and Donlan, 1994) and more likely to be affected by their individual experience and cultural baggage (Oller, 1995) than any other aspect of the narrative structure. In general, the typical technique to generate the use of specific content schemata is through the selection of different themes (Anderson, 2004). Here the texts selected had a common theme, Christmas, with different perspectives. Globally speaking, then, the content schema was shared by all prompt texts. Another reason for the choice of a common theme was that this would activate certain relevant concepts in memory (Mannes, 1994). At the same time, however, precisely because the participants read more than one text that substantiated the same schema, they might intrude (in the reading response and visual representation tasks) information about Christmas derived from their general script about the celebration or from the previously read fragments (Bower, Black and Turner, 1994). Finally, I chose the area of celebrations and rituals, in particular Christmas, because being a cultural event in itself, it guaranteed the presence of both implicit and explicit cultural elements.

The choice of the text in Spanish was further complicated by an array of additional requirements, none of them compromising its cultural familiarity: this text needed to include some religious component, which is typical of a Christmas celebration in Argentina; it had to offer some difficulty so as to avoid excessive transparency; and it had to include an adequate number (not excessive) of prediction-fostering elements for the same reason. A text without difficulties, i.e. with total stability and high predictability, was not desirable or possible, as no text can explicitly mention all connections (De Beaugrande, 1981). I shall provide more details in the analysis of this fragment at the end of this chapter as well as in Appendix I.

5.6. Text characteristics

Considering that a well-organized narrative structure (with patterns such as problem-solution, cause-effect, etc.) facilitates recall (Bower, Black, and Turner, 1994; Oller, 1995), the key element in the selection of the texts was the quality of their structure (the presence of clearly delineated characters, a definite context, a clear theme, clear narrative episodes,

resolution, etc.). Another equally important characteristic was the presence of elements that make a text less abstract and stimulate cognitive interest (such as examples, imagery, descriptions, analogies, comparisons, emotion, metaphors, vivid vocabulary, contextual information, etc.).

I anticipated that the structure of the selected texts would help participants direct their attention to relevant textual information and activate searches in memory, with the selective activation of their prior knowledge, either partially or totally – although there of course exist individual differences in the readers' capacity of activating such knowledge (Allen et al., 1994; Allington, 1994).

The concerns regarding perspective mentioned before led to a consideration of other issues involved in text selection, such as length, style, details of the rhetorical structure, linguistic transparency and linguistic complexity, among others. It is possible to affirm that the three texts are complex because of different reasons and that all participants were helped by different aspects of the fragments such as the outsider perspective in *Desert Wife*, or Elaine's outsider perspective with respect to Banerji's culture in *Cat's Eye*, as way of example. The point nevertheless is that no researcher can keep all factors identical ever, no matter which texts are chosen, especially when natural, unmodified, authentic texts are used as in this thesis (see the following chapter for further discussion regarding the use of experimentally unmodified texts).

5.7. Prior knowledge

The selected texts included information that the participants would be able to relate to or contrast with their prior knowledge and their own experiences in some way. Such potential link with their prior knowledge was of utmost importance as it constituted itself as the point of entrance to the texts. In the case of *Mi planta de naranja-lima*, these elements pervaded the text and involved the references to food, light, sadness, presents, poverty, etc. The text included explicit contrasts, with which participants could relate from any perspective, such as rich families – poor families; abundance of food – lack/scarcity of food; good – evil; happiness – sadness; fireworks – silence, loneliness; presents – lack of presents. These contrasts remind us of the importance of the notions of difference and cultural visibility in cultural understanding discussed in chapter 2. In addition, the prevalence of

binary divisions or dichotomies in this text meant that participants would be able to respond to these oppositions through their own perspectives, and in so doing they would be creating their own hybrid third spaces in the understanding of otherness (also discussed in chapter 2).

In the text about the Canadian-American celebration, the recurrent contrasts between the American and the Indian cultures in different areas of everyday life meant that participants might be able to find their own connections, from the point of view of their own cultures, during reading. Again the notions of difference, visibility, third space and hybridity operate here because the perspectives portrayed in the text regarding the American and Indian cultures would necessarily be mediated by the participants.’ Some of the areas of divergence between both cultures, as visualized by the narrator, Elaine, included Nature (fooling with Nature, square tomatoes, skinless cats), the weather (snow), food and eating habits (turkey, slicing the turkey, cranberry juice, smashed potatoes, Jello salad) and Christmas celebration habits (gathering at the table, slicing the turkey, appropriateness of the topics of conversation), among many others. The culture matrix in this fragment was clearly complex. I shall say more about this in the analysis of this fragment in Appendix I.

Finally, along similar lines, the Navajos text portrayed the following areas of dichotomy, more or less explicitly, which participants might relate to: Indian reservation – civilization; wild life reservation – people from the town; aboriginal reservation – society / white people; communal – small celebration; the religious – the pagan; gender roles in family life and in the community; eating habits; trading habits; cooking habits, etc.

Other possible points of contact, or commonalities with the participants’ lives, in all three texts, could be the probably universal feeling of not belonging, or alienation, that individuals are likely to experience at some point in the course of their lives. Participants might share this feeling with Zezé (for whatever reasons); with Elaine, Banerji, and for that matter with Atwood herself; and with the Navajos and the narrator Hilda herself at different moments of the story. Here it is important to bring to memory that these participants were young adults in their twenties, who were in a continuous process of construction and reconstruction of different aspects of their identities. Beyond something as complex as identity issues or social identifications, the three texts used in this study portray the commonality of the intricacy of human relations irrespective of cultural background, in particular family

relations. In this respect, a family or communal gathering for a Christmas dinner/celebration can always become a source of conflict in various fronts.

All of these aspects in the three texts, among others, would allow participants to make connections with their prior knowledge of and/or imagination about a Christmas celebration in each context, contributing to making the texts interesting and to arousing their curiosity.

5.8. Insider, outsider and hybrid perspectives in the portrayal of otherness

There also existed the possibility of selecting texts with an insider perspective, i.e., with a narrator who participates in the events described and is a member of the culture represented in the text, or with an outsider perspective, i.e., with a narrator who participates in the events described but is not a member of the culture represented in the text. This choice is crucial as the insider/outsider perspectives, which always involve hybrid perspectives as well, may determine, through their difference in voice, how readers will perceive the culture in question (Yakota, 1998). I will say more about perspective when I comment on each text toward the end of this chapter as well as in Appendix I.

Another aspect in relation to this issue is the perspective (insider, outsider, hybrid) through which a reader enters a text, especially its cultural content. The readers' perspectives in their approach to this cultural dimension of EFL reading constitute a key element in the *Model of Cultural Understanding* described in chapter 4.

One important methodological concern arose from this perspective issue. The fact that the Navajos text had a different dominant perspective from the other two (outsider rather than insider) complicated matters. During the analysis phase, I would never know with certainty whether some cultural aspects in the text were more or less understandable because readers had been helped by the outsider perspective provided by the narrator, Hilda, as observer. At this juncture, I entertained the possibility of finding a text about a Navajo event written by an insider. In this way, I would have three texts in the continuum, the three with different relative cultural familiarity-unfamiliarity and the three with insider perspectives. At the furthest extreme, I would place one text where readers would need to be able to understand

something which was not comparable to or did not exist in any form in their own environment, such as a Navajo insider description of an event which was completely different (i.e. not Christmas). I started searching for other topics, topics for which I would be able to get an insider Navajo perspective, such as births, death rituals and others. I soon abandoned the search for the reasons I mention next.

Several obstacles arose while considering this option, which led me to discard it. One was the issue of text comparability, or put differently, the fact that ideally, one would wish to have some control over as many of the factors involved in text selection as possible in all the selected texts. The most obvious aspects here are content and rhetorical schemata. In this respect, it would have been extremely unlikely to find an insider Navajo story about Christmas simply because the Navajos do not celebrate Christmas⁴. Moreover, choosing a text with a theme other than Christmas meant that the selected texts would have different content schemata. In any case, this text would probably have had to be a translation into English of something written originally for the insider audience. Translations, however, are problematic in studies of cultural understanding because they add another layer of interpretation of the culture in question, that of the translator. How many layers would such a Navajo text involve, for instance? The narrator's, the translator's understanding and interpretation of that, my reading as researcher and text analyst, and then the participants' interpretations. It was important to avoid more complexity here.

⁴ I contacted the Native Information Center in the US and asked about Navajo literature in this topic area. I was informed that to their knowledge, there exist no accounts of Faunce's Christmas description told by a Navajo. I was provided with some good stories about Navajo history and traditions, many told by Navajo people. However, the problems regarding content and rhetorical schemata that I mention elsewhere in this chapter were pertinent in all cases.

The closest to what I was looking for was an online book which includes a section by Joseph Gray entitled "Navajo Christmas Celebrations" (pp. 47-50). The writer is certainly Navajo, but the text does not really read like an insider perspective. At times, in fact, it resembles Faunce's text. Overall, then, I was unsuccessful in my search for a more appropriate Navajo narration of a Christmas celebration, i.e. more appropriate than the one I already had.

Driskill, J. L. (Ed.) (1997). *Christmas Stories from Around the World: Honoring Jesus in Many Lands*. Pasadena, California. Hope Publishing House. Accessed October 29, 2009.
http://books.google.com/books?id=hbaGZuHtiKkC&pg=PA47&lpg=PA47&dq=Navajo+Christmas+stories&source=bl&ots=831KI4gKe&sig=EYfv316GpIqW2nAxg4VE-Tskpw&hl=en&ei=dQsDSouSEY3flQeol_TfBA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2#PPA48,M1

The most important reason of all is that I was interested in using these three texts because I had already carried out research on this topic, and the use of the same texts would allow me to tie results to my previous studies, which were set in exactly the same context (same country, city, university) and with a similar profile of participants as in this thesis (see chapter 8). I have already pointed out in chapter 3 the scarcity of relevant studies in the field of EFL reading and cultural understanding in Argentina and Latin America (where English is indeed a foreign language; cf. Spain). More specifically, and to my knowledge, there exist no other studies which have investigated this topic with this particular college population (i.e. prospective teachers and translators of English) in any other public national university in the country. This thesis distances itself from my own previous research endeavours in the theoretical lenses I adopt here (sociocultural perspectives on schema theory) as well as in several methodological aspects (data collection instruments, data analysis measures, and important variations in the procedures of data collection and analysis) (Porto, 2010 b, 2009 a, c, d, 2008 a, 2005, 2003 b, c; 2001 c, among others). I describe these modifications in detail in the methodology chapter (chapter 6) and I have presented the overall contributions of these research projects in chapter 3. In all cases, what has remained constant are the prompt texts and, more globally, the theoretical underpinnings and assumptions of the research (Porto, forthcoming, 2010 a, 2009 a, b, c, 2008 a, 2007 b, 2001 a, 2000, among others). The fact that this thesis uses the same three prompt texts as described in this chapter secures interesting results and interrelationships in this setting.

5.9. Perspective and cultural understanding

This issue of perspective brings up several aspects which are relevant to cultural understanding in relation to the narrative genre, and consequently relevant to this study. In the 1950s, narratives were used in historical understanding as if they were a transparent means of telling the “real truth” about the past, becoming a form of knowing. With its emphasis on context, narrative analysis places potentially discrete elements within wider networks of relationships instead of isolating them as independent variables (Mink, 1966). In this way it fosters understanding about what happened in a specific place, at a certain time, under peculiar circumstances. This relativity and contextual specificity is essential in cultural understanding as well.

For this study, the topic of perspective also has an important methodological implication, taking into account the options that were entertained in order to control it, described before. White (1973) argues that the moment that one specific form of discourse is chosen (instead of another), this choice determines what can be known or understood (historical or other types of understanding) because of what it includes as well as excludes.

Gallie (1964) compares the reader of narratives to the spectator in a chance game. Both readers and spectators have different degrees of knowledge, perception and intelligence, and none will interpret the game in the same way. To follow a narrative means, to a great extent, to apprehend human action. Put differently, readers must have the capacity to perceive the intentions, wishes and thoughts of the protagonists. Many times, readers identify so strongly with a character in a story that they position themselves in his/her shoes and experience his/her same feelings. Other times, they remain as still and aloof observers. The author affirms that good readers permanently fluctuate between their own positions and those of the characters. Readers therefore have a double vision that constantly moves back and forth between themselves and the characters. Similar reasons in support of the use of literature for intercultural understanding (as discussed at the beginning of this chapter) have been offered by Bredella (2000, 2003), Burwitz Melzer (2001), Matos (2005) and others.

Rosaldo (1993) goes a step further and questions the idea that it is possible at all to say that the protagonists (in a story or in real life) participate in the same social event. The characters in a story may interpret the key incidents of daily life very differently and may not agree about what triggered a sequence of events or who was involved. The same happens with individuals in their daily lives and with readers. This issue of perspective is therefore complex and simultaneously inevitable. Both Gallie (1964) and Hexter (1971) agree that narratives continuously change perspectives, from the observer to the participants, and vice versa. They disagree in what distinguishes both views. Gallie (1964) focuses on the reader and puts in the background the interaction between the proximity of passionate identification and the distance of observation. Hexter (1971) prioritizes the position of the writer and emphasizes the interaction between future uncertainty and past certainty. Characters find themselves in the middle, looking ahead but not knowing what things will be like in the future.

Ricoeur (1984) also highlights the difficulty of the notion of point of view or perspective. According to him, in social narrative the protagonists are so trapped in the flow of events that they cannot be trusted as narrators. Mink (1966) argues that there may exist more than one description of a same event, all of them true but referred to different aspects of the “same” event, or described with different degrees of generality. What pervades in all this discussion is the difficulty to define and control the notion of point of view or perspective in this study. What I could do as researcher was to be conscious of these considerations during data analysis.

5.10. Surprise, novelty or abnormality of textual content

One important aspect related to prior knowledge is the fact that interest in reading material depends, among other facts and up to a certain extent, on its degree of surprise or novelty. Wade et al. (1999) have argued that learners will be interested in reading material that they consider novel or abnormal. From this perspective, a completely familiar and predictable text will not be interesting. The Greek used one specific word to express what paralyzes our understanding: *atopon*, which means something a-typical, un-focused, something that does not fit in well with our expectations of understanding and therefore disorients (Gadamer, 1992). The effort to comprehend begins in this way, i.e. when a reader finds something that he/she considers weird, provoking, troubling, or unsettling. Whatever amazes, surprises and/or challenges our schematic expectations and pre-conceptions will make us think. These feelings (which are relative) invite readers to dig deeper toward alternative, more profound ways of knowing and understanding.

I describe below my reasoning regarding the importance of this aspect in the text selection process and argue that the selected texts have the potential to allow for this kind of deep understanding, essential in cultural understanding, which is the focus of this study.

Bernhardt (1991) has suggested that in general readers tend to remember specific events when these events constitute exceptions to their rules or when they have a powerful or dramatic emotional meaning. What we know about the world is a result of our own experiences in it, and this is where prior knowledge as mentioned before plays a role. However, despite the fact that it is only possible to comprehend (in the broadest sense of

the term) in relation to what we already know, we live in a constant state of anticipation. This means that we anticipate and predict unconsciously, permanently and efficiently (Bernhardt 1991) and become aware of this only to the extent that our anticipations and predictions are violated or contradicted. When our predictions fail during comprehension, we feel surprised.

The fact that the three texts offered three different views of Christmas, set in diverse contexts, responds to the foregoing need to avoid total familiarity, transparency, and predictability. The text in Spanish portrayed a Christmas celebration which was incongruent with a typical one in these participants' sociocultural context. This fragment presented another view of the celebration: an extremely sad and poor ritual, with a religious component that challenged mainstream Catholic conceptions and views in Argentina. In Atwood's text, the novelty is materialized mainly in the presence of a foreigner in the celebration together with the rich cultural details in relation to the food, the Christmas habits, the contrasts between the American and Hindu cultures, and in the anecdotes referring to the manipulation of Nature (turkey with four drumsticks, square tomatoes, skinless chicken and cats, etc.), among others. The variety and multiplicity of attractive episodes and elements in the Navajos text (dancing, wrestling, racing, cooking, dress, fires, music, etc.) portrayed a vivid and unusual world. According to Wade et al. (1999) and Bernhardt (1991), all of this was fundamental to generate the participants' interest in the text selections.

Conversely and concomitantly, both authors also suggest that an extremely weird or unpredictable situation will not generate much interest. In this sense, it was possible that the three celebrations were perceived as too atypical or abnormal, required excessive effort to be apprehended and appeared uninteresting, consequently debilitating understanding. The hypothesis entertained here is that the vivid and unusual worlds presented in the texts would neutralize the possible negative effects that the surprise and strangeness of their content might generate. Besides, although attractive details are not necessary to generate interest, readers tend to judge the information with a sensational touch as important and interesting (Maccabe and Peterson, 1990). This type of information abounded in all texts.

5.11. Overview of the selected texts

I present next an overview of the selected texts. More detailed analyses appear in Appendix I. Part of the analyses that I include here as well as in this Appendix have been published elsewhere (Porto and Barboni, 2009 a, b). The prompt texts appear at the end of this chapter as well as in Appendix I for the reader's convenience. This overview needs to be framed within the caveat that I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

5.11.1. *Mi planta de naranja-lima* (Vasconcelos, 1971: 39-43).

This fragment, written in Spanish, presents a relatively close cultural reality to the participants'. It describes a Christmas celebration in Brazil with an insider perspective, that is, a narrator who participates in the celebration described and is a member of the culture the text represents. Although this text describes a celebration similar to one in Argentina (including the religious ingredient), it offers some difficulty as the celebration is not prototypically Argentine. The selection portrays a wider view of Christmas, applicable to the Latin American context. The fact that the fragment offers the perspective of a poor Brazilian family means that middle class college students in Argentina could find difficulties in its approach.

5.11.2. *Cat's Eye* (Atwood, 1998: 137-140).

This text, written in English, portrays a different cultural reality from the participants' and is set in a Canadian-American context. It describes the Christmas celebration of a Canadian family with an insider perspective. The culture matrix is complex here as Mr. Banerji, a student of the narrator's father, is a guest from India in this Christmas dinner. Both cultures, the American and the Indian, conflux and mingle through the eyes of Elaine, the professor's daughter and narrator. The typical elements of an American Christmas celebration are present, such as the turkey, the abundance of food, the snow, the snowmen and religion.

These participants were familiar with the American culture through their contact with the English language in their course of studies at the university as well as through its penetration in the national culture in their everyday lives (in the form of films, TV, artwork, literature, music, Internet, street visuals, advertising, newspapers, the media, etc.).

I nonetheless anticipated that the fragment would pose difficulties to the participants because of the description of distant, culturally-specific aspects.

With regard to these two fragments from *Mi planta de naranja-lima* and *Cat's Eye*, I also hypothesized that the contribution of the insider perspective to the participants' cultural understanding would be limited because of a number of reasons. First, the cultural content is portrayed through the eyes of an insider, who belongs to the culture in question. This necessarily involves the presence of implicit and covert cultural information as well as cultural assumptions for the simple reason that an insider does not need to make explicit the values associated with certain behaviours, unless there exists a powerful motivation for doing so. The view offered by this perspective is mediated by the insider's own perceptions of reality, which add an element of inevitable subjectivity to the portrayal. Second, because of the foregoing, this insider perspective does not go beyond the description of cultural information, i.e. it does not move towards its explanation, consequently making its apprehension more difficult. Finally, this perspective does not attempt at the interpretation of the insider's perceptions and portrayal of the cultural. Put differently, readers are left to interpret the actions and behaviours of the characters as well as the cultural content in general without the guidance that the presence of explicit cultural values and beliefs would provide.

5.11.3. *Desert Wife* (Faunce, 1961: 173-181)

This text presents a totally distant cultural reality. It describes a Christmas celebration by the Navajo Indians of the USA with an outsider perspective, that is, with a narrator who participates in the celebration described but is not a member of the culture the text represents. The fragment is distant in terms of cultural content (a different country and ethnic group) as well as in terms of the participants' experiences and background (setting, era, age of protagonists). In other words, of the three texts, this one was judged to be the most challenging to the participants' capacity to approach otherness in this particular cultural context.

Because of the unfamiliar cultural reality portrayed in this fragment, I considered the possibility that too many different or strange cultural aspects would result in problems of overload. Added to this, Christmas is a Christian festival introduced to the Native Americans by the American narrator, Hilda, and her partner, Ken. In this sense, the fragment is culturally

rich and complex, as several layers are intertwined: Hilda's mainstream American culture; the Navajos' culture; the lack of cultural significance that a Christian celebration has for the Navajo; and the portrayal of the Native American culture through Hilda's eyes, which brings about issues of stereotyping, unconscious racism, and implicit and explicit derogatory perspectives on occasions.

This complexity notwithstanding, I anticipated that the outsider perspective in *Desert Wife* would facilitate the participants' access to the cultural content of the fragment for several reasons, thereby reducing the challenge posed by its cultural unfamiliarity. First, this perspective offered the values that the narrator associated with some behaviours of the Native Americans, which would help participants understand those behaviours to a certain extent by contrasting them with their own. Second, this perspective offered abundant cultural information, new and factual, through the eyes of an observer, which would contribute to its visibility. As said before, these participants were trained in a critical discourse approach to reading, and I assumed that they would be able to identify the narrator's biases and prejudiced views on occasions, and to access the cultural information about the Navajo that they needed in order to do the written tasks. Finally, this perspective went beyond the mere description of cultural information towards explanation and interpretation. At some points in the text, the narrator Hilda attempts to explain and interpret the observable behaviours of the Navajo. Because of these reasons, this text is necessarily longer than the other two as the outsider perspective involves the inclusion of descriptions, explanations and interpretations which are not explicit in texts with an insider perspective (insiders do not need to make explicit the implicit values associated with their behaviours).

Because of the outsider perspective, some parts of the text presented a lot of factual and culturally novel and rich information (dances, cooking) through the eyes of an observer (not a Navajo), which in general contributed to its clarity. The outsider narrator meticulously describes different elements such as the context, the characters, the life habits of the Navajo, characteristics about their physical appearance and personality as well as their customs and rituals (described in great detail). She includes colourful and vivid portrayals of such customs, and offers explanations and interpretations for the cultural information mentioned. Other times Hilda fails to describe or interpret what she observes from the point of view of the Navajos. In this sense, her outsider portrayal of the Navajo permeates, at times, a condescending view of the Native Americans. However, these participants were well trained

in the use of a critical discourse analysis approach in their reading of literary texts in this course. I hypothesized that the benefits associated with the perspective would soften the impact of the significant cultural load of this text.

5.12. A limitation

The fact that three texts and a unique topic (Christmas) were used in this study limit the generalization of findings to narrative texts with diverse characteristics or in fact to any other text types and genres. Considering that the participants represent particular combinations of capacities and prior learning experiences in an educative and socioculturally specific context, findings are necessarily limited to the context described.

In addition, any text can affect reading performance in a positive or negative way, offering a portrait of some readers as more competent than others (Bernhardt, 1991). Therefore, the dependency on individual instances of reading (here, three texts) as an indicator of reading capacity, specifically cultural understanding in this study, is limiting (Bernhardt and Kamil, 1995; Rosenblatt, 2004).

5.13. Conclusion

This chapter has described the process of selection of the materials used in this study, namely the texts that served as prompts for the investigation of the participants' cultural understanding. I have included a rationale for the use of literary narrative texts in this study and I have explained why my text selection constitutes itself in one of its distinguishing features. I have then explored some issues involved in selection and I have described my decision-making process in this respect. I have specifically considered the following aspects: choice of theme, text characteristics, prior knowledge, insider and outsider perspectives in the portrayal of otherness, perspective and cultural understanding, and surprise, novelty or abnormality of textual content. I have concluded with an overview of the selected texts. A comprehensive textual analysis of each selected fragment appears in Appendix I.

The following chapter describes the research design of this exploratory-interpretative study in detail and includes the rationale for all methodological decisions.

Fragment from Vasconcelos, J.M. (1971). *Mi planta de naranja-lima*. Buenos Aires, El Ateneo (pp. 39-43).

En la cocina estaba Dindinha, que había venido para hacer "rabanada" mojada en vino. Era la cena de Nochebuena.

Le comenté a Totoca:

-Y mira, hay gente que ni siquiera tiene eso. El tío Edmundo dio el dinero para el vino y para comprar las frutas para la ensalada del almuerzo de mañana.

Totoca estaba haciendo el trabajo gratis, porque se había enterado de la historia del Casino Bangu. Por lo menos, Luis tendría un regalo. Una cosa vieja, usada, pero muy linda y que yo quería mucho.

-Totoca.

-Habla.

-¿Y no voy a recibir nada, nada, de Papá Noel?

-Pienso que no.

-Hablando seriamente, ¿crees que soy tan malo como dice todo el mundo?

-Malo, malo, no. Lo que pasa es que tienes el diablo en la sangre.

-¡Cuando llega la Nochebuena, querría tanto no tenerlo! Me gustaría tanto que antes de morir, por lo menos una vez, naciése para mi el Niño Jesús en vez del Niño Diablo.

-Quién sabe si a lo mejor el año que viene. . .

- ¿Por qué no aprendes y haces como yo?

-¿Y qué haces?

-No espero nada. Así no me decepciono. Ni siquiera el Niño Jesús es eso tan bueno que todo el mundo dice. Eso que el Padre cuenta y que el Catecismo dice...

Hizo una pausa y quedó indeciso entre contar el resto de lo que pensaba o no.

-¿Cómo es, entonces?

-Bueno, vamos a decir que fuiste muy travieso, que no merecías un regalo.

-Pero ¿Luis?

-Es un ángel.

-¿Y Gloria?

-También.

-¿Y yo?

-Bueno, a veces..., tomas mis cosas, pero eres muy bueno.

-¿Y Lalá?

-Pega muy fuerte, pero es buena. Un día me va a coser mi corbata de moño.

-¿Y Jandira?

-Jandira tiene ese modo. . . pero no es mala.

-¿Y mamá?

-Mamá es muy buena; cuando me pega lo hace con pena y despacito.

- ¿Y papá?

-¡Ah, él no sé! Nunca tiene suerte. Creo que debe haber sido como yo, el malo de la familia.

-¡Entonces! Todos son buenos en la familia. ¿Y por qué el Niño Jesús no es bueno con nosotros? Vete a la casa del doctor Faulhaber y mira el tamaño de la mesa llena de cosas. Lo mismo en la casa de los Villas-Boas. Y en la del doctor Aducto Luz, ni hablar...

Por primera vez vi que Totoca estaba casi llorando.

-Por eso creo que el Niño Jesús quiso nacer pobre sólo para exhibirse. Después Él vio que solamente los ricos servían... Pero no hablemos más de eso. Hasta puede ser que lo que diga sea un pecado muy grande.

Se quedó tan abatido que no quiso conversar más.

Ni siquiera quería levantar los ojos del cuerpo del caballo que pulía.

Fue una comida tan triste que ni daba ganas de pensar. Todo el mundo comió en silencio, y papá apenas probó un poco de "rabanada". Ni siquiera había querido afeitarse. Tampoco habían ido a la Misa del Gallo. Lo peor era que nadie hablaba nada con nadie. Más parecía el velorio del Niño Jesús que su nacimiento.

Papá agarró el sombrero y se fue. Salió, incluso en zapatillas, sin decir hasta luego ni desear felicidades. Dindinha sacó su pañuelo y se limpió los ojos, pidiendo permiso para irse en seguida con tío Edmundo. Y éste puso algún dinero en mi mano y en la de Totoca. A lo mejor hubiese querido dar más y no tenía. A lo mejor, en vez de darnos dinero a nosotros, desearía estar dándoselo a sus hijos, allá en la ciudad. Por eso lo abracé. Tal vez el único abrazo de la noche de fiesta. Nadie se abrazó ni quiso decir algo bueno. Mamá fue al dormitorio. Estoy seguro de que ella estaba llorando, escondida. Y todos tenían ganas de hacer lo mismo. Lalá fue a dejar a tío Edmundo y a Dindinha en el portón, y cuando ellos se alejaron caminando despacito, despacito, comentó:

-Parece que están demasiado viejitos para la vida y cansados de todo. . .

Lo más triste fue cuando la campana de la iglesia llenó la noche de voces felices. Y algunos fuegos artificiales se elevaron a los cielos para que Dios pudiera ver la alegría de los otros.

Cuando entramos nuevamente, Gloria y Jandira estaban lavando la vajilla usada y Gloria tenía los ojos rojos como si hubiese llorado mucho.

Disimuló, diciéndonos a Totoca y a mí:

-Ya es la hora de que los chicos vayan a la cama. Decía eso y nos miraba. Sabía que en ese momento allí no había ya ningún niño. Todos eran grandes, grandes y tristes, cenando a pedazos la misma tristeza.

Quizá la culpa de todo la hubiera tenido la luz del farol medio mortecina, que había sustituido a la luz que la "Light" mandara cortar. Tal vez.

El Reyecito, que dormía con el dedo en la boca, sí era feliz. Puse el caballito parado, bien cerca de él. No pude evitar pasarle suavemente las manos por su pelo. Mi voz era un inmenso río de ternura.

-Mi chiquitito.

Cuando toda la casa estuvo a oscuras pregunté bien bajito:

-Estaba buena la "rabanada", ¿no es cierto, Totoca?

-No sé. Ni la probé.

-¿Por qué?

-Se me puso una cosa rara en la garganta que no me dejaba pasar nada... Vamos a dormir. El sueño hace que uno se olvide de todo.

Yo me había levantado y hacía barullo en la cama.

-¿Adónde vas, Zezé?

-Voy a poner mis zapatillas del otro lado de la puerta.

-No las pongas. Es mejor.

-Las voy a poner, sí. A lo mejor sucede un milagro. ¿Sabes una cosa, Totoca? Quisiera un regalo. Uno solo. Pero que fuese algo nuevo. Sólo para mí...

Miró para el otro lado y enterró la cabeza debajo de la almohada.

Fragment from Atwood, M. (1998). *Cat's Eye*. Bantam, Anchor Books (pp. 137-140).

We sit around the table, eating our Christmas dinner. There's a student of my father's, a young man from India who's here to study insects and who's never seen snow before. We're having him to Christmas dinner because he's foreign, he's far from home, he will be lonely, and they don't even have Christmas in his country. This has been explained to us in advance by our mother. He's polite and ill at ease and he giggles frequently, looking with what I sense is terror at the array of food spread out before him, the mashed potatoes, the gravy, lurid green and red Jello salad, the enormous turkey: my mother has said that the food is different there. I know he's miserable, underneath his smiles and politeness. I'm developing a knack for this, I can sniff out hidden misery in others now with hardly any effort at all.

My father sits at the head of the table, beaming like the Jolly Green Giant. He lifts his glass, his gnome's eyes twinkling. "Mr. Banerji, sir," he says. He always calls his students Mr. and Miss. "You can't fly on one wing."

Mr. Banerji giggles and says, "Very true, sir," in his voice that sounds like the BBC News. He lifts his own glass and sips. What is in the glass is wine. My brother and I have cranberry juice in our wineglasses. Last year or the year before we might have tied our shoelaces together, under the table, so we could signal each other with secret jerks and tugs, but we're both beyond this now for different reasons.

My father ladles out the stuffing, deals the slices of dark and light; my mother adds the mashed potatoes and cranberry sauce and asks Mr. Banerji, enunciating carefully, whether they have turkey in his country. He says he doesn't believe so. I sit across the table from him, my feet dangling, staring at him, enthralled. His spindly wrists extend from his over-large cuffs, his hands are long and thin, ragged around the nails, like mine. I think he is very beautiful, with his brown skin and brilliant white teeth and his dark appalled eyes. There's a child these colours in the ring of children on the front of the Sunday school missionary paper, yellow children, brown children, all in different costumes, dancing around Jesus. Mr. Banerji doesn't have a costume, only a jacket and tie like other men. Nevertheless I can hardly believe he's a man, he seems so unlike one. He's a creature more like myself: alien and apprehensive. He's afraid of us. He has no idea what we will do next, what impossibilities we will expect of him, what we will make him eat. No wonder he bites his fingers.

"A little off the sternum, sir?" my father asks him, and Mr. Banerji brightens at the word.

"Ah, the sternum," he says, and I know they have entered together the shared world of biology, which offers refuge from the real, awkward world of manners and silences we're sitting in at the moment. As he slices away with the carving knife my father indicates to all of us, but especially to Mr. Banerji, the areas where the flight muscles attach, using the carving fork as a pointer. Of course, he says, the domestic turkey has lost the ability to fly.

"*Meleagris gallopavo*," he says, and Mr. Banerji leans forward; the Latin perks him up. "A pea-brained animal, or bird-brained you might say, bred for its ability to put on weight, especially on the drumsticks" – he points these out – "certainly not for intelligence. It was originally domesticated by the Mayans." He tells a story of a turkey farm where the turkeys all died because they were too stupid to go into their shed during a thunderstorm. Instead they stood around outside, looking up at the sky with their beaks wide open and the rain ran down their throats and drowned them. He says this is a story told by farmers and probably not true, although the stupidity of the bird is legendary. He says that the wild turkey, once abundant in the deciduous forests in these regions, is far more intelligent and can elude even practiced hunters. Also it can fly.

I sit picking at my Christmas dinner, as Mr. Banerji is picking at his. Both of us have messed the mashed potatoes around on our plates without actually eating much. Wild

things are smarter than tame ones, that much is clear. Wild things are elusive and wily and look out for themselves. I divide the people I know into tame and wild. My mother, wild. My father and brother, also wild; Mr. Banerji, wild also, but in a more skittish way. Carol, tame. Grace, tame as well, though with sneaky vestiges of wild. Cordelia, wild, pure and simple.

"There are no limits to human greed," says my father.

"Indeed, sir?" says Mr. Banerji, as my father goes on to say that he's heard some son of a gun is working on an experiment to breed a turkey with four drumsticks, instead of two drumsticks and two wings, because there's more meat on a drumstick.

"How would such a creature walk, sir?" asks Mr. Banerji, and my father, approving, says, "Well may you ask." He tells Mr. Banerji that some darn fool scientists are working on a square tomato, which will supposedly pack more easily into crates than the round variety.

"All the flavor will be sacrificed, of course," he says. "They care nothing for flavor. They bred a naked chicken, thinking they'd get more eggs by utilizing the energy saved from feather production, but the thing shivered so much they had to double-heat the coop, so it cost more in the end."

"Fooling with Nature, sir," says Mr. Banerji. I know already that this is the right response. Investigating Nature is one thing and so is defending yourself against it, within limits, but fooling with it is quite another.

Mr. Banerji says he hears there is now a naked cat available, he's read about it in a magazine, though he himself does not see the point of it at all. This is the most he has said so far.

My brother asks if there are any poisonous snakes in India, and Mr. Banerji, now much more at ease, begins to enumerate them. My mother smiles, because this is going better than she thought it would. Poisonous snakes are fine with her, even at the dinner table, as long as they make people happy.

My father has eaten everything on his plate and is digging for more stuffing in the cavity of the turkey, which resembles a trussed, headless baby. It has thrown off its disguise as a meal and has revealed itself to me for what it is, a large dead bird. I'm eating a wing. It's the wing of a tame turkey, the stupidest bird in the world, so stupid it can't even fly anymore. I am eating lost flight.

Fragment from Faunce, H. (1961). *Desert Wife*. Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press (pp. 173-181).

Kismas

Before the birth of Mrs. White Hat's baby, more frequently while the wind blew in October and without ceasing, after that dance Polly and I attended, the heathen asked, "How long 'till Kismas?"

Christmas to us meant warm fires, red berries, gifts in tissue paper. We found that the Navajo "Kismas" included the warm fires, but everything else was novel enough to make history.

We planned to watch the benighted Navajo cook dinner; we had even declared we would eat with them; we would spend the day watching their games. For our treat we prepared a hundred small bags each containing candy, cookies and a red apple.

Christmas Eve the heathen began to arrive over these hills. There were wagonloads of women and children and scores of men and young people on horses. Everybody was dressed in his best: beads, bracelets and silver belts glistened against the bright-colored velvet shirts and glossy sateen skirts, with miles and miles of flounces. I had made several of the skirts and I knew how many miles long a flounce was.

By dark some two hundred Navajos were present. The Utcitys were there: the head of the house in all his dignity, the Little Bidoni and his three wives, soft-spoken and sweet, and all the other sons and daughters and husbands and wives; the Little Cranks, living up to their name; the Old Lady and Old Man, with their children and grandchildren; Robert, greeting old friends, and White Hat and Mrs. White Hat and the children; Japon and his wife and their progeny, Mrs. Japon and the Old Lady giving each other a wide berth. Cla was present with his brothers and the Old Buzzard. Everybody's friends were present and all their relatives.

Apparently they expected "Kismas" to begin at once. Expecting to supply meat for the Christmas dinner, Ken had killed a beef, but now he took down a hind quarter and cut steaks and more steaks until there was enough to go around. The adults came and took what they needed for their families for supper and for breakfast on Christmas morning. What they did not eat at once they were afraid to put down because some one would steal it, so all the evening they strolled about with great raw beefsteaks in their hands. Mrs. Japon and the Old Buzzard each had two.

We had provided several loads of wood so they could help themselves; and the Christmas fires, big and little, were all over the place. They were so all over the place, we were uneasy. One family settled down and built their fire within two feet of the walls of that frame shack of a store building. Ken had to go out and insist that they move elsewhere. They were indignant and thought it quite fussy in me to go out and shovel dirt over the bed of live coals they left.

Big fires were built on the level space, where the dancing was to be, and these, added to the light of a full moon, made the night so bright we could see the whole landscape around. The dancing was just for the Indians' amusement and ours and was in no sense ceremonial. Now and then some of them danced a figure from a ceremonial dance but without the costumes and other accessories. The music was made on a clay water jar with water in it and a rawhide stretched over the top. One fellow played this, or beat it, and others shook rattles made of paper bags with beans in them.

The best dance of the lot was one performed by some of the older men. They had to dance and sing because the younger men knew neither the proper songs nor the dance; and Utcity, the Singer, and the other six who made up the figures sang, laughed and kept up the most violent sort of exercises until they dropped panting to the ground. They all assured us

that when they were young men they could keep it up all night, but now they were old and full of meat besides, and they couldn't do what they used to do.

With that dance and others, and wrestling and racing about the fires, there was plenty of activity. There was nothing cold or solemn about the gathering; every one was laughing and happy. They were a most fun-loving people and laughed at the same things we thought funny.

All the evening I was trying to bake two loaves of fruit cake. It was done when we finally went to bed at midnight -done with a thick crust an inch deep all over it and a core of good cake in the middle. Keeping an oven fire of pitch wood and watching the dancing outside had been too much for the success of the cake. The wood-burning stove was temperamental at its best.

All night we smelled the piñon smoke from the camp fires, and when a different smoke drifted into our window, we got up and followed it to find that some one had put box boards on his fire. Lady Betty was nervous and growled every time we or any one else moved. When we got back in bed, after tracing the source of non-piñon smoke, she came to the side of the bed and put her cold nose in my hand. After a little she lay down with a loud sigh, but got up at once if she could not feel my hand. My arm was numb from keeping the hand where she could reach it. Poor Betty! She didn't get much sleep that night and a hard day she had ahead of her, too. Wild reservation life was no joy to a blooded bulldog like Betty.

What with our uneasiness about the Indian fires and their early rising habits, we were up early Christmas morning. While the men and boys went out to the flat mesa to race their horses, we women folk thought about dinner for the crowd. By eleven o'clock Mrs. White Hat and Mrs. Japon began making bread and the efficient way they went about it was a lesson to me.

A twenty-five-pound sack of flour, a frying pan or Dutch oven, a can of baking powder and a bucket of well water was the total of their equipment. They rolled back the top of the sack, put in a pinch of baking powder and mixed in enough water with their hands to make a dough stiff enough to handle easily. This was pulled and patted into a cake that covered the bottom of the cooking pan and fried in an inch or two of fat. The finished cakes were stacked in piles. It was an interesting performance; but after I had watched for a time, I realized they could not bake enough bread for the crowd that way, so I started to make biscuits in the oven. That was a full-time job. I learned then that one sack of flour just fills a washtub with biscuits.

While we women were preparing the bread, Ken had cut up the meat. Some women built up stones about the cooking fires to set tubs on, and soon we had three tubs of the meat simmering, each with an attendant stirring it with a long splinter of wood from the woodpile. The wash boiler did duty as a coffee pot. There was a forked cedar in it to hold the bag of coffee down. I was sure the whole dinner would be flavored with cedar, but it wasn't.

Other women I set to peeling onions and potatoes, and very handy they were at it too. These we added to the meat tubs. When everything was all well cooked, I mixed a pail of flour and water for thickening and added that, with salt, pepper and chili. The cooks tasted it of ten and said it was very good.

One of the children was sent out to the mesa edge to call the men; and in a few minutes they charged in, the ponies running pell-mell between the camp fires and jumping over the clutter of camp stuff, the Indians yelling like pirates and quirting on both sides. I never had heard a pirate yell, but I was sure a Navajo must be as good a yeller as a Comanche, and nothing else *could* make so much noise, unless it was a pirate.

The dripping ponies were left at one side and the Indians came to the fires. I dipped the stew into pans, all we had in the store; and then we passed tin cups of coffee and spoons

for the stew. The family groups sat together and everybody ate and ate. Some of the heathen, I know, had not had a square meal for a month.

After the meal was over, the women cleaned the soot from the tubs and boiler with sand, while I scalded the spoons and pans. They were willing enough to do it, though they would have gone away and left everything dirty, if I had not suggested the dishwashing. I thought it best they do some little thing for their meal.

When that was done, the children lined up to get the bags of candy. I passed them out and soon became suspicious about the length of the line. Investigation revealed Mrs. Little Crank and a score of other mothers standing around the corner of the store, putting bags of candy into their blankets and sending the children back to stand in line for another. There was a sort of appreciation in the Navajo, but it was the sort that wanted all they could get from any one who wasn't looking.

By the middle of the afternoon they were all gone and we were allowed to eat something ourselves. Tired! But we agreed we had never seen such a Christmas and would not see another in a lifetime.

Among the last to go was Robert, who came to me and spoke in English, a thing he did not often do, as I had learned Navajo. "I wish you a Merry Christmas, San Chee (my name)," he said.

All day I had been too busy and excited to think, but that little attention made me homesick for something not Indian; and I stumbled into the store and hurried through to the living room, so Ken would not see the tears in my eyes.

He locked the store, polished the lamp chimney which I had not had time to touch and followed me. He set the lamp on the table and handed me an envelope.

"Merry Christmas," he said. He turned at once to undress and I knew he knew I did not want him to see me cry.

In the envelope was the receipt for the second payment on the farm.

"Ken," I gasped.

"Better get to bed. It's been a long day," he answered sleepily.

Half undressed, I sat on the edge of the bed. Outside a cold moon climbed to where I could see it through the window. We had been at Covered Water more than a year. Did Ken want to own a farm or would he rather stay on the reservation?

The moon climbed higher, and the shell of a house snapped and cracked in the cold. The air was freezing; I could see my breath in the moonlight, but still I sat.

I thought Ken asleep but suddenly he rolled over and spoke to me. When I faced him, he grinned at me in the moonlight.

With a gesture, I finished undressing and pulled the warm covers over me. My teeth were chattering and I blew out my breath sharply, to see the wraith of it in the moonlight. What difference whether we worked here or there, so we worked together?

CHAPTER 6

METHODOLOGY CHOICES: DESCRIPTION AND RATIONALE

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CHAPTER 6

METHODOLOGY CHOICES: DESCRIPTION AND RATIONALE

6.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the research design of this exploratory-interpretative study in detail and includes the rationale for the methodological decisions taken. It is organized as follows. First, I offer a general overview of the complete research design, intended to present the gist of the research. Then, I recapitulate some general considerations regarding the participants, in particular issues about linguistic and literary competence. These considerations are important because they helped narrow the research focus. Second, I provide an overview and analysis of previous research in relation to the data collection instruments in the literature. To this aim, I return to some or all of the key studies already reviewed in chapter 3. Observing serious inadequacies in the traditional data collection instruments available, I then proceed to propose my own as well as offer the rationale for my choices, describing and explaining these instruments in detail. Third, I focus on data analysis in the same way: I start with an overview of previous research, on the basis of whose critique I move on to propose new data analysis measures. Throughout the chapter the emphasis is on explaining how my methodological decisions complement each other and are put together in a robust research design. I conclude with a discussion about validity, triangulation and reliability issues.

6.2. Overview of the research design

6.2.1. Population and context

This study was framed in the context of my chair, English Language II, at Universidad Nacional de La Plata in Argentina. This is a prestigious, public, access for all university in a developing country. English Language II is a second-year subject, part of two five-year programs to become a teacher or a translator of English. The reason to nest this study in the framework of this subject was practical (i.e. as teacher-researcher at this university it was not necessary for me to seek permissions to carry out the study in the first place).

The medium of instruction throughout both programs is English (a foreign language) and students are required to have reached CAE (Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English) level to pass the course. This language level is measured by means of performance in the partial exams (in other words, they are not required to actually take this specific test). The syllabus of this subject is literature-based, with an exclusive focus on narratives. Although narrative instruction with a strong linguistic focus is a core element in this course, learners are provided guidance in treating literary texts as illustrative of cultural issues. This cultural dimension is explicitly addressed in the classroom.

Ten former students of mine participated voluntarily. They were Argentine college students (nine female, one male), prospective teachers and translators of English, between twenty and twenty-four years of age (with two exceptions, aged twenty-eight and thirty-two), who had been my students in the course English Language II at Universidad Nacional de La Plata in 2008. Data were collected in November 2009. I contacted these students because I thought that it was important to carry out this study with participants who had already taken my course (to avoid the ethical considerations involved if they had been taking this course during data collection) and also because I had developed a caring and respectful relationship with this group, which guaranteed that they would participate out of genuine interest in the project and a sincere desire to help (rather than a consideration about whether participating in the study would contribute to helping them pass the course).

6.2.2. Procedure: instrumentation

A detailed description of how this study was implemented appears later in this chapter. It may be useful to anticipate at this point that these participants received general information about the research project and signed a consent form. They had to read three literary narrative extracts and perform a number of tasks based on their reading of that material. They received written instructions for each task they were required to do (the same tasks for the three texts) and they completed all tasks individually. At the end of data collection, they were debriefed.

Data were collected in three different sessions (on different days) in November 2009. The participants were required to come unprepared to these sessions, i.e. it was highlighted that they did not need to study or find information prior to data collection. They worked on one text per session. However, we were in permanent contact via email and they were allowed to make additional comments regarding each text as they felt was necessary. Data were therefore

mostly collected *in situ*, though some data types were delivered electronically (such as the questionnaire with personal information and the questionnaires about reading in English and reading in Spanish). Some participants wrote further reflections on the texts after the data collection sessions had taken place. One example is Victoria (pseudonym) who wrote a post reflection based on the fragment from *Cat's Eye* two weeks after data collection and sent it to me via email. Chapters 8 and 9 with findings and chapter 10 with the in-depth analysis of one reader will show that participants added contributions, comments and reflections up to one year after the closure of data collection.

6.2.3. Data collection and analysis

Prompted by three literary narrative texts with a common theme (Christmas celebrations), different perspectives (insider, outsider, hybrid) and different cultural loads (relatively culturally familiar as in *Mi planta de naranja-lima*, culturally distant as in *Cat's Eye* and totally culturally remote as in *Desert Wife*), these participants responded to the fragments by writing two tasks (among others) in their native language, Spanish: a reading response task in writing and a visual representation. As we shall see later, a reading response task is a reader response format which goes beyond summarizing toward imaginative and personal responses to a text. A visual representation is defined here as the visual representation of textual content including the combination of words, phrases, and/or sentences with visual information in different formats of varying complexity (such as charts, tables, graphs, grids, mind maps, flowcharts, diagrams, drawings and the like). Succinctly, I propose in this thesis that the reading response and the visual representation tasks are better instruments to investigate reading comprehension than the traditional and widely accepted free recall protocol. I shall support this statement later in this chapter.

More specifically, the data types were the following, collected in Spanish in this order (none with a time or word limit):

- a) a questionnaire seeking biographical information;
- b) a questionnaire about reading in Spanish;
- c) a questionnaire about reading in English;
- d) a prior knowledge task in writing about the cultural content of the fragments (prior to seeing each text) together with a specification of the source of that knowledge (TV, books, etc.);

For each text:

- e) the text underlined with difficult or confusing parts as the participants perceived them during reading together with a brief explanation of such difficulties in note form in the text itself;
- f) an immediate written reflection log (retrospective self-observation) based on the cultural aspects in the text and the comprehension difficulties found;
- g) a reading response task;
- h) a visual representation task;
- i) a grid designed to investigate the degree of comprehension of the cultural aspects previously identified in the texts (cultural idea units) using a scale 0-6; and
- j) a delayed interview to focus on issues which emerged from my analysis of g) and h).

The research instruments e), f) and j) were explicitly included in this research design in order to explore the *process* of reading, or in other words, the investigation of how these readers approached the cultural content of these texts *during* the reading itself.

Consistent with Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm's (2004) concept of a continuum in varying degrees of familiarity with cultural schemata, three prompt texts with varying degrees of cultural familiarity were used in this study. Details about the prompt texts appear in chapter 5. It may be pertinent to repeat, however, that the text with relatively culturally familiar content, written in Spanish, is a selection from *Mi planta de naranja-lima* (Vasconcelos, 1971) and describes a poor Christmas celebration in Brazil with an insider perspective, i.e. with a narrator who participates in the celebration described and is a member of the culture the text portrays. One of the texts with culturally distant content, written in English, is a selection from *Cat's Eye* (Atwood, 1998) and describes the Christmas celebration of a Canadian family with an insider perspective. The other text, with totally unfamiliar cultural content, also written in English, is a selection from *Desert Wife* (Faunce, 1961) and describes one Christmas celebration in a Native American context with an outsider perspective, i.e., with a narrator who participates in the celebration described but is not a member of the culture the text represents.

In response to each fragment, the participants produced a number of tasks (listed before), which were analyzed using a taxonomy of cultural idea units (specific to the cultural content of each prompt text), a list of specific reader behaviours in the approach to the cultural content

of the texts (such as distorting, simplifying, generalizing and elaborating on cultural information, for instance) and the theoretical *Model of Cultural Understanding during EFL reading*, re-designed for the purpose of this study, described in chapter 4 and used as a measure of analysis as well.

6.3. Design: general considerations

This study's design is based on the hypothesis that cultural understanding as investigated here depends, among others, on three key aspects, namely linguistic competence, literary competence and cultural competence. Taking into consideration the complexity of studying comprehension, in particular the fact that "almost 50% of the variability remains unexplained" (Sharp, 2002: 101; also Bernhardt, 1991 and Smith Maddox, 1998) and acknowledging the complexity of research on mental processes with human beings, the line of thought was that of these three variables, I chose to focus on cultural competence because I assumed that the language and literary factors were not (or should not have been) a problem with this population.

As regards the language factor, participants had reached CAE level (Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English) at this stage, which meant that they were very advanced readers and therefore language was not a problem in the type of text used in the research. This fact notwithstanding, the study is consistent with the literature (studies reviewed in chapter 3) in having provided all instructions in the native language, Spanish, and having required that all tasks be performed in the L1 (also Chang, 2006; Yu, 2008) – when I could have safely asked participants to respond in English, or when I could have allowed both English and Spanish, for instance. The use of the L1 in instructions and task completion was aimed at avoiding potential linguistic difficulties in the L2. In addition to this agreement in the literature regarding the language factor, some studies have purposefully investigated the role of this language issue on comprehension, and have concluded that the use of the native language in task completion guarantees a better measure of students' comprehension in the second language than the use of the foreign/second language itself (Martínez-Roldán and Sayer, 2006; Yu, 2008). More specifically, Martínez-Roldán and Sayer (2006) have shown that their readers revealed more comprehension when they were allowed to use Spanish, their L1 (rather than English), to mediate their reading and retelling of the prompt texts.

With respect to literary competence, I believed it should not be a problem either. Participants read and respond to literary narrative texts in all Language and Literature subjects (including my subject, English Language II) throughout the five-year teaching program and the five-year translation program at our university. Literary narrative texts constitute a core part of the syllabus in my subject, hence the text selection (see chapter 5). There are many obligatory literature courses (Argentine, English, American and several other literatures) in both programs. Also, those who were enrolled in the translation program had literary translation courses as well. For these reasons, I thought that literary competence in the narrative genre would not present itself as an obstacle in this study.

6.4. Research design and data collection instruments: overview from previous research and proposed instruments for this study

6.4.1. Literature overview

In general terms, the studies reviewed in chapter 3 can all be said to investigate reading comprehension and cultural aspects. The specific ways in which the issue is explored, however, vary significantly in each case, with the emphasis put on different points of entrance and angles of vision such as cultural background, culturally specific prior knowledge, discipline specific prior knowledge, content attitudes, social context, etc. As I have shown in chapter 3, important variations exist as well in the design of the studies in terms of participants (age, cultural background, prior knowledge, etc.), prompt texts (genre - expository, narrative-; length; modality -aural, written-, language -L1, L2-), data collection instruments (i.e. required tasks such as recall protocols, probed recall, multiple choice tests, etc.), language (of prompt texts and required tasks) and measures of analysis (idea units, index of qualitative changes in recalls, gist, reading time, etc.). I shall comment below on these aspects as they are relevant to this study.

Bernhardt (1991, 2005), Brantmeier (2003, 2004), Klingner (2004), Heinz (2004) and others insist on the importance of using *multiple measures* of reading comprehension. Brantmeier (2004: 52) in particular calls for the need of “consistency across L2 reading studies” in this respect. In all cases chapter 3 has revealed the combination of various reading comprehension instruments such as multiple choice tests, recall protocols, probed recall, inference questions, open-ended questions, sentence completions, true/false, summaries, cloze tests and others. I

only find consistency in the use of one instrument, the free recall protocol, though there are subtle variations in what participants were asked to do exactly, in which language (L1 or L2) and the conditions in which the recall was done (with time limit or not; with access to the prompt text or not; immediate, delayed, or both; etc.). This consistency in the use of recalls surpasses the studies which investigate cultural schemata - the focus of our study- and involves those which explore other aspects of reading as listed at the beginning of chapter 3, together with many others such as Brantmeier (2003), Chang (2006), Deville and Chalhoub-Deville (1993) and Riley and Lee (1996).

It is worth noting that the kind of recall required in most cases was in general *verbatim* and when it was not, participants were explicitly told to recall the original as closely as possible (cf. Hammadou, 1991, who focused on gist of meaning rather than *verbatim* recall during analysis). I describe Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson (1979: 16) as one prototypical example. Subjects were told to “maintain the same order and use the same words,” to “write down every bit” they could remember and if they could not remember the exact words, to write down the sentence “as close to the original as possible.” In Brantmeier (2005: 50) the instructions were: “Without looking back at the text, write in English all that you remember about the text. Try to mention the main ideas as well as details. *The emphasis is on the quantity of ideas recalled*” (my emphasis). In Hollingsworth and Reutzel (1991: 196) “students were instructed to write everything that they could remember from reading the passage.” In Carrell (1984c: 454) “the subjects were asked to write down everything they could remember from the text, using their own words or words from the text. They were asked to try to write in complete sentences and not just isolated words or ideas.” Similarly, in Rice (1980) participants were instructed to write the passage from memory as accurately as possible and to use their own words if they could not remember exact words.

In this respect, Sharp (2002: 102) makes a point about the importance of the instructions provided, which affect the nature of the task. “The recalls provided by subjects told to summarize the main ideas of the text were found to contain significantly more idea units than the recalls of subjects simply told to write down what they could remember (. . .) the task may have an effect on what is recalled and must be clearly defined.” I shall come back to this point later as I define the instrument I use in this study instead of the recall protocol. Beyond instructions, Chang (2006) also warns that the general conditions under which the recall task is administered affect the recall products.

Despite some exceptions (for instance, Chang, 2006 who proposes a translation task and Yu, 2008, who uses summarization), there exists an unquestionable agreement in the literature not only on the use of the recall protocol but also on how data are collected (i.e. instructions given) and the kind of recall that is therefore obtained. However, I observe an incongruence between what the reviewed studies in chapter 3 explicitly aimed to investigate (i.e. different aspects of comprehension) and the main instrument chosen, namely the free recall protocol. This incongruence makes itself even more evident if one considers the other instruments mentioned before, i.e. sentence completions, true/false, summaries (Yu, 2008), cloze tests (Chihara, Sakurai and Oller, 1989; Sasaki, 2000), etc. Klingner (2004: 59) has claimed that “none of these [cloze task, multiple-choice, short-answer questions, etc.] are natural reading tasks nor do they reflect what we know about the reading process.”

This thesis extends this claim and basically raises the concern here that the recall protocol (as well as the before mentioned instruments) can in fact be an appropriate measure of comprehension or understanding. Along similar lines, López Bonilla and Rodríguez Linares (2003: 74)¹ have pointed out the difficulty of defining the notion of comprehension in terms of recall ability and propose instead a constructivist notion: “In any case, what is at stake is what is understood by reading comprehension, a construct more and more slippery each time because of its fluid nature, situated in specific contexts (...) It is in this context that the forms of alternative evaluation have gained prominence in the last decade. Contrary to traditional practices, in which the student selects an answer from a range of possibilities (multiple choice, true/false, matching), the alternatives require the construction of a response, a product or a demonstration from the student.”

Although most of the studies reviewed in chapter 3 are framed within schema theory for the investigation of comprehension, the focus is on the final product of what has been understood as revealed by the recall protocol, with a specific interest in how much has been remembered from a text, or in other words, the *amount* of understanding. I believe that this focus would need a different way of theorizing, i.e. how much can be remembered where memory is a factor and therefore needs to be theorized. As Chang (2006: 522) puts it, “comprehension does not necessarily equate with remembering.” This change of focus is

¹ My own translation of the original in Spanish. I have translated into English all the quotes that I include in this thesis from material written originally in Spanish.

not acknowledged in the literature reviewed (cf. Chang, 2006). I shall come back to this issue later when I discuss the measures of analysis.

The recall task as described in the studies reviewed in chapter 3 seems to come into conflict with many of its widely accepted advantages. For instance, contrary to what I have just argued, i.e. that the recall protocol can be seen as a test of memory rather than comprehension, Sharp (2002: 117), Khaldieh (2001) and many others argue that “the assumption is that recall indicates something about the readers’ assimilation and reconstruction of text information and therefore reflects comprehension (...) Comprehension is therefore measured by the amount of information in the response.” Bernhardt (1991) maintains that this instrument, whose qualitative analysis is the preferred method to investigate L2 reading comprehension processes, requires that the reader understands the text well enough in order to be capable of producing a logical and coherent account. The most important thing about this instrument, according to this author, is that it allows for the emergence of errors and gaps in comprehension and in this way permits the visualization of the conceptual, linguistic and cultural elements that interfere with comprehension. She furthermore affirms that this instrument directly reflects how a reader builds meaning and which factors (linguistic and extra-linguistic) impede comprehension.

Heinz (2004: 99-100) claims that “the procedure allows misunderstandings and gaps in *comprehension* to surface” (my italics) and “stresses the importance of understanding. Students cannot simply guess at answers; they must attempt to form an understanding of the text.” On this basis, and building on Bernhardt (1991), the author foregrounds the recall protocol’s congruence with constructivist theories of L2 reading and its suitability to investigate “the reading comprehension *process*” (Heinz, 2004: 117) (my emphasis). Together with Riley and Lee (1996) and Sharp (2002), he also points out its integrative nature (quantity and quality) when compared to discrete point measures as well as its authenticity (considering that retelling is a pervasive activity in everyday life). Heinz (2004) is one of the few authors who recognizes memorial representation as the theoretical underpinning of the recall protocol, but the link with constructivist theories of reading and the attention on the process is curiously left unexplored.

I have decided to distance myself from the widely used recall protocol on the basis of four interrelated reasons. The first reason resides in the point I have raised above that the use of

recalls would require me to direct my attention to theories of memory which are beyond the scope of this study. Second, I believe that recalling what is in a text is not the same as understanding what is in a text. A few defenders of the recall protocol acknowledge the possibility of “rote learning without real comprehension occurring” (Sharp, 2002: 117), but only as a minor disadvantage. Because of this distinction between recall and understanding, I argue here that the recall of a text does not help to answer my research question. Third, what is more fundamental is the nature of my research question. I am interested in the *process* of reading, not only its *product*, which is what a recall test would focus upon. As I have just shown, defenders of the recall protocol argue the opposite. Finally, another fundamental reason is related to one distinguishing feature of this study, which is that it investigates natural reading, or reading in a natural setting, meaning that unmodified, natural texts were used (cf. the artificiality and experimentally contrived characteristic of the texts used in the majority of the reviewed studies in chapter 3 – something I exemplify later). Furthermore, regarding the artificiality of the experimental tasks which readers are asked to perform on the basis of such contrived, non-natural texts, I agree with Allington and Swann (2009: 224) when they say that “psychological experiments on literary reading, with their ‘think-aloud’ protocols, their rating tasks, their tests of recalls, etc. – not to mention the exam-like environments in which they often take place, and the bibliographically idiosyncratic texts (or ‘textoids’) at their heart – might be thought signally unsuited to the task of building up a model of ‘ordinary reading’: it may be better to treat such practices as indicative of the competencies on which particular groups or individuals *are able to draw when pressed* than of how reading “normally” proceeds” (their emphasis).

6.4.2. The proposed research tasks

6.4.2.1. One alternative: Think-alouds

One obvious option available in this study to investigate the process was to use the think-aloud technique. In what Cohen (1986: 132) calls a “mentalistic approach to reading,” think-alouds tap into the mental processes of reading, from the reader’s perspective (Cohen, 2009, personal communication). It is interesting to note, however, that none of the studies I have reviewed in chapter 3 uses think-alouds, with the exception of Sharifian, Rochecoste and Malcolm (2004), where surprisingly there is no mention of why the think-alouds were collected in the first place or how they were analyzed.

After due consideration, I came to the conclusion that this technique would not be suitable for the context in which I carried out this investigation for a number of reasons. First, it is heavily dependant on the verbalization skills of participants, who may experience difficulty articulating what they are doing or thinking as they read (Klingner, 2004). Second, the simultaneity of thinking about reading and reading was a potentially serious problem for inexperienced participants as mine, who had never engaged in this kind of activity. Furthermore, this simultaneity disrupts the process of reading itself (Klingner, 2004). Third, I anticipated it would have been difficult to guarantee that the focus of the think-aloud was placed where I wanted it to be. In other words, how the participants conceptualized the task would have been crucial. Even with my guidance, I thought it would have been impossible to assure that these participants focused on the cultural aspects of the texts, considering the ingrained linguistic focus of EFL reading in this context (Porto, 2001 b, 2008 b). On this basis, the prior training of the participants would have been much more time-consuming and demanding than usual and in the end, there would have been no certainty that the think-alouds would be usable for the purposes of this study. Finally, the length of the prompt texts, between one and three pages long, would have become an additional complication for the use of think-alouds, in particular in connection with their scoring, considering the fact that think-alouds are time-consuming and difficult to score (Klingner, 2004).

Let me at this juncture return to the literature analysis in chapter 3. When information about the length of the prompt materials used is included in the reviewed studies (which is infrequently the case, let alone finding appendices with the actual texts), it is remarkable that all are extremely short. Just a few examples follow. Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson (1979) used letters of between one hundred and twenty-seven – one hundred and thirty-six idea units (but did not include them in their article). Lipson (1983) never mentioned length at all. Of those who did include actual texts in appendices, Rice (1980) and Hammadou (1991) resorted to texts of between two hundred and fifty –five hundred words, and Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm (2004) varied between one paragraph and transcribed oral conversations of between ten and forty lines. Mecarty (2001) is one of the few who adopted a one-page text. Returning to my study now, because my prompt texts were unmodified extracts from literary works, they were considerably longer than those usually used in the research literature. Given the foregoing, it simply did not seem feasible to use think-alouds in this particular educational context, precisely because of the length of

the prompt texts. It is important to mention that participation was voluntary (not paid), that the project was already extremely demanding in terms of time, and that the think-aloud technique with texts of between one and three pages (as used here) would have been too time consuming to be implemented.

6.4.2.2. The proposal: reading response and visual representation instruments. General characteristics.

I therefore decided to abandon the traditional recall protocols and the think-alouds as described above. Klingner (2004: 59) has stressed the need for “innovative procedures that evaluate aspects of comprehension not assessed by standardized instruments.” In a similar vein, López Bonilla and Rodríguez Linares (2003: 74-75) have proposed the need for alternative assessment in evaluating reading comprehension and have suggested some examples which stress their naturalness and authenticity: “alternative evaluation can be understood as that which occurs on a daily basis in significant learning contexts. These practices reflect experiences that are conceived as ‘authentic’ and that are documented through, among other methods, observation, journal writing, portfolio writing, experiments and performance assessment. The emphasis here lies in the self-reflection of the person who undertakes each method as well as in the comprehension of what is done without taking into account the recall of isolated details.” This thesis can be seen as a contribution to the field in this respect by proposing the reading response and the visual representation tasks as alternative instruments.

I needed, however, an instrument which did not depart from recalls too dramatically so as to guarantee “consistency” across L2 reading studies (Brantmeier, 2004: 52). I designed two modes of response, a reading response task and a visual representation task, both based on the widely used recall protocol but with original innovations which, from my perspective, do emphasize the “integrative nature and authenticity” of the task (cf. point about Heinz, 2004, six paragraphs before).

A reading response task in writing is a reader response format adapted from Ollman (1996) which allows for the emergence of idiosyncratic responses to a text. It involves recalling and summarizing, but it goes beyond that by encouraging imaginative and personal responses as well. A skilled reader can, with the appropriate knowledge of text structure,

recall and summarize a text but have little understanding of the cultural dimension behind it. However, to produce a reading response task and a visual representation, recalling and summarizing alone are not enough. My participants had to make sense of the cultural cues as well as the culturally situated information in the fragments, relate them to their own cultural parameters, and in so doing they brought in their experiences, knowledge and background to their interpretation. As the instructions did not require them to recall every bit of the texts (see Appendix II), participants were free to respond to particular aspects which called their attention. They were not committed to reflecting the views of the writer or the narrator in each text. From this perspective, the reading response and the visual representation tasks are clearly distinct from the *verbatim* recall generally required in the recall protocol because they take account of current sociocultural views on reading that rest, among other features, on the multidimensional and multivalent nature of its processes (Bernhardt, 2003; Paris and Paris, 2003).

For the purpose of this study, the reading response task was also redesigned so as to distance it from the summaries, the syntheses and the free recall protocols that I had myself used in my previous studies. One radical difference with earlier projects resides in the fact that in this study Spanish was used in the instructions and in task completion. Before, the instructions were in Spanish, but the participants wrote their summaries (or syntheses, or free recall protocols according to each case) both in Spanish and in English, and were free to choose the language for the visual reformulation task (see remarks in what follows about the terms representation-reformulation). However, I have already pointed out that there is agreement in the literature regarding the advantages of collecting data in the participants' native language.

A visual representation is defined here as the visual representation of textual content including the combination of words, phrases, and/or sentences with visual information in different formats of varying complexity (such as charts, tables, graphs, grids, mind maps, flowcharts, diagrams, drawings, and the like). It distances itself from *reformulation* in the classic sense, whereby a reader rewrites a text (not his/her own) trying to adhere to the writer's assumed intended meaning (Cohen, 1983a, b, c, 1989, 2009, personal communication).²

² In my previous studies I had named this instrument visual *reformulation*. In order to distinguish it from reformulation in this classic sense, in this thesis I use the term visual *representation*. I thank Andrew Cohen for bringing the need of this distinction to my attention in 2009.

One of the reasons for the inclusion of this mode of response as a research instrument was its simplicity and power of representation (Derrida, 1994) as well as its usefulness to capture emotional responses in reading, an area in which schema theories have weaknesses (Sadoski and Paivio, 2004). Sadoski, Paivio and Goetz (1991: 472) remark that “imagery (...) has generally been neglected by reading researchers.” Furthermore, Dual Coding Theory (Paivio, 1971; Sadoski and Paivio, 2004), a theory of cognition like schema theory (described in chapter 3), can be rescued at this point to highlight the importance of imagery in comprehension. This theory can be used to justify the use of the visual representation as one data collection instrument in this study. Finally, Brantmeier (2005: 54) cites one study which found that “Imagery and affect were formed even in the absence of total understanding. This shows that they are fundamental variables in foreign language reading.” The visual representation was therefore conceived in this study as a medium for the foregrounding of imagery and emotion in reading.

To put oneself in someone else’s shoes requires imagination (Byram and Grundy, 2002; Kramersch, 1995) and the visual representation aimed to offer a forum for its manifestation (Burnett and Gardner, 2006). The idea was that participants reacted visually with the purpose of accessing their non-verbal, imaginative systems (Arizpe, 2001; Pope Edwards and Mayo Willis, 2000; Sadoski and Paivio, 2004). Another reason resided in the power of images as a strategy to recall textual information (Sadoski and Paivio, 2004). The integration of textual information in visual format is related to the comprehension, integration and appreciation of reading material (Pope Edwards and Mayo Willis, 2000; Sadoski and Paivio, 2004). In addition, the visual representation aimed at stimulating the cognitive through the affective in order to satisfy the perceived need in the academic community to unify the cognitive sphere and the affective domain (Burnett and Gardner, 2006; Byram and Grundy, 2002; Kramersch, 1995, 2003; Millard and Marsh, 2001; Sanders Bustle, 2004; Tierney, 1994), specially acute in countries like Argentina where many times the educational environment limits the development of this imaginative dimension. Although this study was not specifically aimed at or designed to investigate the affective dimension of reading, there is agreement in the literature that this dimension constitutes the point of entrance to another culture (Byram and Morgan, 1994).

Finally, this kind of affective, personal response to texts which the visual representation allows (obviously conditioned by the written mode) caters for the affective dimension involved in responses to literary texts as used in this study. Widdowson (2003: 89) points

out a gap that exists in this area: “One area of linguistic experience, however, continues to be neglected, namely the imaginative and individual exploration of meaning potential that is characteristic of literature.” This neglect motivates my claim that the visual representation can become a useful and necessary mode of response, which to my knowledge has not been used in studies investigating the cultural dimension of EFL reading. Worth remarking is Widdowson’s emphasis not only on the imaginative dimension but also on the individual. I have already argued in chapter 2 that this investigation is about the personal, the local, the individual, where the individual is not “reduced to a common factor” (Widdowson, 2003: 89). In this sense, therefore, the use of literary texts in this study, together with this specific mode of response, the visual representation, may contribute to capturing “the reality of the individual’s experience of language” (Widdowson, 2003: 89).

A practical issue here is that because I thought that the visual representation could help participants plan their reading response task if done first, I decided to have them do the visual representation after the reading response task. Anyway, as I am conscious of the inevitable effect that the sequencing of tasks has on the actual production of those tasks themselves (the sequencing proposed in this design or any other sequencing for that matter), I took this influence into consideration in the design of the data collection instruments as we shall see later.

6.4.2.3. Reading response and visual representation instruments: two forms of textual intervention

Both the reading response and the visual representation are tasks that presuppose some textual intervention, i.e. an act of “transformation” and change that allows for a deeper understanding of a text (Pope, 1995: 1). In both cases, the participants produced a new “text” (Anstley and Bull, 2006: 24), *different* from the prompt texts. In this sense, both instruments distance themselves from the free recall protocol, where the exactitude and precision in the reproduction of the original text is fundamental.

Precisely because of the transformation that they involve, the reading response and the visual representation tasks are also different from the retellings used by Martínez Roldán and Sayer (2006) and Van Hell, Bosman, Wiggers and Stoit (2003). Although I concur

with Martínez-Roldán and Sayer's concept of authorship in retellings when they state that "the analysis of retellings should not emphasize recall in the form of repetitions or paraphrases but (...) the focus should be on the reader as author of his own version of the content" (Martínez-Roldán and Sayer, 2006: 297), the notion of "transformation" (Pope, 1995: 1) is not at the centre of retellings. By contrast, the concept is fundamental in the proposed research instruments (reading response and visual representation) as well as the idea that the participants were the authors of these tasks, rather than mere recallers or re-tellers of textual content.

Based on Pope (1995), Carter (2010: 118), in the field of pedagogical stylistics, argues that "among the most striking developments have been those that focus on 'textual transformations' using comparative text analysis by means of processes of rewriting from different angles and positions by 'translating' the text from one medium to another along an axis of spoken to written, verbal to visual, textual to dramatic." Three types of textual transformations are identified. "*Re-writing* involves making use of a different range of linguistic choices; *transformation* is the manipulation of some key design feature of the text such as its narrative organization; and *re-registration* involves a more distinct shift so that the same content is conveyed in a different genre" (Carter, 2010: 118, his emphasis). Specifically, transformative text analysis requires that the reader compares the original text with one which has been rewritten, transformed or re-registered.

Three aspects need to be mentioned at this point. One is that in essence, it is possible to say that the reading response and the visual representation tasks that I propose in this thesis involve these three forms of transformations identified by Carter (2010), in lesser or greater degrees. Another is that Carter addresses textual transformations for pedagogical purposes, while I am proposing here that the reading response and visual representation tasks can be useful research instruments to replace the more widely known recall protocol. Finally, in this study participants did not purposefully compare texts on the basis of close readings, which is what textual transformations require from readers. However, the participants may have incidentally engaged in a process of comparing the prompt texts and their written productions.

The key idea, then, is that in writing the reading response and visual representation tasks, these readers produced new texts and in so doing, they engaged in processes of rewriting,

transforming and re-registering. These new texts are the result of, and at the same time, conform to the literacy identity of each participant, in his/her role as reader of the fragments as well as writer of the reading response and visual representation tasks. In this study, these tasks focused the attention on the repertoire of resources that each participant brought, specifically in relation to his/her *cultural knowledge and experiences* in his/her process of literacy within a wider matrix (constituted by his/her previous experiences with texts, his/her knowledge of texts, and his/her social and technology experiences and knowledge, among other aspects; Anstley and Bull, 2006).

The reading response and visual representation tasks are also different from the academic essay or the analysis paper, which tend to be usual in the literature courses in this university. For the purposes of this study, these ways of responding to literary texts would have reflected how much “knowledge about” cultural aspects the participants had, but would not have allowed for the emergence of their “knowledge in action” about the cultural aspects in the prompt texts. This notion of knowledge in action refers to the participants’ capacity to use cultural knowledge in new and concrete problem solving situations, in this case the textual interventions. Put differently, it involves the intercultural skills (Byram, Nichols and Stevens, 2001) set in motion while articulating knowledge about culture and cultural values. From this perspective, the reading response and visual representation tasks, as textual interventions, captured the participants’ cultural understanding at two points simultaneously: while reading a text and while producing another one at the same time. Producing an intervention requires exploiting a text in order to rewrite it from an alternative perspective, a perspective that will always be complementary or supplementary but never identical to the original text.

This potential of the textual interventions proposed for this study, in the area of cultural understanding, is strengthened by the properties of narratives which I have described in chapter 5. As I mention later, the reading response and visual representation tasks in this study included an important narrative component. The useful point about the narrative genre is that it is a space with holes, an arena of conflict and negotiation of meanings about others. The creation involved in reading and intervening in a text necessarily required an exploration of the hybrid, fluid, changing and dynamic nature of the voices and cultures found in the prompt texts. This exploration distanced itself from the perception or understanding of a culture as a homogeneous entity, since writers give their characters

voice in different sociocultural contexts. In this sense, when producing the textual interventions proposed for this study, the participants had to identify the existing tension amongst the voices of others (in the selected fragments) and their own, which they portrayed in their reading response and visual representation tasks. That is, intervening a text as the participants of this study did, meant bringing in their own voice as well as the voices of others in a way which was different from the writer's.

Both the reading response and the visual representation are re-centered textual interventions (Pope, 1995), the former from a new genre (short essay or composition) and the latter from an adaptation or change to a new medium (visual) without any genre modification from the original fragments. Anyway, the task instructions as the participants received them made them incline toward an important narrative component, even in the reading response task with a new genre (see Appendix II for the complete instructions). More specifically, the participants had to imagine that they were going to prepare someone for reading each text and that this person did not know the environment in which the text was set. They had to write an introduction to the text, in essay or composition format, telling readers (who were unfamiliar with the setting) what they needed to know, and what themes, specific to the cultural setting, would come up in the text. The instructions explicitly mentioned that this essay or composition had to be anchored to the original text, something that forced participants to make references to different aspects in each narrative.

The visual presentation (in this case by means of the visual representation), through image, has more determinacy because “Words *represent* worlds. Far less than film and photography do they *present* worlds. Words offer *absences*. Far less than film do they project *presences*” (Pope, 1995: 87). For this reason, in the reading response task the language tends more towards the telling or “narrativising” of experience, whereas the image shows or “dramatizes” experience. Particularly because the visual representation presents a change of medium (from word to image-word), it always means transforming, never simply transferring.

The participants' productive capacity was crucial to the completion of both tasks because they required the inclusion of a strong narrative component – given the narrative nature of the selected fragments themselves. The narrative element in both tasks required the integration of different kinds of knowledge, including linguistic, cognitive, social and discourse capacities (Allen et al., 1994). At a linguistic level, it was necessary to have

control over the logical and temporal organization. At a cognitive level, it was necessary to be able to use the typical elements in short stories such as events, aims, consequences, etc. and to know how these elements interrelated. At the level of social knowledge, participants needed to be able to explain the motivations and the behaviours of the characters and to include information about their mental states. At a discourse level, it was necessary to know how to create the frame or context for a story, to be able to distinguish the different voices present in a story (e.g. narrator and characters), to be able to distinguish the main and secondary characters and refer to them, to have the skill not to confuse their roles and activities, etc. In sum, both tasks required a high productive capacity (Allen et al., 1994).

Following Pope (1995), these textual interventions allow students to turn into analysts, critics and writers themselves. Both the reading response and the visual representation tasks encouraged participants to transform the prompt texts in multiple and varied ways (Anstley and Bull, 2006: 90-91), such as through:

- non traditional uses of plot, characters and place, challenging the reader/observer to find different ways of reading/looking (for instance, the combination of image with text, non linear readings);
- unusual uses of the voice of the narrator, to make the reader/observer read/look in particular ways through the eyes of particular characters (from 3rd person to 1st person);
- the mixture of styles of presentation of the visual that requires a range of skills in how to read, using different techniques for different types of information (for instance, graphs, patterns, charts, etc.);
- changes of format from a traditional to an unusual one, challenging the readings of the reader/ observer of the narration;
- intertextuality that requires a reader/observer to have access to and use other texts to reach available meanings (for instance, knowledge of other genres); and
- the availability of multiple readings and meanings for a variety of audiences.

More specifically, in intervening each text, the participants had multiple techniques at their disposal, such as:

- alternative reading responses and visual representations: attracting the attention to different aspects, generating discourses with distinct value loads, establishing what each participant considered more or less central, etc.;
- changes in the title, in the introductions (context of the narration) or in the beginnings with the purpose of creating different expectations in the reader;
- different endings to express a particular preference different from that of the original text;
- narrative intervention: changes in some central point of the narrative to explore alternative consequences;
- parody: exaggerating aspects of the original text to change its style or the its concerns;
- exploit implied or partially explicit parts;
- center the attention on a particular section of the text; and
- focus on central or secondary aspects, essential or peripheral information; among other options.

By means of these resources, put into action in the reading response and in the visual representation, the participants could challenge the reader's expectations, produce multiple readings and meanings, and defy a traditional audience to question established characters, scenes and plots. These resources provide new and alternative meanings because they play a role in the way in which an individual interacts with a narrative.

In this sense, the reading response and visual representation tasks allowed the exploitation of narrative processes conceived as a construction. In other words, in this thesis narratives are not considered simply as a final product but rather as a continuous and active process that implies the recreation of the fragments in question by means of the proposed textual intervention tasks.

Both textual interventions also required each participant to make a decision as to how parallel, contrary or alternative his/her production would be in relation to the prompt text. Following Pope (1995:5), intervening requires to ask oneself which “preferences” the writer creates, that is, which dominant reading is offered in a certain text. This can be complex in the case of literary texts because of their inherent ambiguity and aesthetic value. In addition, the fact that written language presents gaps of indeterminacy is not

trivial, or put differently, there is an important level of generality that requires a high degree of participation from the reader in order to achieve meaning (see chapter 2). Playing with this indeterminacy, literary texts accomplish effects and allow varied readings through time and through readers. Appendix I offers an analysis of the prompt texts where I present some of the key aspects in relation to the dominant reading, basically cultural issues, that it was possible to expect from the participants in this study, taking into account the inherent indeterminacy of the written medium.

On the basis of the foregoing, I propose that the reading response and the visual representation tasks are better instruments to investigate reading comprehension than the traditional free recall protocol.

6.4.2.4. Instruments for the investigation of the process

I was left, however, with the problem of how to explore what went on *during* EFL reading more directly. Even though I have conceived the reading response and the visual representation tasks so as to be congruent with sociocultural and constructivist views of reading in general, and of schema theory in particular, these modes of response are produced, nonetheless, *after* the reading has taken place. As viable alternatives to the think-aloud (given the contextual and local constraints that discouraged me from adopting this technique), I decided to explore the *process* of reading using the following research instruments:

- The prompt texts underlined with the difficult or confusing parts as the participants perceived them during reading together with brief explanations of those problematic aspects in note form in each text itself. As in Cohen et al. (1984), participants underlined each text as they read. The instructions aimed at having readers explain or comment on their underlining at this point, i.e. their comprehension difficulties *during* reading (see Appendix II), identifying the portions they found to be problematic or confusing for any reason except language. I explicitly denied the possibility of underlining linguistic difficulties in the hope that this would redirect their attention to other aspects such as the cultural content. The aim here was to observe which portions of the fragments these participants *perceived* as problematic, and in particular, which of those were cultural difficulties.

- An immediate written reflection log in Spanish based on the cultural aspects in the texts and the comprehension difficulties that the participants experienced. I placed this instrument immediately after reading each text and before the reading response and the visual representation tasks. The idea was that the participants reflected on their comprehension *during* reading, with no influence of the required written tasks based on each text. I thought that if I had collected this data type after these tasks, reflections would have tended to focus on issues related to the participants' formulation of their responses instead of on the process of reading itself. The immediacy between the reading and the log assured that participants remembered what they had done or thought of during reading. I obviously missed whatever they did not focus upon in their writing as the limitations typical of introspective methods apply. I should mention at this point that these learners had performed many reflection tasks similar to this reflection log as part of the requirements in my course.

- An individual delayed interview to explain, reflect and comment upon the participants' modes of response, in particular on specific issues arising from their reading response and visual representation tasks. Through specific questions, I directed them to reflect upon their thinking behind their writing in these tasks, particularly on issues which emerged from my preliminary analysis of them. Reflection, however, was not exclusively tied to these modes of response. In fact, sometimes it focused upon the prior knowledge task, the reflection log, or the comprehensibility grid for instance. These interviews took place one week after the reading of each text. Participants had all their productions as well as the prompt texts with them at the time of interviewing.

6.5. Research design: Full description of data collection instruments

In this section I describe each data collection instrument in detail. As I do so, I say how the proposed instruments in this thesis build on my prior research in this setting.

From a methodological point of view, my own prior body of work (Porto, 2010 b, 2009 a, c, d, 2008 a, 2005, 2003 b, c, 2001 c, among others) distances itself significantly from this thesis. Methodological and procedural issues underwent important and significant modifications in this thesis and constitute an advance with respect to this own production. I describe now the data collection instruments in detail and explain in each case how this thesis constitutes an advance over previous studies of mine in this setting.

6.5.1. Demographic data

The first step in the design was the collection of demographic and similar data to establish knowledge of the participants' position before they began the research tasks. Adhering to standard ethics as described for example in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000), the participants received general information about the research project and signed a consent form prior to implementation (Appendix II). In addition to biographical and contextual information, these data gathered information regarding the reading habits of participants in both languages as well as their prior cultural knowledge on the text topics. The data collection instruments appear in full form in Appendix II.

These data collection instruments were:

- a) questionnaire about reading in Spanish;
- b) questionnaire about reading in English;
- c) biographical information;
- d) prior knowledge task in writing about the cultural content of the fragments (prior to seeing each text) together with a specification of the source of that knowledge (TV, books, etc.).

Compared with my previous studies, the focus of some of these instruments, intended to collect demographic data, was reoriented toward aspects that were relevant to cultural understanding. For instance, the questionnaire about biographical information includes in this thesis specific questions about religion (given the important religious ingredient in all texts, by presence or omission) and about the participants' experiences and contacts with other cultures (through trips abroad and within the country, Internet, contact with foreigners, etc.). These aspects were not included in my prior studies.

I designed two questionnaires about reading, written in Spanish, one about reading in English and the other about reading in Spanish, which participants completed at home and returned electronically. These questionnaires aimed at gathering information about different aspects such as the participants' interest in reading, their reading habits (as well as those of family members), their reading preferences as regards genres, the time spent on reading outside formal education, their difficulties experienced during reading, their attitudes towards reading, the availability of reading material at home, and the use of libraries, among others. The participants' visions of and attitudes toward reading were important because, being influenced

by the cultural context as well as previous learning experiences, they delineated how participants conceived of reading and what values and assumptions they associated with it (Artelt, 2005; Burgess, Hecht, and Lonigan, 2002; Gee, 2001; Worthy, Moorman, and Turner, 1999). These questionnaires constituted themselves in a general contextual factor as well as one of the elements which allowed me to provide a thick description of the participants (Geertz, 1974, 1983).

I also designed a prior knowledge task about the cultural content of the fragments, which participants wrote before seeing each text. The task was simple and aimed at identifying their prior knowledge about a Christmas celebration in each context and their attitudes toward it – fundamental as they constituted the point of entrance to the texts.

This prior knowledge task about the cultural content of the fragments is much more specific than before. In my other prior studies, the task instructions were simple and open, of the kind *Write everything you know about ... If you are not sure, write what you think you know*. In this thesis, participants not only described a typical Christmas celebration in Argentina and the US, but they also compared and contrasted them with a typical Christmas celebration in their own homes. They also specified whether they had ever spent Christmas outside their homes and if so, they described the event. One question required them to say whether they knew how Christmas is celebrated in Brazil and in the US. The prior knowledge task about the Navajos inquired about any school knowledge about different Indian groups or tribes that participants thought might be relevant in their reading of this text.

The rationale for the inclusion of this task was that a reader's inappropriate interpretations may stem from textual or prior knowledge reasons. In addition, a wrong assumption regarding what the participants knew could have led to an inadequate or wrong analysis of their difficulties (Bernhardt, 1991). The task also required that participants specified the source of their prior knowledge (TV, books, films, art, trips abroad and within the country, contact with foreigners, etc.). This information was vital given that this study was framed in a culturally-specific context where English is not spoken in the country or the region, study abroad options are rare, and the participants had no direct contact with the foreign language or culture except through books, TV, Internet or other similar means.

6.5.2. The research tasks: data types and procedure

The second step was the administration of the tasks. The participants worked on one text per day, with one week time lapse in between. They received written instructions in Spanish for each task they were required to do and completed all tasks individually. At the end of data collection, they were debriefed.

For each text:

Participants read the prompt text with no time limit and performed the following tasks in the order presented here, obtaining these data types:

e) The text underlined with difficult or confusing parts as the participants perceived them during reading together with a brief explanation of such difficulties in note form in the text itself. In my previous studies, the participants underlined each text with the difficult or confusing parts as they perceived them during reading but were not asked to add this brief explanation of such difficulties in note form in the text itself. This modification was included with the idea of having a reference, brief, specific and concrete, about each difficulty.

f) An immediate written reflection log in Spanish. The participants reflected on such difficulties (as underlined in the texts, data type e) in a log especially designed to this aim. This log was a kind of retrospective self-observation and was based on the cultural aspects in the text and the comprehension difficulties found. It was made clear that they did not need to organize the information to be included or revise for linguistic accuracy because this was a reflection diary aimed at capturing the flow of their consciousness.

This data collection instrument is new to this thesis, i.e. I have not previously used it. In congruence with the view of comprehension that this study adheres to, as the participants wrote about the comprehension difficulties they experienced in relation to the cultural aspects in the texts in this immediate written reflection log, they were allowed to have access to the texts. By contrast, in all my prior studies as well as in the reviewed studies in chapter 3, the prompt texts were withdrawn after the participants had finished reading and they were not available to produce the required tasks (recall protocols, summaries, synthesis, etc.).

g) A reading response task in writing, in Spanish, with no time or word limit (described in sections 6.4.2.2. and 6.4.2.3.).

h) A visual representation task in Spanish, i.e. the visual representation of textual content including the combination of words, phrases, and/or sentences with visual information in different formats of varying complexity such as charts, tables, graphs, grids, mind maps, flowcharts, diagrams, drawings, and the like (described in sections 6.4.2.2. and 6.4.2.3.). It is important to note that while the instructions for this visual representation were identical to other prior studies (not the rationale though, see above), there was one important difference, which was the fact that this task had to be written in the participants' mother tongue.

The participants were well trained to produce the reading response and the visual representation tasks. They had produced them on several occasions in response to other literary texts used in this course during the year and prior to implementing this study. As mentioned before, they worked on each text at a time, in three different sessions (on different days). In each case, they read the prompt text and wrote a reading response task and a visual representation task, both in Spanish. The decision to use the L1 in the instructions and in the required tasks is consistent with the literature and aimed at avoiding any language interference with their ability to demonstrate comprehension. The high proficiency level of the participants notwithstanding, they might have experienced production difficulties in the L2 if required to perform the tasks in English. There was no time limit to read the texts. The participants were allowed to keep the prompt texts with them at all times during data collection (cf. all reviewed studies in which the prompt texts were withdrawn after the reading time). Participants were allowed to take notes and completed each task in the required order. There were no length requirements.

i) The following grid was also used. It included:

- the degree of self-perceived comprehension of the cultural aspects previously identified in the texts (cultural idea units; see measures of data analysis later) using a scale 0-6 (for example: I don't remember, totally comprehensible, totally incomprehensible); and
- the evaluation of each cultural aspect as essential or auxiliary to each Christmas celebration.

<i>Comprehensibility of cultural aspects</i>							<i>Importance</i>	
<i>Cultural Aspect</i>	<i>1 Totally comprehensible</i>	<i>2 Moderately comprehensible</i>	<i>3 Perceived as obstacle</i>	<i>4 Perceived as serious obstacle</i>	<i>5 Totally incomprehensible</i>	<i>6 I don't remember</i>	<i>Essential</i>	<i>Auxiliary</i>
Rabanada								
Sunday school								
Etc.								

As shown in chapter 3, in all the studies reviewed in this thesis data analysis involved at some point a qualitative analysis of the recall protocols in terms of the important and unimportant text elements recalled (the relative nature of the term “important” should be acknowledged). Although I find serious problems with the distinction product/process or quantity/quality (discussed later), I believe that this qualitative distinction can be useful to comprehend and describe how the participants in this study approached the cultural content of these texts in this setting. For each cultural idea unit identified in each text (see measures of analysis later), such as *rabanada* in *Mi planta de naranja-lima*, participants ranked its cultural comprehensibility, as perceived by themselves, on the basis of a six-item scale ranging from “Completely comprehensible” to “I don’t remember” (see Appendix II). They also had to decide whether each cultural idea unit, for example *rabanada*, was essential or auxiliary to the Christmas celebration described in the text. Participants completed this information in the grid after finishing the writing of the reading response and the visual representation tasks. This grid involved reflection on the cultural content of the texts, in particular the participants’ *perception* of such content, *after* the reading occurred, and after having elaborated that cultural content through the textual interventions (i.e. the writing of the reading response and the visual representation tasks).

j) A delayed interview to focus on issues which emerged from my analysis of g) and h)

I met with each participant on an individual basis to discuss their work. I invited comments in an open-ended way in the form of a semi-structured interview (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000; Kvale, 1996). Specific questions based on any aspect needing clarification followed. These personal interviews were not implemented in my previous studies and allowed me to obtain the participants’ opinions about specific aspects of their comprehension process.

I should mention at this point that the limitations associated with introspection and self-retrospection in much research with human participants apply to this study too (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007), in particular in connection with certain instruments such as the questionnaires, the immediate reflection log, the prior knowledge task and the interviews. Introspective and self-retrospective methods are good to collect information about the affective and mental states of readers, but reflect only what they are willing or able to express. It is impossible to know whether these participants believed, felt or did what they said they believed, felt or did. In addition, the participants may have edited their thoughts unconsciously before expressing them or may have experienced some difficulty to express certain feelings and opinions in writing or in the interviews. However, chapters 8 and 9 with findings, and chapter 10 with the in-depth analysis shall reveal that participants offered extraordinarily frank and honest feedback. This is something that I shall come back to in the final chapter with conclusions (chapter 11).

6.5.3. Availability of prompt texts at all times during data collection

It is important to point out once again that in this thesis the prompt texts were available to the participants throughout the study, at all times (cf. not only my prior studies but all the revised studies in chapter 3, where the prompt texts were withdrawn after the reading). The reasoning has already been explained: that this is not a study about recall and memory for what has been read, but rather a study about comprehension. On this basis, the rationale is that denying access to the fragments focuses the attention on what the participants are able to recover, or remember from memory, and not necessarily on what they understand.

6.6. Data analysis: overview of previous research

6.6.1. Quantitative and qualitative analysis

All the studies reviewed in chapter 3 analyze recall protocols both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative analysis involves the quantification of all the idea units of a given prompt text in a recall protocol (cf. Deville and Chalhoub-Deville, 1993, who propose an alternative scoring system). The prompt text is first parsed into idea units, which are then identified and quantified in the recall protocols. The more idea units present in a recall, the

more a reader is said to have comprehended the text in question. This quantitative dimension of the analysis focuses on how much has been recalled and how accurately. The *verbatim* recall required makes sense as most studies were framed along this reasoning. However, I have already raised my concern about quantity of recall being a measure of comprehension or understanding and I have argued that this focus would need a different way of theorizing, i.e. how much can be remembered where memory is a factor and therefore needs to be theorized.

In all cases, the qualitative analysis involves the investigation of the changes readers make during recall. On the basis of this dimension of analysis, researchers claim that recall protocols also contribute to exploring the *process* of reading. Heinz (2004: 98) and others stress that the immediate recall protocol “enhances quantitative and, more importantly, qualitative data collection.” Thirty years ago Bernhardt (1991: 194) was already bringing the same point to the attention of researchers: “a successful assessment mechanism for L2 reading comprehension must provide in-depth information on how readers cope with text while, at the same time, providing quantifiable data for large-scale comparison and contrast.” I observe simultaneity of quantity of recall measures (idea units) and quality/kind of recall measures (changes readers make) in all the studies reviewed in chapter 3. Despite this agreement in the literature, I believe that there is considerable confusion in this formulation, as the analysis rests on the changes made precisely during *recall*, not during *reading*. Hence the need to find alternatives to the recall protocol such as the think-aloud technique (which I finally abandoned) and the reading response and visual representation tasks that I have finally proposed in its place. This confusion permeates absolutely all the studies I have reviewed and calls the attention. Again, the investigation of changes made during recall, I have pointed out, would need to be explained in terms of theories of memory. However, in all the reviewed studies these changes are framed within theories of comprehension.

In some cases the confusion is even more visible when researchers use schema theory, adhere to this quantitative and qualitative analysis of recalls, claim that the study in question investigates the *process* of reading and concurrently point out that “there are few studies in the literature that give a complete picture of *performance*” (Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson, 1979: 13, my emphasis). The researchers explain that “there has been a tendency in discourse research for any one investigation to emphasize just a few favoured measures. The measures chosen typically correspond to theoretical position. Investigators with a constructivist bias look for elaborations and intrusions. (...) Those who believe in some

version of abstractive trace theory measure amount of recall of text elements, particularly as a function of importance of the elements to the overall message (Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson, 1979: 14). The authors search for all of the forgoing in their study (i.e. elaborations, distortions, amount of recall, amount of recall of important and important text elements) while they hypothesize and explain within schema theory. In addition, while the researchers acknowledge that readers produce elaborations, distortions, etc. (qualitative changes) at two points, namely during reading and later in recall, this distinction is not accounted for or reflected on in the design of the study. The contradictions and incongruence that I exemplify here between the levels of theory, data collection and data analysis are a characteristic of all the studies I have reviewed in this thesis.

Overall, in all the cultural studies reviewed in chapter 3, I observe a persistent and strong dichotomy *product* vs. *process* in reading comprehension, manifested in most methodological decisions. The opposition is between the quantitative analysis of the recalls through the mean frequency of occurrence of previously identified idea units in the prompt text and the qualitative analysis of those recalls through the observation of the changes readers make in recalling passages. This dichotomy that I point out here is not mentioned in any of the reviewed studies. In all cases, both product and process happily coexist in the methodology with no discussion whatsoever of the underlying views of reading involved. I observe this flaw even in Rice (1980) and Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm (2004) where despite the acknowledgement of a *continuum* of cultural familiarity, the methodology no doubt reinforces such polarity.

6.6.2. Notion of comprehension

The tension between product and process that I observe in all cases depends, as a starting point, on the conceptualization of comprehension (understanding) adopted in the first place. The problem is that this concept and the means to measure it are not defined in any of these studies. This thesis questions the underlying idea in all these studies that the ability to reproduce exactly what is in a text is a reliable indicator of comprehension. The required recall is in general *verbatim* or at best, as close as possible to the original and comprehension is assumed to have occurred when a text is recalled as accurately as possible. The qualitative dimension is generally explored in terms of important versus unimportant idea units, with the quantification of deviations from the original in the form

of errors, omissions, intrusions, distortions, etc. That is, the fewer errors, omissions, intrusions, and distortions observed, the more a reader is said to have comprehended a text. Also, the underlying assumption in all cases is that a measure of recall, which is a *product* of comprehension that takes place *after* reading, is an adequate measure to describe what happens *during* the comprehension *process*.

In this thesis I propose instead a notion of comprehension based on levels or degrees of understanding as described in chapter 4. This view distances itself from the focus on how much is remembered from a text (manifested in the quantification of idea units as well as in the polarity product-process) and brings us to a notion of understanding framed within a constructivist view of learning as a modification of something that is already present (rather than as the acquisition of new knowledge on a *tabula rasa*). The notion of levels or degrees of comprehension allows me to investigate the whole process of comprehension, i.e. both *during* and *after* reading, breaking with the polarity product-process until the process of reading is complete. The proposed design for this study, described in this chapter, allows me to capture both the *during* and *after* reading. The distinction between process and product falls away in this case until the process is complete as this investigation captures the *during* and *after* and how the existing (pre-knowledge) is modified by the process itself.

6.6.3. Measure of global coherence

The cultural idea units, the reader behaviours (with a cultural focus) and the *Model of Cultural Understanding* (previously called *Model of Cultural Apprehension*) – that I describe next - are the only data analysis measures common to all my prior studies and this thesis. In fact, only these three measures are used in this thesis. By contrast, my prior studies involved a wider variety of data analysis measures (see the previously mentioned publications in this section). I comment now about the appropriateness of one specific measure, the global or holistic coherence.

Several studies by other researchers use a similar measure (Heinz, 2004; Mannes, 1991; Martínez-Roldán and Sayer, 2006; Sharp, 2002; Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson, 1979). Heinz (2004: 117) mentions that “comprehenders unknowingly rate some propositions within the text as being more important than others and tend to build comprehension around these structures.” Sharp (2002) believes that the scoring in this measure requires the presence or absence of the gist of the text content. This measure of global coherence (also called “coherence,” “quality measure” or “gist”) aimed at observing whether participants produced a scattered, random sequencing of micropropositions in their recalls, or whether these recalls reflected a gist consistent with the prompt text. Martínez-Roldán and Sayer (2006: 306) refer to “holistic scores of retellings to gain a global measure of student comprehension of each text.” This measure, however, is not explained or described in greater detail than this, in any of the reviewed studies in chapter 3.

By contrast, in my previous studies, this global coherence measure was defined and described in detail. The holistic evaluation of each task (or overall impression, or global coherence) was determined using a scale 1 – 5, adapted from Penningroth and Rosenberg (1995). In this scale, level 1 amounted to an inadequate text in which it was hard to decipher what the writer was trying to say, with little or no coherence at all, and level 5 referred to a completely coherent piece of writing. It was assumed that this evaluation at the level of the complete text constituted a relevant and significant unit of analysis, a holistic measure of understanding. More specificity about this measure (with the description of each level, and how each was assigned) can be found in the previously mentioned publications, especially Porto (2010 b, 2009 a). However, a reconsideration of the adequacy of this measure for the purposes of this thesis led to its dismissal here. The overall line of thought was that in fact this measure centred on writing rather than reading.

6.6.4. Data analysis proposal: Model of Cultural Understanding, cultural idea units and reader behaviours

6.6.4.1. Model of Cultural Understanding

I therefore decided to use the *Model of Cultural Understanding* designed as part of the theoretical contributions of this thesis as a tool of data analysis. As described in chapter 4, this model draws on work by Alred, Byram, and Fleming (2006), Byram and Morgan (1994), Byram and Fleming (2001), and Kramersch (1993, 1998). Consistent with Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm (2004), I propose here that the apprehension, comprehension or understanding of the cultural aspects of (literary narrative) texts during EFL reading is not an all or nothing affair, but rather a question of degrees as well as increasing levels of complexity, accuracy and details. More specifically, the *Model of Cultural Understanding* is a six-stage model which attempts to describe the different ways in which EFL learners in this context may approach cultural issues during reading.

I needed a measure of cultural understanding which was congruent with the theoretical perspectives that frame this study. In this sense, it is important to observe that this model acknowledges the multiple and varied factors (at the level of the individual, the context in which reading occurs, and the sociocultural context, including the historical and global context) which influence reading in a given culture, in particular the aspects identified as central in this theoretical framework (chapter 2): the perspective (insider, outsider, hybrid) through which cultural aspects are portrayed in a text and through which a reader enters a text; the crucial influence of a reader's native culture on reading (through the enactment of multiple and simultaneous social identifications in each reading encounter such as race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, socio-economic status, religion, sexual orientation, educational background, special capacities and others); and the flexibility of reader responses given this interplay of factors. On this basis, I suggest here that this model offers a solid framework for the exploration of the cultural dimension of reading in a foreign language, especially the stages through which the cultural aspects of a given text may be approached during EFL reading. I have developed this model fully in chapter 4.

Model of cultural understanding during foreign language reading

Level 0. Erratic perception or omission of cultural aspects.

Level 1. Perception/identification of cultural differences. Access to levels 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Level 2. Identification of own values and ideas. Identification of the cultural assumptions behind one's own culture (insider perspective).

Level 3. Perception of culture C2 from one's own frame of reference (C1) (outsider perspective).

Level 4. Perception of culture C2 from the frame of reference of members of culture C2 (insider perspective).

Level 5. Perception of culture C1 from the perspective of culture C2 (outsider perspective).

I assigned at least two different levels to each reading response and visual representation task. First, a choice between levels 0 and 1. These levels are critical because they involve the perception, or lack of perception, of cultural elements (cultural details, similarities, differences, always on the basis of the reader's own culture). The perception of the different, exciting and attractive elements of a given culture is possible through the identification of key vocabulary and works as a bridge for stages 2, 3, 4, and 5 in the model. Second, I allocated responses to one of levels 2, 3, 4, 5.

6.6.4.2. Quantity and quality measures within the proposed notion of levels of cultural understanding: cultural idea units and reader behaviours.

Bernhardt (1991) and many others have argued, with regard to codifying and scoring data, that consistency both within the study and across L2 reading studies is crucial to be able to make appropriate generalizations. I think that this issue of consistency across studies is valid not only in relation to quantitative and qualitative analysis but also with regard to the instruments as well (i.e. recall protocols). I have already explained how I think that my proposed data collection instruments, mainly the reading response and the visual representation tasks, constitute an advance over the traditional recall protocol. As far as data analysis is concerned, I propose that the confusing and flawed product vs. process, quantity vs. quality distinction that pervades in all the reviewed studies can in fact be superseded by the notion of levels of understanding as portrayed in my *Model of Cultural Understanding*. Furthermore, I think that I can accommodate the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of analysis within this model in order to respond to this plea for consistency. But instead of

carrying out both analyses as independent and isolated stages in the research process, I propose to integrate both within this model. In other words, I shall show that both quantity and quality (cultural idea units and reader behaviours tied to cultural aspects) can successfully be interrelated in each of the six levels in this model, with more or less strength.

6.6.4.2.1. *Cultural idea units*

How to assign level 1 in this model to the participants' productions turned out to be problematic. I needed to identify some *a priori* elements for coding, for simple organization purposes. I therefore identified the culturally distinctive idea units mentioned in the prompt texts. The focus on *culturally significant* idea units distances this study from previous ones which have quantified *all* the idea units in the prompt texts. These idea units, which I identified with the help of a US native-speaker (when necessary), took the form of short phrases or propositions. Within this cultural dimension, I observed these *a priori* cultural idea units as included by the participants in the reading response and the visual representation tasks. Those learners who were able to identify or perceive (i.e. recall in all other studies) these cultural idea units in the tasks reached level 1 in the *Model of Cultural Understanding*. The omission of idea units was as significant as their inclusion.

Apprehending the cultural content of reading material requires, as mentioned in chapter 4, the openness of mind to discover new horizons of ideas. The choice between levels 0 and 1 in the model operates as evidence of such openness. I anticipated that a participant who lacked this openness would close his/her mind to these cultural idea units and would reach level 0 in the model. Even though this openness is an affective element of the process, and I am interested in the cognitive (i.e. degrees or levels of understanding), I think that this affective side constitutes the point of entrance to the texts. This justifies the presence of a zero level in this model.

A caveat here is that these cultural idea units are only *indicative* of a first step toward cultural understanding, i.e., level 1 in the *Model of Cultural Understanding*. The recall of particular idea units, atomistic as it may appear at first glance, presupposes the reader's *perception* of such ideas, with the concomitant awareness of the otherness behind them – something that allows for the entrance to higher levels of cultural understanding.

I include below the cultural idea units identified in each prompt text and codified as included/not included in the reading response and in the visual representation tasks written by the participants.

For *Mi planta de naranja-lima*

Rabanada soaked in wine; scant food; old and used present; without new presents from Santa Claus; birth of Devil Child; funeral of Jesus Child; Eve Mass; shaving and dressing up for Christmas; hugging and saying good things at Christmas; happiness of the others at church; family's poverty; uncle Edmundo puts money for the food; richness of the Faulhaber, Villas-Boas and Adauto Luz; rural life; sadness of the dinner; dine in silence; not expect presents in order not to be disappointed; place the trainers on the others side of the door; sleep to forge; Zezé's hope.

(Rabanada mojada en vino; comida escasa; regalo viejo y usado; sin regalos nuevos de Papá Noel; nacimiento del Niño Diablo; velorio del Niño Jesús; Misa de Gallo; afeitarse y vestirse bien en Nochebuena; abrazarse, decir cosas buenas y desear felicidades en Navidad; alegría de los otros en la Iglesia; pobreza de la familia; tío Edmundo pone dinero para la comida; riqueza de los Faulhaber, Villas-Boas y Adauto Luz; vida rural; tristeza de la cena; cenar en silencio; no esperar regalos para no decepcionarse; poner las zapatillas del otro lado de la puerta; dormir para olvidar; esperanza de Zezé).

For *Cat's Eye*

Jello salad; Jolly Green Giant; enormous turkey; cranberry sauce; cranberry juice; variety and abundance of food; playing with food without eating; Sunday school; Sunday school missionary paper; Banerji as a strange creature; Elaine as a strange creature; hidden misery of Banerji; family's hospitality; square tomatoes; turkeys with four drumsticks; skinless chicken; skinless cats; classification of people (tame-wild); snakes as topic of conversation; turkey as topic of conversation; cultural differences; scientific discourse; turkey's stupidity; anecdote of drowned turkeys; Banerji's appearance; reference to biology; smashed potatoes; lost flight.

For *Desert Wife*

Desert landscape; Navajo dressed in their best clothes; 200 Navajos present; a community celebration; piñon smoke from Christmas fires; Native Americans stroll with raw beefsteaks; provision of wood by Hilda & Ken; dances and music for amusement; handmade musical instruments; active celebration: wrestling and racing; early rising habits on Christmas; Navajos as efficient and ingenious; family groups eat together; Navajos eat and eat; episode of candy bags; dishwashing episode; bread making description; stew preparation; coffee-making description; Robert's greeting; reference to food in general; fun and happiness.

6.6.4.2.2. *Cultural understanding: specific reader behaviours in the approach to cultural content*

The process of cultural understanding, as portrayed in the model above, necessarily involves readers elaborating, distorting, inferencing, generalizing and simplifying (among other behaviours) the cultural content of what they read, depending on the level of cultural understanding they have reached. I therefore decided to observe what participants did in the written tasks, i.e. how they modified the cultural content of each text in writing the reading response and the visual representation tasks. In agreement with the product (quantity) vs. process (quality) discussion above, I also observed these behaviours in relation to the cultural aspects that appeared in the research instruments designed to investigate the process: the underlined prompt texts, the immediate reflection log and the delayed interview (data types e, f, j).

As I have shown, this procedure of observing the *kind* of information recalled is a standard measure in the studies reviewed in this thesis. However, in all cases the measures of analysis are more general than the ones designed for this study. For instance, Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson (1979: 15) focus on four broad changes that people make when recalling passages, namely elaborations or “culturally appropriate extensions of the text,” distortions or “culturally inappropriate modifications of the text,” overt errors, and omissions. Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm (2004: 211) include five elements in their classification index for recalled idea units, namely “correct recall, partial recall, distortion/reinterpretation, addition, omission,” which they call “general patterns or strategies recruited during the recall (Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm, 2004: 203).”

In this study, the reader behaviours considered (the textual modifications produced by the participants in their response to the fragments) are different from those in the literature in two ways. First, they are more varied and specific. From this perspective, the extensive list of sixteen reader behaviours which appears below is a distinguishing feature of this study. Second, these reader behaviours are not what is known as reading strategies but rather are those processes or behaviours which appear only in the approach to the cultural content in reading. Each behaviour is a behaviour in relation to cultural content. So it is not “simplifying information” but “simplifying *cultural* information.”

This list of behaviours has developed from the results of three earlier studies with similar characteristics to this one (Porto, 2001 c, 2003 c, 2005). In those studies, the usual five behaviours were initially observed and codified in the data, to find later that many more indeed appeared during data analysis. Hence, this extended list of reading behaviours emerged as a methodological contribution of such prior work. Tentatively, because the contexts of those studies and this one were similar, I expected that similar behaviours would appear. However, I was open to find other categories in the data, i.e. I was flexible about these *a priori* definitions.

Cultural understanding: specific reader behaviours

Elaborating cultural information

Distorting culture C2

Intruding cultural details from own culture

Making evident cultural errors

Appropriate cultural inferencing from the texts

Inappropriate cultural inferencing (inferences not motivated or justified by the cultural content)

Including irrelevant cultural information

Rationalizing cultural information

Simplifying cultural information

Generalizing cultural information

Making evaluative comments based on cultural information

Including an adequate moral related to a cultural aspect

Including an inadequate or wrong moral related to a cultural aspect

Explicitly including the feelings and motivations of the characters, appropriately inferred from the cultural content of the text

Explicitly including the feelings and motivations of the characters, wrongly inferred from the cultural content of the text or not motivated or justified by it

Including culturally adequate details

I define each reader behaviour in more detail now.

Elaboration of cultural information: information from an appropriate schema; culturally appropriate extensions from the text (with more or less precision).

Distortions of culture C2: culturally inappropriate information; culturally inappropriate textual modifications.

Intrusions from the native culture or C1: from the participants' own ideas and cultures.

Evident cultural errors: an action leads to an unexpected or inappropriate result; explicit cultural errors with an identifiable cultural base; strange details, not motivated or justified by the text in general, its cultural content, or the Christmas schema.

Inferences from the cultural content of the text: inferences motivated or justified by the cultural content of the text.

Wrong inferences: inferences not motivated or justified by the cultural content of the text.

Irrelevant cultural information: information (about events, places, characters, thoughts and feelings of certain characters, etc.) referring to cultural aspects which has no place in the flow of the key events in the story; the result of a local reading and of assigning the same value or importance to all the text, with the focus on cultural information which was not intended to be focal.

Rationalization of cultural information: link among cultural details and the presentation of such details as apparently coherent. Of two types, depending on whether one cultural detail is linked to another not present in the text itself (inventions) or whether two cultural details present in the text are related (with the use of cohesion to relate elements which should not have been connected).

Reduction/simplification of cultural information: process of simplification of two or more sentences, with fewer words and details than the original text; use of general vocabulary; presence of general propositions, i.e. with terms which summarize the most basic actions of the Christmas schema in the text.

Generalization of cultural information: a more significant reduction in which general words replace specific nouns; presence of general propositions, of a more topical nature than reductions.

Evaluative comments about the cultural content: inclusion of an opinion or attitude about a cultural idea in the text (not the mere copying of the opinions of the characters or the opinions of the writer of the text).

Adequate moral/ interpretation: motivated or justified by the cultural content of the text or the Christmas schema.

Inadequate or wrong moral/ interpretation: not motivated or justified by the cultural content of the text or the Christmas schema.

Explicit inclusion of the feelings and motivations of the characters: inferred from the cultural content of the text.

Explicit inclusion of the feelings and motivations of the characters: wrongly inferred or not motivated or justified by the cultural content.

Culturally adequate details.

6.7. Validity, triangulation and reliability issues

A brief discussion about validity, triangulation and reliability issues is imperative at this point. Considering that in any research, it is impossible to be totally valid and reliable (i.e. it is a matter of degree), the discussion that follows needs to be framed within the qualitative research paradigm.

As regards validity, this study is undoubtedly anchored to the principles of qualitative research (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). It stresses, as I have explained in chapters 1 and 2, its context-boundedness, the socially situated nature of the data, its descriptive focus with an emphasis on understanding (not explanation), the natural (classroom-based or

community-based) setting of the data types (cf. laboratory-based and experimental studies), an emphasis on the process (as well as outcomes) and the complexity inherent in all research in the social sciences, involved with people and oriented toward discovering meaning and intention from the participants' points of view. In addition, the internal validity of this study has been achieved mainly by the peer examination of the data analysis process as well as by the detailed account of the rationale for the instruments used as explained earlier in this chapter.

Not only does this study adhere to and respect these principles, which contribute to its validity, but it also addresses this concern for validity through other means, such as the “honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007: 133). From this perspective, and as these authors themselves suggest, it might be best to re-conceptualize this notion as it is pertinent in this study as *authenticity* or *understanding*. I allow myself to bring Byram's words from the introduction in chapter 1 at this juncture, in claiming that the validity of this study is that it can be thought of as “work which seeks *understanding* of the experience of people involved in education” as opposed to work which seeks explanation or change (Byram, forthcoming).

More specifically, following Maxwell (2002), this study achieves the following kinds of validity: descriptive (in the factual accuracy of what is reported here, nothing of which has been made up, altered or cut in any way³); interpretive (in my ability to see meaning in the participant's productions, or in other words, my interpretive ability); and generalizability or internal generalizability, which means “generalizing within the community, group, or institution studied to persons, events, and settings that were not directly observed (Maxwell, 2002: 53). Freeman et al. (2007: 29) refer to this as “particularistic generalizations.” In this specific setting, internal generalizability has been achieved in the

³ It may be useful to bear in mind what Maxwell (2002: 47) says with regard to descriptive validity: “A claim that a certain phenomenon was frequent, typical, or rare in a specific situation at the time it was observed (...) is also subject to threats to descriptive validity. This is an issue for which Becker (1970) has advocated the use of what he calls “quasi-statistics” – simple counts of things to support claims that are implicitly quantitative. What makes this a matter of descriptive validity is that it does not involve statistical *inference* to some larger universe than the phenomenon directly studied, but only the numerical description of the specific object of study.” On this basis, the report of findings in chapters 8 and 9, where applicable, should be seen in this light, i.e. as a numerical description of what was observed.

possibility to generalize *within* this specific group of students (college students, prospective teachers and/or translators of English) in this specific community (La Plata, Universidad Nacional de La Plata) under these circumstances (English Language II course). As Maxwell (2002) states, qualitative studies do not allow generalizations to wider populations. There is no claim here as far as external generalizability is concerned, i.e. “generalizing to other communities, groups, or institutions” (Maxwell, 2002: 53). This would be a matter for further research with larger samples from different institutions and/or universities. Maxwell then continues to emphasize that “indeed, the value of a qualitative study may depend on its lack of external generalizability in a statistical sense; it may provide an account of a setting or population that is illuminating as an extreme case or “ideal type” (Maxwell, 2002: 54). This study provides such account.

Following Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), this study achieves other kinds of validity as well. One is ecological validity, in the sense that as researcher, I have not tried to control variables. I have already said that one distinguishing feature of this study is that it is descriptive and exploratory, i.e. it investigates natural reading. As Allington and Swam (2009: 224) state in this respect, “with complex real world activities like reading, conclusions arising from experimental data alone can at best be – as Hall (2008: 21) argues – ‘suggestive’, their ecological validity questionable.” Furthermore, “the primary authenticity of literary texts” (Carter, 2010: 116), and therefore of the literary narrative texts used in this study, contributes to its high ecological validity because “narratives enable an investigation of contextualized language use” (Van Hell, Bosman, Wiggers and Stoit, 2003: 299). This means that “more imaginative and representational uses of language could be embedded alongside more referentially utilitarian output” (Carter, 2010: 116).

Another kind of validity is cultural validity, because in all the stages of the research I have been extremely sensitive to the participants, their cultures and the specific circumstances surrounding them as individuals. Although in general cultural validity is used with reference to target cultural groups, the notion is applicable to this study, if one brings to the foreground the principles of qualitative research that I mentioned before, as well as the conceptualization of culture as a dynamic construct (a concept to which this thesis adheres and which has been explored in chapter 2).

It should also be borne in mind that there are several types of validity (Freeman et al., 2007). For instance, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) identify and discuss over eighteen types of validity, obviously not all relevant to this study. What is perhaps important to highlight is the permanent attention that I have paid to this issue in this thesis throughout the process of carrying out this study and my flexibility to continuously consider multiple alternatives in my decision-making at different stages in the process. In this sense, I agree with Freeman et al. (2007: 29) when they say that “There is no single marker of validity in qualitative inquiry, and the best qualitative research uses many of the strategies just described and invents others specific to the particular study. Thus, validity cannot be defined in advance by a certain procedure but must be attended to at all times as the study shifts and turns.” I illustrate some small shifts and turns in what follows. In chapter 11 I describe this process with a major shift related to the notion of cultural remoteness.

As far as triangulation is concerned, the richness, complexity and intricacy of the context-boundedness of this study and its participants was captured by the various perspectives or aspects of reading as they were experienced by these participants in this particular context. More specifically, this study achieves the following kinds of triangulation: time triangulation, because the participants rendered data at different points in time in the course of thirteen months (November 2009-November 2010); investigator triangulation, because the data were analyzed independently by myself and by invited colleagues, or in other words, analyses were undertaken through the eyes of more than one observer; theoretical triangulation, because of the multiple theoretical lenses which constitute the theoretical framework of this study, as discussed in chapter 2; and methodological triangulation, because the multiple instruments of data collection as described in this chapter secured that the data captured reading as experienced in this setting, by these participants, from more than one standpoint. In particular, the instruments of data collection and the measures of analysis allowed complementary insights into the data (the reading response task and the visual representation task on the one hand, and the use of these three modes of analysis of the data on the other - the *Model of Cultural Understanding*, the cultural idea units, and the reader behaviours-).

An option that I entertained here was the resort to member checks as a form of triangulation conceived as a process. Bishop (1999: 120) says that checking with the actual

informants is the “ideal scenario” and proceeds to justify on these grounds: “Sharing our work with our informants as often as is feasible and as interactively as possible will not only enrich our cultural understanding, involve us in triangulation as process, but also allow our readers to know what we did and why it worked out that way” (Bishop, 1999: 123). Similarly, Freeman et al. (2007: 28) say that “qualitative methodologists also encourage member checks” - although this practice may vary with the different schools of qualitative research. For instance, “in this tradition [the Chicago school of qualitative sociology], the practice of checking a researcher’s interpretations and representations with participants prior to publication is valued” (Freeman et al., 2007: 26).

By contrast, Morse et al. (2002: 16) argue that “while it is an attractive idea to return the results to the original participants for verification, it is actually not a verification strategy. In fact, several methodologists (...) have warned against the tendency to define verification in terms of whether readers, participants, or potential users of the research judge the analysis to be correct, stating that it is actually more often a threat to validity. The problem with member checks is that, with the exception of case study research and some narrative inquiry, study results have been synthesized, decontextualized, and abstracted from (and across) individual participants, so there is no reason for individuals to be able to recognize themselves or their particular experiences (...) Therefore, member checks may actually invalidate the work of the researcher and keep the level of analysis inappropriately close to the data.”

Overall, despite the appeal in Bishop’s (1999) suggestion, Morse et al.’s (2002) caveat that the notion of verification of the results by member checks is problematic when results are synthesized seemed sensible. Nevertheless, and quite apart from triangulation issues, I believed that it was important that the people involved in this study knew what was being done with the data. Considering that respect for informants is an important issue which can be met in some circumstances, I thought that the circumstances in this study allowed me to cater for this concern. I therefore shared the results chapters (8 and 9) with all the participants and chapters 10 with Tess. I did so with the understanding that even though they might have comments, those comments would not necessarily be more authoritative than mine as a systematic researcher and analyst. I should mention that no participant had made any remarks by December 2010 (when the writing up of this thesis report was finalized).

Another decision at this point was to respect the anonymity I had promised participants at the beginning of the study. There are, however, other views on the matter. For instance, Williams (1996 in Bishop, 1999: 144) says: “While most researchers disguise participants’ names and associations to protect them from potential embarrassment or harm, this strategy also prevents participants from receiving recognition. In fact, as researchers paper over participants’ identities, they eliminate any opportunity for public acknowledgement or praise.”

Another aspect that merits some space here is that of reliability. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007: 148) affirm that “the suitability of the term for qualitative research is contested” and can be replaced by others like credibility, confirmability, dependability, consistency and applicability. Whilst a discussion of the nuances among these terms escapes the scope of this thesis, one underlying principle of qualitative research reflects such contestedness. This principle refers to the uniqueness, the locality and the idiosyncrasy of qualitative research, which make replicability unworkable. It is on the basis of this impossibility that the notion can be contested.

Concurrently, however, the authors point out that there may be replication in some aspects of qualitative research. In this study, the aspects that could be replicated are the status position of myself as researcher, the choice of participants, the social situations and conditions, and the methods of data collection and analysis. If one moves beyond the debate regarding the need, relevance and legitimacy of the concept of reliability for qualitative research, ultimately the principles of qualitative research which I referred to earlier may become the criteria of reliability in qualitative methodologies (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Once again, these criteria would be the specificity of the context and the situation, authenticity, comprehensiveness, detail, honesty, depth of response and meaningfulness to the respondents.

More specifically, one kind of reliability that could be applicable in this study is inter-rater reliability. Freeman et al. (2007: 28) say that “working with other researchers—peer debriefers and research groups—to help think about the complexity and ethics of the work is also recommended.” In this case, four colleagues voluntarily agreed to participate as analysts of samples of the different kinds of data from the different instruments, using the different modes of analysis. It is important to note that these colleagues were participants (as research assistants) in one of the current studies on which this thesis builds.

Specifically, this is a research project funded by the Ministry of Education of Argentina (2008-2011) (see chapter 1 for the contributions of my own previous studies to this thesis). Because of this, these colleagues only needed minimal training to participate in this process. They were highly familiar with the overall study, including the data collection instruments and the data analysis measures. We held one meeting in which I explained how this thesis differed from the current study they were participating in, in particular with regard to details about the research instruments and the measures of analysis. For data analysis, these colleagues followed the same procedures described in this chapter. Each one worked independently and we consulted to resolve cases of disagreement by discussion. This process clarified the overall analysis because it provided a guarantee of my being consistent in my analysis through this consultation with others.

Morse et al. (2002) contest the gradual replacement of the concepts of validity and reliability by sets of criteria including those discussed above, which has occurred in qualitative research over the past two decades. They make a case for a return to these notions as a way of attaining rigor in qualitative research by the implementation of verification strategies during the research process itself (as opposed to criteria used to evaluate research once it has been completed). I let the authors speak for themselves: “We argue that strategies for ensuring rigor must be built into the qualitative research process *per se*. These strategies include investigator responsiveness, methodological coherence, theoretical sampling and sampling adequacy, an active analytic stance, and saturation” (Morse et al., 2002: 17).

Investigator responsiveness has been taken care of in this thesis by my sensitivity to the participants as well as my flexibility in putting forth a research design that was appropriate to the setting (e.g. the dismissal of think-aloud as described in this chapter). Methodological coherence was achieved by the congruence between the research question and the method. The sampling was appropriate and adequate in the sense that the participants were thought to be able to provide a response to the research question (for instance, they had high literary and linguistic competence, therefore allowing the focus on cultural competence; see chapter 5). In addition, the data were collected and analyzed concurrently, permitting an interaction between collection and analysis that “is the essence of attaining reliability and validity” (Morse et al., 2002: 18). For instance, before implementing the interviews I read all the reading response and the visual representation

tasks to be in a position to know what to inquire about in the interviews. Finally, another aspect mentioned by the authors is what they refer to as “thinking theoretically” (Morse et al., 2002: 18). This means that the ideas that emerged from the data were confirmed in new data, and this process in turn generated new ideas which were then verified in the collected data. I shall say more about this when I describe the data analysis process in the following chapter. In sum, in this study I have also implemented verification strategies *during* the investigation *process* in Morse et al.’s terms (2002), strategies which have contributed to the attainment of reliability and validity.

6.8. Conclusion

This chapter has described the research design of this exploratory interpretative study in detail and has included the rationale for my methodological decisions. It has provided a general overview of the research design as a whole, for the reader to have a gist of the research. I have also offered an overview and analysis of previous research in relation to the data collection instruments and the data analysis measures in the literature. Observing serious inadequacies in the traditional instruments and measures available, I have then proceeded to propose my own. This proposal has been accompanied by the rationale for my choices as well as by a detailed description and explanation of the proposed instruments and measures. Throughout the chapter the emphasis has been on explaining how my methodological decisions have complemented each other and have been put together in a robust research design. The chapter has concluded with a discussion about validity, triangulation and reliability issues.

In the next chapter the focus will turn to the process of data analysis as it actually occurred in this investigation. Its purpose will be to describe, explain and illustrate how I analyzed the collected data.

CHAPTER 7

DATA ANALYSIS: DESCRIPTION AND ILLUSTRATION OF THE PROCESS

Introduction

Researcher's background and perspectives

- Theoretical journals
- Field notes
- Data files

Proper data analysis

- Global overview from all data collection instruments
- Proper data analysis

Data analysis: interrelationships, description and exemplifications

- Cultural idea units
- Reader behaviours
- Model of Cultural Understanding

Conclusion

CHAPTER 7

DATA ANALYSIS: DESCRIPTION AND ILLUSTRATION OF THE PROCESS

7.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the process of data analysis as it took place in this investigation. I start with a short reference to the issue of the researcher's stance in a qualitative study such as this one, and explain how my awareness of it led me to take specific actions to mitigate its impact. I describe procedural aspects in connection with data analysis, such as how I organized and arranged data, how I actually went about analyzing the data, what processes lie beneath what got reported in this thesis, what problems I was faced with at different points in data analysis and how I solved them, etc. I then explore the interrelationships among the proposed measures of data analysis. I do this in an integrated account whereby I describe, illustrate and exemplify the workings of the cultural idea units, the reader behaviours and the *Model of Cultural Understanding* in operation in the array of data collection instruments, namely the prior knowledge task, the immediate reflection log, the reading response task, the visual representation task and the delayed interview. Finally, I present the supporting role of interview data, which I have integrated in this chapter's procedural and integral account of how data analysis has proceeded in this study.

7.2. Researcher's background and perspectives

“Neither research participants nor researchers can be neutral, because (...) they are always positioned culturally, historically, and theoretically” (Freeman et al., 2007: 27). Focusing the attention on the researcher, the knowledge base of every investigator is limited and is affected by the social, historical and cultural context. This context works as a cognitive filter and affects the manner in which the researcher conceives the investigation and carries it out as well as the way in which he/she perceives the research process itself. The researcher is part of the social world under investigation and is therefore in a position to know certain things and not others (Rosaldo, 1993). Particularly worth mentioning is the

double vision that oscillates between the perspective of the external observer and that of the members of a given culture (Geertz, 1983), discussed in chapter 2. Each point of view is incomplete and reflects the fact that sociocultural realities are changing and multifocal (Rosaldo, 1993). Furthermore, language use is not neutral. Given this scenario, the researcher must be explicit with regard to the meanings that he/she brings to his/her analyses and observations. I describe next this process as it took place in this investigation. Nevertheless, even though this study has strengthened my capacity to see and understand, I am aware that there may be other ways of hearing and interpreting the voices and reading practices of the participants involved in this research.

7.2.1. Theoretical journals

As I was positioned by the qualitative nature of the research as the main agent of collection, analysis and interpretation of the data, it was important to reflect on my background and perspectives. I did not attempt to suppress my methodological prejudices, unavoidable as these were, but rather bring them to consciousness, acknowledging my subjectivity. No matter how open I was, I was conscious that I approached this research project with my idiosyncratic theoretical and analytical frames for interpretation (Norton Peirce, 1995). Much subjective reasoning went into my decisions about the direction the research should take, as these decisions were influenced by many ideas such as what doing qualitative research involves, what findings are desirable in a study of this kind, what my aspirations as researcher were and many others. I therefore kept theoretical journals throughout the research process to reflect on issues like these. The journals had the status of intrapersonal dialogues, i.e. written conversations with myself focusing on my own interests, strengths, weaknesses, biases and goals in connection with the research process and thus offer insight into my background as researcher and my points of view in response to, but not limited to, issues like those above. Reflecting on these questions in writing forced me to make my stance to the research project explicit and helped clarify my roles and functions in each stage of the research. These theoretical journals were particularly useful during the first year of this endeavour, when the adjustments to the original research proposal were frequent and ongoing.

7.2.2. *Field notes*

I took brief field notes during all the research process, with peculiarities for each stage. For instance, during each data collection session, and within the constraints of the actual implementation, I wrote accounts of whatever called my attention, including descriptions of the context and the physical setting, reflections on the participants' states of mind, descriptions of incidental episodes as well as of issues that came out in the interviews. During data analysis, these notes took the form of brief comments about many things, such as emerging issues and themes, areas that required my revision for some reason, unforeseen areas of difficulty in the coding stage, etc. In this sense, they became very useful as they constituted reminders of things to focus upon later (particularly for coding purposes as I shall exemplify later, and for writing up the thesis). I expanded these notes, descriptive and narrative in nature, as soon as possible after I wrote them.

7.2.3. *Data files*

I kept data in different files. I had *raw data files*, *data reduction files*, *data reconstruction files* and *methodological process notes*. I describe each one in turn.

*Raw data files*¹ included all the data from all the research instruments. These raw data files comprised:

- a *context data file*, with general observations regarding basic information about the university in general and the course of studies in particular, the organization of the school day (useful to arrange the data collection sessions), schedules for the interviews, etc.;
- a *researcher data file*, with my field notes, theoretical journals, coding sheets, marked data types (handwritten comments I inserted in the actual collected data), transcripts of the interviews with my handmade annotations, etc.;

¹ I adopt the term “raw” for simplification purposes here. It should be noted, however, that “data are produced from social interactions and are therefore constructions or interpretations. There are no “pure,” “raw” data, uncontaminated by human thought and action” (Freeman et al., 2007: 27).

- a *participant data file*, which included the biographical information questionnaire, contact information, email correspondence throughout the research process, questionnaires about reading in English and in Spanish, etc.; and

- *proper data types*, which included all the data types in this investigation (reflection log, reading response task, visual representation task, delayed interview, etc.).

In *data reduction files* I included:

- a) descriptive and narrative handwritten comments about all the data collection instruments (particularly the prior knowledge task, the reflection log, the reading response and the visual representation tasks, and the interview);
- b) short informal notes about the idiosyncrasies of certain participants (for instance, personal traits and significant events in their lives - as reported in the biographical questionnaires, or revealed through other data collection instruments - which I thought would be relevant for cultural understanding);
- c) general written profiles of the data;
- d) *verbatim* data excerpts from varied data types entered in the computer;
- e) written outline of data collection procedures;
- f) data display charts; etc.

My notes on emerging patterns and key themes in relation to the research question went to *data reconstruction files*. These notes were important because they helped focus my attention on the research question. I also used them to organize the final report. Here I also included handwritten notes connecting varied data types as they were pertinent to the research question, and written syntheses of data from key data collection instruments (reading response and visual representation tasks, interviews) which included my preliminary attempts at providing interpretive comments. The preliminary drafts of the final report of this thesis and the written feedback from colleagues on these evolving drafts went to these reconstruction files too.

Worth mentioning in particular in this respect is the detailed feedback, written and face-to-face, provided by Andrew Cohen, Michael Paige and Elaine Tarone, researchers at CARLA (Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition), University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, USA, in September 2009. I was invited by CARLA's Director, Elaine

Tarone, to spend a short research stay there, where I presented my research project. The feedback they offered allowed me to improve some methodological aspects and highlight some methodological strengths. One was the distinction between representation and reformulation in connection with one data collection instrument, the visual representation, discussed in chapter 6, which resulted from discussions with Andrew Cohen. Another was the distinction between the nature of the prompt texts used in this study and the use of cultural incidents in intercultural research, discussed in chapter 5, which was made possible through interaction with Michael Paige. Finally, Elaine Tarone's caveats and doubt cast around the theoretical concept of cultural remoteness contributed to my abandoning this aspect of this research for the purposes of this thesis. I take up this issue in chapter 11.

I also kept specific *methodological process notes* where I documented research decisions through reflection on issues related to data collection, analysis and interpretation. I used these notes to explain my methodological decisions in this final report, consider research options, explore their advantages and limitations, and examine the impact of these decisions on the research process itself. I also wrote notes to reflect on my growing understandings of the general patterns in the data and how these contributed to answering my research question.

Data collection

Raw data files

Context data files

Basic information about the university in general
Basic information about the course of studies in particular
Organization of the school day; timetables
Interview schedules

Researcher data files

Theoretical journals
Field notes
Coding sheets
Marked data types
Transcripts of interviews with annotations

Participant data files

Biographical information questionnaire
Contact information
Email correspondence throughout the research process
Questionnaires about reading in English and in Spanish
Prior knowledge task in writing about the cultural content of the fragments

Main data types files

Text underlined with difficult or confusing parts
Immediate written reflection log
Reading response task in writing
Visual representation task
Comprehensibility grid
Delayed interview

Data reduction files

Descriptive/narrative handwritten comments about all data types
Short informal notes of the idiosyncrasies of each participant
Narratives of significant points of discussion sessions with external coders
Extensive narratives of some selected meetings with the raters
Written synopses of these key meetings
Written reflections on unresolved cases
General written profiles of all the data
Verbatim data excerpts from varied data types for illustration purposes
Written outline of data collection procedures
Data display charts

Data reconstruction files

Emerging patterns and key themes in relation to the research question
Handwritten notes connecting varied data types
Written syntheses of key data types
Preliminary drafts of the final report
Written/oral feedback from colleagues on these evolving drafts

Methodological process notes

Documenting research decisions through reflection
Explaining methodological decisions
Considering research options
Exploring their advantages and limitations
Examining the impact of these decisions on the research process itself
Reflection notes on my understandings of the general patterns in the data

7.3. Proper data analysis

7.3.1. Global overview from all data collection instruments

I conducted global analyses of all the available data. For this macro analysis, I extensively reviewed all data types to become familiar with them and to obtain a global, holistic sense of what was happening. After the closure of data collection, I read and reread all the data types several times and kept informal notes/comments of salient features focusing on areas of agreement across data types and participants, unique perspectives and emerging themes. After this holistic overview, I repeated the procedure with specific groups of data. One group was formed by the biographical questionnaire and the questionnaires about reading in English and in Spanish. Another group comprised the prior knowledge task, the texts underlined with reading difficulties and the immediate reflection log. The final group consisted in the key data types, namely the reading response and the visual representation tasks, plus the interviews. These anecdotal handwritten comments, descriptive or narrative in nature, helped me look for

explicit links and interconnections among all data types. My initial impressions, based on these comments, were general observations related to the research question. Based on these impressions I generated preliminary reflections pertinent to the research question. I portrayed these two levels of data analysis (initial impressions and preliminary reflections) in a three-column data display chart capturing commonalities, unique perspectives and the developing themes. Congruence between my impressions and these reflections was loose at this stage as I was more interested in gaining access to the broad picture. I also read all the data about individual participants independently, wrote short informal narrative and descriptive interpretations, and used these data narratives to confirm or discard the preliminary information in the three-column data chart.

It is important to highlight the significance of the process I have just described, which emerged after the data collection and only when I was faced with all the actual data. In other words, it was impossible for me to execute my original data analysis plan (described in chapter 6) right away as I needed to accommodate to the wealth of data I had in front of me. I did so in the way I have described above.

Data analysis

Global overview from all data types

Extensive revision of all data types
Writing informal notes/comments of salient features
Identifying areas of agreement, unique perspectives and emerging themes
Finding links and connections among all data types
General observations related to the research question
Preliminary reflections pertinent to the research question
Writing short informal descriptive or narrative interpretations
Holistic perspective

Coding

Cultural idea units
Reader behaviours
Model of Cultural Understanding

Process

Marking and placing in appropriate categories
Searching for negative cases that challenge idea units, behaviours, levels
Naming, refining, grouping, collapsing and regrouping idea units
Multi-coding when necessary
Data saturation: multiple examples
Entering all data types in the computer
Selecting multiple examples for illustration in final report
Compiling detailed reader profiles of individual participants
Ongoing selectivity and revisiting of the data
Resorting to external coders to identify bias in selection and representation
Writing interpretive descriptions of selected data excerpts: analytic narrative +
general description + interpretive comment
Propositional statements

Triangulation issues

Revisiting the body of data as a whole repeatedly
Renaming or redefining the patterns and categories already created and defined
External raters examine data and provide a check on method of analysis
Meetings with the external raters to discuss method of analysis
Independent reviewing by myself and external raters
Individual written reflections on unresolved cases
Collaboratively resolving disagreement by discussion

7.3.2. Proper data analysis

I was ready then to start with the coding using the data analysis measures described in chapter 6. As I used these *a priori* measures, i.e. the cultural idea units corresponding to each text, the list of reader behaviours and the *Model of Cultural Understanding*, I was simultaneously alert

to the preliminary holistic impressions and reflections which the previous macro analysis had revealed.

I selected data segments from all data types for inclusion in this chapter in order to illustrate and exemplify the interrelationships among the research instruments and the measures of analysis as I had used them in this study. I began with a broad selection of segments. As time passed and I grew familiar with the data, I narrowed the selection and searched for data segments that added insights of typical cases as well as those that captured unique or conflicting information. I used coding sheets and proceeded manually, one data type at a time (cf. the vertical analysis participant by participant which I mentioned above).

The initial coding in this stage served to alert me to inadequacies in the *a priori* measures of analysis and led me to create new categories for coding as well as to find places where to collapse categories. I reviewed all the available data in search of negative cases that challenged these new categories. When I coded a data section primarily under one category, and later discovered that this portion had aspects which were indicative of another category, I multi-coded it. I shall provide examples of this later in this chapter. When I could not find new data that supported additional categories, I considered the data saturated (Morce, Barrett, Mayan, Olson and Spiers, 2002). Therefore, the final categories in the cultural idea units and the reader behaviours as well as the levels in the *Model of Cultural Understanding* were partly devised *a priori* but were also partly directly derived from the data themselves.

I entered all data types in the computer, with the exception of the questionnaires about reading and the biographical information. Deciding what and how much to include in this chapter for illustration purposes was not easy. I initially selected lengthy data segments and reduced them more and more by eliminating redundant or irrelevant information as well as other information not directly relevant to the research question. I added contextual clues, reference information and clarifications where necessary. The prior knowledge task, the immediate reflection log, the reading response and the visual representation tasks, and the interviews were entered in their entirety for the three texts.

I shall later in this chapter present, illustrate and exemplify each measure of analysis using data excerpts. To this aim, I targeted specific portions of the data entered in the computer for in-depth analysis. I identified the most salient and representative examples while trying at the

same time to be comprehensive enough to fully sample the breadth and richness of the data. Selecting the most representative examples was more problematic than I had expected. I wanted to offer a thorough and rich picture of the data I chose to include here for illustration purposes, capturing at the same time significant nuances in the participants' multiple perceptions and interpretations of each prompt text. I identified critical discrepant cases, in particular those that I thought had the potential to influence my own interpretation of how cultural understanding had taken place in this setting. Another reason for including multiple examples stemmed from my awareness that what I selected, how I positioned myself in this selection, and how I constructed my interpretations of these selections would affect what got actually represented in this final report. I was conscious that in featuring certain descriptive and narrative accounts of the data I was inevitably downgrading others. As I was continuously interpreting and reinterpreting the data, I was aware that my representation of such data could not be anything but an incomplete picture of the reality of these participants' approximation to the cultural content of the prompt texts used in this study. Selecting multiple examples to illustrate the measures of analysis forced me to examine the impact of these issues on my selection process and assess how representative my selected examples were in the light of the wealth of available data.

As mentioned before, I include here multiple examples in an attempt to capture these participants' multiple interpretations and assure a genuine and meaningful representation of the essence and specifics of the individuals concerned. I am conscious, however, that in my effort to capture the breadth and variety of the data, I might have included snapshots of rich but perhaps idiosyncratic accounts. Selectivity was an ongoing and crucial process in this final phase of analysis as I was still left with somewhat accumulated and extended repetitive realms of *verbatim* excerpts from the varied data types in support of the main results of this study. I was aware that selectivity here could be equated with bias. My decisions about what counted as a representative example and where it fitted in the overall picture may have resulted in a narrow or distorted vision of what got represented in this thesis. I counteracted premature selectivity by reviewing the selected excerpts again and again and exploring critical incidents and events in greater depth. Revision of the data was ongoing. I invested time and effort to refine and narrow the lens through which I viewed the data.

I also used the most salient and representative examples from the data to compile detailed reader profiles of individual participants. These profiles got shape after my reading and

rereading of all the data types by each participant independently in what can be called a vertical analysis (cf. the horizontal or transversal analysis described so far in this chapter). These profiles were therefore informative, descriptive and explanatory, were a synthesis of all the relevant data types, gave a flavour of the data, and served to identify the major issues and thematic trends associated with each individual. I explored specific voices by gathering more contextualized data on some focal participants and in this way gained a sense of the nuances in each individual. I synthesized this information in an integrated account. I have used this information in chapter 10, which provides an in-depth analysis of one participant. The process described here was useful in the selection of this individual for this vertical analysis.

For illustration purposes in the present chapter, then, I wrote preliminary narrative vignettes containing *verbatim* excerpts from all data types framed with brief interpretive comments in order to explain, support and illustrate the measures of analysis. In particular, this final phase involved the writing of interpretive descriptions including a general description, an analytic narrative, and an interpretive comment. The narrative vignettes reflect the characteristics of cultural understanding in this context. The general descriptions provide evidence that the narrative vignettes written are typical examples from the total corpus of the data. Each data excerpt is framed with brief interpretive comments including pertinent information about the context, analysis of its meaning and finally, fit within the entire picture.

7.4. Data analysis: interrelationships, description and exemplifications

After this procedural description regarding data analysis, and before I formally present results in the following chapters, I shall proceed next to show and exemplify where appropriate the interrelationships among the proposed measures of data analysis in answering the research question, which was:

What processes, techniques and behaviours do EFL college readers in this setting use to comprehend the cultural content of literary narrative texts during and after reading?

7.4.1. Cultural idea units

One important clarification at this point is that even though the research design in this thesis purposefully switched the focus away from the explicit *recalling* of textual content (in the form of the *immediate recall protocol*) (see previous chapter), the textual

intervention designed, in the form of a reading response task and a visual representation task, required that readers organized their responses drawing upon the cultural content of the texts. This cultural focus was made explicit in the instructions that the participants received (Appendix II). Therefore, one obvious and first decision that these participants needed to make, consciously or unconsciously, in responding to the cultural content of the literary narrative prompt texts concerned what content could be regarded as cultural (and what content could not) and within that, what needed to be explicitly mentioned in their tasks and what needed to be omitted. In this research design, this decision amounts to the distinction between levels 0 and 1 in the *Model of Cultural Understanding* described in chapter 4. This distinction centres on the identification of some culturally distinctive idea units, mentioned in the prompt texts, and their inclusion in the required written tasks (for instance, the reading response and the visual representation tasks).

I had compiled these idea units in an *a priori* list of *cultural idea units*, which I used for coding. The focus on *culturally significant* idea units distances this study from previous ones which have quantified *all* the idea units in the prompt texts (and have therefore emphasized recalling). Those readers who were able to identify or perceive (i.e. *recall* in all other studies) these cultural idea units in the tasks reached level 1 (as opposed to level 0) in the *Model of Cultural Understanding*. Here, the omission of idea units was as significant as their inclusion.

Now this choice between levels 0 and 1 in the model operates as evidence of these participants' openness of mind to discover new horizons of ideas (in this study in relation to the cultural) in their reading of the prompt texts. A participant who lacked this openness would close his/her mind to these cultural idea units and would be seen as having reached level 0 in the model. The recall of particular idea units, atomistic as it may appear at first glance, presupposes a reader's *perception* of such ideas, with the concomitant awareness of the otherness behind them, something that allows for the entrance to higher levels of cultural understanding.

As I shall mention in chapters 8 and 9 with findings, these participants included most of my *a priori* cultural idea units in the required tasks, though not all, and in different degrees. They also included other cultural idea units, specific to each text, which I had not listed myself

(mentioned in Tables 14, 15 and 16 in Appendix III). For the reader's convenience, I include my *a priori* lists again here.

For *Mi planta de naranja-lima*

Rabanada soaked in wine; scant food; old and used present; without new presents from Santa Claus; birth of Devil Child; funeral of Jesus Child; Eve Mass; shaving and dressing up for Christmas; hugging and saying good things at Christmas; happiness of the others at church; family's poverty; uncle Edmundo puts money for the food; richness of the Faulhaber, Villas-Boas and Aducto Luz; rural life; sadness of the dinner; dine in silence; not expect presents in order not to be disappointed; place the trainers on the others side of the door; sleep to forge; Zezé's hope.

(Rabanada mojada en vino; comida escasa; regalo viejo y usado; sin regalos nuevos de Papá Noel; nacimiento del Niño Diablo; velorio del Niño Jesús; Misa de Gallo; afeitarse y vestirse bien en Nochebuena; abrazarse, decir cosas buenas y desear felicidades en Navidad; alegría de los otros en la Iglesia; pobreza de la familia; tío Edmundo pone dinero para la comida; riqueza de los Faulhaber, Villas-Boas y Aducto Luz; vida rural; tristeza de la cena; cenar en silencio; no esperar regalos para no decepcionarse; poner las zapatillas del otro lado de la puerta; dormir para olvidar; esperanza de Zezé).

For *Cat's Eye*

Jello salad; Jolly Green Giant; enormous turkey; cranberry sauce; cranberry juice; variety and abundance of food; playing with food without eating; Sunday school; Sunday school missionary paper; Banerji as a strange creature; Elaine as a strange creature; hidden misery of Banerji; family's hospitality; square tomatoes; turkeys with four drumsticks; skinless chicken; skinless cats; classification of people (tame-wild); snakes as topic of conversation; turkey as topic of conversation; cultural differences; scientific discourse; turkey's stupidity; anecdote of drowned turkeys; Banerji's appearance; reference to biology; smashed potatoes; lost flight.

For *Desert Wife*

Desert landscape; Navajo dressed in their best clothes; 200 Navajos present; a community celebration; piñon smoke from Christmas fires; Native Americans stroll with raw beefsteaks; provision of wood by Hilda & Ken; dances and music for amusement; handmade musical instruments; active celebration: wrestling and racing; early rising habits at Christmas; Navajos as efficient and ingenious; family groups eat together; Navajos eat and eat; episode of candy bags; dishwashing episode; bread making description; stew preparation; coffee-making description; Robert's greeting; reference to food in general; fun and happiness.

These *a priori* lists had resulted from three previous studies which I carried out in this same setting between 2000 and 2005. At that time, I collapsed or merged idea units and added others to obtain these final lists. For instance, after noticing that sometimes readers failed to mention specific events but nonetheless referred globally to a certain idea, I generated all-embracing idea units such as *scant food* and *family's poverty* for the text in Spanish. These new idea units were useful for coding when a reader had not specifically mentioned the *rabanada*, or the lack of presents for instance, but had explicitly referred to the lack of food and the poverty of the family in general.

The same occurred in the case of the fragment from *Cat's Eye*. Sometimes readers did not explicitly include the different anecdotes regarding Nature in their written tasks (*square tomatoes, turkeys with four drumsticks, skinless chicken, skinless cats, anecdote of drowned turkeys*) but did refer to *biology* or *scientific discourse* in general; other times they failed to offer specificity regarding the food (*jello salad, enormous turkey, cranberry sauce, cranberry juice*) but nonetheless referred to the *variety and abundance of food*.

Finally, in the Navajos text sometimes readers did not mention the specific events that took place during the celebration such as the *dances and music for amusement*, the different *cooking episodes*, or the *wrestling and racing*, but kept the idea of the *fun and happiness* associated with the celebration.

The foregoing motivated the inclusion of general cultural idea units like those exemplified here in earlier studies, and I made the decision to keep these general idea units for this

study too. This process turned out to be very useful for this study and pertinent as well. Consequently, no additional collapsing or merging took place at the time of the present investigation, with isolated exceptions.

One such exception was that, at the beginning of this study, my initial *a priori* list of cultural idea units for *Cat's Eye*, for instance, involved a distinction between the anecdote of the drowned turkeys in detail (actually narrating what happened in the anecdote) or in general (simply referring to the fact that this anecdote is narrated in the story). However, given that the data analysis phase revealed that nobody mentioned this anecdote in detail, I decided to keep only one cultural idea unit for coding. I have included the *a priori* lists of cultural idea units in previous paragraphs. Tables 14, 15 and 16 in Appendix III include those which I needed to add for coding in this particular study in the way I have just described.

Overall, then, the cultural idea units became concrete, evident indices of how these readers responded to the cultural content of the literary narrative prompt texts used in this study. In other words, the inclusion of these idea units in the written tasks evidenced the participants' decisions related to issues such as what content could be regarded as cultural (and what content could not) and within this, what needed to be explicitly mentioned in the tasks and what needed to be omitted.

7.4.2. Reader behaviours

Concomitant with the coding of these cultural idea units was my observation of what these participants had done in the written tasks, i.e. how they had modified the cultural content of each text in writing the reading response and the visual representation tasks. It is important to highlight that data analysis proceeded as a unified process in the way I have just described, i.e. starting with the cultural idea units (simply because I had to start somewhere) but in permanent interaction with the other measures of data analysis (reader behaviours and the *Model of Cultural Understanding*). I undertook very many re-readings of all data types (as I describe at the beginning of this chapter) in order to analyze the data, sometimes the focus being on the cultural idea units, other times on the reader behaviours and others on the model, but never losing sight of the research question. What is necessary to stress nevertheless is that these analyses were integrated and simultaneous rather than discrete, staged and successive

(i.e. one data analysis measure at a time). This written report, however, fails to capture this dynamics because of the linearity of writing. The point then is that in this data analysis, product (in the form of the quantification of cultural idea units) and process (in the form of the kind of behaviours undertaken by the participants while reading and writing the required tasks) came together in an *integrated data analysis process*.

The integration of product and process and the permanent interaction among all measures of data analysis at this stage reached not only the main data types (reading response, visual representation) but also the research instruments purposefully designed to investigate the *process* of reading (i.e. what the participants did or thought about *during* reading), which were the underlined prompt texts, the immediate reflection log and the delayed interview (data types e, f, j). From this perspective, the illustration of the measures of analysis that comes next in this chapter focuses on both aspects of the research question, namely the *during* and *after*. I shall say more about this later.

In addition, much in the same way that my analyses were integrated and procedural, this written report aims to respond to the research question in a similar fashion, i.e. presenting an integral account drawing from all the available data types. For this reason, the reader will not find in what follows a sequential listing (with definitions and examples) of each measure of analysis (cf. methodology chapter 6). Therefore, to facilitate clarity, measures of analysis are italicized throughout.

It may be useful at this point to exemplify the list of reader behaviours, another measure of data analysis, with the actual collected data. For the purpose of this section, which is to illustrate the observed reader behaviours, I start with a definition of each reader behaviour plus an example, which may come from any data type. Following the data analysis process that I have just described, this exemplification necessarily proceeds in an integral manner. Put differently, it is impossible (and undesirable) to isolate reader behaviours in an atomistic fashion (cf. methodology chapter). Rather, what follows presents an illustration of reader behaviours in permanent interaction among themselves and among all data types.

I have chosen to focus this illustration mostly on one text only, the text in Spanish, because this narrowing allows for this interaction to emerge more clearly. Between parentheses I mention each participant's pseudonym and the data type, and between brackets I add any

clarifying information as I deemed necessary. When I transcribe a portion from an interview here (i.e. when the interview is not complete), I signal the missing parts with suspension marks in this way (...). Also, in the interview transcripts I use initials to identify each participant and myself as the interviewer (in this case with the initial M). In the data excerpts selected for illustration purposes here, I italicize the evidence for the argument or point I wish to make in each case.

In chapter 6 I have defined *elaboration* of cultural information as information from an appropriate schema (in this study, the Christmas schema) or in other words, culturally appropriate extensions from each text, with more or less precision. Victoria's reading response offers an example of an elaboration around the concept of Eve Mass (Misa de Gallo): "Se observan, por otro lado, elementos típicos navideños. Son ejemplos las diferentes menciones a la comida; los fuegos artificiales que se echan al viento a medianoche en Nochebuena; *la Misa de Gallo, que es la celebración de la iglesia católica para esperar y conmemorar el nacimiento de Cristo*" (Victoria, reading response, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*).

When the elaborations occurred in the prior knowledge task, they were obviously not anchored to textual information (because these data were collected before the actual reading of the texts) but rather to the participants' prior knowledge regarding the text topics, irrespective of the source of such knowledge. Victoria wrote a highly *elaborate* prior knowledge task from the point of view of its cultural content, with many *culturally adequate details* regarding a Christmas celebration in Argentina:

En los días previos la gente se ocupa de comprar regalos y comida, todo lo cual será luego el centro de la fiesta de Nochebuena. En las calles se respira un aire más jovial, hay *adornos en vidrieras y árboles de Navidad en las casas*, por supuesto, todo dependiendo de la situación económica que también parece ser un factor motivante importante, quizás precisamente a consecuencia de que regalos y comida constituyen el centro del festejo. *Gente que no se ha visto entre sí en mucho tiempo aprovecha la ocasión para hacerse un llamado*, y se organizan la cena de Nochebuena y el almuerzo de Navidad. En ambos casos *suele ser comida no apropiada para la estación (verano)*; supongo que hemos importado las modas de otros países donde la Navidad tiene lugar durante el invierno. Aparecen entonces *las comidas típicas como el asado, el cerdo u otra carne hecha "a la parrilla", ensaladas, y como corolario, los infaltables turrónes y el imprescindible pan dulce, casi un símbolo de la Navidad en Argentina*. Los festejos de Navidad suelen *congregar a toda la familia alrededor de la mesa*, y muchas veces sirven como *punto de reencuentro* para quienes han estado sin verse, quizás, desde las Navidades anteriores" (Victoria, prior knowledge task about Christmas in Argentina).

A *distortion of culture C2* amounts to culturally inappropriate information or culturally inappropriate textual modifications. In this text, the reference to the event of Zezé putting his trainers on the other side of the door resulted in all kinds of distortions, ranging from what it was that he put (shoes, trainers, slippers, or in other words, *errors with a clear cultural base*) to Christmas being associated with the Three Kings, but framed nonetheless within the Christmas schema. That is, the participants who mentioned the Three Kings did so as if this event happened during Christmas time. Besides being considered as a *distortion*, this reference to the Three Wise Men can also be taken as an example of an *error with a cultural base* as well as of an *intrusion* from this religious festivity in the participants' culture. In this sense, this exemplifies too the multi-coding that I referred to above. I shall come back to these last two reader behaviours later (errors, intrusions)².

² A caveat is in order here as regards Christmas and Epiphany. The reader shall have noticed that for the purposes of this investigation I consider Christmas and Epiphany as two different celebrations. This distinction was particularly relevant in the data analysis stage, as evidenced in this section. I shall come back to this point later in this footnote.

Let me begin by stating that the Catholic Church, whose celebrations are established in the so called "liturgical calendar" or "liturgical year," includes Christmas and Epiphany within the same liturgical season. This liturgical season, called precisely "Christmas season," finishes with the celebration of the Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist, the first Sunday after the Epiphany. The reason for this inclusion is, to begin with, that both Christmas and Epiphany have the same setting (the manger of Christ's birth). Moreover, Epiphany is a direct consequence of Christmas, as it can be read in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CATCC): "the magi's coming to Jerusalem in order to pay homage to the king of the Jews shows that they seek in Israel, in the messianic light of the star of David (...) the one who will be king of the nations" (CATCC, 528).

However, even when they are included within the same season, the Catholic Church considers Christmas and Epiphany two different celebrations. In fact, they originate from two different biblical episodes: Christmas refers to the birth of Child Jesus (Mt. 1, 18-25) while Epiphany refers to the visit of the Wise Men (Mt. 2, 1). The article 1171 of the CATCC reads: "In the liturgical year the various aspects of the one Paschal mystery unfold. This is also the case with the cycle of feasts surrounding the mystery of the incarnation (*Annunciation, Christmas, Epiphany*). They commemorate the beginning of our salvation and communicate to us the first fruits of the Paschal mystery" (the emphasis is mine).

Given the foregoing, in this study I consider Christmas and Epiphany as two celebrations which, despite being very closely related, differ in their biblical origins as well as in their specific rituals.

The fact that today both celebrations have an undeniable common link (giving and receiving presents) might be seen as a relevant factor involved in the generation of the kind of *distortions, errors with a cultural base* and *intrusions* that I describe and exemplify in this chapter.

Finally, it would be possible to entertain that the inclusion of Christmas and Epiphany, by the Catholic Church, within the same liturgical season might have confused the participants and might have led them to see Christmas and Epiphany as part of the same celebration. However, something that weakens the possibility that this might be a relevant factor involved in the *distortions, errors with a cultural base* and *intrusions* observed in this sense is the fact that the participants in this study have not shown that they were in a knowledgeable position to have a deep understanding of

In her reflection log Luz dwelled on the confusion that the mention of the trainers in the text generated in her. This task is evidence of a multiplicity of behaviours, and of how they were at times intricately interrelated within a short piece of text.

La segunda dificultad se presenta cuando *el niño insiste en colocar sus zapatillas*, ilusionado con recibir un regalo de Papa Noel. *Según su cultura entiendo la idea ya que lo asocié con una parte de mi cultura (Los Reyes Magos)*. Di por sentado esa relación. Igualmente creo que se me facilito el entendimiento ya que son hechos o acciones que tenemos en común, pero se presentaría como un problema si la persona que lee el texto no realiza en su cultura un hecho familiar. Si en el país, región o lugar las personas carecen de ese ritual por llamarlo de alguna manera, no podría interpretar porque el niño quiere poner las zapatillas del otro lado de la puerta.
(Luz, reflection log, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

Here Luz attempted to interpret the reference to the sneakers by relating this event to what she associated it with, namely the Three Wise Men (“Según su cultura entiendo la idea ya que *lo asocié con una parte de mi cultura [Los Reyes Magos]*”). But at the same time, she distanced from this festivity in her own culture and made an effort to reflect upon how somebody who did not have a similar festivity would interpret Zezé’s actions (“*pero se presentaría como un problema si la persona que lee el texto no realiza en su cultura un hecho familiar*”). There is here a trace of level 5 in the *Model of Cultural Understanding*, in the attempt to inspect one’s cultural practices from the eyes of outsiders, something I shall come back to later. Luz concluded with a generalizable meta-cultural reflection about the need to anchor the protagonist’s actions to something familiar in a reader’s culture (“*Si en el país, región o lugar las personas carecen de ese ritual por llamarlo de alguna manera, no podría interpretar porque el niño quiere poner las zapatillas del otro lado de la puerta*”).

This reflection log supports what she had previously underlined in the text itself as problematic, and the brief explanation in note form that she had provided then:

Entiendo que el nene quiere y espera el regalo de papá Noel y es por eso que coloca las zapatillas. *Nosotros lo hacemos no en Navidad sino cuando vienen los “Reyes.”* En fin, lo entendí y *lo comparé y lo asocié con mi conocimiento sobre mi país y cultura, pero*

the liturgical year, and consequently, of the inclusion of Epiphany within the Christmas season.

Digital version of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Available at <http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/INDEX.HTM> Last retrieved February 11, 2011.

Catechism of the Catholic Church. Latin text copyright (c) Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Citta del Vaticano, 1993.

creo que si no tendría (sic) ese conocimiento previo hubiese sido muy difícil saber a qué hacía referencia y por qué el niño actuaba así.

(Luz, note about the text underlined with difficulties, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

Both tasks include the Three Wise Men as an *intrusion* from her own culture, something that is also observed in the following extract from her interview.

M.: "Creo que se debe a no saber particularidades de la cultura." Yo supongo que vos suponés que esto es algo cultural.

L.: Claro.

M.: Por eso. ¿Qué te hace suponer que es algo cultural y no otra cosa? ¿Por qué se te ocurrió que es cultural?, es mi pregunta. Por ahí no sabés contestarla...

L.: Claro, sí, no... en realidad... Claro, sí, acá veo como que está hablando algo que me parece que es cultural por el hecho de que ellos lo comparten, o sea, la familia lo comparte, pero... no sé, se me ocurrió que puede ser parte de su cultura.

M.: Entiendo.

L.: Pero no sé el significado ni...

M.: Bueno, va más allá de la familia, eso me querés decir.

L.: Claro, sí.

M.: (Pausa)

L.: Ah, en esta parte... claro, *donde habla de los Reyes Magos y... o sea, de los Reyes Magos no, justamente en nuestra cultura, bueno, lo asocié... el hecho de poner las zapatillas, lo relacioné... Inmediatamente tuve que hacer referencia a lo que es mi cultura y buscar una conexión porque creo que si no... si en nuestra cultura no tuviéramos eso de poner las zapatillas para los Reyes Magos, no comprendería que está haciendo referencia...*

M.: ...a algo de regalos.

L.: Claro, a los nenes... al nene poniendo la zapatilla.

M.: Claro, *pero tiene que ver con la Navidad.*

L.: Claro, sí.

M.: O sea que *es algo distinto a lo nuestro.*

L.: *Sí, en parte sí.* (Pausa) Y bueno, y justamente en esta parte... que está marcado como que... cuál es la esperanza del nene, yo lo que quise poner es que *él se duerme con... esperanzado de que su regalo no va a ser el... al ser una familia pobre es como que tenían el mismo regalo...*

M.: *...para compartir...*

L.: *Sí, para compartirlo o... por ahí hasta se repetían regalos, ¿no?* Y el hecho de que hay una esperanza no sólo a nivel regalo sino... me parece que va más allá de los objetos, va... o sea, esperanza de... de por ejemplo, de tener... o sea, a nivel económico... por ahí, de levantarse... porque acá también... "mañana será un nuevo día", decía. Entonces es como que está relacionado con que por ahí el año que viene ellos puedan llegar a tener un,... no sé, un mejor porvenir.

(Luz, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

Then in turn this extract shows Luz making connections among different parts from the text in the form of *rationalizations* (sneakers, Christmas, Three Wise Men, present, hope, a better future) ("donde habla de los *Reyes Magos* y... o sea, de los *Reyes Magos* no, justamente en nuestra cultura, bueno, lo asocié... el hecho de *poner las zapatillas* (...)

esperanzado de que su *regalo* (...) hay una *esperanza no sólo a nivel regalo* sino... me parece que va más allá de los objetos, va... o sea, *esperanza de...* de por ejemplo, *de tener... o sea, a nivel económico...* por ahí, de levantarse... porque acá también... ‘mañana será un nuevo día’, decía. Entonces es como que está relacionado con que *por ahí el año que viene ellos puedan llegar a tener un,... no sé, un mejor porvenir*”). It also shows what can be considered an *adequate interpretation* globally. Most importantly, these data excerpts from Luz, as a whole, demonstrate the fluidity and interaction among the research instruments and the measures of analysis that I mentioned at the beginning, and the importance of providing an integral and procedural description of how I have carried out this data analysis phase.

Evident *cultural errors* occurred when an action, a phrase (or in fact anything in the texts) led to an unexpected or an inappropriate result. These were *explicit cultural errors*, or in other words, errors with an identifiable cultural base. They also involved strange cultural details, not motivated or justified by the text in general, its cultural content, or the Christmas schema. For instance, Beryl attempted to explain the phrase “*tienes el diablo en la sangre*” by tying it to a certain point in time, different from her own, and bringing in a sociocultural perspective marked by such generational distance.

Frases como “*tienes el diablo en la sangre*” asumo que es una *expresión de un tiempo anterior al mío*, lo que me dificulta su completo entendimiento. Además, *parece ambigua en relación con el contexto*.
(Beryl, reflection log, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*).

In response to a question requiring an expansion of this idea in the interview, Beryl added what follows in its support:

B.: Se me ocurre que sea... se me ocurre que sea precisamente... viste que *hay expresiones que... que vienen con cada generación, y me pareció que quizás era una frase que venía de otra generación. Yo tengo veinticuatro años y entonces me pareció que era anterior a la mía, que el texto por ahí lo había escrito alguien que tendría... no sé, estaría en sus cincuenta o sus sesenta*.

M.: Está bien. Entiendo.

B.: Entonces como que... viste que por ahí los textos argentinos tienen muchas connotaciones, muchas frases que son típicas de la época de alguien. Bioy Casares tiene esas cosas.

M.: Claro.

B.: Borges más que nada. Entonces asumí que por ahí tenía que ver con eso.
(Beryl, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

This error simultaneously led her to engage in *adequate inferencing* and *wrong or inadequate inferencing* from the cultural content of the text, i.e. inferences that were motivated or justified by the cultural content of the text and, by contrast, those which were not motivated or justified by the cultural content of the texts. In this extract, the reference to the text in Spanish as an Argentine text (meaning Argentine literary text) becomes an error resulting from a process of *inadequate inferencing* (“viste que por ahí *los textos argentinos tienen muchas connotaciones, muchas frases que son típicas de la época de alguien*”). We concurrently see intertextual references to famous Argentine writers, which reveal Beryl’s literary knowledge being put at the service of her interpretation (“*Bioy Casares tiene esas cosas*”).

Some other times, the errors with an obvious cultural base were tied to what is called rationalization. A *rationalization of cultural information* requires a link among cultural details and the presentation of such details as apparently coherent. Rationalizations can be of two types, depending on whether one cultural detail is linked to another one which is not present in the text itself or whether two cultural details, present in the text, are related (with the use of cohesion to relate elements which should not have been connected). In the following extract from the interview, Beryl engaged in a deep thread of rationalizations regarding the family’s poverty, which support the opinion initiated in her reading response task that the fragment portrays a materialistic view of Christmas. The former type of rationalizations can be called *inventions*. The reference to “*mendigar*” below is an example (“no son la gente que no tiene absolutamente nada y que *están mendigando en la calle. Simplemente creo que son gente que tuvieron una mínima posición antes y que luego... cayeron*”). The reference to the uncle paying for the dinner is an instance of the latter kind of rationalizations (“Y de hecho *no son del todo de una clase baja que no tiene absolutamente nada para comer porque de hecho uno de los tíos es el que paga por la cena*”). Notice the use of “*porque*” to relate the two textual elements here.

Si bien esta familia no parece pertenecer a una clase social alta, o en todo caso su clase social está en declive, *sus deseos parecen directamente relacionados con el materialismo.*

(Beryl, reading response, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*).

B.: Entonces me parece que lo que surge es *el materialismo*, quizás por el hecho de que son una familia que se ve como que no... no es de... *quizás no es de clase alta pero tampoco una clase media*, y por eso te decía que su sociedad... o sea, *su clase está en declive*. Porque... mínimas referencias sociales y económicas que a mí me hacen ver que es como que están en la típica que se le llama hoy la clase media baja.

M.: OK.

B.: Entonces me pareció que por ahí *se aspiraba a volver a tener lo que se había tenido quizás en algún momento.*

M.: ¿Cómo te surge esta idea de que están en declive? Porque no tienen para comer, dice. ¿Cómo puede ser una clase media baja en declive que no tenga ni siquiera para comer?

B.: *Precisamente porque la clase media baja es la clase que fue en su momento media... y está en declive, o sea está llegando a ser clase baja o marginada en todo caso.*

M.: Está bien.

B.: Entonces me pareció... Y de hecho *no son del todo de una clase baja que no tiene absolutamente nada para comer porque de hecho uno de los tíos es el que paga por la cena.*

M.: Hm. No son completamente pobres.

B.: Entonces es como que hay una diferencia... *Claro, no son la gente que no tiene absolutamente nada y que están mendigando en la calle. Simplemente creo que son gente que tuvieron una mínima posición antes y que luego...*

M.: ...cayeron.

B.: ...cayeron, ¿no?

(Beryl, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

This previous extract offers evidence of much more than rationalizations. The extract starts with Beryl's personal interpretation of the text. The list of reader behaviours which serves as a measure of data analysis distinguishes between *adequate moral or interpretation*, based on appropriate cultural information, and *inadequate or wrong moral/ interpretation* which, by contrast, is not motivated or justified either by the cultural content of the text or the Christmas schema. The reference to materialism is clearly Beryl's own interpretation, because one could always question whether a small child immersed in poverty for years and longing for a new present at Christmas can be seen as materialistic. Beryl, however, justified and explained her interpretation at greater length than I quote here in this interview extract, and made a convincing case in favour of her view. In this case, it would be possible to argue whether this interpretation is grounded or not on the text and why it is not, and to find that in fact, there can be evidence of both adequate and inadequate aspects in Beryl's understanding of the story.

Other examples of morals of this kind were, however, more clear-cut and left no room for this discussion. Such was the case of Scarlet Rose's reading response, where she concluded that the loss of faith in religion shows that the text challenges the stereotype that the Argentine people have of Brazilians, namely that they are happy people ("La pérdida de fe en la religión y en la sociedad marca una ironía: nosotros, desde nuestro punto de vista como argentinos, tenemos un estereotipo de que los brasileros son gente alegre. El texto demuestra que no siempre es así"; Scarlet Rose, reading response, *Mi planta de naranja-*

lima). There is no doubt here that this interpretation, though of course viable and valid for this reader, is not motivated or justified by textual content.

Beryl's extracts above serve well in the exemplification of *intrusions from the native culture or CI*, i.e. from the participants' own ideas and cultures. This assumption that this family had to have had a better position in the past is an instance. Beryl spent considerable space around this idea of the family being "in decline."

Yanina's reading response task constitutes another example of a similar *intrusion* regarding the economic situation of the country ("Esta historia refleja *una de las problemáticas más comunes en nuestro país hoy en día: la pobreza*"), upon which she then proceeded to *elaborate* ("*Muchos niños trabajan para poder sobrevivir o, como en este caso, para que un familiar querido tenga un regalo en el día de Navidad*") and *evaluate* ("esta cultura desesperanzada *lamentablemente* crece día a día"), resulting in a personal interpretation of textual context (*adequate/inadequate moral or interpretation*):

"Esta historia refleja una de las problemáticas más comunes en nuestro país hoy en día: la pobreza. Muchos niños trabajan para poder sobrevivir o, como en este caso, para que un familiar querido tenga un regalo en el día de Navidad (...) *La cultura que se ve reflejada en el texto es la cultura de familias humildes, relegadas por la sociedad y el estado. Estas familias y por ende esta cultura desesperanzada lamentablemente crece día a día.*"

(Yanina, reading response, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

Yanina's visual representation expands on other *elaborations* based on *intrusions* from her own culture, such as the fact that low-class families tend to be numerous in Argentina: "Hacia el final se habla de un bebé que sumado a todos los otros niños ya mencionados *refleja una característica de las familias de clase baja: las familias con menos recursos son por lo general numerosas*" (Yanina, visual representation, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*). This comment can also be seen as an example of *irrelevant cultural information*, i.e. information (about events, places, characters, thoughts and feelings of certain characters, etc.) referring to cultural aspects which has no place in the flow of the key events in the story. The inclusion of the fact that this family is numerous is the result of a local reading and of assigning the same value or importance to all the text, with the focus on cultural information which was not necessarily intended to be focal.

Also in Beryl's interview extract above, we can observe the presence of a *generalization of cultural information*, which is a significant reduction of textual information in which general words replace specific nouns and in which there are also general propositions that replace more detailed information in the prompt text. An example here would be the mention of "minimal social and economic references" ("*mínimas referencias sociales y económicas*") without any specification of which those references are.

A *reduction or simplification of cultural information* is a process of simplification of two or more sentences, with fewer words and details than the original text. It may involve the use of general vocabulary as well as the presence of general propositions, i.e. with terms which summarize the most basic actions of the Christmas schema in each text. Examples of simplifications were the references to the Christmas dinner and the opening of the presents, for instance, without any other specific details.

Enrique Alejandro's reading response task based on the text in Spanish offers several examples of *generalizations* and *simplifications*. This task was a quarter of a page long, the shortest length registered for this task in this text (Table 8 in Appendix III). This was a characteristic of this reader in the production of all his tasks in the three texts: he was concise and to the point and avoided much of the elaboration of phrase and ideas (in the form of descriptions, explanations, examples) that was observed in the majority of the other cases. This length issue may have resulted in the presence of *generalizations* and *simplifications* of textual content in his reading response task. Because Enrique Alejandro did not include any specific narrative event or character description (except, notice, the *inferred feelings*), he resorted to *generalizations* and *simplifications*. For instance, he referred to the lack of presents in general (i.e. not in relation to Zezé's wish for a new, instead of an old and used, one). He did not specify anything as far as the family members were concerned (no names except Zezé, no reference to how many they were, or what their relationship with Zezé was). He referred to "the way" in which family members coped with the anguish, without mentioning any specific example ("*la forma en la que los varios miembros de la familia se las arreglan para soportar su angustia*"). He repeated the expression "*la forma en la que*" as a general way of describing textual content and not really saying anything about the specific "way" in any case. The only characterization of the family (apart from the inferred feelings) was that they were in a bad economic situation and lived in a rural area ("*una familia de mala situación económica,*" "*una pobre familia*

de campo”). Enrique Alejandro mentioned the “children” (“*los niños*”) in the very first lines of this task, but only identified one child by name, Zezé, and in the very end.

El texto narra la “fiesta” de navidad de una familia de mala situación económica, tomando el punto de vista de uno de los niños de la familia, angustiado por no recibir regalos. El contexto es el de una locación rural, con menciones a caballos y a la ciudad como lugar lejano, y en general podría describirse como la forma en la que una pobre familia de campo, deprimida ya por su pobreza u otro evento no explicado, pasa las fiestas de mala gana y la angustia que esto le provoca al niño protagonista Zezé y la forma en la que los varios miembros de la familia se las arreglan para soportar su angustia.

(Enrique Alejandro, reading response, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

The *explicit inclusion of the feelings and motivations of the characters* were either appropriately or inappropriately inferred from the cultural content of the texts. In other words, these feelings can be said to be motivated (or not), or justified (or not), by the cultural content of the text. For instance, Enrique Alejandro wrote in his reading response task that “uno de los niños de la familia [está] *angustiado* por no recibir regalos” (...) “una pobre familia de campo (...) pasa las fiestas *de mala gana* y la *angustia* que esto le provoca al niño protagonista Zezé.” Lula expressed, also in the reading response, that “La situación que se vive es de continua *zozobra* y *malestar*” and mentioned “*amargura, tristeza*” in the visual representation. Miranda Dana believed that family members are “*resignados*” (reading response). In the visual representation task Tess described the family’s feelings with nouns such as “*abatimiento, tristeza, cansancio, resignación, ternura*”.

These *inferred feelings* constituted the basis of a chain of *rationalizations* (of both types) in Enrique Alejandro’s interview, in his attempt to explain these feelings after a specific question I posed. The interconnections among the topics led him to move on to explain the family’s economic situation (producing a new chain of rationalizations), which then made him resume the reference to the feelings. I signal rationalizations in italics and inferred feelings in bold in the extract.

EA.: "De mala gana" porque... bueno, pasa las fiestas **de mala gana** porque no... **nadie tiene muchas ganas de festejar**, es como que van... realizan la ceremonia por sentido de...

M.: ...de obligación...

EA.: ...de obligación, precisamente, pero... simplemente lo hacen y se van a dormir con su propia **angustia**, no... no es algo que les traiga **felicidad**.

M.: Hm. O sea que "de mala gana" vos lo distinguís de la tristeza, o de la angustia, ¿o es la misma cosa para vos?

EA.: No, de mala gana es... *están de mala gana porque están tristes. Lo hacen de mala gana porque están tristes. Si estuvieran contentos podrían festejar tranquilamente.*

M.: Está bien. (Pausa) Te pregunto acá otra cosa: "Su pobreza puede deberse a otro evento no explicado." ¿Como qué? ¿Qué pensaste, qué se te vino a la mente?

EA.: *Hacía una mención de... la historia de...*

M.: ...del Casino Bangu.

EA.: Exactamente. *Quizás fue alguna debacle económica que causó... la pobreza o ya eran pobres y eso lo hizo peor...*

M.: ¿En el país o en la familia?

EA.: En la familia.

M.: En la familia.

EA.: Dudo que haya sido... que sea tan...

M.: Está bien.

EA.: ...tanta...

M.: ...significativo.

EA.: ...repercusión.

M.: Claro. (Pausa) Te pregunto acá, ¿por qué ponés en la reformulación³ visual *la historia del Casino Bangu* si no la entendiste? O sea, le atribuí importancia a pesar de que no sabés de qué...

EA.: No, es una... por eso lo pongo con signos de interrogación, es una posibilidad simplemente. *Quizás sea... es una de... quizás sea una de las causas o un agravante de la mala situación económica.*

M.: Entiendo.

EA.: *Que es lo que lleva a todo lo demás.*

M.: Entiendo.

EA.: ¿Quién siente **lástima**? Toda la familia en realidad.

M.: ¿Y lástima por qué, por quién?

EA.: No sé, quizás no fue la palabra... correcta. Eh... en realidad ahora lo borraría y simplemente diría que... la **angustia**... afecta a la familia o envuelve a la familia.

M.: Está bien. Borrarnos lástima entonces.

EA.: Están siendo afectados por la **angustia**.

M.: Perfecto. *Y esto significa que el clima festivo genera más angustia.*

EA.: *Exactamente. Como ellos lo mencionan en un momento, eh... ellos están haciendo la fiesta en su casa mientras escuchan todos los gritos y las... las fiestas alrededor. Eso en realidad lo hice un poco por experiencia personal de que cuando uno está deprimido y la gente está festejando alrededor...*

M.: ...es peor.

EA.: ...se pone peor.

(Enrique Alejandro, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

At the same time, the final part of this extract from the interview shows Enrique Alejandro relating the text to his own personal experiences and *generalizing* his feelings on this basis, as if they were applicable to others: "Y esto significa que el clima festivo genera más angustia (...) ellos están haciendo la fiesta en su casa mientras escuchan todos los gritos y

³ Note my use of the term visual *reformulation* in the interviews, whereas I have explained in chapter 6 that I made the decision to call this research instrument visual *representation* following Andrew Cohen's piece of advice (2009, personal communication) towards the end of the year 2009. This incongruence stems from the fact that this decision to replace the term *reformulation* by *representation* was made after the data had been collected.

las... las fiestas alrededor. Eso en realidad lo hice un poco *por experiencia personal de que cuando uno está deprimido y la gente está festejando alrededor... (...) se pone peor.*”

Evaluative comments about the cultural content involve the inclusion of an opinion or attitude of each particular reader about a cultural idea in the texts. It does not encompass the repetition of the opinions of the characters or the opinions of the writer of the text. Victoria’s tasks were a rich example of evaluative comments, which took the form of adverbs or adjectives: “Se añade aquí un *quasi* cuestionamiento teológico, planteado con *absoluta* inocencia por los más pequeños de la casa, sobre la *aparente* falta de recompensa a la bondad y la *aparente* injusticia divina” (reading response); “*aparentes* ventajas de la resignación” (Victoria, visual representation). In Yanina’s reading response, evaluations also took the form of short prefabricated phrases: “*Es entendible que* ante tanta desigualdad social, niños y adultos se pregunten por qué Dios le da a algunos, y a otros no, o que piensen que para Jesús sólo los ricos sirven. *Después de todo*, es lo que ven reflejado en la realidad.” In her visual representation, Yanina wrote: “A pesar de la *cruda* realidad, Zezé no pierde su inocencia.”

Sometimes these *evaluative comments* (“*hasta* hay llanto”) led to extended explanations in an interview about certain *personal interpretations*, which brought in *intrusions* and *rationalizations* (“no hay motivo para celebrar porque están rodeados de miseria”; again notice the use of “porque” to signal the rationalization). Miranda Dana’s reading response and interview constitute an example. I signal some instances of *personal interpretations* in italics, *intrusions* in bold and *rationalizations* through underlining.

Toda la celebración ocurre en un clima de tristeza. Hay mucho silencio y hasta hay llanto. Parece como si no hay motivo para celebrar porque están rodeados de miseria. (Miranda Dana, reading response, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

M.: Acá no entiendo. ¿Por qué “...hasta hay llanto”? ¿Qué querés poner con el “hasta”? Es representativo eso...

MD.: Como que...

M.: ...lingüísticamente.

MD.: Claro. Eh...

M.: Porque en realidad lloran. ¿Por qué ponés “hasta lloran”?

MD.: Claro... *como que era un extremo, me pareció.*

M.: Un extremo...

MD.: *Que estaban todos que no comían, por ahí bueno, que estaban deprimidos, pero... “hasta hay llanto”, me pareció que era demasiado extremo quizás... la depresión.*

M.: Entiendo.

MD.: Por eso.
M.: Y... ¿y por qué demasiado extremo? ¿Vos qué harías en una situación parecida?
MD.: No sé, la verdad, no sé, pero... yo supongo que...
M.: Te parece muy extremo para lo que se refleja.
MD.: Claro, porque además quizás... no es una situación que se dio de un momento para el otro: quizás la situación social de la familia ya es... viene hace un tiempo, no sé, *me parece demasiado extraño que lloren así a tal extremo en una celebración... cuando tendrían que estar, no sé, más acostumbrados quizás.*
M.: Hm, entiendo.
MD.: Como que no es nada nuevo, entonces... me pareció eso.
(Miranda Dana, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

In this interview extract, Miranda Dana explained her use of *even* as an *evaluation* of the family's action of crying. I decided to include this example because it evidences much more than this reader's evaluative comment. The use of this little word in this reading response task triggered a deep interpretation of one act, the act of crying. Here Miranda Dana made a deliberate effort to understand this action but did so from her own frame of reference. That is, her own understanding of a Christmas celebration as something festive (*intrusion*) made her see this family's crying as *too strange* and *extreme*. And this resulted in an *inadequate interpretation* which cannot be said to be anchored to textual information (by resort to a *rationalization*), which is the naturalization of poverty and therefore this family's apparent failure to have accustomed to their reality ("cuando *tendrían que estar, no sé, más acostumbrados quizás*").

Not only are these extracts evidence of the concurrence and interaction of reader behaviours in operation here but also of Miranda Dana's difficulty to see, consider, judge and evaluate one action (only one action, the act of crying) within its cultural setting, or in other words, from the point of view of the members of another culture. This difficulty led her to interpret this part of the text as the naturalization of poverty, i.e. her *generalization* of a stereotyped assumption resulting from an *inadequate rationalization* (because they have been poor for so long they should be accustomed to it). This line of interpretation would be framed within level 3 in the *Model of Cultural Understanding* because of these reasons – something that I shall illustrate in more depth in the next section. In addition, this reader's lack of empathy to put herself in somebody's else's shoes is evidence of this level 3 but, at the same time, of the difficulty of reaching level 2, i.e. understanding her own culture from an insider perspective. It is the lack of cultural sensibility and the prevalence of ethnocentric positions (which characterize this level 2) that do not allow Miranda Dana to discover alternative perspectives in the interpretation of what a Christmas celebration should involve in her view. It cannot

involve other than anything festive. Precisely this failure to question the values and assumptions within her own practices reinforces level 3 in the model.

7.4.3. Model of Cultural Understanding

In the last section of this chapter, I shall put the *Model of Cultural Understanding* in operation with some examples. As shown before, the data analysis phase became one integrated whole, and was carried out in the manner I have just described. In other words, cultural idea units, reader behaviours and this model interacted as measures of analysis not only among themselves but also with all data types. What this integrative process reveals are the ways in which these readers went about interpreting the cultural content of the prompt texts used in this study. It is then within this framework that the present section should be read. That is, even though I narrow my lenses to the model here, it should not be forgotten that my analyses were integrative.

I should perhaps re-state here that the basic assumption behind this model is that the apprehension, comprehension or understanding of the cultural aspects of (literary narrative) texts during EFL reading is not an all or nothing affair, but rather a question of degrees as well as increasing levels of complexity, accuracy and details. Furthermore, this model is intended to capture the dynamic and procedural aspects of cultural understanding. In other words, this model conceptualizes cultural understanding in reading as a flexible trajectory along stages, implying that readers can move back and forth among levels, at any point during the reading process.

I started by assigning at least two different levels to each reading response and visual representation task. First, a choice exclusively between levels 0 and 1. These levels were critical, because they involved the perception (level 1), or lack of perception (level 0), of cultural elements (cultural details, similarities, differences), always on the basis of the reader's own culture). The perception of the different, exciting and attractive elements of a given culture was possible through the identification of key vocabulary and worked as a bridge for the other stages (2, 3, 4, and 5) in the model. This first level of analysis turned out to be quite straightforward, as it was facilitated by the previous coding of the cultural idea units present in both required written tasks. Another way of putting this is that the prior identification of the cultural idea units in the tasks helped me assign level 0 or level 1 to each task with ease and

confidence. Decisions were quite transparent because either a reader had perceived cultural elements and had manifested this perception by explicitly including several cultural idea units in his/her written tasks, or he/she had not.

In addition, the data analysis plan as I described it in chapter 6 involved the allocation of responses to one of levels 2, 3, 4, 5. In working toward this aim, what I discovered was that participants in fact slipped backwards and forwards along the continuum of this model, not only among the written texts they produced, but also at different points in the same text. In other words, exploring where these readers were on the continuum of this model revealed their dynamic and fluid approach in their understanding of the cultural content of the prompt texts. I exemplify this fluidity later. Therefore, this step in the analysis using the model turned out to be more complex than anticipated, precisely because at different points in the same text the totality of these participants could be said to have slipped from one level in the model to another. Also, all these readers could be seen as moving flexibly among levels when all the data that they produced were considered. That is, there was variability in the levels that these participants were seen as reaching depending on which data type was inspected.

Paradoxically, this dynamism and flexibility in the participants' responses to the cultural content of the texts means that it was not possible to allocate only *one* of levels 2, 3, 4, 5 to their written responses in this phase of the analysis. This difficulty notwithstanding, I have nonetheless tried to assign one of these levels (in addition to one of levels 0 and 1 as I mentioned before) based on an overall impression of each task. I have also decided to accommodate the readers' dynamism and flexibility by simultaneously identifying the most critical slips back and forth levels in the model in each written task. I show this in this chapter by signalling these slips, assigning them a level in the model, and exemplifying them. For instance, the examples of the model as a measure of analysis which I embedded in my exemplification of reader behaviours in the previous section are cases of such slips. Once again, I have preferred to exemplify with the text in Spanish, so as to offer a coherent and integrated illustration of the data analysis process. Illustrations from the other texts appear here to the extent that the point being made was rare or not observable in *Mi planta de naranja-lima*.

The examples I have chosen for illustration purposes give a flavour of the variety of the levels in the model which emerged during data analysis. They also serve to describe one aim

fulfilled by the interview data, which was to gain more depth of understanding of the findings in the main data types, namely the reading response and the visual representation tasks. In this sense, the interviews provided support for specific findings. The data samples I present next exemplify and illustrate the functioning of the *Model of Cultural Understanding* and simultaneously show this supporting role of interview data.

I begin with Scarlet Rose's reading response.

El texto trata sobre la Navidad en Brasil y cómo la festeja, particularmente, la familia de Totoca y el narrador (punto de vista de un niño). El texto refleja una cultura caracterizada por la desigualdad, una sociedad en la cual Papá Noel sólo visita a unos pocos. La familia del narrador, como se ve, no tiene la suerte de ser parte de la alegría que la Noche Buena supone. La pregunta clave que puede ayudar a guiar la lectura de este texto es: "¿Por qué, si en nuestra familia son todos buenos, el Niño Jesús no es bueno con nosotros?" La pérdida de fe en la religión y en la sociedad marca una ironía: nosotros, desde nuestro punto de vista como argentinos, tenemos un estereotipo de que los brasileros son gente alegre. El texto demuestra que no siempre es así. (Scarlet Rose, reading response, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

Scarlet Rose did not include many cultural idea units in this reading response task. She focused on offering what in her view was the main message of the text, providing a global account of the story from this perspective, i.e. the text moral. Because there is no specific reference, either in detail or in general, to the specific events in the story, this task is quite short and straightforward. On this basis, I assigned this task level 0 in the *Model of Cultural Understanding* (choice between levels 0 and 1), signifying that this reader has omitted this kind of information.

Regarding the choice among levels 2, 3, 4, 5 (which, as I mentioned before, was made holistically and in an impressionistic fashion), I judged this task as reaching level 3, which involves the perception of another culture from this reader's frame of reference, or in other words, approaching another culture from an outsider perspective as an observer. This approach (i.e. the approach to culture represented by level 3 in the model) helps comprehend another culture only superficially, analyzing and explaining from the outside. For instance, the assumption that having a happy Christmas is reserved to the lucky ("no tiene la *suerte* de ser parte de la *alegría que la Noche Buena supone*") comes from this reader's perception of Christmas in her own cultural setting. What Scarlet Rose does not try to do here is find the motivations (values and beliefs, for instance) behind the family members' observable behaviours (a characteristic of level 4), which might help explain why the celebration is full of sadness. As a reader of this reader response, I can make a link

with the issue of inequality in society that Scarlet Rose mentions at the beginning (“El texto refleja *una cultura caracterizada por la desigualdad*, una sociedad en la cual *Papá Noel sólo visita a unos pocos*”), but the point is that she as the author of this text did not explore this connection explicitly.

Above all, what justifies most a level 3 in this case is the final stereotyped (and therefore dangerously erroneous) generalization that the Brazilians are seen by the Argentine as happy and fun-loving people (“**nosotros**, desde **nuestro** punto de vista *como argentinos, tenemos un estereotipo de que los brasileros son gente alegre*”). Note the use of first person plural pronouns and references, which show that Scarlet Rose saw herself as one of those Argentine people who believed that Brazilians are happy and fun-loving (in bold in the example). This stereotyped view is further supported by the following extract from her interview, where Scarlet Rose, questioned about whether the purpose of this text was to show this interpretation, confirmed that it was (“Eh... No sé si... no sé si es el único propósito pero uno de los tantos *me parece que sí*”; Scarlet Rose, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*).

Scarlet Rose’s task also shows she slips back and forth among levels in the model that I mentioned before. Despite the overall judgment of this task as corresponding to level 3 for the reasons previously outlined, it is also possible to say that the first half of this reading response, till the moment when Scarlet Rose poses the question “¿Por qué, si en nuestra familia son todos buenos, el Niño Jesús no es bueno con nosotros?,” portrays a depth of analysis characteristic of level 4 which involves the perception of another culture from the frame of reference of members of this culture. Perhaps what contributes here is the succinct nature of this reader’s task.

Another example of level 3 came from Tacuara’s reading response. The main difference with Scarlet Rose’s above is that here there is an explicit attempt to provide some details in the form of the inclusion of cultural idea units. Consequently, I assigned level 1 in this case. The basis for assigning level 3 does not reside in a stereotyped view as in Scarlet Rose’s above, but rather on the fact that Tacuara approached otherness from her ethnocentric position, interpreting and re-interpreting the other culture as an outside observer, though not portraying a stereotyped view of Brazilians. This resulted in a response task that is globally congruent with the overall tenor of the prompt text, but framed within this

reader's idiosyncratic interpretation around the "synecdoque." Tacuara included abundant evaluative comments and inferred morals about the message that the text was supposed to convey in her view. Although this synecdoque reading can be globally warranted by the text, Tacuara appears to have focused almost exclusively on this issue, something that may make this interpretation appear to be too idiosyncratic. In addition, what Tacuara did not do is attempt to put herself in the protagonists' shoes to be able to understand why the religious perspective was so ingrained in them. In other words, she judged their religiosity by her own parameters. Anyway, Tacuara took the time and effort to describe, explain and account for her interpretation in the interview in greater depth.

El texto retrata a modo de sinécdoque [La sinécdoque es una licencia retórica mediante la cual se expresa la parte por el todo] a toda una sociedad o al menos una clase de ella (clase baja). Digo "a modo de sinécdoque" porque es a través de una situación puntual (la navidad) y de un grupo (una familia) que la historia representa a un colectivo más amplio.

Yo calificaría a la sociedad, cultura retratada como desposeída y atrasada. En cuanto a este último adjetivo ("atrasada"), no lo uso en un sentido peyorativo, sino más bien Hegeliano, por así decirlo. Es decir, según la teoría del absoluto Hegeliano uno puede calificar a una cultura como más o menos atrasada según el grado de autoconciencia alcanzado (entendiendo como autoconciencia la idea de pensarse como ser humano libre, y demás). Teniendo estos conceptos presentes y *considerando el fuerte peso que los aspectos "milagrosos" y "religiosos" tienen en el texto, teniendo en cuenta eso es que digo "atrasado"*. Por ejemplo, al final del texto Zezé se levanta de la cama y cuando le preguntan adónde va, dice: "a poner mis zapatillas del otro lado de la puerta...a lo mejor sucede algún milagro". A mi juicio, *tanto este fragmento, como otros que tratan de justificar la ausencia de regalos y comida atribuyendo esta carencia a la falta de bondad en la persona, esos fragmentos para mí, muestran lo sometida que está esa cultura. Sometida y hundida en la pobreza y la ignorancia.* Ignorancia no en un sentido peyorativo, sino haciendo referencia a que *ignoran que si están siendo castigados terrenalmente no es ni dios ni Jesús el verdugo.* Digo despojados también porque se retrata en la historia la pobreza naturalizada.

La historia logra retratar, desde el punto de vista de un niño, las problemáticas que atraviesan a una familia de clase baja. Muestra, la historia, cómo una fecha como la navidad, tan explotada comercialmente y tan disfrutada por mucha gente, cómo esa fecha es vivida por otra clase, muchas veces olvidada.

(Tacuara, reading response, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*).

My previous analysis of this reading response is further supported by the following extracts from the interview (showing a supporting role for this data type).

T.: Sí, era eso como... bah, que me parece que se hace... o sea que... es a través de un... de una situación poder representar un montón de cosas más desde la sociedad y... qué sé yo, a partir de... bueno, en este caso como de la situación... de la cena de Navidad y... qué sé yo, es esa cosita que de repente te puede mostrar y decir un montón de cosas.

(...)

M.: Entiendo. Acá en el medio: "Teniendo estos conceptos presentes y considerando el fuerte peso que los aspectos milagrosos y religiosos tienen en el texto, teniendo eso en cuenta es que digo atrasado. Por ejemplo, al final del texto, él se levanta de la cama y cuando le preguntan hacia dónde va dice: A poner mis zapatillas." (Pausa) ¿Por qué hacés tanto hincapié en lo milagroso y lo religioso?

T.: Porque me parece... eh...

M.: Lo milagroso es religioso...

T.: Sí...

M.: O lo religioso es milagroso... ¿Cómo es?

T.: Sí, lo veo muy parecido y... es que son... o sea, *me parece que es un bloqueo terrible, o sea, digo, por ejemplo, el querer que... ese esperar que las cosas cambien por sí solas, o sea... que hace sujetos completamente pasivos, resignados a... y más... digo, por ejemplo en esta familia y... creo que está muy ligado a eso, que mientras más humildes son, eh... más... se apoyan en una contención religiosa o... entonces esperar que, bueno, las cosas en algún momento van a cambiar, y si no es acá en otra vida, la vida será justa... tener que buscar otra vida, otro plano que excede a lo terrenal porque acá... o sea, ya está... las cosas son así, el pobre es pobre y... y hay que lidiar con eso y... me parece que hace a eso.*

(...) *el tema de la religión yo la veo que lleva a una resignación y a... qué sé yo, a aceptar un montón de cosas que no tendrían que ser así pero bueno, como a uno lo excede, deja todo... la justicia en manos de Dios.*

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) "A mi juicio este fragmento y otros que justifican o tratan de justificar la ausencia de regalos y comida atribuyendo esta carencia a la falta de bondad de la persona muestran lo sometida que está esa cultura." No entiendo esto.

T.: Yo creo que era... sí, que decía...

M.: Los fragmentos que intentan mostrar...

T.: Sí, eran fragmentos, por ejemplo... cuando dice: "*Yo soy bueno...*" o sea, *como que si uno es bueno recibe, y si uno es malo no recibe.*

M.: Eso es lo que quiere transmitir el escritor, pensás vos.

T.: Claro, sí... en una parte... No, es... no, lo que los pensamientos, *cómo ellos mismos creen eso.* Por ejemplo, si yo soy bueno... O sea, "*¿Yo soy malo, que no me van a traer regalos?*", viste que pregunta.

M.: Sí.

T.: Es esa cosa de decir...

M.: Eso refleja que estamos hablando de una cultura sometida.

T.: Claro, para mí... tiene otra vez que ver con esto de que "si soy bueno Dios me premia, y me va a dar." En ese sentido, otra vez volver a caer en lo mismo, ¿entendés? O sea, *que nunca se planteó una cuestión de "por qué no tengo"* y ver... qué sé yo, cuestiones más de...

M.: ...profundas.

T.: Sí, pero profundas en el sentido de... de concretas, también, de cómo está organizada...

M.: ...de la realidad.

T.: De la realidad, de cómo está organizada, de cuáles son las consecuencias, y no caer en...

M.: ¿Y qué tiene que ver eso con el sometimiento?

T.: Es que... es otra vez lo que decíamos hace un rato, con lo que yo... cómo lo entendía yo, "atrasada" y... como el estar... *estar sometidos a creencias y a... estar otra vez estancado en ese lugar y esperando que las cosas cambien.*

(Tacuara, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

Although I have said before that Tacuara's reading response and interview data constitute, globally, evidence of level 3 in the model because of the ethnocentric interpretation of the religious perspective in the text, her tasks offer testimony of the dynamism and flexibility

in these readers' approach to otherness through reading. Her view of the family and this society as backward and dispossessed ("*atrasada, sometida, desposeída*"), which permeates portions of both data types, clearly reflect a stereotyped conception of the poor as backward, diminished or disadvantaged in their religious conceptions as well as a stereotyped link among poverty, low education, and religiosity.

From this analysis, both Scarlet Rose's and Tacuara's reading responses were assigned level 3 in the model, but for different reasons. Therefore, the dynamism and flexibility that we see in operation here are related to the different rationales that can be found to operate for the same level. Concurrently, however, throughout both tasks, reading response and interview, we see in Tacuara the critical and reflexive attitude typical of level 5 in the model, which has led her to produce a deep and well-argued social critique, revealing of her conscientiousness about social and cultural issues.

Tacuara's visual representation testifies to the usefulness of having collected interview data in this study. In this case, the interview fulfilled a complementary role in this data analysis phase (cf. the supporting role which I mentioned before), which was crucial in some specific and isolated cases, such as this one. The reason for this is that this interview shed light on the analysis of this visual representation, which would otherwise have been obscure. Put differently, it would have been hard, if not impossible, to assign one of levels 2, 3, 4, 5 to it, as this reader offered no grounds on which to do so. The following extract from the interview contributed significantly in this respect.



Tacuara, visual representation, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

M.: En la reformulación visual, ... ¿Qué significa esto?

T.: A mí me pareció... viste más o menos... el final del fragmento, que él deja la zapatilla y... una cuestión que todavía tiene esperanza pero... es, esperanza de que pase algo... no de una, o sea, *no hay una idea de que uno puede hacer o transformar de alguna manera, sino una idea de esperar algo más allá, esperar algo que venga de afuera*... Por eso en este dibujo me pareció que se reflejaba así un poco la pared y eso, relacionada con la casa precaria que me imagino en la que se vive, y... bueno, esa zapatillita así...

M.: ¿Ladrillos?

T.: Sí, son todos ladrillos.

M.: Entiendo.

T.: No tiene revoque.

M.: Ah, ladrillos... entiendo.

T.: Y... y la zapatilla...

M.: O sea que eso es importante, la zapatilla.

T.: Sí. Y está ahí como que... *esperando que vuele, o sea... que salgan solitas las alas* y... Y también lo que significa el volar... digo, todas las connotaciones o cómo uno asocia el hecho de volar, la libertad... qué sé yo.

(Tacuara, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

What this extract from Tacuara's interview shows is that she intended her visual representation task to be similar to her reading response. She put in a visual format the interpretation previously available from the reading response task, supported once again by her interview. On this basis then, I assigned this task level 3 again, for the same reasons.

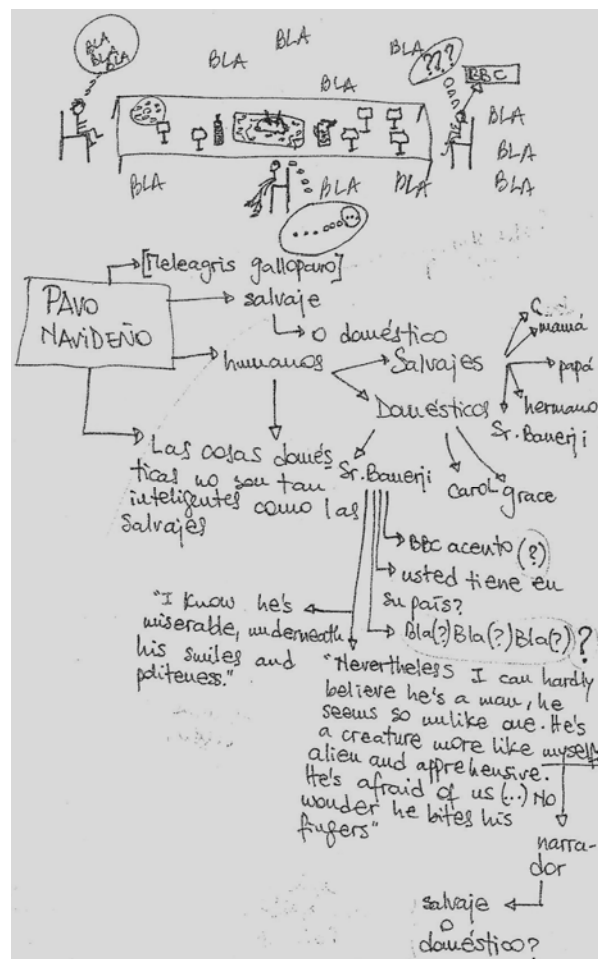
This analysis of Tacuara's visual representation and interview is an example of the complementary role of interview data. In this particular case, the interview allowed for the allocation of one level in the model to the visual representation, which would otherwise have been impossible. When situations like this one occurred, I decided to assign one level using both data types in combination. My rationale here was that the allocation of a level to the visual representation taking into account exclusively what this task showed (i.e. without the complement of the interview) would result in a distorted portrayal of Tacuara's understanding of the cultural content of this text. This procedure is also evidence of the interaction among data types and measures of analysis that I mentioned earlier in this chapter, as well as of the importance of keeping within sight the integral contribution of all research instruments and measures of analysis in answering the research question.

In almost all cases, it was possible to assign one or more levels to the reading response and visual representation tasks, levels which were then supported by interview data. Interestingly enough, the cases where a task (reading response or visual representation) had to be analyzed in combination with the interview in order for a level to be assigned were indeed rare. Closer inspection revealed that this happened with the visual representation only (perhaps because of

the visual and concise nature of the task itself), with one participant only, namely Tacuara, and only for the text in Spanish.

There were other cases in which interview data fulfilled an important complementary role in the sense that they enriched and expanded what a reading response or visual representation revealed, though they were not indispensable to assign a level in the model (cf. Tacuara above). These situations, again, were scarce, were restricted to the visual representation, and were typical of some participants rather than others. For instance, this happened with Scarlet Rose for the three texts, with Lula for the text in Spanish, and with Beryl and Tacuara for *Cat's Eye*.

A couple of examples on the basis of *Cat's Eye* follow. One belongs to Beryl. In the interview, she explained two important elements of her visual representation, namely the use of “bla, bla, bla” as well as the question marks. Even though I was able to assign a level in the model to this task, the interview enriched and complemented Beryl’s understanding of this text as portrayed in the visual representation.



(Beryl, visual representation, *Cat's Eye*)

M: En la reformulación visual... te pregunto... ponés textual del latín, el nombre del pavo.

B.: Precisamente por eso. *Porque hay una ensalada de tantos temas*, que uno de los temas...

M.: Para reflejar...

B.: Claro. Uno de los que más... o sea, se hace hincapié desde mi punto de vista, es el tema de la biología. Esta persona, este extranjero invitado, recién logra sentirse un poco más cómodo cuando... cuando el... el padre de este... del relator dice que... cuando le habla del... le dice el nombre del pavo en... en latín.

M.: Hm.

B.: Entonces es como que... da la sensación de que el se siente un poco más... menos incómodo con la situación.

M.: Entiendo. *Entonces quisiste reflejar esa ensalada de temas.*

B.: Claro, sí, sí, totalmente. *Por eso hay muchos "blas".*

M.: *"Bla" (eso te iba a preguntar), refleja la variedad de temas de conversación.*

B.: *Sí. Es como cuando ves tiras cómicas por la televisión, que siempre se dice: "Bla, bla, bla"...*

M.: Entiendo.

B.: *...y se juntan muchos "bla".*

M.: Entiendo. ¿Y los signos de pregunta?

B.: Claro, porque me parece que... o sea, que hay temas, por ejemplo, como éste, ¿no?, que evidentemente son... muy naturales para la familia porque el padre de... esta persona que relata es biólogo. *Pero de todas formas como que sigue siendo un poco fuera de la situación, ¿no?*

M.: *Eso es lo que querés representar con los signos.*

B.: *Claro, como que hay cosas que no se terminan de entender.*

M.: Entiendo.

B.: *En lo que se dice, no en lo textual.*

M.: Hm.

B.: *Me refiero a los diálogos que hay entre uno u otro personaje.*

(Beryl, interview, *Cat's Eye*)

In much the same way it is possible to observe the contribution of the interview in Tacuara's interpretation of the storm, the broken wings and the reference to the rupture in her visual representation of the same text.



(Tacuara, visual representation, *Cat's Eye*)

M.: en la reformulación visual, dibujás las alas... y rotas... y te pregunto por qué la lluvia, ¿por qué llueve?

T.: Ah, eh... *la lluvia es como una manera de simbolizar la tempestad, una... un... un algo así.*

M.: Una tempestad.

T.: Sí, sí.

M.: Perfecto. (Pausa). Eh... "cómo se conecta con" ¿qué? No entiendo...

T.: El criterio de utilidad.

M.: (Pausa). Cuál es el criterio de utilidad ya me lo pusiste...

T.: Hm.

M.: O me explicaste qué es la utilidad en realidad.

T.: Sí.

M.: ¿Y el criterio de utilidad cuál vendría a ser?

T.: Pensar las cosas... eh... en términos de eso, de... de utilidad, o sea que ése sea el criterio para valorar algo. O sea, por ejemplo... Eh... No sé, cuando habla... cuando habla de los pollos, que los van a hacer pelados para que no pierdan... no tiempo pero... la energía en producir las plumas, para que puedan producir más. *Una cosa completamente utilitaria y re... terrible, o sea, con ese criterio... terrible para mí.* En ese sentido apuntaba a eso...

(...)

M.: Entiendo. *¿Cómo se conecta esto con el quiebre?*

T.: Y, porque...

M.: Pobreza, miseria, separar a la gente en... tame and wild...

T.: Porque me pareció toda una cosa... ¿no?, que lo analicé bastante negativamente y... también medio el final y eso de... *como que los débiles no tienen lugar.*

M.: Hm.

T.: Entonces... eh... *me pareció eso una cosa re-trágica, o sea... todo, todo conectado, esa cosa de dividir a la gente así, después toda esa cosa muy fuerte del utilitarismo, y encima... claramente que... eso, que sólo los fuertes sobreviven, que los débiles no tienen lugar, son una cosa horrible, me pareció.*

M.: Entiendo.

T.: Fue lo que... *con la tempestad y las alas quebradas.*
(Tacuara, interview, *Cat's Eye*)

Summing up, then, as far as data analysis using the model is concerned, this means that the interviews fulfilled mainly a supporting role, i.e. they contributed to clarifying, expanding, describing, and exemplifying issues which were already available to be known through the reading response and the visual representation tasks. Only exceptionally did the interviews fulfil a complementary role whereby what appeared in them offered insights which were not readily available first hand from the reading response and the visual representation tasks themselves. Finally, I have also illustrated the only instance in which a decision to analyze a visual representation in combination with its corresponding interview was made (Tacuara, text in Spanish).

I shall now resume the illustration of the levels in the model. I present next Scarlet Rose's visual representation of *Mi planta de naranja-lima* to illustrate level 4. This stage involves the

comprehension of another culture from an insider perspective, i.e. how the members of another culture behave is interpreted in the light of their own cultural norms. The schematic nature of this task allowed this reader to offer a succinct presentation of textual content in an interesting genre, the cartoon. The elaboration on the stereotyped perceptions of Brazilians as happy people, which we saw earlier in Scarlet Rose's reading response, disappears here, perhaps because of the condensed nature of the visual representation in conjunction with the genre chosen for its portrayal. This task is rich in terms of cultural idea units (level 1). Level 4 amounts to more than information in areas such as the home, work, the community, food, dress, celebrations and festivities, traditions, etc. (all of which we see reflected in this task), adding layers of description and interpretation with the aim of leading to the identification of the value systems, social norms, and expectations of the members of another culture. These layers are represented by the specific references to the poverty of the family, the religious perspective, and the family members' view of Christmas. What is interesting to rescue here is that the concise nature of this task withheld the over-elaboration of phrase that, as I have shown on other occasions, many times turned tasks into idiosyncratic personal accounts of each story.



(Scarlet Rose, visual representation, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

I would like to come back to Enrique Alejandro at this point. His reading response task based on *Mi planta de naranja-lima*, quoted before, was one instance in which the choice between levels 0 and 1 in the model was not so easy. The problem resided in the prevalent

generalizations and concise nature of the task. Although Enrique Alejandro mentioned very few cultural idea units, I nonetheless decided to assign level 1 in the *Model of Cultural Understanding* to this task. My rationale here was that this task offered more specificity than Tacuara's reading response mentioned before, to which I assigned level 0. I include the task again here for convenience.

El texto narra la "fiesta" de navidad de una familia de mala situación económica, tomando el punto de vista de uno de los niños de la familia, angustiado por no recibir regalos. El contexto es el de una locación rural, con menciones a caballos y a la ciudad como lugar lejano, y en general podría describirse como la forma en la que una pobre familia de campo, deprimida ya por su pobreza u otro evento no explicado, pasa las fiestas de mala gana y la angustia que esto le provoca al niño protagonista Zezé y la forma en la que los varios miembros de la familia se las arreglan para soportar su angustia.

(Enrique Alejandro, reading response, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

Overall, I judged this task as being representative of level 4 in the model. Assigning this level was not easy in this case, because even though this reader undoubtedly explained events such as the family's predominant feeling of anguish from the point of view of an insider in the family (i.e. not his own perspective), this task lacked much of the reflection and criticality that I observed in other readers such as Tess and Victoria. I shall show this criticality and reflexivity in chapters 8 and 9. In addition, despite the concise nature of the task, Enrique Alejandro's portrayal was not stereotyped to merit a level 3, for instance. Furthermore, the instances of level 2 (looking at one's cultural parameters and the assumptions behind them) that I observed here were mainly the references to Christmas as a festivity, in particular through the use of the word "fiesta" and "fiestas," the first between inverted commas. However, he did not explore these underlying assumptions explicitly and only hinted at them by recourse to a literary device such as irony. These considerations led me to assign level 4 to this task then. I shall say more about my rationale for this decision next.

I should mention at this point that I analyzed all the data in this order: first the text in Spanish, then the fragment from *Cat's Eye*, and finally the Navajos text. Within this sequence, I had ordered the research instruments in the order in which the participants had produced them, and within this, alphabetically by reader. This information is important because it means that I was soon confronted with the issue of what to do in cases like this one as far as the *Model of Cultural Understanding* was concerned. I decided therefore that

I needed to add a new level to the model, namely level *4 plus* (4+) in order to distinguish between readers like Tess and Victoria, on the one hand, and Enrique Alejandro (as well as other participants) on the other. Tess and Vitoria, who showed significant instances of level 5 in their tasks, materialized in their depth, reflexivity and criticality in response, and Enrique Alejandro, who did not show these elements but nonetheless could not be said to have portrayed the stereotyped perspective associated with level 3. Put differently, I needed to be able to assign level 4 to Enrique Alejandro while at the same time distinguish in some way between him and Tess and Victoria. This is the rationale behind the addition of level 4 plus to the *Model of Cultural Understanding*.

In the following reading response, Luz provided one interesting and unique example of what can be considered level 5 in the *Model of Cultural Understanding* for the text in Spanish. I say unique because this is the only instance of the occurrence of this level (cf. Tacaura's *slip* into level 5 before) in this text. In other words, Luz herself did not adopt this perspective in the approach to otherness in any other of her tasks. This fact reveals that this level was hard to achieve. One reason can be that it involves apprehending one's own culture from an outsider perspective, with awareness of how one's own behaviour is seen through the eyes of the members of other cultures. Therefore, what we see Luz doing here is explaining, describing and informing about Christmas to her imagined reader, a reader who does not know what Christmas is, what it involves, who Santa Claus is, or what the Christmas Mass is intended to celebrate, among other aspects. In short, a reader who is totally unfamiliar with the Christmas schema, its associated events, and its connotations.

La historia refleja una familia muy ligada con la religión católica que esta por celebrar Navidad. Dicha familia parece encontrarse en una situación económica difícil, cosa que se ve reflejada en toda la historia.

El niño, personaje principal, piensa que no va a recibir ningún regalo. *En dicha cultura se ve que para Navidad suelen hacerse regalos por un tal Papa Noel*. El asocia la falta de ese regalo con su comportamiento y relaciona el buen comportamiento con la religión, lo compara con el Niño Jesús, por el contrario el mal comportamiento esta ligado con el diablo. Acá se ve claramente como *el niño esta inmerso en una cultura donde la religión ocupa un espacio importante. Hace referencia también al Padre y el Catecismo, el primero se refiere a la persona que en la religión católica celebra la misa (también esta a cargo de la Iglesia) y el segundo se refiere a un libro donde se encuentran las normas o esperados comportamientos de las personas*. Vendría a ser el ideal cristiano, por llamarlo de alguna manera.

Al momento de celebrar la Navidad la familia parece estar muy triste y asocian la falta de dinero con la cantidad de comida y como está su mesa en ese día tan especial. La familia demuestra su tristeza durante la cena, y la falta de entusiasmo y motivación en ese día tan importante. Nombran a "*La Misa de Gallo*" *que es una misa, celebración que se hace en*

la Iglesia tratando de imitar lo que fue el nacimiento de Jesús. Al ser una familia católica es para ellos un evento muy importante y el hecho de no ir es visto de una mala manera. Esto suma al desgano, falta de interés por arreglarse y verse bien en esa celebración. Finalmente el niño ve que la gente de su familia ni siquiera comieron por tal angustia. Aunque el sigue esperanzado que va a recibir el regalo, y se duerme con esa infantil e inocente esperanza.

(Luz, reading response, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

The capacity to recognize and articulate the difficulties found in the process of perceiving a culture from inside (level 5) is also present here. And Luz resolved the difficulties successfully. This level matches Kramersch's "third perspective" (Kramersch 1993: 210), which permits the adoption of insider, outsider and hybrid perspectives in the apprehension of C1 and C2. So Luz simultaneously took the perspective I have just described at the time that she also could not avoid filtering her own personal view toward textual content ("Vendría a ser el *ideal cristiano*, por llamarlo de alguna manera ... en ese día *tan* especial... en ese día *tan* importante... se duerme con *esa infantil e inocente* esperanza").

Luz supports this perspective-taking in the interview in the following terms, reflecting precisely the characteristics that are typical of level 5:

L: O sea... lo que compartimos nosotros justamente con... con esta familia es que... *viene una persona, supuestamente llamada Papá Noel, que deja regalos a los niños. Eh... Bueno, la realidad es que Papá Noel... o sea, son los mismos padres, o las mismas familias, y el hecho de que por ahí lo que yo a veces me planteo es que se ve, bueno, en muchas películas, o... o varias veces como que... ¿en las familias pobres qué pasa? O sea, hay un Papá Noel en las familias ricas o en las familias medias, pero en las familias que... no sé, que no... No existe esa... creación por ahí de lo que es una familia, no tienen papá, son los hijos abandonados... o sea, ¿qué pasa en esos chicos? Entonces es como que...*

M.: Bueno, porque de hecho no lo mencionan. ¿Por eso decís vos? ¿Está mencionado Papá Noel en el texto?

L.: No, no.

M.: No. Pero eso tiene que ver con que son pobres. *Vos decís como que ellos no tienen el concepto de Papá Noel.*

L.: O sea...

M.: *No tan arraigado...*

L.: *No tan arraigado y por ahí el hecho de que ellos esperen... de hecho esperan un regalo, entonces... bueno, yo supongo que es de Papá Noel pero... hasta no sé hasta qué punto ellos... o sea, van a creer en una persona tan ideal, si saben que... por ahí hasta los mismos padres les tienen que decir: "Bueno, Papá Noel no existe" de movida por el hecho de que... por la situación en la que están viviendo.*

M.: Entiendo. Entonces esto... no fue que *vos asumís que la persona que va a leer tu texto no sabe quién es Papá Noel: es algo irónico, se me ocurre...*

L.: *No, no, para mí no, no sabe... por eso es que lo hago específico.*

(Luz, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

In addition, what could be perceived as an open gap in this reading response, namely the reference to the concept of the Christian ideal and its brief explanation in this task itself, Luz explained in the interview. This is evidence once again of the supporting function fulfilled by the interview data.

L: trato de explicar el... o sea, qué es lo que... *el hecho de la Navidad que va más allá de... o sea... qué es lo que se hace, por ejemplo las comidas típicas, y justo en esto... Más o menos trato de contar un poco la importancia de la parte religiosa que.. que creo que es importante cuando el nene dice: "Voy a ser una buena persona" o "Voy a ser una mala persona", como que se hace replantear, "Si soy una buena persona voy a tener un regalo; si no, no."*

M.: Entiendo. *¿Cuál es el "ideal cristiano"?*

L.: (Pausa) Eh... *Y, justamente eso, que estén... que el comportamiento de una persona sea el adecuado para llegar a ser como una persona buena... y justamente, bueno, los niños por ahí se plantean: "Si soy una persona buena voy a tener un regalo."*

(Luz, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

Other instances of level 5 in the model occurred in the fragments in English, but they were exemplified by two readers only, and by the same two readers in both texts, Tess and Victoria. In the following chapter I describe an instance of level 5 by Victoria in connection with the episode of the candy bags in the Navajos text. What we see there is how this level 5 involves an awareness of issues of objectivity, the validity of one's perceptions, bias and subjectivity, the naturalization of one's views and practices, the relativity of cultural values, and the universality of certain cultural practices. In relation to *Cat's Eye*, only Victoria, Tess and Lula mentioned for instance that the fact that Elaine and her family thought that Banejri would feel lonely at Christmas was evidence of the character's inability to see things from his frame of reference instead of their own. He may not feel lonely at all simply because in his culture Christmas is not celebrated. Tess reflected:

M.: Y "¿Qué posibilidad de contacto sincero hay?", no hay, estás cuestionando que haya la posibilidad de un contacto sincero.

T.: Para mí hay posibilidad pero está limitada.

M.: Hm.

T.: Por ahí justamente con ese diálogo como que ellos un poco se van desmitificando, cómo ven al otro.

M.: ¿Y está limitada por qué, porque son de culturas distintas o por otra cosa?

T.: En parte sí me parece porque son culturas diferentes, y también... por el temor a cómo va a reaccionar el otro, por ser corteses, por...

M.: Sí.

T.: Y en parte por su propia cultura, como el que *ponía que la familia tenía sus propias costumbres, festejos, y le costaba desde esa visión ver al indio, porque no se*

ponen a plantearse... Por ejemplo, pensaban que ellos invitan a Navidad para que no esté solo. No se ponen a pensar que para el indio es un día común...

M.: Claro.

T.: *No es que se va a sentir más ni menos solo, entonces están como que su propia cultura los limita en la relación.*

(Tess, interview, *Cat's Eye*)

Sometimes readers showed *traces* of this level in a certain task, or in their ability to reflect in the interview for instance. Enrique Alejandro, based on the Navajos text, showed his ability to adopt an angle of vision different from his own in the interpretation of the use of the word “heathen” in the fragment. In the following extract from the interview, we see the deep reflection and criticality that he engaged in as well as his ability to de-centre and analyze the use of the word “heathen” in the text from a perspective different from his own. A perspective that was different from his own on two fronts, namely the religious and the generational dimensions. Enrique Alejandro positioned his analysis from the eyes of a pervasive and ingrained religiosity in the culture he imagined, distancing himself (and his interpretation) from an understanding of the word “heathen” seen from the perspective of the 21st century. Notice that this reflection was triggered by confusing textual content (see chapter 9), in this case the word “heathen.”

EA.: *"heathens", cuando los llama "herejes". Eso también, otra cosa que me confundió.*

M.: No lo pusiste a eso.

EA.: No lo puse porque *me pareció contradictorio otra vez. Durante el texto no menciona ninguna... no hay ninguna otra mención despectiva de los indios. Todo el resto los trata como si fueran gente. Es más, dice que "aprendí esto, les mostré esto"... No hay ninguna otra mención despectiva. Quizás esto fue escrito en un contexto cultural en el que la religión era muchísimo más importante, los que no fueran cristianos eran herejes a pesar de que fueran perfectamente... normal. Esa contradicción me llevó a no... a no contarla porque... es tan raro que no...*

M.: Sí. ¿O sea que sería una visión... una posible visión nuestra, desde el siglo XXI?

EA.: Sí, precisamente, como que *no lo menciona de esa manera porque los desprecie, simplemente que los menciona... porque quien no es cristiano es un hereje, punto.*

(Enrique Alejandro, interview, *Desert Wife*)

This extract is also revealing of the importance of all the data collection instruments in collectively contributing to an understanding of how these participants approached the cultural content of these texts. While I have already shown the predominant ways in which the interviews served to support the findings from key research instruments such as the

reading response and the visual representation tasks, this extract revealed the complementary nature of the interviews at times. Enrique Alejandro explicitly stated here that he had omitted this specific reflection on the word “heathen” from his tasks because it was confusing and apparently contradictory for him. But it was precisely this extract from this interview which evidenced that this reader was capable of a depth of criticality and reflexivity that was characteristic of higher levels of cultural understanding in the model, namely levels 4, 4 plus and 5. This means that the interviews served to enrich and complement the findings from the other research instruments at specific points in the process of data analysis. Not only this, but also that the process of comprehension was complete much later after the reading of the text had finished. Furthermore, this fact shows the integral nature of the research design, something I have already discussed. As I affirm all of the foregoing, this extract is also rich in showing the fluidity of this understanding. While Enrique Alejandro claimed that there was nothing pejorative in the view of the Navajos portrayed in the text, he himself referred to them in a most despicable and derogatory fashion: “Todo el resto los trata *como si fueran gente.*”

This ability to see from eyes different from one’s own is a characteristic of levels 4, 4 plus and 5 in the model. Victoria and Tess also showed evidence of level 5 in the model in one specific way, which was their ability to reflect upon the fact that they could not escape their own prejudiced views on occasions, or the ethnocentrism of their own perspectives. Tess reflected in this way:

M.: Después mencionás muchos ejemplos de... Bueno, los indios son... perezosos, o aprovechadores u oportunistas... Esto... ¿puede entenderse como una lectura racista o peyorativa o discriminatoria de los indios de parte de la narradora o es algo objetivo? Porque vos decís, bueno, narra a la especie de un diario de viaje.

T.: Sí.

M.: En el sentido de que uno trata de ser lo más objetivo posible. Pero también ponés esto. ¿Existe algo, o te parece que existe algo...

T.: Para mí es peyorativo, sí. Por ahí *después pensé que capaz era mi propia visión, que ya estaba como con prejuicios en contra de esa narradora que iba a mirar a los indios.*

M.: ¿Cómo? Perdón, no te entendí.

T.: Claro, *no sé si al final termino siendo yo la que tengo prejuicios contra la narradora blanca pensando que ella va a mirar con prejuicios a los indios.*

M.: Está bien.

T.: Pero me dio esa sensación, que aunque muy sutilmente, iba introduciendo críticas.

(...)

M.: Hm. ¿Por qué es importante lo del episodio de lavar los platos?

T.: Para mí.. cuando lo leí el texto me pareció importante porque... también te lo marqué, que no entendía por qué la narradora creía que tenía derecho a decirles qué

hacer. *Fue en ese momento del texto que me di cuenta que... que yo tenía una visión un poco negativa o que había hecho muchas críticas. Ahí es como que me llevó a releer otras partes.*

(Tess, interview, *Desert Wife*)

I shall conclude this chapter with an exemplification of some brief instances of level 2 in the model, in this case from Lula. Level 2 involves comprehending one's own culture from an insider perspective, i.e. visualizing one's behaviour, values and ideas in the light of one's cultural parameters. In her reflection log, she reflected in the following way, showing awareness of this difficulty in the form of a meta-cultural comment:

Desde el punto de vista cultural, (rabanada, Misa de Gallo) son aspectos difíciles de comprender porque *en nuestra sociedad, quizá, las cosas sean bastante diferentes. Uno tiende a cerrarse en lo que conoce, y resulta difícil entender lo que difiere de nuestras costumbres y comportamiento.*

(Lula, reflection log, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

Lula expanded on this reflection in the interview (notice again its supporting role), bringing in possible interpretations which were clearly anchored to her own ways of conceiving reality, such as the concept of the split family with divorced or distanced parents.

L.: ... Era más que nada por el tema de la familia, que... en parte... o sea, es algo que en realidad yo no conozco, pero quizá en otros sectores de la sociedad sea más común. El... el tío que les da plata a los chicos y no el padre o la madre, y el padre que en el medio de la cena se levanta y se va... sin decir nada...

M.: Hm.

L.: *Y se puede llegar a entender que... no sé, los padres están separados y se juntan para la cena de Navidad pero... en ese fragmento del texto no decía nada, entonces... eh... era eso.*

(Lula, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

Another instance of a slip toward level 2 appears in Enrique Alejandro's reading of *Cat's Eye*, whereby he interpreted otherness from an ethnocentric position, i.e. from his own cultural parameter that told him that Christmas is a family gathering. In the reading response and interview we see his difficulty in even considering that Christmas habits and traditions can be different in another country ("*Eh... no pero... no sé, lo... por alguna razón lo dudo*"). This constitutes evidence of level 2 in the model. We also see his reluctance to consider the idea that hosting a foreigner can in fact be a normal or usual habit in a

different context. This shows the strength of the influence of family context and cultural background in Enrique Alejandro's approach to the cultural. What he was doing here was naturalizing his own cultural norms, traditions and beliefs. This also exemplifies the difficulty of accommodating and assimilating new knowledge to prior frames of reference. For Enrique Alejandro, Christmas is a family gathering, no matter what the text says. Notice that he evaluated the habit of having a guest at Christmas (which he discussed at the level of tentativeness) as a bit "shocking" perhaps. In addition, he clarified that the distortion stemmed from the fact that usual roles would change because of the presence of an unknown person in what should be a family gathering ("el tener una persona desconocida es... no... no de manera shockeante pero medio *cambia un poco las cosas porque uno hace de anfitrión*").

Culturalmente, el cuento presenta una cena navideña perfectamente estereotípica en lo que creo que son los Estados Unidos (ya que se menciona la BBC) con una familia reunida y la comida típica de las fiestas americanas (pavo y puré), *la cual es un tanto distorsionada por la inclusión de un extranjero que se siente intimidado por el ritual desconocido.*

(Enrique Alejandro, reading response, *Cat's Eye*)

EA.: "...y la cual un tanto distorsionada por la inclusión de un extranjero."
"¿Distorsionada para quién?"... la fiesta... bueno, *la Navidad familiar es una fiesta familiar usualmente*, el tener una persona desconocida es... no... no de manera *shockeante* pero medio cambia un poco las cosas porque uno hace de anfitrión.

M.: Por eso, yo te pregunto si puede ser que en Estados Unidos ese hábito sea común.

EA.: Eh...

M.: ¿Vos sabés?

EA.: ¿Qué hábito?

M.: *El de invitar a un extranjero.*

EA.: *Eh... no pero... no sé, lo... por alguna razón lo dudo.*

M.: Te suena raro.

EA.: Sí.

M.: Entiendo.

(Enrique Alejandro, interview, *Cat's Eye*)

7.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have described the process of data analysis as it took place in this investigation. I have begun with a short reference to the issue of the researcher's stance in a qualitative study such as this one, and I have explained how my awareness of it led me to take specific actions to mitigate its impact. I have also described procedural aspects in connection with data analysis, such as how I organized and arranged the data, how I actually went about analyzing the data, what processes were beneath what got reported in this thesis, what problems I faced at different points in data analysis and how I solved them, etc. In this sense, this chapter has satisfied the need pointed out by Miles and Huberman (2002: 395) to make analyses "fully explicit about what is being done each step of the way."

Another function of this chapter resides in the exploration of the interrelationships among the proposed approaches to data analysis. I have done this in an integrated account whereby I have described, illustrated and exemplified the workings of the cultural idea units, the reader behaviours and the *Model of Cultural Understanding* as they operated in the array of data collection instruments, namely the prior knowledge task, the prompt texts underlined with difficulties (accompanied by a brief explanation in note form for each difficulty), the immediate reflection log, the reading response task, the visual representation task and the delayed interview. Finally, this chapter has also aimed at the introduction of the supporting role of interview data, which I have integrated in this procedural and integral account of how data analysis has proceeded in this study. I have also mentioned and exemplified another function of interview data, their complementary role, which was rare.

Having described and exemplified how data analysis was conducted, and having described and illustrated the workings of the measures of analysis using excerpts from the key research instruments, I shall now turn to the presentation of the findings of this study in the following two chapters.

CHAPTER 8

FINDINGS: RESULTS RELATED TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF OTHERNESS IN THIS SETTING

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CHAPTER 8

FINDINGS: RESULTS RELATED TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF OTHERNESS IN THIS SETTING

8.1. Introduction

This chapter and the next present the results of this study¹. They are structured around the research question, or in other words, I use information from any data collection instrument and measure of analysis in an integrated account in responding to this question. I present findings in two separate chapters for the sake of clarity and readability, even though the process of cultural understanding in this setting was integral, i.e. it cannot be said to be composed of independent and discrete elements. The propositional statements around which I have organized this presentation of findings were observed throughout the process of comprehension, in all tasks and texts, and by all participants, and were therefore ingrained within it.

In the present chapter I shall focus my attention on findings related to the specific understanding of otherness, while in the following one I shall inspect more general processes. These processes were embedded within cultural understanding here, simply because this study was designed to explore it and therefore foregrounded the cultural throughout. This distinction specific-general refers to the fact that the more general processes in the following chapter could also be thought of as pertaining to the understanding of whatever is not cultural, even though here they were inseparably tied to the cultural.

¹ Raw data appear in all tables in both chapters. Blank spaces mean that none of the participants provided a response for the items in question. I have made the following decisions in the reporting of the quantitative findings here. For the sake of variety, sometimes I report specific numbers of readers (for instance, *three* participants did ...). Other times I use expressions such as *the majority of* (to mean 7-8 participants), *almost all* (9 participants), *half* (5), *almost half* (4), *one third* (3), *two thirds* (6), *three quarters* (7-8).

It is useful to bear in mind what Maxwell (2002: 47) says with respect to quantification in qualitative research: "A claim that a certain phenomenon was frequent, typical, or rare in a specific situation at the time it was observed (...) is also subject to threats to descriptive validity. This is an issue for which Becker (1970) has advocated the use of what he calls "quasi-statistics" – simple counts of things to support claims that are implicitly quantitative. What makes this a matter of descriptive validity is that it does not involve statistical *inference* to some larger universe than the phenomenon directly studied, but only the numerical description of the specific object of study." Quantitative information in this study is conceptualized in these terms.

8.2. Overview of this chapter

This chapter begins by recapitulating key issues of this investigation, necessary for the presentation of findings. One is the distinction between comprehension *during* and *after* reading as stated in the research question. Another inseparable aspect here is the polarity *product-process*, already discussed in chapter 6. A final concern pertains to the interrelatedness among instruments and measures of analysis and highlights the integral process of data analysis as I have described it in the previous chapter. This chapter and the following one summarize results in a similar integral and integrated way, drawing upon all the available data types and measures of analysis, from all the participants, in an attempt to offer a general portrait of how these EFL college readers comprehended the cultural content of the literary narrative texts used in this study. By contrast, chapter 10 shall narrow the scope in order to provide an in-depth analysis of one participant, whose responses to the prompt texts are exemplars of and representative of the somewhat disparate ways in which these readers responded to the selected fragments.

8.3. The research question: recapitulating key issues

I shall proceed next to answer the research question, which was:

What processes, techniques and behaviours do EFL college readers in this setting use to comprehend the cultural content of literary narrative texts during and after reading?

I have already explained in chapter 6 how the *during reading* and *after reading* in this question are taken care of in this research design. Basically, I have argued that three instruments were explicitly included in this research design in order to explore the *process* of reading, or in other words, the investigation of how these readers approached these texts *during* the reading itself. These instruments were:

- each text underlined with difficult or confusing parts as the participants perceived them during reading together with a brief explanation of such difficulties in note form in the text itself;

- an immediate written reflection log (retrospective self-observation) based on the cultural aspects in the text and the comprehension difficulties found;
- a delayed interview focusing on issues which emerged from my analysis of the reading response task in writing and the visual representation task.

By contrast, the *after reading* part of the research question was taken care of by the following instruments: the reading response task in writing, the visual representation task, and the comprehensibility grid designed to observe the self-assessed degree of comprehension of the cultural aspects identified in the texts (cultural idea units) as well as the participants' evaluation of each cultural aspect as essential or auxiliary to each Christmas celebration.

In answering this question, it is also important to keep in mind an observation that I made in chapter 6. What I pointed out there was a persistent and strong dichotomy *product* vs. *process* in reading comprehension, manifested in most of the methodological decisions made in the reviewed studies in chapter 3. The opposition in these studies was between the *quantitative* analysis of the recall protocols through the mean frequency of occurrence of previously identified idea units in the prompt texts used, and the *qualitative* analysis of those recalls through the observation of the changes readers make in recalling passages. The tension between product and process that I observed in all cases depends, as a starting point, on how comprehension (understanding) is investigated in the first place. I have questioned in this thesis the underlying idea that the ability to reproduce exactly what is in a text is a reliable indicator of comprehension. In all these studies comprehension is assumed to have occurred when a text is recalled as accurately as possible. In addition, the underlying assumption in all cases is that a measure of recall, which is a *product* of comprehension that takes place *after* reading, is an adequate measure to describe what happens during the comprehension *process*.

In this thesis I have proposed instead a notion of comprehension based on levels or degrees of understanding. This view distances itself from the focus on how much is remembered from a text (manifested in the quantification of idea units as well as in the polarity product-process). The notion of levels or degrees of comprehension has allowed me to investigate the whole process of comprehension, i.e. both *during* and *after* reading, breaking with the polarity product-process until the process of reading is complete. The proposed design for

this study, as I briefly summarize it in this chapter (described in detail in chapter 6), has allowed me to capture both the *during reading* and the *after reading*.

The interaction and interrelationships among the data collection instruments and the measures of data analysis as described in the previous chapter also contribute to breaking this polarity and to the exploration of the *during* and *after* reading. I have proposed that the confusing and flawed product vs. process, quantity vs. quality distinction that pervades in all the reviewed studies in chapter 3 can in fact be superseded by the notion of levels of understanding as portrayed in my *Model of Cultural Understanding*. Furthermore, I have also argued that it is possible to accommodate the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of analysis within this model. In the previous chapter with a description of the data analysis process I have shown how I have carried out both analyses in an integrated manner within this model instead of as independent and isolated stages in the research process. In other words, I have shown there that both quantity and quality (cultural idea units and reader behaviours tied to cultural aspects) can successfully be interrelated within and among the six levels in the model, with more or less strength.

The main argument therefore is that in the data analysis phase, described in the previous chapter, product (in the form of the quantification of cultural idea units) and process (in the form of the kind of behaviours undertaken by the participants while reading and writing the required tasks) came together in an *integrated data analysis process*. That is, analyses that were integrated and simultaneous rather than discrete, staged and successive (i.e. first one data analysis measure, then another). This written report, I have mentioned in chapter 7, fails to capture this dynamics because of the linearity of writing. This difficulty to capture the fluid, global and integrative nature of the analysis undertaken will become most evident in these chapters with findings (chapters 8 and 9), as I was forced to make continuous decisions related to the organization and presentation of these results in a manner that would best portray such dynamics.

8.4. The participants

It seems sensible to start this reporting of results with the participants. Knowing who they were, what conceptions of reading they held, what motivated them to read in Spanish and English and other relevant information regarding literacy in both languages was a pre-

condition to answering the research question. The specific findings of this study should be framed within the profile of the participants that I shall offer next. In addition, the centrality of the results from the demographic data should also be understood within the conceptualization of this study as classroom-based research which highlights the importance of the individual and the local and makes an effort to describe how literacy in English, in this case EFL reading, is lived and experienced in peripheral countries, of which Argentina is an example.

8.4.1. *Biographical information*

The biographical questionnaire revealed that all the participants but one were female. They were in their early twenties at the time of data collection (see Table 1 below), with the exception of two females (one aged twenty-eight and the other thirty-two). One of them had two additional characteristics which made her unique: she had completed a five-year course of studies and was a teacher of Spanish language and literature (i.e. she already held an undergraduate degree), and she was blind². The majority had entered university in 2007, with one exception in 2005 and another in 2006. The fact that they had all taken my course, English Language II, in 2008 (i.e. approximately in the second year of their course of studies, as should ideally be the case) means that they were very good students academically. Only three participants reported that they worked, but in all cases informally (for instance, teaching English or Spanish) and for short hours. I mention this here because it meant that they were devoted to their studies – something that the participants later confirmed in informal conversations. Of the six participants who were Catholic, only one was a practising Catholic, and the rest were atheist. This information is important because the three texts had a religious ingredient.

² This reader used a computer supplied by the School in which a program called *Jaws* had been previously installed. Developed for computer users whose vision loss prevents them from seeing screen content, *Jaws* reads aloud what is on the PC screen. Versatile features and customizable options allow users to tailor the program to their individual needs and preferences. For instance, this reader could choose whether *Jaws* read to her phrase by phrase, word by word or character by character whilst she typed on the keyboard. As the program was also set to read an entire document or read through line by line, this reader used it to revise her tasks.

This reader was confronted with an additional difficulty in the writing of the visual representation because *Jaws* is unable to read graphics or drawings. However, she resorted to a sort of numbered summary, where she presented between four and six key issues (depending on the text), numbered, which she explained by using words and short phrases and sentences. Visually, this task was similar to other graphics produced by the other participants.

With respect to their experience with other cultures, half of the participants reported having had the experience of traveling abroad. Interestingly here, of this half, three had traveled many times, ranging from four to ten times. With one exception, all participants had traveled many times within Argentina. What this means is that they had had the opportunity of facing otherness (presumably in a variety of formats) repeatedly through these trips. Regarding direct contact with foreigners, the majority informed having had regular contact with one, two or three people in the course of their lives. Two participants mentioned having had contact with ten or more people. At the moment of data collection, half of them were having regular contact with at least one foreign person, and more than half had this contact also through the Internet. All participants were frequent Internet users, another source of the confrontation with otherness. Overall, then, these participants could be assumed to possess, in varied degrees, some of the knowledge, skills and attitudes (Byram, Nichols and Stevens, 2001) needed to approach otherness, in this case through reading in English as a foreign language.

Table 1. Biographical information.

	<i>Pseudonym</i>									
	<i>Beryl</i>	<i>Enrique</i>	<i>Lula</i>	<i>Luz</i>	<i>Miranda</i>	<i>Scarlet</i>	<i>Tacuara</i>	<i>Tess</i>	<i>Victoria</i>	<i>Yanina</i>
		<i>Alejandro</i>			<i>Dana</i>	<i>Rose</i>				
Age	24	21	21	23	20	20	20	21	32	28
Year of entrance to university	2007	2006	2007	2005	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007
Works	No	Occasionally	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Religion	Atheist	Catholic	Atheist	Catholic	Catholic	Catholic	Atheist	Atheist	Catholic	Catholic
Practising Catholic		No		No	No	No			Yes	No
Trips abroad	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Number of visits abroad	1		10		4	2		8		3
Trips within Argentina	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of visits	over 5	7	5	several	10	many	many	many	few	many
Regular Internet use	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Contact with foreigners in life	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Number of people	2	1	1	2	3	15	10			5
Contact with foreigners (Internet)	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Contact with foreigners at present	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

8.4.2. Motivation for reading

The questionnaires about reading revealed how these participants conceived reading. Since most of them did not work, more than half never read either in Spanish or English for job-related purposes. The conceptualisations of reading that emerged were the same in both

languages. For instance, these visions included reading in both languages as a tool to gain access to information and to learn about the world (almost all the participants) as well as to achieve good results at university. Reading for their studies at university, external motivation, was salient in both languages. All the participants mentioned that they often read for this purpose. At the same time, with the exception of one participant, all of them indicated that they frequently read for pleasure and out of curiosity (internal motivations) in both Spanish and English. They attributed little importance to reading in order to keep updated (newspapers and magazines), slightly higher in the case of their native language. Whilst half indicated that they read for this purpose in Spanish, more than half revealed that they never, or hardly ever, did so in English.

Table 2. Purposes of reading

Reading in English	Frequency			
	<i>Never</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>
Study				10
Work	5	1	3	1
Information		2	1	7
Being updated (newspapers)	2	4	1	3
Pleasure		1	4	5
Curiosity		1	3	6

Reading in Spanish	Frequency			
	<i>Never</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>
Study			1	9
Work	6	2	1	1
Information			3	7
Being updated (newspapers)		4	2	4
Pleasure			2	8
Curiosity			4	6

8.4.3. Reading material

With regard to the amount of reading material available in their homes, almost all the participants informed that they had abundant reading material in Spanish, whilst more than half expressed the same about English. Only one or two participants said that they had a small amount of material in both languages and none of them mentioned that they had little

or no material at all. Regardless of the language, half of the participants resorted to the library to get reading material (the university library as well as virtual libraries). More than half bought books in both languages or borrowed them from their friends. Few students resorted to the classroom or to the teacher in order to get the material that they needed (only two participants did so, and only in the case of English). None of the participants were subscribers to any material in Spanish or English. Hardly ever did they resort to photocopies. The fact that they bought and borrowed books (rather than using photocopies, which is an extended practice in this setting) is revealing of the high value associated to reading.

Table 3. Reading material in English and in Spanish

	<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
Likes reading a lot	9	9
<i>Reading material at home</i>		
Nothing		
Very little		
Little	2	1
Moderate	1	1
A lot	4	3
Abundant	3	5
<i>Sources of reading material</i>		
School library	4	4
Public library		2
Online library	6	4
Home	2	5
Classroom	2	
Kiosk		
Bookshops	6	7
Suscriptions		
From friends, classmates	6	8
Other (photocopy shop)	2	1

8.4.4. Reading difficulties and strategies to become better readers

As shown in Table 4, half the participants admitted that they encountered lexical difficulties when reading in Spanish, and more than half experienced difficulties related to the content of what they read. The lexical difficulties increased when reading in English, in

which case almost all admitted encountering problems. Half of them had difficulties related to the content of what they read in English. Just one participant in each case claimed that they did not encounter difficulties of any kind when reading in Spanish or in English.

The participants chose three strategies that would help them become better readers in their opinion. Reading more (i.e. become a better reader by reading) was salient for both languages (everyone in Spanish and almost all in English). Half of them mentioned the study of vocabulary in the case of English while a minority did so for Spanish. Only one participant mentioned the study of grammar, and it was in the case of reading in English. Nobody considered that having private lessons in English or Spanish was important. Almost half of the participants considered that practising with texts (e.g. summarising, answering questions, finding main ideas, etc.) in both languages was a good strategy. Most attributed great importance to the idea of having discussions about their readings in both languages with other people (family members, friends, teachers, etc.).

***Table 4. Difficulties experienced during reading
Strategies to become a better reader***

<i>Difficulties experienced during reading</i>		
	<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
None	1	1
Lexical	8	5
Syntactic		
Organisation	1	2
Content	5	6
Other (cultural)		1
<i>Strategies to become a better reader</i>		
	<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
Study vocabulary	5	2
Study grammar	1	
Read more	8	10
Take private lessons		
Practice with texts	3	4
Talk about the readings with friends, classmates, teachers	7	8
Other (please specify)		

8.4.5. Reading habits of these participants

Summarising, in general, the questionnaires about reading in English and in Spanish revealed participants with strong internal motivations, who liked to read in both languages, who considered that reading was important in their lives, who talked with family members and friends about their readings, who had access to reading material (both by borrowing and buying) and who had grown up in homes that encouraged reading. The revelation of these perspectives proved important since, being delimited by culture and previous learning experiences, they acted as filters that moulded the way these participants conceived reading both in Spanish and English, as well as the values and assumptions associated with it. The attitudes and beliefs revealed here showed students motivated and immersed in contexts that valued and encouraged reading.

In short, the questionnaires about reading in Spanish and English revealed that participants were immersed in an environment that allowed me to discard difficulties related to their linguistic and literary competence or their reading capacity, and therefore investigate cultural understanding in this setting.

8.4.6. Participants in other research

In this study, the participants could be seen as representatives of the same sub-culture within the national culture. While there were very many differences among them as the analysis of their tasks revealed, they also shared some characteristics. Their profile as readers, which I described before, was one key common trait. Another one was their condition as college students at Universidad Nacional de La Plata in this specific sociocultural setting, La Plata city. They were all young adults who in general faced no financial hardships.

These characteristics sometimes contrast with and on other occasions are similar to other participants in the reviewed studies in chapter 3. For instance, adults participated in Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson (1979) too, though no information is provided about their age, which might be a key issue considering the amount of contact with otherness that older adults may have encountered along the course of their lives. In addition, these

researchers' participants had two different backgrounds, Indian and American, although both lived in the US. I have already pointed out in chapter 3 that this cannot be considered a pure cross-cultural study because although the Indian subjects were natives of India, they resided in the US. The authors provide no further contextual or background information regarding this condition (such as the language and the cultural practices in the home, the school, and the community, and the interrelationship between native language/heritage culture and second language/foreign culture in those settings).

Hollingsworth and Reutzel (1990) worked with sixth-grade students in the US. Similarly, American children participated in Lipson's study (1983). This contrasts with the young adult participants in the study reported in this thesis. In Lipson (1983) the religious background was foregrounded. Specifically, children with Catholic and Jewish affiliations participated. In this thesis information about religion was considered to be relevant and was therefore targeted at through one specific question in the biographical questionnaire, but the study did not intend to make these religious identifications central. In addition, the way cultural understanding proceeds in children and young adults may be different and consequently the research design in this thesis may not be the most appropriate one to investigate cultural understanding among children, or at least, this is something that remains to be investigated.

Contrary to this thesis, Abu-Rabia's study (1998) resorted to participants of low socio-economic level. In addition, they were adolescents, aged fourteen-fifteen, Arab students in Israel, who were learning Hebrew as L2. That is, this is a study about L2 reading as this thesis. However, the complexity of the social and cultural setting in Israel is highly idiosyncratic, therefore making the study very context dependent. The same is the case with Abu-Rabia (1996).

Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm (2004) carried out an exploratory study with ten adult participants as in this thesis, but they were educators. Presumably their level of cultural awareness and their ability to understand otherness might be thought to be higher owing to this condition.

Other studies have involved college readers, though they came from different fields and disciplines. These studies used expository texts (rather than narrative texts as in this thesis) for the investigation of the cultural dimension of reading, specifically English as a native

language reading. For instance, Alderson and Urquhart's (1984) participants were English-speaking, university-based students in the UK while Mannes' (1994) were US-based. Brantmeier (2005) used L1 and L2 texts as in this thesis, and included the foreign language condition. More specifically, her participants were Spanish-speaking EFL students as in this study, together with other foreign language contexts.

Overall, these studies have failed to provide detailed reader profiles as well as careful descriptions of the specific sociocultural settings in which the studies were carried out. This lack of specificity about the sociocultural setting is a particular weakness in US-based studies, and needs to be contrasted with the level of detail in Abu-Rabia's studies (1996, 1998). By contrast, in this thesis I offer a detailed profile of the participants (in this chapter) as well as specifics regarding the sociocultural setting (in chapter 1).

8.5. Results about these participants' readings of the selected fragments

I shall begin this presentation of the results by making some general comments, relevant to how these readers approached the cultural content of the three texts. First and foremost, there exists one significant and powerful limitation in how I am able to report findings, posed by the constraints involved in operating in writing in this final report. This limitation is not minor, as I have shown in the previous chapter, and it raises awareness of the actual impossibility of the linearity of writing (and consequently of this report) to capture the flexibility, fluidity, dynamism and procedural nature of cultural understanding as manifested in this study on two ends. On the one hand, the research design itself, from the perspective of the *investigation* of cultural understanding in reading (materialized in this specific study). On the other hand, the participants' processes, techniques and resources in their approach to the cultural content of the texts used here. I have already addressed the first side of this issue in the previous chapter, which describes the process of data analysis. I shall focus on the second side in this chapter and the following one.

In addition to this severe limitation of writing, the process of data analysis that I described in the previous chapter, in particular its first holistic stage, also revealed the intricate complexity and depth of the participants' cultural understanding in relation to the three texts. The complexity and depth were of such an extent that it would be possible to argue that this research design (or any other for that matter) is by necessity investigating cultural

understanding in reading from a limited standpoint. In other words, this study has captured particular issues in relation to cultural understanding in EFL reading in this setting, and not others, and within what it has revealed, this thesis report in turn inevitably fails to become an accurate representation of what the study has captured in the first place, through its own lenses, because of the foregoing. Therefore, the results that I present in this chapter and the following one should be framed, understood and interpreted within this panorama.

I shall begin this section by presenting an overview of what the first holistic stage in the process of data analysis (described in the previous chapter) revealed. I adopt a thematic approach in the presentation of these findings as I summarize major issues and thematic trends in descriptive phrases or propositional statements that capture the essence of this macro analysis. Congruent with my comments in the previous paragraphs, and with the description of the process of data analysis in the preceding chapter, I have striven to embed the results from the measures of data analysis (cultural idea units, reader behaviours and the *Model of Cultural Understanding*) here in an integrated account.

I list these propositional statements next as indicators which anticipate the detailed presentation that follows.

Findings related to the specific understanding of otherness

1. In approaching otherness, participants resorted to what was known or familiar to them.
 - What other research has revealed concerning prior knowledge.
 - Elaborating and distorting cultural information.
 - Summary of propositional statement 1.
2. The basis for understanding otherness rested on a process of comparing and contrasting.
 - The difficulty to de-centre led to stereotyping.
 - Perspective-taking in understanding culture.
 - Summary of propositional statement 2.
3. Readers showed critical thinking, reflection, critical cultural awareness and social awareness.
 - Summary of propositional statement 3.
4. Readers showed a sophisticated ability to reflect upon culture: Meta-cultural reflections.
 - Summary of propositional statement 4.
5. Cultural understanding in this setting was fluid.
 - The research design was central in allowing this fluidity to emerge in the first place.
 - Summary of propositional statement 5.
 - Overall connection with prior work in this same setting.

Findings related to general processes of understanding

1. Readers showed awareness of problematic terms related to cultural understanding.
- Summary of propositional statement 1.
2. Participants brought their literary knowledge and assumptions into play in understanding another culture.
- Summary of propositional statement 2.
3. Participants offered simultaneous and alternative interpretations of textual content.
- Perceived confusion and difficulty with textual content.
- Summary of propositional statement 3.
4. Problematic textual content led to its re-visiting: A-ha moments.
- Summary of propositional statement 4.
5. Different foci of attention were revealed: prominent vs. shadowed topics.
- Emotions, perception of text topics during comprehension, and favoured vs. shadowed topics during reading as well as in the required tasks.
- Summary of propositional statement 5.
6. Participants expressed difficulty to visualize textual content during reading.
- Summary of propositional statement 6.

I shall now deal with each one in turn. In this chapter I focus upon the first group, i.e. those findings related to the understanding of otherness in this setting, while in the following chapter I discuss the second group, i.e. findings related to general processes of understanding. I briefly summarize each statement after its presentation, and then provide a general summary of all in the end. Throughout both chapters I compare and contrast these findings with others in the literature as reviewed in chapter 3.

8.5.1. In approaching otherness, participants resorted to what was known or familiar to them³

These participants' experiences with the fragments from *Mi planta de naranja-lima*, *Cat's Eye* and *Desert Wife* showed a number of common trends across participants, data types and texts. Firstly, as I said before, the participants' cultural understanding in relation to the three texts was complex, deep and intricate. This contrasts with other studies I have carried out in this same setting – something that I explore towards the end of this chapter. The interconnectedness and interaction among the text topics (in the form of the cultural idea units) and these readers' interpretations permeated all the data types. More specifically, they all interpreted the texts by explicitly resorting to something familiar, either in the form of specific knowledge or personal experiences. Jeffries (2001: 325) refers to this as “schema affirmation.” Theoretically, I have already mentioned in chapter 2 that all understanding is based on reference to what is familiar by recourse to a strategy of comparison and contrast. What the data analysis phase has revealed is that these knowledge and experiences were not necessarily related to Christmas, and they were not necessarily related to the participants' own cultures either. On the contrary, many times they amounted to free associations that the texts had triggered, tied to knowledge of different areas and disciplines, and the most diverse experiences. In other words, sometimes this familiarity was specific to their own homes while other times the spectrum

³ As a general strategy in both chapters, I italicize the names of the reader behaviours (generalizations, rationalizations, cultural errors, cultural details, etc.). I exemplify throughout with the idea that the reader recognizes them as I illustrate.

I also highlight the key parts of the extracts I quote from the different data types in italics, bold and/or underlining. These highlighted portions constitute the evidence for my analyses. With the exception of the interviews, simply because of their length, in general I have tried to include the complete tasks at some point (i.e. complete immediate reflection logs, complete reading response tasks and complete visual representation tasks). Resorting to complete tasks rather than isolated fragments allows for the visualization of the holistic perspective in each case. However, I have not been able to follow this strategy at all times because the purpose of this chapter is to illustrate my arguments with close readings. In other words, it was necessary to analyze extracts in detail, and to this aim, it was impossible to quote very long ones.

Finally, I intertwine short portions from the complete tasks I include here when the specificity of the argument requires it. I also at times embed short extracts even when I have not reproduced them in their completeness here. My justification for the presence of truncated extracts lies in the rationale for the use of multiple examples, which I have developed in the previous chapter.

opened to their hometowns, their communities, the country as a whole, or other countries and communities for instance.

This finding is not new about reading in general as it is not new as far as cultural understanding is concerned, and I have already shown this in chapter 3. For instance, Van Hell, Bosman, Wiggers and Stoit (2003: 296) say: “In their attempt to deal with a culturally unfamiliar or less familiar topic, children revert to existing knowledge for interpretation and guidance of their actions.” What I venture is worth mentioning here is that the participants in this study made this connection very evident, explicit and put it in writing. They all expressed in words that they were making these connections, and further continued to exemplify and support them. This finding, which resulted from the holistic analysis of all data types that I carried out before the implementation of the actual data analysis plan (see previous chapter), was a commonality observed in absolutely *all* interviews about all texts. It was a bit less strong, though, in other data types, where about three quarters of these participants made this kind of connections.

The explicit connection with familiar knowledge and experience should be differentiated from one specific measure of analysis, namely the reader behaviours (what these participants did in relation to the cultural content of the three texts), and within the list of reader behaviours, the *intrusions*. I shall say more about intrusions below. Let me recall at this point that an intrusion refers to cultural information deriving from the participants’ own culture, and connected specifically with the Christmas schema. Therefore, in all data types (except the prior knowledge task as I shall point out next), the instances of prior knowledge and experience around Christmas were identified and codified as intrusions. By contrast, the resort to familiar knowledge and experience that I mentioned before involved any familiar knowledge or experience that readers brought to bear on textual content, from their own cultures or others, and from varied topics and disciplines. This distinction is technical and specific to this study and was needed for methodological reasons. The narrow focus of intrusions as understood in this study meant that only prior knowledge and experience of Christmas counted as such. Otherwise, all prior knowledge and experience from the participants’ cultural background should have been codified as intrusions – something that in turn would have moved the focus away from the Christmas schema, which is the centre of this research.

I should remark now that all the reviewed studies in chapter 3 define intrusions in more ample terms to involve all culturally familiar knowledge. For the reason I have just mentioned, a narrower focus was needed in this study. Furthermore, there is another subtle distinction that I make in this thesis, and which is not observed in those reviewed studies, which is the difference between familiar knowledge and experience on the one hand, and *culturally* familiar knowledge and experience on the other. None of the reviewed studies in chapter 3 makes a distinction of this kind, neither a distinction as above in an explicit way. In fact, the category “culturally familiar knowledge” is never defined, in any study. Readers are said to “intrude” culturally familiar knowledge, but again the term intrusion is never defined rigorously. In fact, it is never defined at all. Apparently these notions are used interchangeably. In this sense, both categories (be that culturally familiar knowledge or intrusion) are too wide to be of use in the first place. There might appear to exist a difference between culturally familiar knowledge and prior knowledge, but once again when the term prior knowledge is used, it is never defined (for instance in Hollingsworth and Reutzel 1990 and Hammadou 1991). Confusion arises because researchers like Hammadou (1991), for example, use the term prior knowledge as apparently equivalent to culturally familiar knowledge. In sum, there appears to be a weakness in all the reviewed studies regarding this lack of specificity in crucial notions such as culturally familiar knowledge and prior knowledge. In particular Hollingsworth and Reutzel (1990) and Hammadou (1991) conclude with a point concerning the difficulty of investigating this area and therefore the need for more research. What I am trying to point out here is that part of this difficulty might reside in this vagueness in defining key concepts and measures of analysis.

By contrast, in this thesis I have defined what is understood by intrusion in chapter 6, and I have offered further specifications in this section. I have also distinguished between culturally familiar knowledge and experience (in a broad sense) from culturally familiar knowledge and experience of Christmas. In addition, I have made a further distinction around familiar knowledge and experience of other cultures as well as of different disciplines and fields. I illustrate these distinctions in this chapter, as we shall see later.

Finally, it should also be noted that a place is given in this study to experiences, not only knowledge. None of the reviewed studies in chapter 3 makes a reference to familiar experiences (as distinct from knowledge). Jeffries (2001) is one exception. I also show in

the present chapter that participants explicitly recalled specific personal experiences in their attempt to interpret the prompt texts.

Specifically within their own cultures and within the topic of Christmas, the prior knowledge task about a Christmas celebration in Argentina revealed this kind of knowledge and experience, to which readers referred later in the other written tasks. A caveat is in order at this juncture, because although strictly speaking, as I have just argued, this knowledge and experience would fall within the reader behaviour called *intrusion*, participants were not really intruding anything in this task, for two reasons. First, the prior knowledge task itself required that they focused on Christmas and what they knew about it, specifically including their personal experiences with this celebration. In other words, participants were probed for intrusions. Second, they had not yet read the texts because they produced this task before the actual reading of the fragments. Consequently, there was nothing to be intruded at this stage in data collection. Consistently with what was expected, this prior knowledge task about Christmas in Argentina generated longer reflections than the prior knowledge tasks about Christmas celebrations in the American and Native American contexts because the participants only had to reflect upon lived experiences in previous Christmas celebrations. In fact, many re-lived past celebrations in writing with the inclusion of descriptive details, feelings and emotions awoken by those celebrations, and on occasions, extensive reflections about the meaning of Christmas in their views.

The case of Enrique Alejandro is useful at this point because I shall come back to it toward the end of chapter 9 when I situate the findings of this study within key theoretical issues concerning cultural understanding in this setting. In the prior knowledge task about Christmas in Argentina, Enrique Alejandro centred on his family in particular. He reflected on the fact that there were no children in his family because the younger ones had all grown to the age of fifteen-twenty. He expressed his feeling of terror by the reality that “a scary percentage” of the male members of his family had died because of health issues (“un *aterrorizante (sobre todo para mi)* porcentaje de los hombres fallecieron por causas de salud”). It would be possible to say that his masculine condition played a role in his remarks at this point. The reader may find it useful to know that he lived with his mother, because his father had died when he was fifteen. He offered this information when I contacted him for further details regarding this statement seven months after the closure of data collection. This is an example of how personal life experiences and the family context

impinged upon reading, as evidenced clearly in one task in particular (the prior knowledge task), and of how they constituted a point of entrance to the texts.

La descripción que hice arriba es exactamente mi experiencia con navidades (nunca tuvimos problemas con quemaduras), aunque en los últimos años ocurrieron algunos cambios: Algunos familiares se mudaron/casaron/distanciaron por alguna razón, todos los jóvenes crecimos hasta el rango de los 20-15 años sin que aparecieran otros chicos y un aterradorante (sobre todo para mi) porcentaje de los hombres fallecieron por causas de salud. En grandes rasgos la “ceremonia” sigue igual, pero con menos gente, ninguna necesidad de pretender que Papá Noel existe y menos pirotecnia porque cuesta mucho.

(Enrique Alejandro, prior knowledge task, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

I say that these personal life experiences and the family context constituted a point of entrance to this text in particular because then in his reading response task Enrique Alejandro’s focal points revolved exclusively around the anguish, depression, poverty and rural setting, i.e. mainly the negative side of the Christmas celebration portrayed in the text. He wrote: “El texto narra la “fiesta” de navidad de una familia de mala situación económica (...) en general podría describirse como la forma en la que una *pobre familia* de campo, *deprimida* ya por su pobreza u otro evento no explicado, pasa las fiestas *de mala gana* y la *angustia* que esto le provoca al niño protagonista Zezé y la forma en la que los varios miembros de la familia se las arreglan para *soportar su angustia*” (Enrique Alejandro, reading response, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*). Both tasks, prior knowledge and reading response, revealed the importance of family background for this reader. Evidence of this is the centrality of the nuclear family, of the association between death and the male members of his family, of lived experiences in the family in connection with Christmas (spending Christmas with all the family), and of cultural associations (Christmas in Argentina as a familiar and festive celebration, in particular revealed by the use of the word “fiesta” between inverted commas). It is possible that the predominant focus on the negative aspects of the celebration portrayed in his reading response (sadness, poverty, depression, etc.) is connected with Enrique Alejandro’s inclination to perceive the negative owing to personal life experiences such as his father’s death at an early age. Interestingly, in the biographical questionnaire he had mentioned several negative memories that he recalled from family holidays in his childhood.

In addition, in this prior knowledge task the participants mentioned multiple and varied specific elements, typical of a Christmas celebration in Argentina (Table 5). Three quarters of them mentioned the Christmas dinner and the presents for the children. Half included a reference to the presents in general (not necessarily for the children), the gathering with close and dear family members, the celebration with friends and neighbours, the specific mention of nuts, nougat, hazelnuts and caramelized nuts and almonds, the Christmas tree, Santa Claus, Eve Mass, and the fireworks. One third of these participants mentioned the opening of the presents on December 24th in the evening, the abundance of food, the toast, the specific reference to the barbecue, pork, lamb or chicken for dinner, and the Christmas greetings by phone, letter or in person. A great variety of additional aspects were mentioned by only one or two participants, such as the Nativity, the street and shop decoration, the festive spirit, the gathering with distant family members, the special outfits for the occasion, the reference to the food and drink in general, the reference to specific cold dishes, sweet bread, the loss of a beloved one, the lack of religious spirit, the reference to the economic situation of the country and family bonds. Summarizing then, these participants were able to make explicit their knowledge and experience of a Christmas celebration in Argentina, and used it later in the written tasks they produced, as we shall see later.

Table 5. Prior knowledge about Christmas in Argentina and Brazil

Has spent Christmas outside home

<i>Yes</i>	2
<i>No</i>	8

Argentina. Reference to specific elements

Reference to presents	5
Presents for children	7
Open presents on December 24th at midnight	3
Reference to the dinner	8
Reference to food and drinks in general	1
Abundance of food	3
Barbecue, pork, chicken, etc.	3
Salads, cold dishes	2
Nuts, peanuts, etc.	4
Sweet bread	1
Christmas tree	4
Nativity	2
Street and shop decorations	1
Santa Claus	4
Christmas greetings (phone, letter, in person, etc.)	3
Celebrate with friends, neighbours, etc.	5
Reference to a dead relative	1
Go to mass	4
Lack of religious/spiritual feeling	2
Festive spirit	1
Reference to economic situation of country	2
Special outfits for the occasion	1
Toast	3
Fireworks	4
Gathering with close relatives and friends	4
Gathering with distant relatives	1
Family cohesion	1

Brazil. Reference to specific elements

Similar to Argentina	6
Don't know anything	3
Don't know much	3
Open presents on December 24th at midnight	1
Typical food and drinks	4
Go to mass	1
Religious/spiritual feeling	4
On the beach	1
Festive spirit (dances)	2
Fireworks	1

This prior knowledge task included one specific question about a Christmas celebration in Brazil. Whereas more than half of the participants thought that it would be similar to one in Argentina, one third manifested not knowing much and another third, not knowing anything. Almost half the participants believed there had to be some special food and drink involved. Other characteristics were erratic, being brought up by only one or at most two individuals, such as the festive spirit, the dancing on the beach, the fireworks, and Mass.

Moving on now to the reading response and the visual representation tasks, intrusions as defined before were present in both tasks based on the three texts. However, only one third of the participants intruded cultural information about Christmas in this way. Anyway, the presence of intrusions can be explained taking into account that it is possible that the visual memory of a personal event related to certain narrative episodes in the texts had provoked the filtering of contextual information and the generation of intrusions (Allen et al., 1994). Consistent with Singer and Donlan (1994), it is also possible that the perceived difficulty of some portions of the texts had inclined some of these readers to direct their attention to anything familiar in the textual content and then to relate it to their own understanding of Christmas in their own cultures. In this chapter I exemplify the presence of intrusions not only as they appeared in the reading response and the visual representation tasks, but also in the immediate reflection logs and the interviews.

The resort to the Three Wise Men to understand Zezé's act of placing his trainers on the other side of the door in the text in Spanish that I exemplified in the previous chapter is an example of the more general use of familiar knowledge and experience during interpretation, but there are others. Enrique Alejandro explained that the family's poverty may have originated from an economic debacle in the country (in much the same way that this has been the case with Argentina over the years). Yanina, in her visual representation, made a reference to her knowledge that low socio-economic status families tend to be numerous.

Turning now to the fragment from *Cat's Eye*, the questions designed to elicit the participants' prior knowledge about an American-Canadian celebration were revealing (Table 6). Only one participant had spent a Christmas celebration in this context and therefore had first-hand experience about it (though paradoxically, this student did not consider that she had such direct experience). All the participants but one said that their knowledge of a American-

Canadian Christmas celebration came from films, books, cartoons, TV and magazines. The majority said that this celebration would be similar to theirs in Argentina. Some participants provided specific titles for the source of their knowledge (for instance, the Simpsons, Home Alone, etc.).

Table 6. Prior knowledge about Christmas in the US and Canada

<i>Has spent Christmas in US or Canada</i>	
<i>Yes</i>	1
<i>No</i>	9
<i>Reference to specific elements</i>	
Similar to Argentina	8
Open presents December 25th (morning)	2
Reference to presents	1
Reference to food and drinks in general	3
Abundance of food	1
Turkey	1
Natural Christmas tree	3
Street and shop decorations	3
Home decorations	3
Santa Claus	5
Toast	2
Christmas greetings (phone, letter, in person, etc.)	4
Religious/spiritual feeling	1
Festive spirit	1
Snow	9
Special outfits for the occasion	1
Christmas carols	4
Fireworks	2
Gathering with close relatives and friends	8
Big gathering	1
Triviality, superficiality	1
Different season	2
Socks in chimney	1
Reference to other American celebrations	2
<i>Source of prior knowledge</i>	
Movies, TV, cartoons, books, etc.	9
Internet	2
From friends, relatives, acquaintances	1
Personal experience	

In this prior knowledge task, participants explicitly mentioned multiple and varied elements related to a celebration of this kind. However, only a few of these multiple elements were included in this task by most participants. These were the snow (all participants but one), the gathering with close relatives and friends (the majority) and Santa Claus (half). Four participants, i.e. almost half of them, mentioned the Christmas greetings (phone, letter, in person, etc.) and the carols. Several elements were mentioned by one third of the participants such as the reference to food and drink in general, the natural Christmas tree (as opposed to the artificial one that is used in Argentina) and the decoration of houses as well as of streets. Many other elements, listed in Table 6, were mentioned by only one or two individuals.

Despite the fact that these readers were quite knowledgeable about a Christmas celebration in this context, as this prior knowledge task showed, only one third intruded cultural information of this kind, i.e. specifically from the Christmas schema, in the reading response and the visual representation tasks as I have already mentioned. By contrast, absolutely all of them resorted to familiar knowledge and experiences of any kind in their understanding of this text too.

For instance, Beryl clearly explained that the source of her knowledge for her interpretation of the turkey was her prior knowledge of Crusades for Christ in Argentina - irrespective of whether this led to an *inadequate interpretation* originated in the confusion between Christmas and Thanksgiving. An *inadequate or wrong moral/interpretation* is a reader behaviour defined in chapter 6 as a moral or an interpretation not motivated or justified by the cultural content of the text or the Christmas schema. In this chapter I italicize reader behaviours as well as other measures of analysis throughout. Evidence of this inadequate interpretation is the fact that despite her realization that turkey is eaten at Christmas too (not only at Thanksgiving), she nonetheless persisted in advancing her own interpretation. Her reading response task started in this way: “Desde mi punto de vista, la cultura reflejada en este texto es meramente estadounidense. Asumo que es así porque se describe mucho *la cena típica de Acción de Gracias*. El tema del texto parece reflejar una *cena navideña* que, en comparación con el texto anteriormente leído, es de un grupo de personas de clase media.” Here we see the connection that Beryl made between Christmas and Thanksgiving, and the presence of contradictory information in the second and third sentences: this celebration is either one or the other, and cannot be both simultaneously. When I pointed

out this inconsistency to Beryl in the interview, she recognized that there was an incongruence, admitted feeling surprised by the fact that turkey is eaten in both celebrations (*No sabía que para Navidad también era una especie de tradición el pavo ... me sorprendió en sí cuando me di cuenta*), but nonetheless favoured her own interpretation (*No se si Navidad ... Porque yo los veía como celebridades aparte con diferentes rituales en todo caso*). This shows the strength of existing schemata, and the difficulty of accommodating and assimilating new knowledge to prior frames of reference. I shall say more about what participants did when faced with a cultural difference or a contradiction of their own cultural expectations based on Archer (1997) later in this chapter.

M.: Bueno. (Pausa) Esto es nuevo para vos, que se come pavo en Navidad.

B.: Sí, *creí que sólo era en Acción de Gracias*. Hay uno de los chicos que están en ese grupo en Argentina de *Crusades for Christ*...

M.: Ah, sí.

B.: Bueno, uno de ellos me comentó más o menos la diferencia entre... o sea, *me dijo que había una diferencia entre Navidad y Acción de Gracias, yo no estaba muy familiarizada con el tema, y creí que el pavo era sólo para Acción de Gracias, que es una festividad aparte*.

M.: Claro.

B.: *No sabía que para Navidad también era una especie de tradición el pavo*.

M.: O sea que eso te generó dificultades.

B.: Sí, sí, me sorprendió en sí cuando me di cuenta.

M.: En la respuesta textual (pausa) Vos ponés que describe mucho la cena típica de Acción de Gracias.

B.: Sí.

M.: Y yo te pongo: "Bueno, pero es Navidad".

B.: Exactamente, precisamente porque me llamó la atención lo de que... lo de que se comiera pavo, me parecía que la acción, o sea, y además decía que había un "staffing" en el...

M.: O sea que...

B.: ...en el pavo...

M.: O sea que no te quedó claro que era de Navidad.

B.: *Me quedó claro que era de Navidad, pero me parecía que reflejaba más que nada Acción de Gracias*.

M.: Entiendo.

B.: *No sé si Navidad*.

M.: Entiendo.

B.: *Porque yo los veía como celebridades aparte con diferentes rituales en todo caso*.

(Beryl, interview, *Cat's Eye*)

Beryl then proceeded in the same way to attempt to understand the concept of Sunday School and Sunday school missionary paper by tying it to her knowledge of *catecismo* in Argentina.

M.: Las dos referencias... "Sunday school" y Sunday school missionary paper", ¿a qué puede hacer referencia? ¿Sabés a qué puede hacer referencia o lo pusiste como auxiliar porque no lo...

B.: No, no, más o menos tengo una idea a lo que puede llegar a hacer referencia, ¿no?

M.: Pero globalmente, ¿a qué...

B.: Globalmente me parece que... es esta cuestión de que... generalmente *los estadounidenses tienen... eh... los domingos es muy típica la práctica de la misa, y que los menores a veces tienen... eh... como una Sunday school, a la que van y practican como el Catecismo para nosotros.*

M.: Ah, OK.

B.: *Es como la clase de Catecismo, ¿no?*

M.: Entiendo.

B.: Eh... pero no me pareció demasiado relevante porque me parece que el foco no estaba en sí, ¿no?, en ciertas cuestiones religiosas sino en el choque de culturas, no desde lo religioso.

(Beryl, interview, *Cat's Eye*)

Notice incidentally the *generalizations* in expressions like “*generalmente los estadounidenses tienen... eh... los domingos es muy típica la práctica de la misa, y que los menores a veces tienen...*” There is one small attempt to soften such generalizations in the use of an expression of frequency, *a veces*, but only in reference to “*los menores*” (and not “*los estadounidenses*” for instance). Also worth mentioning here is an example of propositional statement 5 in chapter 9 (Different foci of attention were revealed: prominent vs. shadowed topics) whereby Beryl decided to focus her attention on the clash of cultures rather than on the religious perspective (“*pero no me pareció demasiado relevante porque me parece que el foco no estaba en sí, ¿no?, en ciertas cuestiones religiosas sino en el choque de culturas, no desde lo religioso*”). I shall come back to this in the following chapter.

Enrique Alejandro began his reading response task in this way: “Culturalmente, el cuento presenta una cena navideña perfectamente estereotípica en lo que creo que son los Estados Unidos con una familia reunida y comida típica de las fiestas americanas (pavo y puré), la cual es *un tanto distorsionada por la inclusión de un extranjero que se siente intimidado por el ritual desconocido.*” Later in his interview he expanded on the rationale for this idea of the Christmas celebration being distorted by Banerji, expressing how his presence affected what he supposed should be a familiar celebration. When I asked him whether having a guest for Christmas may be a common practice in another country, he simply refuted the idea. This also exemplifies most of these readers’ tendency to naturalize their own cultural practices as well as the difficulty of accommodating and assimilating new

knowledge to prior frames of reference. For Enrique Alejandro, Christmas is a family gathering, no matter what the text says.

Lula's reading response offers another example: "Lo que es más, *en la India no comen carne*, por lo que el señor Banerji parece estar preso de una lucha interna que no puede resolver: ¿cómo comer carne, si no está bien para su propia cultura? ¿Cómo rechazar la carne, que esta cultura que lo recibe tan amablemente, le ofrece?" This is an instance of a *generalization* (that in India people do not eat meat), and more specifically, an example of a denial of a naturalized practice in her own country, namely the widespread consumption of meat on a daily basis by the population in general regardless of background and position. Lula explicitly denied that in India people eat meat because she assumed that the normal state of affairs shared by readers in this community, in this particular sociocultural setting, is that people do eat meat. So she decided to point out that this is not the case in India. This is an example of the interactive nature of the use of negatives in written discourse (Pagano, 1994).

Notice too another *inadequate interpretation* in the idea that eating meat or not becomes a dilemma for Banerji. Nothing in the textual content justifies the terms in which Lula has portrayed the dilemma: as an internal fight materialized in two rhetorical questions ("¿Cómo comer carne, si no está bien para su propia cultura? ¿Cómo rechazar la carne, que esta cultura que lo recibe tan amablemente, le ofrece?"). In her visual representation she kept the fact that they do not eat meat, but without the further interpretation. In her interview, she identified the source of her knowledge in very vague terms ("he escuchado"). Note another denial ("*No sé si no comen peces*"), which is hard to explain. As a reader and analyst of her production, I fail to see why she assumed that she needed to negate that fish are eaten in India.

M.: "En India no comen carne." ¿Dice el texto eso?

L.: No, pero... es algo que... *he escuchado que no comen carne allá, que... No sé si no comen peces*, pero por lo menos sé que carne de los animales terrestres...
(Lula, interview, *Cat's Eye*)

Other instances of propositional statement 1 follow. Scarlet Rose and Yanina tied the Sunday school missionary paper to the evangelic missions in Argentina. Tess associated the BBC and Banerji with England and her knowledge of colonialism.

Moving now to the fragment from *Desert Wife*, the prior knowledge task revealed that nobody thought they knew anything about the Navajos (Table 7). Participants explicitly stated not knowing anything. However, in this prior knowledge task they all mentioned multiple and varied elements related to a Christian celebration (such as Christmas) by an Indian group (such as the Navajo), as they imagined it. For instance, Tacuara reflected upon this in the interview: she assumed that the Navajo are pagan because they are Indian, and that consequently they do not celebrate Christmas. But she nonetheless proceeded to mention characteristics of such a celebration by this group. Interestingly, and contradictorily as it may appear, while all the participants spent time reflecting on different elements or characteristics of such celebration, half of them thought that the Navajos would not celebrate Christmas. As way of example, in the interview, Tacuara showed her awareness of this contradiction in these terms:

M.: Hay algo que no te cierra en este texto.

T.: Sí, hay un montón de cosas igual que me quedaron medio flojas. Igual que... *cómo es la celebración de ellos, los navajos y... por qué, dónde eso pasa... digo, la Navidad tiene una raíz cristiana, ¿no?*

M. Sí.

T.: O sea que alguien se lo impuso eso porque... ¿de dónde sacaron ellos...

M.: Bueno, ¿y no te preguntaste eso?

T.: Sí, por eso *me pregunto por qué celebran la Navidad si...* De hecho, en el cuestionario anterior yo en un momento *puse que no sabía nada de la Navidad de ellos pero me llamaba la atención por qué una comunidad indígena festeja la Navidad si tiene origen cristiano*, entonces alguien le impuso esa... ese ritual que no es de ellos.

M.: Está bien. Ésa fue la interpretación que se te ocurrió.

T.: Sí porque... yo no sé cómo... *de dónde sacan ellos la Navidad, no tienen... para mí es eso...*

M.: ¿Por qué no mencionaste esto en las tareas?

T.: Por qué... no en el prior knowledge, porque no sé si... porque acá en ningún momento tengo para poner eso.

M.: No, pero puede ser algo importante para interpretar el texto.

T.: Ah, yo en el otro lo puse.

M.: Está bien.

T.: En el cuestionario anterior.

(Tacuara, interview, *Desert Wife*)

About half the participants mentioned the dances, music and singing, and the religious and spiritual aspect in this prior knowledge task. They also mentioned elements associated with their own culture that they thought would *not* be present in a celebration of this kind such as the Christmas tree, the Christmas presents, Santa Claus, Nativity and the fireworks – again another instance of the interactive nature of denials that I mentioned before. Participants also referred to a considerable number of additional characteristics, though none of these features

were mentioned by more than three individuals, such as the following: rituals, pagan rituals, references to polytheism and sacrifices, the fires, the special outfits for the occasion, community celebration, the activities of the women (cooking) and the men (hunting), the drinking, etc. These responses revealed that participants were quite knowledgeable about a Christian celebration in a Native American context, despite the fact that half believed that the Navajos would not celebrate Christmas.

Lula reflected in this way in her prior knowledge task:

La verdad, ni siquiera se quiénes son los indios navajos. Nunca había escuchado hablar de ellos.

No se mucho acerca de sus rituales y/o festejos, pero imagino que también deben estar en estrecha relación con la naturaleza. Quizá el dar ofrendas a sus dioses para la buena casa o cosecha; la salud de algún miembro de la tribu...

(Lula, prior knowledge task, Desert Wife).

In response to a question in this prior knowledge task that inquired about any school knowledge of Indian tribes that might be of help in the reading of this fragment, Lula was quite detailed. She mentioned several ways of living, specific materials for the making of their “houses” and a reference to polytheism.

Recuerdo que eran cazadores, recolectores o pescadores. Que vivían puramente de la naturaleza. Sus casas estaban hechas de barro, maderos, huesos, hojas de parra, paja, todo obtenido de los alrededores. Vivían en tribus organizadas con un cacique que la guiaba y regía. Tenían sus dioses: eran politeístas. Veneraban a varias deidades que representaban diferentes elementos de la naturaleza.

(Lula, prior knowledge task, Desert Wife).

Scarlet Rose mentioned that she knew “absolutely nothing” about the Navajos and that the only school knowledge that might be relevant for the reading of this fragment was related to “some kind of dance or ritual, or some sacrifice that the Indians could do to celebrate something” (“Lo único que recuerdo y que podría ser relevante es alguna especie de baile o ritual, o algún sacrificio que los indígenas pudieran hacer para celebrar algo”). Notice the tentative language (general words, expressions like *algún tipo de*, verbs like *imagino*, formulaic expressions like *me parece que*, modality like *podría*, *sería*, etc.) to signal her lack of certainty in this respect, as in what follows. She then continued to say that “Desde el estereotipo de indígena que tengo (y como no conozco casi nada de los Navajos), imagino que celebran la Navidad con algún baile y canto típico. No imagino ningún

arbolito de Navidad *ni* fuegos artificiales pero sí mucha música indígena. *Me parece*, también, que la cena *sería* carne.” Worth emphasizing here are her awareness and explicit acknowledgement that her account is based on her stereotype of an Indian and the use of denials concerning the characteristic elements of Christmas in her own culture (Christmas tree, fireworks).

Victoria was the only participant who did not attempt to mention some characteristics in the way that Lula, Scarlet Rose and the rest did. Her prior knowledge task was deeper, consisting in a reflection regarding the Indians’ struggles for their lands and rights. She explicitly mentioned that a Christmas celebration by the Navajos had to be imported from the American culture, i.e. it could not be an Indian celebration. She evaluated her own interpretation as *paradoxical*, based on her belief that the “Indians want to differentiate from that culture.”

Lo único que considero que acaso pudiese ser relevante para la lectura del texto es recordar las *luchas de los indios por sus tierras y derechos*. Sospecho que la Navidad debe de ser para ellos una celebración *no autóctona*, entendiendo por “no autóctono” *algo que han debido de tomar de la cultura norteamericana*. Esto resulta *paradójico* siendo que, por lo poco que sé al respecto, existe la intención de los indios de *diferenciarse de dicha cultura*. Por tanto, deduzco que las celebraciones navideñas deben de *tener diferencias bastante importantes* con respecto a las que se enmarcan en la cultura norteamericana.

(Victoria, prior knowledge task, *Desert Wife*).

Prompted by a question in the prior knowledge task that required her to imagine what a Christmas celebration by the Navajos might be like, she did not add further details. She repeated the idea of the standard American culture influencing minorities and emphasized two notions: the assimilation of both cultures and the idea of difference.

Imagino que las fiestas de Navidad de los navajos habrán *asimilado elementos de la cultura norteamericana*, pero también sospecho que en tales celebraciones se deben de haber *incorporado además rituales y tradiciones típicas de esta tribu*. No puedo suponer demasiado porque desconozco absolutamente el tema e ignoro, entre otras cosas, *la influencia que la cultura norteamericana estándar ejerce hoy día sobre estos grupos minoritarios*; pero sí tengo la idea de que las celebraciones navideñas de los navajos deben de ser *bastante diferentes a todo lo que conozco*.

(Victoria, prior knowledge task, *Desert Wife*).

Table 7. Prior knowledge about Christmas by Navajos

Don't know anything	10
----------------------------	----

Reference to specific elements

Very different from Argentina	3
Imported from the USA	1
Blend of traditions	1
Navajos don't celebrate Christmas	5
Typical food and drinks	3
Food from nature	1
Fires	1
Hunting by men	2
Dancing	6
Music	4
Singing	4
Religious/spiritual feeling	5
Sacrifices, offerings, veneration	3
Conversion to Christianity	3
Paganism and politeism	2
Festive spirit	1
Community celebration	1
Special outfits for the occasion	1
No presents, Christmas tree, Nativity or fireworks	4

Source of prior knowledge

Stereotype of the Indian	1
No source	8
Impossible to relate Navajos with Indians in Latin America	1

Once again, despite the fact that all the participants, with the exception of Victoria, were able to imagine a Christmas celebration by the Navajos in the prior knowledge task, only one third of these readers intruded cultural information around the Christmas schema in the required tasks. On the contrary, the totality used familiar knowledge and experiences of any kind (i.e. not tied to Christmas as celebrated either by an Indian group or in their own culture) in their understanding of this text.

I come back to Beryl for illustration purposes here. She used her knowledge of the Mapuches Indians in Neuquén (an Argentine province, and the province Beryl was from) to understand this text (i.e., familiar knowledge of Indian tribes in Argentina). She then resorted to something familiar about the “Borneos” in an attempt to understand the reference to the Navajos yelling like pirates. There appeared a problem here because I could not understand what Beryl meant by this term, and this instance became one of the

many examples of the further conversations over email that I held with these participants, long after the closure of data collection (six months in this specific instance). Beryl clarified that she was referring to the inhabitants of Borneo Island. What we see in this extract is not only this link with her prior knowledge of this population (another culture) but also how she in turn associated this prior knowledge with the crowing of the rooster in her own culture. In other words, the association with this familiar knowledge in her own culture in this case was indirect as it occurred through the association with familiar knowledge of another culture first, the Borneos. Note in the end this tendency to make conjectures, something that I shall come back to later, materialized in a chain of *rationalizations* (“*gritos de los piratas – grito específicos de los Borneos – canto del gallo – para indicar que amaneció – relacionado con la naturaleza*”).

B.: Y lo de los gritos como de piratas, es porque en un momento decía que... ellos gritaban y parecía, se asimilaba con un grito de piratas pero que era mucho más fuerte.

M.: Sí. ¿Tiene alguna connotación eso?

B.: A mí me parece que debe tener alguna connotación, sé que hay *comunidades como los Borneos por ejemplo que tienen un grito específico para cuando amanece, como si fuera para nosotros el canto del gallo, digamos.*

M.: Claro.

B.: *Es un grito específico para indicar que amaneció.* Entonces me pareció que por ahí tenía que... debía tener algún contenido relacionado con la naturaleza, me pareció.

(Beryl, interview, *Desert Wife*)

8.5.1.1. *What other research has revealed concerning prior knowledge*

Abu-Rabia's (1996, 1998) studies reviewed in chapter 3 investigated whether relevant prior knowledge facilitated text comprehension in L1 and L2. The researcher took into account two Israeli social contexts, namely Arab and Jewish, to find consistency in results with schema theory. Performance lowered with the texts that were unrelated to the subjects' culture, even though both Arabs and Jews had lived in the same country for fourteen years. Both Abu-Rabia's studies are among the few that explicitly consider the effect of different social contexts on comprehension. Although this thesis did not have this specific aim, these results are relevant because contrary to Abu-Rabia's findings, I have shown some evidence of the positive influence of the penetration of the American culture in this setting on the comprehension of the American-like Christmas celebration in *Cat's*

Eye. Almost all these participants mentioned in their prior knowledge task that what they knew about a Christmas celebration in this context came from films, TV series and books. Tess, Enrique Alejandro, Scarlet Rose and Victoria specifically referred to TV cartoons like *The Simpsons*, films like *Home Alone*, and books like *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. Despite the evident complexity of the social, ethnic, religious and military scenario around the Israeli studies, not in the least comparable to this setting, what is worth rescuing here is the fact that even though my participants were not immersed in the American context (cf. Abu-Rabia's subjects, both Arabs and Jews, who had lived in the same country for fourteen years), the influence was observable. This may be related to a long history of tension between the US and Argentina in economic, financial, political, ideological and military terms, framed within the discourse of imperialism (Borón, 2005, 2009; Borón and Vlahusic, 2009). This influence may be susceptible of exploration in the future.

Hollingsworth and Reutzel (1990) have shown that content-related attitudes did not significantly affect their subjects' reading comprehension (again in a study thought and designed with a totally different conception from Abu-Rabia's – as I have shown in chapter 3). The authors have suggested that more research is needed in the area of the affective dimension of comprehension. This thesis seems to support this need on the basis of the results described in this chapter and the following one, particularly those stemming from the prior knowledge task and the interviews. These instruments showed that these readers clearly had different degrees of prior knowledge in connection with the three text topics (a commonsensical result) but also that this prior knowledge was permeated by intuitive and emotional issues, tied many times to past lived experiences, which emerged in the interviews or in communication with myself following data collection (communication that extended over the whole of 2010). These associations became visible to myself as researcher *after* the reading had occurred, but were associations that readers made *during* the reading itself as they explicitly mentioned. For instance, Enrique Alejandro's loss of his father in adolescence tinted his interpretation of the sad celebration in *Mi planta de naranja-lima* and led him to portray only the negative side of the contrasts present in the text (rich-poor, happiness-sadness, etc.) in his reading response task. Tess perceived she had not really experienced Christmas in a US setting despite the fact that she had indeed spent Christmas with her relatives there.

8.5.1.2. *Elaborating and distorting cultural information*

Finally, in spite of what the prior knowledge tasks revealed and the perceived textual difficulties as captured in the underlined texts and the questionnaires about the texts (that I shall describe later), one interesting result is that the presence of *elaborations* (cultural information from an appropriate schema or culturally appropriate extensions from each text) and *distortions* (culturally inappropriate information) was non-existent or extremely low (only scattered individuals) (Table 17). This finding contradicted my expectations as I had anticipated a much higher presence considering that participants had manifested in the prior knowledge tasks that they knew nothing about the Navajos, very little about a Christmas celebration in Brazil, and that what they knew about the American-Canadian culture came from books, films, cartoons and TV (Tables 5, 6 and 7).

Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson's (1979: 10) study, reviewed in chapter 3, revealed that subjects recalled more textual information and generated more culturally appropriate elaborations of the "native passage" and produced more cultural distortions of the "foreign passage." The authors interpreted these results as indicative of the power of content schemata in reading comprehension. In a similar vein, Rice (1980) showed that when the content of the text did not meet the participants' cultural norms, confusion arose to the point that some extremely foreign material became unintelligible. Heavy stereotyping and distortions to fit cultural expectations occurred. Taken together, these studies, as well as others which use cultural differences as the independent variable, have shown that readers have a better understanding and recall of texts from their own cultural background, i.e. texts for which they possess a relevant or appropriate culturally-specific content schema. Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm's (2004) study is another one that obtained similar findings with regard to elaborations and distortions.

By contrast, I have just pointed out that one finding from the present study is that the presence of *elaborations* (cultural information from an appropriate schema or culturally appropriate extensions from a text) and *distortions* (culturally inappropriate information) was non-existent or extremely low (only scattered individuals) (Table 17), regardless of whether the prompt texts are considered "native" or "foreign" in Steffensen et al.'s (1979: 10) terms. Leaving aside for a moment the difficulty with terminology here around the use of the terms "native" and "foreign" (which I discussed in chapter 2), this thesis' findings

do not support the predominance of elaborations and distortions as the before mentioned investigations did. Considering that these participants had manifested in the prior knowledge tasks that they knew nothing about the Navajos, very little about a Christmas celebration in Brazil, and that what they knew about the American-Canadian culture came from books, films, cartoons and TV (Tables 5, 6 and 7), it seemed reasonable to expect that this study would support those previous findings. However, it did not.

I would risk the following interpretation for this finding. The answer might lie in the research design in the three cases. If one notices, Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson's (1979) and Rice's (1980) studies, as almost all the studies I have reviewed in this thesis, made use of the immediate recall protocol, or a similar variant, where the focus was on the explicit recalling of textual content as evidence of comprehension. I have dwelled on the inadequacy of this assumption (that accurate recall equals comprehension) at length in this thesis. I have argued for the need to resort to different instruments, and I have proposed my own, namely the reading response task, the visual representation task and the interviews, in a matrix of an integral and more complex research design. It is possible that the requirement to reproduce what a text says as accurately as possible leads readers to elaborate on culturally familiar content and distort culturally unfamiliar content. The reading response and the visual representation tasks explicitly distanced themselves from recalling (in the instructions that the participants received for doing the tasks, but most importantly in their theoretical rationale) and directed the attention to interpreting from the readers' perspective. In the specific case of elaborations and distortions, the key may not be only in the issue of familiarity and unfamiliarity, but most crucially perhaps in the readers' ability to relate textual content to their prior knowledge and experiences (Jeffries, 2001; Van Hell, Bosman, Wiggers and Stoit, 2003) as well as the freedom to respond to this content beyond recalling – something that this research design as a whole stimulated. I describe and exemplify related issues throughout this chapter, and I do so particularly under the first two propositional statements (in approaching otherness, participants resorted to what was known or familiar to them; the basis for understanding otherness rested on a process of comparing and contrasting).

Table 17. Reader behaviours. *Mi planta de naranja-lima, Cat's Eye, Desert Wife*

	<i>Mi planta de naranja-lima</i>			<i>Cat's Eye</i>			<i>Desert Wife</i>		
	<i>Reflection log</i>	<i>Reading response</i>	<i>Visual representation</i>	<i>Reflection log</i>	<i>Reading response</i>	<i>Visual representation</i>	<i>Reflection log</i>	<i>Reading response</i>	<i>Visual representation</i>
Elaborations		3					1	1	
Distortions		1							1
Intrusions	2	3	4		4	4	1	4	3
Inferences		5	1		2		1	5	2
Wrong inferences	2	1			3				
Irrelevant information		2	2						
Inferred feelings		6	5		5	2		5	3
Wrong inferred feelings		2	1					2	2
Evaluative language		7	4	4	10	3		7	3
Adequate morale/interpretation		5	6	2	7	6	1	5	2
Inadequate morale/interpretation	1	6	4	3	4	8		8	2
Rationalization: two textual elements	1	5	4		1	2		2	1
Rationalization: one textual element and one invented	2	4	3		3	1	3	1	1
Explicit errors		3	4	3	6	8	5	5	4
Simplifications			1						1
Generalizations	1	5	6	1	8	5		9	8
Cultural details		3	3		2	5		5	6
Direct quotes from text		2	2		2	2		2	1
Meta-cultural reflection	5			4	5	3	1	1	1
Formulation of questions	2						1		
Intertextuality				1	1				

8.5.1.3. Summary of propositional statement 1

To summarize, this finding captured in propositional statement 1 means that in approaching otherness, participants resorted to what was known or familiar to them. This resort to familiar knowledge and experience involved any familiar knowledge or experience that readers brought to bear on textual content, from their own cultures or others, and from varied topics and disciplines. For the purposes of this thesis, I have distinguished such knowledge and experience from the technical term *intrusion*, which I have reserved for prior knowledge and experience of Christmas exclusively.

8.5.2. The basis for understanding otherness rested on a process of comparing and contrasting

Underlying this resort to prior and familiar knowledge for interpreting otherness was an ongoing process of comparing and contrasting. Basically all readers compared and contrasted the different cultural realities presented in the texts with their own by means of comparisons, analogies, metaphors and other linguistic resources. For instance, many explicitly referred to the contrast between the community celebration in the Navajos text and the familiar celebration in their own cultures. I have just shown, in the previous section, that Scarlet Rose's prior knowledge task about the Navajos introduced contrasts between a Christmas celebration by the Navajos and Christmas in her own setting by means of the use of denials (“*No imagino ningún arbolito de Navidad ni fuegos artificiales*”).

Other times participants explored similarities. For instance, Yanina rescued the fact that the Navajos were dressed in their best clothes, much in the same way that she dressed up for the occasion in her culture:

M.: (Pausa) Los navajos están vestidos con sus mejores ropas. ¿Cuál es la importancia de eso?

Y.: Y... para mí es importante porque casi siempre que pensamos en.. en los navajos o en otros indios, nos.. bah, yo no sé bien cómo ellos viven la Navidad u otras festividades, y me parece interesante, además muestra cómo son *que se vistan con sus mejores.... con su mejor ropa en esa ocasión como por ahí lo hacemos nosotros también.*

(Yanina, interview, *Desert Wife*)

The following reflection log and interview about the text in Spanish by Tess exemplifies, in a unified account, this process of comparing and contrasting. Tess was aware that she was comparing and contrasting and explicitly mentioned this in her reflection log (“por comparación con nuestra propia cultura”). She resorted to her knowledge of the Three Wise men in her own culture to understand the custom of placing the trainers in order to receive a present.

Me parece que con los elementos que da el texto y por comparación con nuestra propia cultura podemos inferir lo no dicho o reconstruir cómo es la celebración de la navidad que se narra. Lo no dicho sería el “background” de información que el autor puede dar por supuesto, por considerarlo parte del conocimiento compartido con el lector.

Podemos inferir que los niños tienen que dejar sus zapatos para que le dejen los regalos. Aunque no hacemos acá lo mismo, podemos entenderlo porque tenemos esa costumbre en el día de Reyes.

(Tess, reflection log, Mi planta de naranja-lima)

She then pointed out the difficulty to understand this custom of the trainers for people with different backgrounds, and entertained that the points in common between Latin American cultures and many Catholic traditions allowed her (and others with similar backgrounds) to get closer to the text.

Seguramente para lectores de otros orígenes el texto resultaría mucho más difícil. Si pensamos que hay una historia común entre las culturas latinoamericanas y muchas tradiciones católicas comunes, lo cual nos acerca al texto y probablemente no sería así para otros pueblos.

(Tess, reflection log, Mi planta de naranja-lima)

When I inquired in the interview about what she meant by the expression “readers from different origins” (“lectores de otros orígenes”), Tess engaged in a discussion of terms like *origin*, *culture*, *country* and mentioned that she had thought about people from different *cultures*, especially remote cultures. The key idea was that Christmas can be a point of contact among people from different cultures because it is an extended tradition at least in America, despite differences in how it is celebrated in each case. Note again that she was explicitly aware that she was comparing (“Se puede comparar por lo menos”). She made the intertextual connection with *Cat’s Eye* (propositional statement 2 in chapter 9), pointing out that in this text Banerji had no basis for comparison (“No tienen con qué comparar”).

M.: ...culturas.

T.: Pero bien remotas, porque *la Navidad dentro de todo me parece como algo bastante extendido, por lo menos en todo América*, entonces tiene que ser algo *bien remoto*. Por eso no sabía bien si poner "culturas", porque *puede ser de otras culturas diferentes pero que coincidan en eso, en cómo festejan la Navidad o... y que lo entiendan igual, aunque no sea exactamente lo mismo*.

M.: A vos, eso ¿qué motivó este comentario, el hecho de las zapatillas?

T.: (Pausa) *Sí, por ejemplo, y que no es exactamente lo mismo como se dejan los regalos... pero la idea es más o menos la misma*.

M.: Hm.

T.: *Se puede comparar por lo menos, no es tan distinto como para que no haya...*

M.: Y vos estás pensando en alguien que no conoce la Navidad.

T.: Claro, por ejemplo *en el texto anterior, que hablaba del indio, directamente no tienen esa celebración*.

M.: Entiendo.

T.: *No tienen con qué comparar*.

(Tess, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

8.5.2.1. *The difficulty to de-centre led to stereotyping*

At times this process of comparing and contrasting revealed the participants' difficulty in distancing themselves from their own positions and understanding otherness from the point of view of the Other. This difficulty to de-centre led to stereotyping. For instance, Tacuara said that poor people are uneducated and tend to become criminals. In a similar vein, Luz said that the concept of Santa Claus is less strong in the poor precisely because of their poverty. Scarlet Rose referred to the stereotype of the American family Christmas dinner (with the emphasis on everyone being American). Tess described Hindu people as humble and demure. Some readers perceived all Navajos in general (i.e. not the group described in the text) as dirty (stemming from the dish-washing episode), distrustful (because of a long history of domination and wars) or greedy (because they took more than they needed). In one interview, Tess explained the thinking that pervaded in these *generalizations*:

M.: Cuando ponés: "Las personalidades de los indios...", de los "indios", ¿querés decir de la India o de los indígenas?

T.: De la India.

M.: De la India. "Como una humildad y recatamiento" "¿Por qué pensás que es posible generalizar?", te pongo yo. ¿Por qué son los hindúes, o por qué asociás a los hindúes con la *humildad y el recatamiento*?

T.: *No sé, me pareció...*

M.: Está bien, yo te pregunto...

T.: No sé, es que... como *en el texto él se presenta más como indio que como persona individual, me parece que todo lo que se dijera de él se aplicaba... desde la mirada del texto para la familia se aplicaba a toda la población de la India, en general. Él estaba representando a su cultura*.

(Tess, interview, *Cat's Eye*)

Tess explicitly took Banerji as a representative of people from India, as a representative of his own culture. She easily generalized by saying for instance that Hindu people are humble and demure, though she was not able to put in words her rationale for saying this in the interview. It is relevant to mention at this point that about half the participants generalized the cultural content of the text in Spanish in the reading response and visual representation tasks in the way Tess did, rising to the majority in the reading response tasks of the other two texts and in the visual representation of *Cat's Eye* (Table 17).

Interesting indeed is the case of stereotyping by Tacuara that I exemplified before. I say interesting because even though in her reading response task she described the society portrayed in the text in Spanish as “backward, behind and dispossessed,” she argued in the task itself as well as in the interview that she did not intend her interpretation to be taken as stereotyped. And the more she engaged in this rationale during the interview, the clearer it became how unaware she was of her biased and pejorative interpretation in this specific regard.

El texto retrata a modo de sinécdoque (La sinécdoque es una licencia retórica mediante la cual se expresa la parte por el todo) a toda una sociedad o al menos una clase de ella (clase baja). Digo “a modo de sinécdoque” porque es a través de una situación puntual (la navidad) y de un grupo (una familia) que la historia representa a un colectivo más amplio.

Yo calificaría a la sociedad, cultura retratada como desposeída y atrasada. En cuanto a este último adjetivo (“atrasada”), no lo uso en un sentido peyorativo, sino más bien Hegeliano, por así decirlo. Es decir, según la teoría del absoluto Hegeliano uno puede calificar a una cultura como más o menos atrasada según el grado de autoconciencia alcanzado (entendiendo como autoconciencia la idea de pensarse como ser humano libre, y demás). Teniendo estos conceptos presentes y considerando el fuerte peso que los aspectos “milagrosos” y “religiosos” tienen en el texto, teniendo en cuenta eso es que digo “atrasado”. Por ejemplo, al final del texto Zezé se levanta de la cama y cuando le preguntan adónde va, dice: “a poner mis zapatillas del otro lado de la puerta...a lo mejor sucede algún milagro”. A mi juicio, tanto este fragmento, como otros que tratan de justificar la ausencia de regalos y comida atribuyendo esta carencia a la falta de bondad en la persona, esos fragmentos para mí, muestran lo sometida que está esa cultura. Sometida y hundida en la pobreza y la ignorancia. Ignorancia no en un sentido peyorativo, sino haciendo referencia a que ignoran que si están siendo castigados terrenalmente no es ni dios ni Jesús el verdugo. Digo despojados también porque se retrata en la historia la pobreza naturalizada.

(Tacuara, reading response, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

Tacuara started by putting in evidence her literary knowledge in understanding another culture (propositional statement 2 in chapter 9). She did so by providing a definition for synecdoche (“La sinécdoque es una licencia retórica mediante la cual se expresa la parte por el todo”). She then explained in which way this text was a synecdoche from her point

of view: “Digo “a modo de sinécdoque” porque es a través de una situación puntual (la Navidad) y de un grupo (una familia) que la historia representa a un colectivo más amplio.”

The rest of her reading response (i.e. most of it) was centered on her description of the society portrayed in this text as “backward, behind and dispossessed.” Here she brought in familiar knowledge from philosophy (for instance, Hegel), exemplifying again proposition 1 above (In approaching otherness, participants resorted to what was known or familiar to them). This knowledge was quite detailed, sophisticated and complex in terms of the notions presented: “según la *teoría del absoluto Hegeliano* uno puede calificar a una cultura como más o menos atrasada según el *grado de autoconciencia* alcanzado (entendiendo como autoconciencia la idea de *pensarse como ser humano libre, y demás*).” She then made a *rationalization* by linking the heavy religious component in the text with her evaluation of this society as backward: “considerando el fuerte peso que los aspectos ‘*milagrosos*’ y ‘*religiosos*’ tienen en el texto, teniendo en cuenta eso es que digo ‘*atrasado*.” She provided an example, the only specific example from the text (the placing of the trainers by Zezé on the other side of the door wishing for a miracle), signalled this example clearly, and quoted from the text itself using inverted commas (“Por ejemplo, al final del texto Zezé se levanta de la cama y cuando le preguntan adónde va, dice: ‘a poner mis zapatillas del otro lado de la puerta...a lo mejor sucede algún milagro’”).

Tacuara devoted the last part of this task to providing an *evaluation* of the fragment. She argued that texts like this one which equate poverty and the lack of presents with the lack of goodness in people reveal the ignorance of the culture in question. Notice the *generalization* in referring to a whole culture as ignorant and subjected: “A *mi juicio*, tanto este fragmento, como otros que tratan de *justificar la ausencia de regalos y comida atribuyendo esta carencia a la falta de bondad en la persona*, esos fragmentos para mí, *muestran lo sometida que está esa cultura. Sometida y hundida en la pobreza y la ignorancia*.” She never mentioned other similar texts which do this in her view, however. Again she protected her face by saying that this reference to ignorance was not pejorative (“Ignorancia *no* en un sentido *peyorativo*”). She then concluded with a reference to the naturalization of poverty (“se retrata en la historia *la pobreza naturalizada*”), which is left unsupported.

The most important point perhaps about Tacuara's reading response task is the stereotyped and biased view that she projected of the poor and the dispossessed as well as the intricate and rationalized line of argument in support of her position toward textual content. What Tacuara missed is the fact that behind the possible religious questioning in the text, what the adults were trying to do in Zezé's family was offer the child an innocent explanation for their pervasive poverty. That is, her interpretation might have differed if she had positioned herself in the shoes of one of these adult members for a second. But she did not, and instead judged textual content from her own perspective, which resulted in this stereotyped and biased interpretation. Furthermore, the fact that Zezé was indeed aware of his reality, and that he had a critical attitude toward it (revealed precisely in his continuous questioning of that reality in his interaction with these adults) is something that passed unnoticed to Tacuara. This reader had the tendency to provide stereotyped and biased interpretations as is revealed by the fact that most of her tasks based on the three texts were assigned level 3 in the *Model of Cultural Understanding* – a level that captured this kind of approach (see Table 19 in the discussion of propositional statement 5 in this chapter).

8.5.2.2. *Perspective-taking in understanding culture*

In much the same way that many times the process of comparing and contrasting revealed the participants' difficulty in distancing themselves from their own positions and understanding otherness from the point of view of the Other (which led to stereotyping, as I have just shown in the previous sub-section), other times the process of comparing and contrasting resulted in the adoption of different perspectives in the understanding of another culture. Such was the case of Victoria, and her development of the topic of domination in her reading response and visual representation tasks as well as in the interview based on the fragment from *Desert Wife*. I analyze and exemplify this idea of domination later in this chapter (under propositional statement 3), in particular on the basis of her reading response and visual representation tasks. What I would like to focus upon now is the issue of perspective, especially as it emerged in the interview as a way of supporting what the previous tasks, reading response and visual representation, had revealed.

Victoria was aware of, and explicitly stated, whose view the text portrayed. Not only that, but she also provided details regarding what perspective San Chee, the narrator, adopted in

her description of the Navajos, with reflections about the fact that she was an outsider, an external observer, who was also a participant but not a true or genuine participant in a sense. The issue of objectivity appeared in the assumption that San Chee's narration was not value-free ("*de ahí la importancia del juicio que ella pueda tomar de esto, porque quizás para muchos va a ser el único contacto con la cultura Navaja que tengan*"). In spite of this awareness, Victoria evaluated the text as offering a relatively objective account of the Navajos, despite the unavoidable lenses through which the narrator observed them. Note Victoria's overall tendency to support her affirmations with direct quotes from the text (I use underlining to signal quotes).

M.: ¿Cuál era la "cultura local"?...

V.: La cultura local en aquel texto era la cultura del narrador, es decir, el *punto de vista del narrador del texto*.

(...)

M.: Hablás también de introducir... que "la narradora quiere introducir al lector a las costumbres Navajas."

V.: No, lo que quiero decir con eso es que *si el lector desconoce, como me pasa a mí, las costumbres Navajas, las vemos a partir de los ojos de la narradora*.

M.: Hm.

V.: O sea, *de ahí la importancia del juicio que ella pueda tomar de esto, porque quizás para muchos va a ser el único contacto con la cultura Navaja que tengan*.

M.: Sí, pero *también decís que hay cierta objetividad*.

V.: *A eso voy*.

M.: O sea que *es una buena lectura, o una buena introducción*.

V.: A eso voy, exacto, o sea, incluso ahí está la conclusión, donde ella dice: "No hay nada frío, ni nada solemne, ni nada acartonado, nada almidonado en esto, la gente es feliz, son gente amable..." O sea, si bien el aspecto... Por eso digo que me parece que *está narrado con bastante objetividad, dentro de lo que no puede evitar...* (Victoria, interview, *Desert Wife*)

Much discussion emerged about this issue of objectivity and the unavoidability of bias and subjectivity in entering another culture. Victoria used the idea that San Chee learned from the Navajo women as evidence of the fair objectivity of the narrator's perception of the Navajos:

M.: Y relacionado con esto, mi pregunta es, ¿existe... o vos ves de parte de la narradora una visión peyorativa o denigratoria de los indios por racista?

V.: En ciertos casos... no sé si denigratoria, sí veo quizás algo condescendiente, y sí veo... Digamos... A ver, veo *una objetividad bastante marcada* a pesar de... veo... incluso ahí abajo pongo que hay un *interés incluso de aprender* de la cultura aborígen, esa cosa de... O sea, veo que está *bastante objetiva* la cuestión. Lo que sí creo es que *hay cosas que quizás no pueda evitar*.

(Victoria, interview, *Desert Wife*)

Note how Victoria generalized on the basis of this fragment (that the US is dominating the world) and how she simultaneously permeated her ideological position toward the US as a dominating country. The issue of the unavoidability of certain attitudes and behaviours that Victoria explored before exclusively in connection with San Chee appear here linked to one specific country, the US.

V.: Ella [San Chee]. O sea, quizás como prototipo de *una cultura* que está dominando justamente, y que *domina no solamente al aborigen sino que casi como que al mundo*, digamos...

M.: Sí.

V.: *Quizás no puede evitar esa actitud de dominador, ¿no?, de... o de conquistador dondequiera que pongo el pie.*
(Victoria, interview, *Desert Wife*)

The reflection on the episode of the candy bags prompted Victoria to focus on the universality of certain cultural practices, one being, in her view, this idea that one takes more than what one needs when others are not looking. More specifically, she argued that much of the narrator's culture is based on this precept. Through this generalization, she was naturalizing her own view of the American culture. Here Victoria seemed to have missed the fact that the text was not contemporaneous with her times, and that indeed San Chee might not have held such a negative view of her own culture. We see Victoria's own biases and prejudices in operation here. The use of a proverb to capture this complex idea is interesting and efficient ("está mirando la paja en el ojo ajeno y se olvida de la viga en el propio"). Note again the tentativeness revealed in her linguistic choices (in bold in the extract) when I pointed out to her how strong her idea was.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) Acá marqué: "Su cultura no queda excluida", pero no sé dónde lo veo...

V.: Eso está donde yo hablaba del aspecto negativo de este episodio de los niños tomando las bolsas de dulce.

M.: Ah, sí.

V.: Yo pongo que se pasa por alto, es decir, *la narradora de nuevo parece olvidar*, en un punto de vista casi... **casi como... no sé** si condescendiente **o hasta... hasta negativo** de ese aspecto de la cultura Navaja, **parece** olvidar *que su cultura, mucho de su cultura se basa en esa cosa de hacer o de tomar lo que el otro no ve que le estoy tomando. O sea, si es que...*

M.: Eso es fuerte, lo que estás diciendo.

V.: **O sea**, lo planteo desde el punto de vista de que está... **o sea...** lo está... **digamos**, la narradora lo está poniendo desde el punto de vista de "ellos, lo que hacen, mirá, ellos están... cuando nadie los ve están sacando cosas". Bueno, **sospecho que muy sutilmente, si mis sospechas son ciertas y... y la voz narradora se inserta en la cultura norteamericana típica...**

M.: Sí, es así.

V.: Eh... **sospecho, bueno, que**... que hay una... **o sea**... hay una omisión de una información... **no sé si** deliberada o **quizás** porque no está mirando... *está mirando la paja en el ojo ajeno y se olvida de la viga en el propio, una cosa así.*

M.: Claro, claro, entiendo.
(Victoria, interview, *Desert Wife*)

The following extract shows Victoria's tendency to naturalize actions and behaviours as if they were universal, in particular in something as delicate as stealing. The point is strong because she spoke of the idea of taking advantage as "intrinsic to human nature," irrespective of the previous and post softening of this affirmation ("*No me atrevería a generalizar* porque sería por ahí ser injusto con quienes no lo hacen"; "*Digamos, no todo el mundo*"). Softening the impact of her affirmations in this way was a characteristic in Vitoria throughout her tasks and I show this in this chapter. The switch to the first person plural pronouns and references (in bold in the following extract) to include herself in her generalization is worth mentioning, and at this moment her affirmation also became more general as she referred to actions in general (not necessarily stealing or taking advantage) ("*no creo que **todos podamos** decir que **nuestras** acciones a solas sean las mismas que **nuestras** acciones cuando **nos** están mirando*"). In addition, we see here her ability to critically put a behaviour (in this case, taking advantage) in perspective, scrutinize it, and see herself as an exponent of this culture (reflected on this use of the first person plural pronouns and references that I have just pointed out). In other words, her angles of vision of one event, namely the episode of the candy bags, were multiple and involved seeing the Navajos' actions from the point of view of an outsider, but also seeing her own actions (the possibility that she would also take advantage under some circumstances) from a distance.

V.: Creo que es una *cuestión universal*, creo que *todo ser humano* hace un poco eso, ¿no? O sea, mientras lo dejen tomar ventaja quizás lo haga. *No sé si todos, pero una... una gran parte del género humano...*

M.: Una universalidad ves ahí.

V.: Sí, casi... Casi. No me atrevería a generalizar porque sería por ahí ser injusto con quienes no lo hacen, pero... sí creo que es *una cuestión casi, casi intrínseca de la naturaleza humana*, esa cosa de: "No me miran..." Digamos, no todo el mundo... *no creo que todos podamos decir que nuestras acciones a solas sean las mismas que nuestras acciones cuando nos están mirando, por ejemplo.*

(Victoria, interview, *Desert Wife*)

Once more, what the data showed was the conflux of factors that I mention in this chapter in permanent interaction among each other, and once again the difficulty to disentangle and

isolate issues for illustration purposes here (something I have also explained in the previous chapter).

8.5.2.3. Summary of propositional statement 2

Summarizing then, propositional statement 2 refers to an ongoing process of comparing and contrasting underlying the resort to prior and familiar knowledge for interpreting otherness. Basically all readers compared and contrasted the different cultural realities presented in the texts with their own by different means and resources, as I have shown in this section. At times this process of comparing and contrasting revealed these participants' difficulty in distancing themselves from their own positions and understanding otherness from the point of view of the Other. This difficulty to de-centre led to stereotyping. Other times, however, the process of comparing and contrasting resulted in the adoption of different perspectives in the understanding of another culture.

8.5.3. Participants showed critical thinking, reflection, critical cultural awareness and social awareness

Under propositional statement 2 in the following chapter I describe at length the finding that participants brought their literary knowledge and assumptions into play in understanding another culture. I mention this finding at this point because sometimes this knowledge of literature, stylistics and literary criticism led many participants to invest time and effort to look beyond the surface of what the prompt texts apparently offered. That is, they did not content themselves with surface analyses but really strove to find hidden meanings and alternative interpretations. This does not mean that these interpretations were all adequate, or globally motivated by textual content, as this chapter and the following one show. What I am trying to point out here is that their literary knowledge motivated them to inspect the texts in depth and select portions that they felt needed to be analyzed further. Then on that basis they scrutinized these sections and came up with interpretations that reflected the complexity and depth of analysis that I mentioned before. This happened mostly in the reading response and the visual representation tasks, where readers explained and supported their interpretations at length.

This depth of analysis was also evidence that participants engaged themselves in the critical readings of the texts. Almost all participants showed these elements of criticality and reflexivity regarding textual content and showed therefore their critical thinking skills in operation. The reading response and visual representation tasks brought to the surface these readers' critical cultural awareness, which the interviews served to support. For instance, Beryl questioned and criticized what she considered a materialistic view of Christmas and came over and over again to this topic in all her tasks. I show how she did this in her reading response task in the following chapter under propositional statement 1 (Readers showed awareness of problematic terms related to cultural understanding). In her visual representation, she mentioned key concepts, in one word each ("Navidad, felicidad, regalos, comida, prosperidad"), each one followed by a question mark. I inquired about the meaning of the question mark in the interview and she responded saying that these concepts represent typical conceptions of Christmas as seen in advertising. She used the question marks as a way of showing that the fragment is in fact implicitly questioning where happiness, presents, food and prosperity can be found in Zezé's context.

M.: "¿Prosperidad?" ¿Por qué con signos de pregunta? Eso era lo que te quería preguntar.

B.: Ah bueno...

M.: "Navidad, felicidad, regalos, comida, prosperidad."

B.: Sí, lo vas a ver quizás ahora también en el segundo. Precisamente porque... o sea... como *uno tiene las concepciones de que en la Navidad... hay alegría, hay abrazos, hay... prosperidad, que son los típicos advertisements que encontrás, ¿no?*

M.: Sí.

B.: Entonces mi pregunta creo que en base al texto, *lo que se pregunta el texto implícitamente es dónde está todo esto.*

M.: ¿Es un cuestionamiento entonces?

B.: *Es un cuestionamiento de dónde se encuentra... no dónde se encuentra presente en el texto sino lo que yo veo que se refleja en el texto.*

(Beryl, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

Two additional things are worth noticing here. One is the intertextual connection that Beryl anticipated, namely that she resorted to the use of question marks in the visual representation of *Cat's Eye* too, for the same reason ("lo vas a ver quizás ahora también *en el segundo*" [texto]). The other is her clarification that she finds the questioning reflected on the text herself rather than the text revealing it on its own ("Es un cuestionamiento de dónde se encuentra... *no dónde se encuentra presente en el texto sino lo que yo veo que se refleja en el texto*"). This remark is revealing of her awareness of the active role of the

reader in comprehension and more specifically, of her literary knowledge in this respect (propositional statement 2 in the following chapter).

She then reflected on her own difficulty with this text because she did not agree with the commercial side of Christmas. The fact that she was an atheist contributed to her difficulty in finding “what Christmas refers to exactly” in her view.

B: A mí siempre me costó mucho porque *no entiendo precisamente la festividad de la Navidad, no... No entiendo a qué refiere exactamente la Navidad y me parece una cuestión totalmente comercial y no... Si bien estoy bautizada no... No practico la religión, no me interesa, entonces...*
(Beryl, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

Victoria offers a rich example of a critical reading of the text in Spanish, in particular about its religious content, which she herself identified as a critical reading in the reading response and the visual representation tasks. This short extract from the reading response is deep and complex, full of profound concepts. She identified the perspective from which this “quasi-theological questioning” is presented, namely the children’s. Complex notions such as lack of reward, kindness and divine injustice are cramped in one sentence (“*aparente* falta de recompensa a la bondad y la *aparente* injusticia divina”). Note the tentativeness through the use of the adjective “apparent.” Notice that she assumed that there can be a full comprehension of a text (“*plena* comprensión de este texto”). She stated what is needed for this “full” comprehension in her view, basically knowledge of certain cultural aspects related to Christmas as well as of its more profound meaning, the religious (beyond the view of Christmas as a family gathering only). Again the use of the negative in “*no es sólo una reunión familiar*” reflects her assumption that her reader would hold this view.

Se añade aquí un *quasi cuestionamiento teológico*, planteado con absoluta inocencia por los más pequeños de la casa, sobre la aparente falta de recompensa a la bondad y la aparente injusticia divina (...) Para la lectura y plena comprensión de este texto es importante conocer *ciertos aspectos culturales concretos relacionados con la Navidad y sus usos, comidas y tradiciones*, pero es incluso más imprescindible comprender que la Navidad *no es sólo una reunión familiar*, porque las *disquisiciones quasi teológicas* de algunos de los personajes apuntan precisamente a *la parte subyacente y más profunda de esta fecha*.
(Victoria, reading response, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

In her visual representation the same concepts appear, together with new ones such as resignation and deception. The contrast poverty-richness is also present (“Reflejo del *nivel económico-social de la familia*, contraste con la *riqueza* en que viven otros”). Here she explicitly mentioned the critical position around Christmas offered by the text, from a social perspective. She added her own interpretation in that this social critical view centers on the injustice of the unequal distribution of money (“*Crítica social a la injusticia del dinero mal distribuido*”), an injustice that is aggravated in her view by the fact that the protagonists are children.

1. Diálogo entre Zezé y Totoca, *cuestionamiento sobre la bondad del Niño Jesús, justicia o injusticia de la falta general de regalos. Aparentes ventajas de la resignación, que evita decepciones. Reflejo del nivel económico-social de la familia, contraste con la riqueza en que viven otros. Crítica social a la injusticia del dinero mal distribuido. Niños como protagonistas, mayor sentimiento de injusticia.*
(Victoria, visual representation, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

In the interview extract that focuses on the previous parts of the reading response and visual representation tasks, Victoria emphasized that these tasks offer her own reading of the text, not necessarily the text’s intended meaning – another instance of this reader’s literary knowledge (propositional statement 2 in the following chapter) and knowledge of comprehension in general. She explicitly mentioned, in addition, that the text contrasts ought to fulfill a function in the text.

M.: ¿Y esto de la crítica social? Luego de todo eso ponés: "Contraste con la riqueza que viven otros, crítica social a la injusticia del dinero mal distribuido."

V.: Sí...

M.: ¿Es un texto que tiene este propósito?

V.: Yo no.. o sea, *no sé si el propósito del texto...* yo tendría que releer el... es decir, *lo estoy tomando de nuevo de mi lectura.* En este fragmento no habría ningún tipo de... digamos, no se ve un propósito, sí se ve una... digamos, *situación de crítica* en cuanto a que se está contrastando... *el contraste tiene que tener una función en el texto*, supuestamente evidente...

M.: O sea que vos podés hacer una lectura crítica social.

V.: Exacto, yo lo que estoy haciendo...

M.: Desde tu punto de vista.

V.: Exacto. *Lo que estoy haciendo es interpretar, digamos, en base a lo que se ve, lo que puede estar intentando el texto.* De hecho toda la obra transcurre en una situación de... no digo de indigencia pero de bastante pobreza.

(Victoria, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

The point that these extracts illustrate is that all participants positioned themselves as critical readers of all texts. This criticality was motivated by different and specific themes in each text, and led to reflections of this kind whereby participants engaged in critical thinking defined as higher order thinking (or the type of thinking that regulates and monitors itself), involving processes of analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Waters, 2006). However, these readers went beyond critical thinking in these terms toward critical cultural awareness, or critical social awareness, that is, a criticality and reflexivity tied to a social dimension, issues of citizenship, of humankind and human nature from a philosophical perspective, etc.

Recurrent topics which led to this kind of response in the text in Spanish were the religious (and the questioning of the religious), accompanied by the related aspects of poverty, social injustice, socio-economic inequality, domination of the masses, taking action to fight this inequality (instead of accepting it, as Tacuara's explanation of her visual representation in the previous chapter shows) and criticisms toward the materialism associated with Christmas in capitalist societies. In *Cat's Eye*, examples of critical readings involved the manipulation of nature with implications on the manipulation of genetics, disquisitions about artificiality and naturalness in science, the mistreatment of animals and associations with the mistreatment of people (reflected on the use of analogies and contrasts between turkeys and people for instance), etc. In the fragment from *Desert Wife*, examples revolved around the theme of domination and authority among peoples, about primitive vs. dominant cultures, about animals (e.g. Lady Betty, the bulldog) as representatives of cultures too (not only humans). Overall, this depth of response was evidenced in the reading response and the visual representation tasks, and then justified at length in the interviews. All the participants offered analyses of this kind, in more or less depth. I include only one here, from Victoria and the Navajos text. Note again Victoria's tendency to support her affirmations with direct quotes from the text (I signal these quotes with underlining).

Medianoche.- Final de la fiesta, mención del perro y su aparente desasosiego: “Poor Betty! She didn't get much sleep that night and a hard day she had ahead of her, too. Wild reservation life was no joy to a blooded bulldog like Betty.” Aparente idea de que incluso los perros tienen ideas culturales que dificultan su adaptación a la vida en “wild reservations.”

(Victoria, visual representation, *Desert Wife*)

This extract from Victoria's visual representation introduces the notion that animals can be also seen as the representatives of a culture (not only human beings). Victoria was the only reader who made this interpretation. This was as much a critical reading of the text as it was idiosyncratic, because she presented the view that animals have cultural preconceptions that function as obstacles to their adaptation to wildlife reservations such as the Navajos.' Notice again the softening of this interpretation by the use of the adjective *apparent*, in what may be taken as a general strategy by Victoria to protect herself from the impact of her interpretations on her reader. In other words, even though her analyses were deep, complex and critical, at the same time she distanced herself from them by appearing to be less assertive through hedging devices of this kind. I have already pointed out her resort to similar devices in other extracts by her in this chapter (see for instance propositional statement 2 before).

In the interview, we see that this interpretation originated from her surprise that the term "wild reservation" is used in reference to people in this fragment, in this case the Navajos. She resorted to her familiar knowledge of "la teoría del buen salvaje" (another instance of propositional statement 1 at the beginning of this chapter) and brought in two perspectives, a positive and a negative one in connection with it. Notice the pauses and dubitative nature of her line of thought at this point, in an attempt to clarify as she spoke the very same idea that she was trying to put through (evidence of this point in bold in the extract). The use of general and vague expressions also contribute to signalling the difficulty she was experiencing in clarifying her thoughts ("la cosa ésta de"... "digamos, siguiendo..." "Es como que"). This is something that I shall come back to in chapter 11 when I discuss the significance of this research, namely that the very act of writing and talking about issues generated additional thinking on such issues.

M.: Tu referencia o tu mención a que los perros... los perros y las ideas culturales...

V.: Exacto, porque se plantea lo de Lady Betty.

M.: Sí.

V.: Que *en realidad me llamó la atención porque habla de una "wild reservation". "Wild", el término "wild", en este caso, refiriéndome a seres humanos... o bien tiene la cosa ésta de... digamos, siguiendo... no sé, la teoría del buen salvaje, ¿sí?, si se quiere, o siguiendo quizás la... digamos, puede tener un aspecto positivo como de naturaleza, o un aspecto negativo como es el que creo... Es como que estamos... poniendo en una... No sé, estamos en una reserva natural donde tenemos animales en peligro de extinción. Es decir, voy a esa cuestión, ¿no?, de... y hasta qué punto en este caso se muestra a un perro hasta más civilizado que... que el salvaje. O sea...*

(Victoria, interview, *Desert Wife*)

Victoria also incorporated her knowledge that in a reservation one can find animals in danger of extinction – something that is not explicitly mentioned in the text (“estamos en una *reserva natural donde tenemos animales en peligro de extinción*”). She topped this with an *inadequate interpretation* (i.e. not necessarily motivated by textual content) that a dog is more civilized than the savage (“en este caso se muestra a un perro hasta más civilizado que... que el salvaje”). Note the use of the definite article “*el salvaje*.” It is not clear who she was referring to, who the savage was in her view, and on what basis she concluded this. This is not clear, even though she quoted a line from the text (underlined in the extract) as supposed evidence for her previous argument that Lady Betty has cultural awareness (“el perro tiene noción cultural”).

M.: Sí.

V.: **O sea**, el perro es el que... "Uy, *el perro tiene noción cultural, pucha, no puede dormir a la noche porque mirá todo lo que le pasó durante el día...*" No es... habla... sobre todo por la última frase, que dice **algo así como**: "Wild reservation is no joy for a dog".

M.: Sí.

(Victoria, interview, *Desert Wife*)

In this final part of this extract, Victoria’s argument seemed to go astray, presenting a totally idiosyncratic perspective, a further analysis of her previous *inadequate interpretation*. This idea is that a dog can be accustomed to “a certain thing” (*una cierta cosa*, note the vague language, which thing?) and then lose that custom, and that there are rural and urban dogs. In the midst of this complex argument, she invited the reader to join her in her interpretation by using the adverb *evidentemente* – in an interpretation that is far from evident and that would require a lot of effort from the reader to get at. All of the foregoing was motivated by one sentence from the text, namely that “wild reservation is no joy for a dog.” Again I signal evidence of tentativeness in bold and quotes from the text in underlining.

V.: Es decir, me refiero a que **quizás... no tanto... o sea**, el perro **puede** estar *acostumbrado a una cierta cosa y bueno, perder la costumbre*, pero evidentemente en este caso se habla de que "wild reservation is no joy for a dog". ¡Epa! **O sea**, ¿qué hablamos, *de perros de ciudad y de perros de wild reservation*?

M.: Está bien.

V.: A eso voy, a *los perros como representantes culturales también*, **¿no?**
(Victoria, interview, *Desert Wife*)

In all cases, Victoria's interpretive effort started with something that called her attention in some way or another. I have mentioned in chapters 2 and 4 that this issue of identifying or noticing something as distinct for any reason constitutes the first step in cultural understanding. Level 1 in the *Model of Cultural Understanding* represents this first step. In this example, she expressed her surprise before the aspects she identified as distinct in explicit terms through the use of specific phrases (“en realidad *me llamó la atención*”) and informal and colloquial interjections, sometimes with exclamation marks (“*Uy*”, “*pucha*,” “*¡Epa!*”).

In the Navajos text, the theme of domination was recurrent by most participants and constitutes a good example of the depth of criticality and reflection of these readers. I highlight in bold the instances of doubt, hedging devices, modality, tentative language and vague and general language in the following extracts – uses which I have explained before. These instances are revealing of Victoria's decision not to take full responsibility for her interpretations, i.e. she has decided to present her interpretations and then soften them, or distance herself from them, by recourse to these devices. The topic of domination is explored through the dichotomy “standard culture” vs. “minority group,” recurrent in the whole extract. The notion of integration is also present, evidenced in the contrast *terreno ajeno – propio territorio*. The domination stems, according to Victoria, from the fact that the narrator attempts to dominate in a territory that is not her native land, or in other words, in the Navajos' reservation. She quoted the cooking and dish-washing episodes as evidence of this domination (I underline direct quotes from the text).

Por otro lado, **si mis sospechas son ciertas**, quienes intentan *integrarse* aquí forman parte de lo que **podríamos** considerar “*cultura estándar*” (*norteamericana*), **al menos** en relación a la *cultura del grupo minoritario de los navajos*. **Quizás** por eso, **incluso** en “*terreno ajeno*”, se generan escenas en que **aparentaría** producirse una *sutil dominación* por parte de quienes sin ser miembros de la tribu ni de la celebración que tiene lugar en ella, representan la *cultura estándar*:

Other women I set to peeling onions and potatoes, and very handy they were at it too.

After the meal was over, the women cleaned the soot from the tubs and boiler with sand, while I scalded the spoons and pans. They were willing enough to do it, though they would have gone away and left everything dirty, if I had not suggested the dishwashing. I thought it best they do some little thing for their meal.

Es como si, a pesar de hallarse inmersos temporalmente en otra cultura, *el hecho de pertenecer a la “cultura estándar” concediera ciertos derechos implícitos de dominación*, **al menos sutil**, y **obligara implícitamente al grupo minoritario a aceptar el status quo incluso en su propio territorio**.
(Victoria, reading response, *Desert Wife*)

She explained the idea of domination further in a part of the interview, along the same lines (domination is subtle; there is an implicit privilege of domination in what she calls the “standard culture”). She evaluated textual content by using adverbs such as *paradójicamente* and commented on what called her attention as a point of departure for her interpretations.

M.: Sí. (Pausa) Hablás de dominación, eso es muy interesante.

V.: "Dominación", me refiero a que en un momento dado, por ejemplo hay dos casos puntuales...

M.: Sí, los que citás acá.

V.: Los que cito ahí, en los cuales se genera una *sutil situación de dominación* en la cual *el que pone las reglas, o el que intenta ponerlas al menos, es el foráneo*, es decir, paradójicamente *ellos están en un... insertos en una cultura que no es la suya, y sin embargo están diciéndoles qué hacer.*

M.: Sí.

V.: Es decir, con su cultura, con sus costumbres.

M.: Sí.

V.: *Eso es lo que por ahí me llamó la atención.*

M.: Y ¿por qué los dominados aceptan?

V.: Y claro, o sea, por eso pongo más abajo que habría una suerte de cosa *implícita*, de.. de... quizás *contacto implícito, ¿no?*, en el cual la... *la cultura mayoritaria o la cultura estándar, en este caso, que podemos llamar cultura estándar, tendría cierto privilegio de dominación.* Quizás por eso tampoco se genera ese recelo ante... Yo creo que el recelo incluso es... Estoy pensando en el término inglés "take over", o sea, *esa cosa de... de que el foráneo o el extranjero pueda asumir el control.*
(Victoria, interview, *Desert Wife*)

Victoria's analysis in the reading response task was embedded within a connection with the idea of taking more than what one needs. She quoted from the text the extract portraying the Navajos strolling with raw beefs under their arms. She put this in perspective and offered a critical opinion of San Chee. Victoria pointed out that the narrator was unaware that in her culture people also steal. Note once more Victoria's overall tendency to support her affirmations with direct quotes from the text (I signal these with underlining).

Ciertos factores contemplados desde el punto de vista de la “*cultura estándar*” (cuya mirada, por otra parte, es la que conduce al lector a introducirse en la cultura de los navajos), focalizan en lo que **podrían** considerarse aspectos negativos de la tribu: “What they did not eat at once they were afraid to put down because some one would steal it, so all the evening they strolled about with great raw beefsteaks in their hands.” (...) “There was a sort of appreciation in the navajo, but it was the sort that wanted all they could get from any one who wasn't looking.”

La narradora pasa por alto el hecho de que, al menos en este último caso, tampoco su cultura queda excluida de esta conducta negativa.

(Victoria, reading response, *Desert Wife*)

Victoria's analyses before are revealing of a characteristic of cultural understanding in this setting, which is that participants in general were attracted to, or interested in textual content, regardless of its familiarity or unfamiliarity and notwithstanding the vagueness and difficulty of the concept of attraction and/or interest. In spite of the fact that these readers favoured some text topics instead of others in the production of the written tasks based on the three texts (propositional statement 5 in chapter 9), it is evident from this thesis that they were involved with textual content. By contrast, Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson (1979), Lipson (1983), Rice (1980), Hollingsworth and Reutzel (1990), Abu-Rabia (1996, 1998), Hammadou (1991) and Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm (2004) (among others, see chapter 3) have shown the powerful role of content schemata in comprehension. More specifically, these researchers have shown that those texts whose content did not meet the participants' cultural norms were in all cases harder for readers for multiple reasons. It is possible to argue in this thesis that the three texts used here contained content that could be considered surprising or novel for any reason, consequently not meeting the participants' cultural norms, irrespective of their cultural familiarity or unfamiliarity.

Let me expand. The familiar and potentially predictable celebration in *Mi planta de naranjilima* offered yet a different view of Christmas through the inclusion of elements which were totally incongruous with a typical celebration in Argentina, such as the religious questioning for instance. Almost all readers manifested that the celebration in *Cat's Eye* was strange because of Banerji's presence and the topics of conversation at the Christmas table, among other aspects. In addition, the celebration described in *Desert Wife* could have been regarded as extremely weird, atypical or abnormal, considering that no one knew anything about the Navajos. I am trying to emphasize that seen from the line of argument in the studies reviewed in this thesis, then the three texts used here could be considered as departing from these readers' cultural expectations. However, the vivid, different or unusual worlds materialized in some or all of the different episodes described in the three texts led these readers to sharpen the depth, criticality and reflexivity of their interpretations (see also propositional statement 2 in the following chapter and propositional statement 4 in this chapter) when faced when confusing content for any reason. This depth, criticality and reflexivity needs to be contrasted with findings from the before mentioned studies taken as a whole.

More specifically, I mentioned under propositional statement 1 in this chapter that one finding from the studies reviewed in chapter 3 was the elaboration of culturally familiar content and the distortion of culturally unfamiliar content – something that this thesis does not support either. Not only this, but this thesis revealed by contrast a depth, criticality and reflexivity of analysis beyond elaboration and distortion. Once again, I have already argued that these studies were flawed methodologically and theoretically because they explicitly aimed at the exploration of the *process* of cultural understanding with an inadequate instrument, the immediate recall protocol. It is therefore possible that their theoretical rationales and research designs simply did not allow for the emergence of this kind of reader response. From this perspective, this thesis constitutes an advance over this previous work. Something similar can be said about my own prior body of work, and I shall come back to this later.

8.5.3.1. Summary of propositional statement 3

In conclusion, the participants' literary knowledge (for instance, that texts have a message that readers must discover) (propositional statement 2 in the following chapter) motivated them to inspect the texts in depth and select portions that they felt needed to be analyzed further. They all positioned themselves as critical readers of all texts, showing elements of criticality and reflexivity regarding textual content. Furthermore, many times they went beyond critical thinking in these terms toward critical cultural awareness, or critical social awareness, that is, a criticality and reflexivity tied to a social dimension, issues of citizenship, of humankind and human nature from a philosophical perspective, and others.

8.5.4. Readers showed a sophisticated ability to reflect upon culture: Meta-cultural reflections.

In all data types, almost all readers tended to include some sort of what I have decided to call *meta-cultural reflections*, i.e. reflections about the cultural aspects involved in communication in general, or about cultural practices in their own culture as well as in other cultures. In all cases, these reflections were motivated by textual content and readers made this connection explicit. These meta-cultural reflections traversed all tasks and texts, and therefore impinge upon all the propositional statements around which I have arranged the response to the research question in this chapter and the next. This means that the

extracts I have chosen for illustration purposes in this section serve simultaneously as evidence of other propositional statements.

Tacuara's extract below shows not only this level of awareness of cultural issues (propositional statement 4 here) but also the ability to compare and contrast (propositional statement 2 in this chapter), as well as an attempt to distinguish between related terms and define them (propositional statement 1 in chapter 9). I prompted the reflection by inquiring about her use of the term "clasista" in her reading response of *Mi planta de naranja-lima*. This question stimulated Tacuara's exploration of what is referred to under the concept of "class." She revealed sophisticated cultural awareness in her understanding that the concept of social class may transcend national boundaries (revealed in the use of a denial, in bold in the extract) and in her conclusion that commonalities and bonds are more likely to exist between people from a similar social class in different countries (even countries from different continents such as Latin America and Europe) than between people from the same country but belonging to different social classes.

M.: ¿Qué significa esto de "clasista"?

T.: Ah, no, porque me pareció que...

M.: Vos distinguís entre algo clasista y algo cultural por lo que veo.

T.: Claro, es... una cuestión... es decir, **no sólo decir si es un país de Latinoamérica o no, o un país europeo...** o sea, por ese tipo de definición, y después que dentro también... que *dentro de un mismo... de distintos países, ya sea, un país más desarrollado o no, dentro de esos países también hay una división de clases, y que esa división de clases para mí hace que por ejemplo... eh... una persona de cierta clase social de la Argentina pueda tener más en común con una persona de cierta clase social de Europa que entre dos personas dentro de la Argentina, ¿me explico?* O sea, si yo comparo... a una persona de una familia más acomodada en un... con el otro extremo de la sociedad, tampoco tan extremo pero... o sea, no vayamos a un cartonero pero qué sé yo, una familia precaria, eh... qué sé yo, *por más que vivan dentro del mismo país, van a tener un montón de... van a estar separadas por un abismo de...*

M.: Sí. Sería más fácil para vos comprender... alguien de otro país o cultura pero del mismo...

T.: ...que comparta la misma clase, o sea, tiene por ahí las mismas dificultades... (Tacuara, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

These meta-cultural reflections were rich and varied. In connection with the fragment from *Cat's Eye*, Beryl questioned in her reflection log the truth and veracity of what television shows about cultural issues, stemming from her lack of knowledge that people in the US have turkey for Christmas and her assumption that this was the case only for Thanksgiving Day. In her reading response Lula reflected on how habits and beliefs change between the

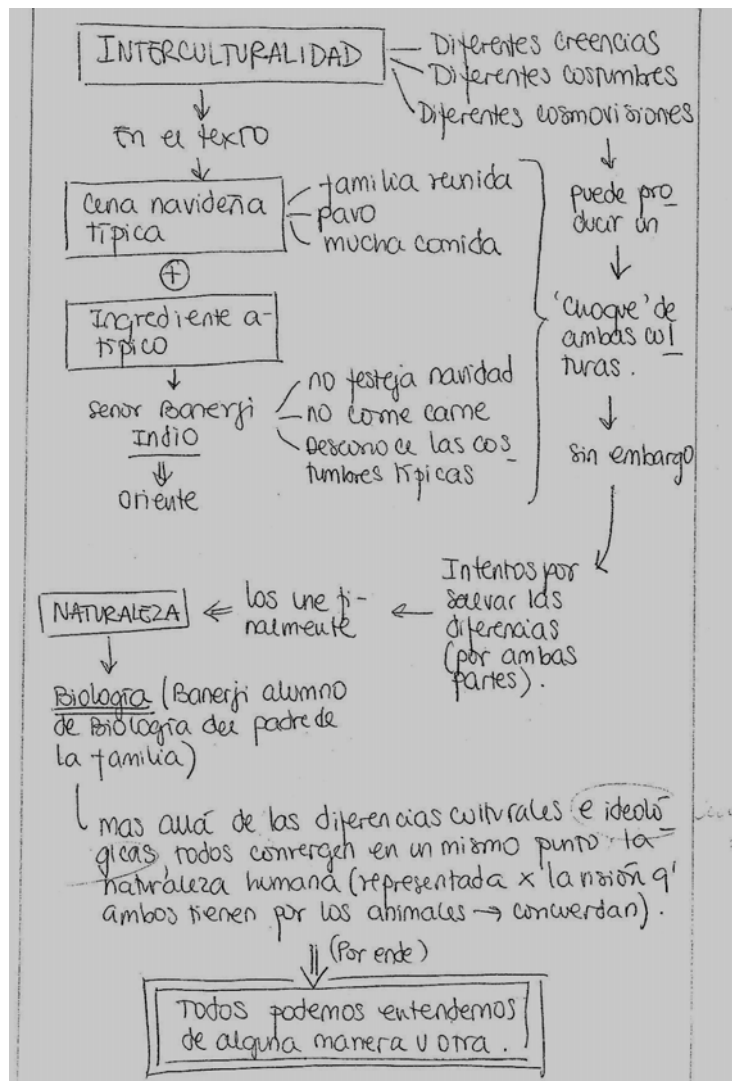
west and the east. She exemplified this meta-cultural reflection with textual content. She showed her opinion of that meta-cultural reflection in the form of an *evaluation*: habits and beliefs change “radicalmente.” The exemplification with textual content led to another meta-cultural reflection, namely that Banerji did not know how to reject the food that he did not want to eat. At this point she resorted to familiar knowledge of the social consequences that some actions and behaviours may have from a cultural point of view: rejecting food when you are invited to dinner may be rude in this context. Notice the use of the present simple (underlined in the extract) for those reflections as compared to the use of tentative language and modality in the rest of the reading response (in bold).

En este contexto de lo que se **podría** tomar como una cena típica, hay un ingrediente atípico: un invitado extranjero. *Pero no es éste un extranjero de occidente, viene del otro lado del hemisferio, del oriente, de la India.*

Hago esta referencia a los hemisferios porque considero que es importante para hacer la distinción cultural. *Las costumbres y las creencias cambian radicalmente una vez que se cruza esa línea invisible que separa el occidente del oriente.* El invitado **puede** que no comprenda algunas de las costumbres propias de la familia con la que comparte la mesa. Se siente incómodo porque inclusive la comida es muy diferente, y **probablemente** no sepa cómo hacer para rechazar aquello que no desea comer. **Quizá, lo más probable en realidad**, es que considera que resulta grosero rechazar lo que se le ofrece.”

(Lula, reading response, *Cat's Eye*)

Lula's visual representation begins with the notion of “interculturality,” highlighted with borders, from where the differences between Banerji and the family are identified (differences in beliefs, customs and worldviews). These differences lead to a clash between both cultures. In the midst of a “typical” Christmas dinner, Lula mentioned an “a-typical ingredient” (Mr. Banerji from orient). In this task Lula emphasized the possibility of human contact despite the “cultural and ideological differences” that she had mentioned previously. She concluded with this idea, which is a meta-cultural reflection (“todos podemos entendernos de alguna manera u otra”), highlighted with double borders.



(Lula, visual representation, *Cat's Eye*)

Lula then expanded these ideas in the interview on the basis of the notion of clash of cultures that she had presented in this visual representation. Contrary to what she did in the visual representation, the key concept that she emphasized throughout in the interview was the difficulty of genuine understanding among cultures as well as the impossibility of complete understanding. This is evidence of the fact that the foci of attention (favoured vs. shadowed topics) described under propositional statement 5 in the following chapter changed among the different tasks based on the same text by the same individual as in this case. Lula narrowed her meta-cultural comment now by saying that “ninguno de los dos va a llegar a saber si lo que está haciendo está bien para el otro o... es decir, qué es exactamente lo que tiene que hacer.” She furthermore highlighted the importance of taking the Other into account (“Tienen que tener en cuenta qué puede llegar a pensar el otro”). This is an opposite perspective to that highlighted in her own visual representation, which

was the idea that understanding is possible one way or another (“todos podemos entendernos de alguna manera u otra”). Other participants such as Beryl under propositional statement 5 in the following chapter portrayed this last perspective too. Beryl’s interpretation revolved around notions of fraternity, harmony and common bonds.

M.: En la reformulación visual te pregunto por qué "choque" de ambas culturas, "choque" entrecomillado.

L.: Porque...

M.: ¿El contacto entre dos culturas produce un choque siempre?

L.: No, porque un choque en el sentido de que... hubo un choque en tanto ellos se sienten incómodos. Entonces... es como que *no pueden llegar a entenderse del todo*, y uno... *ninguno de los dos va a llegar a saber si lo que está haciendo está bien para el otro o... es decir, qué es exactamente lo que tiene que hacer*, como que *hay una tensión*, entonces *un choque* en ese sentido, de que... no es algo que ellos puedan... no desarrollarse sino... comportarse comúnmente. *Tienen que tener en cuenta qué puede llegar a pensar el otro.*

M.: Está bien. Bueno, y en base a lo que vos ponés te pregunto, una... no sé cómo decirlo, que dos culturas entren en contacto ¿va a producir un choque?

L.: (Pausa)

M.: Según tu opinión.

L.: No un choque en sentido negativo, pero siempre va a haber *un choque en cuanto a la comunicación*, porque nunca... *cuando tenés una cultura tan diferente podés llegar a comunicarte de manera... es decir, entenderte de manera completa con la otra persona*. Porque por ahí vos podés hacer entender algunas cosas, pero *tu manera de ver el mundo es diferente*, entonces nunca va a ser exactamente igual la forma de tratar las cosas. A eso me refiero.

(Lula, interview, *Cat's Eye*)

Many times these meta-cultural reflections were motivated or originated by personal experiences or knowledge related to textual content (propositional statement 1 in this chapter), on the basis of which a process of comparing and contrasting around cultural issues (propositional statement 2 also in this chapter) was evidenced. Such was the case of Yanina’s reflection log based on the Navajos fragment. She recalled a personal experience (signalled by the words “recuerdo que una vez”) which she used to exemplify an affirmation she had previously made, namely that what some people consider rude can be acceptable for others (“lo que algunos consideran descortés es aceptable para otros”).

(...) *Lo que algunos consideran descortés es aceptable para otros.*

Recuerdo que una vez invité a estudiar a una compañera del interior y ella intentaba ayudar todo el tiempo con la comida, los platos, etc. Me pedía que le dijera dónde estaban las cosas así yo no me molestaba en alcanzárselas. Para mi, en realidad, era como una invasión. No me gusta que la gente tenga tanta confianza.

También me daba cuenta que cuando yo iba a su casa y no ayudaba, *a ella le parecía que yo era haragana.*

Obviamente tenemos diferentes formas de ver las cosas. Puede ser porque ella es del interior o simplemente en su casa fue educada así.

No conozco la cultura Navaja como para decir que a ellos les parece bien que el anfitrión haga las cosas, pero quizá sea algo parecido.

(Yanina, reflection log, *Desert Wife*)

Yanina concluded the narrated personal experience with a meta-cultural reflection (“Obviamente tenemos diferentes formas de ver las cosas”) and attempted alternative explanations for her friend’s behaviour (“Puede ser porque ella es del interior o simplemente en su casa fue educada así”). Immediately after this, and in a similar vein, she attempted to provide alternative interpretations for the Navajos’ behaviour regarding the dish-washing episode (propositional statement 3 in the following chapter) within this overall strategy of comparing and contrasting actions and behaviours within her own culture (her own behaviours and those of others, in this case, a friend’s) as well as within the Navajos’ culture: “No conozco la cultura Navaja como para decir que a ellos les parece bien que el anfitrión haga las cosas, pero quizá sea algo parecido.”

These meta-cultural reflections, as I mentioned before, occurred throughout all the tasks based on the three texts. Sometimes they amounted to brief, one-sentence comments, while other times the reflections were longer and occupied half a task. For instance, in her reading response based on the same text Yanina wrote a lengthy meta-cultural reflection, which concluded this task, where she emphasized the possibility that different cultures can coexist in harmony and peace while she acknowledged at the same time that it is hard to assimilate to another culture and become a part of it.

(...) sabemos que la narradora no logra acomodarse o sentirse totalmente bien en el nuevo lugar (“nuevo” aunque ya hace un año que viven ahí). Esto quizás muestra que *es muy difícil la unión de diferentes culturas. Se puede comprender lo diferente, pero muy difícilmente asimilarse y formar parte de la otra cultura, es decir, volverse uno más de ellos.*

A pesar de esto, lo bueno es que pueden convivir en paz. Es bueno que haya diferencias y es mejor aún que se comprendan y puedan convivir en paz.

(Yanina, reading response, *Desert Wife*)

In all cases, participants expanded on their meta-cultural reflections in the interviews. These further reflections led to a consideration of a multiplicity of other issues, cultural or other. In this brief extract, prompted by her meta-cultural reflection in the reading

response, Yanina introduced the topic of domination. Her belief was that it is good that differences exist because otherwise people can be more easily dominated by the government. Notice the use of the first person plural pronouns and references (in bold in the extract) which shows that she was thinking about her own culture and country, and that she included herself in this affirmation.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) Y después más abajo ponés: "*Se puede comprender lo diferente pero es muy difícil asimilarse, y forma parte de la otra cultura, es decir, volverse uno más de ellos.*" [from the reading response]

Y.: Sí.

M.: ¿Por qué ponés esto vos? ¿Sería el objetivo de la pareja asimilarse, pensás vos?

Y.: No, no creo, parece como que su objetivo es más ir ahí a trabajar, y más eso que asimilarse con los demás, pero *yo me refería en general*. [evidence that the italicized phrase above is a meta-cultural reflection]

M.: En general, cuando uno se encuentra con otra *cultura*.

Y.: Claro, o *países diferentes* y...

M.: Bueno. ¿Por qué es bueno que haya diferencias? Vos decís que es bueno que haya diferencias.

Y.: Porque si todos **fuéramos** iguales sería muy aburrido, y... creo que *si todos pensáramos igual sería más fácil dominarnos, porque es bueno que haya diferentes opiniones, es más constructivo que si todos pensáramos igual y fuéramos para el mismo lado*.

M.: ¿Dominarnos por quién?

Y.: *Por los gobernantes*.

(Yanina, interview, *Desert Wife*)

8.5.4.1. Summary of propositional statement 4

To summarize, the main finding reported in this section is that in all data types, almost all readers tended to include some sort of what I have decided to call *meta-cultural reflections*, i.e. reflections about the cultural aspects involved in communication in general, or about cultural practices in their own culture as well as in other cultures. In all cases, these reflections were rich and varied and were motivated by textual content.

8.5.5. Cultural understanding in this setting was fluid

A final finding of this study is that cultural understanding in this setting was fluid. The key measure of analysis through which cultural understanding was observed was the *Model of*

Cultural Understanding described in chapter 4. It should be recalled that I started by assigning at least two different levels in this model to each reading response and visual representation task. First, there was a choice exclusively between levels 0 and 1. These levels were critical, because they involved the perception (level 1), or lack of perception (level 0), of cultural elements (cultural details, similarities, differences, always on the basis of the reader's own culture). The caveat that I mention in chapter 9 under propositional statement 5 regarding the fact that the omission of a cultural idea unit in the reading response and/or the visual representation tasks cannot be taken to mean that readers did not perceive that unit is in order here. In this sense, in the following chapter I highlight the crucial contribution of the comprehensibility grid (data collection instrument i) in chapter 6 because the only cultural idea units which these participants did not perceive at all were those that they identified with the option *I don't remember* in this grid. In it, readers had to show their degree of comprehension of all the cultural idea units (whether they had included them in the tasks or not) using a scale 0-6 (ranging from *I don't remember* to *totally comprehensible* or *totally incomprehensible*).

Second, there was a choice among levels 2, 3, 4, 5. However, in the previous chapter I mentioned that it was not possible to allocate only *one* of these levels. I nonetheless strove to do so based on an overall impression of each task, but decided to accommodate the readers' dynamism and flexibility by simultaneously identifying the most critical slips back and forth levels in the model in each written task. Here the interviews have served the function of supporting the findings from the other data types. I have shown and exemplified this fluidity as well as the supporting role of interview data in the previous chapter as well as in this one.

With this consideration in mind, let me be more specific now. Table 18 shows that the only level in the model which I never assigned to any task was level 2. I never did so in the global and impressionistic way of assigning levels that I described before. However, this level was present in the slips I also mention before. The reason for this may be simple, and may reside in the fact that this study was thought and designed to investigate the cultural understanding of another culture rather than one's own. However, I have also referred to the inevitability of looking at one's own culture in this process (propositional statement 2 in this chapter; also chapter 2). In addition, level 2 was always the point of departure for the comparing and contrasting that I saw these readers operating within, as captured by propositional statement 2

in these findings (namely, the basis for understanding otherness rested on a process of comparing and contrasting).

Table 18. Levels of cultural understanding

<i>Level</i>	<i>Naranja-lima</i>			<i>Cat's Eye</i>			<i>Desert Wife</i>		
	<i>Reading response</i>	<i>Visual representation</i>	<i>Interview</i>	<i>Reading response</i>	<i>Visual representation</i>	<i>Interview</i>	<i>Reading response</i>	<i>Visual representation</i>	<i>Interview</i>
<i>Choice between levels 0 and 1</i>									
Level 0. Omission	4	2		2			2	1	
Level 1. Perception of cultural differences	6	8	10	8	10	10	8	9	10
<i>Choice among levels 2, 3, 4, 5</i>									
Level 2. Own culture from inside									
Level 3. Another culture from outside	3	1	3	1			2	2	2
Level 4. Another culture from inside	2	3	3	2	2	1	4	4	4
Level 4+. Evidence of levels 4 & 5	4	6	4	5	7	7	2	3	1
Level 5. Own culture from outside	1			2	1	2	2	1	3

Table 18 also shows several other interesting findings. First and foremost, level 1 was pervasive in both the reading responses and the visual representations of all texts, and got confirmed by the interviews, where all participants identified cultural elements from the fragments. Second, level 3, which represents a stereotyped approach to otherness, was present at the most in three readers in all texts. More specifically, for example, the fragment from *Cat's Eye* only triggered this kind of approach in one task, the reading response, and by one participant. Third, and congruent with the foregoing, the participants' responses were allocated mostly between levels 4 and 5. Whereas overall only one or two participants reached level 5 depending on the task and text, it is worth noting that this level occurred only once for the text in Spanish. Put differently, level 5 was observed with the texts in English almost exclusively. Fourth, in many cases these readers' responses could be seen to lie somewhat between levels 4 and 5. This situation prompted me to add another level, which I have tentatively called *level 4 plus*, which basically encompasses level 4 but with significant traces of level 5 embedded within itself. If one looks at level 4 independently, between two and four participants were allocated to this level, considering all tasks and texts. Between five and seven participants reached level 4 plus in *Cat's Eye*, decreasing to four-six in *Mi planta de naranja-lima*, and between one and three in the Navajos text. The most important finding is that globally, the majority of responses considering all texts were framed within levels 4, 4 plus and 5.

These findings ratify the results from the holistic data analysis phase, materialized in the propositional statements in both results chapters (chapters 8 and 9), mainly that these readers showed critical thinking, reflection, critical cultural awareness and social awareness (propositional statement 3 in this chapter), offered simultaneous and alternative interpretations of textual content (statement 3 in the following chapter), re-visited textual content (statement 4 in the following chapter; a-ha moments), and showed a sophisticated ability to reflect upon culture (propositional statement 4 in this chapter; meta-cultural reflections). These are characteristics of levels 4, 4 plus, and 5, on the basis of an understanding of otherness that rested on a process of comparing and contrasting (propositional statement 2 in this chapter).

I should restate at this point that Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm (2004) (see chapter 3 for details) observed different degrees of familiarity with the cultural schemata in the oral narratives that they analyzed. Likewise, this thesis supports the notion of degrees of familiarity with cultural content along a continuum – a notion that is central in the *Model of Cultural Understanding*. The fluidity in how these readers approached the cultural not only across texts and tasks, but also within each task, is revealing of varying degrees of familiarity (or unfamiliarity) with very specific portions of the selected fragments. I have shown and exemplified this fluidity in this chapter, in the previous one, and I shall do so too in the next one. Similar to Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm (2004), this thesis stresses the notion of a continuum in cultural understanding rather than the notion of absent (non-available) vs. present (available) schemata most often associated with the beginnings of schema theory (see chapter 3 for further details).

Finally, the vertical analysis by reader (analysis of each reader independently), which resulted from the overall holistic and impressionistic data analysis process of all data types by each individual separately, showed that despite the fluidity and flexibility of these readers' responses (represented by the constant slips back and forth levels in all tasks and texts), it was possible to globally frame each reader within a certain stage in the model. Such stage represented *a point in time* within each reader's trajectory as far as cultural understanding was concerned. For instance, the stereotyped approach (level 3 in the model) was almost exclusively tied to Scarlet Rose and Tacuara. Level 5 was only observed in responses by Tess and Victoria, with one exception by Luz in only one task corresponding to the text in Spanish.

Overall, Table 19, which shows the levels of cultural understanding by reader, reveals a certain uniformity of level of response across tasks and texts by each individual reader.

Table 19. Levels of cultural understanding by participant

	<i>Naranja-lima</i>			<i>Cat's Eye</i>			<i>Desert Wife</i>		
	<i>Reading response</i>	<i>Visual representation</i>	<i>Interview</i>	<i>Reading response</i>	<i>Visual representation</i>	<i>Interview</i>	<i>Reading response</i>	<i>Visual representation</i>	<i>Interview</i>
<i>Beryl</i>	0 4	1 4	1 4	1 3	1 4+	1 4+	1 4	1 4+	1 5
<i>Enrique Alejandro</i>	1 4	1 4	1 4	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	0 3	1 4	1 4
<i>Lula</i>	1 4+	0 4	1 4	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	1 4	1 4
<i>Luz</i>	1 5	1 4+	1 5	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	1 4	1 4	1 4
<i>Miranda Dana</i>	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+
<i>Scarlet Rose</i>	0 3	1 4+	1 3	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	1 3	1 3	1 3
<i>Tacuara</i>	1 3	0 3	1 3	0 4	1 4	1 4+	0 3	1 3	1 4
<i>Tess</i>	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	1 5	1 5	1 5	1 5	1 5	1 5
<i>Victoria</i>	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	1 5	1 5	1 5	1 5	1 5	1 5
<i>Yanina</i>	0 3	1 4+	1 3	1 4	1 4	1 4	1 4	0 4	1 4

8.5.5.1. The research design was central in allowing this fluidity to emerge in the first place

In this chapter I have shown that the interaction and interrelationships among the data collection instruments and the measures of data analysis as described and exemplified here do contribute to breaking the polarity *product–process* as well as to the exploration of the *during* and *after* reading – something that I have argued for in this thesis. The following chapter operates in the same way. I have also proposed in previous chapters (6 and 7) that these aspects, i.e. *product*, *process*, *during*, *after*, can in fact be superseded by the notion of levels of understanding as portrayed in the *Model of Cultural Understanding* designed for this thesis. Furthermore, I have also argued that the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of analysis can be integrated within this model (chapter 6). I have shown in the previous chapter and in this one that both quantity and quality (cultural idea units and reader behaviours tied to cultural aspects) can successfully be interrelated within and among the six levels in the model, with more or less strength.

What I have done in this chapter, and I shall do in the next one too, is put the *integrated* data analysis *process* that I described in chapter 7 in operation in this presentation of findings. The point in this final line of argument is that it is within this notion of levels of understanding as captured by the model that these findings need to be framed. In other words,

this interaction and interconnection among data types and measures of analysis was continuous, evolving and dynamic, and was embedded within this *Model of Cultural Understanding*. Each level in this model showed evidence or traces of all the propositional statements presented in this chapter and the next, with varying degrees of depth, complexity and detail, also embedded here within those statements.

Central to this argument is the notion of the impossibility to assign isolated and independent levels in the model to any reader's approach to the cultural content of the texts used in this study. The point to be stressed is that of fluidity, i.e. these readers moved back and forth levels freely at any point during the reading process, showing elements of almost all levels in all tasks. Table 18 presents these findings.

8.5.5.2. Summary of propositional statement 5

To round off this section, another finding of this study is that cultural understanding in this setting was fluid. Participants moved back and forth levels in the *Model of Cultural Understanding* freely at any point during the reading process, showing elements of almost all levels in all tasks. Globally, the majority of responses considering all texts were framed within levels 4, 4 plus and 5. These findings ratify the results from the holistic data analysis phase, materialized in the propositional statements in this chapter and the following one, mainly that these readers showed critical thinking, reflection, critical cultural awareness and social awareness (propositional statement 3 in this chapter), offered simultaneous and alternative interpretations of textual content (statement 3 in the following chapter), re-visited textual content (propositional statement 4 in the following chapter; a-ha moments) and showed a sophisticated ability to reflect upon culture (statement 4 in this chapter; meta-cultural reflections). These are characteristics of levels 4, 4 plus, and 5, on the basis of an understanding of otherness that rested on a process of comparing and contrasting (propositional statement 2 in this chapter). A concomitant important finding here is that the research design in this thesis was central in allowing this fluidity to emerge in the first place.

8.5.5.3. Overall connection with prior work in this same setting

In this thesis, the pervasive perception of the specific features of the cultural content of the texts (materialized in the cultural idea units) led me to assign level 1 in the model (as opposed to level 0) to almost all tasks based on the three texts (see Table 19). The perception or identification of these cultural elements constituted the point of departure for these readers' focus on the differences between themselves and others (propositional statement 2 in this chapter). In other words, the basis for understanding otherness rested on a process of comparing and contrasting, and in this process these readers resorted to what was known or familiar to them (propositional statement 1 in this chapter). I have shown here, and I shall also do so in chapter 10 with the in-depth analysis, that the confrontation with the values and ideas present in the perspectives of others (members of other cultures) favoured a process of decentralization or critical distancing from the participants' own perspective (propositional statement 3 in this chapter). Expressed in a different manner, these readers showed critical thinking, reflection, critical cultural awareness and social awareness, in greater or lesser degrees. In the majority of the cases, this way of approaching otherness was integral to the comprehension process and was evidenced in some *portions* of all their tasks based on the three texts. In two instances, Tess's and Victoria's, this approach was observed in the *entirety* of all their tasks and could be seen to be more ingrained.

This result contrasts sharply with prior findings from my own body of work, which I have described in chapters 3 and 6. Collectively, these studies have revealed a predominantly superficial and stereotypical approach in cultural understanding. I should mention at this juncture that in this body of work I utilized the same prompt texts as in this thesis –something that allows a basis for comparison now. Added to this, these studies were framed within the same chair, English Language II, at the same university, and the profile of the student population could be regarded as similar to the one in this thesis. However, on all prior instances, while the participants did distance themselves from their own perspectives in a way, they failed to relativize their views, which led them to judge otherness on the basis of their own cultural parameters, resulting in a predominance of level 3 in the model in all tasks and texts, with low percentages associated with level 4. The readers' stereotyped approach to this otherness, represented by level 3, was characterized by a high presence of distortions, intrusions, errors, rationalizations, generalizations and inadequate interpretations,

and relatively low percentages of elaborations and adequate interpretations. Although the majority of those readers were interested in discovering alternative perspectives (as revealed by the pervasive presence of level 1 in the model), their own frames of reference always mediated this interpretation. Even though this is expected and unavoidable in all comprehension, the characteristics of level 3 in the model outweighed other kinds of response. These traits involved an ethnocentric position and the pervasive adaptation of incongruences to their cultural code (i.e. they accommodated the different and alien cultural features of the texts in order to fit in with their own reality).

Another persistent finding in my previous work, taken collectively, which also contradicts the results in this thesis, was the existence of a threshold of cultural awareness of others, beyond which what was different or novel remained inaccessible. The existence of this threshold was explained in those studies considering that in order to capture the cultural aspects in a text, it is essential to have attitudes of curiosity, openness, and willingness to suspend disbelief and value judgments with regard to other people's beliefs and behaviours. However, although those readers perceived different features of the cultures in question (manifested in a pervasive level 1 in the model), very few made a genuine effort to get familiar with the different by attempting to see the actions and beliefs present in the prompt texts from the perspective and the world of the insiders in those cultures. This finding, together with the prevalent superficial and stereotypical approach to the cultural content of all texts that I mentioned before, led me to suggest that those learners showed extreme difficulty to go beyond their cultural ego towards another kind of comprehension.

Although it is not the aim of this thesis to explain what may have motivated such discrepant findings between my prior studies and the present one, I would not wish to remain at the level of description. A number of factors need to be considered – factors which I have formulated in chapter 6. First, this thesis was conceived in a radically different way, namely as an interpretive, exploratory study of ten readers, instead of as a quantitative study with two hundred participants.

Second, this change of focus, together with the attention on the comprehension process (rather than product) led to a change in data collection instruments. While in the past I had used variants of the immediate recall protocol such as summaries and syntheses, with an exclusive reliance on accurate recall (for instance, the texts were not available to the

readers in the production of the written tasks), in this study I proposed alternative instruments such as the reading response and the visual representation tasks (chapter 6). Furthermore, this thesis emphasizes the process of comprehension, for which reason a number of instruments were specifically designed to investigate the process. I have shown that the interviews were especially useful in this respect, because they made visible what the participants thought about during the actual reading of the texts. This focus on the process was non-existent in all my other studies.

Third, the fact that this study was exploratory resulted in the generation of a bond between the participants and myself, which allowed me to contact them with particular inquiries many months after the closure of data collection. In this way I gathered critical information, explanations and further reflections that facilitated the in-depth analysis of how these readers approached otherness in reading. Therefore, my overall speculation here is that this thesis yielded different findings because it was conceived with a rationale and a research design that allowed for this depth, criticality and reflexivity in cultural understanding to emerge in the first place. However, this does not mean that the readers in previous studies were not capable of generating this kind of response.

One final observation is that the opaque portions in the texts used in this thesis required extreme perception to be interpreted. The reflexivity and criticality needed was evidenced particularly in the interviews. I have exemplified this enough in chapter 7 as well as in this one, and I shall do so too in the next chapter. This critical and reflexive approach to otherness is also revealing of the tension between familiarity and unfamiliarity in the double structure of interpretation (Moreiras, 1991), something I have dwelled upon in chapter 2. On the one hand, it familiarized what was strange and made understanding possible. On the other, it made the familiar unfamiliar and allowed for reflection and critical analysis. In this process, I have also illustrated the role of personal prejudices, bias, partial information, and suppositions regarding intentions in the appreciation and evaluation of textual content. These were the instances identified as indicative of levels 2 and 3 in the *Model of Cultural Understanding*.

8.6. General summary of findings

I shall conclude this chapter with a general summary of findings, as captured by the propositional statements developed in each section. Propositional statement 1 means that in approaching otherness, participants resorted to what was known or familiar to them. This resort to familiar knowledge and experience involved any familiar knowledge and experience that readers brought to bear on textual content, from their own cultures or others, and from varied topics and disciplines. For the purposes of this thesis, I have distinguished this knowledge and experience from the technical term *intrusion*, which I have reserved for prior knowledge and experience of Christmas exclusively.

Propositional statement 2 refers to an ongoing process of comparing and contrasting underlying the resort to prior and familiar knowledge for interpreting otherness. Basically all readers compared and contrasted the different cultural realities presented in the texts with their own through the use of different means and resources, as I have shown in this chapter. At times this process of comparing and contrasting revealed the participants' difficulty in distancing themselves from their own positions and understanding otherness from the point of view of the Other. This difficulty to de-centre led to stereotyping. At other times, however, the process of comparing and contrasting resulted in the adoption of different perspectives in the understanding of another culture.

Propositional statement 3 refers to the fact that readers inspected the texts in depth and selected portions that they felt needed to be analyzed further. They all positioned themselves as critical readers of all texts, showing elements of criticality and reflexivity regarding textual content. Furthermore, many times they went beyond critical thinking in these terms toward critical cultural awareness, or critical social awareness, that is, a criticality and reflexivity tied to a social dimension, issues of citizenship, of humankind and human nature from a philosophical perspective, etc.

The main finding reported under propositional statement 4 is that in all data types, almost all readers tended to include some sort of what I have decided to call *meta-cultural reflections*, i.e. reflections about the cultural aspects involved in communication in general, or about cultural practices in their own culture as well as in other cultures. In all cases, these reflections were rich and varied and were motivated by textual content.

A final finding of this study is that cultural understanding in this setting was fluid (propositional statement 5). Participants moved back and forth levels in the *Model of Cultural Understanding* freely at any point during the reading process, showing elements of almost all levels in all tasks. Globally, the majority of responses considering all texts were framed within levels 4, 4 plus and 5. These findings ratify the results from the holistic data analysis phase, materialized in the propositional statements in this chapter and the next one, mainly that these readers showed critical thinking, reflection, critical cultural awareness and social awareness (propositional statement 3 in this chapter), offered simultaneous and alternative interpretations of textual content (statement 3 in the following chapter), re-visited textual content (statement 4 in the following chapter; a-ha moments), and showed a sophisticated ability to reflect upon culture (statement 4 in this chapter; meta-cultural reflections). These are characteristics of levels 4, 4 plus, and 5, on the basis of an understanding of otherness that rested on a process of comparing and contrasting (propositional statement 2 in this chapter). A concomitant important finding here is that the research design in this thesis was central in allowing this fluidity to emerge in the first place.

8.7. Conclusion

This chapter has presented the results of this study. I have structured it around the research question, which was

What processes, techniques and behaviours do EFL college readers in this setting use to comprehend the cultural content of literary narrative texts during and after reading?

In other words, I have used information from all data collection instruments and measures of analysis in an integrated account in responding to this question.

In this chapter I have focused the attention on findings related to the understanding of otherness in this setting. The chapter began with a recapitulation of key issues of this investigation, as they pertained to this chapter. One such issue was the distinction between comprehension *during* and *after* reading as stated in the research question. Another inseparable aspect was the polarity *product-process*, already discussed in chapter 6. A final concern was connected to the interrelatedness among instruments and measures of analysis and highlighted the integral process of data analysis as I have described it in the previous chapter. I have argued in chapter 7 for the need to present results in a similar integral and

integrated way, drawing upon all the available data types and measures of analysis, from all the participants, in an attempt to offer a general portrait of how these EFL college readers comprehended the cultural content of the literary narrative texts used in this study. This is the way I have presented results in this chapter. I use the same approach in the presentation of findings in the following chapter.

Throughout this chapter I have discussed key issues regarding cultural understanding in this setting. In so doing, I have constantly compared and contrasted these findings with those from other settings. I have taken some of the key studies reviewed in chapter 3 and I have discussed their findings in the light of those of the present study. I do this too in the following chapter. I have focused on prior knowledge as well as on the attitudinal and affective dimension of comprehension. I have made my prior body of work a particular center of attention. In this respect, I have offered a layer of interpretation and speculation concerning the meaning of the present findings in view of existing others in the same setting (i.e. prior research carried out by myself).

The following chapter presents findings related to general processes of understanding. As I said at the beginning, these findings are tied to the cultural because this study was conceived as an investigation of cultural understanding in the first place. However, it would be possible to say that the findings reported in chapter 9 also pertain to the understanding of whatever is not cultural. In addition to the inspection of the findings in this thesis in the light of those from other settings, in the following chapter I shall dwell upon theoretical aspects and I shall point out how this thesis has taken account of relevant concepts.

CHAPTER 9

FINDINGS: RESULTS RELATED TO GENERAL PROCESSES OF UNDERSTANDING

Introduction

Overview of this chapter

Findings related to general processes of understanding

Readers showed awareness of problematic terms related to cultural understanding

Summary of propositional statement 1

Participants brought their literary knowledge and assumptions into play in understanding another culture

Summary of propositional statement 2

Participants offered simultaneous and alternative interpretations of textual content

Perceived confusion and difficulty with textual content

Summary of propositional statement 3

Problematic textual content led to its re-visiting: A-ha moments

Summary of propositional statement 4

Different foci of attention were revealed: prominent vs. shadowed topics

Emotions, perception of text topics during comprehension, and favoured vs. shadowed topics during reading as well as in the tasks

Summary of propositional statement 5

Readers expressed difficulty to visualize textual content during reading

Summary of propositional statement 6

General summary of findings

Placing findings within the theoretical perspectives in this thesis

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CHAPTER 9

FINDINGS: RESULTS RELATED TO GENERAL PROCESSES OF UNDERSTANDING

9.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the results of this study related to general processes of understanding. These processes were embedded within cultural understanding here, simply because this study was designed to explore it and therefore foregrounded the cultural throughout. The distinction between the specific understanding of otherness (in the previous chapter) and the more general processes of understanding in this chapter refers to the fact that the latter may also be thought of as pertaining to the understanding of whatever is not cultural.

Paralleling the organization of the previous chapter, this one is also structured around the research question. I also use information from any data collection instrument and measure of analysis in an integrated account in responding to this question. I should emphasize once again that I present findings in two separate chapters exclusively for the sake of clarity and readability. The main idea overall behind these two chapters with findings is that the process of cultural understanding in this setting was integral, i.e. it cannot be said to be composed of independent and discrete elements. This means that the propositional statements around which I have organized this presentation of findings were observed throughout the process of comprehension, in all tasks based on the three texts, and by all participants, and were therefore ingrained within it.

9.2. Overview of this chapter

In this chapter I discuss findings related to general processes of understanding as they were observed in cultural understanding in this setting. I briefly summarize each statement after its presentation, and then provide a general summary of all in the end. Throughout the chapter I compare and contrast these findings with others in the literature as reviewed in chapter 3. I conclude with an examination of findings (from this chapter and the previous one) from a theoretical perspective resuming key concepts from chapter 2.

9.3. Findings related to general processes of understanding

This chapter, together with the previous one, answers the research question, which was:

What processes, techniques and behaviours do EFL college readers in this setting use to comprehend the cultural content of literary narrative texts during and after reading?

In so doing, let me now bring to the foreground the list of propositional statements from chapter 8.

Findings related to the specific understanding of otherness

1. In approaching otherness, participants resorted to what was known or familiar to them.
 - What other research has revealed concerning prior knowledge
 - Elaborating and distorting cultural information
 - Summary of propositional statement 1

2. The basis for understanding otherness rested on a process of comparing and contrasting.
 - The difficulty to de-centre led to stereotyping
 - Perspective-taking in understanding culture
 - Summary of propositional statement 2

3. Readers showed critical thinking, reflection, critical cultural awareness and social awareness.
 - Summary of propositional statement 3

4. Readers showed a sophisticated ability to reflect upon culture: Meta-cultural reflections.
 - Summary of propositional statement 4

5. Cultural understanding in this setting was fluid
 - The research design was central in allowing this fluidity to emerge in the first place
 - Summary of propositional statement 5
 - Overall connection with prior work in this same setting

Findings related to general processes of understanding

1. Readers showed awareness of problematic terms related to cultural understanding.
 - Summary of propositional statement 1
2. Participants brought their literary knowledge and assumptions into play in understanding another culture.
 - Summary of propositional statement 2
3. Participants offered simultaneous and alternative interpretations of textual content.
 - Perceived confusion and difficulty with textual content
 - Summary of propositional statement 3
4. Problematic textual content led to its re-visiting: A-ha moments.
 - Summary of propositional statement 4
5. Different foci of attention were revealed: prominent vs. shadowed topics.
 - Emotions, perception of text topics during comprehension, and favoured vs. shadowed topics during reading as well as in the tasks
 - Summary of propositional statement 5
6. Participants expressed difficulty to visualize textual content during reading.
 - Summary of propositional statement 6

I shall now deal with each statement from the second group in turn in this chapter.

9.3.1. Readers showed awareness of problematic terms related to cultural understanding

Interestingly enough, the participants enacted some of the difficulties with terminology in understanding, thinking and writing about culture in a way that resembled what I did in chapter 2. This does not mean that their enactments were accurate, but rather that they had a quite sophisticated level of cultural awareness that made them not only distinguish among certain terms (i.e. be able to say that one term is different from another) but also attempt subtle definitions. Some of the terms included under these reflections were *culture*, *society*, *country* and *social class*. As way of example, Tacuara, Beryl and others explained their use of these terms in their reflection logs, reading response and visual representation tasks, as well as in their interviews.

“(…) me parece que independientemente del origen del escritor o del lugar donde transcurre la historia, independientemente de eso, la problemática que está presente es una que también atraviesa nuestra *sociedad*, por lo cual el texto resulta más fácil de asimilar. (…) me parece que para abordar el texto hay que adoptar un punto de vista no sólo *cultural* sino también *clasista*.”

(Tacuara, reflection log, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

Note the generalized reference to *la problemática* without really identifying the problem at all in this reflection log. Here Tacuara attempted to distinguish among the terms *society*, *culture* and *social class*. She provided no explanation for her argument that the text needed to be interpreted from a cultural and class perspective. This lack of specificity motivated me to question her in the interview about these distinctions.

M.: ¿Sociedad y cultura es lo mismo?

T.: Y, van de la mano, porque *a una cultura la hace la... surge de la sociedad misma*. ¿A ver dónde lo puse?

M.: Vos pusiste: "Yo clasificaría la sociedad, cultura retratada..." Lo ponés en el mismo plano. ¿Es lo mismo?

T.: Sí, para mí *la cultura la tomo como producto de la sociedad, o sea, está creada por la sociedad misma*.

M.: Sí, está bien. ¿Y esto de las clases, qué es?

T.: ¿Cómo qué es?

M.: Lo de las *clases sociales* que acabás de mencionar. ¿Tiene que ver con la sociedad, con la cultura?

T.: *Con la estructuración de la sociedad*.

(Tacuara, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

Tacuara clarified in this extract that in her view, a culture is a product of a society while social classes are a way of structuring that society. Irrespective of the accuracy of these definitions, she established nuanced differences in meaning among the terms.

In her reading response task based on the same text, Beryl used the term *social class* and emphasized the differences in social classes exclusively from an economic perspective. She argued that the text intended to portray this contrast between “those who have” and “those who do not have.” Because she centred on this economic perspective only (what is important are the presents and what one has on the Christmas table), she concluded that the text offered a “materialistic” perspective. What she perhaps failed to do here, as Tacuara before, is see Christmas from the narrator’s perspective. Zezé was a child, and it is not unreasonable that he wished for a present and a nice meal for Christmas. But Beryl judged these wishes from the point of view of an adult, probably herself, and *evaluated* them as “materialistic.”

La *cultura* presentada en el texto leído es, a mi entender, un reflejo de la *sociedad* actual, en la que vemos la distinción de *clase social* claramente marcada.

Es fácil determinar las contraposiciones que se hacen entre *quienes tienen (desde un nivel material y económico)* y *quienes no tienen*. El narrador mismo se coloca desde un punto *materialista*, visto que para él/ella la Navidad tiene que ver con lo que Papa Noel puede traerle como regalo y lo que cada uno tiene en su mesa.

Si bien esta familia *no parece pertenecer a una clase social alta*, o en todo caso *su clase social está en declive*, sus deseos parecen directamente relacionados con el *materialismo*. (...)

(Beryl, reading response, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

Interestingly, after her analysis of social classes from this economic perspective, Beryl stated that the family “no parece pertenecer a una clase social alta.” This affirmation, though softened by the use of tentative language at the beginning (“no parece”), struck me as contradictory. Precisely because there were no presents or food (among other available evidence in the text), it was obvious they were not high class. In this sense, it is unclear why Beryl denied this fact so tentatively, and why she thought that a reader of her reading response would entertain this possibility in the first place (i.e. that they were high class). Recall that writers deny whatever propositions they think their readers, real or imagined, will hold (Pagano, 1994). Beryl then clarified the previous remark and said that “their social class was in decline.” This was left unexplained and was not exemplified. What in the text led Beryl to assume that they had been better off is unclear. Finally, notice the *rationalization* (introduced by the connector “si bien”) that in spite of the foregoing, their wishes are materialistic, as if only people from a high social class (in Beryl’s understanding) could wish for material things (“Si bien esta familia *no parece pertenecer a una clase social alta*, o en todo caso *su clase social está en declive*, sus deseos parecen directamente relacionados con el *materialismo*”).

In the interview Beryl attempted to define what she meant by low social class and materialism in her reading response. Again we see her assumption that the family was not high class or middle class. Using the notion of the interactive nature of denials that I mentioned before from Pagano (1994), it is unclear why she entertained that her reader would believe that the family was indeed high or middle class (“*quizás no es de clase alta pero tampoco una clase media*”). She then made a *generalization* by equating society and class (“su *sociedad... o sea*, su *clase* está en declive”). She concluded the beginning statement by referring to the typical low middle class (“en la típica que se le llama hoy la *clase media baja*”), whatever that means. At this point she involved the social dimension,

not only the economic, in her analysis of social classes, but did not offer any specificity (“mínimas referencias *sociales* y económicas”).

B.: Entonces me parece que lo que surge es el *materialismo*, quizás por el hecho de que son una familia que se ve como que no... no es de... *quizás no es de clase alta pero tampoco una clase media, y por eso te decía que su sociedad... o sea, su clase está en declive*. Porque... *mínimas referencias sociales y económicas* que a mí me hacen ver que es como que *están en la típica que se le llama hoy la clase media baja*.

M.: OK.

(Beryl, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

She then engaged in an explanation of social class in decline, low social class and marginalized class. She attempted differentiations, always based on one parameter, namely having food or not. I italicize these attempts in the extract. The line of argument got confusing, but Beryl believed in it. She brought in the example of the uncle providing the money for the food as evidence that the family was not absolutely poor. This is an instance of a *rationalization*, i.e. the link between an element in the text (uncle paying for food) and another one supplied by herself (they belong to a low middle social class). Beryl's mode of argument was heavily dependent on repetition, i.e. she resorted to the same explanations over and over again in order to justify her statements. But as she repeated the same ideas, her argument was not clarified (“Precisamente porque la clase media baja es la clase que fue en su momento media... y está en declive, o sea está llegando a ser clase baja o marginada en todo caso.”). At some points we see *inadequate interpretations* (i.e. not justified by textual content) such as the beginning and closing statements in the next interview extract (“se aspiraba a volver a tener lo que se había tenido quizás en algún momento ... Simplemente creo que son gente que tuvieron una mínima posición antes y que luego cayeron”).

B.: *Entonces me pareció que por ahí se aspiraba a volver a tener lo que se había tenido quizás en algún momento*.

M.: ¿Cómo te surge esta idea de que están en declive? Porque no tienen para comer, dice. ¿Cómo puede ser una clase media baja en declive que no tenga ni siquiera para comer?

B.: *Precisamente porque la clase media baja es la clase que fue en su momento media... y está en declive, o sea está llegando a ser clase baja o marginada en todo caso*.

M.: Está bien.

B.: Entonces me pareció... Y de hecho *no son del todo de una clase baja que no tiene absolutamente nada para comer porque de hecho uno de los tíos es el que paga por la cena*.

M.: Hm. No son completamente pobres.

B.: Entonces es como que hay una diferencia... Claro, *no son la gente que no tiene absolutamente nada y que están mendigando en la calle*. Simplemente creo que *son gente que tuvieron una mínima posición antes y que luego...*

M.: ...cayeron.

B.: ...cayeron, ¿no?

(Beryl, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

Yanina also attempted to distinguish among terms and define them, and in so doing created personal interpretations of this fragment as well as of some ideological positions that the text was in her view addressing. This concluding paragraph in her reading response summarizes her critical reading of this text, from a social and economic perspective, and her opinion of this socioeconomic reality (reflected on the use of the adverb *lamentablemente*): “La cultura que se ve reflejada en el texto es la cultura de familias humildes, relegadas por la sociedad y el estado. Estas familias y por ende esta cultura desesperanzada *lamentablemente* crece día a día.” It also evidences the association that she brought to bear on her reading of this text with her knowledge of the social and economic situation in Argentina, i.e. that poverty grows continuously (“crece día a día”) (propositional statement 1 in chapter 8). Notice the reference to poor families as a culture in their own, i.e. for Yanina, one parameter to define culture is the economic – in a similar vein to Beryl before. We observe a simultaneous *rationalization* and *generalization* in the association that poor families are relegated by the society and the state (“familias humildes, relegadas por la sociedad y el estado”). She *evaluated* this “culture” as hopeless (“desesperanzada”).

Yanina expanded these ideas in the interview in the following terms, providing support for her views. Specifically, I solicited a clarification on her use of concepts like *society* and *state*. Yanina promptly said that she had provided a personal interpretation. She repeated the association she had made in her reading response that the text represented the culture of the people who have less. She based her argument that this “culture” is “relegated” and “discriminated” on the stereotype that criminals are poor or live in shanty houses. Although she appeared to be presenting a critical view of this stereotype, she never explicitly distanced herself from it, despite her use of vague language like “se escucha” (i.e. the source for the affirmation was weak, where does one hear this?) and the softening of her statement by a phrase of frequency (“muchas veces” and not all the time for instance).

M.: ¿Por qué la cultura está relegada por la sociedad y el Estado? ¿Cuál es la diferencia entre la sociedad y el Estado y cómo sabés? ¿Esto es una interpretación tuya o está en el texto?

Y.: Eh... *es más una interpretación mía*. No está en el texto. Para mí la cultura, *esa cultura que se refleja ahí, que es las... las personas que menos tienen, esa cultura está relegada* porque... las personas, por ejemplo, *muchas veces se escucha que si alguien cometió un delito, seguro que es pobre o que vive en la villa*, y de una manera u otra es como que quedan *relegados o discriminados*.

M.: Hm.

(Yanina, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

She then presented her ideological position concerning the role of the state in the face of this reality (i.e. that its role is to do something about this situation) as well as her negative critical attitude toward the action that the state takes on this matter (“relegados o discriminados ... por el estado también, porque... como que *si al estado le importara haría algo*”). Finally, she attempted to differentiate terms like *culture* and *society*. She thought that different cultures may exist in one society, explicitly mentioned that *society* is not the same as *culture*, but offered no further specification.

Y.: Y por el estado también, porque... *como que si al estado le importara haría algo*.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) ¿Hay alguna diferencia entre lo social y lo cultural entonces? Vos estás hablando de cuestiones sociales: pobreza, desigualdad... ¿Y esto es lo mismo que algo cultural para vos?

Y.: *Pienso que en una sociedad pueden haber diferentes culturas, dentro de una misma sociedad. Entonces no es lo mismo sociedad y cultura para mí*.

(Yanina, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

Sometimes the participants' awareness of problematic terms resulted in their making *personal and adequate interpretations* of the content of the three texts as well as *inadequate interpretations* on other occasions. The results from the measure of analysis that I have called *reader behaviours* show that about half the participants tended to make *personal and adequate interpretations* in the way that Yanina did (Table 17, p. 313). These readers mentioned possible messages or morals that they thought the fragments were supposed to convey, based on textual content or motivated by it. In other words, participants provided what I have called *personal and adequate interpretations*, both in the reading response and in the visual representation tasks. These personal interpretations permeated absolutely all the interviews about the three texts.

Concomitantly, about half of the participants made *inadequate interpretations* in the reading response and in the visual representation tasks based on *Mi planta de naranjallima*, i.e. interpretations that were not warranted by textual content, rising to the majority of the participants in the Navajos text in both tasks as well as in the visual representation of *Cat's Eye*. These interpretations were accompanied by abundant *evaluative language* (such as the use of the adverb *lamentablemente* by Yanina before), which revealed the participants' attitudes toward the propositions mentioned in the text. Two thirds of the participants used *evaluative language* in the reading responses based on the text in Spanish and the Navajos, and all the participants did so in the same task of *Cat's Eye*. This evaluative language decreased in the visual representations based on all texts (about one third of the participants) (Table 17).

Table 17. Reader behaviours. *Mi planta de naranja-lima*, *Cat's Eye*, *Desert Wife*

	<i>Mi planta de naranja-lima</i>			<i>Cat's Eye</i>			<i>Desert Wife</i>		
	<i>Reflection log</i>	<i>Reading response</i>	<i>Visual representation</i>	<i>Reflection log</i>	<i>Reading response</i>	<i>Visual representation</i>	<i>Reflection log</i>	<i>Reading response</i>	<i>Visual representation</i>
Elaborations		3					1	1	
Distortions		1							1
Intrusions	2	3	4		4	4	1	4	3
Inferences		5	1		2		1	5	2
Wrong inferences	2	1			3				
Irrelevant information		2	2						
Inferred feelings		6	5		5	2		5	3
Wrong inferred feelings		2	1					2	2
Evaluative language		7	4	4	10	3		7	3
Adequate morale/interpretation		5	6	2	7	6	1	5	2
Inadequate morale/interpretation	1	6	4	3	4	8		8	2
Rationalization: two textual elements	1	5	4		1	2		2	1
Rationalization: one textual element and one invented	2	4	3		3	1	3	1	1
Explicit errors		3	4	3	6	8	5	5	4
Simplifications			1						1
Generalizations	1	5	6	1	8	5		9	8
Cultural details		3	3		2	5		5	6
Direct quotes from text		2	2		2	2		2	1
Meta-cultural reflection	5			4	5	3	1	1	1
Formulation of questions	2						1		
Intertextuality				1	1				

Let me finish this section with another illustration of propositional statement 1 here, in this case with a sophisticated distinction between the notion of dominant vs. minority culture as developed by Victoria in connection with the Navajos text. I have already referred to this topic of domination under the discussion of propositional statement 2 in the previous chapter, in particular with the focus on perspective-taking (section 8.5.2.2.) as well as under propositional statement 3 in the previous chapter too on critical thinking and critical cultural awareness. Victoria's interview exemplified the sophisticated and detailed definition of key terms as she had used them in the writing of the required tasks, mainly the contrast between "standard culture" vs. "local culture." The definition is sophisticated in the sense that Victoria distanced herself from the parameter of quantity to say what she took a standard culture to involve. The parameter, in her view, was precisely the issue of domination - which she developed at length and in depth in all her tasks, including the interview. Note that she chose to use inverted commas for the terms ("entre comillas"), perhaps as a way of reflecting the difficulty in defining them.

M.: ¿Es posible hablar de una "cultura estándar"?

V.: Me refiero, cuando hablo de "*cultura estándar*" me refiero... Es decir, los navajos constituyen un grupo bastante... digamos, *no sé en cantidad* pero sospecho que es *un grupo minoritario en cuanto a que hay una cultura, digamos, en la cual se insertan o no pero son parte de... digamos, son indios de los Estados Unidos*. Por lo tanto *son parte de un país cuya cultura entre comillas "dominante" no es ellos, o sea, no es ese grupo*.

M.: Entiendo.

V.: A eso me refiero con "*cultura estándar*", *por contraste con cultura... bueno, navaja o cultura... aborigen*.

(Victoria, interview, *Desert Wife*)

9.3.1.1. Summary of propositional statement 1

As a summary of this section, the participants enacted some of the difficulties with terminology in understanding, thinking and writing about culture. They had a quite sophisticated level of cultural awareness that made them not only distinguish among certain terms (i.e. be able to say that one term is different from another) but also attempt subtle definitions.

9.3.2. Participants brought their literary knowledge and assumptions into play in understanding another culture

Absolutely all participants showed a high level of literary competence. In chapter 6 I have argued that the focus of this study was on the cultural (rather than the linguistic and the literary) and that I could safely assume they had good levels of linguistic and literary competences. What the macro data analysis showed was not only that this was indeed the case (even though the study did not aim at this) but, crucial to this study, that these readers resorted to this literary knowledge in attempting to understand the cultural in the texts. They all made this connection between the cultural and their literary knowledge very evident, explicit and put it in writing. Pervasive in almost all cases was this idea that a text has a message that the reader has to discover, a message beyond the actual words on the page. As way of example, Tess referred to it as “the unmentioned” message in a text. Consequently, as the participants explicitly mentioned this, i.e. that there was something hidden for them to discover and that they had to read between the lines, they strove to do so. Beryl, for instance, closed her reading response about the Canadian-American celebration in this way: “Las contraposiciones entre tipos de pavo parecen ser una analogía entre culturas, pero también parecen mostrar una postura diferente sobre la navidad: es a partir de la simple cena como el protagonista arriba a conclusiones inesperadas *que parecen reflejar algo más allá de la simple lectura. Hay un mensaje escondido entre líneas que el lector debe dilucidar.*” Luz, also in her reading response based on this text, wrote: “...pero al desconocer el significado de la palabra “tame” no puedo cerrar mi idea de la división de grupos que hace el niño. Por ende no comprendo totalmente el texto y *no llego a encontrarle y apreciar esa enseñanza que se trata de comunicar.*” This was a commonality in almost all readers in connection with their interpretation of the three texts. Furthermore, for some readers, this issue of a hidden message was recurrent and they came to it over and over again during the interviews. For example, Luz mentioned it five times in the interview about this text.

In turn, a majority also engaged in more detailed literary meta-reflections, such as for instance the idea that everything that is included in a text is intentional on the part of the writer (Yanina), that the contrasts portrayed in the fragments are intended to fulfil a function (Victoria), that literary texts include symbolisms (Miranda Dana understood Zezé hugging his uncle in the text in Spanish for instance as a symbol of the child’s resistance to

depression), that texts transmit or reflect ideological positions (Tacuara, Yanina), etc. One example of this appears in Victoria's extracts under propositional statement 3 about critical thinking, reflection, critical cultural awareness and social awareness in the previous chapter ("*el contraste tiene que tener una función en el texto, supuestamente evidente*"; Victoria, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*).

Furthermore, examples of intertextuality, or how these readers generated intertextual links between the prompt texts and other literary texts, were very frequent. For instance, Beryl connected *Mi planta de naranja-lima* with Argentine literary texts because in her opinion both include many connotations and language that is characteristic of a certain time and place. She mentioned specific Argentine writers such as Bioy Casares and Borges. The Jolly Green Giant was associated with the Grinch in the children's book by Dr. Seuss entitled *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* and its corresponding film, with American children's fables in general (without specific examples) and with children's stories in general (not necessarily American, and not necessarily fables). The anecdotes of the skinless chicken and cats, the drowned turkey and the snakes in the fragment from *Cat's Eye* were seen by three quarters of the participants as resembling fantastic stories. Beryl saw connections between this fragment and *The Great Gatsby* by Scott Fitzgerald that she had read as part of the English Language II course at this university.

Another kind of intertextuality was evidenced as well, namely, an intertextuality that connected the three prompt fragments used in this study. Half of the participants made intertextual links among the three texts, in particular prompted by the reading of the Navajos fragment. In other words, these intertextual connections emerged in general after they had finished reading the three fragments. I say in general because some readers made intertextual connections between the first two fragments for instance. Beryl wrote in her reading response task based on *Cat's Eye*: "El tema del texto [*Cat's Eye*] parece reflejar una cena navideña que, *en comparación, con el texto anteriormente leído* [*Mi planta de naranja-lima*], es de un grupo de personas de clase media." Victoria started her reading response based on the Navajos text with a fairly long intertextual comment between this fragment and that from *Cat's Eye*. She analyzed both texts from the concept of integration (who was being integrated in each Christmas celebration). This prompted her to compare both texts around the concepts of "local culture" and "minority group."

Me permito en primer lugar *establecer una mínima comparación con el texto anterior*. En ambos casos se observa la *integración (o intento de tal) de un extranjero en una fiesta navideña celebrada en una cultura que le es extraña*. En el caso del texto anterior [Cat's Eye], el que intentaba integrarse era un hindú, cuya cultura no considera las fiestas navideñas, a un entorno en el que la Navidad es relevante y muy popular como celebración. En el texto presente, un grupo de representantes de una cultura en que aparentemente también se celebra la Navidad (sospecho que la norteamericana, aunque los datos son pocos) se integran (o intentan hacerlo) a las celebraciones navideñas de un *grupo minoritario*: una tribu de navajos. (Victoria, reading response, *Desert Wife*)

In the interview, a question I posed about the meaning of “local culture” brought in this element of intertextuality with *Cat's Eye* again. It is also revealing of the close textual scrutiny that the re-visiting of textual content during the interview generated (propositional statement 4 in this chapter) (in bold in the extract).

M.: Sí. (Pausa) ¿Y qué es la "cultura local"? ¿Puede ser que la uses en algún otro punto?

V.: Eh...

M.: ¿La "cultura local" como la de la narradora?

V.: En realidad sí, **no sé en qué contexto lo inserté pero supuestamente sí, o sea... pero no usé "local", me parece**. Si usé "local" lo usé en contraste con el texto anterior. No, me parece que no usé "cultura local".

M.: Ah, no, tenés razón. Dice: "*Remitiéndose al texto anterior*, no se ve en el caso presente el recelo y el prejuicio *que sí se observaban en el texto anterior*, sobre todo de parte de la cultura local."

V.: *Exacto*.

(Victoria, interview, *Desert Wife*)

Victoria further exploited this intertextuality between both fragments with a tight focus on the topic of domination, on which she dwelled at length in all tasks based on the Navajos text (propositional statement 3 in the previous chapter; readers showed critical thinking, reflection, critical cultural awareness and social awareness). In this portion of the interview, Victoria brought in her interpretation based on the idea of domination to add a further layer of analysis to the text she had read previously, i.e. the fragment from *Cat's Eye*:

V: (...) Quizás por eso tampoco se genera ese recelo ante... Yo creo que el recelo incluso es... Estoy pensando en el término inglés "take over", o sea, esa cosa de... de que el foráneo o el extranjero pueda asumir el control.

M.: Hm.

V.: Por lo tanto quizás intuyo que *el recelo que se genera en el texto anterior [Cat's Eye], en el texto en el cual el.. la cultura local era la... la... digamos la.. donde se insertaba la fiesta, tiene que ver con eso, con esa cosa de temer al forastero como posible competidor o posible... persona que puede tomar el control*. En este caso, siendo un grupo minoritario, supongo que esta cosa de la cultura estándar como

mayoría a pesar de estar inserta, de ser una minoría en ese momento, tiene su... su... digamos su relación con esto de *dominar o de intentar imponer reglas*, y de ser aceptados.

(Victoria, interview, *Desert Wife*)

Intertextual connections of this kind permeated her whole reading response. In this extract, the intertextuality centred on the issue of prejudice. Note Victoria's tendency to quote from the texts in order to support her affirmations (underlined in the extract), something that I have also pointed out in the previous chapter under propositional statements 2 and 3.

Ya desde el nombre, todo les resulta extraño: "We found that the Navajo "Kismas" included the warm fires, but everything else was novel enough to make history." Sin embargo, *remitiéndome nuevamente a mi comparación con el texto anterior*, no se ven en el caso presente (al menos no de manera tan marcada), *el recelo y el prejuicio que sí se observaban en el texto anterior*, sobre todo de parte de la "cultura local".

(Victoria, reading response, *Desert Wife*)

Finally, intertextual links also appeared not only in relation to literary works but also to non-literary sources, and from varied means and resources. This occurred mainly with regard to *Cat's Eye*. Many cultural details associated with a Christmas celebration in North America were explicitly tied to TV series, films and cartoons such as *Home Alone*, *the Simpsons*, etc.

9.3.2.1. Summary of propositional statement 2

To round off this section, findings reveal that all participants showed a high level of literary competence. Not only that, but they also made the connection between the cultural and their literary knowledge very evident, explicit and put it in writing. Pervasive in almost all cases was this idea that a text has a message that the reader has to discover, a message beyond the actual words on the page. The majority also engaged in more detailed literary meta-reflections. Furthermore, readers generated intertextual links between the prompt texts and other sources such as literary texts and non-literary resources (TV, films, etc.). Another kind of intertextuality was evidenced as well, namely among the three prompt fragments used in this study.

9.3.3. Participants offered simultaneous and alternative interpretations of textual content

I should restate at this point that participants showed critical thinking, reflection, critical cultural awareness and social awareness in the understanding of otherness in this setting (propositional statement 3 in the previous chapter). When the parts of the texts that motivated this kind of deep and critical response were judged to be confusing for any reason, all readers spontaneously took the time and effort to think of explicit alternative interpretations. This occurred mainly in the immediate reflection logs and the interviews, and needs to be distinguished from what happened in the reading response and the visual representations, where readers presented one interpretation and supported it at length. These alternative interpretations in the reflection logs and interviews were not necessarily long, and many times amounted to a brief succession of “..... or or ...” sequences in the form of conjectures. For instance, many of the episodes in the Navajos text generated multiple possible interpretations, namely the dishwashing episode, the fact that the Navajos ate and ate or took more meat and candies than they needed, Robert’s greetings, etc. Enrique Alejandro, for example, mentioned that the Navajos did not first wash the dishes because they expected someone else to do that job or because dishwashing was not an activity they used to do. Lula said that perhaps the Navajos thought that they were guests and therefore did not have to do the dishwashing. Beryl mentioned that maybe the Navajos left the dishes to be washed by the rain, or waited days before they actually washed them. Scarlet Rose resisted the idea that came to her mind that the Navajos were dirty. Absolutely all the participants attempted explanations of this kind.

These alternative interpretations were signalled by the use of tentative language (“Pareciera como si”, conditionals), modality (“buscara,” implicaría”), negation (“no la pasaron tan bien”) and prefabricated patterns (“Una de las cosas que no entendí”). An example from Yanina’s immediate reflection log based on the Navajos text follows:

Una de las cosas que no entendí es cuando Betty pone su nariz en la mano de San Chee, la narradora. No sé si es una costumbre de los indios Navajo o simplemente algo que ella hace. Pareciera como si tuviera miedo de algo y buscara protección en San Chee.

Tampoco entiendo bien si ellos querían invitarlos (a los Navajo) o no. Por momentos dice que la pasaron bien y les gusta que pasen Navidad con ellos. Pero luego cuando se van piensa que ahora pueden comer. Esto implicaría que no la pasaron tan bien si es que tuvieron que trabajar tanto. Además, después de comer San Chee piensa que es bueno que la ayuden a lavar los platos porque al menos hacen algo por la comida que

recibieron. Desde mi punto de vista, cuando invitamos a alguien, *no* esperamos que nos ayuden, *sino que* hacemos las cosas nosotros. *Igualmente*, sé que hay gente que cree que si el invitado ofrece su ayuda, es mal educado. *Quizás depende de* la cultura o la educación que recibe cada uno. Lo que algunos consideran descortés es aceptable para otros.
(Yanina, immediate reflection log, *Desert Wife*)

Irrespective of the *error with a cultural base* that Betty is one Navajo woman as Yanina mentioned in the interview, she entertained two possibilities for Betty's action of placing her nose in San Chee's hand ("Una de las cosas que no entendí es cuando *Betty pone su nariz en la mano de San Chee*, la narradora"). She thought that it may be a Navajo habit in general or an idiosyncratic habit of Betty ("No sé si es una *costumbre de los indios Navajo* o simplemente *algo que ella hace*. Pareciera como si tuviera *miedo* de algo y buscara *protección* en San Chee"). Within this last option, she conjectured that Betty was afraid and wanted protection from San Chee.

Another confusing part of the text for Yanina was the relationship between the Navajos and San Chee and Ken. Her initial interpretation was that San Chee and Ken wanted to invite the Navajos ("*Tampoco entiendo bien si ellos querían invitarlos [a los navajos], o no*"). She doubted her own interpretation from the very beginning, and then started to consider multiple options ("*Por momentos dice que la pasaron bien y les gusta que pasen Navidad con ellos. Pero luego cuando se van piensa que ahora pueden comer. Esto implicaría que no la pasaron tan bien si es que tuvieron que trabajar tanto*"). In so doing, she engaged in a series of *rationalizations* (they eat only when the Navajos leave, consequently they did not have such a good time).

Then Yanina focused on the dish-washing episode and gave her opinion of San Chee's suggestion that the women washed the dishes ("*Desde mi punto de vista, cuando invitamos a alguien, no esperamos que nos ayuden, sino que hacemos las cosas nosotros*"). Notice the use of the first person plural pronouns and references and the denial. She concluded her log by considering other perspectives in the interpretation of the act of inviting (issues of perspective-taking under propositional statement 2 in the previous chapter) ("*Igualmente, sé que hay gente que cree que si el invitado ofrece su ayuda, es mal educado*"). Note the reference to the social consequences that some actions and behaviours may have from a cultural point of view: if a guest does not offer his/her help, he/she may be perceived as bad-mannered. The final sentence is a meta-cultural reflection as I define it in propositional

statement 4 in the previous chapter (readers showed a sophisticated ability to reflect upon culture): what can be seen as impolite for some is acceptable for others (“Quizás depende de la cultura o la educación que recibe cada uno. *Lo que algunos consideran descortés es aceptable para otros*”).

I should remark at this junction that this reflection log, in much the same way as all the data types, offers evidence of several of the propositional statements in this chapter and the previous one as well as of various reader behaviours. It exemplifies the importance of having carried out the data analysis stage in this thesis as an integral and integrative process – something that I have discussed in chapter 7 as well as at the beginning of chapter 8.

In sum, these readers provided multiple alternative interpretations of the different events in the fragments. Taking the time and effort to entertain different options in this way became an opportunity to re-visit the text, and this is something I shall come back to later, with the next propositional statement. For instance, in this respect, and specifically about the dish-washing episode, Tess expressed in the interview: “Para mí... *cuando lo leí el texto me pareció importante porque... también te lo marqué, que no entendía por qué la narradora creía que tenía derecho a decirles qué hacer. Fue en ese momento del texto que me di cuenta que... que yo tenía una visión un poco negativa o que había hecho muchas críticas. Ahí es como que me llevó a releer otras partes.*” The interview revealed that it was *during* the reading of the text that Tess thought that she needed to re-read some parts.

I shall now situate these findings in the context of others in the literature. For instance, within the empirical studies framed around schema theory in the field of English as a native language reading, reviewed in chapter 3, specifically those that Sadoski, Paivio and Goetz (1991) categorize as bizarre text studies, Anderson, Reynolds, Schallert and Goetz (1977) used ambiguous texts designed so as to simultaneously allow two different but incompatible interpretations. What the authors discovered was that subjects interpreted the selected text in a way that was consistent with their prior knowledge and were unaware that there was another possible interpretation. Despite the differences in design between Anderson et al.’s study and this one in this thesis, in particular the fact that in this thesis the selected texts were not purposefully ambiguous, my findings show that participants many times entertained alternative and simultaneous interpretations for confusing textual content.

For instance, as exemplified before, many of the episodes in the Navajos text generated multiple possible interpretations, namely the dishwashing episode, the fact that the Navajos ate and ate or took more meat and candies than they needed and Robert's greeting in English. In sum, these readers were conscious of the alternative and simultaneous nature of their interpretations.

This process was accompanied by *rationalizations* as I defined them in chapter 6. In other words, faced with a cultural difference or a contradiction of their own cultural expectations, these readers adopted one of the following strategies (adapted from Archer, 1997): a) they corrected one aspect of culture C2 so as to make it consistent with C1; b) they modified aspects of both cultures; and c) they corrected one aspect of culture C1 to match culture C2. This process of *rationalizations* involved relating aspects of the different cultures mentioned in the texts, which should not have been related. It was observed in half the participants in the reading response and the visual representation tasks based on the text in Spanish, decreasing to not more than three participants in the rest of the tasks and texts (Table 17, p.313). This means that these readers used the resources at their disposal to approach otherness, i.e. they accommodated different cultural features in order to fit them in with their own reality.

Despite the tendency to think of explicit alternative interpretations for textual content, these readers did not make inferences, express relations, or reach conclusions which were not present in the prompt texts or were not motivated by them. Put differently, *wrong or unmotivated inferencing*, another reader behaviour, was almost non-existent in all tasks based on the three texts (Table 17, p.313).

The same happened with the inclusion of *irrelevant information*. It was almost non-existent in all tasks based on the three texts (Table 17, p.313). I had anticipated that readers would include a lot of irrelevant information for two reasons: first, as they had expressed in the prior knowledge tasks about Christmas in the three settings, many times they lacked solid cultural knowledge to evaluate the relevance of textual content; and second, the texts included abundant culturally detailed content as well as attractive information which was significant at the level of each narrative episode, though not necessarily at a global level (Maccabe and Peterson, 1990).

This is connected with the point I made in the previous chapter (under propositional statement 3) regarding the fact that readers tend to find interest in content that is perceived as novel, surprising or abnormal for any reason (Maccabe and Peterson, 1990). The findings in this thesis show that this was indeed the case, but also that participants were able to assess the relevance of textual content when deciding what to include in the tasks and what to omit. I describe and exemplify this finding under propositional statement 5 in this chapter in my analysis of the comprehensibility grid. Overall, this result means that these participants responded to indices in the texts which revealed which parts were likely to be important.

Contrasting with the finding that *inadequate inferencing* was almost non-existent, half the participants made *adequate inferences* in the reading response tasks of the fragment in Spanish and the Navajos text (cf. only two participants in *Cat's Eye*) (Table 17). Recall that adequate inferencing is a reader behaviour that refers to inferences motivated or justified by textual content. In agreement with Bower, Black and Turner (1994), this inferencing meant that participants included in the tasks implicit actions belonging to the Christmas schema which were not present in the fragments they had read. Inferences were scant in the visual representations of all texts, however. This might be connected with the visual and schematic nature of the task itself.

The fact that these readers entertained multiple interpretations of specific sections of textual content resulted in the occurrence of *evident errors with a cultural base*, another reader behaviour. About four to eight of the participants included explicit errors of this kind in the tasks based on all texts. More errors occurred regarding the American-Canadian celebration (Table 17). At the same time, these readers included *cultural details* related to those sections which generated multiple interpretations. More specifically, about one third of the participants included *cultural details* in the reading response and the visual representation tasks based on *Mi planta de naranja-lima* and *Cat's Eye*, increasing to half in the Navajos text (Table 17). Here it is possible that the rich cultural details in this text called the readers' attention because of their sensational tenor, therefore making them more memorable (Maccabe and Peterson, 1990).

In the interviews, these instances of alternative interpretations generated by confusing or problematic textual content were accompanied by much doubt about the adequacy or

appropriateness of such interpretations. Participants explicitly identified areas of doubt and directly inquired about them, seeking confirmation from me regarding one interpretation or another. For instance, Scarlet Rose wanted to know whether the word “heathen” did refer to one specific tribe within the Navajos as she thought, and whether the motivation for not having eaten well for a month stemmed from a religious tradition or the heathens’ poverty. Notice that what we see in operation here, once again, is the interaction among the measures of analysis used in the study. That is, this example evidences Scarlet Roses’ alternative interpretations, which at the same time illustrate *an error with a cultural base* (that the heathens are one tribe within the Navajos), becoming simultaneously an instance of *wrong inferencing* and a *rationalization*. These are reader behaviours that I have also illustrated in chapters 7 and 8.

Added to this, these moments of doubt and their tentative interpretations were accompanied by questions that these readers would have liked to find an answer to, motivated by their personal curiosity and a desire to learn more about certain issues. I illustrate this point with Beryl next. In order to do so, I must recapitulate several of the considerations mentioned before. Let me be more specific.

In her reflection log about the Navajos text, Beryl started by identifying an area of confusion for her: “*No termino de comprender la diferencia entre los navajos y los Utcitys, pero sé que puede deducirse algo aunque no sea lo correcto.*” The reading response that she wrote after this reflection log reflected a series of *cultural errors* originated by such confusing textual content.

Sin embargo, no todas sus prácticas culturales coinciden o son similares a las de otras comunidades. Vemos así, otra vez, *el choque de culturas. Entre los Navajo, los Utcity y la cultura de la narradora. Visto que entre ambas comunidades nativas (según mi inferencia los Navajo y los Utcity) hay practicas diferentes, como el hecho de que las canciones cantadas y danzadas son realizadas por los Utcitys, que son los que saben hacerlo; mientras que los Navajo parecen no poder realizarlas por ser muy jóvenes.*
(Beryl, reading response, *Desert Wife*)

Beryl expanded on these issues in the interview. Her conjectures, possible interpretations and inferencing were accompanied at all times by tentative language and hedging devices (in bold in the extract) in order to show the fact that she was speculating. Beryl also referred to her knowledge of literary conventions in particular, and of language understanding in general, that something can always be deduced from a text (propositional

statement 2 in this chapter) (“Pero sé que puede deducirse algo aunque no sea lo correcto,” “sé que se puede deducir algo, o sea, y yo te planteo mis deducciones”). Here she showed her awareness that these deductions may be inappropriate (“Pero sé que puede deducirse algo aunque no sea lo correcto”). Also note her belief in the authority of the text, and of the written word (“precisamente *hablaba* de la danza y *decía* que sólo la podían hacer los mayores”).

M.: Acá no entiendo qué ponés: "La diferencia entre los navajos y los..."

Beryl: Ah, que... ¿Los Utcitys era?

M.: Sí. Bueno, y ¿qué es eso?

B.: Eh... **me pareció que eran una comunidad diferente. O sea, en realidad me pareció... Pensé en dos... de dos lados, ¿no? Como que por ahí los navajos eran los más jóvenes y los Utcitys eran los más viejos** porque precisamente hablaba de la danza y decía que sólo la podían hacer los mayores.

M.: Sí.

B.: Pero **pensé que por ahí eran dos comunidades indígenas diferentes que... eran amigables entre sí, ¿no?**

M.: Está bien. "Pero sé que puede deducirse algo aunque no sea lo correcto". No entiendo lo que me querés poner.

(Beryl, interview, *Desert Wife*)

Her basis for saying that her deductions may be inaccurate was her difficulty in understanding this inferred difference between the Navajos and the Utcitys. This *error with a cultural base*, the fact that the Utcitys were another Indian community (when in fact they were a family group within the Navajos), motivated her speculations and conjectures.

B.: Claro porque... eh... yo dije que no... *no podía terminar de comprender la diferencia entre los navajos y los Utcitys, o sea... por qué unos son navajos y por qué los otros Utcitys*, por eso te digo, o sea, lo que yo hice fue... sé que se puede deducir algo, o sea, y yo te planteo mis deducciones, que *pueden ser que unos sean mayores y otros menores...*

M.: Ah.

B.: O sea, como que sean *los más antiguos y los otros los más jóvenes* y por eso tienen diferencias, *o que sean comunidades aparte.*

(Beryl, interview, *Desert Wife*)

In this previous interview extract, Beryl is expanding and providing support for her ideas in the immediate reflection log. The key for her resided in the lack of sociocultural background for understanding the Navajos' actions, which led her to conjecture.

No conozco nada sobre los rituales/cultura de los Navajo y eso es un poco problemático para entender por qué hacen lo que hacen, según la descripción del texto.

No termino de comprender la diferencia entre los navajos y los Utcitys, pero sé que puede deducirse algo aunque no sea lo correcto.

De todas formas, considero que *la falta de información previa hace la lectura un poquito dificultosa desde el aspecto sociocultural.*

(Beryl, reflection log, *Desert Wife*)

In the following interview extract, she was very specific as to what she took this sociocultural background to refer to. At this point we see how the elements that she perceived as confusing in the text stimulated questions that she would have liked to find an answer to, motivated by her personal curiosity and a desire to learn more about certain issues (italicized in the extract). For instance, she wished to know why the Navajos yelled or why the dances could be performed by some and not others. What she did in her speculating was supply possible information to fill these missing gaps. Note again another *error with a cultural base* in that “certain dances could only be performed by the Utcitys and not the Navajos.” She also wondered why only some could sing along the dances. Overall, then, her attempt to fill gaps and find answers to questions of interest to her led to *errors of this kind, inadequate inferencing, inadequate interpretations and series of rationalizations.*

M.: Entiendo. "Falta información para que la lectura..." "Falta información sobre aspectos socioculturales." ¿Qué tipo de información?

B.: Sí, me parece que en realidad, por ejemplo, yo lo que me planteaba son cosas como que por ejemplo, *cuando habla de los gritos, que gritaban muy fuerte, ¿por qué? O... por qué las danzas sólo las pueden hacer... porque había ciertas danzas que sólo las podían hacer los Utcitys y no los navajos, ¿por qué sólo ellos las podían cantar?*

M.: Entiendo.

B.: ¿Me entendés? *Cuestionamientos como éste. O por ejemplo, por qué sentían... se ponía cierto énfasis en... que era muy lindo estar con los navajos pero que así y todo es como que ellos querían tomar siempre todo aunque no fuera de ellos, en cierta forma.*

M.: Hm.

(Beryl, interview, *Desert Wife*)

This previous extract illustrates a series of these *rationalizations* (Navajos – Utcitys – dances – singing – festive spirit – taking advantage). Specifically regarding the last rationalization, Beryl said: “por qué sentían... se ponía cierto énfasis en... que era muy lindo estar con los navajos **pero** que así y todo es como que ellos querían tomar siempre todo aunque no fuera de ellos, en cierta forma.” The connector in bold shows the link between two pieces of textual information that were not intended to be explicitly

connected. There is also a *generalization* in that the Navajos wanted to take “everything” (not only food) and hedging devices such as *cierto énfasis, así y todo, en cierta forma*.

Beryl’s speculations and attempts to bridge gaps in understanding, as those exemplified before, led her to emphasize two crucial aspects for her. One was the fact that texts have a message (notice the modal in “*tiene que tener un trasfondo*”). She was putting her literary knowledge at work here, something that I have dwelled upon in this chapter under propositional statement 2 in the previous section. Another is the key role she attributed to prior knowledge in comprehension, and her awareness that for the reading of this text, she lacked this prior knowledge. In the midst of this reflection, she brought in her familiar knowledge of the Mapuches, an Indian group from the province where she lived (again, evidence of propositional statement 1 in the previous chapter). She then clarified that she did not know much about the Mapuches, but that she included the example to show how necessary this prior knowledge was in her view, in particular in connection with Indian communities. She broadened the scope here to include not only reading but spoken interaction too.

B.: Por qué esto, o sea, como que *tiene que tener un trasfondo*. Me parece que textos así que están claramente... Me parece que en las comunidades indígenas, siempre hay como *una información previa que... bah, a mí me parece totalmente necesaria*. Yo sé, Neuquén y los Mapuches... es una comunidad muy amplia y muy conocida. Entonces es como que *siempre hay que tener una información previa como para llegar a actuar o a trabajar sobre un texto o para... o para poder incluso hablar con ellos*, o sea, es como que me parece que para algunas cosas, ciertas prácticas son muy significantes.

M.: ¿Vos sabés de los Mapuches?

B.: No, no, poco y nada, pero...

M.: Sí.

B.: *Más o menos sé que para ciertas cosas... o sea, para ciertas situaciones necesitás... tener como una información previa, ¿no?*

(Beryl, interview, *Desert Wife*)

The link between the open gaps in the text and the desire to know more about certain aspects was materialized in the specific questions she wanted an answer to (some of them I have exemplified before). Note how she concluded the interview with the idea of the central role of prior knowledge in comprehension. This interview also brought to the surface what Beryl actually did as she read, and what she thought about as she read too (i.e. *during* reading) (signalled in bold in the extract). She explicitly mentioned what she thought and did as she read this text.

B.: lo que me pasa es que **cuando lo leí** no me resultó complicado pero de todas formas **encontraba cosas como que yo decía**: "*Bueno, ¿pero esto por qué es así? ¿Por qué es de esta forma?*" Especialmente con lo de las danzas, y con lo de la diferencia entre los navajos y los Utcitys . **Entonces me parecía que la información previa es necesaria** como para que uno pueda llegar al texto más preparado, ¿no?
(Beryl, interview, *Desert Wife*)

The reflection on the cultures portrayed in the text also led to a series of conjectures. The italicised phrases show that Beryl thought about these issues during the reading of the text. In bold I signal the expressions revealing the tentativeness of her conjectures ("*pero después dije*: Bueno, hay muchos países que tienen como segunda lengua obligatoria el inglés, *por ejemplo los países nórdicos, entonces dije*: **Bueno, pueden ser**; *pero también por otro lado pensé*, bueno... San Chee, *y dije*: **Bueno, pueden ser de algún** país asiático... *y después medité y dije*: **Pueden ser** descendiente de inmigrantes y viven... **no sé, si querés en Estados Unidos, me pareció, ¿no?** *Saqué muchas conjeturas*, pero es que... me es natural hacer eso cuando leo"). Added to these conjectures, Beryl's reflections resulted in *generalizations* ("otras comunidades," "esta gente" in reference to Ken and San Chee), *rationalizations* signalled by the use of connectors ("sé que hablaban inglés *pero* no sé si eran exactamente anglosajones"; "pensé que podían ser anglosajones, *porque* hablaban inglés"), and *errors with a cultural base* ("tres tipos de culturas").

It is interesting to see how many alternative and simultaneous interpretations Beryl entertained. For instance, she knew that San Chee spoke English but was unsure whether "her culture" was Anglo-Saxon. Because she had entertained that the Navajos and the Utcitys were two different cultures, she now concluded that the text portrayed three cultures. Finally, it is important to highlight how the interview allowed for the discovery of what happened *during* reading (in bold in the extract).

M.: Entiendo. En la respuesta textual, cuando decís "otras comunidades", supongo que serán las Utcitys una, ¿y alguna otra?

B.: En sí, me pareció que *no pude terminar de determinar si la cultura de Ken y San Chee, si ellos eran en todo caso anglosajones*, sé que hablaban inglés pero no sé si eran exactamente anglosajones. Entonces me parecía como que había *un enfoque de tres tipos de culturas, ¿no?* Un poco *lo de los Utcitys, lo de los navajos y lo de esta gente* que si bien se acomodaba, era acoplable, se ve mucho cómo la chica tiene... tiene una sensación de querer retornar en parte a lo que ella vivió antes, ¿no? *Entonces me parece que sí puse "otras comunidades" refiriéndome a las tres, en sí.*

M.: Habla en inglés y entonces qué... qué comunidad pensás vos?

B.: No, **pensé que por ahí** era... **pensé que** podían ser anglosajones, porque hablaban inglés, **pero después dije**: **Bueno, hay** muchos países que tienen como segunda lengua obligatoria el inglés, por ejemplo los países nórdicos, **entonces dije**:

Bueno, pueden ser; pero también por otro lado pensé, bueno... San Chee, y dije: Bueno, pueden ser de algún país asiático... y después medité y dije: Pueden ser descendiente de inmigrantes y viven... no sé, si querés en Estados Unidos, me pareció, ¿no? Saqué muchas conjeturas, pero es que... me es natural hacer eso cuando leo.

M.: Está bien.

B.: Si no no... no me sirve.

M.: Estas conjeturas que me estás mencionando.

B.: Sí, yo necesito... es como que los interrogantes para mí tienen que estar... no es como que... te quedás con lo que leíste y nada más.

(Beryl, interview, *Desert Wife*)

9.3.3.1. Perceived confusion and difficulty with textual content

More specifically, the parts of the fragments that generated multiple interpretations were, as I said before, perceived as confusing for various reasons such as difficulties with an aspect of language, the plot, the cultural content, or any other. One specific research instrument in this research design aimed at discovering what these readers perceived as difficult or problematic in the texts, namely the texts underlined with these sections. Participants underlined the texts as they were reading them. For the text in Spanish, almost half the participants underlined the *rabanada*. The references to the religious aspect (Jesus is not so good, He was born poor just to exhibit himself, Devil Child, Jesus Child and Eve Mass) did not cause major problems. Only one participant underlined the references to the sadness of the celebration in general and of the dinner in particular as well as the expression “dine sadness in pieces” (Table 11). All the participants attempted multiple interpretations for these confusing parts of the text that they themselves identified as such in this task. I have just illustrated this with Beryl before.

Other problematic aspects were related to parts of the fragment which referred to other parts of the novel, not explained in the fragment that the participants had read, such as the reference to the story of the Casino Bangu, underlined by the majority. Other similar instances such as Totoca’s unpaid job, Light, the blame on the tenuous Light, the little king, Luis’ present, sew the tie, and the horse were identified as troublesome, but by only one or two participants. Taken together, the most difficult parts of this fragment as perceived by these readers were those related to other parts of the novel not included in the prompt text. Although I have codified and quantified them because they were underlined by most participants, I have decided that they cannot be taken to be cultural difficulties precisely because the problematic events were not narrated in the prompt fragment.

Table 11. Underlining of textual problems in *Mi planta de naranja-lima*

	<i>Underlining in text itself</i>	<i>Identification in reflection log</i>
Mass	1	1
Rabanada	4	4
Typical food		1
Totoca was working for free	2	1
Story of Casino Bangu	7	4
Story of horse	1	
Light	3	1
Poverty of Jesus to show off	1	
Devil in blood	1	1
Sneakers on other side of door	4	
Sew bow tie	2	
Good and bad in the family	2	
Father leaves the celebration	1	
Uncle Edmundo provides money	1	
Only one present for Luis	1	1
Family relations, relationship among events in story	2	1
Only the rich are useful	2	
Sadness	1	
Happiness of the others	1	

In addition, these readers answered a questionnaire about their reading of the texts. In one question they had to rank the perceived areas of difficulty in each text from the most difficult to the least difficult. Table 10 shows the most problematic aspects related to the reading of the text in Spanish, which centred on cultural information (almost three quarters of the participants) and the dialogues (over half). The rest of the options were chosen by between one and three participants only (character names, text structure, vocabulary, topic, length and grammar).

Table 10. Difficulties experienced during reading

	<i>Naranja-lima</i>			<i>Cat's Eye</i>			<i>Desert Wife</i>		
	<i>Order of importance</i>			<i>Order of importance</i>			<i>Order of importance</i>		
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
Vocabulary		1	1	4	2	2	7	1	2
Grammar		1	1						1
Text structure	1						1		
Length		1				1		2	1
Topic	1	1	1	2	1		1		
Cultural information	3	1	3	3		2	3	4	2
Character names	2		1						
Dialogues	2	3	1	1	3				
Other (lack of context)							1		

Concerning the fragment from *Cat's Eye*, in the task that required the underlining of the text portions considered to be problematic or confusing for any reason, the majority agreed in underlining words or phrases that were linguistic concerns (for instance, difficult adjectives, nouns or adverbs that were not essential to follow the text). Six participants underlined the Jolly Green Giant and slightly less than half marked the turkey with four drumsticks and the impossibility to fly with one wing. Participants were consistent here in the sense that half of them, for instance, perceived the Jolly Green Giant as a serious obstacle to comprehension (Table 15 section 9.3.5., p.344). In all these cases, all of them attempted different alternative interpretations for these aspects. Table 12 shows that several other cultural idea units were underlined as problematic in the text itself, but by only one or two individuals.

Table 12. Underlining of textual problems in *Cat's Eye*

	<i>Underlining in text itself</i>	<i>Identification in reflection log</i>
Words and/or phrases	8	1
Jello salad	2	
Jolly Green Giant	6	4
Enormous turkey	1	1
Cranberry sauce	2	1
Variety and abundance of food	1	
Banerji's presence	1	
Sunday school	1	1
Turkey with four drumsticks	4	
Impossibility to fly with one wing	4	
Skinless chicken	1	
Lost flight	1	
Banerji's hidden misery		2
Biology as refuge		1

How these readers perceived textual content as far as its difficulty was concerned was also revealed by a question specifically designed to this aim in the before mentioned questionnaire. The most problematic aspects related to the reading of the fragment from *Cat's Eye* were the vocabulary (the majority, and within this majority, almost half marked the vocabulary in the first order of difficulty), the cultural information (half) and the dialogues (almost half) (Table 10, p.331). The participants informed not having had difficulties with the characters' names, the text structure or the grammar.

In relation to the fragment from *Desert Wife*, absolutely all the participants underlined isolated words or short phrases in the text, which were clearly difficulties related to vocabulary (Table 13). Overall, very few aspects of the textual content were underlined, and only by one or two individuals (for instance, the names of the characters, the fires, the dish-washing episode, the Indians' early rising habits and the source of San Chee's authority). In other words, this underlining revealed that as far as the participants' *perceptions* of the textual content were concerned, no major problematic aspects were identified. However, as the occurrence of *errors* and *inadequate interpretations* has revealed, exemplified at length in this chapter and the previous one, several areas of difficulty were in fact observed.

Table 13. Underlining of textual problems in *Desert Wife*

	<i>Underlining in text itself</i>	<i>Identification in reflection log</i>
Words and/or phrases	10	3
Character names	1	1
Fires	2	
Getting up early	1	
Dish washing episode	2	
San Chee's authority	1	

The most problematic aspect in the Navajos text was once more the vocabulary, for all the participants. Three quarters of them marked the vocabulary in the first order of difficulty. The second most problematic aspect was the cultural information, mentioned by almost all the participants. The dialogues and the characters' names offered no difficulties, and the rest of the options (text structure, length, grammar) were identified by only one or two participants (see Table 10, p.331).

Overall, the multiple, alternative and simultaneous interpretations that I mentioned at the beginning of this section were connected to the difficult or problematic areas that the participants underlined in the texts themselves. Even though they had all marked the vocabulary in the first order of difficulty for the three texts (in the questionnaire about the perceived difficulty of the texts, Table 10, p.331), the reading response and the visual representation tasks as well as the interviews showed that these readers' concerns during comprehension were not focused upon the linguistic but were rather much broader and deeper, as revealed by the propositional statements which capture the findings of this study (see the beginning of this chapter).

9.3.3.2. Summary of propositional statement 3

The main conclusion of this section is that when the parts of the texts that motivated a deep and critical response (described in propositional statement 3 in the previous chapter) were judged as confusing for any reason, all readers spontaneously took the time and effort to think of explicit alternative interpretations. These alternative interpretations were not necessarily long, and many times amounted to a brief succession of “..... or or ...” sequences in the form of conjectures. In the interviews, these instances of alternative

interpretations generated by confusing or problematic textual content were accompanied by much doubt about the adequacy or appropriateness of such interpretations. Added to this, these moments of doubt and their tentative interpretations were accompanied by questions that these readers would have liked to find an answer to, motivated by their personal curiosity and a desire to learn more about certain issues. In general, these multiple, alternative and simultaneous interpretations were connected to the difficult or problematic areas that the participants had underlined in the texts themselves.

9.3.4. Problematic textual content led to its re-visiting: A-ha moments.

As these readers wrote about issues of interest to them and reflected aloud in the interviews on these aspects, they re-visited points in the texts they felt confused or doubtful about, and critically considered multiple interpretations. In this process they experienced *A-ha moments* whereby they came to see certain parts in the texts in a different, new perspective. In this sense, the four key tasks in combination, that is the reflection log, the reading response, the visual representation and the interviews all allowed readers to re-visit their own thoughts, ideas and interpretations and become aware of alternative perspectives in comprehension. These research instruments, as the other data types, allowed for the discovery of what went on in these readers' heads *during* reading, as I have just exemplified with Beryl in the previous section.

One example of this re-visiting of textual content was Tess's rereading of different parts of the Navajos text, motivated by the dishwashing episode, which I quoted in the previous section. She expressed in the interview: "Para mí... *cuando lo leí el texto me pareció importante porque... también te lo marqué, que no entendía por qué la narradora creía que tenía derecho a decirles qué hacer. Fue en ese momento del texto que me di cuenta que... que yo tenía una visión un poco negativa o que había hecho muchas críticas. Ahí es como que me llevó a releer otras partes.*" The interview revealed that it was *during* the reading of the text that Tess thought that she needed to re-read some parts.

In sum, then, in all cases the interviews showed that the re-visiting of problematic textual content occurred *during* the reading of the texts. The immediate reflection logs in particular also showed this, though to a lesser extent, considering that the logs were about a page long at the most while the interviews were considerably longer (see Appendix V).

Furthermore, in the reflection logs the participants were instructed to precisely reflect on confusing and problematic textual content as well as the source of the difficulty. In other words, they had to reflect upon what they thought about *during* the actual reading of the texts. Yanina's reflection log based on the Navajos text, which I discussed before (under propositional statement 3 at the beginning of the previous section) constitutes one example. The overall finding then is that the participants read each text and went back to some parts for further inspection (what I call here the re-visiting of textual content). Yanina's interview offers an example of re-visiting, with accompanying conjectures for the re-visited part, in this case whether San Chee was Navajo or not. I italicize the evidence of the fact that the emphasis was on re-visiting *during* the reading, which was captured by the research instruments afterwards.

Y.: *Cuando leí por primera vez el nombre de ella pensé que era parte de los...*

M.: ...de los navajos.

Y.: Sí, de los navajos. *Pero después me di cuenta que no, no es. Y... no sé, el nombre parece algo asiático, el de ella, pero el de él, Ken, es como que podría ser de cualquier lugar.*

(Yanina, interview, *Desert Wife*)

Concomitantly, the interview in particular made possible the visualization of what happened *after* reading – the other focus in the research question. Specifically, sometimes this re-visiting occurred after the reading of the texts, in particular at the time of the interviews, and the *A-ha moments* took place then. In this way, as I have already argued repeatedly, this research design has captured both aspects of the comprehension *process*, namely the *during* reading and the *after* reading, in an integrated account. In what follows I show how this research design allowed the interaction between the *during* and *after* reading to emerge in the first place, and how the comprehension process was fluid, dynamic and integral. Crucial too is the fact that the comprehension process was completed much longer after the actual reading of each text had finished, and that comprehension was continuously modified in the process.

During the interview about *Cat's Eye*, for instance, and after a considerable re-consideration of issues, Tacuara realized that in fact the protagonists were criticizing the manipulation of Nature by men instead of adhering to it as she had initially thought. Another example is the case of Enrique Alejandro, who actually signalled his own discovery with the interjection *Ah!* when reflecting upon the universality of the tame-wild

distinction and the peculiarities that each culture may attribute to each category. Note how much interpretive work Enrique Alejandro had to engage in to arrive at this moment of discovery. He reflected on issues of perspective-taking for instance (“por supuesto todos estos valores *dependen de quien los esté viendo, ¿no?* Para una persona en el contexto... en la cultura donde vive el narrador algo va a ser salvaje y algo va a ser domesticado, etc., pero *esos valores cambian dependiendo de quien los... de quien los esté viendo*”). The notion of the universality of certain dichotomies was also important, and even though in the end Enrique Alejandro agreed that the dichotomy tame-wild may be universal in much the same way as other dichotomies in general might be (“Que las oposiciones son universales”), he concurrently showed his capacity to position himself from another perspective, namely a culture where the dichotomy did not exist at all (“*Quizás haya alguna cultura en la que todavía no exista una... en donde no exista una diferencia entre las dos*”).

EA.: Esta pregunta no se la entendí muy bien. "¿Hay o puede haber variaciones culturales en lo que es salvaje"...

M.: ...domesticado... Vos ponés... Esto viene porque vos ponés que lo de las comparaciones culturales es para explorar otras dicotomías: lo salvaje y lo domesticado, lo natural y lo artificial... Yo te pregunto como si eso fuera un... no sé cómo ponerlo... un absoluto...

EA.: No, por supuesto *todos estos valores dependen de quien los esté viendo, ¿no? Para una persona en el contexto... en la cultura donde vive el narrador algo va a ser salvaje y algo va a ser domesticado, etc., pero esos valores cambian dependiendo de quien los... de quien los esté viendo.*

M.: Está bien, pero las dicotomías son universales.

EA.: Entonces necesito un diccionario porque... Pensé que era una oposición entre dos opuestos.

M.: Está bien, o por ahí no me estoy explicando, pero vos decís que este concepto de oponer lo salvaje y lo domesticado es algo que trasciende a las culturas.

EA.: No, no, desde el punto de vista de...

M.: Las sutilezas estás diciendo vos que son culturales.

EA.: Exactamente, qué es lo salvaje y qué es lo domesticado depende de la...
¡Ah, ahora entiendo!

M.: Si para todas las culturas existe este opuesto de... estos dos opuestos.

EA.: Sí, sí, lo que es salvaje y lo que es domesticado. Bueno...

M.: O que exista tal oposición.

EA.: Para la mayoría de las culturas... occidentales sí, los dos conceptos son opuestos, por lo menos hasta donde sé. *Quizás haya alguna cultura en la que todavía no exista una... en donde no exista una diferencia entre las dos pero... usualmente pensaría que sí.*

M.: Perfecto.

EA.: *Que las oposiciones son universales.*

(Enrique Alejandro, interview, *Cat's Eye*)

9.3.4.1. Summary of propositional statement 4

Overall then, as readers reflected upon issues of interest to them, they re-visited points in the texts they felt confused or doubtful about, and critically considered multiple interpretations. In this process they experienced *A-ha moments* whereby they came to see certain parts in the texts in a different, new perspective, becoming aware of alternative perspectives in comprehension. This occurred at two points, namely *during* the reading itself, and *after* it (therefore capturing both foci of the research question). In this sense, the comprehension process was not complete until much later after the actual reading of each text had finished. In addition, comprehension was continuously modified during this process.

9.3.5. Different foci of attention were revealed: prominent vs. shadowed topics.

I have said that these readers entertained multiple alternative interpretations of textual content and that these interpretations occurred mainly around content perceived to be difficult or confusing for any reason. However, this study has also shown that this was revealed first and foremost in the interviews, because in the reading response and in the visual representation tasks what participants did was opt for one interpretation and develop it at length. With regard to alternative interpretations, I have shown in the previous section that the interviews revealed what these participants thought about *during* the reading of the texts. Beryl before offered a clear example of this. In other words, the interviews made visible some things that happened *during* reading, which would not have become visible without them. Other times, as in the extract by Enrique Alejandro above, the interviews revealed thoughts and discoveries which did occur at the time of the interview rather than during the actual reading itself (i.e. *after* reading). In this sense, this research design captured what went on during the *process* of comprehension as a whole, understanding this process as one that was not finished when the actual reading of each text was.

The fact that readers chose an area of interest to them (derived from the prompt texts) and that they based their reading response and visual representation tasks on these areas of interest meant that they favoured some themes for inclusion in these tasks (what I call *prominent topics* here) rather than others (what I refer to as *shadowed topics*). This is important, because all the cultural idea units identified for each text were available to the

participants, through their reading, and were therefore susceptible of being foregrounded in the reading response and in the visual representation tasks. However, all these participants were selective in this way.

Furthermore, these participants did not favour the same themes in all the tasks they produced corresponding to the same text. For instance, in the text in Spanish, in the different tasks, some readers focused their attention on the contrasts portrayed in the fragment (rural life-urban life; richness-poverty; happiness-sadness; etc.), others focused on the religious content; and others on the Christmas celebration *per se* (with reference to the presents, the food, etc.). In *Cat's Eye* some focused on the clash of cultures (American, Hindu and their own), others on the scientific discourse (biology), others on either Eliane or Banerji and their cultures in each case, on Christmas, on the turkey, on different contrasts (animals-humans, capitalism-nature, artificiality-naturalness), on the human bonds that existed among the cultures portrayed in the fragment, etc. In *Desert Wife*, some readers also focused their attention on contrasts (Indian reservation– civilization, English – Navajo language, dirtiness-cleanness, standard culture-primitive culture, etc.), on the clash of cultures (Navajo's, San Chee's and their own), others on the common bonds among the cultures portrayed, others on the celebration itself, others on the religious aspect, etc. Consequently, then, the text topics that got represented in these tasks (in the form of cultural idea units) revolved around each reader's selected focus of attention. This can be a simple reason why some cultural idea units were more frequent than others in the reading response and in the visual representation tasks. Clearly these fragments led readers to inspect some (prominent) topics in depth as they disregarded others (shadowed).

In addition, the tone of the tasks was very different depending on the enactments of these foci of attention too. The text in Spanish generated very contrasting tones for instance. The tasks by Luz centred on the idea of hope while Enrique Alejandro focused on the negative aspects of the celebration (sadness, poverty, depression, etc.) and Tacuara revolved around the idea of religion as domination. The same happened in *Cat's Eye*. For instance, while Lula's, Luz's, Tess's and Victoria's reading responses centred on the possibility of human contact among cultures and the common bonds that make communication possible at all, other responses focused mainly on the clash of cultures and its irreducible nature. Regarding the Navajos fragment, this contrast between the hope in the possibility of contact and the distance generated by difference also emerged.

These variations in tone were accompanied by the inclusion of *inferred feelings* in the required tasks, another reader behaviour. Half the participants included inferred feelings in the reading response tasks of the three texts, which may be seen as an attempt to comprehend the actions and behaviours of the members of other cultures. The presence of inferred feelings in the visual representation task was lower (two participants in *Cat's Eye* and *Desert Wife*, while in *Mi planta de naranja-lima* half did). The inclusion of *wrong inferred feelings* (not motivated by textual content) was very low in the text in Spanish and in the Navajos text, and non-existent in Atwood's fragment (Table 17, p.313).

For illustration purposes, Beryl's reading response exemplifies her hope in the possibility of contact based on her reading of the Navajos fragment. In her view, the essential concepts in this text are those of "fraternity in harmony," the sharing of a celebration by different social and cultural groups, the lack of imposition of one group over the other (cf. Victoria's focus on the idea of domination described in propositional statement 3 in the previous chapter), the "union among people" and "the cultural as learning." Beryl specifically pointed out that the focus on the differences was auxiliary in her view. Notice the use of denials (in bold in the extract) to discard the interpretations she did not wish to focus her attention upon. I should remark once again at this point the contrast between the topics and concepts that Beryl favoured in the reading of this text, and those that Victoria foregrounded, basically around the notion of domination, which I discussed at several points in the previous chapter.

En mi opinión, el tema del texto es el enfoque cultural, **no** visto como choque, sino como *fraternidad en armonía*. Es decir, *diferentes grupos sociales/culturales pueden compartir una celebración*, tal como lo es la Navidad, **sin imponerse unos a otros**, sino *compartiendo las diferentes prácticas culturales y aprendiendo* de las mismas. Más allá de que *las diferencias* están manifestadas por la narradora del texto, estas *son de carácter secundario*, puesto que se reflejan más claramente los conceptos *de unión entre personas* y de *lo cultural como aprendizaje*.
(Beryl, reading response, *Desert Wife*)

This foregrounding of some topics instead of others occurred in the reading response and in the visual representation tasks, and later in the interviews, because in the interviews readers reflected not only on what they had read but also on their written tasks. In other words, even though I have said that the entertainment of alternative and simultaneous interpretations was pervasive in the interviews, it is also possible to say that each interview

had one or two key foci of attention that emerged more forcefully than others, which were always those that the readers had favoured in the previous tasks.

In the interview, Beryl expanded this idea of fraternity and presented what in her view was the text's moral ("yo creo que es más que nada un texto de aprendizaje desde lo que ve la narradora").

B.: creo que el tema central era precisamente que, no como un choque de diferentes culturas, sino como un *enfoque viendo culturas diferentes, cómo pueden unirse entre sí, interactuar y relacionarse entre sí, y así aprender del otro, porque yo creo que es más que nada un texto de aprendizaje desde lo que ve la narradora, ¿no?*
(Beryl, interview, *Desert Wife*)

The fact that the tasks had different foci of attention not only among readers but also among the different tasks by the same reader is not a minor discovery. In relation to my list of cultural idea units, which functioned as a measure of data analysis, the fact that the reading response and the visual representation tasks were broadly centred on one or two themes meant that this measure of analysis by itself could not reveal whether readers had failed to perceive certain cultural aspects in the texts simply because they had not included them in these written tasks. To this aim, the comprehensibility grid which readers completed for each text was vital, because the only cultural idea units which these participants did not perceive at all were those that they identified with the option *I don't remember* in this grid.

In this grid, readers had to show their degree of comprehension (based on their self-perception) of all cultural idea units (whether they had included them in the tasks or not) using a scale 0-6 (ranging from *I don't remember* to *totally comprehensible* or *totally incomprehensible*). This grid also required that they evaluated each cultural idea unit as essential or auxiliary to each Christmas celebration. Given the foregoing argument about the prominent vs. shadowed topics, I report these results in combination in this chapter, that is, frequency of occurrence of the cultural idea units in the tasks, their perceived comprehensibility (in the before mentioned grid) and the readers' evaluation of their importance in each celebration (essential vs. auxiliary, also in this grid).

With respect to the text in Spanish, to a lesser or greater extent, as can be observed in Table 14, all the cultural idea units were considered by all participants to be completely or

moderately comprehensible (levels 1 and 2 in the comprehensibility grid, taken together). The exception was the funeral of Jesus Child, considered as completely or moderately comprehensible by only half the participants. If one looks at level 1 independently (totally comprehensible), with the exception of the *rabanada*, old and used present, funeral of Jesus Child, shaving and dressing up for Christmas and sleep to forget, all the other cultural idea units were considered as completely comprehensible by the majority of the participants. Only four participants perceived the *rabanada* soaked in wine as an obstacle during reading (Table 14) and underlined it in the text itself as a problematic aspect (Table 11, p. 330).

Only two aspects turned out to be totally incomprehensible, but only for less than one third of the participants (Eve Mass and shaving and dressing up for Christmas). Very few cultural idea units were perceived as obstacles to comprehension, and again by one or two participants (*rabanada*, funeral of Jesus Child, sadness of the dinner, sleep to forget and Zezé's hope). In general, a minority failed to remember only two cultural idea units (Eve Mass and funeral of Jesus Child) (Table 14).

Table 14. Perceived comprehensibility of cultural aspects, assessment of their importance, and their inclusion in the required tasks. Naranja-lima

	<i>Comprehensibility of cultural aspects</i>						<i>Importance</i>		<i>Inclusion in the tasks</i>	
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>Essential Auxiliary</i>		Reading response	Visual representation
	Completely Comprehensible	Moderately Comprehensible	Perceived as obstacle	Perceived as serious obstacle	Not Comprehensible	I do not remember				
Rabanada	3	3	2	2			3	7		
Scant food	10						10		6	4
Old and used present	5	5					8	2		
Without new presents	8	2					10		5	4
Birth of Devil Child									4	1
Funeral of Jesus Child	3	2	2	2		1	3	7	1	2
Christsmas Mass	8				1	1	7	3	1	
Shaving & dressing up for Christmas	4	3			3		1	9	3	1
Hugging & wishing happiness	10						6	4	1	1
Happiness of the others at church	10						8	2		4
Poverty of the family	8	2					4	6	1	9
Uncle Edmundo provides money	9	1					10		8	1
Richness of doctors	9	1					3	7	1	4
Rural life	9	1					8	2	4	
Sad dinner	6	3	1				4	6	1	4
Dine in silence	9	1					10		4	4
Not wish for presents	8	2					7	3	2	1
Sneakers on other side of door	7	3					7	3		5
Sleep to forget	5	3	1	1			4	6	1	1
Zeze's hope	9		1				6	4	1	8
General sadness									4	6
Religious questioning									4	5
Religious aspect									5	3
Inequality									7	7
Lack of hope									6	7
Christmas tree									4	2
Presents in general									4	4
Santa Claus									1	2
The Three Wise Men									4	

Of the cultural aspects that were judged to be essential and completely comprehensible by almost all the participants (scant food, old and used present, without new presents, happiness of the others, uncle Edmundo gives money, rural life, and dine in silence), only one was mentioned by almost all of them in one of the tasks (the reading response), and it was that uncle Edmundo had supplied the money for the food. The rest of these cultural idea units, such as dine in silence, were mentioned in the tasks in a lesser degree (half the participants or fewer) and in some cases, some aspects were omitted altogether. Such was the case of the old and used present, which nobody mentioned either in the reading response or in the visual representation. In many instances, the participants were consistent in seeing some aspects as auxiliary and therefore not including them in the tasks. Examples of this are the *rabanada*, shaving and dressing up for Christmas, and the funeral of Jesus Child. Other aspects, judged as essential by two thirds of the participants, were included in the tasks in a lesser proportion, such as placing the trainers on the others side of the door, not expecting presents in order not to be disappointed, hugging and saying good things at Christmas and Eve Mass. The family's poverty and Zezé's hope, considered as completely comprehensible by almost all the participants, were included by the majority only in the visual representation.

Turning now to *Cat's Eye* (Table 15), only one aspect was considered by almost all participants to be essential to the celebration and completely comprehensible (variety and abundance of food). However, if we consider levels 1 and 2 together (completely and moderately comprehensible), the scope opens to include the reference to the turkey for dinner, Banerji as a strange creature, the hidden misery of Banerji, the classification of people in tame and wild, the turkey as topic of conversation, the cultural differences, and the anecdote of the drowned turkeys. Despite these evaluations, these cultural idea units were included in their written tasks by about half the participants. The exceptions were the cultural differences, mentioned by nine participants (though only in the reading response task) and the anecdote of the drowned turkey, not included at all in either task.

Table 15. Perceived comprehensibility of cultural aspects, assessment of their importance, and their inclusion in the required tasks. Cat's Eye.

	<i>Comprehensibility of cultural aspects</i>						<i>Importance</i>		<i>Inclusion in the tasks</i>	
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>Essential Auxiliary</i>		<i>Reading</i>	<i>Visual</i>
	Completely Comprehensible	Moderately Comprehensible	Perceived as obstacle	Perceived as serious obstacle	Not Comprehensible	I do not remember			response	representation
Jello salad	3	4	1		1	1	1	9		
Jolly Green Giant		1	1	5	3		2	8		
Enormous turkey	7	3					8	2	5	5
Cranberry sauce	4	6						10		
Cranberry juice	6	4					1	9	2	1
Variety and abundance of food	10						8	2	4	3
Playing with food without eating	6	4					7	3	1	
Sunday school	2	3	5					10		
Sunday school missionary paper	1	3	3	2		1		10		
Banerji as a strange creature	5	3				2	8	2	3	3
Elaine as strange creature	2	1	6		1		7	3	2	1
Hidden misery of Banerji	3	7					10		5	5
Family's hospitality	7	3					6	4	4	1
Square tomatoes	5	1	2	2			5	5		1
Turkeys with four drumsticks	3	2	2	2	1		7	3		1
Skinless chicken	1	6	2	1			10			
Skinless cats		5	3	2			8	2		1
Classification of people tame-wild	2	7		1			8	2	4	6
Snakes as topic of conversation	3	6	1				4	6		1
Turkey as topic of conversation	5	4	1				8	2	6	4
Cultural differences	5	4	1				10		9	4
Scientific discourse	5	4	1				5	5	5	7
Turkey's stupidity									2	4
Anecdote of drowned turkeys	2	8					10			
Banerji's appearance	5	3				2	6	4	1	2
Reference to Biology	6	3		1			6	4	6	5
Smashed potatoes	10						1	9	1	1
Lost flight	1	2	3	2		2	4	6	2	3
Food in general										1
Change in atmosphere										1
Thanksgiving										1
BBC voice									2	1
Common bonds									4	2
Headless baby									1	1

Only one cultural idea unit was perceived as an obstacle to comprehension by the majority of the participants (Jolly Green Giant). Others were judged in this way by two thirds of the participants such as the missionary paper, Elaine as strange creature and lost flight. Some others were considered obstacles by half the participants (Sunday school, square tomatoes, turkeys with four drumsticks, skinless cats) and were not included at all in the written tasks (or by only one individual).

The majority considered the references to culturally specific dishes as auxiliary and consistently did not include them at all in the reading response and in the visual representation tasks (Jello salad, cranberry sauce, cranberry juice, smashed potatoes). The exception was the enormous turkey, judged to be essential to the celebration, and mentioned by half the participants in each task. When I inquired participants about this apparent contradiction, almost all of them argued that they had included the turkey in their tasks because it was the turkey that triggered the central discussion at the dinner table regarding the text topics. Other cultural idea units such as the Jolly Green Giant and the religious references (Sunday school and the missionary paper) were also judged as auxiliary by all the participants and were omitted in the tasks. Interestingly enough here, these three aspects were perceived as obstacles to comprehension in different degrees (all but one participant in the case of the Jolly Green Giant, and half for the religious references).

The specific examples of the manipulation of Nature by humans generated mixed results. While some of the anecdotes were considered essential (skinless cats and chicken) by the majority, the others (tomatoes, four drumsticks) generated divided opinions. Participants did not include these anecdotes in the written tasks, although they were perceived as completely or moderately comprehensible (levels 1 and 2 together) by half or slightly over half of the participants. The reference to the scientific discourse, which could be seen as a more general cultural idea unit encompassing all these specific anecdotes, was perceived as comprehensible (levels 1 and 2 together) by all but one of the participants. About half the participants included a general reference of this kind in their tasks, which is consistent with their judgment of this cultural idea unit as either essential or auxiliary to the celebration by half the participants in each case.

Participants mentioned in the tasks other cultural idea units, not included in my *a priori* list. As Table 15 shows, on average these were mentioned by one or two participants only.

With respect to the Navajos text (Table 16), of the aspects that the majority of the participants considered essential to the celebration and completely comprehensible (community celebration, dances and music, families eat together, and happiness and fun), not even one aspect was included in the written tasks by this majority. That is, these aspects were mentioned by isolated individuals. About half the participants mentioned happiness and fun, though, in their written tasks. Most of the cultural idea units were considered as completely and moderately comprehensible (levels 1 and 2 taken together) by the majority or all of the participants (desert landscape, Navajo dressed in their best clothes, two hundred Navajos present, community celebration, provision of wood by Hilda and Ken, dances and music for amusement, handmade musical instruments, active celebration - wrestling and racing -, early rising habits on Christmas, Navajos as efficient and ingenious, family groups eat together, Navajos eat and eat, episode of candy bags, dishwashing episode, bread making description, Robert's greeting, reference to food in general, and fun and happiness). However, some of these aspects were not mentioned in the tasks at all (desert landscape, community celebration, musical instruments, wrestling and racing, efficiency and intelligence of the Navajos). Of the few aspects that were perceived as obstacles to comprehension, only one, the fires, was perceived as an obstacle by half the participants (the rest was perceived in this way by between one and three participants only).

Table 16. Perceived comprehensibility of cultural aspects, assessment of their importance, and their inclusion in the required tasks. Navajos.

	<i>Comprehensibility of cultural aspects</i>						<i>Importance</i>		<i>Inclusion in the tasks</i>	
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>Essential Auxiliary</i>		<i>Reading</i>	<i>Visual</i>
	Completely Comprehensible	Moderately Comprehensible	Perceived as obstacle	Perceived as serious obstacle	Not Comprehensible	I do not remember			response	representation
Desert landscape	6	2	1			1	6	4		
Dressed in best clothes	7	1	2				6	4	1	2
200 Navajos present	7	3					7	3		
Community celebration	9	1					10		1	2
Fires	1	3	3	1	1	1	2	8	5	7
Stroll with raw beefsteaks	2	5	3				5	5	3	1
Wood supply	5	4			1		2	8	1	
Dances and music	8	2					9	1	5	6
Musical instruments	9	1					4	6		
Wrestling and racing	5	3	1				1	6	4	
Early rising habits	5	5					5	5		1
Efficiency and intelligence	5	4					1	6	4	
Families eat together	9	1					8	2		2
Eating and eating	9	1					6	4	1	1
Episode of candy bags	6	4					8	2	3	4
Dish washing	5	4	1				5	5	2	1
Bread making	4	4	1	1			1	9	2	1
Stew preparation	4	2	2	1			1	10	2	
Preparing coffee	4	3	2	1				10	1	1
Robert's greeting	6	3					1	8	2	1
Meet - food	7	3						4	6	7
Happiness and fun	9	1					9	1	6	4
Yell like pirates										3
Rituals, traditions									8	1
Clash of cultures									9	7
Common bonds									5	5
Stereotypes										4

Of the cultural aspects that were judged to be auxiliary by the majority or all of the participants (fires, wood supply, stew preparation and coffee preparation), none were mentioned in the tasks by more than one or two participants. The exception was the fires, mentioned by about half the participants in each task. The rest of the elements had mixed results, as about half the participants considered them either essential or auxiliary (desert landscape, Navajo dressed in their best clothes, two hundred Navajos present, Native Americans stroll with raw beefsteaks, handmade musical instruments, wrestling and racing, early rising habits on Christmas, Navajos as efficient and ingenious, Navajos eat and eat, dishwashing episode, reference to food in general). These elements did not appear in the written tasks at all or were mentioned by between one or three participants, with the exception of the reference to the food in general, included by half of the participants in the reading response task and by two thirds in the visual representation.

Finally, the participants included in the tasks other ideas not present in my *a priori* list of cultural idea units (Table 16). For instance, the majority referred to rituals and traditions in general and to the notion of clash of cultures in the reading response task (decreasing in the visual representation). The idea of the existence of common bonds or points of contact among peoples from different cultures was mentioned by half the participants in each task.

9.3.5.1. Emotions, perception of text topics during comprehension, and favoured vs. shadowed topics during reading as well as in the tasks

The reading response task and the interviews of the three texts (and to a lesser extent the visual representation task) revealed varied affective reactions towards textual content. These reactions were revealed through the presence of *evaluative language* (another reader behaviour), i.e. language which revealed the participants' attitudes toward the propositions mentioned in the texts. I have already said that two thirds of the participants used this kind of language in the reading responses of the text in Spanish and the Navajos, and all participants did so in the same task based on *Cat's Eye* (Table 17, p.313). This evaluative language decreased in the visual representations of all texts (about one third of participants), perhaps because of the concise and visual nature of the task itself. The fact that the evaluations of this kind permeated these readers' responses to the cultural content of the texts can be understood within the framework that the initial confrontation with what

is different can produce feelings of disorientation, rejection, disbelief, surprise, excitement, attraction (and others) before the different and the unknown (Moreiras, 1991). This kind of reaction is natural and important because it constitutes the first step towards the appreciation of the unknown. This thesis has shown that under some circumstances, when certain textual information did not match the readers' available schemata or was too divergent, it was ignored or rejected, even though it was perceived (as the comprehensibility grid revealed).

For example, in some cases, some readers omitted some episodes altogether from the reading response and the visual representation tasks (for example, the anecdotes with the turkeys, the square tomatoes and the skinless chicken and cats in *Cat's Eye*, and the dancing, wrestling, riding, music, bread-making, stew-preparation and coffee-making episodes in *Desert Wife*) while in others, they elaborated on the textual content and attempted alternative interpretations (for instance, the religious perspective in *Mi planta de naranja-lima*). On other occasions, readers foregrounded the information that was different and surprising to them and they included it in their productions, even when this information contradicted or conflicted with their prior knowledge (as revealed in the questions designed to elicit this knowledge) as long as it was perceived as convincing and possible. The clearest example of this was the fact that about half the participants believed that the Navajos would not celebrate Christmas because they were a pagan group, but they nonetheless approached the tasks as if this celebration was typically Navajo.

What all the foregoing illustrates, I believe, are the processes of assimilation and accommodation in schema theory in operation within the process of cultural understanding as it occurred in this setting. I have already referred to the notion of "schema affirmation" by Jeffries (2001: 325) under propositional statement 1 in chapter 8, which is different from assimilation and accommodation, and means that readers identify prior knowledge and experience in literary readings. Although I concur with Sadoski, Paivio and Goetz' (1991) critique regarding the lack of precision in the description of the schema processes of selection, abstraction, interpretation, and integration, this thesis has shown that at least in this setting these readers assimilated new information to their existing schemata (resulting in the elaboration of the schema through the inclusion of explicative information for instance) (Bransford, 2004). They also accommodated new content by means of

restructuring, consequently producing the modification of the schema, i.e. the new information made individuals change their initial ideas (Bransford, 2004).

The findings of this thesis are not new in this respect, as I have pointed out in chapter 3. As way of example, Rice (1980) showed that her participants used three strategies to deal with the missing or unclear structural aspects of the experimental texts in order to accommodate them to the story schema in question: they imported information to fill the gap, they completely deleted an episode if it was incomplete, or they elided or condensed two or more episodes. In other words, these strategies were revealing of assimilation and accommodation processes as well.

More specifically, when my participants felt an emotional commitment with certain text topics, they favoured them in their productions. Those topics which turned out to be central to the participants' value systems generated more emotional commitment than others, and therefore more reflection and critical analysis. Such was the case of themes like extreme poverty, the unequal distribution of wealth in society, and the scrutiny and questioning of the religiosity associated with Christmas in the text in Spanish; hospitality, the meaning of Christmas beyond the festive aspect, loneliness and nostalgia, and the manipulation of Nature in *Cat's Eye*; and the lack of religious connotation in this celebration of the Native Americans, as well as the question of authority, paternalism and condescendence in *Desert Wife*.

I wish to stress here not only the need for further investigation of the emotional and affective dimension of cultural understanding but also its difficulty and complexity. This thesis was not especially designed to research prior knowledge and the affective dimension of cultural comprehension in particular, but there are indices which are suggestive of their potential significance. This complexity and difficulty has been the core of other studies such as Hammadou (1991), who investigated prior knowledge in the context of Italian and French as foreign languages in the USA. This study conceptualized prior knowledge in terms of *degrees* of familiarity as in this thesis (see propositional statement 5 in the previous chapter), but with a scale most-mid-least. Hammadou (1991) insisted on the difficulty of identifying prior knowledge accurately as her results showed that the participants' self-reports about topic familiarity (using the most-mid-least familiar scale) were unable to predict the ability to recall a certain topic. She gave the example of one reader who rated AIDS as the most familiar topic, but never recognized it while reading. In

other words, the readers' perceptions of and attitudes toward their prior knowledge and experience seemed to be crucial. Tess offered an example of this importance of perceptions and attitudes when she expressed that she thought that she had not really experienced Christmas in a US setting despite the fact that she had indeed spent one there.

9.3.5.2. Summary of propositional statement 5

On the basis of this section, one overall finding of this study is that the frequency of occurrence of cultural idea units in the reading response and in the visual representation tasks was not necessarily tied to their perception or lack of perception by the participants, neither to their perceived comprehensibility (as revealed by the comprehensibility grid) or to the readers' evaluation of their importance in each celebration (essential vs. auxiliary, also in this grid). Put differently, readers sometimes perceived a cultural idea unit but did not include it in the tasks, irrespective of whether it was judged to be auxiliary or essential to the celebration in question, and of whether it was perceived as comprehensible or not (in different degrees). One important finding of this study in this respect is that the topics that readers favoured during reading (for different reasons as the interviews showed) were those that got represented in the reading response and in the visual representation tasks, as opposed to those that were downgraded, again for different reasons as the interviews showed.

As a conclusion of this section, findings show that readers chose an area of interest to them (derived from the prompt texts) and based their reading response and visual representation tasks on these areas of interest. Consequently, they favoured some themes for inclusion in these tasks (what I have called prominent topics) rather than others (what I have referred to as shadowed topics). This is important, because all the cultural idea units identified in each text were available to the participants, through their reading, and were therefore susceptible of being foregrounded in the reading response and in the visual representation tasks. However, all these participants were selective in this way.

9.3.6. Readers expressed difficulty to visualize textual content during reading

The interviews revealed these readers' difficulty to imagine or visualize textual content in their minds *during* reading itself. Almost all readers commented on this difficulty, for all texts. In the text in Spanish this difficulty resided mainly in the ability to position themselves in the family's situation, given their poverty and sadness. For instance, I have quoted Miranda Dana in chapter 7 (in the section describing and illustrating the measure of analysis called *reader behaviours*) when she explained in the interview her impossibility to understand why the family cry in the celebration and her judgment of crying as an extreme reaction given the circumstances. Her position was that the family should have been accustomed to that poverty by then (because they had been poor for so long), and that therefore their crying was strange and extreme. In the case of the texts in English, all participants reflected on their difficulty and/or impossibility to picture in their minds, or visualize, the square tomatoes, the skinless cats and chicken, the turkey with four drumsticks, the preparation of the coffee and the stew, the actual Navajo dances, what the hand-made musical instruments were like, which clothes the Navajo women were wearing and many other aspects.

The detail of description of these narrative episodes in the texts added to the complexity of their being understood, as the participants themselves acknowledged in the interviews. All readers mentioned being able to follow the language used in the narration of these episodes but nonetheless not understanding them because they were unable to fully picture or "represent" the scenes in their minds. Yanina's interview extract below based on the Navajos text illustrates this difficulty experienced *during* reading, together with the strength of image schemata ("Porque después que me lo *imaginé... pienso que todo el tiempo lo tuve en la cabeza* pero nunca lo había pensado") and the difficulty of assimilating or accommodating textual content to existing frames of mind ("Después cuando quise volver a ver qué había imaginado, *ya tenía el... el paisaje desértico y no me lo podía sacar, no me acordaba de qué era lo que había imaginado*"). Notice also the evidence of the re-visiting of textual content (propositional statement 4 in this chapter) ("*Después cuando quise volver a ver qué había imaginado*")

[inquiring about the desert landscape in the comprehensibility grid]

M.: El paisaje desértico, ¿cuál es tu problema con eso?

Y.: Que... *no lo imaginé cuando lo iba leyendo.*

M.: No imaginaste un paisaje...

Y.: No. Después cuando quise volver a ver qué había *imaginado*, ya tenía el... el paisaje desértico [en la mente] y no me lo podía sacar [de la mente, de la cabeza], no me acordaba de qué era lo que *había imaginado*.

(...)

Y.: Porque después que me lo *imaginé*... pienso que todo el tiempo *lo tuve en la cabeza* pero nunca lo había pensado.

M.: Hm.

Y.: Después cuando hablan también de... de la granja, *entonces es como que ahí ya empecé a pensarlo un poco más... conscientemente, pero creo que lo... como que lo tenía ahí en mi mente mientras lo iba leyendo.*

(Yanina, interview, *Desert Wife*)

Yanina explicitly mentioned how the reading of some later parts of the text (the reference to the farm, for instance) contributed to her imagining this previous reference to the desert landscape *during* the actual reading of the text (“Después cuando hablan también de... de la granja, *entonces es como que ahí ya empecé a pensarlo un poco más... conscientemente, pero creo que lo... como que lo tenía ahí en mi mente mientras lo iba leyendo*”; note the continuous tense). Worth mentioning is the emphasis on the duration of the act of reading (“pienso que *todo el tiempo* lo tuve en la cabeza pero nunca lo había pensado”). Furthermore, the reading of later parts of the text brought what she had imagined to consciousness (“*Después cuando hablan también de... de la granja, entonces es como que ahí ya empecé a pensarlo un poco más... conscientemente*”).

In the interview about *Cat's Eye* Tess mentioned her difficulty to fully picture or represent certain scenes in her mind (“¿Está hablando de lo que *me imagino* o no?") in these terms, with the focus on the strangeness of the episodes:

T.: *me parecía que las anécdotas siempre hacían alusión a algo **extraño**, a una característica **extraña**, no sé... los pollos y los tomates... Yo cuando lo veía no sabía si estaba entendiendo bien primero, porque era algo que no... que no me esperaba. Entonces cuando yo leía de los pollos, digo: "Pero ¿estoy entendiendo bien? ¿Está hablando de lo que me imagino o no?"*

M.: Está bien. O sea, ¿es algo real? ¿Puede ocurrir eso en la vida real? Lo de los tomates, lo de los pollos...

T.: Sí, puede ocurrir pero no... O sea, podría llegar a ocurrir pero...

M.: ...pero no es real.

T.: ...parecería **raro**.

(...)

M.: Acá marcás que todas, todas las historias relacionadas con la naturaleza, los tomates, los pollos, los gatos, qué sé yo, son todas esenciales, y a su vez ponés que el discurso científico de la biología es algo auxiliar. ¿No hay una contradicción? ¿No son ejemplos, todos éstos, de la referencia a la biología, del discurso científico?

T.: Sí, lo que pasa es que... no lo relacioné tanto con el texto científico a la biología y los ejemplos sino con mostrar lo **raro**, lo **distinto**... Por ese lado.

M.: Ah.

T.: Hago la asociación con el hindú, no tanto con el discurso científico o con la biología.

M.: ¿Y por qué está asociado con el hindú?

T.: Por eso de encontrar algo **raro** que a ellos les parecía **extraño**.

M.: ¿A quiénes?

T.: A la familia

M.: Ah, en estas cosas, en los gatos, ¿en eso?

T.: Sí.

M.: Y no entiendo la relación con el hindú.

T.: Claro, que para ellos el hindú les parecía **raro**, o algo **extraño**.

M.: Ah, como los tomates, como los pollos. Entiendo.

(Tess, interview, *Cat's Eye*)

Note how this brief extract offers simultaneous evidence of other characteristics of cultural understanding in this setting as portrayed by the propositional statements in this chapter and the previous one. For instance, I have already discussed the fact that in general the point of departure in cultural understanding here resided in what readers perceived as surprising, different, novel or abnormal for any reason (level 1 in the *Model of Cultural Understanding*) (“las anécdotas siempre hacían alusión a algo *extraño*, a una característica *extraña*, no sé... los pollos y los tomates,” “*era algo que no... que no me esperaba*,” “parecería *raro*,” “con mostrar lo *raro*, lo *distinto*,” “Por eso de encontrar algo *raro* que a ellos les parecía *extraño*,” “para ellos el hindú les parecía *raro*, o algo *extraño*”). Tess repeated the words *raro* and *extraño* nine times in this extract (in bold).

At the same time, this extract shows that confusing content, or content perceived as troublesome for any reason, led participants to invest effort and time trying to find a satisfactory interpretation in their view (propositional statement 3 in this chapter, participants offered simultaneous and alternative interpretations of textual content) (“Yo cuando lo veía *no sabía si estaba entendiendo bien* primero, porque era algo que no... que no me esperaba. Entonces *cuando yo leía de los pollos, digo: "Pero ¿estoy entendiendo bien? ¿Está hablando de lo que me imagino o no?"*”) through the re-visiting of textual content (propositional statement 4 in this chapter, problematic textual content led to its re-visiting) (“*Pero ¿estoy entendiendo bien?*”). In this process, some text topics were

favoured while others got relegated (propositional statement 5 in this chapter, different foci of attention were revealed) (“*no lo relacioné tanto con el texto científico a la biología y los ejemplos sino con mostrar lo raro, lo distinto... Por ese lado*”, “*Hago la asociación con el hindú, no tanto con el discurso científico o con la biología*”). It is worth mentioning that Tess expressed these ideas in the interview, but clearly showed that these thoughts occurred at the time of reading, i.e. *during* the reading itself (“*Yo cuando lo veía no sabía si estaba entendiendo bien primero, porque era algo que no... que no me esperaba. Entonces cuando yo leía de los pollos, digo: "Pero ¿estoy entendiendo bien? ¿Está hablando de lo que me imagino o no?"*”).

Enrique Alejandro went further, expressed that these anecdotes were ridiculous and discarded the possibility that these tomatoes, cats and chicken could ever exist. This is an instance of the rejection or dismissal of textual content as well as of a refusal or reluctance to assimilate or accommodate new information to existing schemata, something that I have referred to in the previous section. In other words, an example of “schema affirmation” (Jeffries, 2001: 325).

9.3.6.1. Summary of propositional statement 6

Overall then, the immediate reflection logs and the interviews revealed these readers’ difficulty to imagine or visualize textual content in their minds *during* reading itself. Almost all readers commented on this difficulty, for all texts.

9.4. General summary of findings

I shall conclude this chapter with a general summary of findings, as captured by the propositional statements developed in each section. The idea around propositional statement 1 is that the participants enacted some of the difficulties with terminology in understanding, thinking and writing about culture. They showed a quite sophisticated level of cultural awareness that made them not only distinguish among certain terms (i.e. be able to say that one term is different from another) but also attempt subtle definitions.

Findings related to propositional statement 2 revealed that all these participants showed a high level of literary competence. Not only that, but they also made the connection between the cultural and their literary knowledge very evident, explicit and put it in writing. Pervasive in almost all the cases was this idea that a text has a message that the reader has to discover, a message beyond the actual words on the page. The majority also engaged in more detailed literary meta-reflections. Furthermore, readers generated intertextual links between the prompt texts and other sources such as literary texts and non-literary resources (TV, films, etc.). Another kind of intertextuality was evidenced as well, namely among the three prompt fragments used in this study.

Propositional statement 3 refers to the fact that all readers spontaneously took the time and effort to think of explicit alternative interpretations when textual content was perceived as confusing for any reason. These alternative interpretations were not necessarily long, and many times amounted to a brief succession of “..... or or ...” sequences in the form of conjectures. In the interviews, these instances of alternative interpretations generated by confusing or problematic textual content were accompanied by much doubt about the adequacy or appropriateness of such interpretations. Added to this, these moments of doubt and their tentative interpretations were accompanied by questions that these readers would have liked to find an answer to, motivated by their personal curiosity and a desire to learn more about certain issues. In general, these multiple, alternative and simultaneous interpretations were connected to the difficult or problematic areas that the participants had underlined in the texts themselves.

Propositional statement 4 means that as these readers reflected upon issues of interest to them, they re-visited points in the texts they felt confused or doubtful about, and critically considered multiple interpretations. In this process they experienced *A-ha moments* whereby they came to see certain parts in the texts in a different, new perspective, becoming aware of alternative perspectives in comprehension. This occurred at two points, namely *during* the reading itself, and *after* it. In this sense, this fact shows that the comprehension process was not complete until much later after the actual reading of each text had finished, and also that comprehension was continuously modified during this process.

Readers chose an area of interest to them (derived from the prompt texts) and based their reading response and visual representation tasks on these areas of interest (propositional statement 5). Consequently, they favoured some themes for inclusion in these tasks (what I have called prominent topics) rather than others (what I have referred to as shadowed topics). This is important, because all the cultural idea units identified in each text were available to participants, through their reading, and were therefore susceptible of being foregrounded in the reading response and in the visual representation tasks. However, all participants were selective in this way.

As mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, these readers were trained in a critical discourse perspective in L2 in the course English Language II. Chapters 7, 8 and 9 have shown that they all made an effort, with more or less depth, to search for significant cultural patterns behind what was visible, and to reflect on the adequacy of their interpretations with a critical eye. When what was different or unfamiliar in the texts revealed itself as problematic, these readers attempted simultaneous and alternative interpretations, and re-visited problematic textual content in a variety of ways (propositional statements 3 and 4 in this chapter). The perception of some textual content as difficult or problematic from a cultural point of view may have stemmed from the way in which life generally promotes uniformity and continuity through collective patterns of behaviour (Parsons, 1951). However, not everything that was different was perceived as troublesome. I have shown in this chapter that different foci of attention were revealed, whereby these readers favoured some topics and gave them prominence in their responses while they simultaneously shadowed others (propositional statement 5). In other words, although the three texts offered a plurality of options and perspectives to these readers, their attention to topics was selective for reasons that escape the domain of this thesis, but which were, as I have shown in this chapter, intertwined with a multiplicity of factors such as prior knowledge, attitudes, personal lived experiences and literary knowledge and preferences, among others.

Finally, another finding is that the immediate reflection logs and the interviews revealed these readers' difficulty to imagine or visualize textual content in their minds *during* reading itself. Almost all readers commented on this difficulty, for all texts (propositional statement 6).

9.5. Placing findings within the theoretical perspectives in this thesis

In this chapter and the previous one I have presented the findings of this study regarding cultural understanding in this setting. Throughout both chapters I have considered, at different points, some of the key studies reviewed in chapter 3 and I have discussed their findings in the light of those of the present study. For instance, I have focused on the widespread finding in the literature that texts from one's cultural background are recalled better than texts whose content is discrepant from a cultural point of view. I have also shown that closely connected with this are findings centred on prior knowledge as well as the attitudinal and affective dimension of comprehension. I have particularly made my prior body of work a centre of attention, and here I have attempted some further interpretation and speculation of the meaning of the present findings in this setting.

What I would like to do in this section is see the findings of this study as they are relevant to key theoretical issues concerning cultural understanding in this setting. Let me repeat that I have done this throughout chapters 8 and 9 by comparing and contrasting my findings with others from different settings where possible. I shall do so now from a theoretical standpoint.

More specifically, I shall dwell upon aspects which I developed in chapters 2 and 3. In particular, I shall draw on issues around the notion of schema as it has evolved historically and I shall say how this thesis has taken account of relevant aspects. I shall stress that this thesis has captured the developmental, social, cultural and functional dimensions of schemata. I shall also foreground the importance of *image* and *emotion* schemata within the cultural dimension of reading. I shall emphasize the underlying centrality of cultural understanding as a *fluid process* in a *continuum* of cultural familiarity and unfamiliarity, something that I have done throughout this chapter and the previous one as well.

This thesis has rescued the *developmental*, *social* and *cultural* dimensions of schemata from the contributions of Kant (1929), Bartlett (1932) and Piaget (1952) theoretically in chapter 3. It has also illustrated such dimensions particularly in both chapters with findings (chapters 8 and 9) and it shall do so in the following chapter with the in-depth analysis of one reader. Chapters 8 and 9 evidence how the notion of schema has captured what happened within these individuals' minds through interconnections with their prior

knowledge and experiences at different points in their lifetimes (for instance affected by the death of beloved relatives as in Enrique Alejandro's case, developmental dimension), simultaneously linked to sociocultural assumptions and preconceptions (for example that Christmas is a family and festive celebration –social and cultural dimensions).

Therefore, although schemata are abstract knowledge structures that represent generic concepts stored in memory (Anderson and Pearson, 1984; Rumelhart and Ortony, 1977; Rumelhart, 1984), this study has revealed their *functional* role in the relationships of individuals and the environment, in this case in two ways. First, as a means of relating to the situation proposed by the study itself, whereby these participants had to respond to the specific reading experiences presented around the Christmas schema, evaluating and accommodating their understanding of what they thought they were required to do. Second, as a means of relating to the Christmas schema itself, prompted by the confrontation of the Christmas visions offered by each text with their own understandings and experiences in this arena. The research instruments have captured this functional role of schemata in this dual way.

I say that this thesis has *rescued* the sociocultural perspective of schemata present in Piaget, Kant and Bartlett as constructs which extend beyond the individual to comprise the social and the cultural because I believe, in alignment with McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek (2005), that this perspective was lost in contemporary conceptions of schema as derived from cognitive psychology in the 1970s. These “sociocultural perspectives on schema” (McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek, 2005: 452) acknowledge, as in this thesis, that cultural schemas are not a static characteristic of an individual's cognition (are not an in-the-head phenomenon). Rather:

- Cultural schemata are shared by members of a cultural group; in this study, this specific group of participants;

- Cultural schemata are constantly being negotiated and renegotiated through time and generations. One example can be the time span of this study through the negotiation stimulated by the participants' interaction with me in my role as interviewer, for instance. In addition, our communication continued long after the closure of data collection, sometimes over twelve months after it, whereby they re-visited their understandings of

some data excerpts. Another example can be the time span of the participants' lives, as in the case of Enrique Alejandro whose father had died when he was fifteen. Yet another instance can be the time span of other generations in the participants' own families, as exemplified by the references to their grandparents' traditions in the prior knowledge task about Christmas in Argentina. Or the time span of other generations in societies and cultures which were not their own, as Enrique Alejandro showed in his understanding of the word "heathen" in the Navajos text (chapter 7, section describing and illustrating the *Model of Cultural Understanding* as a measure of analysis).

- Cultural schemata are instantiated (materialized) in cultural artefacts like rituals, paintings, narrative, video, discussions, etc. In this study, this instantiation took place through the selected texts and the proposed tasks that these readers engaged in, in other words, all the data collection instruments used here.

I have argued in chapter 3 that "if one thinks of schema as embodied and not just in the head, then it becomes clear that patterns of enactment (ways of engaging the world) both shape our interpretation of cultural activity and are shaped by cultural activity" (McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek, 2005: 546). This thesis has brought this interaction to the surface by showing that cultural understanding among this group of participants in this specific setting was linked as much to what the prompt texts had to offer, as to what these readers brought with them (regarding the Christmas schema in particular, but also regarding all the interconnections that this schema triggered in other dimensions), as to what the re-visiting of textual content generated through the negotiation, interaction, reflection and critical analysis that the research instruments allowed for. In this sense, while most of the empirical investigations carried out by cognitive scientists in the 1970s and 1980s were experiments done in laboratories in complete dissociation from the social and cultural world, this study has captured precisely the social and the cultural, but beyond the impoverished and limited conception of culture that pervaded in Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson (1979), Lipson (1983), Rice (1980), Hollingsworth and Reutzel (1990), Hammadou (1991) and other studies (cf. Abu-Rabia, 1996, 1998). Whilst the narrow conception of culture underlying these studies confined it to one aspect of an individual's "integrated cultural identities" (Dunnett et al., 1986; Kabakchy, 1978; Maloof, Rubin, and Neville Miller, 2006: 255), namely race, ethnicity, or nationality (occasionally religion), this thesis has taken account of the complex interplay of the multiple and varied aspects of

the participants' individualities (Rosaldo, 1993). In particular the biographical questionnaire (Table 1, Appendix III), the questionnaires about reading in English and in Spanish (Tables 2, 3, 4, Appendix III) and the interviews (Appendix V) have allowed for the emergence of idiosyncrasies in terms of gender, social class, educational and cultural backgrounds, and religion, among other factors.

In support of Sharifian, Rochecouste and Malcolm (2004), this thesis has revealed the importance of identifying *image* and *emotion* schemata within the cultural dimension of reading. Regarding the former, the visual representations that these readers produced have shown the power and simplicity of visual imagery in capturing the cultural in reading. Chapters 7 and 10 include several visual representations which illustrate this point. The interviews have in turn served to show the depth, complexity, reflexivity and criticality behind their simplicity. Concerning the latter, I have dwelled at some length in this chapter on the significant role of emotion in cultural comprehension (under propositional statement 5, section on emotions and the perception of text topics during comprehension). From this perspective, this thesis has taken account of the imaginative and emotional dimensions of reading, areas in which schema theory has problems (Sadoski, Paivio and Goetz, 1991).

Finally, Rice (1980) distinguishes three types of schemata in a continuum. One kind is universal, such as Piaget's cognitive schemata (at one end). It would be possible to speculate that image and emotion schemata belong to this type. Another kind is idiosyncratic, highly variable according to each individual's experience (at the other end). For instance, Enrique Alejandro was the only participant who associated Christmas with a relative's death because of past lived experiences and from this perspective, his Christmas schema can be said to be idiosyncratic in this setting. Finally, the last type of schema is culturally derived, along the continuum, and is associated with what anthropologists call "world view." The participants in this study shared a socioculturally determined view of Christmas as a dominantly familiar (not community) and happy (festive though not necessarily religious) celebration.

9.6. Conclusion

This chapter has presented the results of this study related to general processes of understanding within cultural understanding. I have structured it around the research question, which was

What processes, techniques and behaviours do EFL college readers in this setting use to comprehend the cultural content of literary narrative texts during and after reading?

This means that I have used information from all data collection instruments and measures of analysis in an integrated account in responding to this question.

Theoretically, in the final section, I have dwelled upon aspects which I developed in chapters 2 and 3. In particular, I have drawn on issues around the notion of schema as it has evolved historically and I have mentioned how this thesis has taken account of relevant aspects. More specifically, I have stressed that this thesis has captured the developmental, social, cultural and functional dimensions of schemata. I have also foregrounded the importance of image and emotion schemata within the cultural dimension of reading. I have emphasized the underlying centrality of cultural understanding as a fluid process in a continuum of cultural familiarity and unfamiliarity throughout this chapter and the previous one.

The breadth and scope of both results chapters (8 and 9) as far as the participants are concerned is wide. In other words, I have used data excerpts by all the participants and from all tasks based on the three texts for illustration purposes. In this sense, findings are representative of the kind of responses offered by this group of readers in this setting. This chapter and the previous one have prepared the way for the in-depth analysis of one participant that comes in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 10

AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF ONE READER, TESS

Introduction: the need for an in-depth analysis of one reader

Horizontal versus vertical analysis

Personal and social identifications

The nature of reading and reading performance: the exaltation of the unique and the peculiar

Some caveats

Overview of the chapter

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Conclusion

CHAPTER 10

AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF ONE READER, TESS

10.1. Introduction: the need for an in-depth analysis of one reader

10.1.1. *Horizontal versus vertical analysis*

In chapters 8 and 9 I have answered the research question by recourse to multiple examples by all participants from all data types by means of a horizontal data analysis process. I have argued in chapter 7 that multiple examples contribute to showing the breadth and variety of the responses to the selected fragments offered by these readers in this setting. The sampling involved in these chapters was intended to “make sure one has adequately understood the *variation* in the phenomena of interest in the setting” (Maxwell, 2002: 53, my italics). This issue of variation is linked to the use of multiple examples as a key strategy in the presentation of findings in these chapters.

This horizontal analysis has focused the attention on the group phenomenon, i.e. it has treated the participants as a group of ‘local’ readers, where local refers to their being Argentinean and therefore ‘periphery’ readers. These considerations need to be framed within the understanding that no claim is made here regarding the external generalizability of this qualitative study (chapter 6). By contrast, the notion of internal generalizability, discussed in chapter 6, is applicable, and refers to the possibility to say that the group of readers in this study can be seen as *similar* to other groups in the same course (English Language II), context (college students, prospective teachers and/or translators of English) and institution (Universidad Nacional de La Plata). Last but not least, I have dwelled at length on the tension and inseparability between the local and the universal in this research in chapter 2. In this respect, this horizontal analysis could be embedded in what Bishop (1999: 143) refers to as “the intrinsic case,” which seeks understanding of a particular case. “The case [is undertaken because it] represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but [above all] because, in all its *particularity* and *ordinariness*, this case is itself of interest” (Stake, 1994: 237) (my emphasis). The case describes “people in situations anywhere – including children and youth in schools – not just people who live in remote jungles or cosy peasant villages” (Spindler and Spindler, 1987: 17).

However, one weakness here is that the emphasis on breadth, variety and multiple examples does not reveal how each reader as an individual approached cultural understanding in this setting. What this chapter shall offer then is an in-depth vertical analysis of one participant. This analysis will show that in addition to this identification as local and periphery reader, this participant, as well as the others, are also readers who brought other identifications to the reading. This is worth doing since it counterbalances the possibility that the horizontal analysis in chapters 8 and 9 is perceived as a simplification based on these readers' local and peripheral identity.

This new analysis describes at the same time that it also disentangle meaning structures. This disentanglement becomes more evident through a vertical rather than a horizontal analysis because to emerge, meaning structures require details regarding the idiosyncrasy of the setting (i.e. sociocultural context) as well as, crucially, of the individual. This equals what Rosaldo (1993: 2) puts as “the gradual thickening of symbolic webs of meaning.” This chapter attempts to provide these webs of meaning for the case of one participant, Tess.

I have also justified the need for this exploratory and interpretive study in chapter 2 on the basis of the urge in the literature to rescue the local within culturally-specific contexts. In other words, the emphasis is on the importance of the local in a research effort that describes how literacy in English is lived in peripheral countries, of which Argentina is an example. More specifically, this study has investigated cultural understanding in EFL reading in a very specific setting within the country. Therefore, the focus on the local has been taken care of. Chapters 8 and 9 portray findings which are tied to these participants in this specific setting. As it shall become evident toward the end of the present chapter with the in-depth case, the local is present at all times here as well.

10.1.2. Personal and social identifications

What is missing in chapters 8 and 9, that constitutes a justification for this chapter, is the portrayal of an integral and holistic interpretation of one reader. I have argued in chapter 2 that a study which is conceived as this one is needs to rest on a fluid conception of identity as social identifications that simultaneously embody personal and social factors. This study therefore needs to bring to the surface how such multiple and fluid identifications are

involved in everything individuals undertake – in this case, specific instances of EFL reading encounters. One weakness of the studies reviewed in chapter 3, I have pointed out, is that they isolated one of these identifications (for instance, religion in Lipson, 1983) for the exploration of cultural understanding within an essentialist and static conception of culture. By contrast, this chapter with an in-depth analysis of one participant allows this reader to emerge from different social identifications and groupings such as the home, the community, the school, the university, the Argentine nation, and the Latin American continent (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000) in an integrated way within a dynamic conception of culture and a sociocultural conception of reading which brings these identifications to the foreground. The multiple examples in chapters 8 and 9 allowed the visualization of the foregoing in a partial way, as snapshots of certain selected aspects. In addition, the social factors present in chapters 8 and 9 describe the Argentinean reader, of a specific educational background, in this specific sociocultural context, while this chapter shall focus upon how these factors interact with personal/individual aspects and other identifications in the reading process. The interest does not reside in the individual as individual but rather as representative of the group. This chapter shall show that any individual reading will be determined by a range of identifications and not just the main one, which was the focus on the notion of local and peripheral readers.

This in-depth analysis chapter shall reveal who the selected reader for in-depth exploration is and what family, community, educational and other environments may have influenced how she read in this study (Burgess, Hecht and Lonigan, 2002; Norton and Toohey, 2001). Who this reader is as an individual in terms of her identifications with race, ethnicity, gender, social class, religion, language, etc. and how these factors simultaneously influenced and contributed to how she experienced reading in this setting (Chen, 2005; Chien-Hui Kuo, 2003; Gallas and Smagorinsky, 2002) shall become visible in this chapter. All the participants in this study enacted multiple identities as they read each prompt text, depending on the aspects that they chose to give prominence to on each occasion (language, religion, ethnicity, gender, social class, etc.). In this in-depth chapter these enactments become visible as I respond to the research question in an integral and holistic way by analyzing the case of one individual in greater depth.

Finally, the interest in and the importance of identity issues as they relate to intercultural competence has been argued convincingly (Byram, 2008, 2009, forthcoming; Byram and

Grundy, 2002) and also highlights the integration of the personal/unique and sociocultural dimensions in understanding another culture. For instance, chapters 8 and 9 with the findings have illustrated how cultural understanding in this setting proceeded by recourse to familiar (personal) knowledge and experience while simultaneously revealing the predominance of specific sociocultural conceptions around Christmas (for example, that Christmas is a family and happy gathering). In the present chapter, the social dimensions of a sociocultural conception of reading (in addition to that of the “local Argentinean”) shall become manifestly salient as I provide an in-depth analysis of one participant. I shall show how the local in the sense of the Argentinean identity is inevitably interrelated with the local in the sense of identifications with other social groups (gender, religion, social class, etc.).

10.1.3. The nature of reading and reading performance: the exaltation of the unique and the peculiar

These considerations regarding the personal and social identifications in reading are linked to some characteristics of reading and reading performance, which also serve as a justification for the need to include the analysis of one individual in this thesis. One such aspect is related to the inherent ambiguity concerning where meaning really resides (Pearson and Stephens, 1994). The concept of exactitude in reading comprehension is relative because it is a function of different factors such as the reader, certain text characteristics and purposes of reading, among others (Allington, 1994; Anderson, 2004; Bell and Perfetti, 1994; Kimmel and Magginitie, 1984; Paris, 2005; Pearson and Stephens, 1994; Ruddell and Unrau, 1994; Tierney and Pearson, 1994 a, b; Widdowson, 1980, 1984, 2003). What is considered appropriate comprehension varies from reader to reader and from context to context (Tierney and Pearson, 1994 a, b). It is therefore impossible to find an absolute meaning for a text because both private and public aspects are present in each reading (Rosenblatt, 1994). The impossibility to separate the personal from the social means that every reader is unique, and consequently there will always be diversity in interpretation. In this sense, every interpretation is idiosyncratic because personal interests affect reading purposes, the focus of attention during reading and the depth of comprehension searched and achieved (Tierney, 1994). Taking into account the foregoing, L1/L2 reading comprehension is not a mere indicator of reading capacity *per se* but reveals in part the processes of accommodation that a reader has experimented in learning how to

use language appropriately in different contexts (Berg, 2003; Bernhardt, 2003; Pearson and Stephens, 1994). In sum, multiple factors play a role in the uniqueness and the peculiarity of the comprehension process of any individual (Anstley and Bull, 2006).

The in-depth analysis of Tess shall capture this idiosyncrasy and diversity in interpretation as it shall provide a description of the interplay of personal and social factors involved in comprehension in this setting.

10.1.4. Some caveats

Since I have already answered the research question in chapters 8 and 9, strictly speaking, this chapter would not be necessary. However, the foregoing reasons motivate the need for this chapter because there is a point worth making here, which is that these are not readers with just one characteristic as local peripheral Argentinean readers. Rather, they all enacted multiple social identifications at different moments in the reading process.

Nevertheless, this research was not conceived or designed with the purpose of studying social identifications in reading. Instead, it draws upon social identifications as a possible theoretical framework from where to add to the issue under investigation in this thesis, namely cultural understanding in EFL reading in this setting. In this sense, this chapter is purposefully more tentative than the others and can be seen as a first step toward further research in the area of cultural understanding by raising potential ideas for future work. If the evidence cannot provide a fully convincing case at all times in this chapter, then this is because the research was not specifically designed for the investigation of social identifications in written language in the first place.

Furthermore, the analyses in this chapter are my own interpretations of Tess's texts. Even though I have taken account of the co-text and the context (Widdowson, 2004), in a longitudinal research effort whereby I was in contact with Tess for over a year, and I was consequently able to gain a privileged insider perspective to her process of reading, I by no means claim that my interpretations and analyses are more representative or valid than other possible interpretations and analyses.

I have mentioned in chapter 8 that close readings of the data and the selection of multiple examples were central, both in the process of analysis (chapter 7) and in the presentation of findings in chapters 8 and 9. The same is true of this chapter 10. Considering this, it is possible that some parts of my analyses can be seen as what Widdowson (2000: 22) calls “linguistics applied” (cf. applied linguistics), whereby texts are analyzed taking into account grammatical and lexical categories in isolation and specific claims regarding their significance are made. However, this chapter should be read with the understanding that one “cannot read discourse significance directly from a mode of signifying. The use of a [passive] construction might indeed be intended and interpreted in different ways, depending on how it figures in relation to other factors” (Widdowson, 1973; 2004: 95). Widdowson clarifies: “For it is precisely because encoded meaning always gives rise to various pragmatic interpretations that one cannot talk about a particular choice from the transitivity systems of the grammar expressing a particular ideational function in use, or why one cannot talk about a mood or a tense signifying of itself a particular position or perspective” (Widdowson, 2004: 96).

Although Widdowson’s caveats are framed within a discussion about the theory and methodology of critical discourse analysis, I find that they are pertinent for this chapter because in the process of scrutinizing Tess’s texts, it was not possible (or desirable) to examine every feature of her texts for their significance concerning a certain aspect of her social identifications and groupings in reading. Furthermore, the significance of Tess’s texts as evidence of her social identifications and groupings in this respect, as I myself saw that significance and as I report it here, needs to be seen with the awareness that “how the language is used to construct social identity and social relationships is [not] directly inferable from linguistic forms” (Widdowson, 2004: 94). What I shall try to show in this chapter is that these forms, grammatical and lexical, have interrelated co-textually (with each other and among themselves) and contextually (with the circumstances in which Tess used them), within the contextual specificity of this study.

10.2. Overview of the chapter

I start with a consideration of the problem of selection and then offer a brief rationale for my choice. I have decided to focus upon Tess. Anyway, as the previous chapters have

shown, any of these readers would have been a good choice for different reasons, as each individual was an exemplar of the depth and richness of response regarding the cultural content of reading in this context.

I conclude with a recurrent issue in this research, namely the topic of the depth, fluidity, flexibility and interconnectedness of such response, both among individuals across texts and tasks (as chapters 8 and 9 have shown) but also within the same reader. Crucial as well is the fact that the research design in this study has captured these participants' responses to the cultural content of the selected texts not only at the time of the actual reading but much later as well. To an extent, it can be safely said that this study has addressed the whole process of reading, including the *during* and *after*, as captured by the research question. It has shown how the delayed re-visiting of and reflection upon textual content has led to a reconsideration of text topics by the participants, much later after the actual reading had occurred. This is revealing simultaneously of the complexity of cultural understanding in this setting as well as of its approximate, fluid and constantly evolving nature.

In this chapter I highlight in italics the evidence for my analysis as it can be found in the tasks under inspection. Sometimes, when I wish to direct the attention to other specific issues, I highlight the evidence in bold and/or underlining in the extracts and say so explicitly. When the emphasis (italics, bold, etc.) belongs to the participant, I point this out. Otherwise, it is mine.

10.3. Issue of selection

Choosing the reader to include here has not been easy. The previous chapters have shown that all the participants had a quite sophisticated cultural (and literary) awareness. I have included there multiple examples from all the participants evidencing the depth and richness of their responses. These chapters have also served to illustrate the subtle differences in degrees of depth, complexity and details in their responses, as captured by the *Model of Cultural Understanding*. Given this overall sophistication and depth of response, there is no individual who can be said to be more worthy of inclusion in this chapter than any other.

Within this frame of mind, and contradictory as it may seem, the previous chapters have also shown that these readers' responses to the selected fragments were somewhat disparate in several ways. In a sense, and congruent with the justification for an interpretive exploratory study and the study of individuals which supports this thesis (chapter 2), each participant offered a peculiar and idiosyncratic account of how cultural understanding took place in this setting.

Let me explain my rationale for selection then, subjective though it is. My thinking was that it would be useful to analyze the process of comprehension of a participant who had been seen as reaching level 5 in the *Model of Cultural Understanding*, because this level, I have argued recurrently, constitutes the highest degree of depth within cultural understanding. As Table 19 in Appendix III shows, this level was erratic (note, however, that most responses were framed within levels 4, 4 plus and 5, i.e. high levels of cultural understanding). Beryl reached level 5 in the interview about *Desert Wife* and Luz in the reading response and interview based on *Mi planta de naranja-lima*. Two readers, however, evidenced overall consistency in this level of response in this study in all the tasks they produced. They were Tess and Victoria. I say overall because in all the tasks based on *Mi planta de naranja-lima*, both readers were judged as reaching level 4+ (four plus). It should be recalled that I added this level to the model during the process of data analysis in order to capture those responses which basically encompassed level 4 but which also included significant traces of level 5 embedded within themselves. There was no difference between Tess and Victoria regarding level assignment in the model as far as the texts in English were concerned because both readers reached level 5 in all tasks based on the fragments from *Cat's Eye* and *Desert Wife*.

Victoria was a singular case in this group of participants for a number of reasons (Table 1 in Appendix III). She was older than the rest, specifically between eight and twelve years older. She was the only one in her early thirties at the time of data collection. She had completed a five-year course of studies at this university and was a teacher of Spanish. It should be noted that none of the other participants held an undergraduate degree. Of the six Catholic participants, she was the only one who was a practising Catholic. Recall that information about religion was collected in the biographical questionnaire, given the religious perspectives present in the prompt texts. In addition, she was the only one who had not travelled extensively within Argentina. In fact, she reported two trips, family

vacations within the province of Buenos Aires, but too long before to remember, as she herself pointed out. Furthermore, she had a British boyfriend (who spoke almost no Spanish and whom she married some months later) and she was blind. Under these circumstances, it seemed reasonable to expect that Victoria would reach higher levels in the model than the other participants, considering that it was possible to believe that she would have deeper cultural sensitivity and awareness because of her unique life experiences among the group. It should be important at this point to recall, however, the pervasive presence of levels 4 and 4+ among these participants, mentioned in chapter 8 under propositional statement 5, i.e. high levels of cultural understanding nonetheless.

10.4. Tess: background information

I therefore chose Tess rather than Victoria because their levels of response were identical, though Tess had none of those specific characteristics that made Victoria a special case.

Looking into the specific profile of the participants in this study (Table 1 in Appendix III), Tess was, as the others, in her early twenties, had entered university in 2007, had taken my course, English Language II, in 2008, did not work, and was a regular Internet user. She lived in Berazategui and came to La Plata by train. Two facts are not minor here. One is the additional effort involved in pursuing studies in La Plata (when compared to the rest of the participants) because it took her one hour and a half only to arrive at university. The other is that she used the train, a means of transport much stigmatized as highly insecure, dirty, deficient and low class. Interestingly enough in this respect, when we met for data collection, and in particular during the debriefing that took place in a specific meeting after the closure of data collection, the other participants asked Tess about these aspects. They expressed concern and surprise and absolutely all of them compared and contrasted this situation with their own realities. Miranda Dana was shocked by the realization that she got up only ten minutes before an early morning lesson and arrived on time. This kind of interaction occurred among the participants themselves, and with myself too, after each data collection session (there were three, one for each text, during November 2009), and also in a later debriefing meeting which took place in March 2010. This data collection process allowed participants and researcher to know more about each other's realities, and it stimulated interaction and interest in such realities as well as incipient awareness of the

existence of totally diverging sociocultural contexts and lived experiences among the group.

Both Tess and Victoria were the only participants who had had no regular contact with foreign people in the course of their lives, though both had had this contact through the Internet at some point. Different from Victoria, Tess identified herself as an atheist. Different from Victoria too, but also from the others, Tess reported having travelled abroad eight times. Only two other participants had travelled abroad several times (Miranda Dana and Lula) but Tess was the only one who had visited English-speaking countries. Tess lived with her parents and an eighteen-year old brother. Overall, these elements reveal that Tess could be said to have had multiples opportunities in the course of her life to experience otherness.

Tess was an avid reader in both languages, had abundant reading material in both languages at home, and was used to buying books and using the library (Tables 2, 3, 4 in Appendix III, questionnaires about reading in English and in Spanish). She frequently read for pleasure and out of curiosity (internal motivations) in Spanish, though she rarely did so in English. Contradictorily as it may seem, she expressed she liked very much reading for these reasons in English. As I found these statements confusing, I contacted her by email and requested some clarification. At this point, seven months after data collection, she added that she did not have enough time to read for pleasure in English except during holidays, even though she loved it. She perceived she had lexical and content difficulties when reading in both languages. In both cases, she thought that she would become a better reader by reading more and talking about her readings with others.

10.5. Tess's reading as a young adult within specific groupings: the country, the community, the home

Tess's description of a Christmas celebration in Argentina in the prior knowledge task was general and did not include much culturally detailed information as other participants did. Of the twenty-seven specific aspects that appear in Table 5 (Appendix III), mentioned by these participants as a group, Tess explicitly referred to a few such as the presents, food, Nativity, dancing and visiting relatives. These are stereotypes of what Christmas involves

in this country, including Tess's community. She was reading from her social grouping identifications at this point, namely her community and country.

*En general, creo que la gente se prepara aprovisionándose de cosas, regalos y comida para la celebración de nochebuena. A veces hay celebraciones previas, como pesebres vivientes, pero las reuniones más importantes son las del 24 a la noche. **La gente suele** quedarse festejando hasta al menos 1.30 o más de la madrugada. Los más jóvenes a veces vamos a visitar amigos después de las doce, y también **se puede** ir a bailar o salir a algún otro lado. Al día siguiente **suelen** continuar las visitas a parientes, amigos, etc., pero **en general** al mediodía o a la tarde. **Se va a** ver a las personas con las que todavía **no se pudo** estar.
(Tess, prior knowledge task, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)*

This description is simultaneously tinted by intrusions from her own cultural practices at Christmas, in particular those typical of her age group, such as celebrating till 1.30am or later. The generalization and naturalization of such practices as universal is signalled by phrases like *en general*, *la gente* and verbs like *suele* (in bold in the extract). Tess specifically differentiated customs by age when she pointed out that younger generations like herself tend to go out after midnight (“Los más jóvenes a veces *vamos* a visitar amigos después de las doce”). The use of the first person plural is evidence of her identification with this age group. Here she was reading from one specific social identification (Byram et al., 2009), namely age.

Immediately before this recognition, however, she generalized the habit of celebrating till after 1.30 (“*La gente suele* quedarse festejando hasta al menos 1.30 o más de la madrugada”). In other words, despite some phrases which narrow the focus of her affirmations to certain groups (such as “los más jóvenes”, including herself in this group) and some expressions of frequency (“a veces”), she did not show that she was aware of the existence of difference in Christmas traditions within Argentina among different age groups for instance. Furthermore, she used her own cultural practices in the home as the basis for her description of cultural practices in Argentina as a whole, something that she herself acknowledged next. What we see at play here, therefore, is her identification with different groupings such as the home, the community and the country (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000). Note the religious reference to “pesebres vivientes.” I shall discuss her religious identification later.

When prompted by one specific question in the prior knowledge task about Christmas celebrations within her family circle, i.e. the home in Norton's (2000) terms, she did not add anything and in fact pointed out that she had resorted to her own personal experience to write the previous account ("como si me hubiera basado en *mi experiencia personal* para hablar de la *generalidad*"). In what can be seen as an apparent contradiction, it is important to note that in this account she did show awareness of the existence of cultural differences among the different provinces within Argentina regarding Christmas habits. Note again the influence of community groupings, revealed in her awareness of different cultural practices in different provinces within the country.

Creo que los festejos en mi casa son prácticamente como los que describí en el punto 1, como si me hubiera basado en mi experiencia personal para hablar de la generalidad. Y es muy probable que en otras provincias del país los festejos sean totalmente distintos.

(Tess, prior knowledge task, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

Even though she had spent some Christmas celebrations outside her home (and this was a characteristic that was unique to her), including one in the northern hemisphere, she perceived this one as similar to those in Argentina, and therefore concluded that in fact she did not know different ways of celebrating Christmas. Although she acknowledged that differences between Christmas in the US and in her country exist, and was able to identify some ("*no teníamos nada de la decoración típica de arbolitos y esas cosas, y además fue una navidad en invierno y con frío*"), her understanding of Christmas was very much tied to her experiences in her home ("*Esas navidades fueron parecidas a las que pasé en mi casa*").

Pasé algunas navidades fuera de mi hogar. Una vez fue con mis tíos. Como estábamos de vacaciones no teníamos nada de la decoración típica de arbolitos y esas cosas, y además fue una navidad en invierno y con frío. Otras veces la pasamos en la casa de mi abuela o de unos amigos. Esas navidades fueron parecidas a las que pasé en mi casa en los rituales, la decoración, las comidas, los fuegos artificiales, solamente que solía haber más gente (lo que para mí es mejor). En conclusión diría que no conozco muchas formas distintas de celebrar la navidad.

(Tess, prior knowledge task, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

The foregoing is revealing of the strong influence of social groupings in Tess's interpretations, ranging from the home ("*Creo que los festejos en mi casa son prácticamente como los que describí en el punto 1, como si me hubiera basado en mi*

experiencia personal para hablar de la generalidad”), the community (her own and others; “como si me hubiera basado en mi *experiencia personal* para hablar de la generalidad. Y es muy probable que *en otras provincias del país* los festejos sean totalmente distintos”) and the country as a whole (“en general,” “la gente suele,” etc.).

In the interview based on the text in Spanish, Tess compared and contrasted her own cultural practices around Christmas, Christmas in different places, and the fragments from *Mi planta de naranja-lima* and *Cat’s Eye* in this respect. She therefore simultaneously activated meanings associated with different groupings such as her home, her community, her country, Brazil as a Latin American country, and the US and India in other continents. An incidental comment here is that this interview extract illustrates her whole process of reading, both *during* the reading itself (in bold in the extract) as well as *after* reading (underlined) in the production of her tasks, as we see Tess striving to find whatever was hidden beneath the tip of the iceberg, i.e. the physical text itself.

M.: “...para sectores de otros orígenes.” ¿Qué orígenes?

T.: Dije “otros orígenes” como para decir algo amplio, porque no sabía si ponerle... qué palabra usar, si otras culturas, otros países... porque a veces es como que se confunden los términos.

M.: Ah, o sea que es algo...

T.: ...y se me ocurrió poner “orígenes”.

M.: Está bien. Es una solución ahí... **¿Pero qué pensaste? ¿A vos, a tu mente qué se vino?**

T.: No sé...

M.: **¿Qué pensaste**, en países, pensaste en... clases sociales, en culturas, en qué?

T.: No, en culturas, creo.

M.: En culturas.

T.: *Pero bien remotas, porque la Navidad dentro de todo me parece como algo bastante extendido, por lo menos en todo América, entonces tiene que ser algo bien remoto. Por eso no sabía bien si poner “culturas”, porque puede ser de otras culturas diferentes pero que coincidan en eso, en cómo festejan la Navidad o... y que lo entiendan igual, aunque no sea exactamente lo mismo.*

M.: A vos, eso ¿qué motivó este comentario, el hecho de las zapatillas?

T.: (Pausa) Sí, por ejemplo, y *que no es exactamente lo mismo como se dejan los regalos... pero la idea es más o menos la misma.*

M.: Hm.

T.: Se puede comparar por lo menos, no es tan distinto como para que no haya...

M.: Y vos estás pensando en alguien que no conoce la Navidad.

T.: *Claro, por ejemplo en el texto anterior, que hablaba del indio, directamente no tienen esa celebración.*

M.: Entiendo.

T.: *No tienen con qué comparar.*

M.: Entiendo, perfecto.

(Tess, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

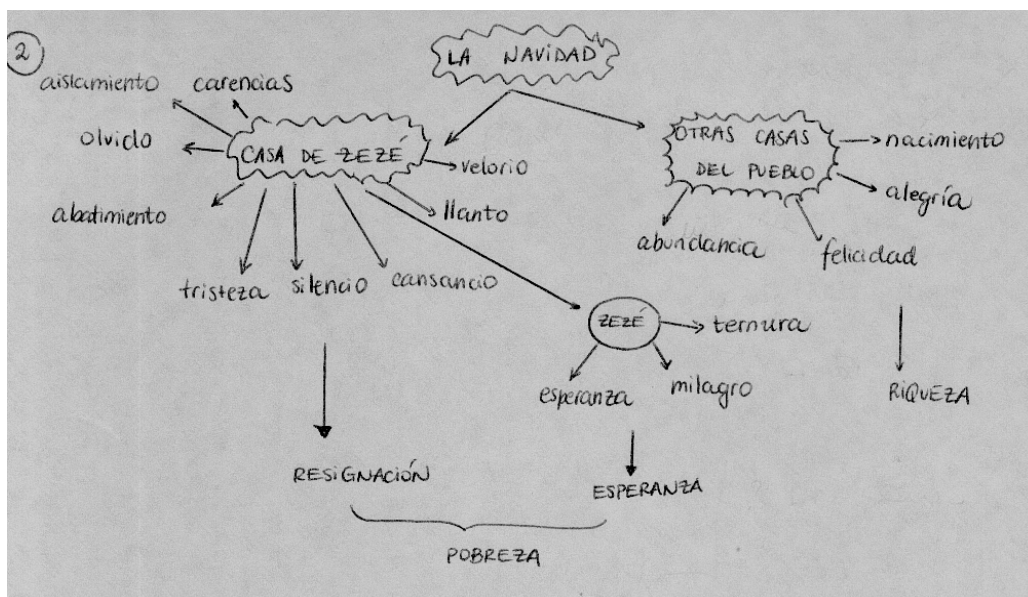
The enactment of her identifications with these different groupings is revealed through meta-cultural reflections such as the universality of Christmas in some cultures (“porque la Navidad dentro de todo *me parece como algo bastante extendido, por lo menos en todo América*”), irrespective of the different ways in which each different culture celebrates it (“porque puede ser de otras culturas diferentes pero *que coincidan en eso, en cómo festejan la Navidad o... y que lo entiendan igual, aunque no sea exactamente lo mismo,*” “que no es *exactamente lo mismo* como se dejan los regalos... *pero la idea es más o menos la misma*”) and the usefulness of having a basis for comparing and contrasting in her attempt to approach otherness in this text (“Se puede *comparar* por lo menos”).

At one point in the reading response task based on *Mi planta de naranja-lima*, Tess foregrounded an identification based on age again. This identification is different from the previous one in this section (as a young adult who visits friends or goes dancing after 12pm at Christmas) in the sense that Tess did not identify herself as belonging to the age group under her consideration, children. What she did was use her understanding of what childhood means as well as the qualities and characteristics that she attributed to children in general as the basis for her interpretation of the fragment. Tess placed herself on Zeze’s side and portrayed the situation from his eyes, i.e. neither richness nor poverty in general terms but rather poverty as experienced by the child in the text. Seeing through Zezé’s eyes is revealing of Tess’s capacity to position herself in the shoes of a poor and sad child in another culture and to decentre, which is one of the components expected in the development of intercultural competence (“En tanto, las familias más ricas comparten comidas muy abundantes y festejan con fuegos artificiales. *Todo este lujo resulta incomprendible para el protagonista, que no puede compatibilizar las enseñanzas religiosas y el origen humilde del niño Dios con la ostentación y con la marcada diferencia que hay entre un hogar y otro.*”). Tess’s reading from an identification based on age is manifest in this case in the view that children’s characteristic innocence and naivety do not allow Zezé to understand the clash between his religious upbringing, his family’s poverty and the richness of the others. The association between children and hope in connection with Zezé’s longing for a present towards the end of the reading response is another instance of this identification (“*El chico es el único que parece conservar, sin embargo, la esperanza de que la situación mejore. Esta esperanza se manifiesta como el deseo de recibir un regalo en esa navidad*”).

El texto que se presenta es un fragmento de una novela brasileña, en el que se retrata cómo vive una familia pobre una de las celebraciones religiosas del país: el nacimiento del hijo de Dios. El pasaje se centra en cómo esa fiesta que es para muchos un motivo de alegría refleja también la situación penosa y la miseria en que viven muchos habitantes. Por un lado, la narración nos muestra que los adultos de la familia viven la jornada con tristeza y resignación; por otra parte, se presenta la sensación de impotencia que se genera en otros personajes por el marcado contraste entre ricos y pobres. [Comment 1: Por una situación de injusticia] La familia no tiene dinero ni para hacer algún obsequio a los más pequeños, como se acostumbra, e intenta explicar la falta culpando al niño, como si fuera un castigo por haber sido malo. En tanto, las familias más ricas comparten comidas muy abundantes y festejan con fuegos artificiales. *Todo este lujo resulta incomprensible para el protagonista, que no puede compatibilizar las enseñanzas religiosas y el origen humilde del niño Dios con la ostentación y con la marcada diferencia que hay entre un hogar y otro. El chico es el único que parece conservar, sin embargo, la esperanza de que la situación mejore. Esta esperanza se manifiesta como el deseo de recibir un regalo en esa navidad.* (Tess, reading response task, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

At all times Tess's *evaluations* of textual content permeated her reading response task through lexical and grammatical choices that revealed her identifications with Zezé as a child as well as with his poverty and sadness ("situación *penosa*," "*marcado* contraste," "*no tiene dinero ni para hacer algún* obsequio," "*como si fuera* un castigo," "comidas *muy* abundantes," "*marcada* diferencia"). Following Eiser (1996: 128), this use of "evaluatively-laden language" shows the own opinions of the user of such language. In this case, such language use reveals Tess's interpretation (that Zezé cannot understand the clash between his religious upbringing, his family's poverty and the richness of the others) on the basis of her conception of children as innocent and naïve.

The association between Zezé's childhood and Tess's assumption that childhood is linked to tenderness, hope and miracle ("*ternura*," "*esperanza*," "*milagro*") is clear in the visual representation as well. This association reveals an identification and decentring based on age in this task too.



(Tess, visual representation, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

In the interview, Tess clarified and explained her understanding of tenderness (“*ternura*”) as connected with the fact that Zezé was a child and that he played with the Nativity. We again see her reading from an identification based on age, basically regarding the association children-childhood-tenderness-innocence-play.

M.: (Pausa) ¿Y en qué sentido Zezé representa la ternura? Porque "milagro" y "esperanza" es claro, ¿no es cierto?, a través de las zapatillas y esperar un regalo... pero ¿y la ternura? ¿Por qué te generó ternura?

T.: Me parece más que nada por... porque *lo veo como... los niños, la ternura... la inocencia... quizás por la edad del personaje y también la parte cuando estaba... en el pesebre, cómo jugaba con el pesebre...*

M.: Entiendo.

T.: *Que agarraba los caballitos...*

(Tess, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

In an interview extract based on *Cat's Eye*, Tess reflected on the topic of alienation in a child in connection with the narrator, Elaine. Tess attempted to explain the child's behaviour from the child's cultural perspective, enacting an identification and decentring based on age (in bold) and embedding this explanation in a meta-cultural comment (“*las costumbres o los modos de actuar que van... van cambiando el modo de pensar, lo van modelando distinto a lo que era antes, porque la nena actuaría de otra manera si no estuviera con la familia o si no le impusieran ser de tal manera*”). I say that this is another instance of an identification based on age because Tess's reading at this point was

permeated by her belief that children's behaviour is supposed to be strongly influenced by their family context ("porque la nena actuaría de otra manera si no estuviera con la familia o si no le impusieran ser de tal manera"). In addition, she again used her understanding that children are naïve and innocent in her interpretation of the fragment when she considered Elaine to be adult-like because she rationalized precisely in the way an adult would. At this point Tess was therefore contrasting her age-group identification as a young adult with that of the character she was analyzing, a child. In so doing she was using this age-group perspective to gain a new interpretation of the text.

M.: Hm. (Pausa) "El narrador también señala que hay similitudes entre ellos. Una de las características que nota es que ambos se sienten alienados y extranjeros de algún modo". Yo te pregunto por qué el narrador o la narradora está alienada. ¿Es posible concebir a un niño (porque es una niña en realidad) alienada? ¿Cómo es posible que un niño esté alienado?

T.: Esa parte creo que la saqué del texto, que ella...

M.: Sí, pero ¿cómo vos interpretás eso?

T.: No sé...

M.: ¿Es posible que un niño esté alienado para vos?

T.: *Para mí algunas de las palabras que usaba parece que **no eran la mentalidad de... de un nene.***

M.: Que era algo más... ¿más qué?

T.: ***Más adulto, que racionalizaba las acciones de otra forma más crítica, como eso que dividía entre personas domesticadas y salvajes...***

M.: Hm. ¿Y qué puede reflejar que un niño haga este tipo de... de comentarios? ¿Es revelador de alguna otra cosa? Digamos, no es menor que lo hace una niña, que esos pensamientos ocurren en la cabeza de una niña. Porque en realidad son pensamientos, no habla de eso. Ella no habla de eso en la mesa.

T.: (Pausa) Hm, no sé... Viéndolo en el texto por ahí es... como que las costumbres o los modos de actuar que van... van cambiando el modo de pensar, lo van modelando distinto a lo que era antes, **porque la nena actuaría de otra manera si no estuviera con la familia o si no le impusieran ser de tal manera...**

M.: Hm.

T.: Por ahí debe ser eso. Por ahí, **siendo el adulto que está recordando lo que... lo que vivió cuando era nena** y entonces pone su propio pensamiento.

M.: No te entendí.

T.: Claro, **la adulta escribe como...**

M.: ...como si fuera una niña.

T.: Claro.

M.: Ah, o sea que en realidad no estamos... ¿Ah, **es un adulto que escribe recordando memorias de niño?**

T.: Sí.

(Tess, interview, *Cat's Eye*)

Closely connected with this age-group identification, Tess's capacity to switch perspectives and decentre is worth further comment. In this previous extract, she reflected on different perspectives by a same individual (Elaine) at different points in time in the

course of life (as a child and as an adult remembering memories from herself as a child; in bold in the extract) bringing in a generational dimension to her interpretation, and resulting in the identification of a possible genre for the fragment (“siendo el adulto que está recordando lo que... lo que vivió cuando era nena y entonces pone su propio pensamiento”). Worth noting here is the subtle issue of whose thoughts are portrayed in the text, Elaine’s as a child or as an adult who is recollecting memories but nonetheless embeds her thinking as an adult within those recollections (“siendo el adulto que está recordando lo que... lo que vivió cuando era nena y *entonces pone su propio pensamiento*”). Once more we see the exploration of multiple perspectives, in particular perspectives that differ because of the age factor.

10.6. Tess’s reading as an atheist

In the prior knowledge task about *Mi planta de naranja-lima*, Tess expressed that she did not specifically know about Christmas celebrations in Brazil. She made the assumption that religion plays a key role because in her view “Catholisim is even more ingrained” [than in Argentina] (“*el catolicismo está todavía más arraigado*”). This comparison with her country is interesting, considering that she had manifested her lack of knowledge regarding this celebration in Brazil and taking into account the fact that she was an atheist. Put differently, she highlighted here one of her social identifications, namely as an atheist (Ysseldyk, Kimberly and Anisman, 2010) (the same applies to the reference to “pesebres vivientes” in the previous section). Even though being an atheist does not exclude religious knowledge, she showed no evidence of being in a knowledgeable position to affirm that “Catholisim is even more ingrained” in Brazil than in Argentina. Despite her tendency to generalize in this way, in particular through the use of the present tense (“*el catolicismo está todavía más arraigado*”), she simultaneously showed tentativeness in all her statements about religiosity through verbs like *supongo* and modality like *debe* to make a deduction (“*el aspecto religioso debe jugar el papel primordial*”). Note the use of evaluative language in “*el catolicismo está todavía más arraigado*” in order to project her own opinion (Eiser, 1996).

No sé exactamente cómo son todas las costumbres en Brasil para Navidad. Sé que por ejemplo, les gusta festejar en la playa si están en la costa, y que los fuegos artificiales son espectaculares. *Creo también que el catolicismo está todavía más arraigado y supongo que el aspecto religioso debe jugar el papel primordial.*
(Tess, prior knowledge task, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

In the immediate reflection log based on the text in Spanish, the link between the placing of the trainers on the other side of the door and the religious festivity of the Three Wise Men in Argentina is an example of the resort to prior and familiar knowledge about religion for interpreting otherness within an ongoing process of comparing and contrasting. Here Tess was reading from a social identification of atheism (Ysseldyk, Kimberly and Anisman, 2010). She brought to the surface her knowledge of religious festivities in the country by comparing and contrasting the cultural practices present in the fragment and in her own culture (“*por comparación con nuestra propia cultura* podemos inferir lo no dicho o reconstruir cómo es la celebración de la navidad que se narra ... podemos inferir que los niños tienen que dejar sus zapatos para que le dejen los regalos. *Aunque no hacemos acá lo mismo, podemos entenderlo porque tenemos esa costumbre en el día de Reyes.*”). This foregrounding of the religious in the comparison with the Three Wise Men is interesting because even though she identified herself as an atheist, she simultaneously acknowledged that she engaged and participated in this religious festivity through her use of first person plural pronouns and references (“*nuestra, hacemos, podemos, tenemos,*” in bold in the extract). Note also the interrelationship of the different groupings mentioned in the previous section, namely the home, the community and the country (“*nuestra propia cultura*”, “*acá*”).

Creo que las dificultades que tuve para comprender el texto fueron principalmente por el contenido de la historia y no tanto desde el punto de vista cultural. Me parece que con los elementos que da el texto y *por comparación con **nuestra** propia cultura* podemos inferir lo no dicho o reconstruir cómo es la celebración de la navidad que se narra. [Comment 1: Lo no dicho sería el “background” de información que el autor puede dar por supuesto, por considerarlo parte del conocimiento compartido con el lector.] Por ejemplo, se puede deducir que la “rabanada” es una comida y no hace falta saber el significado más preciso para comprender el texto. O podemos inferir que los niños tienen que dejar sus zapatos para que le dejen los regalos. *Aunque no **hacemos** acá lo mismo, **podemos** entenderlo porque **tenemos** esa costumbre en el día de Reyes. Seguramente para lectores de otros orígenes el texto resultaría mucho más difícil.* [Comment 2: Si pensamos que hay una historia común entre las culturas latinoamericanas y muchas tradiciones católicas comunes, lo cual nos acerca al texto y probablemente no sería así para otros pueblos.]
(Tess, reflection log, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

While in the majority of the cases participants referred to Christmas by using the word Christmas itself, in her reading response task Tess used a generalization like “one of the religious celebrations of the country” (“*una de las celebraciones religiosas del país*”), tied to a brief description of which one it was, from a religious standpoint (“the birth of the son of God”; “*el nacimiento del hijo de Dios*”). Several aspects can be seen as noteworthy

here. One is the fact that Tess reserved the use of the word Christmas for the very end of her text. Her task concluded with this word. I highlight the contrast with the other participants in this respect. Another is precisely the religious standpoint in her definition of Christmas, when she had expressed in the biographical questionnaire that she was an atheist. This may be connected with her belief, as stated in the prior knowledge task, that the religious aspect was very much ingrained in Brazilian society. What I think this is revealing of is the foregrounding of her social identification of atheism (or “irreligion” following Ysseldyk, Kimberly and Anisman, 2010: 65) as well as Tess’s ability to decentre, i.e. to see Christmas from a perspective which was not her own, in this case the religious. This ability is a characteristic of the highest levels of cultural understanding as portrayed in the *Model of Cultural Understanding* (chapter 4). At the same time, I mentioned above and elsewhere in the previous chapters that there is something stereotyped from a cultural standpoint in Tess’s assumption that the religious connotation can be generalized to the Brazilians as a national group.

El texto que se presenta es un fragmento de una novela brasileña, en el que se retrata cómo vive una familia pobre *una de las celebraciones religiosas del país: el nacimiento del hijo de Dios*. El pasaje se centra en cómo esa fiesta que es para muchos un motivo de alegría refleja también la situación penosa y la miseria en que viven muchos habitantes. Por un lado, la narración nos muestra que los adultos de la familia viven la jornada con tristeza y resignación; por otra parte, se presenta la sensación de impotencia que se genera en otros personajes por el marcado contraste entre ricos y pobres. [Comment 1: Por una situación de injusticia] La familia no tiene dinero ni para hacer algún obsequio a los más pequeños, como se acostumbra, e intenta explicar la falta culpando al niño, como si fuera un castigo por haber sido malo. En tanto, las familias más ricas comparten comidas muy abundantes y festejan con fuegos artificiales. Todo este lujo resulta incomprensible para el protagonista, que no puede compatibilizar las enseñanzas religiosas y el origen humilde del niño Dios con la ostentación y con la marcada diferencia que hay entre un hogar y otro. El chico es el único que parece conservar, sin embargo, la esperanza de que la situación mejore. Esta esperanza se manifiesta como el deseo de recibir un regalo *en esa navidad*.

(Tess, reading response task, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

Tess’s analysis of one cultural idea unit in the interview, namely the birth of Devil child (*niño Diablo*), originated further reflections on religious aspects in an enactment of a religious social identification of atheism again.

M.: Entiendo. Y acá, que pusiste, “el nacimiento del niño diablo”, no lo recordaste.

T.: Sí. Después volví al texto y... en el momento me acordaba pero... *no me acordaba qué relación tenía con la historia, en qué momento aparecía*, entonces después para marcar si era esencial o no... volví al texto y ahí lo vi.

M.: Está bien. ¿Por qué algunos aspectos religiosos son esenciales y otros auxiliares? O sea, lo religioso, ¿es todo importante o no es todo importante? ¿O es posible discriminar entre distintos aspectos de lo religioso?

T.: No, *me pareció que algunos no eran tan importantes, como la Misa de Gallo...*

(Tess, interview, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

In interpreting the fragment from *Cat's Eye*, Tess resorted to her familiar knowledge of religion to understand the concept of Sunday school through an intertextual link with the Simpsons.

M.: ¿Lo religioso? No está muy presente en... en las tareas. Eso de "Sunday School" y "Missionary paper"... Lo ponés como accesible, ¿sabés lo que es?

T.: Me parece que *la escuela dominical*, pero... *más de los Simpson me parece que lo saqué.*

M.: Lo sacaste de los Simpson.

T.: Sí, *ahí van a la escuela.*

(Tess, interview, *Cat's Eye*)

She judged the religious perspective to be auxiliary in the text.

M.: *¿Y por qué lo religioso es auxiliar?* No sé si me contestaste antes.

T.: (Pausa) Me pareció porque... digamos, *no hacían comparaciones con el hindú...*

T.: Ah, porque no estaba atado, relacionado a la cultura.

(Tess, interview, *Cat's Eye*)

Even though she associated the scientific discourse with the religious aspect, she chose not to favour this line of interpretation ("*El discurso científico por ahí me parece que está más relacionado con la religión, pero eso... como que esa parte no la analicé pero... pensé que estaba relacionado con... si el hombre puede jugar a ser Dios, qué límites tiene, pero no exploré mucho ese lado, por eso*").

M.: Acá marcás que todas, todas las historias relacionadas con la naturaleza, los tomates, los pollos, los gatos, qué sé yo, son todas esenciales, y a su vez ponés que el discurso científico de la biología es algo auxiliar. ¿No hay una contradicción? ¿No son ejemplos, todos éstos, de la referencia a la biología, del discurso científico?

T.: *El discurso científico por ahí me parece que está más relacionado con la religión, pero eso... como que esa parte no la analicé pero... pensé que estaba relacionado con... si el hombre puede jugar a ser Dios, qué límites tiene, pero no exploré mucho ese lado, por eso.*

M.: Bueno, gracias.

(Tess, interview, *Cat's Eye*)

Although scant research exists in the area of the social identification of atheism, as Ysseldyk, Kimberly and Anisman (2010) remark, the researchers make an interesting point which may shed light on Tess's decision not to focus on the religiosity of the text. They state that religious social identifications (atheism included) are simultaneously religious affiliations at the time that they become worldviews or frameworks of understanding. In their own words: "it could be argued that atheism, like religion, coincides with an epistemological and ontological framework through which to understand and interpret the world (...) Certainly, such a belief system also offers potential explanations regarding what can be known and what can exist and is likely to be of great import to those whose self identification as an atheist is central" (Ysseldyk, Kimberly and Anisman, 2010: 65). As a broad framework of understanding, Tess's atheism may have emphasized her lack of identification with the religious perspective at this point in the text ("como que esa parte no la analicé").

In the prior knowledge task based on the fragment from *Desert Wife*, Tess manifested not knowing anything about the Navajos, and not recalling any source that talked about a Christmas celebration by the Navajos. Notice that she appeared to be dubious that they did celebrate Christmas ("*ni siquiera* sabía que la festejan"). In the interview, she also mentioned the doubt that a Christian celebration by an Indian group generated in her. Interestingly, as an experienced language user and learner, she worked on an assumption of coherence (Levy, 2003 a, b; Sawyer, 2003). This means that as a good reader she approached the text with this assumption that it would indeed make sense and therefore invested time and effort to interpret it. She consequently explored the option that the Navajos did celebrate Christmas further, but within her frame of mind, i.e. her belief that the Navajos were pagan and the centrality of the idea of the melting pot ("*amalgama de diferentes tradiciones*").

Verdaderamente *no sé nada acerca de la celebración de la navidad de los Indios Navajos, ni siquiera sabía que la festejan*, y tampoco sé mucho de la tribu en general. No recuerdo ninguna fuente en que se mencionara esa celebración. Puede ser relevante el que *muchas tribus adoptan las celebraciones cristianas pero incorporan elementos de sus propios rituales y cultura. Pienso que por ahí la celebración de la navidad que hacen los Navajos puede tener ese carácter de amalgama de diferentes tradiciones.*

(Tess, prior knowledge task, *Desert Wife*)

M.: ¿Celebran los Navajos la Navidad?

T.: Sí, no... *no sé* que es lo que... Yo puse ahí que *me quedaba pendiente cuál era el sentido que le daban a esa fecha, porque ellos sí nombran como que están esperando la Navidad, y después cuándo va a llegar, y hablan de la Navidad, pero no queda claro qué sentido le dan ellos.*

(Tess, interview, *Desert Wife*)

In response to a question in the prior knowledge task that required participants to imagine what they thought a celebration of this kind would be like, Tess focused on the contrasts with her own traditions at Christmas, emphasizing her religious identification of atheism (in italics). For instance, the Navajos do not celebrate the birth of Christ, do not give presents, and there is no Nativity. These denials related to the religious spirit of Christmas can be seen as an enactment of her religious identity as an atheist.

Me imagino que debe haber vestimentas especiales que se usan para el festejo, muy coloridas, bailes y canciones típicas, comidas también especiales pero diferentes de las que tiene la típica cena navideña en EEUU. Debe festejarse un solo día, no me imagino que haya una cena un día y siga la celebración al día siguiente. *Puede ser también que no se den regalos, o que haya pero algún regalo en especial (por ejemplo, algún tipo de muñecos para los chicos). Creo que pueden relacionar el festejo con sus propias creencias religiosas, no necesariamente celebrar el nacimiento de Cristo. Tampoco creo que haya pesebres.*

(Tess, prior knowledge task, *Desert Wife*)

In the immediate reflection log, Tess also reflected on her drive to know more about the meaning of Christmas for the Navajos (“*Me gustaría saber algunas cosas que no se mencionan en el texto, como el sentido que los Navajos le dan a la celebración*”). She added a post commentary four months after the closure of data collection, expanding on aspects that she felt curious about, such as when the celebration was introduced and whether it would be similar nowadays (Comment, “Desde cuándo se introdujo la celebración, si es así en la actualidad”).

Los aspectos culturales que me causaron dificultad en el texto en general no aparecen subrayados porque se podía comprender todo leyendo con cuidado. Quizá lo que sí me pareció es que el texto era demandante porque había que prestar atención a los detalles o a ciertos pasajes (como el de los chicos y los caramelos) que no se entienden del todo en una primera lectura. Pero creo que como la narradora es una observadora externa a la cultura de los Navajos, la describe desde nuestra perspectiva y en un grado de detalle que la hace comprensible, aunque varíe el modo de festejar la navidad en varios aspectos. *Me gustaría saber algunas cosas que no se mencionan en el texto, como el sentido que los Navajos le dan a la celebración*, [Comment 1: Desde cuándo se introdujo la celebración, si es así en la actualidad, etc.] pero no son aspectos sin los cuales no se pueda entender el fragmento.

(Tess, reflection log, *Desert Wife*)

10.7. Gender identification reflected on Tess's linguistic choices

A myriad of research has been carried out on language use and gender. Central for my purpose in this section is the notion that written discourse may contain linguistic markers by which writers convey their multiple identifications, including gender (biological sex) and gender role orientation (gender role schema). Winn and Rubin (2001: 396-397) say: "Early studies of gender and language (Edelsky, 1976; Kramer, Thorne, & Henley, 1978; Lakoff, 1975) associate female speakers with features that hedge or blunt assertions (e.g., "maybe," "sort of," "I guess") and avoid conflict with listeners by the use of politeness formulas (e.g., "if you don't mind" or the use of question forms rather than bald requests). Other "markers" commonly associated with female language include the use of double-sided arguments (e.g., "It was probably Shakespeare's sister, but then again, some people believe it was Marlowe"), expressions of uncertainty (e.g., "I don't know, but . . ."), and the use of certain vocabulary likely to be judged as trivial (e.g., fine grained color terms such as *fuchsia*)."

Beyond the specificity of findings in this field, one underlying conclusion seems to be that the social identifications expressed through language belong to a continuum (rather than being susceptible of being manifested in dichotomies such as male-female) and vary significantly with the elements of the communicative situation (i.e. the context in which language is used) (Winn and Rubin, 2001). Furthermore, gender typicality in writing can be difficult to establish, considering that more recent research has revealed that men's and women's language is more similar than different and that apparent differences tend to be context specific (Winn and Rubin, 2001). Finally, the caveats that I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter are particularly in order in this section. The central idea there was that there is a difference between semantically encoded meaning and pragmatically realized meaning. On this ground, what this section might wrongly imply is "that encoded meaning is carried intact into contextual use, that pragmatic significance is a direct function of semantic signification" (Widdowson, 2004: 98) when in fact it is impossible to "read off significance from text as if it were a simple projection from textual features" (Widdowson, 2000: 19).

Despite the notion of a continuum, the determining influence of the context, and the notion of “*functional fallacy*” (i.e. “the assumption that semantic signification is directly projected as pragmatic significance in language use”) (Widdowson, 2004: 96, his emphasis), many empirical studies investigating gender in discourse have revealed that certain language features have been traditionally associated with female writing. Winn and Rubin (2001: 398-399) report research findings which have “revealed a series of written language features that have traditionally been linked with gender, including markers of excitability (e.g., the use of underlining or exclamation points), nonessentials (e.g., dashes and parentheses), connectives (a combination of illustrators, illatives, adversatives, causals, additives, temporals, and conditionals), and hedges (e.g., a combination of intensifiers, deintensifiers, proximals, modal adjuncts, perceptual verbs and auxiliaries of possibility, audience acknowledgements, first-person markers, enumerations, and sentence length/verbosity).” In general, the markers of nonessential information (dashes, parentheses) can be seen as signalling digressiveness and/or the embellishment of a text while markers of excitability (exclamation points, underlining) may signal high emotionality and may also be used to embellish the text. Hedges may signal the writer’s tentativeness or lack of assertiveness towards propositional content. Furthermore, the use of first-person pronouns in conjunction with verbs of perception, affect, or cognition (I guess/feel/suppose/imagine. . .) signals tentativeness or subjectivity (Winn and Rubin, 2001).

On the basis of the foregoing, it is possible to say that the immediate reflection log based on *Cat’s Eye* shows this use of tentative language, speculations and deductions, modality, hedging devices as well as other subtle resources (not only here but in the majority of Tess’s tasks; in bold in the extract), which might be seen as a characteristic of gender enactment in writing. As an experienced and knowledgeable user of the language, Tess manipulated linguistic choices in order to appear more or less assertive, more or less tentative, at different points in her texts.

No encontré muchas dificultades desde el punto de vista cultural. **Si bien** no conozco algunos personajes o platos típicos que nombran, no conocerlos no impide comprender el texto. [Comment 1: Aunque sea posible comprender el texto, seguramente cuantas más referencias culturales conozcamos, más ricos y variados van a ser los sentidos que podamos encontrar en él.] Alcanzan los datos del contexto o las descripciones para imaginarse a qué apunta cada cosa. **Me parece** haber leído textos parecidos donde se recibía a un extranjero en una casa de familia en inglés, y **puede ser que eso** ayude también a entender mejor el texto.

Creo que en el subrayado número (3) [Comment 2: “You can’t fly on one wing”]

debe haber una frase hecha que no conozco, **o puede ser que** en la situación imaginaria de los personajes haya elementos en los que se basa la broma del padre (más allá de que los dos, él y el estudiante, están interesados en la biología). **Se me ocurre que** la frase hecha **puede ser** una fórmula o chiste para que el invitado se sirva algo.

(Tess, reflection log, *Cat's Eye*)

In a characteristic that can be seen as an enactment of her gender identity through language again, Tess produced a very long reading response task based on this text, over one page and a half long, written in packed handwriting. Four participants wrote more than one page based on this fragment (Table 8 in Appendix III). Winn and Rubin (2001) say that verbose and lengthy texts have been associated with female gender identification. Another instance of this identification may be revealed in the range of qualifying adjectives, which permeated her task. For example, Banerji “feels uncomfortable and insecure,” “alienated,” and is “timid,” “humble,” “demure,” “quiet” (“la *timidez* que se ve en el extranjero”; “Es *amable* y trata de *complacer*, pero a la vez es *silencioso*, *casi no habla...*”). Later when the topic of conversation changes, Banerji “feels comfortable, happy and involved,” “kind,” “indulgent.”

El fragmento relata una cena de celebración de Navidad en una casa de familia, aparentemente en Inglaterra (ya que se hace referencia a la cadena de noticias de la BBC para describir como habla uno de los personajes). Se trata de una comida entre los miembros de la familia que reciben para el festejo a un extranjero que viene de la India y que, por eso mismo, no conoce esta celebración religiosa y *se siente incómodo e inseguro, sin saber bien cómo comportarse en la mesa*. La situación se describe desde la perspectiva de uno de los hijos del anfitrión, que aunque parece ser un niño [Comment 1: No pensé en el momento en la cuestión de que pudiera tratarse de una niña.] tiene un gran poder de evaluar las sensaciones del invitado.

El texto se centra en la distancia cultural entre el indio y la familia anglosajona, y en los aspectos del invitado que llaman la atención del niño. Si bien gran parte de la timidez que se ve en el extranjero puede deberse a que la familia que lo recibe es la de su profesor, creo que también *se está representando la personalidad de los indios como una de humildad y recatamiento. Es amable y trata de complacer, pero a la vez es silencioso, casi no habla*. El texto también nos muestra que de esas diferencias pueden surgir diálogos interesantes: justamente el momento en que *el estudiante habla con más entusiasmo* es cuando le preguntan por su país, y también cuenta una leyenda de allí sobre los pavos. El narrador también señala que hay similitudes entre ellos. Una de las características que nota es que ambos se sienten *alienados o extranjeros* de algún modo.

Considero que el principal aspecto cultural que se trata es de cómo la cortesía nos obliga a adaptarnos a las reglas o costumbres del otro, teniendo que superponernos a dificultades, miedos o incomodidades. Esto en la historia se ve de ambos lados, tanto de la familia como del Indio: por ejemplo, la mujer del profesor acepta que el tema de conversación en un momento sea el de serpientes venenosas, aunque no le agrade,

porque ve que el invitado *se siente cómodo con ese tópico y está más alegre e involucrado en la charla*. Para el indio toda la cena le resulta un desafío, porque no sabe qué se espera de él, qué le van a dar de comer, etc. Incluso puede ser que queriendo ser amable e incluso complaciente se equivoque con lo que diga o la manera en que lo diga. A pesar de estos roces [Comment 2: Más bien tensiones], el fragmento nos muestra también que se trata de una cultura hospitalaria la de la familia, que se esmera por hacer sentir bien al invitado y que no pase solo las fiestas. Analizando un poco más esta actitud y las conversaciones en la mesa también podemos interpretar que hay falta de comprensión en la familia de la cultura del indio, y más que nada desconocimiento. Asumen que deben invitarlo en esa ocasión para que no se sienta solo en la navidad sin pensar que para él no debe tener ningún significado en especial esa fecha.

(Tess, reading response, *Cat's Eye*)

The prior knowledge task corresponding to the fragment from *Desert Wife* (which I quoted before as an instance of a religious identification as atheist) shows some characteristics of female writing which can be seen as a simultaneous enactment of an identification based on gender (Winn and Rubin, 2001). I have already referred to Tess's use of tentative language ("*puede*"), denials ("*no se nada*," "*ni siquiera*," "*tampoco*"), hedging devices ("*verdaderamente*," "*por ahí*"), first person references with verbs of cognition ("*pienso que*") and modality (e.g. distancing through the use of simple past tense, "*sabía*," and the subjunctive, "*mencionara*") (in bold) as well as her tendency to entertain both sides of an idea, or different perspectives (in italics).

Verdaderamente no sé nada acerca de la celebración de la navidad de los Indios Navajos, **ni siquiera sabía** que la festejan, y **tampoco** sé mucho de la tribu en general. **No** recuerdo ninguna fuente en que se **mencionara** esa celebración. **Puede ser** relevante el que *muchas tribus adoptan las celebraciones cristianas pero incorporan elementos de sus propios rituales y cultura*. **Pienso que por ahí** la celebración de la navidad que hacen los Navajos **puede** tener ese carácter de *amalgama de diferentes tradiciones*.

(Tess, prior knowledge task, *Desert Wife*)

Notice again in what follows the discourse features that can be associated with her gender identification as female (in bold). Within these features, Tess's tendency to consider different alternative interpretations is central (underlined in the extract).

Me imagino que debe haber vestimentas especiales que se usan para el festejo, muy coloridas, bailes y canciones típicas, comidas también especiales pero diferentes de las que tiene la típica cena navideña en EEUU. **Debe festejarse un solo día, no me imagino que haya una cena un día y siga la celebración al día siguiente. Puede ser también que no se den regalos, o que haya pero algún regalo en especial (por ejemplo, algún tipo de muñecos para los chicos).** *Creo que pueden relacionar el festejo con sus propias creencias religiosas, no necesariamente celebrar el nacimiento de Cristo. Tampoco creo que haya pesebres.*

(Tess, prior knowledge task, *Desert Wife*)

Tess's reading response task based on this text also included several of the discourse features which can be seen as being associated with women's writing in empirical research, despite the limitations and caveats already mentioned (Winn and Rubin, 2001). She described all the Navajos as lazy and opportunistic, using the dishwashing and the candy episodes as her foundation, with no attempt to restrict this generalization in any way (in bold in the extract; note the use of the present simple "son"). However, she softened the impact of these affirmations by presenting them as the writer's "apparent" intention and by using tentative language (in italics): "los comentarios que *parecen querer decirle al lector que los indios son perezosos* (las mujeres no lavarían los platos si fuera por ellas) *o aprovechadores/ oportunistas* (por ejemplo, los niños esconden los caramelos que se les dan para volver a pedir otros)." As I mentioned before, the expressions of tentativeness (or the lack of them) as well as the use of modality, among other features, precisely show how tentative (hesitant, cautious) or assertive (authoritative, self-assured, determined) a writer has chosen to appear to be, in each case along a continuum (more or less tentative, more or less assertive).

El texto "Kismas" se refiere a la celebración de la navidad por parte de los Navajo, una tribu de aborígenes de los Estados Unidos, con la participación de *algunas personas* blancas dentro de una reservación. El punto de vista que se adopta es el de una mujer blanca que colabora en la preparación de los festejos, y que los describe desde la perspectiva del asombro frente a lo distinto, lo novedoso, que hace que sea valioso para ser contado. En ese marco, el tema cultural que se aborda es el de la distancia y el de la incapacidad de integración. *A pesar de que* la narradora *parece* conocer varias personas dentro de la reservación y se incluye en varias de las tareas que se llevan a cabo, como en la preparación de las comidas, *y a pesar de que* aprendió el idioma Navajo, tiene una nostalgia y un sentimiento de "outsider". El festejo es descrito desde afuera, como una observadora. *Además*, hay aspectos de la otra cultura que *parecen* generarle malestar o incluso desconfianza, *como* el temor a que las fogatas inicien un incendio, *o* los comentarios que *parecen querer decirle al lector que los indios son perezosos (las mujeres no lavarían los platos si fuera por ellas) o aprovechadores/ oportunistas (por ejemplo, los niños esconden los caramelos que se les dan para volver a pedir otros)*. El texto, así, nos muestra al blanco como una persona que puede estar en contacto con los aborígenes pero como colaborador o ayuda, no en una participación de igual a igual, y que se siente

incómodo en tal situación. *Pareciera que* las diferencias se dan *principalmente* en los comportamientos sociales de un grupo y de otro y en las normas de convivencia, con lo cual la narradora no logra insertarse en la comunidad y añora otro tipo de vida, la que puede llevar fuera de la reservación .[Comment 1: El estilo de vida en el que fue criada, el entorno social en el que se educó.] Las diferencias aparecen marcadas *en muchos casos* como críticas hacia el comportamiento de los aborígenes, *como si algunas de sus actitudes fueran reprobables*. [Comment 2: Ética o moralmente.] (Tess, reading response, *Desert Wife*)

Audience acknowledgements are another feature of gendered writing (Winn and Rubin, 2001) (“los comentarios que *parecen querer decirle al lector que...*”, “El texto, así, *nos muestra...*”). In this last example, the first person pronoun “*nos*” reflects that Tess included herself as one of those readers to whom the narrator made the comments.

In addition, the tendency to present more than one side, aspect or perspective of a topic (i.e. double-sided or multiple-sided views), the use of enumerations, and sentence length/verbosity have been shown to be markers of women’s language use (Winn and Rubin, 2001). The following interview extracts show some examples of these markers.

M. Hm. (Pausa) Y después también retomás eso, de que ella no... "No es una participación de igual a igual." Y yo te sugiero acá esto, ¿alguna idea de dominación quisiste poner? ¿Qué quiere decir que uno no participa de igual a igual en un evento?

T.: Sí, no sé si...

M.: O de superioridad o...

T.: Claro, *me parecía como que ellos estaban haciendo caridad en algún momento, por ejemplo cuando les daban los caramelos, en la forma de actuar o... Veo también una relación paternalista, por ejemplo cuando ella les dice que laven los platos, como que tiene que dar indicaciones... Me pareció que era ésa la relación por momentos.*

(Tess, interview, *Desert Wife*)

While in this previous extract she had entertained the possibility that the white couple was in the reservation for charity purposes (“*ellos estaban haciendo caridad, por ejemplo cuando les daban los caramelos, en la forma de actuar*”), later Tess envisaged Hilda and Ken as collaborators and providers of community help.

M.: ¿Qué estaban haciendo ellos en la reserva? ¿O por qué están ellos ahí?

T.: *No sé, yo creí que estaban colaborando, como haciendo ayuda comunitaria, pero...*

M.: Ayuda comunitaria.

T.: *Pero no sé si será eso.*

(Tess, interview, *Desert Wife*)

The example of the Navajos being efficient and ingenious is another instance of this tendency to present multiple-sided perspectives – another possible marker of gender identification in language use. In the following interview extract Tess resumed the topic of perspective-taking that concerned her so much, on the basis of which this trait of the Indians (i.e. that they were efficient and ingenious) could be seen in different, opposing ways, in her view (“había ahí como una *contradicción*”). She considered her own perspective in regarding their efficiency and ingenuity (she did not think this was something negative), though she thought that their doing what San Chee wanted was negative. In exploring different perspectives in the understanding of this aspect, she entertained a stereotyped generalization (“por ahí se puede decir como que son *serviles*, que son *complacientes*”).

M.: Está bien. (Pausa) ¿Y los Navajos como eficientes e ingeniosos?

T.: *Eso también, se ve que le presté más atención a lo negativo que la narradora decía, entonces tuve que volver al texto después para ver qué era... en qué parte hablaba de eficientes, no me acordaba que dijera algo positivo de ellos.*

M.: *¿Y puede ser esto algo negativo mencionar que los Navajos sean eficientes y "ingenious"?*

T.: *Para mí no, pero visto desde ese punto de vista que hacían lo que ella quería sí.*

M.: ¿Por qué?

T.: *Porque para ella eran eficientes cuando cumplían con lo que ella les pedía. Según cómo se mire, porque por ahí se puede decir como que son serviles, que son complacientes...*

M.: (Pausa) ¿Por qué es esencial entonces eso de que son eficientes?

T.: *No sé, me pareció que era importante porque había ahí como una contradicción. Capaz que yo vi sólo lo negativo que ella decía y ahí veo como una contradicción, me pareció.*

(Tess, interview, *Desert Wife*)

The expressions of doubt and tentativeness through modality may be seen as other examples of discourse makers of women’s language (“se ve que; no sé, me pareció; para mi no; por ahí se puede decir como que; capaz que... me pareció”).

10.8. Race and ethnic identifications: Tess's reading as a white, Latin American individual

Tess was one of the participants who elaborated on her tasks after the closure of data collection. I have already mentioned that I had offered this possibility at the time of data collection in November 2009. Interestingly enough, another participant who took the time to provide afterthoughts of this kind was Victoria. While Victoria produced a proper reflective text, about two pages long, Tess seemed to be putting in words her thoughts as they came to her mind, in a sort of stream of consciousness approach, using the Comment option in the Track Changes tool in Word. These comments were written towards the end of March 2010, i.e. over four months after the closure of data collection¹.

In the second post-commentary in her immediate reflection log based on *Mi planta de naranja-lima*, Tess referred to the existence of a common Latin American heritage, and the close connection between this heritage and many shared Catholic traditions among Latin American peoples – a connection that facilitated her comprehension of this fragment (“**Si pensamos** que hay una *historia común entre las culturas latinoamericanas y muchas tradiciones católicas comunes, lo cual nos acerca al texto y probablemente no sería así para otros pueblos.*”).

Creo que las dificultades que tuve para comprender el texto fueron principalmente por el contenido de la historia y no tanto desde el punto de vista cultural. Me parece que con los elementos que da el texto y *por comparación con nuestra propia cultura* podemos inferir lo no dicho o reconstruir cómo es la celebración de la navidad que se narra. [Comment 1: Lo no dicho sería el “background” de información que el autor puede dar por supuesto, por considerarlo parte del conocimiento compartido con el lector]. Por ejemplo, se puede deducir que la “rabanada” es una comida y no hace falta saber el significado más preciso para comprender el texto. O podemos inferir que los niños tienen que dejar sus zapatos para que le dejen los regalos. *Aunque no hacemos acá lo mismo, podemos entenderlo porque tenemos esa costumbre en el día de Reyes. Seguramente para lectores de otros orígenes el texto resultaría mucho más difícil.*[Comment 2: Si pensamos que hay una historia común entre las culturas latinoamericanas y muchas tradiciones católicas comunes, lo cual nos acerca al texto y probablemente no sería así para otros pueblos.]

(Tess, reflection log, *Mi planta de naranja-lima*)

¹ Because this tool in Word alters the font size of the whole file when Tess's comments are printed in their original version (i.e. as Comments in the Track Changes tool), I have decided to include these comments as plain text in this chapter, each preceded by the phrase [Comment 1], inserted exactly in the same place where Tess had located them initially. The original tasks, as Tess produced them, appear in Appendix V.

This post commentary draws attention to her identity as a Latin American person, beyond her national identity as an Argentinean. She had previously foregrounded her national identity in the reflection log itself as she had reflected upon the centrality of the festivity of Three Wise Men in Argentina (“Aunque no **hacemos** acá lo mismo, **podemos** entenderlo porque *tenemos esa costumbre en el día de Reyes*”). The use of first person plural references (in bold in the extract) is evidence of her reading through her social identification as an Argentinean. She also remarked that readers from other origins (i.e. not from Latin America) would probably find the text more distant in this respect. What is worth noticing is the prominence that she attributed to her identification as a Latin American person for the interpretation of the placing of the trainers on the other side of the door.

In the immediate reflection log based on *Desert Wife*, Tess emphasized the role of the narrator’s external perspective in contributing to making the Navajos’ culture comprehensible to her. Note the use of the term “external observer.” She assumed that San Chee’s perspective was like her own, probably bringing in her identification as a white, Latin American individual. The use of the first person plural pronoun reflects that she identified with San Chee rather than the Navajos (“la describe desde *nuestra* perspectiva”).

Los aspectos culturales que me causaron dificultad en el texto en general no aparecen subrayados porque se podía comprender todo leyendo con cuidado. Quizá lo que sí me pareció es que el texto era demandante porque había que prestar atención a los detalles o a ciertos pasajes (como el de los chicos y los caramelos) que no se entienden del todo en una primera lectura. Pero creo que *como la narradora es una observadora externa a la cultura de los Navajos, la describe desde nuestra perspectiva y en un grado de detalle que la hace comprensible*, aunque varíe el modo de festejar la navidad en varios aspectos. Me gustaría saber algunas cosas que no se mencionan en el texto, como el sentido que los Navajos le dan a la celebración [Comment 1: Desde cuándo se introdujo la celebración, si es así en la actualidad, etc.], pero no son aspectos sin los cuales no se pueda entender el fragmento.

(Tess, reflection log, *Desert Wife*)

Tess began the reading response task based on the Navajos text with a concrete frame for the story. I have already quoted this task a few pages before. The fact that this frame is included is not minor because both race and ethnic identifications play a role in this task from the very beginning. From the point of view of ethnicity, Tess identified the Navajos explicitly as an aboriginal group within the US (“El texto “Kismas” se refiere a la celebración de la navidad por parte de *los Navajo, una tribu de aborígenes de los Estados*

Unidos, con la participación de algunas personas blancas dentro de *una reservación*”). It should be recalled that participants experienced difficulty in determining who the Navajos were (see propositional statement 3 in the previous chapter).

Within this same frame, she simultaneously mentioned that “some white people” were participating in the celebration (“El texto “Kismas” se refiere a la celebración de la Navidad por parte de los Navajo, una tribu de aborígenes de los Estados Unidos, con *la participación de algunas personas blancas* dentro de una reservación”). The very inclusion of the term “white” invites a contrast with the non-whiteness of the Navajos as well as the non-aboriginal ethnicity of these white people. It also reveals Tess’s awareness of the distinctiveness of the category “white.” That is, she was aware that it is only in a context where whiteness as distinctive is important that a writer (herself in this case) would need to mention this. The inclusion of the lexical item *white* would only be schematically significant in a context where *white* has a certain significance. We can see the link between language and culture in the sense that *white* in this context reflected a cultural reality. In other words, Tess needed to be in the know about this cultural reality in order to be able to interpret *white* in the text in this way. Her own identification with the narrator, San Chee, as a white, and therefore non-aboriginal, person is evident from the reflection log where Tess explicitly adopts San Chee’s external perspective as her own, revealed in her use of the first person plural pronoun (“como *la narradora es una observadora externa* a la cultura de los Navajos, la describe desde *nuestra perspectiva*”).

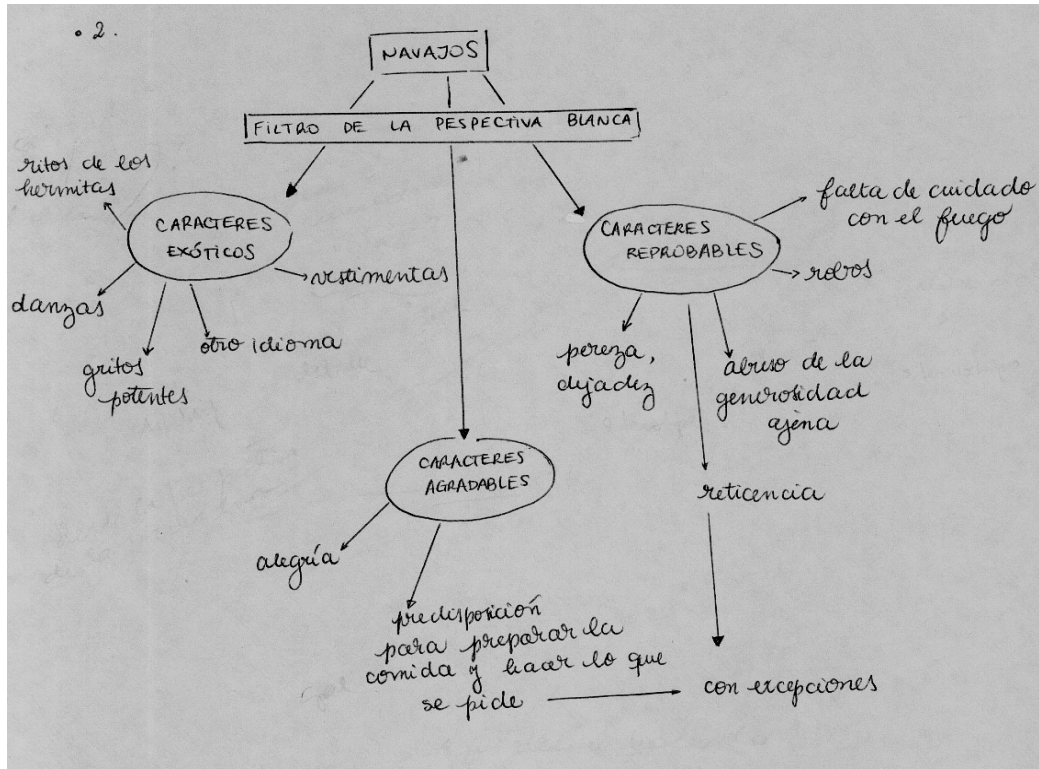
Implied here is the distinction between race as a socially-constructed category and ethnic identifications based on cultural practices and identity (Byram et al., 2009). Embedded in this distinction too is the issue of perspective (“El *punto de vista* que se adopta es el de una mujer blanca que colabora en la preparación de los festejos”). Tess explicitly mentioned the narrator’s intermediary role in the perception that the reader gets of the Navajos’ culture (“y que los describe *desde la perspectiva del asombro frente a lo distinto, lo novedoso*, que hace que sea valioso para ser contado”).

Tess attempted an interpretation of the relationship between the white couple and the Navajos. She did so by generalizing to the white race as a whole (“El texto, así, *nos muestra al blanco como una persona que puede estar en contacto con los aborígenes...*”). The idea of an asymmetrical relationship was central to her (“El texto, así, *nos muestra al*

blanco como una persona que puede estar en contacto con los aborígenes pero como colaborador o ayuda, no en una participación de igual a igual, y que se siente incómodo en tal situación”). Implied here is the topic of global and social justice, considering that *white* is the privileged or unmarked race in many contexts worldwide, as in the context portrayed in *Desert Wife*. Tess addressed related issues of racism, prejudice, bias, paternalism and discrimination in other parts of her reading response task and later in the interview, on the basis of one of the multiple identifications of an individual, in this case race (white as opposed to the non-whiteness of the Navajos), triggered by another identification, namely an identification based on ethnicity (in-comer as opposed to the aboriginal affiliation of the Navajos).

In the final part of the reading response Tess deepened the idea of domination and superiority of the white race over the Indians (“no en una participación de igual a igual”), linked to a possible pejorative view of them (“Las diferencias aparecen marcadas en muchos casos *como críticas hacia el comportamiento de los aborígenes, como si algunas de sus actitudes fueran reprobables*. [Comment 1: *Ética o moralmente*])”. This post commentary clarified the perspective (ethical and moral) under which the Navajos’ attitudes could be said to be “reprobables.”

Race and ethnic identifications permeated Tess’s visual representation as well, structured around three key aspects in connection with the Navajos, namely their exotic, pleasant and reprehensible characteristics, as filtered by the narrator’s white perspective. The choice of a trio is interesting and distances Tess from the exclusive reliance on binary divisions and opposites. The issue of the distinctiveness of San Chee’s whiteness, and therefore her non-aboriginal origin as an in-comer, that I discussed before is relevant at this juncture as well. Recall that Tess had explicitly identified herself with San Chee rather than the Navajos in the immediate reflection log.



(Tess, visual representation, *Desert Wife*)

Finally, Tess stressed that these adjectives in the visual representation (exotic, pleasant and reprehensible) were to be seen from the narrator's perspective, i.e. exotic, pleasant and reprehensible for the narrator. I have already shown that Tess explicitly identified with San Chee as a white, non-aboriginal person rather than with the Navajos from the beginning in the immediate reflection log. This identification with San Chee may be seen as evidence that Tess was using her own racial identity as a white individual as a basis for interpreting this fragment.

M.: ¿Acá cuando ponés lo del filtro es que es que la visión que tenemos de los Navajos está filtrada por la de la narradora?

T.: Sí.

(...)

M.: ¿Por qué los indios deben hacer lo que se les pide? ¿Por qué es algo "agradable" la predisposición de los indios para hacer lo que otro les pide? ¿Es algo agradable hacer lo que otro nos pide o...

T.: Porque en los caracteres yo puse exóticos o agradables según la narradora, por eso. O sea que desde su perspectiva era agradable.

M.: Ah.

T.: Parecía que ella lo ponía como algo positivo cuando ellos cooperaban o... o que decía que eran eficientes haciendo el pan, me pareció...

(Tess, interview, *Desert Wife*)

10.9. Summary of Tess's social identifications and groupings as a basis for interpreting in this setting

In this chapter I have focused upon the multiple and simultaneous social identifications and groupings that played a role in Tess's reading of the prompt texts. I have centred the attention on those identifications and groupings for which I was able to find concrete and explicit linguistic evidence from any data type, namely the social groupings of the home, the community, and the country; and the identifications of age, atheism, gender, race and ethnicity.

Other subtle facets of these same identifications, different from the specific aspects I have discussed in this chapter, were observed as well. Furthermore, other identifications emerged too, such as language and socio-economic class. However, the evidence was indirect in all these cases, which means that I would have needed to collect additional data in order to be able to confirm these other identifications. For the purpose of this chapter, which was to show that other identifications were concurrently involved in interpretation besides that as local peripheral Argentinean reader, I judged this further exploration to lie beyond the scope of this thesis.

More specifically, I have shown the strong influence of social groupings in Tess's interpretations, ranging from the home (i.e. Christmas as celebrated in her own home), the community, and the country as a whole (Christmas as a festive celebration). Her identity as a Latin American person, beyond her national identity as an Argentinean, also surfaced at several points.

Simultaneously, Tess's interpretations enacted at times an identification based on age, namely as a young adult who visits friends or goes dancing after 12pm at Christmas. Another facet of this age identity pervaded in her ability to decentre and to analyse the association children-childhood-tenderness-innocence-play-miracle-hope in interpreting the fragment from *Mi planta de naranja-lima*. In a similar vein, her understanding that children are naïve and innocent led her to see Elaine in *Cat's Eye* as adult-like because she rationalized precisely in the way an adult would.

In interpreting the text in Spanish, Tess's foregrounding of the religious in the comparison between the placing of the trainers on the other side of the door and the religious festivity of the Three Wise Men in Argentina is interesting because even though she had identified herself as an atheist in the biographical questionnaire, she simultaneously acknowledged that she engaged and participated in this religious festivity through her use of first person plural pronouns and references. In addition, Tess's social identification of atheism, conceptualized not only as a religious affiliation but also as a worldview or framework of understanding (Ysseldyk, Kimberly and Anisman, 2010), may have influenced Tess's decision not to focus on the religiosity in *Cat's Eye*. In other words, as a broad framework of understanding, Tess's atheism may have emphasized her lack of identification with the religious perspective at some points in this text.

Furthermore, Tess's written tasks revealed several language features which have been traditionally associated with female writing such as the use of parentheses, connectives, hedges, modal adjuncts, perceptual verbs, auxiliaries of possibility, audience acknowledgements, first-person markers, and verbosity. However, the caveats that I have already mentioned regarding this topic at the beginning of section 10.7. are pertinent here.

Finally, on the basis of Tess's explicit identification with San Chee rather than the Navajos through the use of a first person plural pronoun ("*nuestra perspectiva*"), it may be possible to say that she was using her own racial identity as a white person in interpreting this fragment as well as her ethnic identification as a non-aboriginal individual.

10.10. Conclusion

This chapter with the in-depth analysis of one reader has served to illustrate several key aspects of this research. One is the uniqueness and peculiarity of each individual's interpretations of the texts used here despite the regularities captured in chapters 8 and 9 with the findings. In these chapters I have offered the participants' dominant readings as local peripheral Argentinians by recourse to the use of multiple examples by all the participants in the presentation of findings. The present chapter has achieved the aim of capturing this uniqueness by revealing the multiple other social identifications which simultaneously played a role in the understanding of text in this specific sociocultural

setting. This uniqueness stemmed in part from the constant foregrounding and/or downgrading of different aspects of the participants' social identifications and groupings (Byram et al., 2009) such as gender, age, social class, race, ethnic origin or affiliation, religion, etc., i.e. different identifications being brought to bear at different moments in the process of understanding. This chapter has shown the ways in which these identifications were personalized, in the sense that they were "situated, contested, dynamic and fluid and heavily dependent on context" (Byram et al., 2009: 8-9), in a fashion that resembles Goodenough's (2003) account of his multiple identifications as an anthropologist at personal and social levels. This means that the idiosyncrasies and nuances of interpretation described here were unique to Tess. In this sense, the need for this exploratory and interpretive study on the basis of the urge in the literature to rescue the local within culturally-specific contexts (chapter 2) is acknowledged and honoured in this chapter.

Congruent with the rationale for an exploratory interpretive study like this one (chapter 2), there were unique idiosyncrasies and nuances in understanding in all and each of the other participants as there were multiple activations of their different social identifications. Each individual was an exemplar of the depth and richness of response regarding the cultural content of reading in this context. However, I wish to stress that this chapter has captured the distinctive and personal dimension of reading, but within the wider sociocultural context in which this study was carried out. In so doing, it has reflected the social dimension of reading in this setting. In other words, this chapter, together with chapters 8 and 9, have shown the importance of the personal and the local in a research effort that describes how literacy in English is lived in a peripheral country like Argentina.

Furthermore, by showing that other social identities -beyond the local peripheral Argentinean- can be the basis for other interpretations or readings, I have also shown that other researchers, especially those mentioned in chapter 3, have been too narrow in their interpretations of what cultural understanding involves. Their exclusive focus on the notions of schema, cultural background and culturally familiar/unfamiliar prior knowledge (by which they refer to the 'cultures' of other language groups and countries) has rendered a useful and necessary, but nonetheless narrow and static perspective on the issue. In this sense, this is an exploratory chapter which raises new perspectives for future research based on the idea that multiple social identifications mingle and interact with the local (and therefore peripheral and Argentinean) in reading in this setting. As way of example, one

such possible area of further exploration concerns a distinction between those identities or identifications for which there are direct references and therefore a consciousness (for instance where Tess uses first person plural nouns like “we”) and those for which the indications are indirect and therefore there may be no consciousness.

Another aspect highlighted by this study is the fluidity of cultural understanding in this setting. This fluidity has been revealed not only from the point of view of the flexibility with which each reader approached cultural understanding depending on a multiplicity of factors as we have seen, but also from the perspective of the interconnections and interrelationships that these readers explored, related to the text topics, which showed the complexity of such interaction. The interconnections and interrelationships were observed among tasks (data collection instruments), texts, the readers’ approach to otherness itself - manifested in the measures of data analysis (cultural idea units, reader behaviours and the *Model of Cultural Understanding*) -, as well as among the social identifications and groupings that they brought to bear on their reading. This chapter has also shown the complexity of cultural understanding in this setting, because such fluidity and flexibility permeated the whole process of reading. For instance, this chapter has shown the permanent fluctuation in the social identifications that came to the surface not only among the three prompt texts but also among the different tasks within the same text and what is more, at different points within the same task based on a given text.

In addition, this chapter has revealed the integral nature of this research design as a whole, and the vantage point represented by the fact that this design was conceived in this integral manner. This in-depth chapter has illustrated the impossibility to isolate data collection instruments and social identifications and groupings in the portrayal of how the understanding of the texts used in this study occurred here. This means that there were interconnections and interrelationships that readers made regarding the data collection instruments (both those intended to capture the *during* as well as the *after* in the *process* of reading) and the social identifications and groupings that they foregrounded at different points in their reading process. From this point of view, it can be argued that this research design has captured how these readers approached the texts used in this study not only during the actual reading of each text but also after that. We have seen for instance how the interviews allowed participants to reflect upon a certain textual aspect after the actual reading had occurred, and in so doing how the process of comprehension was “complete”

much later after this actual reading had taken place - a few days or weeks after (as in the interviews) and a few or several months later (as in the other forms of contact between the participants and myself already mentioned elsewhere).

I have used inverted commas for the word “complete” before because this chapter as well as chapters 8 and 9 with the reporting of findings have shown that comprehension is an ongoing, continuously evolving process, which is always susceptible of further analysis and exploration. I therefore use the word “complete” in the sense that comprehension ended with the completion of this study. But surely these readers would be willing and able to push their thinking further and offer new interpretations of their previous reflections and understandings in the future.

Furthermore, one concern that I expressed in the methodology chapter revolved around the methodological options available to capture the *process* of reading (beyond the product of reading emphasized by the traditional immediate recall protocol). I should probably restate here that I proposed the underlined text with the difficult parts (as perceived by the participants), the immediate reflection log and the delayed interview as feasible options in this setting. However, Andrew Cohen (2009, personal communication), as an advocate of the think-aloud technique, had expressed his doubt that these alternative instruments could in fact be as effective as the think-aloud in the investigation of the process (see chapter 6). In this chapter I have shown and exemplified how these alternative instruments did capture not only what went on *during* the process of reading itself but also *after* it.

Finally, one unplanned aspect of the research, which was the further and continuous communication among the participants and myself, allowed for the exploration of the reading process in this setting from a true longitudinal perspective. This study explored the reading process whereby process amounted to a period of more than a year. This contrasts sharply with the conception of process behind the think-aloud, which is a conception that emphasizes what readers think about *during* the actual reading of a text and ends there. In other words, this interaction, resulting from the bond between the participants and myself (originated and developed around this study), offered a longitudinal perspective of the comprehension process which has well compensated for the limitations of not having used the think-aloud technique.

CHAPTER 11

CONCLUSIONS: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS RESEARCH

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CHAPTER 11

CONCLUSIONS: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS RESEARCH

11.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I highlight the main conclusions of this investigation. I also show that this study can be seen as contributing to the field of cultural understanding in EFL reading from two points of view, namely theoretical and methodological. The theoretical significance of this study resides basically in the conceptions of culture and identity it embraces, the acknowledgement of the complexity and importance of the sociocultural context in reading through a congruent conception of schemata, the *Model of Cultural Understanding* itself, and the emphasis on the complexity, fluidity, criticality and reflexivity of cultural understanding in this setting. From a methodological point of view the research instruments and measures of analysis used here can be seen as methodological advances over existing research in this field.

Furthermore, I mention areas of exploration, motivated by this study, which are susceptible of further investigation in the future. These involve two aspects, namely the use of the *Model of Cultural Understanding* in other settings and the investigation of and instruction on the imaginative and emotional dimension of cultural understanding using reading response tasks and visual representation tasks.

Finally, I close this chapter, and the thesis, by reflecting upon the research process itself and my growth as researcher. I delve into two aspects here. One concerns the dynamic and procedural nature of this investigation from the point of view of its conception and implementation. The other is related to the process of my growth as researcher generated by this endeavour.

11.2. The investigation of reading comprehension: breadth, variety and open gaps

In this thesis I have set out to investigate cultural understanding in EFL reading among college students, prospective teachers and translators of English in their early twenties

(with two exceptions aged twenty-eight and thirty-two), who had been my students in the course English Language II at Universidad Nacional de La Plata in Argentina in 2008. The data were collected in 2009.

In chapter 3, I have pointed out that the field of reading comprehension is broad and varied. Reading comprehension in native language and foreign/second language contexts has been studied for years in different disciplines, from psychology (social and cognitive) to linguistics, applied linguistics, cultural studies, literary studies, second language acquisition and others. There are as many studies as the variables involved in the processes of reading comprehension both in L1 and L2.

However, the literature review carried out for the purposes of this study (chapter 3) has revealed that the investigation of the cultural dimension of EFL reading in Spanish-speaking countries, especially in Latin America, is limited and insufficient.

Within Argentina and in the same sociocultural context that frames this thesis, my previous line of research constitutes the background for this study (Porto, 2010 b, 2009 a, c, d, 2008 a, 2007 b, 2005, 2003 b, c, 2001 a, c; Porto and Barboni, 2008; among others). This thesis, however, is a major advance compared to this prior body of work, mainly because of its methodological design as well as its innovative data collection instruments and data analysis measures (see chapter 6 on methodology). In many respects, several of the criticisms that I have put forward with respect to the studies reviewed in chapter 3 apply to my own work. This critique has revealed that this prior work was substantially flawed in several areas, despite its role as a valid antecedent (see chapter 3 for details about critique and contributions).

Given this scenario, this thesis can be seen as a contribution to the field of EFL reading, in particular cultural understanding in EFL reading, in this specific setting. This is an Argentinean setting, where Argentinean equates local as well as peripheral. This is a setting where local peripheral Argentinean in turn carries high specificity within the country itself regarding educational context (college setting), population (university students, prospective teachers and translators of English in their early twenties), language background (highly-proficient EFL readers) and socio-economic status (middle-class¹),

¹ The simplification of a category like middle-class is beyond the scope of this discussion.

among other factors. In this sense, this investigation has addressed the need to “engage with the reality of language as experienced by users and learners” (Widdowson, 2000: 23).

This specificity of the setting is important because, as I have argued in chapter 2, this study is in tune with current calls from TESOL regarding the importance of the individual and the local in classroom-based or community-based research efforts that describe how literacy in English is lived in peripheral countries, of which Argentina is an example. Such calls constitute the most powerful justification for this exploratory interpretive study: this urge in the literature to rescue the local within culturally-specific contexts. “The goal is (...) to describe what people do and say within local contexts” (Freeman et al., 2007: 29). The exploratory and interpretive nature of this study, with its focus on the local in this peripheral setting, simultaneously becomes one significant contribution.

11.3. Overview of key findings of this thesis

The main findings of this study can be recapitulated as follows.

Overall, the key conclusion resides in the notion of fluidity in cultural understanding intertwined with the uniqueness and individuality of interpretation within this specific sociocultural context. This fluidity has been revealed not only from the point of view of the flexibility with which each reader approached the texts, depending on a multiplicity of factors, but also from the perspective of the interconnections and interrelationships that these readers explored, related to the text topics, which showed the complexity of such interaction. Thus, cultural understanding in this setting was characterized by its complexity because such fluidity and flexibility permeated the whole process of reading.

The foregoing needs to be framed within the regularities captured by the presentation of findings in the form of propositional statements in chapters 8 and 9. These statements portrayed findings in two dimensions: some were related to the specific understanding of otherness, while others referred to more general processes which could also be thought of as pertaining to the understanding of whatever is not cultural, but which were here nonetheless inseparably tied to the cultural simply because this study investigated cultural understanding. The underlying conclusion behind all these detailed propositional statements is that the

process of cultural understanding in this setting was integral, i.e. it cannot be said to be composed of independent and discrete elements, processes or stages. Put differently, the propositional statements around which I have organized the presentation of findings were observed throughout the process of comprehension, in all tasks based on the three texts, and by all the participants, and were therefore ingrained within it.

This thesis has also revealed that these readers showed critical thinking, reflection, critical cultural awareness and social awareness, in greater or lesser degrees. The confrontation with the values and ideas present in the perspectives of others (members of other cultures) in the prompt texts favoured a process of decentring or critical distancing from their own perspective. I have argued that the studies reviewed in this thesis were flawed methodologically and theoretically because they were framed within cultural understanding but investigated it using inappropriate rationales and methodologies. It is therefore possible that their theoretical rationales and research designs simply did not allow for the emergence of this kind of reader response. From this perspective, this thesis constitutes an advance over previous work.

This thesis has yielded different findings from other previous research, including my own body of work (which in all cases revealed a stereotyped approach to otherness), because it was conceived with a theoretical rationale and a research design that allowed for this depth, criticality and reflexivity in cultural understanding to emerge in the first place. As way of example, in the case of the reading response and the visual representation tasks, these textual interventions allowed participants to turn into analysts, critics and writers themselves (Pope, 1995). The ingredients of criticality, cultural awareness, reflexivity and depth may have emerged because both kinds of textual intervention required each participant to make a decision as to how parallel, contrary or alternative his/her production would be in relation to each prompt text. I have illustrated how this way of approaching otherness was integral to the comprehension process among these readers in this setting, as evidenced in all their tasks based on the three texts, in chapters 8 and 9 with the presentation of findings.

11.4. Specific findings related to cultural understanding in this setting

I shall now offer a more detailed summarization of those findings related to cultural understanding. To this aim, let me restate that the research question was

What processes, techniques and behaviours do EFL college readers in this setting use to comprehend the cultural content of literary narrative texts during and after reading?

I have used information from all data collection instruments and measures of analysis in an integrated account in responding to this question. I have adopted a thematic approach in the presentation of these findings as I summarized major issues and thematic trends in descriptive phrases or propositional statements that captured the essence of these findings.

I have divided findings into two groups. On the one hand, those related to the understanding of otherness in this setting. On the other, findings related to general processes of understanding. I shall focus upon each group next.

Findings related to the specific understanding of otherness

1. In approaching otherness, participants resorted to what was known or familiar to them.
2. The basis for understanding otherness rested on a process of comparing and contrasting.
3. Readers showed critical thinking, reflection, critical cultural awareness and social awareness.
4. Readers showed a sophisticated ability to reflect upon culture: Meta-cultural reflections.
5. Cultural understanding in this setting was fluid

Propositional statement 1 means that in approaching otherness, participants resorted to what was known or familiar to them. This resort to familiar knowledge and experience involved any familiar knowledge and experience that readers brought to bear on textual content, from their own cultures or others, and from varied topics and disciplines. For the purposes of this thesis, I have distinguished such knowledge and experience from the technical term *intrusion*, which I have reserved for prior knowledge and experience of Christmas exclusively.

Propositional statement 2 refers to an ongoing process of comparing and contrasting underlying the resort to prior and familiar knowledge for interpreting otherness. Basically all readers compared and contrasted the different cultural realities presented in the texts with their own through different means and resources. At times this process of comparing and contrasting revealed the participants' difficulty in distancing themselves from their own positions and understanding otherness from the point of view of the Other. This difficulty to decentre led to stereotyping. Other times, however, the process of comparing and contrasting resulted in the adoption of different perspectives in the understanding of another culture.

Propositional statement 3 refers to the fact that readers inspected the texts in depth and selected portions that they felt needed to be analyzed further. They all positioned themselves as critical readers of all texts, showing elements of criticality and reflexivity regarding textual content. Furthermore, many times they went beyond critical thinking in these terms toward critical cultural awareness, or critical social awareness, that is, a criticality and reflexivity tied to a social dimension, issues of citizenship, of humankind and human nature from a philosophical perspective, etc.

The main finding reported under propositional statement 4 is that in all data types, almost all readers tended to include some sort of what I have decided to call *meta-cultural reflections*, i.e. reflections about the cultural aspects involved in communication in general, or about cultural practices in their own culture as well as in other cultures. In all cases, these reflections were rich and varied and were motivated by textual content.

Finally, cultural understanding in this setting was fluid (propositional statement 5). Participants moved back and forth levels in the *Model of Cultural Understanding* freely at any point during the reading process, showing elements of almost all levels in all tasks. Globally, the majority of responses considering all texts were framed within levels 4, 4 plus and 5, characterized by critical thinking, reflection, critical cultural awareness and social awareness, the entertainment of simultaneous and alternative interpretations of textual content, and a sophisticated ability to reflect upon culture. A concomitant important finding here is that the research design in this thesis was central in allowing this fluidity to emerge in the first place.

I shall now focus on the other group.

Findings related to general processes of understanding

1. Readers showed awareness of problematic terms related to cultural understanding.
2. Participants brought their literary knowledge and assumptions into play in understanding another culture.
3. Participants offered simultaneous and alternative interpretations of textual content.
4. Problematic textual content led to its re-visiting: A-ha moments.
5. Different foci of attention were revealed: prominent vs. shadowed topics.
6. Participants expressed difficulty to visualize textual content during reading.

The idea in propositional statement 1 is that the participants enacted some of the difficulties with terminology in understanding, thinking and writing about culture. They showed a quite sophisticated level of cultural awareness that made them not only distinguish among certain terms (i.e. be able to say that one term is different from another) but also attempt subtle definitions.

Findings related to propositional statement 2 revealed that all these participants showed a high level of literary competence. Not only that, but they also made the connection between the cultural and their literary knowledge very evident, explicit and put it in writing. Pervasive in almost all the cases was this idea that a text has a message that the reader has to discover – a message beyond the actual words on the page. The majority also engaged in more detailed literary meta-reflections. Furthermore, readers generated intertextual links between the prompt texts and other sources such as literary texts and non-literary resources (TV, films, etc.). Another kind of intertextuality was evidenced as well, namely among the three prompt fragments used in this study.

Propositional statement 3 refers to the fact that all readers spontaneously took the time and effort to think of explicit alternative interpretations when textual content was perceived as confusing for any reason. These alternative interpretations were not necessarily long, and many times amounted to a brief succession of “..... or or ...” sequences in the form of conjectures. In the interviews, these instances of alternative interpretations generated by

confusing or problematic textual content were accompanied by much doubt about the adequacy or appropriateness of such interpretations. Added to this, these moments of doubt and their tentative interpretations were accompanied by questions that these readers would have liked to find an answer to, motivated by their personal curiosity and a desire to learn more about certain issues. In general, these multiple, alternative and simultaneous interpretations were connected to the difficult or problematic areas that the participants had underlined in the texts themselves.

Propositional statement 4 means that as these readers reflected upon issues of interest to them, they re-visited points in the texts they felt confused or doubtful about, and critically considered multiple interpretations. In this process they experienced *A-ha moments* whereby they came to see certain parts in the texts in a different, new perspective, becoming aware of alternative perspectives in comprehension. This occurred at two points, namely *during* the reading itself, and *after* it. In this sense, this fact shows that the comprehension process was not complete until much later after the actual reading of each text had finished, and also that comprehension was continuously modified during this process.

Readers chose an area of interest to them (derived from the prompt texts) and based their reading response and visual representation tasks on these areas of interest (propositional statement 5). Consequently, they favoured some themes for inclusion in these tasks (what I have called prominent topics) rather than others (what I have referred to as shadowed topics). This is important, because all the cultural idea units identified in each text were available to participants, through their reading, and were therefore susceptible of being foregrounded in the reading response and in the visual representation tasks. However, all participants were selective in this way.

Finally, another finding is that the immediate reflection logs and the interviews revealed these readers' difficulty to imagine or visualize textual content in their minds *during* reading itself. Almost all readers commented on this difficulty, for all texts (propositional statement 6).

11.5. Theoretical significance of this research

11.5.1. Culture, sociocultural context and schemata

Theoretically, in opposition to those studies which use cultural variables (reviewed in chapter 3), in this thesis culture was not limited to an isolated aspect to be controlled as an independent variable such as race, ethnicity, nationality or religion. Rather, this study has taken account of the complexity of the sociocultural context in which it was carried out. The acknowledgement of the complexity of this context has worked as a justification for two aspects: one is the justification for the type of study carried out, i.e. an exploratory and interpretative investigation; the other is the justification for the objective itself, which was to comprehend how these readers, in this specific context, approached the cultural content of literary narrative texts in EFL reading.

The complexity of this sociocultural context has been acknowledged in this thesis by designing a study which is consistent with a sociocultural perspective on schema theory in two ways:

- first, it is classroom-based research as McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek (2005) recommend;
- second, it used tasks, activities and materials which functioned as cultural mediators of the transactions of these readers with the selected texts (cf. the brevity and artificiality of the materials used in most of the studies reviewed in chapter 3), with the selected tasks (i.e. textual interventions; cf. sentence-integration/completion, true/false, multiple choice, etc.) and with myself as the teacher-researcher.

Such mediation is non-existent in laboratory-based or laboratory-like research. In classroom-based research with paid participants or outside researchers, there is no real sense of “classroom community.” In the three cases, the sociocultural dimension is left in the background. As I have discussed in chapter 3, a sociocultural view of reading as held in this study necessitated a congruent view of schema, i.e. schemata as sociocultural and historical constructions that appear through transactions with others in real contexts and are mediated by cultural activities, materials and artefacts. This thesis has shown that cultural understanding among this group of participants in this specific setting was linked as much to what the prompt texts had to offer, as to what these readers brought with them

(regarding the Christmas schema in particular, but also regarding all the interconnections that this schema triggered in other dimensions), as to what the re-visiting of textual content generated through the negotiation, interaction, reflection and critical analysis that the research instruments allowed for.

This thesis has also captured the *developmental*, *social*, *cultural* and *functional* dimensions of schemata. Chapters 8 and 9 with findings and chapter 10 with the in-depth analysis of one reader evidence how the notion of schema on which this study rests has captured what happened within these individuals' minds through interconnections with their prior knowledge and experiences at different points in their lifetimes (for instance affected by the death of beloved relatives as in Enrique Alejandro's case –*developmental* dimension), simultaneously linked to sociocultural assumptions and preconceptions (for example that Christmas is a family and festive celebration –*social and cultural* dimensions). Therefore, although schemata are abstract knowledge structures that represent generic concepts stored in memory (see chapter 3), this study has revealed their *functional* role in the relationships of individuals and the environment, in this case in two ways. First, as a means of relating to the situation proposed by the study itself, whereby these participants had to respond to the specific reading experiences presented around the Christmas schema, evaluating and accommodating their understanding of what they thought they were required to do. Second, as a means of relating to the Christmas schema itself, prompted by the confrontation of the Christmas visions offered by each text with their own understandings and experiences in this arena. The research instruments have captured this functional role of schemata in this dual way.

I say that this thesis has *rescued* the sociocultural perspective of schemata present in Piaget, Kant and Bartlett as constructs which extend beyond the individual to comprise the social and the cultural because I believe, in alignment with McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek (2005), that this perspective was lost in contemporary conceptions of schema as derived from cognitive psychology in the 1970s. These “sociocultural perspectives on schema” (McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek, 2005: 452) acknowledge, as in this thesis, that cultural schemata are not a static characteristic of an individual's cognition (are not an in-the-head phenomenon). Rather:

- Cultural schemata are shared by members of a cultural group; in this study, this specific group of participants;

- Cultural schemata are constantly being negotiated and renegotiated through time and generations. One example can be the time span of this study through the negotiation stimulated by the participants' interaction with me in my role as interviewer, for instance. In addition, our communication continued long after the closure of data collection, on occasions over a year after it, whereby they re-visited their understandings of some data excerpts. Another example can be the time span of the participants' lives, as in the case of Enrique Alejandro whose father had died when he was fifteen. Yet another instance can be the time span of other generations in the participants' own families, as exemplified by the references to their grandparents' traditions in the prior knowledge task about Christmas in Argentina. Or the time span of other generations in societies and cultures which were not their own, as Enrique Alejandro showed in his understanding of the word "heathen" in the Navajos text (chapter 7, section describing and illustrating the *Model of Cultural Understanding* as a means of analysis).

- Cultural schemata are instantiated (materialized) in cultural artefacts such as rituals, paintings, narrative, video, discussions, etc. In this study, this instantiation took place through the selected texts and the proposed tasks that these readers engaged in, in other words, all the data collection instruments used here.

This thesis has also foregrounded the importance of *image* and *emotion* schemata within the cultural dimension of reading at the time that it has highlighted the difficulty and complexity of the imaginative and emotional dimension of reading and the need for further research in these areas. Regarding the former, the visual representations that these readers produced have shown the power and simplicity of visual imagery in capturing the cultural in reading. Chapters 7 and 10 include several visual representations which illustrate this point. The interviews have in turn served to show the depth, complexity, reflexivity and criticality behind their simplicity. Concerning the latter, I have dwelled at some length in chapter 9 on the significant role of emotion in cultural comprehension (under propositional statement 5, section on emotions and perception of text topics during comprehension). From this perspective, this thesis has taken account of the imaginative and emotional

dimension of reading – an area in which schema theory has problems (Sadoski, Paivio and Goetz, 1991).

This thesis has also offered evidence of the three types of schemata distinguished by Rice (1980) in a continuum. One kind is universal, such as Piaget's cognitive schemata (at one end). It would be possible to speculate that image and emotion schemata belong to this type. Another kind is idiosyncratic, highly variable according to each individual's experience (at the other end). For instance, Enrique Alejandro was the only participant who associated Christmas with a relative's death because of past lived experiences and from this perspective, his Christmas schema can be said to be idiosyncratic in this setting. Finally, the last type of schema is culturally derived, along the continuum, and is associated with what anthropologists call "world view." The participants in this study shared a socioculturally determined view of Christmas as a dominantly familiar (rather than communal) and happy (festive though not necessarily religious) celebration.

11.5.2. Complexity and fluidity of cultural understanding in this setting

Furthermore, this study has emphasized the underlying centrality of cultural understanding as a *fluid process* in a *continuum* of cultural familiarity and unfamiliarity throughout. This study has highlighted *processes* at two levels: theoretically (e.g. in the notions of culture and identity embraced, as reflected in chapter 2) and methodologically (in a research design conceived to embody this focus; chapter 6). I have dwelled on these issues enough in previous chapters.

It may be important to restate here that this thesis has contributed theoretically to disclose a persistent and strong dichotomy *product vs. process* observed in the literature in the methodology of analysing reading comprehension. This opposition was manifested theoretically in the static notions of culture and identity embraced in the reviewed studies in chapter 3 as well as in most of the methodological decisions there. The opposition in these studies was between the *quantitative* analysis of the recall protocols through the mean frequency of occurrence of previously identified idea units in the prompt texts, and the *qualitative* analysis of those recalls through the observation of the changes readers make in recalling passages. The tension between product and process that I observed in all cases depends, as a starting point, on how comprehension (understanding) is

conceptualized in the first place. I have questioned in this thesis the underlying idea that the ability to reproduce exactly what is in a text is a reliable indicator of comprehension. In all these studies comprehension was assumed to have occurred when a text was recalled as accurately as possible. In addition, the underlying assumption in all cases was that a measure of recall, which is a *product* of comprehension that takes place *after* reading, was an adequate measure to describe what happened *during* the comprehension *process*.

11.5.3. Model of Cultural Understanding during EFL reading: levels or degrees of understanding

In this thesis I have proposed instead a notion of comprehension based on levels or degrees of understanding, which have been analysed using a model that I have called *Model of Cultural Understanding during EFL reading*. This view distances itself from the focusing on how much is remembered from a text (manifested in the quantification of idea units as well as in the polarity product-process). The notion of levels or degrees of comprehension has allowed me to investigate the whole process of comprehension, i.e. both *during* and *after* reading, breaking with the polarity product-process until the process of reading is “complete.” The proposed design for this study (described in detail in chapter 6) has allowed me to capture both the *during reading* and the *after reading*. The distinction between process and product fell away in this study until the process was “complete.” In this sense, this investigation has captured the *during* and *after* and how the existing (pre-knowledge) was modified by the process itself. I use inverted commas for the word “complete” because one conclusion of this thesis is that comprehension is an ongoing, continuously evolving process, which is always susceptible of further analysis and exploration. I therefore use the word “complete” in the sense that comprehension ended with the completion of this study. But surely these readers would be willing and able to push their thinking further and offer new readings of their previous reflections and understandings in the future.

More specifically regarding this notion of comprehension based on levels or degrees of understanding, this thesis has also foregrounded the importance of perspective-taking in cultural understanding. The *Model of Cultural Understanding during EFL reading* (chapter 4) constitutes a theoretical advance of this study. This model distinguishes six levels, each

portraying different perspectives through which a text may be accessed. None of the studies I have reviewed in this thesis emphasize different perspectives (insider, outsider, hybrid) *explicitly*. One of this thesis' vantage points, as I described in chapter 2, is that it explicitly attempts to capture the double angle of vision (us-them) through imagination, attributing importance to both aspects: the capacity of movement in and out of different perceptions, and the significant role of imagination in cultural understanding. I have pushed the argument forward in this thesis and I have claimed that in fact this double vision needs to be stretched to reach multiple perspectives, simply because the porous nature of the identities of the "we" or "they" does not allow for such a notion of clear-cut, homogenous, dichotomous categories. The point is that this *Model of Cultural Understanding* can in fact be thought of as a vehicle for the creation of a third space in cultural understanding, a space that foregrounds the fluid, the relative, the dynamic, the unstable.

Rosaldo (1993) suggests that the social and cultural analyst explores from a number of perspectives, from a number of positions (instead of locking himself/herself up within one), both from the distance and the closeness, from the inside and the outside. The perception, observation, and analysis will be different but valid (chapter 2). Ideally, one assumes one position and tries to imagine the other, positioning himself/herself from that different place. Furthermore, this process of knowing involves the whole being. The social and cultural analyst is simultaneously cognitive, emotional and ethical (Rosaldo, 1993). These theoretical considerations are relevant here because even though this study was not specifically thought or designed to explore the affective and emotional dimensions within cultural understanding, it became clear that for these participants these dimensions were part of their integral approach to the cultural. This was evident in chapters 8 and 9 as well as in the analysis of the in-depth case focused on Tess in chapter 10. This study has revealed that participants approached cultural understanding in this way, though possibly without knowing they were doing so. The fluidity of their cultural comprehension as it was captured by the *Model of Cultural Understanding* constitutes itself as evidence of the foregoing. Participants showed they had a plurality of varied identifications, from which they positioned themselves to get close to what was different. The chapters with the data analysis (chapter 7), results (chapters 8 and 9) and in-depth analysis (chapter 10) have illustrated how one same reader interpreted simultaneously from his/her identifications of birth, ethnic origin, socialization, education, age, gender, and religion, among others, identifications which composed a complex and dynamic matrix. Furthermore, and

concomitantly, the participants' multiple identities (Thisted et al., 2007) or identifications (Byram et al., 2009) shifted as a result of reading new material within this particular context, especially material that challenged some of their beliefs based on their social and cultural identifications (McCarthy and Moje, 2002).

11.6. Methodological significance

11.6.1. Research instruments

The modes of response to the prompt texts proposed in this thesis are new and have been called here reading response task in writing and visual representation. As I have explained in chapter 6, they contrast sharply with the immediate recall protocol, a traditional and widely used and accepted instrument. A reading response task is a variation of immediate recall that allows readers to project their own interpretations of the prompt texts (cf. summaries and syntheses). A visual representation can be defined as the visual representation of textual content including the combination of words, phrases, and/or sentences with visual information in different formats of varying complexity (such as charts, tables, graphs, grids, mind maps, flowcharts, diagrams, drawings, and the like). In order to produce a reading response task and a visual representation, recalling and summarizing alone are not enough. My participants had to make sense of the cultural cues as well as the culturally situated information in the fragments, relate them to their own cultural parameters, and in so doing they brought in their experiences, knowledge and background to their interpretations. As the instructions did not require them to recall every bit of the texts (see Appendix II), these participants were free to respond to particular aspects which called their attention. They were not committed to reflecting the views of the writer or the narrator in each text. In both cases, the participants had to produce a new "text" (Anstley and Bull, 2006: 24), *different* from the prompt texts. From this perspective, the reading response and the visual representation tasks are clearly distinct from the *verbatim* recall generally required in the recall protocol (where the exactitude and precision in the reproduction of the original text is fundamental) as they take account of current sociocultural views on reading that rest, among other features, on the multidimensional and multivalent nature of its processes (Bernhardt, 2003; Paris and Paris, 2003). Furthermore, the rationale that the visual representation collects affective data or data indicating

response to literary texts (allowing to capture the affective dimension of EFL reading) is also a distinguishing feature of this study.

In addition, these instruments stimulated readers to put their knowledge about the cultural aspects of a text in action. This notion of knowledge in action refers to the participants' capacity to use cultural knowledge in new and concrete problem solving situations, in this case the textual interventions. Put differently, it involves the intercultural skills (Byram, Nichols and Stevens, 2001) set in motion while articulating knowledge about culture and cultural values. From this perspective, the reading response and the visual representation tasks, as textual interventions, captured the participants' cultural understanding at two points simultaneously: while reading a text and while producing another one at the same time. Producing an intervention required that these readers exploited the prompt texts in order to rewrite them from alternative perspectives, perspectives that were always complementary or supplementary but never identical to the original fragments. The creation involved in reading and intervening in the prompt texts necessarily required an exploration of the hybrid, fluid, changing and dynamic nature of the voices and cultures found in them.

Furthermore, the research design in this thesis allowed for the discovery of the personal, social, and other issues that had an impact on these participants' understanding of other cultures, in particular through the questionnaires about reading in English and in Spanish, the biographical questionnaire, the prior knowledge tasks about the content of the prompt texts, the immediate reflection logs and the individual interviews. These data collection instruments were particularly good for the concurrent exploration of the individual/personal and the social/cultural (explored in chapter 2). Chapter 10 with the in-depth analysis of *Tess* offers instances of both dimensions.

Participants were solid and robust explorers of language, culture and of themselves. Particularly in the immediate reflection logs, the reading response tasks, the visual representation tasks and the interviews they showed a spirit of honest and open inquiry about cultural understanding (propositional statement 4 in chapter 8 and propositional statement 1 in chapter 9), even for much longer after the closure of data collection. I have shown that although data collection was complete in November 2009, some participants voluntarily offered further reflections during the whole of 2010. The basis for this inquiry

process resided in the spirit of disinterested curiosity about language and culture that the research design as a whole fostered (including the prompt texts).

The fact that reflection was tied to concrete and real textual content offered participants the possibility to use their knowledge and experience to reconsider and re-visit their reality (propositional statements 1 and 2 in chapter 8). The participants developed self-examination skills, revealed as they continuously assessed their own thinking processes in the light of their own processes of cultural understanding in this setting (propositional statements 4 and 5 in chapter 8). For instance, I have shown there that in her reflection log based on the Navajos fragment, specifically about the dish-washing episode, Yanina recalled a personal experience which led her to reflect upon the relativity of what can be considered polite or impolite behaviour, her own as well as others', depending on the occasion. Tess's conscious awareness of how she had perceived only the negative aspects of the Navajos (chapter 10) constitutes another example.

Through the awareness that the study as a whole fostered, readers had access to the tacit and context-specific aspects of their reading experiences that were connected with the cultural, to their unconscious and automatic reading habits, to hidden meanings and tacit assumptions regarding specific textual content, to the implicit norms governing cultural understanding in each individual, to their invisible and inaccessible reasoning, etc (propositional statement 2 in chapter 9). The questionnaires about reading in Spanish and English as well as the questionnaires about each text (which inquired about specific aspects of the comprehension of each text) were particularly useful research instruments in this respect. Furthermore, as readers reflected on these aspects and recorded their reflections on paper in the reading response and in the visual representation tasks, they gained more clarity on the values and beliefs that they held and brought to bear on reading as well as on their tacit knowledge about cultural comprehension. Considering that awareness of aspects such as possible areas of exploration, questions, meaningful absences, and recurring patterns in cultural understanding is in general holistic, unintentional and incidental, clarity on these aspects, as revealed by this investigation, is important (propositional statement 6 in chapter 9).

As these participants were confronted with certain topics in the texts, they were attracted to them (propositional statements 3 and 5 in chapter 9). The reading response and the visual representation tasks were a private endeavour, a deeply engaging personal act, a vehicle for self-expression, for researching the cultural through analysis, reflection and introspection. The interviews were person-centred, involved these readers wholly (sense of self, interests, beliefs, values, behaviours, actions, etc.) and led to the identification of an individual's themes in connection with the cultural. For instance, some readers revealed their interest in the contrasts portrayed in the text in Spanish (rural life-urban life; richness-poverty; happiness-sadness; etc.) while others focused on its religious content or the Christmas celebration *per se*. Areas of interest in *Cat's Eye* were the clash of cultures (American, Hindu and their own), the scientific discourse (biology), Eliane or Banerji and their cultures, the turkey, and the different contrasts (animals-humans, capitalism-nature, artificiality-naturalness). In *Desert Wife*, readers also focused their attention on contrasts (Indian reserve-civilization, English-Navajo language, dirtiness-cleanness, standard culture-primitive culture, etc.), on the clash of cultures (the Navajo's, San Chee's and their own), or on the common bonds among the cultures portrayed, among other areas of interest and consequent exploration. In this sense, this study offered insight into these participants' realities concerning cultural understating in EFL reading. I have delved on these aspects in chapter 9.

11.6.1.1. The power of writing and speaking

The writing generated by all the written instruments in this research design was ongoing and sufficiently long to avoid the superficial treatment of issues. It is possible that cultural awareness would have been revealed without the written tasks, but writing it down made it very evident. Both the writing in these tasks and the speaking in the interviews involved a process of exploration of thoughts as these readers discovered from the acts of writing and speaking themselves what these thoughts were. The engagement in critical analysis (written and spoken) of their beliefs facilitated access to these beliefs. The acts of writing and speaking, by externalizing thoughts, allowed these readers to contemplate, clarify, reconsider and revise those thoughts (for instance propositional statements 3 and 4 in chapter 9). Writing about textual content and speaking about it facilitated the interaction with thought: participants manipulated ideas, explored, opposed, made connections

between propositions, etc. Writing and speaking about the cultural was a discovery process as the writing and speaking themselves triggered insights and stimulated ideas. Writing ideas on paper made these readers want to reflect more (propositional statements 3 and 4 in chapter 9) as the physical act of writing created concrete examples to focus their attention on later during the interviews (propositional statement 5 in chapter 9). Writing here was generative as it led to the discovery of new ideas, which were then explored in the interviews. These readers engaged in experiential, expressive writing and speaking through reflection on self-generated topics (propositional statement 1 in chapter 8). As the reading response and visual representation tasks, the immediate reflection logs and the interviews opened up a genuine investigation of such topics, hidden concerns were discovered and personal anecdotes, values and beliefs were revealed (propositional statement 2 in chapter 8 and propositional statement 4 in chapter 9).

Taken together, the data collection instruments contributed to the articulation of complex thoughts and emotions. The act of writing and speaking about their reading and the process of cultural understanding led these participants to experience subtle changes in previously held views (for example, the A-ha moments described under propositional statement 4 in chapter 9). The participants contextualized their points of view in the interviews and used these understandings to explore further. The interviews clearly revealed the importance of the situational and the social context in cultural understanding. The combination of reflection, analysis, and writing and talking about reading allowed these participants to see their thoughts, values and ideas in new ways.

11.6.1.2. Reflection and critical thinking

The immediate reflection logs, the reading response tasks, the visual representation tasks, and the interviews constituted excellent sites for inquiry and reflection. The value of these instruments, simultaneously introspective and retrospective, resided in the mindset they instilled in the participants. These readers found interest in an issue, reflected on it and owned it personally (propositional statement 5 in chapter 9). Reflection had an impact upon these readers' lives as many times they changed what they thought owing to such reflection (propositional statement 3 in chapter 8).

The data collection instruments were finely-tuned in the sense that exploration began at the most relevant point to these readers' needs and interests (propositional statement 1 in chapter 8). All the written tasks and interviews based on the three texts were varied and deep, and offered the opportunity for differentiation since they captured the readers' unique patterns of understanding of the cultural (propositional statement 5 in chapter 8). Thinking became visible. Reflexive thinking involved readers making a conscious effort to reflect on what they knew and thought. The depth of the immediate reflection logs, the reading response tasks, the visual representation tasks, and the interviews revealed that these participants were capable of such critical reflection and analysis (propositional statement 3 in chapter 8).

This study challenged participants to analyze and reflect on the ways in which their values and assumptions regarding cultural understanding had been formed. Through awareness of their values and attitudes, they gained conscious control over their own biased interpretations and were able to see their beliefs and behaviours in perspective (propositional statements 1 and 2 in chapter 8). By questioning their values, they discovered other perspectives and adopted an evaluative stance towards their own cultural perspectives and practices. In so doing, they evidenced critical thinking skills as they shared different viewpoints. Through observation, reflection and critical analysis, these readers uncovered, analyzed and critiqued their own perspectives regarding textual content and those of others (in this case, the characters') (propositional statements 3 and 4 in chapter 8).

11.6.1.3. Research instruments: overall significance

The focus of this study was on insider perspectives in an intensive investigation of cultural understanding in EFL reading in this setting. Participants were insiders and experts in an inside-out approach as they revealed their understanding of the cultural by means of self-disclosure, self-report and self-revelation. The study, by placing the readers' responses to and perceptions of the cultural at the centre of this research, revealed their sophisticated understandings regarding cultural comprehension and showed how much there was to learn about their subjective views of their own actions, thoughts and strategies in connection with the cultural dimension of reading. It is possible to speculate that this study will have

long-lasting effects for these participants in this respect. However, the effect on the research participants themselves owing to having been involved in research is an issue which cannot be pursued here.

Reading surfaced from many varied perspectives including personality, behaviour, influence on and by others, expressed attitudes, implicit or supposed attitudes, etc. Each reading response, each visual representation, each immediate reflection log, each interview told a different story and offered insights into how each reader had approached the cultural in the reading of these literary narrative texts as beliefs, memories, values and cultural assumptions emerged in an integrated account.

11.6.2. Measures of data analysis

Concerning data analysis, the use of reader behaviours related to the cultural content of the texts (i.e. the textual modifications produced by the participants in their response to the cultural in the fragments) as a measure of analysis is something that has not been observed in the literature. In this study, an extensive list of sixteen reader behaviours to be observed was proposed (chapter 6), while between two and five behaviours are predominant in the literature. Not only is this list more comprehensive, but it is also exclusively tied to behaviours related to the *cultural* dimension of reading. Along similar lines, the focus on *culturally significant* idea units as a measure of analysis is something original. As I have explained in chapter 6, previous studies have quantified *all* the idea units (previously identified in the prompt texts) present in readers' recall protocols. By contrast, in this study the emphasis was on *cultural* idea units exclusively.

This research design has highlighted the interaction and interrelationships among the data collection instruments and the measures of data analysis - as described and exemplified in chapter 7, chapters 8 and 9 with the findings and chapter 10 with the in-depth analysis of one individual. This interaction has contributed to breaking the polarity product-process and to the exploration of the *during* and *after* reading. I have proposed that the confusing and flawed product vs. process, quantity vs. quality distinction that pervades in all the reviewed studies in chapter 3 can in fact be superseded by the notion of levels of understanding as portrayed in my *Model of Cultural Understanding* (chapter 4). Furthermore, I have also argued that it is

possible to accommodate the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of analysis within this model. In chapter 7 with the description of the data analysis process I have shown how I have carried out both analyses in an integrated manner within this model instead of as independent and isolated stages in the research process. I have shown there that both quantity and quality (cultural idea units and reader behaviours tied to cultural aspects) can successfully be interrelated within and among the six levels in the model, with more or less strength.

One important methodological contribution of this thesis therefore is that in the data analysis phase, product (in the form of the quantification of cultural idea units) and process (in the form of the kind of behaviours undertaken by the participants while reading and writing the required tasks) came together in an *integrated data analysis process*. That is, analyses were integrated and simultaneous rather than discrete, staged and successive (i.e. one data analysis measure at a time).

11.7. Further research

This thesis has shown how the *Model of Cultural Understanding* can be used to investigate, analyze and describe EFL readers' processes of cultural understanding in a given context. Interesting areas of further exploration in this respect might involve the investigation of the suitability and/or relevance of this model in different reading settings beyond EFL reading and the possible use of the model as an appropriate tool for the assessment of cultural understanding in (EFL) reading.

A line of further research in connection with the research instruments used in this study concerns the investigation of the use of reading response and visual representation tasks for instruction. I identify three possible specific dimensions here, though there may be others. One concerns the cultural dimension of EFL reading. In this respect, the visual representation in particular could become an appropriate tool for instruction in the imaginative and emotional dimension of cultural understanding through reading.

Another dimension is related to one conclusion that I explored before, namely that writing and speaking about the cultural in reading was a discovery process as the writing and

speaking themselves triggered insights and stimulated ideas. I suggest that the focus of further research in this respect might reside in the interconnections among reading, writing, speaking and thought. Let me quote Widdowson (1980: 242) at this point: “Our aim must be to develop in learners a capacity for using language for both thinking and acting so that they can exploit its meaning potential in discourse. This is not a simple matter of learning how to express a selection of notions or perform a selection of illocutionary acts. It is, more fundamentally, a matter of (...) reconciling conceptual and communicative functions in the discourse process.” If one agrees with Widdowson, as I do, then it is possible that the reading response and the visual representation tasks can contribute to this reconciliation or integration of these functions.

Finally, given the centrality of criticality and reflexivity in cultural understanding as revealed by this study, both as a pervasive way of approaching the cultural in reading and as a function of this research in particular, it would be interesting to investigate if and how these tasks (reading response and visual representation) can become part of action research projects in disadvantaged, developing, or Third World countries like Argentina. In these settings, it is important to be able to make one’s critical voice heard in relation to what one reads, beyond hearing the voices of others through reading. The response tasks proposed and used in this study can become appropriate instruments to investigate the teaching and learning of the development of a critical voice in reading.

11.8. The researcher’s perspective

I would like to finish this thesis by reflecting on two aspects which transcend the findings of this study *per se*, and therefore cultural understanding in EFL reading. One such aspect concerns the dynamic and procedural nature of this investigation from the point of view of its conception and implementation. Another aspect is related to the process of my growth as researcher generated by this undertaking. In my specific experience with this thesis, these aspects were intertwined, and mutually interactive and dependent. In what follows I describe the process.

11.8.1. The research and my growth as researcher: fluidity, dynamism and processes

Of the research proposal that I initially submitted for admission in this Program, Doctorado en Ciencias de la Educación, only a fragmented skeleton remains in this thesis. I realize now, upon completion of this project, that the development of the research process, in each and all of its steps, was a mystery, revealed only as it occurred, and to the extent that it occurred. I have included the documentation of this process at several points in the thesis. An expanded example appears later in the next sub-section about cultural remoteness. The rationale for such documentation can be found in Freeman et al. (2007: 26) when they say that “a key source, then, of standards of evidence and quality throughout the history of the scientific method and its application in qualitative inquiries has been the systematic and careful documentation of all procedures—an *account of practice*” (their emphasis). Furthermore, this documentation testifies to the uniqueness of this thesis, which is congruent with Carter’s (2008: 368) statement that “the thesis should reflect its own journey.”

I embarked on this challenge fourteen years after the completion of a Masters degree at the University of Essex. While I prefer to believe that this time-span must (or should) have contributed in some way to the completion of this project, in particular through the antecedents of this thesis (previous research as well as publications), the process of carrying out this study has illuminated my understanding of what doing research involves in unimaginable ways. Specifically, what doing research involves in a context where financial resources are thin, where non commonsensical regulations that one must comply with abound, and where the sharing of time and expertise by knowledgeable academics in the field of the teaching of EFL is extremely hard to find. This thesis has opened me up to different ways of conceiving research, alternative ways of actually investigating, and unknown (to me) forms of sharing my findings with the research community. This thesis simultaneously constitutes an example of all three openings. In this sense, it has allowed me to become a better researcher and has revealed what Morse et al. (2002: 17) call “investigator responsiveness,” i.e. “the researcher’s creativity, sensitivity, flexibility and skill” in doing qualitative research.

I strongly identify with Miles and Huberman (2002: 394) when they say: “We believe that methodological quagmires, mazes, and dead ends are not necessarily the products of researcher incapacity; rather, they stem from the qualitative data themselves. Like the phenomena they mirror, these data are usually complex and ambiguous and sometimes contradictory. Doing qualitative analysis means living for as long as possible with that complexity and ambiguity, coming to terms with it, and passing on your conclusions to the reader in a form that clarifies and deepens understanding.” It is my hope that the reader finds that this thesis is an example of this process.

11.8.2. Cultural remoteness: an instance of “investigator responsiveness”

Let me illustrate the foregoing reflections with a description of what happened during the research process concerning the exploration of cultural remoteness in this study.

Initially, the term *cultural remoteness* appeared to be a useful way of representing a contrast between the cultural affiliations of a reader and the cultural affiliations of those being read about, in this case the members of other cultures as portrayed by the selected fragments. This is a term that I came up with after an initial literature review which showed the use of terms such as *native and foreign text*, *cultural familiarity and unfamiliarity* and *cultural visibility and invisibility*, among others (reported in chapter 2). I conceived this notion with the idea that it might represent degrees of cultural familiarity and unfamiliarity within a continuum. With this perspective in mind, until July 2010, the research question included one sub-question framed around *cultural remoteness*, which was expressed in these terms:

What processes, techniques and behaviours do EFL college readers in this setting use to comprehend the cultural content of literary narrative texts during and after reading?

And furthermore:

Do these processes, techniques and behaviours differ with the cultural remoteness of a text?

Considering this sub-question, at the beginning of this study I initiated a search for the term *cultural remoteness* using the most popular search engines on the Internet (google, bin, yahoo), combining the words “culture” and “remoteness” with “anthropology,” “language,” “teaching” and “education.” Many articles were found but none used the terms

academically. The term *remoteness* was never defined or explained. Furthermore, no relevant articles were found using the phrase “cultural remoteness” in combination. In addition, *cultural remoteness* was also searched for in the British Education Index through a thesaurus search combining the words “culture” and “remoteness.” No relevant articles were found using the phrase *cultural remoteness* as conceived for the purpose of this thesis by July 2010. This search has been incessant since the beginning of this study in December 2008.

Simultaneously, and in part stimulated by the thin results about *cultural remoteness*, another search was undertaken concerning the terms *exotic* and *exoticism* (*exótico/exotismo*) in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and literature. Considering the focus on the different, the attractive and the strange in level 1 in the *Model of Cultural Understanding* (chapter 4), I thought that this search might yield useful results. However, the search revealed that both terms as linked to literary criticism and literary modernism (for instance, Maras, 2001) were the closest to the purpose of this thesis. There were of course non-academic uses (for instance, Bermejo Mora, 2007) and results in other fields such as geography, urban studies and tourism (Chang, 2000; Kim, 2002; Travel Research Bookshelf, 1992) (among others), where the notion of *cultural exoticism* was recurrent. This notion, tied to racial, ethnic and cultural dimensions in these fields, is perhaps susceptible of being of help in the future for further developments in cultural understanding in EFL reading. Let me anticipate, however, that I abandoned this search for the reasons I mention later.

Within the field of literature, it may be useful to offer now a taste of the considerations that I entertained as I undertook this search. In order to assess the suitability of the notion of *exoticism* for this thesis, I needed to define the term. I started with García Caro (2009: 57-58), who defined exoticism in this way: “Exoticism is the main ideogeme in the epistemic machinery that perpetuates the radical otherness (i.e., inhumanity) of the non-European and the cultural/pseudoscientific background of what Anibal Quijano has called the coloniality of power.” Within the discourse of colonialism and post-colonial studies, Huggan (2003), Santaolalla (2000) and others referred to exoticism in this specific field in a similar way.

Jones (2007) defined literary exoticism as "the presentation of one culture for consumption by another," conceived as a way to promote cultural dialogue. The key factor in this perspective is how far outside his/her own perspective a writer (or traveller) would venture. Jones cites Todorov, who suggested using the term *exotic* to explain the deformation by which an observer of a specific phenomenon sacrifices the description of reality in exchange for the formulation of an ideal, and proposed three levels of exoticism, namely ethnocentrism, primitivism and humanism. In this view, the exoticist's goal within humanism is to release one's cultural assumptions, find a rational basis of judgment and apply it as readily to one's own culture as one would to another. I found promising resemblances between this view and some of the key tenets in intercultural understanding as described in chapter 2, and more specifically in chapter 4 in the *Model of Cultural Understanding*.

However, Porter (2008) referred to the difficulty of implementing humanism in the before mentioned terms: "How do the characters and narrator interpret the Other and his or her culture - accurately or erroneously, adaptively or maladaptively? For comparative cultural studies, the conclusion resembles Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. We can observe only because what we can see has always already been contaminated; even were that not so, "primitives" prove to be conscious agents who can plan and lie. They organize their world as we do ours, around the principle of territoriality. Our emphasis on naïve viewpoints does not exculpate industrialized societies; instead, it reveals a permanent ground of presumed superiority that underlies our intermittent adventures in consumption and exploitation abroad." This line of thought is tied to Sen's (2006) civilizational approach, which I refer to later in this section.

In the midst of this search, it became clear to me that the vision of the Other as exotic, typical of level 1 in the *Model of Cultural Understanding* (chapter 4), was closely connected with the concept of identity to which this thesis adheres (chapter 2). Considering that personal and social identifications arise from processes of identification and differentiation in specific historical contexts and within localized social relations, it is not possible to define an "us" without a "them" on which to project systems of similarities and differences (chapter 2). Within the post-colonial discourse, the production of difference is constitutive of all relations of inequality as identity is constructed within specific power

relations. Exoticism resulted precisely from the process of decolonization, when the former colonies were beginning to demand a different treatment from Europe.

The complexity of this discussion was evident to me at this point, and worrisome. Being contextualized in a field which escaped the scope of this thesis, and my area of knowledge, I decided to abandon this thread. One thing was clear, nonetheless, and it was the inappropriateness and difficulty of judging or classifying the prompt texts used in this study as more or less exotic, i.e. in terms of degrees of exoticism. Even though it would perhaps be possible to say, for example, that certain characters or situations in the selected texts are “presented as more or less exotic,” the difficulty with the definition of *exotic* would remain.

I have decided to narrate here this small loop (one among the many that occurred along the research process) because this issue of exoticism serves well to illustrate the “quagmires, mazes, and dead ends” (Miles and Huberman, 2002: 394) that I faced in carrying out this investigation.

At this juncture, it is important to remark that this search incidentally reaffirmed one observation that I made in chapter 2 regarding the terminology difficulty in the field of cultural understanding in reading, basically centred on the vagueness and lack of specificity in the use of widely accepted terms in the literature. Furthermore, after this brief inspection of the term *exotic* as it might be relevant to this study, and the conclusion of it being inappropriate for my purpose in this thesis, it seemed to me, upon completion of this study, that the distinction between “native” and “foreign” text proposed by Kirch (1973: 343) and Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson (1979: 10) more than thirty years ago might be worth re-considering after all. My intention in chapter 2 was to show the vagueness and lack of rigor in the use of terms in the literature. I offered as evidence in this respect the widespread lack of specificity in the use of expressions such as “culture,” “cultural element,” “cultural understanding,” “native/foreign culture,” “native/foreign text,” etc. by researchers and theoreticians. I suggested that the reference to *the cultural* rather than *culture* might be appropriate. Now, in retrospect, although I still agree with this distinction, I believe that the combination “foreign text” that pervades in the numerous studies reviewed in chapter 3 (to which I can now add Huifen and Chen, 2006, 2007, 2008), is one

which might be suitable after all. In the sense proposed here, *foreign* would have any of the meanings listed below:

- 1: situated outside a place or country; especially: situated outside one's own country
- 2: born in, belonging to, or characteristic of some place or country other than the one under consideration
- 3: related to or dealing with other nations

("foreign" In *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*. Retrieved December 14, 2010, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/foreign>)

Of the definitions in *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* for *strange*, the ones below may also be appropriate.

- 1: of, relating to, or characteristic of another country: foreign
- 2 : not native to or naturally belonging in a place: of external origin, kind, or character
- 3: not before known, heard, or seen: unfamiliar

("strange" In *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*. Retrieved December 14, 2010, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/strange>)

In sum, this reflection evidences two important aspects. One is concerned with the fluidity, dynamism and procedural nature of the research process as I experienced it in this study (reflected on this section). Understandings were clarified and continuously re-visited as the research was being carried out, in a cyclical rather than linear fashion, in a process that was not complete until the project was finalized. The fact that the terminology issue did not end at the time that the theoretical framework and literature analysis were finished, but at the very end, and in a far from conclusive way, offers evidence in this respect. It also means, incidentally, that this theoretical framework and literature analysis have been in permanent re-examination till the very end of the research process. Overall, the fluidity, dynamism and procedural nature that characterized the data analysis process (described in chapter 7) was common to all the steps or stages of the research process, such as the construction of the theoretical framework or the literature review, as revealed in this section.

Another significant aspect here is that the complexity of the discussion about terminology has constituted itself simultaneously in one of the crucial dimensions of exploration of this thesis as well as in one of its contributions, precisely by pinpointing the obscurity and

vagueness of the available terminology (and therefore its complexity) and by suggesting some viable alternatives. However, the point made in the previous paragraph indicates that this thesis needs to be seen as the continuation of a permanently evolving discussion.

In the midst of the foregoing, as the results of the searches on *cultural remoteness* were systematically turning out to be futile, I decided to simultaneously engage in further inspection of the notion from a theoretical standpoint. In this process, a series of inappropriate and interrelated shades of meaning which the concept might involve were revealed, nuances which directly impinged upon the theoretical rationale of this thesis. I considered the work on identity and diversity by the social scientist Amartya Sen in order to illustrate the theoretical and conceptual difficulty ingrained within the term *remoteness* and consequently the inadequacy of its adoption in a study in which identity affiliations play an important role.

To begin with, the concept of *remoteness* might bring about the idea of “one allegedly dominant system of classification –in terms of religion, or community, or culture, or nation, or civilization” (Sen, 2006: 13) that is seen as different from one’s own, and can be distant in space and time. From this perspective, I thought that the term *cultural remoteness* simplified the many different affiliations that people bear (which constitute their plural cultural identities as I have discussed in chapter 2) into one main monolithic description held in terms of the religious or the national or any other possible affiliation.

I noticed that what Sen refers to as affiliations is explored in this thesis under the notion of social identifications and groupings (Byram et al., 2009). I have argued in chapter 2 that identity is important in cultural understanding because it is an aspect of how humans make sense of the world and their experiences in it, including their experiences with reading (Kramsch, 2003; McCarthy and Moje, 2002; Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000). Because identities are multiple, hybrid, complex, fluid, and contradictory (Chen, 2005; Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2002; Dlaska, 2003; Starkey, 2007), it is always possible to enact more than one of such identities in each reading experience, or different ones in different reading acts, depending on the relationships, interactions and identifications in a reader’s life that one chooses to foreground: “these multiple identifications are never all activated simultaneously. Instead, the subjective salience of any particular identification fluctuates and changes in a dynamic and fluid manner as the individual moves from context to

context, according to the specific contrasts which are present within the situation and according to that individual's own personal expectations, motivations and needs in that situation" (Byram et al., 2009: 13). I considered that this quote was an important factor in the argument that the term *cultural remoteness* was in fact inadequate in the framework of a study conceived with the theoretical rationale described in chapter 2.

Further exploration revealed that the term *remoteness* bears a geographical link to the notion of identity, one that might reinforce civilization as the basis of identity formation. Many social studies base their analyses on a civilizational approach, explained by Sen (2006: 10) in these terms: "A remarkable use of imagined singularity can be found in the basic classificatory idea that serves as the intellectual background to the much discussed thesis of 'the clash of civilizations,' which has been championed recently, particularly following the publication of Samuel Huntington's influential book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*. The difficulty with this approach begins with unique categorization, well before the issue of a clash –or not- is even raised. Indeed, the thesis of a civilizational *clash* is conceptually parasitic on the commanding power of a unique *categorization* along so-called civilizational lines, which as it happens closely follows religious divisions to which singular attention is paid. Huntington contrasts Western civilization with 'Islamic civilization,' 'Hindu civilization,' 'Buddhist civilization,' and so on. The alleged confrontations of religious differences are incorporated into a sharply carpentered vision of one dominant and hardened divisiveness" (the author's emphasis). Note the resemblance and interconnection between Sen's point here and Porter's (2008) view above within my prior discussion of exoticism.

I have argued in chapter 2 that this study has explored cultural understanding with a design that made it possible to happen in the first place, i.e. by distancing itself from dichotomies or binary divisions such as upper and lower, rich and poor, western and eastern, white and black, occident and orient, dichotomies which produce an idealized, essentialized, and static vision of the Other (Genestch, 2007; Kumaravadivelu, 1999). As Sen points out in the quote above, the civilizational approach has relied on a singular categorization "ignoring the diversities within each identified civilization and also overlooking the extensive interrelations between distinct civilizations" (Sen, 2006: 46). My line of reasoning here was that the term *cultural remoteness* denies the multiple identifications Byram et al. (2009) refer to above as well as the fluid relationships which exist among

them. In so doing, the term *cultural remoteness* falls into the confinement of people to main civilizational categorizations through tempting binary divisions. I have argued repeatedly in this thesis that this study distances itself from these dichotomies and static identifications toward a “Third Space” (Chien-Hui Kuo, 2003: 234; Kramersch, 1993, 1998; Kramersch et al., 1996), “a hybrid space in which a writer [or reader] may refuse to be either same or Other” (Genestch, 2007: 11).

Finally, I also thought that the concept of *remoteness* brings about a sense of inevitability in that one’s belonging to certain cultural affiliations denies the possibility of choice to enact other social identifications. In other words, it fails to capture agency in identity formation and development as well as in the multiple and concurrent social identifications that individuals may choose to foreground or downgrade at different points in time. Sen argues for the freedom of choice that allows individuals to “question the automatic endorsement of past traditions” (Sen, 2006: 114, 2009) when confronted with other cultures. Furthermore, there exist unforeseeable circumstances that influence the choices people make within a range of possibilities available for exploration in the understanding of the competing identifications that all individuals enact – which make up their fluid identities. Sen (2006: 19) puts it in this way: “a person has to make choices –explicitly or by implication- about the relative importance to attach, in a particular context, to divergent loyalties and priorities that may compete for precedence.”

On the basis of the foregoing, and taking into account the main findings (chapters 8 and 9) and conclusions of this investigation (this chapter), anchored centrally to the notions of *fluidity, flexibility, integrity and complexity* of cultural understanding in this setting, I concluded as a further corollary of this study that the concept of *cultural remoteness* was indeed inadequate for the purposes of this research as well as for the rationale on which it rests. My argument was that term *cultural remoteness* entered in conflict with these notions of *fluidity, flexibility, integrality and complexity* of cultural understanding, which pointed to the impossibility for them to be captured by a concept that conceived of identity as an essentialist notion. Writing this chapter as I do, upon completion of this research, I have therefore realized and concluded that, if there is merit in the investigation of cultural remoteness at all, which remains to be inspected, then it should be evident by now that this study, conceived with a theoretical framework as explored in chapter 2, was not indeed suitable to this aim.

I see this descriptive and narrative account of the long process (nearly as long as the whole research process itself, including the writing up of this report) whereby I entertained and later abandoned the notion of *cultural remoteness* for the purposes of this thesis (and in so doing, focused upon terminology as one of the areas of exploration of the study as well) as one instance, among several others, of Morse et al.'s (2002: 17) "investigator responsiveness." At the same time, this example evidences some of the verification strategies for attaining rigor in qualitative research mentioned by the same authors, such as "methodological coherence" (Morse et al., 2002: 18) (i.e. congruence between the research question and the components of the method, whose lack motivated my abandoning the notion of *cultural remoteness* as well as the use of the term *exotic* in this thesis), "thinking theoretically" (i.e. ideas emerging from the data give rise to new ideas) and "theory development" (i.e. moving between the micro dimension of the data and the macro perspective of conceptual rationale/theory).

11.9. A concluding remark

"All inquiry is partial, and each partiality has things of interest to reveal" (Widdowson, 2000: 23). I conclude with the wish that the things of interest in this investigation have been revealed.

CHAPTER 12

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Sources

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APPENDIX I

MATERIALS

Cultural perspectives in *Mi planta de naranja-lima* (Vasconcelos, 1971:39-43)

Introduction

Textual characteristics

Other characteristics: social class, family structure, religious beliefs, roles and context

The culture matrix in the fragment

Cultural perspectives in *Cat's Eye* (Atwood, 1998: 137-140)

Introduction

Context of the fragment

Textual overview

Coexistence of cultures: a matrix of familiarity and strangeness between two cultures

Cultural perspectives in *Desert Wife* (Faunce, 1961: 173-181)

Introduction

Setting the story in context

Textual overview

Otherness, difference and strangeness

Otherness, hybridity, cultural translation

Textual opacity

Characteristics of the narrative

The reading of *Desert Wife* in this educational context

Stereotyping and pejorative terminology regarding the Navajos

APPENDIX I

MATERIALS

This Appendix includes an analysis of each fragment, in this order: *Mi planta de naranjailima*, *Cat's Eye* and *Desert Wife*. These fragments are an exact copy of the materials as the participants received them (for instance, layout, line numbers), except for their size, which I have reduced here to fit this page (the fragments were printed in legal size paper for their use in this study). The numbers in the fragments are line numbers. The direct quotes that I include in this Appendix appear with the line numbers where they can be found in each fragment.

1 En la cocina estaba Dindinha, que había venido para hacer "rabanada" mojada en vino. Era la cena de Nochebuena.

Le comenté a Totoca:

5 —Y mira, hay gente que ni siquiera tiene eso. El tío Edmundo dio el dinero para el vino y para comprar las frutas para la ensalada del almuerzo de mañana.

Totoca estaba haciendo el trabajo gratis, porque se

7 había enterado de la historia del Casino Bangu. Por lo

40 menos, Luis tendría un regalo. Una cosa vieja, usada, pero muy linda y que yo quería mucho.

—Totoca.

—Habla.

—¿Y no voy a recibir nada, nada, de Papá Noel?

45 —Pienso que no.

—Hablando seriamente, ¿crees que soy tan malo como dice todo el mundo?

—Malo, malo, no. Lo que pasa es que tienes el

diablo en la sangre.

20 —¿Cuando llega la Nochebuena, querría tanto no tenerlo! Me gustaría tanto que antes de morir, por lo menos una vez, naciese para mí el Niño Jesús en vez del Niño Diablo.

—Quién sabe si a lo mejor el año que viene. . .

25 ¿Por qué no aprendes y haces como yo?

—¿Y qué haces?

—No espero nada. Así no me decepciono. Ni siquiera el Niño Jesús es eso tan bueno que todo el mundo dice. Eso que el Padre cuenta y que el Catecismo

30 dice. . .

Hizo una pausa y quedó indeciso entre contar el resto de lo que pensaba o no.

—¿Cómo es, entonces?

—Bueno, vamos a decir que fuiste muy travieso,

35 que no merecías un regalo.

—Pero ¿Luis?

—Es un ángel.

—¿Y Gloria?

—También.

40 —¿Y yo?

—Bueno, a veces. . ., tomas mis cosas, pero eres muy bueno.

—¿Y Lalá?

—Pega muy fuerte, pero es buena. Un día me va a

45 coser mi corbata de moño.

—¿Y Jandira?

—Jandira tiene ese modo. . . pero no es mala.

—¿Y mamá?

—Mamá es muy buena; cuando me pega lo hace

50 con pena y despacito.

—¿Y papá?

—¡Ah, él no sé! Nunca tiene suerte. Creo que debe haber sido como yo, el malo de la familia.

—¡Entonces! Todos son buenos en la familia. ¿Y

55 por qué el Niño Jesús no es bueno con nosotros? Vete a la casa del doctor Faulhaber y mira el tamaño de la mesa llena de cosas. Lo mismo en la casa de los Villas-Boas. Y en la del doctor Aduacto Luz, ni hablar. . .

Por primera vez vi que Totoca estaba casi llorando.

60 —Por eso creo que el Niño Jesús quiso nacer pobre sólo para exhibirse. Después El vio que solamente los ricos servían. . . Pero no hablemos más de eso. Hasta puede ser que lo que diga sea un pecado muy grande.

Se quedó tan abatido que no quiso conversar más.

65 Ni siquiera quería levantar los ojos del cuerpo del caballo que pulía.

Fue una comida tan triste que ni daba ganas de pensar. Todo el mundo comió en silencio; y papá apenas

70 probó un poco de "rabanada". Ni siquiera había querido afeitarse. Tampoco habían ido a la Misa del Gallo. Lo peor era que nadie hablaba nada con nadie. Más parecía el velorio del Niño Jesús que su nacimiento.

Papá agarró el sombrero y se fue. Salió, incluso en

75 zapatillas, sin decir hasta luego ni desear felicidades. Dindinha sacó su pañuelo y se limpió los ojos, pidiendo permiso para irse en seguida con tío Edmundo. Y éste puso algún dinero en mi mano y en la de Totoca. A lo mejor hubiese querido dar más y no tenía. A lo mejor, en vez de darnos dinero a nosotros, desearía estar dándose a sus hijos, allá en la ciudad. Por eso lo abracé. Tal vez el único abrazo de la noche de fiesta. Nadie se abrazó ni quiso decir algo bueno. Mamá fue al dormitorio. Estoy seguro de que ella estaba llorando, escondida. Y todos tenían ganas de hacer lo mismo. Lalá fue a dejar

80 a tío Edmundo y a Dindinha en el portón, y cuando ellos se alejaron caminando despacito, despacito, comenté:

85 —Parece que están demasiado viejitos para la vida y cansados de todo. . .

Seudónimo: _____

Lo más triste fue cuando la campana de la iglesia

40 llenó la noche de voces felices. Y algunos fuegos artificiales se elevaron a los cielos para que Dios pudiera ver la alegría de los otros.

Quando entramos nuevamente, Gloria y Jandira estaban lavando la vajilla usada y Gloria tenía los ojos rojos como si hubiese llorado mucho.

95 Disimuló, diciéndonos a Totoca y a mí:

—Ya es la hora de que los chicos vayan a la cama.

Decía eso y nos miraba. Sabía que en ese momento allí no había ya ningún niño. Todos eran grandes, grandes y tristes, cenando a pedazos la misma tristeza.

100 Quizá la culpa de todo la hubiera tenido la luz del farol medio mortecina, que había sustituido a la luz que la "Light" mandara cortar. Tal vez.

El reyecito, que dormía con el dedo en la boca si era

105 feliz. Puse el caballito parado, bien cerca de él. No pude evitar pasarle suavemente las manos por su pelo. Mi voz era un inmenso río de ternura.

—Mi chiquitito.

Quando toda la casa estuvo a oscuras pregunté bien

110 bajito:

—Estaba buena la "rabanada", ¿no es cierto, Totoca?

—No sé. Ni la probé.

—¿Por qué?

115 —Se me puso una cosa rara en la garganta que no me dejaba pasar nada. . . Vamos a dormir. El sueño hace que uno se olvide de todo.

Yo me había levantado y hacia barullo en la cama.

120 —¿Adónde vas, Zezé?

—Voy a poner mis zapatillas del otro lado de la puerta.

—No las pongas. Es mejor.

—Las voy a poner, sí. A lo mejor sucede un milagro. ¿Sabes una cosa, Totoca? Quisiera un regalo. Uno solo. Pero que fuese algo nuevo. Solo para mí. . .

125 Miró para el otro lado y enterró la cabeza debajo de la almohada.

I.1. Cultural perspectives in *Mi planta de naranja-lima* (Vasconcelos, 1971:39-43)

I.1.1. Introduction

I analyze here the different cultural perspectives present in the excerpt from *Mi planta de naranja lima* (Vasconcelos, 1971:39-43)¹ with familiar cultural content which describes a Christmas celebration in a poor Brazilian context. Although the text presents a similar celebration to the Argentinean one, including the religious perspective, it is not prototypical in the sociocultural context of the participants in this research. The excerpt offers a wider vision of Christmas, applicable to the Latin American context and, in particular, to the Brazilian one. The fact that the celebration presents Christmas as lived by a poor Brazilian family meant that the text could pose difficulties for middle class college students in Argentina.

I.1.2. Textual characteristics

The text presents direct language, exclamations and culturally authentic dialogues. It does not feature illustrations. It does not include linguistic clues as to how discourse is

¹ Using Barroso's (1978) biography as a starting point, it is important to mention that José Mauro de Vasconcelos (born in Bangu, Brazil, in 1920 and deceased in San Pablo in 1984) worked as a boxing instructor, a factory worker, a teacher in fishermen's schools and an oral storyteller. In *Mi planta de naranja-lima* he addresses his personal experiences, in particular his disturbing experiences during his childhood. In this novel, Vasconcelos narrates the experiences of the protagonist, Zezé, a five-year old child, who suffers due to extreme social and familiar circumstances. The storyline is set in San Pablo, but the fragment that the participants read does not include this information. It only mentions a contrast between rural life and life in the city. Following Barroso (1978), the choice of place is not random, because Vasconcelos used to set his heroes in natural locations, away from cosmopolitan cities. In the novel there is not a clear time reference, either. For different reasons, especially the fact that the novel contains autobiographical elements, the narration has been set between the 1920s and the 1930s. Another aspect worth mentioning is that the action lasts approximately one year. Consequently, the reader may set the narration in Zezé's childhood between his five and six years of age.

The novel can be framed within a Latin American literary trend called Magical Realism, which is characterized by blending the narrative reality with fantastic and fabulous features in order to exacerbate their mismatch (Martin, 1989). Zezé's magical reality in which plants talk and wooden horses gallop contrasts with a harsh reality, a reality that is hard to assimilate, not only for the protagonist family but also in the context of Brazil and Latin America in general (Burns, 1993; Rama, 1985). In addition, *Mi planta de naranja-lima* was published in 1967, when the Latin American boom reached its peak and Latin American literature arrived in the international scene (Martin, 1989).

organized. For example, there are no titles or subtitles (cf. *Kismas* in *Desert Wife*, which appears in italics as a title).

The text is transparent, i.e. it contains key diagnostic words that activate the Christmas schema. Some of these words are repeated. The following are some examples: Christmas Eve dinner (“*cena de nochebuena*”), Christmas Eve (“*Nochebuena*”), Santa Claus (“*Papá Noel*”), Jesus Child (“*Niño Jesús*”), He (“*Él*”), Father (“*Padre*”), Catechism (“*Catecismo*”), Devil (“*Diablo*”), angel (“*ángel*”), the birth of Jesus Child (“*nacimiento del Niño Jesús*”), Christmas Eve Mass (“*Misa de Gallo*”), God (“*Dios*”), miracle (“*milagro*”), new presents (“*regalos nuevos*”), church bell (“*campana de la Iglesia*”), festive evening (“*noche de fiesta*”), hugs (“*abrazos*”). Among the lexical items that activate the Christmas schema, it is possible to mention the following: hug, say something good, wish Merry Christmas, leave trainers on the other side of the door. This last expression, in fact, refers to another cultural and religious festivity in Argentina, which is the arrival of the Three Wise Men (see footnote p.198, chapter 7).

The text also presents foreign words, for instance from Portuguese (“*rabanada*,” lines 2, 69, 111) and English (Light, 1.103). It also includes culturally loaded names such as “*Casino Bangu*” (1.9). Other proper names are quite common (*Luis, Gloria, Lalá*). Hypocoristic names (nicknames, pet names) also appear (*Totoca, Zezé*)².

The text is also characterized by the use of comparisons or comparative phrases such as “*parece que están*” (1.87), red eyes as if she had been crying a lot (“*ojos rojos como si hubiese llorado mucho*,” 1.94-95); diminutives: old and tired (“*viejitos y cansados*,” 1.87-88), slowly (“*despacito*,” 1.86), very low (“*bien bajito*,” 1.110); parallel structures such as perhaps...perhaps (“*A lo mejor ... A lo mejor ...*,” 1.78); and emphatic devices: such a sad meal that (“*comida tan triste que*,” 1.67), he felt so dejected that (“*se quedó tan abatido que*,” 1.64), she was about to cry (“*estaba casi llorando...*,” 1.59), I am so bad (“*soy tan malo*,” 1.16).

² Hypocoristic names (from the Greek word *hypokoristikós*: caress) are those used with an affective or familiar intention in order to replace a real one. They can take different forms: they can be generated as the reduction of a longer word to a single syllable, as a contracted form of a given name, or as one with a diminutive suffix. In Portuguese, for example, hypocorisms are based on processes of reduction Luis-Lu, duplication José-Zezé or derivation Antonio-Totoca.

The fragment includes vivid descriptions of places, characters and events which include mostly concrete words. The use of figurative language is not as prevalent. Some examples are: to have the Devil in one's blood ("*tener el diablo en la sangre*," 1.18-19), Luis is an angel ("*Luis es un ángel*," 1.37), voice like an immense river of tenderness ("*voz como un inmenso río de ternura*," 1.107), bury your head under the pillow ("*enterrar la cabeza debajo de la almohada*," 1.126-127), Jesus Child's funeral ("*velorio del Niño Jesús*," 1.72), dine sadness in pieces ("*cenar a pedazos la misma tristeza*," 1.100), God sees the happiness of the others ("*Dios ve la alegría de los otros*," 1.91-92).

The images evoked by the text are distributed among three levels along the text: sentence, complete paragraph and complete text. This means that the segments in which images can be conjured up refer both to isolated events and to the whole text. The following are some examples:

A) Visual images: dinner ("*cena*"), fireworks ("*fuegos artificiales*"), Light ("*luz*"), Jandira's red eyes ("*ojos rojos de Jandira*"), dinner table full of food at doctor Faulhaber's ("*mesa llena de cosas en la casa del doctor Faulhaber*"), wash used dishes ("*lavar la vajilla usada*"), dim lantern ("*luz mortecina del farol*"), old and tired Dindinha and Edmundo ("*Dindinha y Edmundo viejitos y cansados*"), body of the polished horse ("*cuerpo del caballo pulido*"), etc.

B) Auditory images: Church bell chimes ("*campana de la Iglesia*"), happy voices ("*voces felices*"), make noise in bed ("*hacer barullo en la cama*").

C) Other parts in which the text may evoke images are: Christmas Eve dinner, the father's clothes (hat, trainers), food (*rabanada*, wine, fruit), sensory descriptions (the Church anecdote), and the descriptions of emotions and feelings.

As regards the narrative structure, the typical discourse markers used in short stories are frequently repeated (but, because, so, sometimes, that is why, etc.). There is one main narrative episode, with a conventional beginning and end for a short story. The typical lexical phrases associated with the beginning and end of a short story are not observed, however. All the elements of the macro-structure of stories are present.

Most of the hidden or implicit cultural aspects emerge through the use of negative statements. The characters, mainly Zezé, use denials to foreground the aspects of the cultural reality that contradict their own ideas, expectations and suppositions about

Christmas. Some examples are: I am not going to get anything (“*no voy a recibir nada,*” 1.14), not really bad, bad, no (“*malo, malo, no,*” 1.18), I dearly wish I didn’t have the Devil inside (“*querría tanto no tenerlo [el Diablo en la sangre],*” 1.20-21), I don’t expect anything (“*no espero nada,*” 1.27), so I won’t be disappointed (“*así no me decepciono,*” 1.27), not even Jesus is as good as everybody says (“*ni siquiera el Niño Jesús es eso tan bueno que todo el mundo dice,*” 1.28), you didn’t deserve a gift (“*no merecías un regalo,*” 1.35), Jandira has her own way but she is not bad (“*Jandira tiene ese modo ... Pero no es mala,*” 1.47), he is never lucky (“*nunca tiene suerte,*” 1.52), And why isn’t Jesus Child good to us? (“*¿Y por qué el Niño Jesús no es bueno con nosotros?,*” 1.55), let’s not talk about this anymore (“*no hablemos más de eso,*” 1.62), He didn’t want to talk anymore (“*no quiso conversar más,*” 1.64), I didn’t feel like thinking (“*ni daba ganas de pensar,*” 1.67), neither (“*tampoco,*” 1.70), nobody talked to anybody else (“*nadie hablaba con nadie,*” 1.71), without saying goodbye or wishing Merry Christmas (“*sin decir hasta luego ni desear felicidades,*” 1.74), Nobody hugged or wanted to say something good (“*nadie se abrazó ni quiso decir algo bueno,*” 1.82), the little king... He was happy but we were not (“*el reyecito ... Sí era feliz [y nosotros no],*” 1.104-105), I don’t know (“*no sé,*” 1.113), I didn’t even try it (“*ni la probe,*” 1.113), I couldn’t swallow anything (“*no me dejaba pasar nada,*” 1.115-116), don’t leave you trainers outside (“*no las pongas,*” 1.122), etc.

It is also interesting to observe the use of phrases that reveal the characters’ feelings towards their own statements such as: not even (“*ni siquiera,*” 1.27), perhaps (“*a lo major,*” 1.78), as everybody says (“*como dice todo el mundo,*” 1.17), at least (“*por lo menos,*” 1.21-22), speaking seriously (“*hablando seriamente,*” 1.16), it is even possible that (“*hasta puede ser que,*” 1.62-63), I didn’t feel like (“*ni daba ganas de,*” 1.67), barely (“*apenas,*” 1.68), the worse was (“*lo peor era,*” 1.71), just to (“*sólo para,*” 1.61), I believe it must have been (“*creo que debe haber sido,*” 1.52-53), it seemed (“*más parecía,*” 1.71-72), even in (“*incluso en,*” 1.73), maybe (“*tal vez,*” 1.81), I am sure that (“*estoy seguro de que,*” 1.83), it seems that (“*parece que,*” 1.87), the saddest part was when (“*lo más triste fue cuando,*” 1.89), perhaps the light from the lantern was to blame (“*quizá la culpa de todo la hubiera tenido,*” 1.101), etc.

The fragment made reference to certain motivations and mental states of the characters, expressed by means of lexical items related to their feelings (Tager-Flusberg and Sullivan, 1995). Some of these terms make explicit reference to emotions (Tager-Flusberg and

Sullivan, 1995), such as the following: indecisive, disappointed, and frustrated to refer to Totoca; Zezé is described as bad, mischievous and frustrated; Jesus is good; everybody is sad (happiness is for the others).

Other terms refer to affective behaviour (Tager-Flusberg and Sullivan, 1995) and help explain certain attitudes expressed by the characters. Among others it is possible to point out the following: leave the place walking slowly, mum cries hidden in the bedroom, wipe tearful eyes with a handkerchief, go to the bedroom, pretend. With reference to Totoca the following behaviours are mentioned: be almost crying, feel disappointed, make pauses, stop talking, raise eyes. Zezé hugs Uncle Edmundo, does not speak, leaves his tennis shoes outside. Everybody is sad. Nobody attends Christmas Eve Mass or hugs the others. Nobody mentions good things or eats. The father barely eats, does not shave himself, leaves Christmas Eve dinner table. He always wears sneakers and does not greet or wish Merry Christmas.

Finally, very few expressions refer to cognitive and psychological mental states (think, believe, love, like) (Tager-Flusberg and Sullivan, 1995).

I.1.3. Other characteristics: social class, family structure, religious beliefs, roles and context

The family depicted in the story is poverty stricken. However, certain habits and customs related to a Christmas celebration are expected by its members. For instance, shoes rather than sneakers are to be worn for the occasion. Men should shave themselves. Everybody should look neat and tidy for Christmas Eve Mass. These expectations are overtly expressed linguistically (“*Salió, incluso en zapatillas*”, 1.73, my emphasis).

Situations of uttermost poverty are explicitly expressed in the fragment (“*hay gente que ni siquiera tiene eso*”, 1.5). If there is a present, it will be used; there is no electricity. A lantern is all the light there is in their dinner. There is no food. These aspects, in addition to the quantity and quality of the gifts as well as the food items and the clothing, indicate the presence of different social classes. Worth noting is the fact that the rich are doctors and have foreign names or are referred to by their complete names (Faulhaber, Villas-Boas, Aducto Luz).

Gestures, attitudes and behaviours are also revealing of what is expected at Christmas, such as hugging, wishing Merry Christmas and complimenting (*“Tal vez el único abrazo de la noche de fiesta. Nadie se abrazó ni quiso decir algo bueno.”* 1.80-82). These gestures, attitudes and behaviours carry meaning. Failing to comply with them at Christmas also has a meaning.

The nuclear family is central (children, father and mother) as well as the extended family (uncles and other relatives). Certain kinds of interaction patterns and behaviours are expected, which vary with the roles and ages of family members. For example, some characters refer to the lack of hugs and dialogue over the Christmas table as unusual. The celebration appears to be private as there are no guests from outside the family.

Religious beliefs and practices are present all along the fragment as characters mention the birth of Jesus, Christmas Eve Mass, Santa Claus, catechism. There is a strong religious atmosphere which implies that the family members are practising Catholic. Characters share strong religious beliefs which lead to the expression of sorrow (I believe Jesus wanted to be born poor just to show off, *“Creo que el niño Jesús quiso nacer pobre sólo para exhibirse,”* 1.60-61) as well as happiness towards the celebration (The little King who sucked his finger over his sleep was indeed really happy, *“El reyecito, que dormía con el dedo en la boca sí era feliz,”* 1. 104-105).

However, the text also refers to pagan beliefs such as the birth of Devil Child strongly related to the Brazilian religious syncretism which resulted from the coexistence of the Catholic religion, inherited from the Portuguese, and the Afro-Brazilian religious customs, incorporated as a result of immigration. Thus, Quimbanda, Candomblé and spiritism are followed by many Brazilians who consider themselves catholic. Some spiritists state they are Christian even though they do not accept certain aspects of Christianity such as the sacrifice of Jesus to save humanity.

In the story, age and gender determine the expected behaviour of the different characters. For example, adult men are expected to be providers. The text states that the father cannot provide the family with everything they need for the Christmas celebration: uncle Edmundo supplies some money. Women seem to be tender but overcome by grief. Gloria and Dindinha cry. Household chores are related to gender: the women do the washing up.

No clear geographical setting is mentioned in the fragment. However, the city is explicitly mentioned as a place different from where the action is set (over there in the city, “allá en la ciudad,” 1.80). In other words, the setting must be a rural or semi-rural area with a nearby church. People “walk” to different places.

I.1.4. The culture matrix in the fragment

A homodiegetic narrator describes and tells us about a Christmas celebration in the uttermost poverty in the shanty town of Bangu through the candid but alert eyes of a child. The characters and their conflicts do nothing less than reflect violence, poverty and exclusion. Religion does not give peace and quiet. Zezé, because of his mischievous nature and the punishment he receives, identifies himself with Devil Child³. For this family, Christmas represents the death of Jesus rather than his birth. The child narrator tells us that happiness and rejoicing are for the others, for those who are well-off and do not suffer deprivations; for them, God is present. For the poor, and these poor are natives, God exists but as an absence or punishment.

Cultural issues are embedded with social class. It is necessary to point out that “social injustice can take on the aspect of cultural difference, disguising social gulfs” (Genetsch, 2007: 27). According to Genetsch (2007: 30): “laziness in the poor may be considered as culturally ingrained but in fact, it is socially instilled depression. Rejection causes dejection, marginalization leaves self-consciousness where integration should foster self-confidence. Disappointment and humiliation bring about an unwillingness to adapt culturally.”

In my previous studies I supposed that this text would be more comprehensible than the other two because it was written in Spanish (although it was a translation from Portuguese) and also because it described a Christmas celebration in a Latin American country. However, a number of aspects do not allow me to support this hypothesis on this occasion. Firstly, the participants lacked information both about shanty towns in an indigenous context and about the typical or characteristic features of Christmas in poor contexts.

³ Origin in Pastorelas: theatre representation of the birth of Jesus, the arrival of the Three Wise Men and the constant struggle between good and evil represented by angels and demons. Source: Candelaria, C., Aldama, A., García, P., Alvarez Smith, A. (2004) *Enciclopedia of Latino Popular Culture*. Westport, Greenwood Publishing Group.

Secondly, the fragment might present difficulties as it included references to other parts of the novel which were not explained in the excerpt that the participants in this study read, and might therefore create confusion. Some examples are the Casino Bangu story; the reference Zezé makes to his own death (“*Me gustaría que antes de morir, por lo menos una vez, naciese para mí el Niño Jesús en vez del Niño Diablo,*” 1.21-22); the reference to the father of the family being bad; the little king; the dim light. Finally, the religious aspects described in the fragment might hinder comprehension, too. Argentina is mostly a Catholic country. Even though the biographical information questionnaire did not inquire about whether students came from Catholic schools, it did reveal that only one participant (of the six who were Catholic) was a practising Catholic. Given the foregoing, Christmas Eve Mass and catechism might be strange to the participants in this study. The expression “*Ni siquiera el Niño Jesús es eso tan bueno que todo el mundo dice. Eso que el Padre cuenta y que el Catecismo dice...*” (1.27-29) is important. Father and Catechism reveal a strong attachment to a religious faith and culture. The following phrase also reveals a quite sophisticated religious knowledge: “*Por eso creo que el Niño Jesús quiso nacer pobre sólo para exhibirse. Después Él vio que solamente los ricos servían... Pero no hablemos más de eso. Hasta puede ser que lo que diga sea un pecado muy grande*” (1.60-63). The association established between Jesus-Good Child, and Devil Child, wealth and poverty, punishment, hope, lack of hope, wish, and frustration represents a complex semantic and symbolic framework which leads to strong feelings embodied by Zezé, Totoca and the other characters

Finally, a singular aspect of this fragment, as I mentioned in chapter 6 (methodology) and chapter 5 (materials), is that it is a translation from Portuguese. Translations express the interpretation of a certain culture made by the translator, who mediates between the text and the vision of the culture which reaches the reader. See chapter 5 for more details.

More specifically, it is important to bear in mind that this translation presents some peculiar characteristics. For example, the word *rabanada* appears between inverted commas; then the question posed is why the translator does not translate it as *torreja* and decides to mark the text. Moreover, the word chosen is *rabanada* instead of *rebanada*. The word for *torreja* in Moliner⁴ is “a slice of bread soaked first in milk and then in egg which

⁴ Online dictionary of the use of Spanish by María Moliner

is finally fried. Sometimes, after fried, it is covered with syrup. It can also be soaked in wine rather than milk.” There is another issue here in that male names in Spanish end with “o.” Consequently, the way proper names are introduced in the text appears to be strange, even though this may also be a translation problem.

1 We sit around the table, eating our Christmas dinner. There's a student of my father's, a young man from India who's here to study insects and who's never seen snow before. We're having him to Christmas dinner because he's
5 foreign, he's far from home, he will be lonely, and they don't even have Christmas in his country. This has been explained to us in advance by our mother. He's polite and ill at ease and he giggles frequently, looking with what I sense is terror at the array of food spread out before him,
10 the mashed potatoes, the gravy, the lurid green and red Jell-O salad, the enormous turkey: my mother has said that the food is different here. I know he's miserable, underneath his smiles and politeness. I'm developing a knack for this, I can sniff out hidden misery in others now with hardly
15 any effort at all.

My father sits at the head of the table, beaming like the Jolly Green Giant. He lifts his glass, his gnome's eyes twinkling. "Mr. Banerji, sir," he says. He always calls his students Mr. and Miss. "You can't fly on one wing."

20 Mr. Banerji giggles and says, "Very true, sir," in his voice that sounds like the BBC News. He lifts his own glass and sips. What is in the glass is wine. My brother and I have cranberry juice in our wineglasses. Last year or the year before we might have tied our shoelaces together, under
25 the table, so we could signal each other with secret jerks and rugs, but we're both beyond this now for different reasons.

My father ladles out the stuffing, deals the slices of dark and light; my mother adds the mashed potatoes and cran-
30 berry sauce and asks Mr. Banerji, enunciating carefully, whether they have turkeys in his country. He says he doesn't believe so. I sit across the table from him, my feet dangling, staring at him, entranced. His spindly wrists extend from

his over-large cuffs, his hands are long and thin, ragged
35 around the nails, like mine. I think he is very beautiful, with his brown skin and brilliant white teeth and his dark appalled eyes. There's a child these colors in the ring of children on the front of the Sunday school missionary paper, yellow children, brown children, all in different costumes, dancing around Jesus. Mr. Banerji doesn't have a
40 costume, only a jacket and tie like other men. Nevertheless I can hardly believe he's a man, he seems so unlike one. He's a creature more like myself: alien and apprehensive. He's afraid of us. He has no idea what we will do next, what impossibilities we will expect of him, what we will
45 make him eat. No wonder he bites his fingers.

"A little off the sternum, sir?" my father asks him, and Mr. Banerji brightens at the word.

"Ah, the sternum," he says, and I know they have entered together the shared world of biology, which offers
50 refuge from the real, awkward world of manners and silences we're sitting in at the moment. As he slices away with the carving knife my father indicates to all of us, but especially to Mr. Banerji, the areas where the flight muscles
55 attach, using the carving fork as a pointer. Of course, he says, the domestic turkey has lost the ability to fly.

"*Meleagris gallopavo*," he says, and Mr. Banerji leans forward; the Laín perks him up. "A pea-brained animal, or bird-brained you might say, bred for its ability to put on
60 weight, especially on the drumsticks"—he points these out—"certainly not for intelligence. It was originally domesticated by the Mayans." He tells a story of a turkey farm where the turkeys all died because they were too stupid
65 to go into their shed during a thunderstorm. Instead they stood around outside, looking up at the sky with their beaks wide open and the rain ran down their throats and drowned them. He says this is a story told by farmers and probably
70 not true, although the stupidity of the bird is legendary. He says that the wild turkey, once abundant in the deciduous forests in these regions, is far more intelligent and can elude even practiced hunters. Also it can fly.

I sit picking at my Christmas dinner, as Mr. Banerji is picking at his. Both of us have messed the mashed potatoes

75 around on our plates without actually eating much. Wild things are smarter than tame ones, that much is clear. Wild things are elusive and wily and look out for themselves. I divide the people I know into tame and wild. My mother, wild. My father and brother, also wild; Mr. Banerji, wild
80 also, but in a more skittish way. Carol, tame. Grace, tame as well, though with sneaky vestiges of wild. Cordelia, wild, pure and simple.

"There are no limits to human greed," says my father. "Indeed, sir?" says Mr. Banerji, as my father goes on to say that he's heard some son of a gun is working on an
85 experiment to breed a turkey with four drumsticks, instead of two drumsticks and two wings, because there's more meat on a drumstick.

"How would such a creature walk, sir?" asks Mr. Banerji, and my father, approving, says, "Well may you ask." He tells Mr. Banerji that some darn fool scientists are working
90 on a square tomato, which will supposedly pack more easily into crates than the round variety.

"All the flavor will be sacrificed, of course," he says. "They care nothing for flavor. They bred a naked chicken,
95 thinking they'd get more eggs by utilizing the energy saved from feather production, but the thing shivered so much they had to double-heat the coop, so it cost more in the end."

"Fooling with Nature, sir," says Mr. Banerji. I know already that this is the right response. Investigating Nature
100 is one thing and so is defending yourself against it, within limits, but fooling with it is quite another.

Mr. Banerji says he hears there is now a naked cat available, he's read about it in a magazine, though he himself
105 does not see the point of it at all. This is the most he has said so far.

My brother asks if there are any poisonous snakes in India, and Mr. Banerji, now much more at ease, begins to
110 enumerate them. My mother smiles, because this is going better than she thought it would. Poisonous snakes are fine with her, even at the dinner table, as long as they make people happy.

My father has eaten everything on his plate and is digging
115 for more stuffing in the cavity of the turkey, which resembles a trussed, headless baby. It has thrown off its disguise as a meal and has revealed itself to me for what it is, a large dead bird. I'm eating a wing. It's the wing of a tame turkey, the stupidest bird in the world, so stupid it can't even fly any more. I am eating lost flight.

I.2. Cultural perspectives in *Cat's Eye* (Atwood, 1998: 137-140)

I.2.1. Introduction

Different cultural perspectives present in the fragment from *Cat's Eye* by Atwood (1998: 137-140)⁵ are analyzed. This fragment describes an episode of a Canadian family's Christmas celebration. For this Christmas dinner, the father of the family has invited a student of his from India, who is alone, to share the celebration with them. The narrator is the little girl of the house, Elaine, who describes the celebration through her eyes of insider of the Canadian-American culture. That is, Elaine is a narrator who participates in the celebration described and is also a member of the culture portrayed in the fragment. The presence of the Indian student adds complexity to the coexistence of cultures in the fragment, since Elaine participates as an observer in relation to the Indian culture. This fact brings to the surface elements of otherness, strangeness, alienation and cultural differences in the frame of a cultural matrix where different perceptions of both cultures, in general conflicting, converge.

I.2.2. Context of the fragment

The family sits around the table, the father sits at the head. He is compared to the Jolly Green Giant, a character that appears in graphic publicity and on commercials in the United States, particularly in a tin of vegetables of the same name. The Jolly Green Giant is green and has an attitude that shows power and strength. The family keeps the tradition

⁵ I present next a brief review based on Aubrey (2002), Bloom (2000), Cooke (1998) and Flexner (1996).

Cat's Eye is the author's seventh novel and it is considered her most autobiographical work. Margaret Atwood was born in Ottawa in 1939 and spent a significant part of her childhood in the Canadian woods. Atwood is known as a feminist writer, though she resists to be considered strictly as such. Her schooling years in Toronto during the 1950s and the 1960s coincided with the emergence of what is often known as the "second wave" of modern feminism.

The novel tells the story of Elaine Risley, a fifty-year-old controversial painter, who comes back to Toronto for a retrospective of her work. At the moment of professional glory, Risley tries to accept her age and she must also struggle with disturbing memories from her childhood. An important part of the novel consists of Elaine's narration of this period of her life. In the centre of the story lies the cruelty that Risley suffered as a child from her three friends, especially from one called Cordelia. At the same time, the novel also offers a vivid image of Toronto during the 1940s and 1950s and shows how the city had changed by the 1980s.

to dine with roast turkey, to which they add a bittersweet cranberry sauce. The act of slicing the turkey is a ceremony in itself, which is generally reserved to the head of the family, as in this case. The dishes are full with mashed potatoes and cranberry sauce. There is Jello salad, which includes fruit pieces and marshmallows.

The custom of inviting a guest for dinner is observed. In general the guest is some poor person from a nearby church, or a foreign and solitary academic from the local university. In the presence of Banerji, the Indian student, Elaine remembers the Sunday school missionary paper and the images of Jesus participating in a circle of children of different nationalities, from different parts of the world.

I.2.3. Textual overview

The text does not include illustrations; it contains abundant direct language and culturally authentic dialogues. It is transparent, i.e. it contains diagnostic words which activate the Christmas schema such as the following ones: “Christmas dinner” (lines 1, 4), “turkey” (1.11), “slices of dark and light” (1. 28-29), “cranberry juice” (1.23), “cranberry sauce” (1.29-30), “Jello salad” (1.10-11), etc. Apart from words, the text also includes diagnostic actions which activate the Christmas schema, such as “sit around the table” (1.1) for Christmas dinner, “ladles out” (1.28), “adds the mashed potatoes” [on the dishes] (1.29), “sips” (1.22), etc. The Christmas dinner and the act of serving food appear among the diagnostic events and scenes. The repetition of diagnostic words is also observed (for example, in the first paragraph, the word “Christmas” is repeated three times). References to Christmas appear throughout the entire fragment.

The use of foreign language words, for example from Latin (“*Meleagris gallopavo*,” 1.57) and the presence of names, words and expressions with cultural load (for example, Banerji, Jello salad, Jolly Green Giant and Sunday school, among others) are observed.

The fragment contains vivid descriptions of places, characters and events, with a preponderance of concrete language. To a lesser extent, figurative language is also observed, such as “his gnome's eyes twinkling” (1.17-18), “voice that sounds like the BBC News” (1.21), “the ... world of biology, which offers refuge” (1.50-51), [Banerji] “He's a creature” (1.43), “A pea-brained animal” (1.58), [turkey as] “headless baby” (1. 115), “sniff

out hidden misery” (l.14), [father is] “digging for more stuffing in the cavity of the turkey” (l.113-114), etc.

The images that the text may potentially generate in a reader are distributed throughout in three levels: sentence, complete paragraph (for example Mr Banerji’s description) and complete text. This means that the points in which the text may evoke images refer both to specific episodes and to the whole text. The aspects that may evoke images are the description of the Christmas dinner, the places of the members of the family around the table (the father at the head, Banerji opposite Elaine), Banerji’s colourful physical description (brown skin, brilliant white teeth, dark eyes), the description of Banerji’s clothes (a jacket and a tie), food description (enormous turkey, green and red Jello salad, wine, wineglasses), specific anecdotes (thunderstorm, turkeys with their beaks wide open, drowning under the rain), Sunday school missionary paper with children of different races in a circle and dancing around Jesus, Jolly Green Giant (as said before, a green monster used by a company which produces tinned vegetables and which publishes in the press and occasionally on television). In the latter cases, the referents are located outside the text, in the cultural reality.

The following cultural aspects are revealed covertly in relation to both the members of the family and Banerji:

- a) Formalization of the table by Elaine.
- b) Family structure. A strong paternal figure appears (the father sits at the head of the table, he slices the turkey, the mother serves), with the infrequent mention of the brother (Stephen), never mentioned by his name.
- c) Hospitality as a precious occidental value. Even though it is a familiar celebration, they welcome Banerji in their house because he is alone and comes from another country.
- d) A respectful professor–student relationship.
- e) Private, familiar celebration. Family inconvenience due to the presence of a stranger.
- f) Passive celebration. Private dinner, without any other activities apart from the dinner in itself (cf. *Desert Wife*).

- g) Inappropriateness of certain topics of conversation at the table, for example about snakes (but it is accepted in order to help Banerji feel comfortable in the celebration, which in turn leads us to the idea of hospitality).

Many of the covert or implicit cultural aspects emerge through the use of negative statements. For example, Elaine, Banerji, the father and the mother use negative statements to bring out those aspects of the foreign cultural reality which contradict their own ideas, expectations and assumptions about such culture. Some examples follow: “does not see the point of” (1.105), “certainly not for intelligence” (1.61), [Banerji] “doesn't have a costume” (1.40-41), “he seems so unlike one” [a man] (1.42), “He has no idea” (1.44), “who's never seen snow before” (1.3-4), “they don't even have Christmas in his country” (1.5-6), “with hardly any effort at all” (1.14-15), “You can't fly on one wing” (1.19), “He says he doesn't believe so” [whether they have turkey] (1.31-32), “I can hardly believe he's a man” (1.42), “without actually eating much” (1.74), “There are no limits to human greed” (1.82), “They care nothing for flavor” (1.94), “No wonder” (1.46), “What is in the glass is wine” (1.22), “a story ... probably not true” (1.67-68), “can't even fly any more” (1. 119), etc.

It is also interesting to emphasize the use of phrases which reveal the characters' attitudes towards their own propositions. For example: “of course” (1.55, 93), “dam fool scientists” (1. 90), “supposedly” (1.91), etc.

As regards the local and global relevance of textual content, the presence of significant or salient information, both local and global, is also noticed. This is the case of the reference to the turkey with four drumsticks, the square tomatoes, the breeding of naked chicken and the anecdote of the naked cats. These anecdotes, which occupy a significant part of the text, are used to illustrate the topic of Nature: the rejection of hybrids, the rejection of the manipulation of Nature beyond certain limits, the lack of limits for human greed. The anecdote of the drowned turkeys illustrates their stupidity and leads to the topic of classifying people into tame and wild.

On the other hand, there is significant and salient information at a local level but not at a global level, such as the anecdote of the shoelaces under the table, and diverse information, mainly at the scientific level: it is not possible to fly with only a wing, the domesticated

turkey does not fly, capacity of the turkey to put on weight (specially in its drumsticks), reference to the muscles of the turkey, the turkey has been domesticated by the Mayas, etc.

In addition, the fragment makes reference to some of the characters' motivations and mental states, with the inclusion of terms referred to their feelings (Tager-Flusberg and Sullivan, 1995). Some terms explicitly refer to affective states or emotions such as the following ones: "miserable" (1.12), "hidden misery" (1.14), "lonely" (1.5), "ill at ease" (1.8), "He has no idea what we will do next, what impossibilities we will expect of him" (1.44-45), "shared world of biology, which offers refuge" (1.50-51), "the Latin perks him up" (1.58), "appalled eyes" (1.37), "terror at the array of food spread out before him" (1.9).

Others are terms which refer to affective behaviours (Tager-Flusberg and Sullivan, 1995) that serve to explain some of Banerji's actions. For example: "smiles" (1.13), "he giggles frequently" (1.8), "This is the most he has said so far" (1.105-106), "he bites his fingers" (1.46), "Mr. Banerji is picking at his" [Christmas dinner] (1.72-73), "Both of us have messed the mashed potatoes around our plates" (1.73-74). As regards the narrator, Elaine stares at Banerji ("staring at him," 1.33), picks at her Christmas dinner ("I sit picking at my Christmas dinner," 1.72), messes the mashed potatoes around the plate ("Both of us have messed the mashed potatoes around our plates" (1.73-74).

Lastly, others are psychological terms (Tager-Flusberg and Sullivan, 1995), such as "ill at ease" (1.8), "alien" (1.43), "apprehensive" (1.43).

1.2.4. Coexistence of cultures: a matrix of familiarity and strangeness between two cultures

On some occasions the narrator's point of view and voice are the ones of a girl, but then the discernment capacity of an adult narrator is filtered, an adult who recalls an event that took place during her childhood. The presence of the Indian student adds complexity to the cultural matrix of the text, since in relation to such Indian culture, Elaine participates as an observer. This fact brings out elements of otherness, strangeness, alienation and cultural differences in the frame of a cultural matrix where different perceptions of both cultures, in general conflicting, converge.

The reader has access to Elaine's cultural reality through her confrontation with Banerji's Indian culture. In India, Christmas is not celebrated; there are no turkeys; there is no snow. This reflects Level 1 in the *Model of Cultural Understanding* (see chapter 4), which means that cultural aspects/differences are perceived and identified from Elaine's perspective. The values, ideas and assumptions behind the American-Canadian culture (level 2 in the model) come to the surface through the explicit mention of different aspects such as the variety and abundance of food for the Christmas dinner (the father ends up all his food and serves himself some more), the association of Christmas with the snow typical of this time of the year, the two levels of the narration (the social, i.e. the Christmas celebration, and the scientific one, which is shared and serves as a refuge for the inconvenience at a social level), Elaine's inconvenience (who assumes the position of a critical observer of Banerji and perceives him as an object of study, as a foreigner) and the family's inconvenience in general (they all adapt their speech, Elaine's mother articulates her words carefully).

Regarding this last point, it is important to emphasize that the topics of conversation are also modified. For example, in relation to the Indian culture, the characters talk about the existence of turkey and poisonous snakes. In the social sphere, the family dominates discourse whereas Banerji just answers the family's questions, without initiating discourse. As regards biology and the scientific world (shared, more comfortable), Banerji takes a more active role in the conversation, he expands his contributions to small comments, he makes questions to show interest ("Indeed, sir?," 1. 83) and he makes some evaluative comments ("fooling with Nature," 1.99). The scientific discourse seduces the guest and allows him to feel that he is able to take part in the conversation, that he is able to talk about something in that country. Banerji only initiates more extensive discourse with the anecdote of the naked cats. Even though Elaine is familiar with the scientific world ("I know already that this is the right response," 1.100), the topic of conversation might still be considered strange for a Christmas celebration. The topic of Nature also comes out, with a rejection of the hybrid and the lack of limit for human greed.

The fragment presents a true insider perspective. Elaine's perspective as a participant (not only as an observer) of the Christmas celebration does not always offer the values associated with the appropriate behaviours for this kind of celebration. On some occasions, the explicit mention of the values associated to certain actions helps to explain them, avoids cultural distortions and contributes to presenting authentic cultural information.

Some other times, the fact that Elaine is a true insider, in the strict sense of the word, does not help her to clarify the implicit values that aid to explain her attitudes and actions. That is, the reader only has access to Elaine's vision, feelings and motivations through her own eyes, with the limitations that this vision brings out.

At the same time, the fragment offers an external perspective in relation to Banerji's Indian culture (level 3 in the model), to which we have access only through Elaine's vision. It is observed that Banerji is left out from the family's celebration from the very first line of the fragment, without taking part thoroughly: the inclusive "we" opposes the "he" of "young man" ("We sit around the table, eating our Christmas dinner. There's a student of my father's, a young man from India who's here to study insects and who's never seen snow before." 1.1-4). Elaine shows surprise, disbelief and attraction towards the odd. Banerji appears as alien, foreign, not human, a strange creature. Banerji's perception as not human reveals Elaine's conception of her own culture as normal, and her difficulty in perceiving other cultures simply as different and not as inferior. Why should Banerji know the snow, for example? The snow represents normality for Elaine, a normality which Banerji is permanently escaping from. The underestimation towards Banerji and his Indian culture is shown, for example, in expressions such as "they don't even have Christmas" (1.6). There is a grading in Banerji's description that culminates in this use of "even."

Elaine's own vision of Banerji's foreign culture is also revealed, as stated before, through the use of negative statements. This use reveals Elaine's prejudices and stereotypes. In India Christmas is not celebrated, there are no turkeys or snow. Banerji does not eat, speaks very little, there are silences. Banerji is presented as alien, foreign, not human, he "doesn't have a costume" (1.40-41), he does not know the snow, he does not celebrate Christmas and his voice sounds like the BBC News, that is, his English sounds unreal, bearing little resemblance to American English.

The first person narrator deadens the "distance" between the hosts and the Indian. At the same time, Elaine compares herself with Banerji in terms of alterity ("Nevertheless I can hardly believe he's a man, he seems so unlike one. He's a creature more like myself: alien and apprehensive." 1.42-43). Both Elaine and Banerji are the Other. Elaine fluctuates, decentres herself, belongs to one group but identifies herself with the Other, in terms of suffering and unhappiness. She tells the reader that she has developed a capacity to sniff

unhappiness. That capacity is owned by those who themselves have experienced those feelings. Elaine knows that Banerji is miserable. There is some compassion and complicity due to Banerji's intent to understand. There may also be some kind of collective imagination behind the missionary paper description: Banerji appears as a postcard of the evangelized, with dark skin and immersed in poverty. Elaine is a girl, but her background of experiences separates her from her brother and situates her beyond. Even though the voice is the voice of a girl, this homodiegetic narrator has the sensibility and the discernment capacity to uncover veils, or at least accounts for them from the present moment of the writing.

A central area through which the clash between both cultures is manifested, is the key vocabulary, such as the Jolly Green Giant and the different food aspects (Jello salad, cranberry juice, turkey with bittersweet cranberry sauce, sliced turkey –rather than in pieces-, wine for adults). The accumulation of adjectives in the description of food emphasizes the American strangeness and abundance. The fragment also offers conceptual difficulties such as Sunday school (Mormon), the Sunday school missionary paper, the hybrids (square tomatoes, turkey with four drumsticks, etc), the religious appearance (through omission), the voice like the BBC News, etc.

The prototypical aspects of a Christmas celebration in the Canadian-American culture appear through Elaine's eyes as natural and are constituted in an amalgam of objective arbitrariness and subjective assumptions. How could all this be otherwise? Our own cultural reality becomes common sense. Elaine's perception of herself as alien, strange, closer to Banerji than to her own family, is an evidence of normality associated with the dominant culture. This culture seems to be so natural for its members (in this case, Elaine and her family) that its common sense remains tied to universal human nature. (Rosaldo, 1993). Elaine, in relation to her own culture, exhibits modes or evaluative orientation patterns, culturally organized, towards specific people, objects and situations within her own cultural matrix (Parsons, 1951, 1966). The feelings and emotions that support those common values within her culture are learnt or acquired, in other words, they are cultural patterns which are internalized.

Even though these patterns are internalized, they are analyzed, fragmented and questioned by the narrator, which leads her to align with Banerji in the alienation that they share. At

the same time, the sociocultural descriptions of the fragment, as they are materialized by Elaine herself (member of such culture), involve a certain emphasis on defamiliarization, that is, on the process to make strange what is familiar (Moreiras, 1991). Defamiliarizing an event means to transform its routines, which are taken for granted (Rosaldo, 1993). When a daily event is defamiliarized from a distant position, a common practice becomes a ritual, making such an event so defamiliarized that it seems strange. Simultaneously, at times, Elaine places herself at a peculiar distance from the intense emotions that a Christmas celebration may provoke, turning the idiosyncrasy of such emotions into a general and routine description of common features of a Christmas celebration in her culture. The familiarity of her own culture coexists with its strangeness in the narration.

In an inverse process of genuine ethnographic approach, Elaine, whose aim is to discover some aspects of Banerji's culture, presents it as an object of critical analysis in an intent to make familiar what is strange. Cultures which are extremely divergent, such as Banerji's, may seem so exotic for people who do not belong to it, that all aspects of daily life seem strange. Social descriptions of divergent cultures require, from those who make them (in this case Elaine), a focus on familiarization, so as to be able to make them emerge as distinct in their differences but at the same time recognizable as human in their similarities (Rosaldo, 1993). At certain moments, Elaine places herself as an observer at a great distance from the observed, Banerji, in the role of a spectator who is not taking part. However, Elaine is not able to distance herself from this role, and therefore is not able to access a conception of the emotions experienced by Banerji in this specific Christmas context through Banerji's own world.

This narrator's voice weaves a thick web which relates different classification systems (animals, human beings, races) and through this estranged gaze, deconstructs them. This classifying system (zoology, biology), which finds its bearing on scientific discourse, is undermined from within by the genetic manipulation which alters the laws of Nature in pursuit of economic ends. The narrator perfectly knows the prevailing scientific doctrine in her paternal circle: to research Nature is legal, as well as to defend oneself from it, but to play with it is a complete different issue. Ethical judgment comes out.

The narrator emphasizes the value of what has not been domesticated, of what remains wild. The wild turkey, as opposed to the domesticated and civilized ones, is represented in Banerji and at the same time in the narrator, as she identifies herself with him. Domestication leads to perceptive automatism. Elaine breaks with this automatism through a discourse that tries to discover the holes or gaps in appearances, walking through borderline areas.

Lastly, the fact that Elaine feels alien just in the way that Banerji does, allows the narrator to consider how her own behaviour is interpreted according to strange cultural parameters, in this case through Banerji's eyes. Level 5 in the *Model of Cultural Understanding* would be present here, that is, the perception of one's own culture through the perspective of another culture. At a formal level, there is a process of estrangement that allows a new and fresh view on something old. The decentralization in relation to our own cultural codes allows us to become aware of their cultural relativity. The critical reflection on our own culture and on others' cultures contributes to relativizing our own cultural assumptions as well as those of others. It also contributes to exploring our own reactions against our behaviours and those of others. Elaine perceives her own cultural norms through the eyes of a foreigner, which facilitates the approach to a foreign culture, developing a critical appreciation of it.

Kismas

1 Before the birth of Mrs. White Hat's baby, more frequently while the wind blew in October and without ceasing, after that dance Polly and I attended, the heathen asked, "How long 'till Kismas?"

5 Christmas to us meant warm fires, red berries, gifts in tissue paper. We found that the Navajo "Kismas" included the warm fires, but everything else was novel enough to make history.

10 We planned to watch the benighted Navajo cook dinner; we had even declared we would eat with them; we would spend the day watching their games. For our treat we prepared a hundred small bags each containing candy, cookies and a red apple.

15 Christmas Eve the heathen began to arrive over these hills. There were wagonloads of women and children and scores of men and young people on horses. Everybody was dressed in his best: beads, bracelets and silver belts glistened against the bright-colored velvet shirts and glossy sateen skirts, with miles and miles of flounces. I had made several of the skirts and I knew how many miles long a flounce was.

20 By dark some two hundred Navajos were present. The Utcitys were there: the head of the house in all his dignity, the Little Bidoni and his three wives, soft-spoken and sweet, and all the other sons and daughters and husbands and wives; the Little Cranks, living up to their name; the Old Lady and Old Man, with their children and grandchildren; Robert, greeting old friends, and White Hat and Mrs. White Hat and the children; Japon and his wife and their progeny, Mrs. Japon and the Old Lady giving each other a wide berth. Cla was present with his brothers and the Old Buzzard. Everybody's friends were present and all their relatives.

35 Apparently they expected "Kismas" to begin at once. Expecting to supply meat for the Christmas dinner, Ken had killed a beef, but now he took down a hind quarter and cut steaks and more steaks until there was enough to go around. The adults came and took what they needed for their families for supper and for breakfast on Christmas morning. What they did not eat at once they were afraid to put down because some one would steal it, so all the evening they strolled about with great raw beefsteaks in their hands. Mrs. Japon and the Old Buzzard each had two.

40 We had provided several loads of wood so they could help themselves; and the Christmas fires, big and little, were all over the place. They were so all over the place, we were uneasy. One family settled down and built their fire within two feet of the walls of that frame shack of a store building. Ken had to go out and insist that they move elsewhere. They were indignant and thought it quite fussy in me to go out and shovel dirt over the bed of live coals they left.

45 Big fires were built on the level space, where the dancing was to be, and these, added to the light of a full moon, made the night so bright we could see the whole landscape around. The dancing was just for the Indians' amusement and ours and was in no sense ceremonial. Now and then some of them danced a figure from a ceremonial dance but without the costumes and other accessories. The music was made on a clay water jar with water in it and a rawhide stretched over the top. One fellow played this, or beat it, and others shook rattles made of paper bags with beans in them.

50 The best dance of the lot was one performed by some of the older men. They had to dance and sing because the younger men knew neither the proper songs nor the dance; and Utcity, the Singer, and the other six who made up the figures sang, laughed and kept up the most violent sort of exercises until they dropped panting to the ground. They all assured us that when they were young men they could keep it up all night, but now they were old and full of meat besides, and they couldn't do what they used to do.

Seudónimo:

75 With that dance and others, and wrestling and racing about the fires, there was plenty of activity. There was nothing cold or solemn about the gathering; every one was laughing and happy. They were a most fun-loving people and laughed at the same things we thought funny.

80 All the evening I was trying to bake two loaves of fruit cake. It was done when we finally went to bed at midnight — done with a thick crust an inch deep all over it and a core of good cake in the middle. Keeping an oven fire of pitch wood and watching the dancing outside had been too much for the success of the cake. The wood-burning stove was temperamental at its best.

85 All night we smelled the piñon smoke from the camp fires, and when a different smoke drifted into our window, we got up and followed it to find that some one had put box boards on his fire. Lady Betty was nervous and growled every time we or any one else moved. When we got back in bed, after tracing the source of non-piñon smoke, she came to the side of the bed and put her cold nose in my hand. After a little she lay down with a loud sigh, but got up at once if she could not feel my hand. My arm was numb from keeping the hand where she could reach it. Poor Betty! She didn't get much sleep that night and a hard day she had ahead of her, too. Wild reservation life was no joy to a blooded bulldog like Betty.

90 What with our uneasiness about the Indian fires and their early rising habits, we were up early Christmas morning. While the men and boys went out to the flat mesa to race their horses, we women folk thought about dinner for the crowd. By eleven o'clock Mrs. White Hat and Mrs. Japon began making bread and the efficient way they went about it was a lesson to me.

110 A twenty-five-pound sack of flour, a frying pan or Dutch oven, a can of baking powder and a bucket of well water was the total of their equipment. They rolled back the top of the sack, put in a pinch of baking powder and mixed in enough water with their hands to make a dough stiff enough to handle easily. This was pulled and patted into a cake that covered the bottom of the cooking pan and fried in an inch or two of fat. The finished cakes were stacked in piles. It was an interesting performance; but after I had watched for a time, I realized they could not bake enough bread for the crowd that way, so I started to make biscuits in the oven. That was a full-time job. I learned then that one sack of flour just fills a washtub with biscuits.

125 While we women were preparing the bread, Ken had cut up the meat. Some women built up stones about the cooking fires to set tubs on, and soon we had three tubs of the meat simmering, each with an attendant stirring it with a long splinter of wood from the woodpile. The wash boiler did duty as a coffeepot. There was a forked cedar in it to hold the bag of coffee down. I was sure the whole dinner would be flavored with cedar, but it wasn't.

130 Other women I set to peeling onions and potatoes, and very handy they were at it too. These we added to the meat tubs. When everything was all well cooked, I mixed a pail of flour and water for thickening and added that, with salt, pepper and chili. The cooks tasted it often and said it was very good.

140 One of the children was sent out to the mesa edge to call the men; and in a few minutes they charged in, the ponies running pell-mell between the camp fires and jumping over the clutter of camp stuff, the Indians yelling like pirates and quirting on both sides. I never had heard a pirate yell, but I was sure a Navajo must be as good a yeller as a Comanche, and nothing else could make so much noise, unless it was a pirate.

145 The dripping ponies were left at one side and the Indians came to the fires. I dipped the stew into pans, all we had in the store; and then we passed tin cups of coffee and spoons for the stew. The family groups sat together and everybody ate and ate. Some of the heathen, I know, had not had a square meal for a month.

150 After the meal was over, the women cleaned the soot from the rubs and boiler with sand, while I scalded the spoons and pans. They were willing enough to do it, though they would have gone away and left everything dirty, if I had not suggested the dishwashing. I thought it best they do some little thing for their meal.

155 When that was done, the children lined up to get the bags of candy. I passed them out and soon became suspicious about the length of the line. Investigation revealed Mrs. Little Crank and a score of other mothers standing around the corner of the store, putting bags of candy into their blankets and sending the children back to stand in line for another. There was a sort of appreciation in the Navajo, but it was the sort that wanted all they could get from any one who wasn't looking.

160 By the middle of the afternoon they were all gone and we were allowed to eat something ourselves. Tired! But we agreed we had never seen such a Christmas and would not see another in a lifetime.

170 Among the last to go was Robert, who came to me and spoke in English, a thing he did not often do, as I had learned Navajo. "I wish you a Merry Christmas, San Chee (my name)," he said.

175 All day I had been too busy and excited to think, but that little attention made me homesick for something not Indian; and I stumbled into the store and hurried through to the living room, so Ken would not see the tears in my eyes.

180 He locked the store, polished the lamp chimney which I had not had time to touch and followed me. He set the lamp on the table and handed me an envelope.

"Merry Christmas," he said. He turned at once to undress and I knew he knew I did not want him to see me cry.

185 In the envelope was the receipt for the second payment on the farm.

"Ken," I gasped.

190 "Better get to bed. It's been a long day," he answered sleepily.

Half undressed, I sat on the edge of the bed. Outside a cold moon climbed to where I could see it through the window. We had been at Covered Water more than a year. Did Ken want to own a farm or would he rather stay on the reservation?

195 The moon climbed higher, and the shell of a house snapped and cracked in the cold. The air was freezing; I could see my breath in the moonlight, but still I sat.

200 I thought Ken asleep but suddenly he rolled over and spoke to me. When I faced him, he grinned at me in the moonlight.

205 With a gesture, I finished undressing and pulled the warm covers over me. My teeth were chattering and I blew out my breath sharply, to see the wraith of it in the moonlight. What difference whether we worked here or there, so we worked together?

I.3. Cultural perspectives in *Desert Wife* (Faunce, 1961: 173-181)

I.3.1. Introduction

I explore now the topic of otherness in the fragment from *Desert Wife* (Faunce, 1934; 1961:173-181)⁶ which describes a Christmas celebration in one of the native communities

⁶ *Desert Wife* narrates the writer's and her husband's life experiences during the four years they spent with the Navajos in the Covered Water reserve in Arizona. The story takes place near the First World War, and the book as such was first published in 1934 (Faunce, 1981: ix).

Hilda Faunce lived on the coast of the Oregon State, a very green and wet place, completely different from the Arizona desert. She came from a reformist family since its origins (Kansas City, 1855), a family whose history "suggests the possibility of the purposeful use of migration to facilitate social reform," and whose women "passed their progressive views about the need to improve society and to expand opportunities for women on to their children, ideas regarding the necessity to improve society and to expand the opportunities for women" (Getz, 2006:1). Hilda's cousin, Ruth Wattles, was a teacher in Colorado Springs and was the recipient of the letters that Hilda wrote from the reserve and which comprise the material from which the book *Desert Wife* originated (Faunce, 1981: vii; ix).

The novel *Desert Wife* offers a vision of the period known as the American "Far West." The term comprises the history, the geography, the peoples, the traditions, and the cultural expressions of life in the West in the United States during the second half of the 19th century, in particular the period that extends from the American civil war to the end of the century. In general terms, the period goes from the midst of the 19th century to the end of the Mexican revolution in 1920 (Lamar, 1977:871).

The expansion of the migration to the South-East in the 1820s and the 1830s forced the Federal Government to face the "indigenous issue". In 1837 the "Indian Removal Policy" started as the enforcement of the law signed by Andrew Jackson in 1830. Around twenty native American Indian tribes, among them the "Five Civilized Tribes" (Creek, Choctaw, Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Seminole) were pushed beyond the borders and were forced to establish themselves in the "Indian territory" (which later became the state of Oklahoma). This episode was known as "The Trail of Tears" (Utley, 2003:162-163). In 1864 the Navajos were expelled from their ancestors' lands and taken to Fort Sumner, New Mexico, in the exodus called "Long Walk of the Navajo" Four years later, as a result of the Agreement of Bosque Redondo, the tribe recovered its original territory where today is the state of Arizona and the southwest of the state of New Mexico (Utley, 2003:184).

When the limits of the "Indian territory" began to be ignored, a new policy of establishing reservations started to be gradually outlined. With the creation of the reservations, the Congress and the Secretary of Aboriginal Affairs hoped to "untribalise" the Native Americans and prepare them for their integration with the rest of the American society (White, 1991).

The attitudes of the white people towards the Indians during this period oscillated between extreme malevolence ("the only good Indian is a dead Indian"), moving towards humanism (Indians live in "inferior" societies and can be saved only by assimilating them to the white society) and ending up in more realistic positions (the Amerindians and the colonists could coexist in societies, separated but as equals, dividing the remaining lands) (White, 1991:321).

in the United States. The topics of otherness, difference and strangeness are pervasive in the fragment, since the Navajos are introduced to an occidental Christmas celebration by an American couple who are living in the Indian reservation. Hilda's view, the woman in the white couple, is present throughout the whole fragment since it constitutes the narrator's voice and positions herself as observer of the Navajos and their habits, customs, behaviours, values and conceptions, among other aspects. The culture clash brings out an endless number of cultural differences, as well as a clear presence of alien and strange cultural elements of a Christmas celebration which is prototypically American and imported from an occidental culture. The plentiful elements of otherness, strangeness and difference present in the fragment can be seen as a characteristic of its opacity or cultural obscurity.

I.3.2. Setting the story in context

Hilda and her husband Ken lived in Oregon. The constant rain and fog were depressing, their undertakings went wrong. Hilda managed to resist penury but her husband did not. Ken missed the desert; he had once been an Indian trader in the southwest of the United States and felt nostalgia for it. They loaded their belongings on a cart and headed for Ken's eagerly awaited land, the desert. Having experienced life outside the reserve, they chose to come back. Their contact with natives allowed them to observe their own lives from another perspective, perhaps a deeper one.

There were few streets, few carts. They arrived and bought the abandoned trade store in Covered Water. It was twenty miles away from Chinle, Arizona, their nearest neighbour, and one hundred and five miles away from Gallup, New Mexico, the nearest city. The trade store was a decrepit two-room tent.

There were no trees at sight in the Navajos inhospitable desert before World War I. A vast empty plain extended all along. Only rocks, sand and a scattered pine tree on the slope of a

The novel presents the possibility of a space of peaceful contact and exchange between the white people and the Navajos in such hard times, both for the Amerindians and for the colonists.

small hill were seen. There was immensity of sand. The Indians rode horses or used their old wagons, and were always ready to trade in the Covered Water store.

Hilda looked at the Navajos (out of the corner of her eye) spitting the floor, removing lice from their heads and begging for coffee. Their dark faces, as well as their customs, seemed strange to her. Little by little Hilda learned to speak some Navajo. The couple started to prosper and to save money to buy a small farm some day.

The Navajos lied and never paid their bills. Everybody talked about Hilda and Ken's kindness in order to try to get the best price or something for free. They all promised to pay later. Hilda and Ken already knew the Navajos, thus they sliced the meat as early as possible so that nobody took more than what they should, or to avoid people not paying for it. They wanted to take the liver, the intestines and the fat without paying. They did not even think that Hilda and Ken had already paid for the whole animal. The Navajos did not waste anything; they were experts in the handling of meat. They also sold wool, necklaces, buttons, rings, blankets, etc. and they never accepted the price that Ken offered for the articles. They added sand or stones to the wool to make it heavier.

In spite of all this, Hilda and Ken perceived the Navajos as respectful, silent when necessary, and reserved in relation to certain matters such as their names. Hilda and Ken did not know the Navajos' names, because they themselves did not tell them. There was a breach here, thus Hilda chose a distinctive feature in each of them (physical feature, behavioural feature, etc.) and she addressed them using this detail as a name.

I.3.3. Textual overview

I offer next an overview of the selected fragment, which serves as a framework for the discussion that follows about the topic of otherness. The position in which the narrator's voice is placed in *Cat's Eye* is diametrically different from the narrator's voice in *Desert Wife*. Even though there is a homodiegetic narrator in both novels, in *Desert Wife* the narrator's voice is the one of an adult woman who describes a Christmas shared with the Navajos, showing and recording her own behaviours as well as the Navajos' from a unique perspective, hers. On the contrary, in *Cat's Eye*, the voice belongs to a girl who has the necessary sensitivity and capacity of judgement to unveil and reveal.

The fragment comprises the presence of signals that indicate the relevance or organization of the discourse (title, etc.). It is also transparent, that is, it presents diagnostic words which activate the Christmas schema in the reader, such as the title itself, in Navajo, “Kismas” (l.4, 6, 34), the “Christmas fires” (l. 46) and the “dancing” (l. 55), among many others. The Christmas schema is not only activated by the use of certain specific words, but it is also manifested through diagnostic actions and events.

The use of foreign language words, for example from Navajo “Kismas” (lines 4, 6, 34), is observed. The Navajos’ proper names, due to the reason mentioned in the previous section, lack cultural connotations (the Utcitys, Little Bidoni, Little Cranks, Old Lady and Lord Man, White Hat and Ms White Hat, Japan, Cla, Old Buzzard). Words such as *mesa* and *piñón* are borrowings from Spanish.

The fragment contains vivid descriptions of places, characters and events, with a preponderance of concrete language. Figurative language is also observed, such as “full of meat besides” (l.73), “the wood-burning stove was temperamental at its best” (l.87), “miles and miles of flounces” (l.19), “dropped panting to the ground” (l. 70-71), “blooded bulldog like Betty” (l.100-101), “yelling like pirates” (l.141-142), “cold moon” (l.192), “was novel enough to make history” (l.7-8), etc.

The images that the fragment evokes are distributed throughout the whole text at three levels: sentence, complete paragraph and complete text. This means that the points in which the text may evoke images refer both to isolated episodes and to the whole text. The following aspects are particularly relevant:

- a) Description of clothes: very colourful (pearls, bracelets, silver belts, velvet shirts of brilliant colours, sateen skirts with flounces).
- b) Description of the place: the hills, the wild reserve, big and small Christmas camp fires all along the area, full moon light, brilliant light that illuminates the landscape, two levels (floor level and place where the dancing takes place).
- c) Other visual images: camp fires, red berries, gifts in tissue paper, pirates, Comanche Indians, dancing, figures in dances, instruments (rattles made of paper bags with beans in them, clay water jar with water in it), wrestling and races, description of the fruit cake and the bread making, description of the cooking of the

meat (stones about the cooking fires to set tubs on), description of coffee making, description of the coffee pot, description of how the food was served (they passed the plates, coffee and a spoon for the stew), the anecdote of the candy bags, wagonloads of women and children, strolling about with beefsteaks in their hands, the light of a full moon, etc.

- d) Tactile images: stiff hands, cold nose.
- e) Auditory images: Indians yelling, songs, music, rattles, chattering teeth, loud sighs, Lady Betty growling.
- f) Olfactory images: pine tree smell and box boards burning on the fires.

The use of deictics such as “that dance Polly and I attended” (l.3) is observed. The value of *that* is important since it refers to something far in time and place. In “Christmas Eve the heathen began to arrive over these hills” (l.14-15), the deictic *these* hills is present again, which suggests that the reader already has some previous knowledge.

The Navajos dress up for the occasion. There is a display of fashionable elements (“Everybody was dressed in his best: beads, bracelets and silver belts glistened against the bright-colored velvet shirts and glossy sateen skirts, with miles and miles of flounces”, l.16-19). What is the sense of this exhibition of clothes and accessories? How do the Navajos experience Christmas? The Indians get ready to enjoy themselves, in spite of the difficulties and the hostility of the context. This hostile context does not prevent them from having a nice time.

The relevance of the full moon in connection with Christmas is not clear enough (“Big fires were built on the level space, where the dancing was to be, and these, added to the light of a full moon, made the night so bright we could see the whole landscape around”, l.54-57).

I.3.4. Otherness, difference and strangeness

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, the topic of otherness, difference and strangeness is pervasive in the fragment since the Navajos are introduced to an occidental Christmas celebration by Hilda and Ken.

Not all the elements of difference and/or strangeness appear explicitly in the text. The use of veiled cultural information, tangible through the use of different resources, is also important. For example, certain undervaluing of the Navajos' culture is observed, which is manifested in Hilda's surprise at the Navajos' ingenious way of preparing coffee, at the efficiency to make bread and to peel onions and potatoes. The reference to novelty in "everything else was novel enough to make history" (1.7-8) suggests that Hilda and Ken did not consider the Navajos cultural practices similar to theirs. What is concretely "everything else"? What does Hilda expect from this Christmas with the Navajos? This inferior view towards the Indians' culture is also present on some other occasions. "The music was made on a clay water jar with water in it and a rawhide stretched over the top. One fellow played this, or beat it" (1.61-63). The change of verb ("beat" for "play") may suggest that their actions did not deserve to be called music.

In the familiar and social structure of the natives, the man is the head of the family and is in contact with horses. Polygamy is present (Little Bidoni has three wives). Women are sweet and speak softly and they do house chores (they cook, make bread, place stones about the cooking fires to set tubs with meat on, wash the dishes). There is also a hierarchical relationship revealed, for example, in the respect towards the eldest: the eldest are the best dancers as opposed to the young ones who know neither the dances nor the songs. An important issue is that through the couple's discomfort towards the Navajos because they are all around, different conceptions of privacy for both cultures are revealed. Finally, whereas the Navajos stroll about with beefsteaks in their hands so as not to lose them, the couple's solidarity and hospitality on this occasion is reflected by the fact that Hilda makes some cookies when she realizes that the bread the women are baking will not be enough, when she brings some containers from her store to serve the meat, and when she prepares some little bags with gifts for the Navajos. At present, these actions might seem paternalist and condescending, but in that contextual moment, they would show a nice and considering attitude towards the Indians.

The fragment also makes reference to certain motivations and mental states of the characters, with the inclusion of terms related to their feelings (Tager-Flusberg and Sullivan, 1995). Some terms are referred explicitly to affective or emotional states from Hilda and Ken's perspective (Tager-Flusberg and Sullivan, 1995). For example, the couple's interest in the way the Navajo women make bread, their surprise to see the

efficiency to make bread, their surprise when they check that coffee is not flavoured with cedar, the discomfort to insist that the Navajos extinguish the fires next to the store, the discomfort felt by the smell of the box boards burning on the fires, the discomfort felt by the habit of getting up too early at Christmas, the sadness and longing for their roots after the celebration, and their suspicion at the candy episode.

Other terms refer to affective behaviours (Tager-Flusberg and Sullivan, 1995) such as, “loud sigh” (1.95-96), “growled” (1.92), “gasped” (1.188), “grinned” (1. 200), “every one was laughing” (1.77-78), “laughed” (1.79), “tears in my eyes” (1.179), “cry” (1.185), among others.

Lastly, some are psychological terms (Tager-Flusberg and Sullivan, 1995), such as the Navajos’ fear to leave the food in case someone steals it, their perception of Hilda as fastidious because she throws soil on the burning fire, the happiness and joy for the celebration, the women’s efficiency to peel potatoes and onions (from Hilda’s perspective), and the discomfort because the Indians were all around (from Hilda’s and Ken’s perspective).

From the opposite perspective, that is, from the Navajos’s eyes, Hilda does not try to explain some of the feelings she attributes to the Indians. Why would the Indians feel in such a way? For example, the reason why the Navajos were outraged when Ken made them extinguish the fires is not mentioned. The reader does not know if there is a ritual or a belief that motivates such particular feeling. Perhaps it may be due to bad manners or to the lack of common sense about the risks that camp fires of this kind may cause. Hilda does not criticise the Indians for this, in spite of the negative judgement evidenced.

The topic of otherness, difference and strangeness is also present in this fragment directly and explicitly through the clear identification of cultural contrasts between both cultures by the narrator, Hilda. Thus, Hilda mentions the celebration size (two hundred people) and some other specific details. For example, women and children arrive in wagons and men and young people on horses; it is a community celebration (sons, daughters, grandchildren, husbands, wives, friends, relatives). As regards food, the narrator highlights the raw steaks to eat, the fruit cake baked in the wood stove, the homemade bread, the meat roasted in big tubs with onions and potatoes, the flour to thicken, the salt, pepper and chilli. As regards

dancing, the description of the music is important (clay water jar with water in it and rattles made of paper bags with beans in them). Hilda feels attracted by the fact that the dance is meant to be funny rather than solemn or ceremonial.

Hilda's and Ken's perceptions of the Navajos' culture is manifested many times through the use of negative statements which reveal their preconceptions and stereotypes about such culture. For example, the appropriation or translation of the celebration by the Navajos is not solemn or cold (as Hilda and Ken believed), coffee is not flavoured with cedar. Hilda is surprised at certain Navajos' behaviours, such as the fact that women are efficient at baking bread and peeling potatoes and onions, as well as at the revelation of the Navajo women as hard workers (when cooking bread and meat). The view of the Navajos as clever and intelligent also surprises her (shown in the way they build the coffee pot with wood and the tugs to cook meat, etc).

At certain moments the narrator perceives and judges certain behaviours of the Navajos according to her own experience. The comparison of the Navajos' yells to the ones of the Comanches and pirates is a sign of her negative evaluation. Both Hilda and Ken feel uncomfortable with certain attitudes of the Navajos which are considered disrespectful or inconsiderate (for example, the proximity of the camp fires to their store, the burning of box boards on the fires, the lack of initiative to wash the dishes). Even though Hilda and Ken had lived in the reserve for a year, they did not belong to the Navajos' culture and acted as observers. In other words, many times they were not able to express the motivations and values that would have helped them to explain certain of the natives' attitudes and deeds. For example, they are surprised to see that the Navajos take more than what they need (two steaks instead of one which would have been enough); that they eat and eat because many of them have not eaten decently for more than a month; that they take more than a bag of candy trying to get the most of the situation when the others are not paying attention. What Hilda is unable to see here is the motivation for the Indians' actions, which originate in their extreme poverty and hunger and which make them be resistant and strong enough to live under such hostile circumstances in the middle of the desert. These difficulties and hardships are what motivate the Navajos to participate in the celebration in the first place and to behave in the way they do. They were opportunistic and lied on these circumstances, but they did so because they were starving. Hilda rejects these behaviours, but at the same time she tolerates them: she does nothing to avoid them.

In this fragment, difference becomes strangeness, alien otherness. Hilda tends to look at the cultural whole, neglecting the typical threads and borders of the natives' mundane experiences. Many times, the narrator's views give expression to the social life of the others as fixed and determined (Benedict, 1935), leaving aside the processes of conflict and change. However, some other times, the Navajos' wishes, plans, caprices, strategies, moods, objectives, fantasies, intentions, impulses, views, or feelings are vehemently present. This is interesting since all these issues are always culturally determined and are influenced by our own biography, the social situation, and the historical context, among other elements (Rosaldo, 1993). The native's culture is defined by its internal homogeneity as well as by its difference from others, in this case the American couple's culture. Even though the notion of difference contributes to making culture particularly visible to external observers, it presents a problem since such differences are not absolute but relative to the cultural practices of such observers (Rosaldo, 1993) (in this case Hilda and Ken).

I.3.5. Otherness, hybridity, cultural translation.

The narration and description of Christmas in *Desert Wife* reveals a number of operations which select the elements articulated in a narrative by a hegemonic voice at a specific historical moment which naturalises and legitimises the act of stereotyping the Other, in this case, the Navajos. This stereotypy is observed in the word *heathen*, in the fact that they are treated as if they are unwilling to collaborate with the tasks (although they are guests and thus, they are not supposed to collaborate), as well as in the cheating nature attributed by the narrator to the mothers when they induce their children to get more candy. The narrator mentions the fact that the women were willing to do the dishwashing, although they would not have done it if she had not mentioned it. Seen from the present, the advantageous historical moment allows us to observe the narrator's voice and point of view from a historical perspective, and to analyse through her discourse how that white and American community, to which she belongs, imagines and builds narratives about its origin and development. It also allows us to visualize in its fissures the silences and deceitfulness of her discourse and how the cultural processes (in this case Christmas celebration with the Navajos), far from countersigning the constituency of self-sufficient identities, are used to expose heterogeneity and hybridity.

The voice that narrates conspicuously places itself in a place that defines the other as “heathen,” as Other. This lexical choice has a strong symbolically loaded denotative value. From this same position, the asymmetrical and commercial nature of the relations between the whites and the natives is naturalized; and features and manners of behaving, which are the product of history and subjection, are presented as essence. The description of the relations in that peculiar community- the reserve- is naturalized by the voice of a narrator that is unable to rebuild the causality of the Navajos’ behaviour. If they had not eaten a proper meal for a month perhaps that is the reason why they agree to celebrate Christmas, if they suffer the scantiness of food that is perhaps the reason why the children try to get a double ration, if they are guests it is not to be expected that they wash up. In that community- the reserve- there cannot be reciprocity in the nature of the relationships because they are imposed by the government and by the transactional and commercial nature of the relationship between Hilda, her husband and the Indians. It is from this positioning that what happens during the celebration is labeled as picturesque, exotic, ludicrous or outrageous.

After the dishwashing episode, with her phrase “I thought it best they do some little thing for their meal” (l.156-157), Hilda treats women as children. She is clearly acquiescent and derogatory at times, but this can be understandable in certain contexts. Metaphorically, the Navajos were in such an extreme state of ignorance and inferiority in relation to the Americans, in such a helplessness state that positioned them as children. In this context, Hilda’s superior view is not surprising. Hilda is also “superior” because the women, it is assumed, were not able to see that they could not manage to cook enough cakes and bread in the way they were doing it. Hilda takes the decision and starts baking cookies, without even asking the women. However, simultaneously, Hilda positions herself at their same level when she gets involved in a task in which everybody works jointly, efficiently and happily. There is nothing here that is acquiescent, condescending, superior or derogatory. Throughout the celebration her sincere effort to help reduce hunger and poverty is noticed, or at least on this particular occasion.

In this description of Christmas with the Navajos the value of novelty is highlighted, yet it is not what the Navajos found new when celebrating a western festivity but what the whites found original in the manner the Navajos appropriated and translated Christmas. The issue of cultural difference here revolves around what Bhabha (1994) describes as the

irresolution or limitation of translation, the element of resistance in the process of transformation, that element in translation which is not liable to be translated. The migrant culture of the in-between, the subaltern position, dramatizes the untranslatability of culture: taking the question of cultural appropriation beyond the dream of assimilation or the racist nightmare, of the thorough and sound transmission of meaning, to focus on the encounter with the ambivalent process of hybridity that signals the identification with difference. When the Indians say and celebrate “*Kismas*”, that “*Kismas*” is not the whites’ Christmas, that “*Kismas*” is marked by hybridity.

The foreign element destroys the structures of reference and the sense of communication of the original as well, not simply by negating it but by negotiating the disjunction in which successive cultural temporalities are preserved in the work of history and at the same time cancelled (Bhabha, 1994). “Translation is the performative nature of cultural communication. It is language *in actu* (enunciation, positionality) rather than language *in situ* (énoncé or propositionality). And the sign of translation continually tells, or ‘tolls’ the different times and spaces between cultural spaces and its performative practices” (Bhabha, 1994: 228). When the Indians say and celebrate “*Kismas*”, they mark a temporality that is related to the historical process of the conquest and assimilation and to a process present in the spatial dimension of the reserve. The Navajos translate Christmas. That process of translation does not imply the whole translocation of the celebration: there is a process of hybridization. Hence, the fact that Hilda wants to “observe” how funny and outrageous that celebration results to be. This cultural translation demystifies the transparent suppositions of cultural supremacy, and in that same process, it demands a textual specificity, a historical differentiation within the minority positions. The time of translation consists in that movement of meaning, the principle and practice of a communication that puts the original in motion to de-canonize it, giving it the movement of fragmentation, a kind of permanent exile.

The greeting of the native Robert at the end crowns the Christmas pantomime in the reserve and triggers something in the narrator when she hears her name translated into the Navajo language (San Chee). She feels the estrangement and is driven to seek refuge in the known and familiar. The narrator appropriates the name that the Navajos use to address her, San Chee. The Indian appropriates her language and her name, which is the very same mark of identity. This event reveals the narrator’s incapacity to understand that from the

encounter with the Other one does not remain the same and that cultural practices cannot be simply transplanted, rather they are translated when they are reenacted in a different cultural context. Robert's greeting in English is a "flawed mimesis, in which to be Anglicized is emphatically not to be English" (Bhabha, 1994: 87). The greeting is a defective mimesis in which the desire for the reformed and knowable Other is revealed, a subject of difference. She speaks the Navajo language, and her reason is utilitarian: Hilda and Ken work and trade there. The fact that the Navajo Robert uses English for civility ends and not utilitarian ones seems to decentre her. The strangeness has become nostalgia and even rejection for everything that is "Indian." The need to reaffirm her identity ("not Indian"), to avoid contamination comes about as a result of the appropriation of her language and her name by the Navajo. This gesture triggers something in the narrator who needs to protect herself in what is known to her. The discourse of mimicry is built around an ambivalence; to be effective, mimicry must continually produce a slippage, an excess, a difference. "Cultural mimicry" (Bhabha, 1994: 86) emerges as a representation of difference which is in itself an act of disavowal.

As I have argued in chapter 2, culture is negotiation. Here, however, cultural practices are transplanted to a new cultural context. The fact that the location of the cultural exchange is demarcated becomes a limitation for the translation of such practices. The setting of this exchange is the Indian reserve and the wider context is trade. On the surface there seems to be reciprocity and a genuine exchange between Navajos and Americans. However, the commercial nature of the relationship between both of them refutes such reciprocity.

I.3.6. Textual opacity

It may be relevant to mention at this point some theoretical issues discussed in chapter 2. Following Gadamer (1992), the understanding process crashes against an impassable wall which is the unfinished character of any experience. The Other, otherness, the alien, the different always combine with the opacity of this Other. In this sense, the opacity of the Other may constitute an obstacle to have access to it. At the same time, our understanding of the world (of history, of literature, of art, etc.) can never end (Nuyen, 1994). From the subject's perspective, each act of understanding or comprehension alters the subject and his/her horizon, producing a new subject who will have to understand or comprehend the

world again. From the object's perspective, its nature is also altered by the act of understanding in such a way that, once understood, it must be understood differently.

An essential requirement to understand the Other consists in being able to justify both similarities and differences (Nuyen, 1994). However, what needs to be understood first is difference, as revealed in the way Hilda and Ken approach the Navajos. Before understanding occurs, difference becomes the strange, the alien, otherness. Faced with the Other, that is strange, foreign, alien, the couple chooses to face it in an attempt of approximation. Recognizing what is strange in the Other is to recognize that there is a breach and that it requires interpretation. Thus, understanding/comprehending is to surpass that otherness; to eliminate its strangeness or its negativity. For Hilda and Ken, the natives' culture becomes an object of understanding since they consider it strange, different from theirs. It is another culture, something that their own culture is not; that is, a negative (Gadamer, 1992). For this couple, the Navajos constitute the strange, foreign and alien Other, representing a horizon different from theirs. However, at some moments they try to fuse or blend their horizon so that a new, extended one, in which the strangeness of the Other tries to be overcome, may emerge.

It is also possible that the breach between oneself and the Other is an abyss. Approximating the Other is possible, although the union with the Other is always deferred. (Derrida, 1992). Nuyen (1994) adheres to the idea that it is impossible to eliminate the alien, the Other, the difference which indefinitely delays the whole and accurate understanding or comprehension of the Other. At the same time, the presence of the Other helps to discover new horizons. Many times, the different (alien, strange, foreign) manifested itself in this fragment as an obstruction and was revealed as threatening, creating an area of absence (Moreiras, 1991). This impossibility to capture the Other may be due to the role of personal prejudices, personal bias, partial information and suppositions about intentions, in making appreciations and evaluations about the members of other cultures. For Hilda and Ken, the strange, the different, many times did not offer protection and revealed the impossibility of dwelling, what is not reconcilable, thus causing concealment.

The term "poor benighted heathen" was a catch phrase in Victorian England to refer to the non Christian subject peoples of the empire. The use of "heathen" and "benighted," both

uncommon words, in proximity in the text indicates that Faunce had heard the phrase. Generally the people were deemed poor and benighted (i.e. in the darkness of night) because they had yet to receive the gift of Christianity. This indicates a concern for the subject peoples and an unconscious attitude of superiority toward them. It was the conventional wisdom of the time.

I.3.7. Characteristics of the narrative

As it has already been mentioned, the implicit and sometimes explicit contrast between the Navajos and the white couple transverses the whole narrative. It is present in the way they make food, in the ingredients, in the utensils used, in the furniture, in the way they sit and in many other examples. At some moments, the contrast between the visitors and who is being visited is similar to a travel book which tries to catch the reader's attention to its strangeness, that is, by emphasizing the differential elements of the place and of the people being visited to arouse interest in those who remained at home. What this narrative shares with that genre is the notion of describing the customs "of the others." It is known, however, that this is not its purpose. The writer's intention when writing the letters was to keep a record as a kind of "personal diary" about her experiences in Covered Water.

Thus, the way in which this narrator records these people's perceptions does not follow an ethnographic method. There is participant observation only on the surface. There is no real interest in Hilda to discover the hidden sense that encourages the Navajos to participate, or to discover why they do things the way they do them and what the meaning of things are for them. The meaning of such things derives from the social interaction that one has with the others. There is no intention to explain, capture or understand the motivations that the Indians give to their actions.

Hilda does not deprive herself of the theoretical and cultural preconceptions that "cloud" her view. If the ethnographic approach were ethnographic, she would be able to remove these cultural crystals. The ethnographic approach goes much further than the use of the ethnographic method (analyzing and recording), which could be found in this narrative. It tries to understand the meaning, purpose and intention that actors print in their deeds (Malinowsky, 1923). In the narrative she tells, Hilda does not describe or interpret the realities observed from the conceptual point of view of its main characters. The process of

analysis, which is insufficient, must be completed continuously and systematically with the process of synthesis and interpretation applying the technique of the hermeneutic circle (Gadamar, 1992). This is not the case. Hilda does not involve herself in social life directly, which does not allow her to describe those unnoticed aspects that social actors tend to hide or communicate.

I.3.8. The reading of *Desert Wife* in this educational context

There is a considerable distance between the text and the present reader as regards the historical moment and the production place. As non-American readers, these participants are faced with a celebration which is not typical of the Navajos through the narrative of an American woman from the beginning of the last century. The fact that these readers belong to another culture, to another country, to another socio-historical context constitutes an important obstacle when facing a deep analysis of this fragment from *Desert Wife*.

As an example, the view of the Indians and of life in the reserve presented in the text may seem racist and condescending for a 21st century reader if a reading from one's own perspective in the new millennium is undertaken. The participants in this study are inserted in a world in which minorities have a voice, claim for their rights and are mainly heard. However, if we consider that the text was written by the wife of one of the first white men who decided to try the west, it may be understandable that her narrative is influenced by a kind of "fascination for remoteness." This feeling is reflected on some lexical choices and on some value judgments that slip away at different moments of the narrative, as described elsewhere in this section.

At some moments, the distance of the text in relation to the participants in this study may constitute an abyss. The main characters' age, ethnic group, time and place (temporal and geographical distance), among other aspects, affect cultural understanding. For instance, knowing what a reserve is, and how they operated and still operate may be a mystery for these readers.

In spite of what has been expressed above, and concomitantly with the distance mentioned, there are several points which a present reader may feel identified with. There is, perhaps, some universality in individuals' disposition to wish to enjoy a leisure and funny moment

(in spite of any adversity), to enjoy dances and songs for pleasure (without any other purpose than pleasure for its own sake), to reveal themselves through clothing (or fashion). Universality in this sense is applied to the Navajos, to the American couple and to the participants in this study. Hilda clearly manifests this in her words: “They were most fun-loving people and laughed at the same things we thought funny.” The outfits described are indicators of fashion at that moment in that specific context; and readers will be able to recognize that they share the taste or interest in fashion independently of their culture, of situational and contextual factors, of their ethnic group, or of the particular historical moment they are inserted in. The text presents and rescues the similarities (in spite of the differences highlighted) that make life together possible in any particular context. This is precisely the ultimate objective of any cultural approach, approximation, way of thinking, understanding or comprehension.

I.3.9. Stereotyping and pejorative terminology regarding the Navajos

One serious concern I had about the fragment from *Desert Wife* was related to whether some terminology might be considered racist, derogatory or stereotyped. I copy here the response I received on this matter from the Native Information Network in the US. The request was posed on my behalf by one research assistant of mine, who worked under my supervision in a related project. The name and email address of this teacher is not disclosed here for ethical reasons. I add clarifying information where necessary between brackets. Both emails are disclosed here by permission.

From: [name and address]
Sent: Friday, December 05, 2008 8:58 AM
To: Native Information Network
Subject: Request from Argentina!

Hello! My name is [name] and I'm a teacher of English as a foreign language at the University of La Plata, Argentina. I am a team member of a research project on the perception of stereotypes in reading comprehension [Research project 11/H511 funded by the Ministry of Education of Argentina (2008-2011)].

One of the texts we are using is a chapter from *Desert Wife*, by Hilda Faunce. In it, the author describes a Christmas celebration in the Navajo reservation where she and her husband lived and uses different words and phrases to refer to the Navajos, such as "the heathen" or "Indians". Since none of the teachers involved in the project are speakers of English as a first language, we need reliable sources to inform us whether these terms are

perceived as derogatory or racist by the Native Americans today, and if they were perceived in the same way when the book was written (early 1900's) and published (1961).

I attach the text in question if you can/want to read it.

I would really appreciate it if you could advise us on this matter.

Thanks in advance.

[name]

--- El **lun 8-dic-08**, **Native Information Network** <NIN@si.edu> escribió:

De: Native Information Network <NIN@si.edu>

Asunto: RE: Request from Argentina!

A: [address]

Fecha: lunes, 8 diciembre, 2008, 2:38 pm

Dear [name],

The term "Indian" is not considered a stereotype or derogatory term. The terms Native American and American Indian are both accepted terms in the U.S. We have received many inquiries about the name of the museum- why it isn't called the National Museum of the Native American instead of American Indian? The term "heathen" is a derogatory word. The Europeans called the Native people "heathens" because in their minds any one who was not Christian and specifically not Catholic were considered "without religion" or "not knowing God" which is what the term "heathen" means.

Here's a little bit of background information about the term "Indian" and our museum:

Our museum, the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, was created by an Act of Congress signed by the first President Bush on November 28, 1989. Prior to that date we were a private museum called the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation that was founded in 1916. In 1916, the term Native American did not yet exist.

As a result of Columbus' geographical error, the term "Indian" has been used for over 450 years and the term "American Indian" since World War II. The term "Native American" is relatively new in comparison. It dates from the last 20 or so years and is problematic as people have argued that any person born in America is a Native American. In Canada, native people prefer the term "First Nations" or "First Nations people." People have various individual preferences; whenever possible native people like to be referred to by their tribal names rather than by a general term and since you are writing an article about a person from the Blackfoot Nation you can use their name when referring to him.

When we joined the Smithsonian museums, we added National to the existing name, Museum of the American Indian. We wanted to avoid changing the name so completely that people would not be aware that this was the same museum. Also, we wanted a name that people all over the world would understand. People in Asia, Europe, etc. know what

American Indian means, but many are unfamiliar with the term Native American, and would not have known what our museum was about.

Also, the U.S. government uses the term American Indian or Indian. That's evident by the names of all the federal institutions: U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs; Indian Health Service; National Congress of the American Indian; Indian Arts & Crafts Board; U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Indian Affairs.

Two other good references that discuss the terminology question in depth are and the attachment is a list of books which discuss American Indian stereotypes:

Russell, George (Saginaw Chippewa). *Native American FAQs Handbook*. 2000. Phoenix, AZ: Russell Publications.

Utter, Jack. *American Indians: answers to today's questions*. 2001. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

I hope this information is helpful.

Regards,

Mary Ahenakew
Resource Center
NIN (Native Information Network)
nin@si.edu

APPENDIX II

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS¹

General information and demographic data

Consent form
Biographical questionnaire
Questionnaire about reading in Spanish
Questionnaire about reading in English

Research instruments for each text and instructions

Prior knowledge task
 Prior knowledge task about Christmas in Argentina
 Prior knowledge task about Christmas in the US/Canada
 Prior knowledge task about Christmas in a Native American context

Instructions for the reading of the texts

Immediate reflection log

Written tasks after the reading of the texts
 Reading response task
 Visual representation task

Questionnaire about each text
 Questionnaire about *Mi planta de naranja-lima*
 Questionnaire about *Cat's Eye*
 Questionnaire about *Desert Wife*

Interviews

¹ Detailed information about the research design appears in chapter 6. The chapter includes information about the steps followed in the implementation as well as the precise instructions that the participants received.

Consentimiento escrito

LA PLATA

6 NOVIEMBRE DE 2009

POR LA PRESENTE, ACEPTO PARTICIPAR EN ESTE ESTUDIO DE INVESTIGACIÓN ACERCA DE LA LECTURA EN INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA Y ASPECTOS CULTURALES DIRIGIDO POR LA PROF. MELINA PORTO.

MI PARTICIPACION ES VOLUNTARIA.

BRINDO MI CONSENTIMIENTO PARA QUE MIS PRODUCCIONES ESCRITAS Y ORALES RESULTANTES DE ESTE PROYECTO SEAN PUBLICADAS, EN TODO O EN PARTE, EN PUBLICACIONES NACIONALES E INTERNACIONALES, Y EVENTUALEMNTE DIFUNDIDAS EN CONGRESOS, JORNADAS, SIMPOSIOS, ETC.

TENGO CONOCIMIENTO DE QUE EN TODOS LOS CASOS SIEMPRE SE USARA MI SEUDONIMO (NO SE REVELARA MI IDENTIDAD).

NOMBRE COMPLETO

FIRMA

FECHA

EMAIL

DIRECCION Y TELEFONO PARA EVNTUAL CONTACTO

Cuestionario con datos personales

Seudónimo:

Edad

Sexo

Lugar y fecha de nacimiento:

Carrera:

¿Cuándo ingresó a la carrera?

¿Recursó alguna lengua?

¿Cuál? ¿Cuántas veces?

¿Desaprobó algún final de las lenguas?

¿Cuál? ¿Cuántas veces?

¿En qué año está de la carrera?

¿Trabaja?

¿De qué?

¿Cuántas horas por día?

Religión:

¿Es practicante?

¿Viajó alguna vez al exterior?

¿Cuántas veces?

Comente acerca de las tres más importantes

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

¿Ha viajado dentro de Argentina?

¿Cuántas veces?

Comente acerca de las tres más importantes

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

¿Usa Internet?

¿Para qué?

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

En el pasado, ¿ha tenido contacto regular con personas de otros países?

¿Con cuántas personas?

Comente acerca de los tres más importantes

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

¿Tiene actualmente contacto regular con personas de otros países? Explique.

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.....

Cuestionario. Leer en español.

Por favor, conteste las siguientes preguntas honestamente sobre la lectura en español. Responda en español. Sus respuestas **no** serán corregidas desde el punto de vista gramatical o léxico. Me interesa saber qué piensa, no cómo lo expresa. Escriba con tinta azul o negra, **no** con lápiz. Escriba su seudónimo en cada hoja.

• 1. ¿Cuán a menudo lee en español

	Nunca	Rara vez	Algunas veces	A menudo
a) Por estudio				
b) Por trabajo				
c) Para obtener información				
d) Por actualización (diarios)				
e) Por placer				
f) Por curiosidad personal				
g) Otros (especifique):				

• 2. Indique cuánto le gusta leer in español

	Para nada	Un poco	Bastante	Mucho
a) Por estudio				
b) Por trabajo				
c) Para obtener información				
d) Por actualización (diarios)				
e) Por placer				
f) Por curiosidad personal				
g) Otros (especifique):				

3. ¿Qué prefiere leer? ¿Cuán seguido lee esto?

	Nunca	Rara vez	Algunas veces	A menudo
a) Terror				
b) Ciencia ficción/fantasia				
c) Aventura				
d) Misterio/suspenso				
e) Romance				
f) Otros (especifique):				

- 4. ¿Qué tipo de material lee en español? ¿Cuán seguido? Marque lo que corresponda.

	Nunca	Rara vez	Algunas veces	A menudo
a) Novelas				
b) Cuentos - Colecciones de cuentos				
c) Chistes - Humor				
d) Libros informativos				
e) Libros académicos/de estudio				
f) Enciclopedias				
g) Libros de bolsillo				
h) Revistas populares (Gente, etc.)				
i) Revistas especializadas (deportes, música, etc.)				
j) Diarios				
k) Diccionarios				
l) Series - Fascículos				
m) Poesía				
n) Biografías				
o) Otros (especifique):				

- 5. ¿Qué dificultades tiene cuando lee en español? Marque con una X las 2 opciones que más dificultades le ocasionen.

- a) Ninguna
- b) Léxica
- c) Sintáctica
- d) De contenido
- e) De organización
- e) Otros (especifique):

- 6. ¿Qué haría Ud. para ser un mejor lector en español? Elija hasta 3 opciones.

- a) Estudiar vocabulario
- b) Estudiar gramática
- c) Leer más
- d) Tomar clases particulares
- e) Practicar con textos
- f) Hablar sobre las lecturas con amigos/compañeros/profesores
- g) Otros (especifique):

• 7. ¿Cuánto material de lectura en español hay en su hogar? Marque con una X lo que corresponda.

- a) Nada
- b) Muy Poco
- c) Poco
- d) Mucho
- f) Abundante

• 8. ¿Dónde consigue material de lectura en español? Elija hasta 3 opciones

- a) Biblioteca de la facultad
- b) Biblioteca pública
- c) Biblioteca virtual
- d) Hogar
- e) Salón de clase
- f) Quiosco
- g) Librerías
- h) Suscripciones
- i) De amigos, conocidos, compañeros
- j) Otros (especifique):

Cuestionario. Leer en inglés.

Por favor, conteste las siguientes preguntas honestamente sobre la lectura en inglés. Responda en español. Sus respuestas **no** serán corregidas desde el punto de vista gramatical o léxico. Me interesa saber qué piensa, no cómo lo expresa. Escriba con tinta azul o negra, **no** con lápiz. Escriba su seudónimo en cada hoja.

• 1. ¿Cuán a menudo lee en inglés

	Nunca	Rara vez	Algunas veces	A menudo
a) Por estudio				
b) Por trabajo				
c) Para obtener información				
d) Por actualización (diarios)				
e) Por placer				
f) Por curiosidad personal				
g) Otros (especifique):				

• 2. Indique cuánto le gusta leer in inglés

	Para nada	Un poco	Bastante	Mucho
a) Por estudio				
b) Por trabajo				
c) Para obtener información				
d) Por actualización (diarios)				
e) Por placer				
f) Por curiosidad personal				
g) Otros (especifique):				

3. ¿Qué prefiere leer? ¿Cuán seguido lee esto?

	Nunca	Rara vez	Algunas veces	A menudo
a) Terror				
b) Ciencia ficción/fantasia				
c) Aventura				
d) Misterio/suspenso				
e) Romance				
f) Otros (especifique):				

- 4. ¿Qué tipo de material lee en inglés? ¿Cuán seguido? Circule lo que corresponda.

	Nunca	Rara vez	Algunas veces	A menudo
a) Novelas				
b) Cuentos - Colecciones de cuentos				
c) Chistes - Humor				
d) Libros informativos				
e) Libros académicos/de estudio				
f) Enciclopedias				
g) Libros de bolsillo				
h) Revistas populares (Gente, etc.)				
i) Revistas especializadas (deportes, música, etc.)				
j) Diarios				
k) Diccionarios				
l) Series - Fascículos				
m) Poesía				
n) Biografías				
o) Otros (especifique):				

- 5. ¿Qué dificultades tiene cuando lee en inglés? Marque con una X las 2 opciones que más dificultades le ocasionen.

- a) Ninguna
- b) Léxica
- c) Sintáctica
- d) De contenido
- e) De organización
- e) Otros (especifique):

- 6. ¿Qué haría Ud. para ser un mejor lector en inglés? Elija hasta 3 opciones.

- a) Estudiar vocabulario
- b) Estudiar gramática
- c) Leer más
- d) Tomar clases particulares
- e) Practicar con textos
- f) Hablar sobre las lecturas con amigos/compañeros/profesores
- g) Otros (especifique):

• 7. ¿Cuánto material de lectura en inglés hay en su hogar? Marque con una X lo que corresponda.

- a) Nada
- b) Muy Poco
- c) Poco
- d) Mucho
- f) Abundante

• 8. ¿Dónde consigue material de lectura en inglés? Elija hasta 3 opciones

- a) Biblioteca de la facultad
- b) Biblioteca pública
- c) Biblioteca virtual
- d) Hogar
- e) Salón de clase
- f) Quiosco
- g) Librerías
- h) Suscripciones
- i) De amigos, conocidos, compañeros
- j) Otros (especifique):

Navidad en Argentina

Escriba en español.

Escriba cualquier idea que se le venga a la mente. **No** es necesario ordenar la información en forma de ensayo o composición. Sus respuestas no serán corregidas desde el punto de vista gramatical o léxico. Me interesa saber lo que Ud. tiene para decir, no cómo lo expresa o lo organiza.

Escriba con tinta azul o negra, **no** con lápiz.

- **1.** Describa una celebración navideña típica en Argentina. ¿Cómo se prepara la gente para la Navidad? ¿Cómo la celebra?

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¿Sabe cómo se celebra la Navidad en Brasil? ¿Cómo supone que será? ¿De qué manera será (podrá ser) similar a la suya? ¿De qué manera será (podrá ser) diferente?

.....

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- **2.** Describa una celebración navideña típica en su hogar. ¿En qué aspectos es similar a las generalidades que mencionó en la pregunta 1, y en qué aspectos es diferente?

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¿Pasó alguna Navidad en otro contexto que no sea el de su hogar? Descríbala.

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Navidad en los Estados Unidos / Canadá

Escriba en español.

Escriba cualquier idea que se le venga a la mente. **No** es necesario ordenar la información en forma de ensayo o composición. Sus respuestas no serán corregidas desde el punto de vista gramatical o léxico. Me interesa saber lo que Ud. tiene para decir, no cómo lo expresa o lo organiza.

Escriba con tinta azul o negra, **no** con lápiz. Escriba su seudónimo.

- **1.** ¿Qué sabe Ud. sobre la celebración de la Navidad en los Estados Unidos/Canadá?

Escriba lo más importante que sepa.

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.....

¿Cómo lo sabe? (TV, libros, Internet, películas, personas que conoce, etc.). Por favor, nombre y/o brinde detalles sobre aquellas fuentes de conocimiento que recuerda como más importantes.

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¿Participó alguna vez en una Navidad en este contexto, u otro contexto similar?
Descríbala.

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• 2. Si no sabe mucho al respecto, ¿cómo imagina que será?

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Navidad de los indios Navajos

Escriba en español.

Escriba cualquier idea que se le venga a la mente. **No** es necesario ordenar la información en forma de ensayo o composición. Sus respuestas no serán corregidas desde el punto de vista gramatical o léxico. Me interesa saber lo que Ud. tiene para decir, no cómo lo expresa o lo organiza.

Escriba con tinta azul o negra, **no** con lápiz.

- **1.** ¿Qué sabe Ud. sobre la celebración de la Navidad de los indios Navajos de los Estados Unidos? Escriba lo más importante que sepa.

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.....

¿Cómo lo sabe? (TV, libros, Internet, películas, personas que conoce, etc.). Por favor, nombre y/o brinde detalles sobre aquellas fuentes de conocimiento que recuerda como más importantes

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

¿Qué recuerda de sus conocimientos escolares sobre distintos indígenas que pueda ser relevante para leer este texto?

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

• 2. Si no sabe mucho al respecto, ¿cómo imagina que será?

.....
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.....

Instrucciones para la lectura de los textos

Escriba en español y con tinta azul o negra, **no** con lápiz.

- **1.** Lea el siguiente texto detenidamente. **No hay límite de tiempo para leerlo.**
-

- **2.** Relea el texto e identifique (subraye) las partes que:

- le resultan totalmente incomprensibles;
- comprende pero no totalmente;
- son problemáticas para comprender por cualquier motivo.

Puede tratarse de conceptos, ideas, párrafos enteros, oraciones, frases, palabras, etc.

No subraye aspectos de lengua.

- **3.** Al lado de cada subrayado, describa o explique la dificultad en forma de nota o comentario breve. Utilice esta hoja si es necesario.

Log de reflexión inmediata (diario de reflexión).

Escriba sobre las dificultades de comprensión que encontró en cuanto al contenido cultural de cada fragmento. Puede tener con Ud. el texto (con las dificultades que ya subrayó). No es necesario organizar la información, esto es un diario de reflexión que intenta capturar el flujo de su conciencia sobre este tema.

¿Por qué son estos aspectos difíciles de comprender desde el punto de vista cultural?

¿Dónde radica exactamente el problema?

Tareas por realizar sobre la base de la lectura de cada texto

Debe realizar las actividades en español y en el orden estipulado.

No hay límite de tiempo para hacer las tareas ni de número de palabras a utilizar.

Sus respuestas no serán corregidas desde el punto de vista gramatical o léxico. Me interesa saber lo que Ud. tiene para decir, no cómo lo expresa o lo organiza.

Utilice una hoja para cada tarea.

Escriba su seudónimo en cada hoja.

Escriba con tinta azul o negra, **no** con lápiz.

- **1.** Realice una lectura propia/personal del contenido del texto. Plásmela por escrito utilizando un formato de ensayo/texto que de respuesta a las siguientes preguntas:

¿Cómo describiría Ud. a la cultura reflejada en este texto?

Desde una perspectiva cultural, ¿cuál es el tema del texto?

Para realizar esta tarea, imagine que va a preparar a alguien para leer este texto. Esta persona no conoce el contexto en el que se sitúa el fragmento. Lo que Ud. escriba sería una introducción al texto contándole al lector (que no está familiarizado con este contexto) lo que necesita saber, y qué temas específicos a este contexto cultural aparecerán en el texto.

Esta tarea **NO** es una síntesis ni un resumen de la historia. **No está permitido hacer un simple resumen del tipo *El cuento empieza por sigue con termina cuando ...*** Sí puede ejemplificar su tarea escrita con episodios, situaciones, etc. de la historia.

- **2.** Plasme el texto en forma visual y con palabras. Puede elegir cualquier formato para hacerlo. Puede optar por realizar un gráfico, cuadro, grilla, mapa mental, esquema, diagrama, dibujo, etc.

Una representación puramente visual (sólo con dibujos) no está permitida, pero sí es posible optar por una combinación de dibujo + palabras, frases u oraciones.

Sin embargo, **no está permitido escribir un texto propiamente dicho.**

Cuestionario sobre el texto en español

Por favor, conteste las siguientes preguntas con tinta azul o negra.

- **1.** En términos generales, ¿cómo clasificaría este texto según su dificultad para comprenderlo? Marque con una X lo que corresponda en el espacio dado.

- ___ a) Muy fácil
- ___ b) Fácil
- ___ c) Moderado
- ___ d) Bastante difícil
- ___ e) Difícil
- ___ f) Muy difícil

- **2.** ¿Qué aspectos le ocasionaron problemas durante la lectura? Elija hasta 3 opciones de la lista y ordénelas de 1 a 3 en forma decreciente según el grado de dificultad que presentaron.

1 = Más dificultad

3= Menos dificultad

- a) Vocabulario
- b) Gramática
- c) Estructura del texto
- d) Extensión del texto
- e) Tema
- f) Información cultural
- g) Nombres de los personajes
- h) Diálogos
- i) Otros (especifique):

1. (Más dificultad)

2.

3..... (Menos dificultad)

• 3. Usando la siguiente escala, diga cuán difíciles de comprender le resultaron los aspectos del texto que aparecen en la tabla. Circule lo que corresponda.

- 1- Completamente comprensible
- 2- Moderadamente comprensible
- 3- Bastante difícil de comprender
- 4- Muy difícil de comprender
- 5- Totalmente imposible de comprender
- 6- No lo recuerdo

a) Rabanada mojada en vino	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) Comida escasa	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) Regalo viejo y usado	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) Sin regalos nuevos de Papá Noel	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) Nacimiento del Niño Diablo	1	2	3	4	5	6
f) Velorio del Niño Jesús	1	2	3	4	5	6
g) Misa de Gallo	1	2	3	4	5	6
h) Afeitarse y vestirse bien en Nochebuena	1	2	3	4	5	6
i) Abrazarse, decir cosas buenas, desear felicidades en Navidad	1	2	3	4	5	6
j) Alegría de los otros en la Iglesia	1	2	3	4	5	6
k) Pobreza de la familia	1	2	3	4	5	6
l) Tío Edmundo pone dinero para la comida	1	2	3	4	5	6
m) Riqueza de los Faulhaber, Villas-Boas y Aducto Luz	1	2	3	4	5	6
n) Vida rural	1	2	3	4	5	6
o) Tristeza de la cena	1	2	3	4	5	6
p) Cenar en silencio	1	2	3	4	5	6
q) No esperar regalos para no decepcionarse	1	2	3	4	5	6
r) Poner las zapatillas del otro lado de la puerta	1	2	3	4	5	6
s) Dormir para olvidar	1	2	3	4	5	6

• 4. Decida si los siguientes aspectos son esenciales para comprender el texto o auxiliares (es decir, sólo agregan un toque de color). Circule lo que corresponda.

a) Rabanada mojada en vino	Esencial	Auxiliar
b) Comida escasa	Esencial	Auxiliar
c) Regalo viejo y usado	Esencial	Auxiliar
d) Sin regalos nuevos de Papá Noel	Esencial	Auxiliar
e) Nacimiento del Niño Diablo	Esencial	Auxiliar
f) Velorio del Niño Jesús	Esencial	Auxiliar
g) Misa de Gallo	Esencial	Auxiliar
h) Afeitarse y vestirse bien en Nochebuena	Esencial	Auxiliar
i) Abrazarse, decir cosas buenas y desear felicidades en Navidad	Esencial	Auxiliar
j) Alegría de los otros en la Iglesia	Esencial	Auxiliar
k) Pobreza de la familia	Esencial	Auxiliar
l) Tío Edmundo pone dinero para la comida	Esencial	Auxiliar
m) Riqueza de los Faulhaber, Villas-Boas y Adauto Luz	Esencial	Auxiliar
n) Vida rural	Esencial	Auxiliar
o) Tristeza de la cena	Esencial	Auxiliar
p) Cenar en silencio	Esencial	Auxiliar
q) No esperar regalos para no decepcionarse	Esencial	Auxiliar
r) Poner las zapatillas del otro lado de la puerta	Esencial	Auxiliar
s) Dormir para olvidar	Esencial	Auxiliar

Cuestionario sobre el texto acerca de la Navidad en los Estados Unidos/Canadá

Por favor, conteste las siguientes preguntas con tinta azul o negra.

- **1.** En términos generales, ¿cómo clasificaría este texto según su dificultad para comprenderlo? Marque con una X lo que corresponda en el espacio dado.

- ___ a) Muy fácil
- ___ b) Fácil
- ___ c) Moderado
- ___ d) Bastante difícil
- ___ e) Difícil
- ___ f) Muy difícil

- **2.** ¿Qué aspectos le ocasionaron problemas durante la lectura? Elija hasta 3 opciones de la lista y ordénelas de 1 a 3 en forma decreciente según el grado de dificultad que presentaron.

1 = Más dificultad

3= Menos dificultad

- a) Vocabulario
- b) Gramática
- c) Estructura del texto
- d) Extensión del texto
- e) Tema
- f) Información cultural
- g) Nombres de los personajes
- h) Diálogos
- i) Otros (especifique):

1. (Más dificultad)

2.

3..... (Menos dificultad)

• 3. Usando la siguiente escala, diga cuán difíciles de comprender le resultaron los aspectos del texto que aparecen en la tabla. Circule lo que corresponda.

- 1- Completamente comprensible
- 2- Moderadamente comprensible
- 3- Bastante difícil de comprender
- 4- Muy difícil de comprender
- 5- Totalmente imposible de comprender
- 6- No lo recuerdo

a) Green and red Jello Salad	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) Enormous turkey	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) Cranberry sauce	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) Cranberry juice in wineglasses	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) Smashed potatoes	1	2	3	4	5	6
f) Variety and abundance of food	1	2	3	4	5	6
g) Pick at dinner without eating much	1	2	3	4	5	6
h) Jolly Green Giant	1	2	3	4	5	6
i) Sunday School	1	2	3	4	5	6
j) Sunday School missionary paper	1	2	3	4	5	6
k) Banerji's appearance	1	2	3	4	5	6
l) Banerji as strange creature	1	2	3	4	5	6
m) Elaine as a strange creature	1	2	3	4	5	6
n) Discomfort & hidden misery of Banerji	1	2	3	4	5	6
ñ) Hospitality of Elaine's family	1	2	3	4	5	6
o) Square tomatoes	1	2	3	4	5	6
p) Turkey with four drumsticks	1	2	3	4	5	6
q) Story of skinless chicken	1	2	3	4	5	6
r) Story of skinless cats	1	2	3	4	5	6
s) Story of turkeys that die in thunderstorm	1	2	3	4	5	6
t) Scientific discourse	1	2	3	4	5	6
u) Reference to Biology	1	2	3	4	5	6
v) Poisonous snakes as topic of conversation	1	2	3	4	5	6
w) Turkey as topic of conversation	1	2	3	4	5	6

x) Classification of people in tame and wild	1	2	3	4	5	6
y) Cultural differences between the family's culture & Banerji's culture	1	2	3	4	5	6
z) Lost flight	1	2	3	4	5	6

• 4. Decida si los siguientes aspectos son esenciales para comprender el texto o auxiliares (es decir, sólo agregan un toque de color). Circule lo que corresponda.

a) Green and red Jello Salad	Esencial	Auxiliar
b) Enormous turkey	Esencial	Auxiliar
c) Cranberry sauce	Esencial	Auxiliar
d) Cranberry juice in wineglasses	Esencial	Auxiliar
e) Smashed potatoes	Esencial	Auxiliar
f) Variety and abundance of food	Esencial	Auxiliar
g) Pick at dinner without eating much	Esencial	Auxiliar
h) Jolly Green Giant	Esencial	Auxiliar
i) Sunday School	Esencial	Auxiliar
j) Sunday School missionary paper	Esencial	Auxiliar
k) Banerji's appearance	Esencial	Auxiliar
l) Banerji as strange creature	Esencial	Auxiliar
m) Elaine as a strange creature	Esencial	Auxiliar
n) Discomfort & hidden misery of Banerji	Esencial	Auxiliar
ñ) Hospitality of Elaine's family	Esencial	Auxiliar
o) Square tomatoes	Esencial	Auxiliar
p) Turkey with four drumsticks	Esencial	Auxiliar
q) Story of skinless chicken	Esencial	Auxiliar
r) Story of skinless cats	Esencial	Auxiliar
s) Story of turkeys that die in thunderstorm	Esencial	Auxiliar
t) Scientific discourse	Esencial	Auxiliar
u) Reference to Biology	Esencial	Auxiliar
v) Poisonous snakes as topic of conversation	Esencial	Auxiliar
w) Turkey as topic of conversation	Esencial	Auxiliar

x) Classification of people in tame and wild	Esencial	Auxiliar
y) Cultural differences between the family's culture & Banerji's culture	Esencial	Auxiliar
z) Lost flight	Esencial	Auxiliar

Cuestionario sobre el texto acerca de los Navajos

Por favor, conteste las siguientes preguntas con tinta azul o negra.

- **1.** En términos generales, ¿cómo clasificaría este texto según su dificultad para comprenderlo? Marque con una X lo que corresponda en el espacio dado.

- ___ a) Muy fácil
- ___ b) Fácil
- ___ c) Moderado
- ___ d) Bastante difícil
- ___ e) Difícil
- ___ f) Muy difícil

- **2.** ¿Qué aspectos le ocasionaron problemas durante la lectura? Elija hasta 3 opciones de la lista y ordénelas de 1 a 3 en forma decreciente según el grado de dificultad que presentaron.

1 = Más dificultad
3 = Menos dificultad

- a) Vocabulario
- b) Gramática
- c) Estructura del texto
- d) Extensión del texto
- e) Tema
- f) Información cultural
- g) Nombres de los personajes
- h) Diálogos
- i) Otros (especifique):

1. (Más dificultad)

2.

3. (Menos dificultad)

- 3. Usando la siguiente escala, diga cuán difíciles de comprender le resultaron los aspectos del texto que aparecen en la tabla. Circule lo que corresponda.

- 1- Completamente comprensible
- 2- Moderadamente comprensible
- 3- Bastante difícil de comprender
- 4- Muy difícil de comprender
- 5- Totalmente imposible de comprender
- 6- No lo recuerdo

a) Desert landscape	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) Navajos dressed in their best	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) Two hundred Navajos present	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) Community celebration	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) Piñon smoke from Christmas fires	1	2	3	4	5	6
f) Stroll with raw steaks in arms	1	2	3	4	5	6
g) Provision of wood by Hilda & Ken	1	2	3	4	5	6
h) Dances and music for amusement	1	2	3	4	5	6
i) Hand-made musical instruments	1	2	3	4	5	6
j) Active celebration: wrestling & racing	1	2	3	4	5	6
k) Early rising habits on Christmas morning	1	2	3	4	5	6
l) Navajos as efficient and ingenious	1	2	3	4	5	6
m) Family groups eat together	1	2	3	4	5	6
n) Navajos eat and eat	1	2	3	4	5	6
ñ) Episode of candy bags	1	2	3	4	5	6
o) Dishwashing episode	1	2	3	4	5	6
p) Bread-making description	1	2	3	4	5	6
q) Stew preparation	1	2	3	4	5	6
r) Coffee-making description	1	2	3	4	5	6
s) Robert's greeting	1	2	3	4	5	6
t) Reference to food in general	1	2	3	4	5	6
u) Fun and happiness	1	2	3	4	5	6

• 4. Decida si los siguientes aspectos son esenciales para comprender el texto o auxiliares (es decir, sólo agregan un toque de color). Circule lo que corresponda.

a) Desert landscape	Esencial	Auxiliar
b) Navajos dressed in their best	Esencial	Auxiliar
c) Two hundred Navajos present	Esencial	Auxiliar
d) Community celebration	Esencial	Auxiliar
e) Piñon smoke from Christmas fires	Esencial	Auxiliar
f) Stroll with raw steaks in arms	Esencial	Auxiliar
g) Provision of wood by Hilda & Ken	Esencial	Auxiliar
h) Dances and music for amusement	Esencial	Auxiliar
i) Hand-made musical instruments	Esencial	Auxiliar
j) Active celebration: wrestling & racing	Esencial	Auxiliar
k) Early rising habits on Christmas morning	Esencial	Auxiliar
l) Navajos as efficient and ingenious	Esencial	Auxiliar
m) Family groups eat together	Esencial	Auxiliar
n) Navajos eat and eat	Esencial	Auxiliar
ñ) Anecdote of bags of candy	Esencial	Auxiliar
o) Dishwashing episode	Esencial	Auxiliar
p) Bread-making description	Esencial	Auxiliar
q) Stew preparation	Esencial	Auxiliar
r) Coffee-making description	Esencial	Auxiliar
s) Robert's greeting	Esencial	Auxiliar
t) Reference to food in general	Esencial	Auxiliar
u) Fun and happiness	Esencial	Auxiliar

APPENDIX III

TABLES WITH FINDINGS¹

Table 1. Biographical information.

Table 2. Purposes of reading.

Table 3. Reading material.

Table 4. Reading difficulties and reading strategies.

Table 5. Prior knowledge about Christmas in Argentina.

Table 6. Prior knowledge about Christmas in the US.

Table 7. Prior knowledge about Christmas in a Native American context.

Table 8. Task length (three texts).

Table 9. Perceived difficulty of the texts.

Table 10. Difficulties experienced during the reading of the three texts.

Table 11. Underlining of difficult parts in the text itself (*Mi planta de naranja-lima*).

Table 12. Underlining of difficult parts in the text itself (*Cat's Eye*).

Table 13. Underlining of difficult parts in the text itself (*Desert Wife*).

Table 14. Perceived comprehensibility of cultural aspects, assessment of their importance, and their inclusion in the required tasks. *Mi planta de naranja-lima*.

Table 15. Perceived comprehensibility of cultural aspects, assessment of their importance, and their inclusion in the required tasks. *Cat's Eye*.

Table 16. Perceived comprehensibility of cultural aspects, assessment of their importance, and their inclusion in the required tasks. *Desert Wife*.

Table 17. Reader behaviours (three texts).

Table 18. Levels of cultural understanding.

Table 19. Levels of cultural understanding by participant.

¹ Raw data appear in all tables. Numbers represent number of participants. Blank spaces mean that none of the participants provided a response for the items in question.

I adopt the term “raw” for simplification purposes here. It should be noted, however, that “data are produced from social interactions and are therefore constructions or interpretations. There are no “pure,” “raw” data, uncontaminated by human thought and action” (Freeman et al., 2007: 27).

It is also useful to bear in mind what Maxwell (2002: 47) says with respect to quantification in qualitative research: “A claim that a certain phenomenon was frequent, typical, or rare in a specific situation at the time it was observed (...) is also subject to threats to descriptive validity. This is an issue for which Becker (1970) has advocated the use of what he calls “quasi-statistics” – simple counts of things to support claims that are implicitly quantitative. What makes this a matter of descriptive validity is that it does not involve statistical *inference* to some larger universe than the phenomenon directly studied, but only the numerical description of the specific object of study.” Quantitative information in this study is conceptualized in these terms.

Table 1. Biographical information.

	<i>Pseudonym</i>									
	<i>Beryl</i>	<i>Enrique</i>	<i>Lula</i>	<i>Luz</i>	<i>Miranda</i>	<i>Scarlet</i>	<i>Tacuara</i>	<i>Tess</i>	<i>Victoria</i>	<i>Yanina</i>
	<i>Alejandro</i>				<i>Dana</i>	<i>Rose</i>				
Age	24	21	21	23	20	20	20	21	32	28
Year of entrance to university	2007	2006	2007	2005	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007
Works	No	Occasionally	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Religion	Atheist	Catholic	Atheist	Catholic	Catholic	Catholic	Atheist	Atheist	Catholic	Catholic
Practising Catholic		No		No	No	No			Yes	No
Trips abroad	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Number of visits abroad	1		10		4	2		8		3
Trips within Argentina	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of visits	over 5	7	5	several	10	many	many	many	few	many
Regular Internet use	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Contact with foreigners in life	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Number of people	2	1	1	2	3	15	10			5
Contact with foreigners (Internet)	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Contact with foreigners at present	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 2. Purposes of reading

Reading in English	Frequency			
	<i>Never</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>
Study				10
Work	5	1	3	1
Information		2	1	7
Being updated (newspapers)	2	4	1	3
Pleasure		1	4	5
Curiosity		1	3	6

Reading in Spanish	Frequency			
	<i>Never</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>
Study			1	9
Work	6	2	1	1
Information			3	7
Being updated (newspapers)		4	2	4
Pleasure			2	8
Curiosity			4	6

Table 3. Reading material in English and in Spanish

	<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
Likes reading a lot	9	9
<i>Reading material at home</i>		
Nothing		
Very little		
Little	2	1
Moderate	1	1
A lot	4	3
Abundant	3	5
<i>Sources of reading material</i>		
School library	4	4
Public library		2
Online library	6	4
Home	2	5
Classroom	2	
Kiosk		
Bookshops	6	7
Suscriptions		
From friends, classmates	6	8
Other (photocopy shop)	2	1

***Table 4. Difficulties experienced during reading
Strategies to become a better reader***

Difficulties experienced during reading

	<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
None	1	1
Lexical	8	5
Syntactic		
Organisation	1	2
Content	5	6
Other (cultural)		1

Strategies to become a better reader

	<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
Study vocabulary	5	2
Study grammar	1	
Read more	8	10
Take private lessons		
Practice with texts	3	4
Talk about the readings with friends, classmates, teachers	7	8
Other (please specify)		

Table 5. Prior knowledge about Christmas in Argentina and Brazil

Has spent Christmas outside home

<i>Yes</i>	2
<i>No</i>	8

Argentina. Reference to specific elements

Reference to presents	5
Presents for children	7
Open presents on December 24th at midnight	3
Reference to the dinner	8
Reference to food and drinks in general	1
Abundance of food	3
Barbecue, pork, chicken, etc.	3
Salads, cold dishes	2
Nuts, peanuts, etc.	4
Sweet bread	1
Christmas tree	4
Nativity	2
Street and shop decorations	1
Santa Claus	4
Christmas greetings (phone, letter, in person, etc.)	3
Celebrate with friends, neighbours, etc.	5
Reference to a dead relative	1
Go to mass	4
Lack of religious/spiritual feeling	2
Festive spirit	1
Reference to economic situation of country	2
Special outfits for the occasion	1
Toast	3
Fireworks	4
Gathering with close relatives and friends	4
Gathering with distant relatives	1
Family cohesion	1

Brazil. Reference to specific elements

Similar to Argentina	6
Don't know anything	3
Don't know much	3
Open presents on December 24th at midnight	1
Typical food and drinks	4
Go to mass	1
Religious/spiritual feeling	4
On the beach	1
Festive spirit (dances)	2
Fireworks	1

Table 6. Prior knowledge about Christmas in the US and Canada

Has spent Christmas in US or Canada

<i>Yes</i>	1
<i>No</i>	9

Reference to specific elements

Similar to Argentina	8
Open presents December 25th (morning)	2
Reference to presents	1
Reference to food and drinks in general	3
Abundance of food	1
Turkey	1
Natural Christmas tree	3
Street and shop decorations	3
Home decorations	3
Santa Claus	5
Toast	2
Christmas greetings (phone, letter, in person, etc.)	4
Religious/spiritual feeling	1
Festive spirit	1
Snow	9
Special outfits for the occasion	1
Christmas carols	4
Fireworks	2
Gathering with close relatives and friends	8
Big gathering	1
Triviality, superficiality	1
Different season	2
Socks in chimney	1
Reference to other American celebrations	2

Source of prior knowledge

Movies, TV, cartoons, books, etc.	9
Internet	2
From friends, relatives, acquaintances	1
Personal experience	

Table 7. Prior knowledge about Christmas by Navajos

Don't know anything	10
----------------------------	----

Reference to specific elements

Very different from Argentina	3
Imported from the USA	1
Blend of traditions	1
Navajos don't celebrate Christmas	5
Typical food and drinks	3
Food from nature	1
Fires	1
Hunting by men	2
Dancing	6
Music	4
Singing	4
Religious/spiritual feeling	5
Sacrifices, offerings, veneration	3
Conversion to Christianity	3
Paganism and politeism	2
Festive spirit	1
Community celebration	1
Special outfits for the occasion	1
No presents, Christmas tree, Nativity or fireworks	4

Source of prior knowledge

Stereotype of the Indian	1
No source	8
Impossible to relate Navajos with Indians in Latin America	1

Table 8. Task length

	<i>Naranja-lima</i>		<i>Cat's Eye</i>		<i>Desert Wife</i>	
	<i>Reading Response</i>	<i>Visual representation</i>	<i>Reading Response</i>	<i>Visual representation</i>	<i>Reading Response</i>	<i>Visual representation</i>
Pages						
One quarter	1	3			1	1
Half	1	1	3	3	3	3
Three quarters	2					1
One	3	6	2	7	4	5
More than one	2		4		1	
Two	1		1		1	
More than two					1	

Table 9. Perceived text difficulty

	<i>Naranja-lima</i>	<i>Cat's Eye</i>	<i>Desert Wife</i>
Very easy		1	
Easy	5	7	4
Moderate	5	1	6
Rather difficult		1	
Difficult			
Very difficult		1	

Table 10. Difficulties experienced during reading

	<i>Naranja-lima</i>			<i>Cat's Eye</i>			<i>Desert Wife</i>		
	<i>Order of importance</i>			<i>Order of importance</i>			<i>Order of importance</i>		
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
Vocabulary		1	1	4	2	2	7	1	2
Grammar		1	1						1
Text structure	1						1		
Length		1				1		2	1
Topic	1	1	1	2	1		1		
Cultural information	3	1	3	3		2	3	4	2
Character names	2		1						
Dialogues	2	3	1	1	3				
Other (lack of context)							1		

Table 11. Underlining of textual problems in *Mi planta de naranja-lima*

	<i>Underlining in text itself</i>	<i>Identification in reflection log</i>
Mass	1	1
Rabanada	4	4
Typical food		1
Totoca was working for free	2	1
Story of Casino Bangu	7	4
Story of horse	1	
Light	3	1
Poverty of Jesus to show off	1	
Devil in blood	1	1
Sneakers on other side of door	4	
Sew bow tie	2	
Good and bad in the family	2	
Father leaves the celebration	1	
Uncle Edmundo provides money	1	
Only one present for Luis	1	1
Family relations, relationship among events in story	2	1
Only the rich are useful	2	
Sadness	1	
Happiness of the others	1	

Table 12. Underlining of textual problems in Cat's Eye

	<i>Underlining in text itself</i>	<i>Identification in reflection log</i>
Words and/or phrases	8	1
Jello salad	2	
Jolly Green Giant	6	4
Enormous turkey	1	1
Cranberry sauce	2	1
Variety and abundance of food	1	
Banerji's presence	1	
Sunday school	1	1
Turkey with four drumsticks	4	
Impossibility to fly with one wing	4	
Skinless chicken	1	
Lost flight	1	
Banerji's hidden misery		2
Biology as refuge		1

Table 13. Underlining of textual problems in Desert Wife

	<i>Underlining in text itself</i>	<i>Identification in reflection log</i>
Words and/or phrases	10	3
Character names	1	1
Fires	2	
Getting up early	1	
Dish washing episode	2	
San Chee's authority	1	

Table 17. Reader behaviours. *Mi planta de naranja-lima, Cat's Eye, Desert Wife*

	<i>Mi planta de naranja-lima</i>			<i>Cat's Eye</i>			<i>Desert Wife</i>		
	<i>Reflection</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Visual</i>	<i>Reflection</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Visual</i>	<i>Reflection</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Visual</i>
	<i>log</i>	<i>response</i>	<i>representation</i>	<i>log</i>	<i>response</i>	<i>representation</i>	<i>log</i>	<i>response</i>	<i>representation</i>
Elaborations		3					1	1	
Distortions		1							1
Intrusions	2	3	4		4	4	1	4	3
Inferences		5	1		2		1	5	2
Wrong inferences	2	1			3				
Irrelevant information		2	2						
Inferred feelings		6	5		5	2		5	3
Wrong inferred feelings		2	1					2	2
Evaluative language		7	4	4	10	3		7	3
Adequate morale/interpretation		5	6	2	7	6	1	5	2
Inadequate morale/interpretation	1	6	4	3	4	8		8	2
Rationalization: two textual elements	1	5	4		1	2		2	1
Rationalization: one textual element and one invented	2	4	3		3	1	3	1	1
Explicit errors		3	4	3	6	8	5	5	4
Simplifications			1						1
Generalizations	1	5	6	1	8	5		9	8
Cultural details		3	3		2	5		5	6
Direct quotes from text		2	2		2	2		2	1
Meta-cultural reflection	5			4	5	3	1	1	1
Formulation of questions	2						1		
Intertextuality				1	1				

Table 18. Levels of cultural understanding

<i>Level</i>	<i>Naranja-lima</i>			<i>Cat's Eye</i>			<i>Desert Wife</i>		
	<i>Reading response</i>	<i>Visual representation</i>	<i>Interview</i>	<i>Reading response</i>	<i>Visual representation</i>	<i>Interview</i>	<i>Reading response</i>	<i>Visual representation</i>	<i>Interview</i>
<i>Choice between levels 0 and 1</i>									
Level 0. Omission	4	2		2			2	1	
Level 1. Perception of cultural differences	6	8	10	8	10	10	8	9	10
<i>Choice among levels 2, 3, 4, 5</i>									
Level 2. Own culture from inside									
Level 3. Another culture from outside	3	1	3	1			2	2	2
Level 4. Another culture from inside	2	3	3	2	2	1	4	4	4
Level 4+. Evidence of levels 4 & 5	4	6	4	5	7	7	2	3	1
Level 5. Own culture from outside	1			2	1	2	2	1	3

Table 19. Levels of cultural understanding by participant

	<i>Naranja-lima</i>			<i>Cat's Eye</i>			<i>Desert Wife</i>		
	<i>Reading response</i>	<i>Visual representation</i>	<i>Interview</i>	<i>Reading response</i>	<i>Visual representation</i>	<i>Interview</i>	<i>Reading response</i>	<i>Visual representation</i>	<i>Interview</i>
<i>Beryl</i>	0 4	1 4	1 4	1 3	1 4+	1 4+	1 4	1 4+	1 5
<i>Enrique Alejandro</i>	1 4	1 4	1 4	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	0 3	1 4	1 4
<i>Lula</i>	1 4+	0 4	1 4	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	1 4	1 4
<i>Luz</i>	1 5	1 4+	1 5	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	1 4	1 4	1 4
<i>Miranda Dana</i>	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+
<i>Scarlet Rose</i>	0 3	1 4+	1 3	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	1 3	1 3	1 3
<i>Tacuara</i>	1 3	0 3	1 3	0 4	1 4	1 4+	0 3	1 3	1 4
<i>Tess</i>	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	1 5	1 5	1 5	1 5	1 5	1 5
<i>Victoria</i>	1 4+	1 4+	1 4+	1 5	1 5	1 5	1 5	1 5	1 5
<i>Yanina</i>	0 3	1 4+	1 3	1 4	1 4	1 4	1 4	0 4	1 4

APPENDIX IV

INTERVIEWS

General information

Transcripts of the interviews

Getting the transcriptions done

Cutting and editing the audio files

Typing

Checking and correcting

Duration of the individual interviews

APPENDIX IV

INTERVIEWS

IV.1. General information

The interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. Each recording contained several interviews in the form of wav audio files. These files were copied to a computer and divided into separate interviews using an audio editing program, and then changed to the mp3 format. After this process, another program was used to improve their sound quality. Next, the files were played in the computer and transcribed in order to create a text version of the interviews.

More specifically, the following computer programs were used in this task. The audio player *Winamp* was used to play the audio files of the interviews on the computer. The audio editing program *SoundForge* was used to cut the original audio files and separate the interviews. This program was also used to change the format of the original files from wav to mp3. Another audio editing program called *MP3Gain* was used to improve the sound quality of the files¹.

IV.2. Transcripts of the interviews

Concerning the transcriptions of the interviews, the following decisions were made.

- The complete names of the speakers (interviewer and interviewee) were mentioned at the start of each interview. Subsequently, they were referred to by the first initial(s) of their names.
- The brief pauses that show hesitation of the speaker were indicated using ellipsis.
- The longer pauses, with a few exceptions, occurred when an interviewee searched for quotations within the prompt texts. These longer pauses were signalled in the transcripts

¹ *Winamp* is freely available at www.winamp.com (official site)

SoundForge is available at www.sonycreativesoftware.com/soundforgesoftware (trial version)

MP3Gain is freely available at www.mp3gain.sourceforge.net/

using the word “Pause” written between parentheses. In addition, the quoted lines from the texts that the interviewees read aloud were transcribed using inverted commas.

- Inverted commas were also used to signal the instances when interviewer or interviewee read aloud some parts of any of the data types (for instance, immediate reflection log, reading response, visual representation, etc.).
- The use of ellipsis at the beginning of a contribution indicates that the speaker is continuing the phrase of the previous participant.
- In some cases, for one reason or another (voice overlap, interrupted sound, background noise, etc), certain words or phrases were hard to understand. Often, it was easy to infer which the intended word or phrase was. However, when this was not possible, a question mark between parentheses was used (?) to indicate the gap.

IV.3. Getting the transcriptions done

The whole task (from beginning to end) was completed over the course of a three week period.

IV.3.1. Cutting and editing the audio files

The audio files had to be cut in order to separate the different interviews. This had to be done manually as the interviews were originally recorded in large files, each containing several of the interviews. The sound quality was also improved during this process. In all, this task took approximately fifteen hours to complete, as the files had to be separated, checked to ensure they were complete and then placed into the correct categories

IV.3.2. Typing

Since one hour of audio takes an average of four hours to type, this was a particularly time-consuming part of the task. The combined length of all the interviews together was over five hours, which meant that it took over twenty hours to type all the material.

IV.3.3. Checking and correcting

After the interviews had been typed, they were checked for errors, and then compared against the original audio files. This process took about fifteen hours to complete. Afterwards, the final text version was double checked for errors in a final revision that took about five hours.

IV.4. Duration of the individual interviews

All the interviews lasted 5h. 6 min. 41 sec, distributed as follows.

<i>Mi planta de naranja-lima</i>	
Beryl	8 min. 35 sec.
Enrique Alejandro	4 min. 16 sec.
Lula	4 min. 59 sec.
Luz	13 min. 05 sec.
Miranda Dana	5 min. 37 sec.
Scarlet Rose	4 min. 38 sec.
Tacuara	11 min. 03 sec.
Tess	7 min. 13 sec.
Victoria	9 min. 40 sec.
Yanina	6 min. 48 sec.
Total time:	1 h. 15 min. 54 sec.

<i>Cat's Eye</i>	
Beryl	12 min. 17 sec.
Enrique Alejandro	10 min. 41 sec.
Lula	7 min. 54 sec.
Luz	11 min. 57 sec.
Miranda Dana	7 min. 12 sec.
Scarlet Rose	5 min. 02 sec.
Tacuara	10 min. 08 sec.
Tess	14 min. 00 sec.
Victoria	10 min. 02 sec.
Yanina	7 min. 39 sec.
Total time:	1 h. 36 min. 52 sec.

<i>Desert Wife</i>	
Beryl	16 min. 35 sec.
Enrique Alejandro	14 min. 06 sec.
Lula	12 min. 33 sec.
Luz	15 min. 00 sec.
Miranda Dana	10 min. 07 sec.
Scarlet Rose	10 min. 33 sec.
Tacuara	12 min. 47 sec.
Tess	13 min. 40 sec.
Victoria	15 min. 52 sec.
Yanina	12 min. 42 sec.
Total time:	2 h. 13 min. 55 sec.

APPENDIX V

RAW DATA

Mi planta de naranja-lima

Immediate reflection logs

Beryl
Enrique Alejandro
Lula
Luz
Miranda Dana
Scarlet Rose
Tacuara
Tess
Victoria
Yanina

Reading response tasks

Participants, in alphabetical order

Visual representations

Participants, in alphabetical order

Interviews

Participants, in alphabetical order

Cat's Eye

Immediate reflection logs

Participants, in alphabetical order

Reading response tasks

Participants, in alphabetical order

Visual representations

Participants, in alphabetical order

Interviews

Participants, in alphabetical order

Desert Wife

Immediate reflection logs

Participants, in alphabetical order

Reading response tasks

Participants, in alphabetical order

Visual representations

Participants, in alphabetical order

Interviews

Participants, in alphabetical order

APPENDIX V

RAW DATA

This Appendix includes raw data corresponding to the key research instruments, namely the immediate reflection log, the reading response task, the visual representation task and the interview. These tasks (except the interview) were originally handwritten (cf. questionnaires, for instance, which participants submitted electronically) and were later entered in the computer. The data from the other instruments do not appear here.

The rationale for this Appendix is that one principle with qualitative data is to make them available wherever possible so that the reader can see for him/herself the whole data. How much to make available, however, is not an easy decision. Freeman et al. (2007: 28) say: “At a minimum, sufficient data are cited in reports to support each claim (...); at a maximum, researchers make data available to others for secondary research (...). How much material is provided and whether entire collections of field notes, interviews, and documents are made available to the public are conventions that vary by qualitative tradition.” I have decided to include the data belonging to the before mentioned instruments because they are central and because offering all the available data would have been too space consuming (take for instance the case of the questionnaires about reading in English and in Spanish as well as the questionnaires about the texts).

I adopt the term “raw” for simplification purposes here to mean data as the participants produced them, i.e. without my intervention as analyst. It should be noted, however, that “data are produced from social interactions and are therefore constructions or interpretations. There are no ‘pure,’ ‘raw’ data, uncontaminated by human thought and action” (Freeman et al., 2007: 27).

I explain next my decision-making regarding the arrangement of these data in this Appendix. Several options were available, namely to present the data by participant (all the data belonging to each student), by research instrument (all the data belonging to each instrument), or by text (all the data corresponding to each text, one text at a time). I have decided to include the data here in the order in which I analyzed them, which was the following: first the text in Spanish, then the fragment from *Cat’s Eye*, and finally the

Navajos text. Within this sequence, I have ordered the data types in the order in which the participants produced them (see chapter 6), and within this, alphabetically by reader.

One final remark is that some participants wrote additional comments in some tasks long after the closure of data collection (between four and twelve months after it) and submitted them electronically. Tess in particular used the Comment option in the Track Changes tool in Word. Other participants signalled their comments using italics, or included footnotes. In all cases, the layout and text characteristics (use of italics, footnotes, borders, lines, etc.) belong to the participants. I add clarifying information between brackets.

Mi planta de naranja-lima

Immediate reflection logs

Beryl

Me costó comprender el sentido y significado de rabanada, aunque sé que algún tipo de comida es. El problema es que supongo que debe tener una connotación cultural/navideña que desconozco por completo. Quizás desde el punto de vista religioso, tema del que no tengo demasiada información en mi mente, principalmente por no tener interés. *(Comentario aclaratorio) lo que quise explicar es que considero que la palabra rabanada debe tener alguna connotación religiosa en el texto leído, puesto que dicha palabra se enfatizaba, en mi opinión, bastante durante todo el relato.*

Frases como “tienes el diablo en la sangre” asumo que es una expresión de un tiempo anterior al mío, lo que me dificulta su completo entendimiento. Además, parece ambigua en relación con el contexto.

Enrique Alejandro

A) Solo encontré una mención problemática desde el punto de vista cultural. La “rabanada”, evidentemente un tipo de comida que desconozco y que quizá se come en las fiestas donde sea que transcurre el relato. El resto del relato no presenta ningún problema salvo por la referencia a un evento del que no tengo suficiente información (“La historia del Casino Bangu”).*

* Me retracto ligeramente. Hay dos elementos más que no comprendo: la “misa del gallo” y la costumbre de dejar las zapatillas del otro lado de la puerta al dormir. El problema es el mismo: contexto cultural desconocido.

B) El problema de comprensión radica tan solo en una menor diferencia de cultura, en este caso tan solo en lo culinario.

Lula

En primer lugar se me hizo difícil imaginar qué tipo de comida es la rabanada, pero eso no dificulta en sí la comprensión del texto.

Se mencionan cosas como la historia del casino de Bangu y la Misa del Gallo que no sé a qué se refieren exactamente. La Misa del Gallo puede entenderse como la misa de navidad o algo por el estilo, pero la historia no sabría decir a qué se refiere.

Está también el problema de la familia: las relaciones son confusas, los roles también.

Desde el punto de vista cultural, son aspectos difíciles de comprender porque en nuestra sociedad, quizá, las cosas sean bastante diferentes. Uno tiende a cerrarse en lo que conoce, y resulta difícil entender lo que difiere de nuestras costumbres y comportamiento.

Luz

No sé a qué hace referencia con “Casino Bangu”, doy por sentado que es una historia que los protagonistas comparten siendo de una cultura en particular. No conozco la historia en sí.

La segunda dificultad se presenta cuando el niño insiste en colocar sus zapatillas, ilusionado con recibir un regalo de Papá Noel. Según su cultura entiendo la idea ya que lo asocié con una parte de mi cultura (Los Reyes Magos). Di por sentado esa relación. Igualmente creo que se me facilitó el entendimiento ya que son hechos o acciones que tenemos en común, pero se presentaría como un problema si la persona que lee el texto no realiza en su cultura un hecho familiar. Si en el país, región o lugar las personas carecen de ese ritual por llamarlo de alguna manera, no podría interpretar porqué el niño quiere poner las zapatillas del otro lado de la puerta.

Miranda Dana

El problema radica en que no hay suficiente información en el texto para deducir ninguno de los fragmentos que subrayé. Ya sea la historia del casino Bangu, o en qué consiste la “rabanada”. Podemos inferir que es una comida, pero no se sabe de qué tipo (si contiene carne, frutas, si es un postre, etc.). Y todo se vuelve más confuso cuando en la línea 65 el narrador dice que Totoca “no pudo levantar los ojos del cuerpo del caballo que pulía”.

No hay indicación acerca de qué cultura se trata y como la Navidad es una celebración intercultural, las opciones son muchas.

Lo mismo ocurre con la línea 45 donde se menciona “coser mi corbata;” no queda claro si es una especie de castigo porque le pega o un favor porque es buena.

Scarlet Rose

Por lo que entiendo, hay una luz que “reemplaza” a la otra pero no comprendo a qué se refiere “Light”. ¿Por qué cambia de “luz” a “Light”? ¿La “Light” mandó a cortar algo? (¿cómo? Si una luz no es un sujeto capaz de cortar).

Tacuara

No tuve mayores dificultades con el texto, me parece que independientemente del origen del escritor o del lugar donde transcurre la historia, independientemente de eso, la problemática que está presente es una que también atraviesa nuestra sociedad, por lo cual el texto resulta más fácil de asimilar. En cuanto a la frase que marqué [como frase problemática] (“la historia del Casino Bangu”), me pareció que hacía alusión a alguna problemática propia del lugar, en cuyo caso sería representativa. Por lo demás, no encuentro en el texto grandes dificultades que me impidan interpretarlo. Por otro lado, me parece que para abordar el texto hay que adoptar un punto de vista no sólo cultural sino también clasista.

Tess

Creo que las dificultades que tuve para comprender el texto fueron principalmente por el contenido de la historia y no tanto desde el punto de vista cultural. Me parece que con los elementos que da el texto y por comparación con nuestra propia cultura podemos inferir lo no dicho o reconstruir cómo es la celebración de la navidad que se narra. Por ejemplo, se puede deducir que la “rabanada” es una comida y no hace falta saber el significado más preciso para comprender el texto. O podemos inferir que los niños tienen que dejar sus zapatos para que le dejen los regalos. Aunque no hacemos acá lo mismo, podemos entenderlo porque tenemos esa costumbre en el día de Reyes. Seguramente para lectores de otros orígenes el texto resultaría mucho más difícil.

Victoria

En mi caso, las dificultades que encontré tenían que ver con términos que hacían referencia a cuestiones aparentemente típicas del lugar en que se desarrolla la acción de la obra (Brasil). Ignoro, por ejemplo, cosas relacionadas con las comidas típicas, acaso específicas de Navidad, y por tanto no comprendo el significado de ciertas palabras que se refieren a ellas. Por otra parte, desconozco ciertos detalles locales como lo que imagino que podría ser el nombre de una compañía proveedora de energía eléctrica, por lo que sólo puedo deducir el sentido de “Light” a la... Luz del contexto, pero no soy capaz de precisar si mis deducciones son correctas. De todos modos, las dificultades que encontré en la lectura no entorpecieron mi comprensión general del texto.

Yanina

No entiendo de qué habla Zezé cuando dice que Totoca se había enterado de la historia del Casino Bangu. Comprendo que Totoca está realizando algún trabajo gratis para que Luis pueda tener un regalo para navidad. Pienso que este problema de comprensión radica en que esa historia del casino es compartida por los personajes del cuento y, si es real, por lectores familiarizados con la historia. Pero en mi conocimiento no está, entonces no termino de entender qué es lo que quiere decir.

Tuve otro problema con el párrafo enumerado 60. Creo que el problema de comprensión puede ser cultural porque yo no conozco mucho sobre la historia de Jesús o la Biblia en general. Quizás ese párrafo es más comprensible para una persona que sí tenga ese conocimiento.

Entiendo que cuestiona a Jesús porque ve que su familia es pobre y otras familias no lo son. Piensa que Jesús quiso nacer pobre pero después se dio cuenta de que los ricos “eran mejores” o servían. Lo que no entiendo es por qué dice que no quiso nacer pobre para exhibirse.

En esta misma parte tuve problemas para identificar quién hablaba. Después de leerlo varias veces creo que habla Totoca. Las pistas que tuve son: “Pero no hablemos más de eso” seguido de la voz del narrador en el siguiente párrafo diciendo “Se sintió tan abatido que no quiso hablar más”. Como el narrador es Zezé, deduje que lo anterior fue dicho por Totoca.

Reading response tasks

Beryl

La cultura presentada en el texto leído es, a mi entender, un reflejo de la sociedad actual, en la que vemos la distinción de clase social claramente marcada.

Es fácil determinar las contraposiciones que se hacen entre quienes tienen (desde un nivel material y económico) y quienes no tienen. El narrador mismo se coloca desde un punto materialista, visto que para él/ella la Navidad tiene que ver con lo que Papá Noel puede traerle como regalo y lo que cada uno tiene en su mesa.

Si bien esta familia no parece pertenecer a una clase social alta, o en todo caso su clase social está en declive, sus deseos parecen directamente relacionados con el materialismo y con la pérdida, por otra parte. Esto último se ve claramente en partes del texto como “tampoco habían ido a la Misa del Gallo” o “Ni siquiera el Niño Jesús es eso tan bueno que todo el mundo dice”.

La pérdida de esperanza es otro punto importante, concepto que se ve reflejado en las actitudes de esta familia y en los comentarios continuos de Totoca.

Enrique Alejandro

El texto narra la “fiesta” de navidad de una familia de mala situación económica, tomando el punto de vista de uno de los niños de la familia, angustiado por no recibir regalos. El contexto es el de una locación rural, con menciones a caballos y a la ciudad como lugar lejano, y en general podría describirse como la forma en la que una pobre familia de campo, deprimida ya por su pobreza u otro evento no explicado, pasa las fiestas de mala gana y la angustia que esto le provoca al niño protagonista Zezé y la forma en la que los varios miembros de la familia se las arreglan para soportar su angustia.

Lula

El texto presenta la fiesta de Navidad de una familia numerosa y carenciada de Brasil (a juzgar por los nombres que aparecen). Los personajes principales son Totoca y Zezé, dos hermanos de la familia. Totoca es mayor, ya ha pasado la etapa de creer en Papá Noel y los Reyes Magos; Zezé, en cambio, aún cree en ellos.

La problemática radica en la posición económica de la familia: a duras penas les alcanza para comer, no se pueden hacer regalos y deben ser ayudados por el tío Edmundo para poner comida en la mesa. En la casa no hay felicidad, solo caben las lágrimas. La situación que se vive es de continua zozobra y malestar. Zezé, sin embargo, aún conserva la esperanza de que las cosas pueden mejorar.

La cultura representada presenta una fuerte creencia religiosa en la cual la noche de navidad es muy importante. El tema del texto es la oposición que existe entre las creencias de la familia y la manera en que esas creencias les “responden”. Es decir, los rezos y las súplicas les son inútiles en su situación.

Luz

La historia refleja una familia muy ligada con la religión católica que está por celebrar Navidad. Dicha familia parece encontrarse en una situación económica difícil, cosa que se ve reflejada en toda la historia.

El niño, personaje principal, piensa que no va a recibir ningún regalo. En dicha cultura se ve que para Navidad suelen hacerse regalos por un tal Papá Noel. Él asocia la falta de ese regalo con su comportamiento y relaciona el buen comportamiento con la religión, lo compara con el Niño Jesús, por el contrario el mal comportamiento está ligado con el diablo. Acá se ve claramente cómo el niño está inmerso en una cultura donde la religión ocupa un espacio importante. Hace referencia también al Padre y el Catecismo, el primero se refiere a la persona que en la religión católica celebra la misa (también esta a cargo de la Iglesia) y el segundo se refiere a un libro donde se encuentran las normas o esperados comportamientos de las personas. Vendría a ser el ideal cristiano, por llamarlo de alguna manera.

Al momento de celebrar la Navidad la familia parece estar muy triste y asocian la falta de dinero con la cantidad de comida y cómo está su mesa en ese día tan especial. La familia demuestra su tristeza durante la cena, y la falta de entusiasmo y motivación en ese día tan importante. Nombran a “La Misa de Gallo” que es una misa, celebración que se hace en la Iglesia tratando de imitar lo que fue el nacimiento de Jesús. Al ser una familia católica es para ellos un evento muy importante y el hecho de no ir es visto de una mala manera. Esto suma al desgano, falta de interés por arreglarse y verse bien en esa celebración.

Finalmente el niño ve que la gente de su familia ni siquiera comieron por tal angustia. Aunque él sigue esperando que va a recibir el regalo, y se duerme con esa infantil e inocente esperanza.

Miranda Dana

Este texto muestra cómo celebra la Navidad una familia de clase social baja. Es muy interesante observar cómo la ausencia de regalos o de una comida abundante es atribuida, en principio, al mal comportamiento. Zezé cree que es una especie de castigo del Niño Jesús porque es “malo”. En su conversación con Totoca, Zezé pregunta si varios miembros de su familia son “buenos” y al descubrir que todos son “buenos” pregunta: “¿Y por qué el Niño Jesús no es bueno con nosotros?” (Línea 55). En este momento Zezé se da cuenta que la “pobreza” de su celebración se debe a otras cuestiones. Y compara su situación con las otras familias (aparentemente de clase alta) como los Faulhaber, los Villas-Boas, etc.

Toda la celebración ocurre en un clima de tristeza. Hay mucho silencio y hasta hay llanto. Parece como si no hay motivo para celebrar porque están rodeados de miseria. Están resignados y el único que todavía espera un milagro es Zezé (cuando en el final del fragmento decide poner sus zapatillas del otro lado de la puerta).

Scarlet Rose

El texto trata sobre la Navidad en Brasil y cómo la festeja, particularmente, la familia de Totoca y el narrador (punto de vista de un niño). El texto refleja una cultura caracterizada por la desigualdad, una sociedad en la cual Papá Noel sólo visita a unos pocos. La familia del narrador, como se ve, no tiene la suerte de ser parte de la alegría que la Noche Buena supone. La pregunta clave que puede ayudar a guiar la lectura de este texto es: “¿Por qué, si en nuestra familia son todos buenos, el Niño Jesús no es bueno con nosotros?” La

pérdida de fe en la religión y en la sociedad marca una ironía: nosotros, desde nuestro punto de vista como argentinos, tenemos un estereotipo de que los brasileros son gente alegre. El texto demuestra que no siempre es así.

Tacuara

El texto retrata a modo de sinécdoque [*La sinécdoque es una licencia retórica mediante la cual se expresa la parte por el todo*] a toda una sociedad o al menos una clase de ella (clase baja). Digo “a modo de sinécdoque” porque es a través de una situación puntual (la navidad) y de un grupo (una familia) que la historia representa a un colectivo más amplio. Yo calificaría a la sociedad, cultura retratada como desposeída y atrasada. En cuanto a este último adjetivo (“atrasada”), no lo uso en un sentido peyorativo, sino más bien Hegeliano, por así decirlo. Es decir, según la teoría del absoluto Hegeliano uno puede calificar a una cultura como más o menos atrasada según el grado de autoconciencia alcanzado (entendiendo como autoconciencia la idea de pensarse como ser humano libre, y demás). Teniendo estos conceptos presentes y considerando el fuerte peso que los aspectos “milagrosos” y “religiosos” tienen en el texto, teniendo en cuenta eso es que digo “atrasado”. Por ejemplo, al final del texto Zezé se levanta de la cama y cuando le preguntan adónde va, dice: “a poner mis zapatillas del otro lado de la puerta...a lo mejor sucede algún milagro”. A mi juicio, tanto este fragmento, como otros que tratan de justificar la ausencia de regalos y comida atribuyendo esta carencia a la falta de bondad en la persona, esos fragmentos para mí, muestran lo sometida que está esa cultura. Sometida y hundida en la pobreza y la ignorancia. Ignorancia no en un sentido peyorativo, sino haciendo referencia a que ignoran que si están siendo castigados terrenalmente no es ni dios ni Jesús el verdugo. Digo despojados también porque se retrata en la historia la pobreza naturalizada.

La historia logra retratar, desde el punto de vista de un niño, las problemáticas que atraviesan a una familia de clase baja. Muestra, la historia, cómo una fecha como la navidad, tan explotada comercialmente y tan disfrutada por mucha gente, cómo esa fecha es vivida por otra clase, muchas veces olvidada.

Tess

El texto que se presenta es un fragmento de una novela brasileña, en el que se retrata cómo vive una familia pobre una de las celebraciones religiosas del país: el nacimiento del hijo de Dios. El pasaje se centra en cómo esa fiesta que es para muchos un motivo de alegría refleja también la situación penosa y la miseria en que viven muchos habitantes. Por un lado, la narración nos muestra que los adultos de la familia viven la jornada con tristeza y resignación; por otra parte, se presenta la sensación de impotencia que se genera en otros personajes por el marcado contraste entre ricos y pobres. La familia no tiene dinero ni para hacer algún obsequio a los más pequeños, como se acostumbra, e intenta explicar la falta culpando al niño, como si fuera un castigo por haber sido malo. En tanto, las familias más ricas comparten comidas muy abundantes y festejan con fuegos artificiales. Todo este lujo resulta incomprensible para el protagonista, que no puede compatibilizar las enseñanzas religiosas y el origen humilde del niño Dios con la ostentación y con la marcada diferencia que hay entre un hogar y otro. El chico es el único que parece conservar, sin embargo, la esperanza de que la situación mejore. Esta esperanza se manifiesta como el deseo de recibir un regalo en esa navidad.

Victoria

El tema del texto es la Navidad o, para expresarlo más precisamente, la celebración (o no) de la Navidad en una familia pobre de Brasil. Como suele ocurrir en las fiestas navideñas donde hay niños y pobreza, se observa en el texto el sentimiento de desazón de los adultos, incapaces de regalar nada a sus niños y viendo que ellos crecen rápido y antes de tiempo:

Disimuló, diciéndonos a Totoca y a mí:

-Ya es la hora de que los chicos vayan a la cama. Decía eso y nos miraba. Sabía que en ese momento allí no había ya ningún niño. Todos eran grandes, grandes y tristes, cenando a pedazos la misma tristeza.

Se observan, por otro lado, elementos típicos navideños. Son ejemplos las diferentes menciones a la comida; los fuegos artificiales que se echan al viento a medianoche en Nochebuena; la Misa de Gallo, que es la celebración de la iglesia católica para esperar y conmemorar el nacimiento de Cristo; las zapatillas de los niños que todavía aguardan que Santa Claus les deje un regalo, etc. El texto abunda en detalles relativos sobre todo a la pobreza en que vive la familia protagonista, contrastando con la opulencia en que lo hacen otras:

-¡Entonces! Todos son buenos en la familia. ¿Y por qué el Niño Jesús no es bueno con nosotros? Vete a la casa del doctor Faulhaber y mira el tamaño de la mesa llena de cosas. Lo mismo en la casa de los Villas-Boas. Y en la del doctor Aducto Luz, ni hablar...

Se añade aquí un quasi cuestionamiento teológico, planteado con absoluta inocencia por los más pequeños de la casa, sobre la aparente falta de recompensa a la bondad y la aparente injusticia divina:

-Por eso creo que el Niño Jesús quiso nacer pobre sólo para exhibirse. Después El vio que solamente los ricos servían... Pero no hablemos más de eso. Hasta puede ser que lo que diga sea un pecado muy grande.

Lo que podríamos considerar la espiritualidad de las fiestas navideñas se ve aquí empañada por la falta de recursos económicos, ante la que hasta las mejores intenciones parecen sucumbir:

Fue una comida tan triste que ni daba ganas de pensar. Todo el mundo comió en silencio, y papá apenas probó un poco de "rabanada". Ni siquiera había querido afeitarse. Tampoco habían ido a la Misa del Gallo. Lo peor era que nadie hablaba nada con nadie. Más parecía el velorio del Niño Jesús que su nacimiento.

Para la lectura y plena comprensión de este texto es importante conocer ciertos aspectos culturales concretos relacionados con la Navidad y sus usos, comidas y tradiciones, pero es incluso más imprescindible comprender que la Navidad no es sólo una reunión familiar, porque las disquisiciones quasi teológicas de algunos de los personajes apuntan precisamente a la parte subyacente y más profunda de esta fecha.

Yanina

Esta historia refleja una de las problemáticas más comunes en nuestro país hoy en día: la pobreza. Muchos niños trabajan para poder sobrevivir o, como en este caso, para que un familiar querido tenga un regalo en el día de navidad.

Pensamientos que quizás hace muchos años eran solamente de adultos, hoy se ven en niños. Muchos chicos, como Zezé en esta historia, se preguntan por qué existen tantas diferencias entre las personas. Nuestra sociedad se divide en clases donde los pobres y ricos son cada día más y la clase media va desapareciendo. Es entendible que ante tanta desigualdad social, niños y adultos se pregunten por qué Dios le da a algunos y a otros no, o que piensen que para Jesús solo los ricos sirven. Después de todo, es lo que ven reflejado en la realidad.

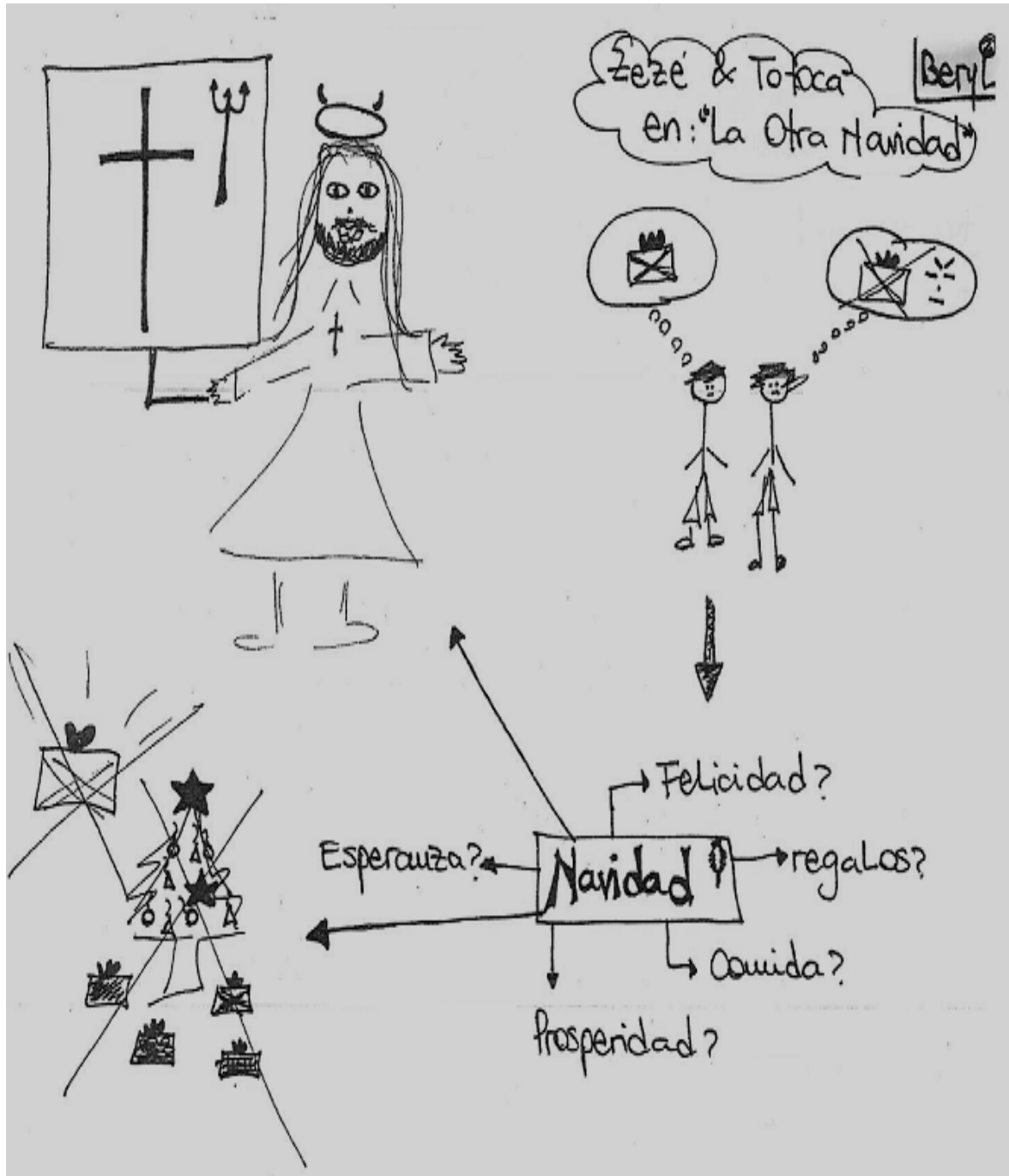
Las comidas que antes solían ser festejos, cada vez más se transforman en momentos de angustia. Angustia de padres por no poder dar a sus hijos una linda cena o un pequeño regalo. Angustia de niños que no comprenden por qué no pueden tener un regalo como otros niños o por qué sus papás se ven tristes. Angustia familiar por no poder si quiera tener luz para cenar.

La cultura que se ve reflejada en el texto es la cultura de familias humildes, relegadas por la sociedad y el Estado. Estas familias y por ende esta cultura desesperanzada lamentablemente crece día a día.

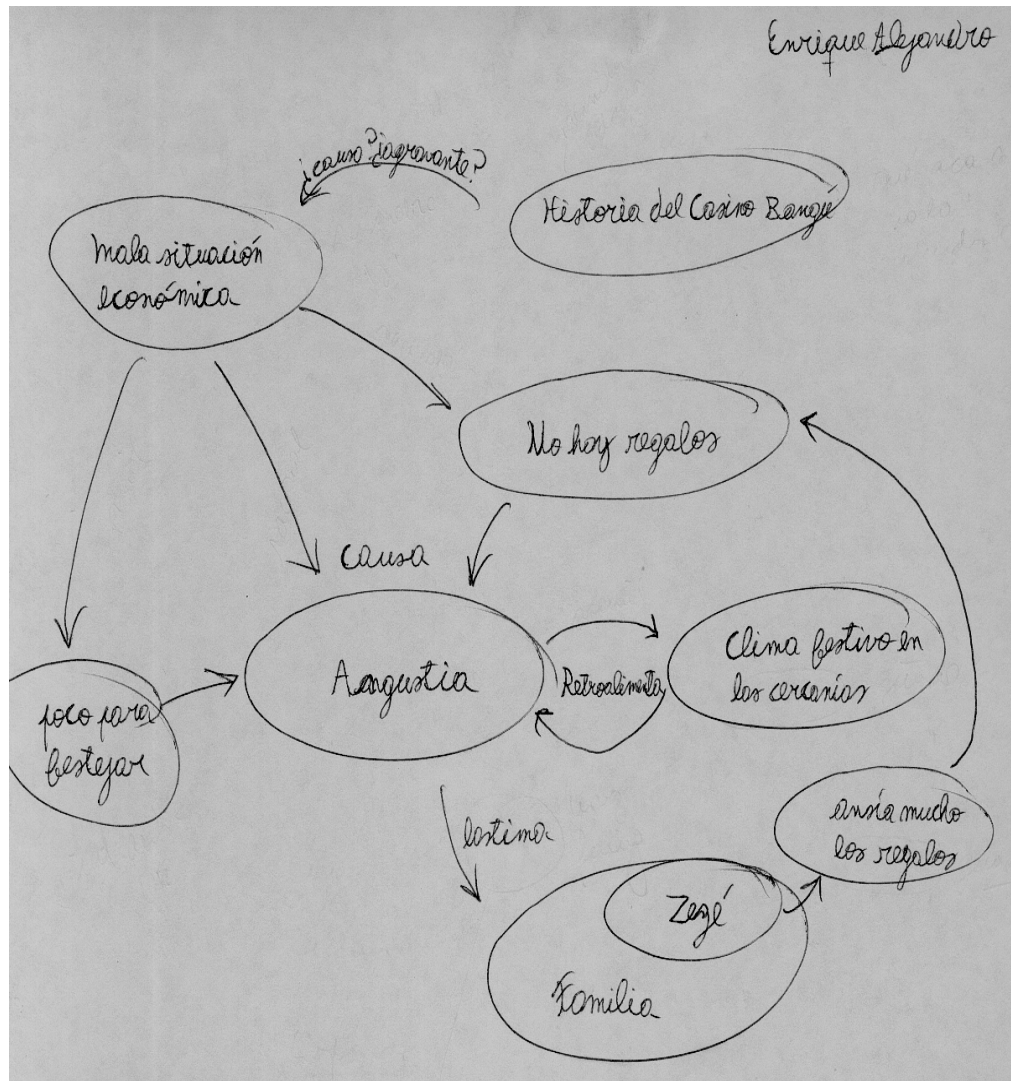
Desde un punto de vista cultural, este texto habla sobre las diferencias sociales, la pobreza y la desesperanza.

Visual representations

Beryl

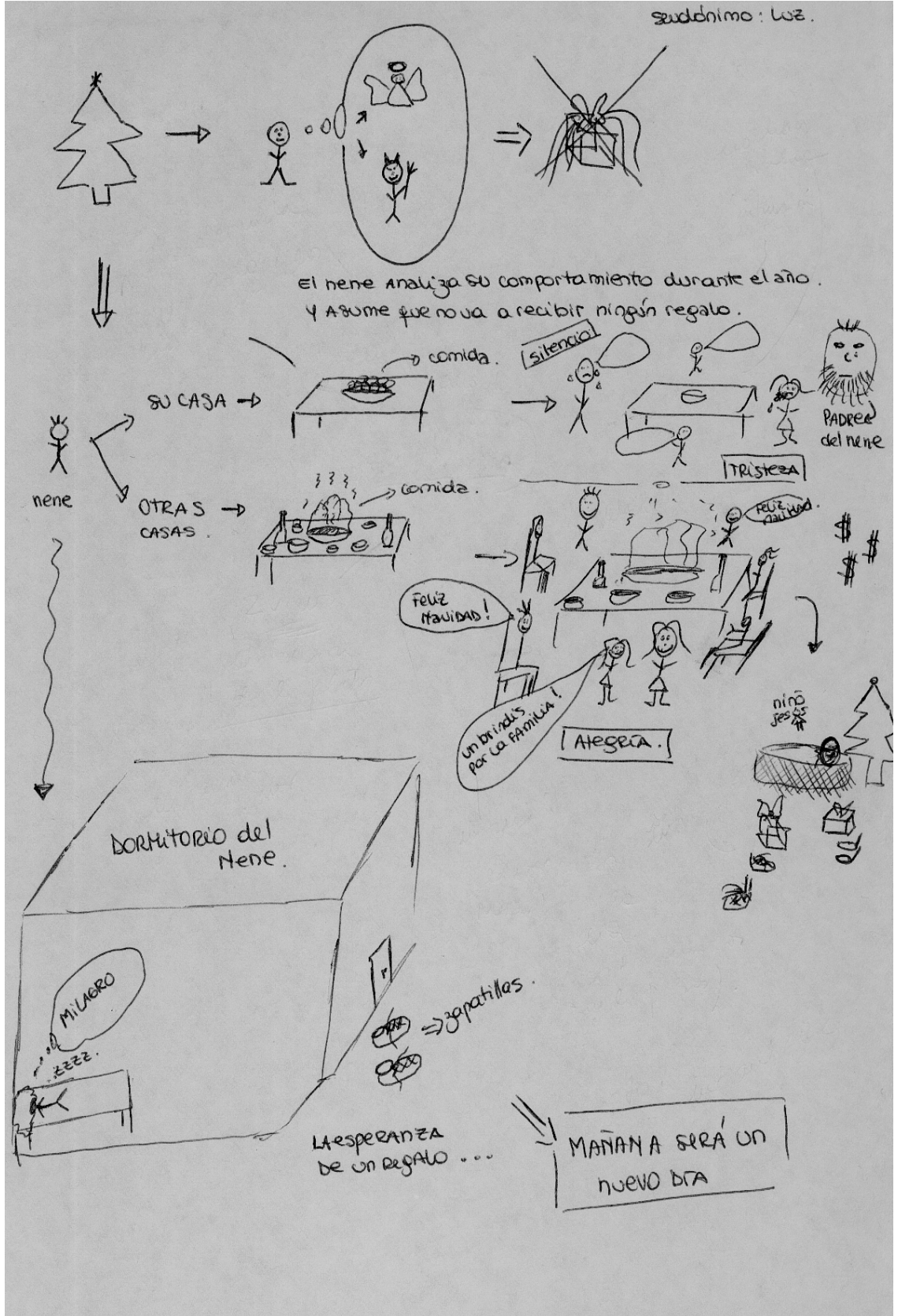


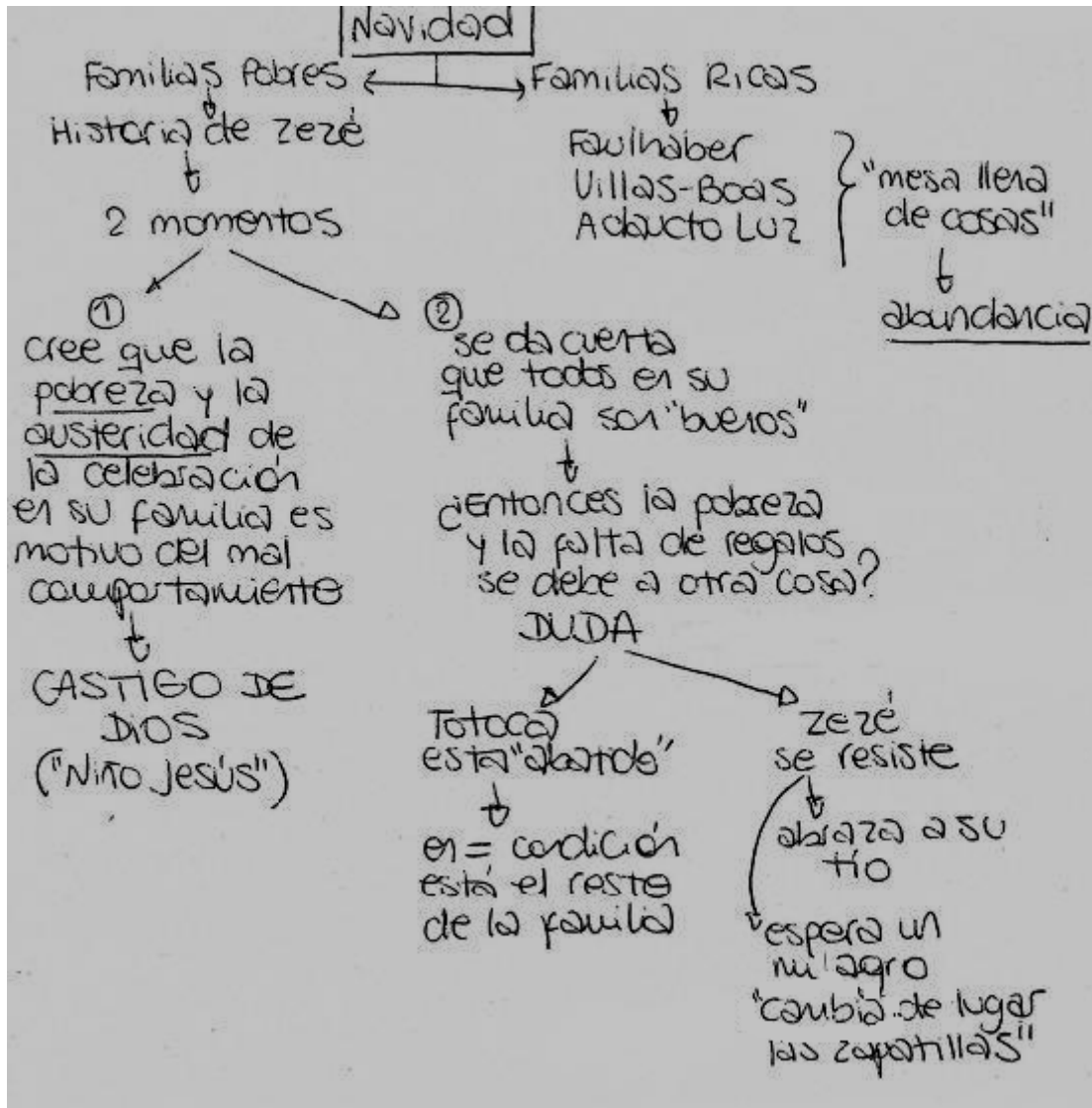
Enrique Alejandro



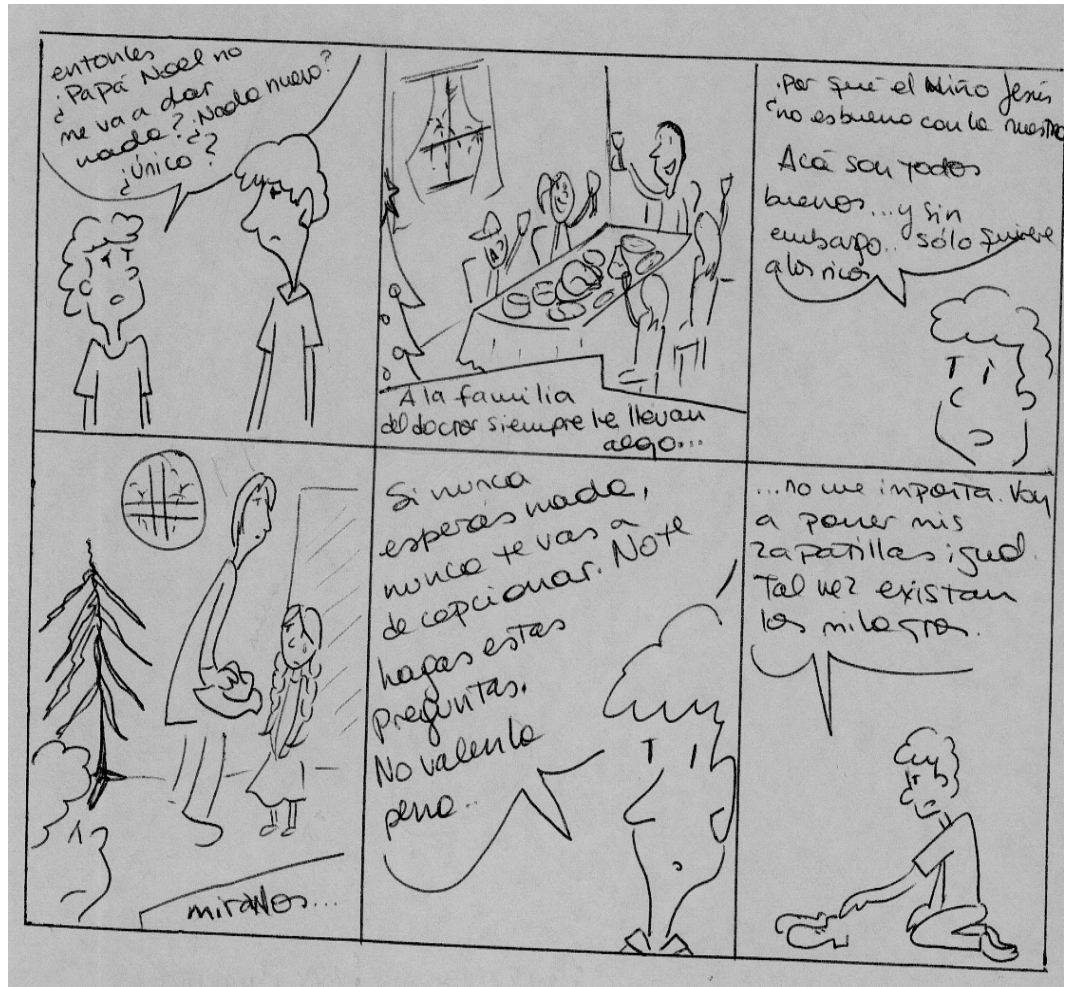
Lula







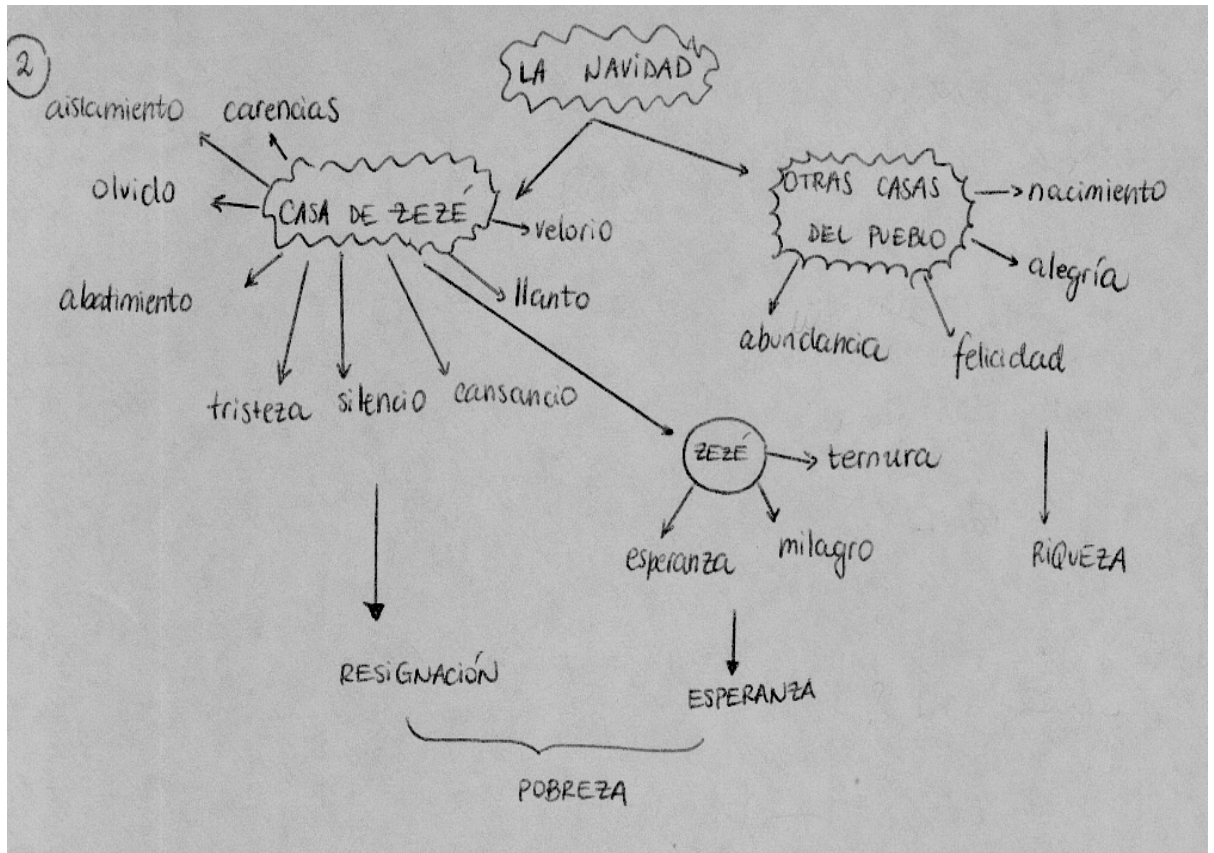
Scarlet Rose



Tacuara



Tess

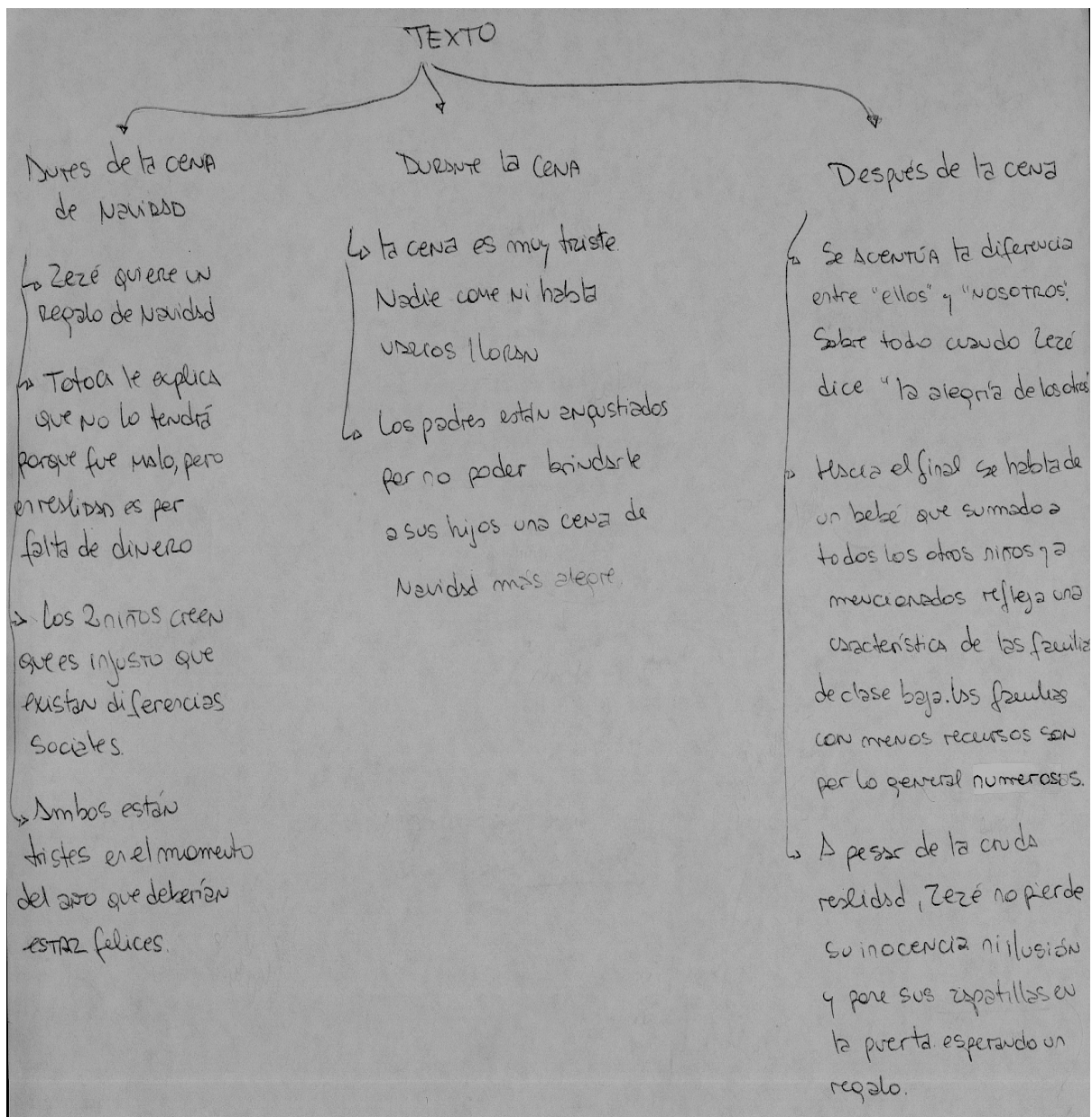


Victoria

1. Diálogo entre Zezé y Totoca, cuestionamiento sobre la bondad del Niño Jesús, justicia o injusticia de la falta general de regalos. Aparentes ventajas de la resignación, que evita decepciones. Reflejo del nivel económico-social de la familia, contraste con la riqueza en que viven otros. Crítica social a la injusticia del dinero mal distribuido. Niños como protagonistas, mayor sentimiento de injusticia.
2. Cena de Nochebuena. Representación de la tristeza de cada miembro de la familia: padre silencioso, rápida retirada de Dindinha. Distribución de dinero por parte del tío Edmundo, haciendo aún más visible, por lo escaso del regalo, la situación de precariedad. Campanadas de la iglesia, algarabía contrastando con la tristeza de los protagonistas.

3. Final de la celebración, decepción de los niños que esperaron un regalo en vano. Diálogo de Zezé y Totoca, más expresiones de tristeza. Zezé y sus zapatillas junto a la puerta: esperanza que no se pierde, esperanza contra toda esperanza, desafío a la injusticia, acaso posibilidad de cambio, o de más decepciones.

Yanina



Interviews

Beryl

Melina: Estoy con Beryl. (Pausa) ¿Por qué religioso?, te pregunto. "El problema es que debe tener una connotación cultural que desconozco por completo, quizás desde el punto de vista religioso", ponés. ¿Lo religioso es algo cultural?

Beryl.: Claro, me parece que entraría... "rabanada" podría referirse... Lo religioso sí, siempre tuvo que ver con la cultura desde siempre, o sea, forma parte de lo que es una sociedad, ¿no? Pero "rabanada" es como que yo lo tomé que me... me parece que podía tener tanto un contexto religioso como quizás un contexto completamente sociocultural. Entonces no entendía... o sea, lo dividí en esas dos ramificaciones y de todas formas no comprendía cuál era el significado de que fuera tan importante la palabra en el texto. A mí me resultó que tenía especificación muy clara, era muy importante a lo que se refería con eso. Desde lo religioso dije: Bueno, quizás tiene que ver con la... con el judaísmo, se me ocurrió por ahí, por ejemplo. Me pareció que tenía...

M.: Que sea una... un exponente de la religión, una comida religiosa típica, por ejemplo.

B.: Claro, porque viste que generalmente las comidas típicas de alguna religión en particular siempre tienen mucho que ver generalmente en los textos literarios.

M.: Tienen muchos contenidos, sí.

B.: Claro, es como que el contenido religioso siempre es muy importante, especialmente en el aspecto de...desde... desde lo alimenticio, digamos, ¿no? Entonces me pareció que por ahí tenía mucho que ver. eh... desde esos dos puntos, ¿no?

M.: Entiendo.

B.: Y por eso iba, cuando vos preguntás de lo cultural, apunté precisamente a que lo cultural no sólo incluye la sociedad sino todos los aspectos dentro de una sociedad.

M.: Perfecto. (Pausa) Ah, bueno, entonces me iba a fijar [in the comprehensibility grid] y congruentemente ponés que es algo esencial a la celebración.

B.: Claro, totalmente.

M.:(Pausa) "Tienes el diablo en la sangre". ¿Por qué es una expresión de tiempo anterior al tuyo?

B.: Se me ocurre que sea... se me ocurre que sea precisamente... viste que hay expresiones que... que vienen con cada generación, y me pareció que quizás era una frase que venía de otra generación. Yo tengo veinticuatro años y entonces me pareció que era anterior a la mía, que el texto por ahí lo había escrito alguien que tendría... no sé, estaría en sus cincuenta o sus sesenta.

M.: Está bien. Entiendo.

B.: Entonces como que... viste que por ahí los textos argentinos tienen muchas connotaciones, muchas frases que son típicas de la época de alguien. Bioy Casares tiene esas cosas.

M.: Claro.

B.: Borges más que nada. Entonces asumí que por ahí tenía que ver con eso.

M.: Bueno, perfecto. (Pausa) “La Navidad tiene que ver con lo que Papá Noel puede traerle como regalo y lo que cada uno tiene en su mesa”. ¿Por qué, te pregunto yo? ¿Y lo religioso? ¿Qué tipo de celebración es la Navidad?

B.: La Navidad tiene ese contexto religioso, pero me parece que a lo que apuntaba más que nada el texto es precisamente al materialismo, y que en base... por eso yo lo completé con lo que preguntás después, por ejemplo acá. Por eso yo te decía lo del materialismo, porque si bien el protagonista sabía... de que él siempre tiene un regalo viejo y usado, creo que a lo que apunta es que él pretende... él no quiere ese regalo viejo y usado. De hecho él al final dice que espera que llegue un regalo nuevo.

M.: Hm.

B.: Entonces me parece que la diferencia es clara entre que él es el único que tiene esperanzas de que algo nuevo surja, en contraposición con el resto de su familia.

M.: Hm.

B.: Entonces me parece que lo que surge es el materialismo, quizás por el hecho de que son una familia que se ve como que no... no es de... quizás no es de clase alta pero tampoco una clase media, y por eso te decía que su sociedad... o sea, su clase está en declive. Porque... mínimas referencias sociales y económicas que a mí me hacen ver que es como que están en la típica que se le llama hoy la clase media baja.

M.: OK.

B.: Entonces me pareció que por ahí se aspiraba a volver a tener lo que se había tenido quizás en algún momento.

M.: ¿Cómo te surge esta idea de que están en declive? Porque no tienen para comer, dice. ¿Cómo puede ser una clase media baja en declive que no tenga ni siquiera para comer?

B.: Precisamente porque la clase media baja es la clase que fue en su momento media... y está en declive, o sea está llegando a ser clase baja o marginada en todo caso.

M.: Está bien.

B.: Entonces me pareció... Y de hecho no son del todo de una clase baja que no tiene absolutamente nada para comer porque de hecho uno de los tíos es el que paga por la cena.

M.: Hm. No son completamente pobres.

B.: Entonces es como que hay una diferencia... Claro, no son la gente que no tiene absolutamente nada y que están mendigando en la calle. Simplemente creo que son gente que tuvieron una mínima posición antes y que luego...

M.: ...cayeron.

B.: ...cayeron, ¿no?

M.: Está bien. ¿Y a vos te parece que Zezé es materialista, volviendo a este punto, por querer un regalo nuevo?

B. No, yo no apunto al hecho de que sea materialista, me parece que desde la superficie a lo que se apunta es al... o sea desde el materialismo se intenta apuntar al hecho de la esperanza. El chico habla del... del regalo viejo y usado, como precisamente lo que te decía después, que es como que hay una pérdida de esperanza. Es como que es continuo el discurso de que... de que no hay esperanza para ellos.

M.: Está bien.

B.: Para nadie de... dentro de su familia, ¿no? Pero desde el materialismo es como que me parece que se presenta la analogía con la esperanza que tiene este narrador de que algo diferente surja, que de hecho es lo que dice al final, ¿no?

M.: Sí, sí.

B.: ...cuando plantea que el vuelve... Yo por ahí escuchaba que los chicos decían el tema de las zapatillas que son muy de los Reyes. Es ficción, yo asumo que en la ficción siempre se pueden mezclar las cosas, y esta... esta persona, asumo que es un nene, siempre dice que es como que él va a volver a dejar la zapatilla, no importa qué es lo que pase después. Es la esperanza desde lo material, desde el regalo nuevo, que algo nuevo surja, ¿no?

M.: Está bien. Entiendo. (Pausa) ¿Éste quién es en la reformulación visual?

B.: Ése es mi dios-diablo.

M.: Está bien.

B.: Porque viste que es como que no hay una contraposición, Si no me equivoco, creo que es Totoca que cuenta que Jesús no es tan bueno como parece. Entonces desde ese punto lo vi.

M.: Bueno. (Pausa) "La otra Navidad", ¿cuál es "la otra Navidad"?

B.: La otra Navidad es la Navidad de ellos, la Navidad que nosotros creemos porque... Yo enseguida...

M.: No la de los ricos. La de ellos.

B.: No la... no la que nosotros... por ahí nosotros, creo que casi todos somos de una clase más o menos media, no lo que tenemos en mente como Navidad. Porque creo que cada festividad tiene que ver con lo que uno también tiene en mente en base a lo que uno vive, como todo.

M.: Por supuesto.

B.: Y me acordé mucho del cuestionario [prior knowledge task] cuando hice este punto. Por eso "la otra Navidad". Porque la Navidad que yo describí en el cuestionario, la que considero la Navidad que yo describí en el cuestionario, que es la que yo vivo, no es esta Navidad que viven ellos.

M.: En el cuestionario... el primer cuestionario, el del conocimiento previo.

B.: Sí, sí, totalmente.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) "¿Prosperidad?" ¿Por qué con signos de pregunta? Eso era lo que te quería preguntar.

B.: Ah bueno...

M.: "Navidad, felicidad, regalos, comida, prosperidad".

B.: Sí, lo vas a ver quizás ahora también en el segundo. Precisamente porque... o sea... como uno tiene las concepciones de que en la Navidad... hay alegría, hay abrazos, hay... prosperidad, que son los típicos advertisements que encontrás, ¿no?

M.: Sí.

B.: Entonces mi pregunta creo que en base al texto, lo que se pregunta el texto implícitamente es dónde está todo esto.

M.: ¿Es un cuestionamiento entonces?

B.: Es un cuestionamiento de dónde se encuentra... no dónde se encuentra presente en el texto sino lo que yo veo que se refleja en el texto.

M.: Está bien. Perfecto. ¿El tema? ¿Cuál es el tema? La Navidad.

B.: La Navidad, sí, sí.

M.: Lo ves como algo...

B.: A mí siempre me costó mucho porque no entiendo precisamente la festividad de la Navidad, no... No entiendo a qué refiere exactamente la Navidad y me parece una cuestión

totalmente comercial y no... Si bien estoy bautizada no... No practico la religión, no me interesa, entonces...

M.: Claro, sí, como pusiste en algún lado, no te interesa así que no le ves el sentido.

B.: Claro, exacto.

M.: Bueno, eso es todo, gracias.

Enrique Alejandro

Enrique Alejandro: ¿Por qué "tan sólo"? ¿Qué significado tiene la comida? Para mí la comida era simplemente otro elemento característico de la cultura. Eh... y obviamente, para saber qué era la rabanada debería tener la información cultural del contexto. No... No le di mucho más significado que eso.

Melina: Está bien. (Pausa) La misa de Gallo no sabés qué es.

EA.: Tampoco.

M.: Pero sabés que es algo... ¿referido a qué?

EA.: Suena a algo religioso.

M.: Suena a algo religioso.

EA.: Justamente por la palabra "misa". Y la práctica de lo de las zapatillas suena a algo parecido a lo de los Reyes pero... en un lugar diferente. Yo no... por lo menos yo no la dejaba atrás de... al lado de mi puerta.

M.: Pero esto es un texto sobre la Navidad.

EA.: Por eso, ésa es otra cosa que... Debe ser alguna otra... otra práctica en una cultura diferente. (Pausa) "De mala gana" porque... bueno, pasa las fiestas de mala gana porque no... nadie tiene muchas ganas de festejar, es como que van... realizan la ceremonia por sentido de...

M.: ...de obligación...

EA.: ...de obligación, precisamente, pero... simplemente lo hacen y se van a dormir con su propia angustia, no... no es algo que les traiga felicidad.

M.: Hm. O sea que "de mala gana" vos lo distinguís de la tristeza, o de la angustia, ¿o es la misma cosa para vos?

EA.: No, de mala gana es... están de mala gana porque están tristes. Lo hacen de mala gana porque están tristes. Si estuvieran contentos podrían festejar tranquilamente.

M.: Está bien. (Pausa) Te pregunto acá otra cosa: "Su pobreza puede deberse a otro evento no explicado". ¿Como qué? ¿Qué pensaste, qué se te vino a la mente?

EA.: Hacía una mención de... la historia de...

M.: ...del Casino Bangu.

EA.: Exactamente. Quizás fue alguna debacle económica que causó... la pobreza o ya eran pobres y eso lo hizo peor...

M.: ¿En el país o en la familia?

EA.: En la familia.

M.: En la familia.

EA.: Dudo que haya sido... que sea tan...

M.: Está bien.

EA.: ...tanta...

M.: ...significativo.

EA.: ...repercusión.

M.: Claro. (Pausa) Te pregunto acá, ¿por qué ponés en la reformulación visual la historia del Casino Bangu si no la entendiste? O sea, le atribuí importancia a pesar de que no sabés de qué...

EA.: No, es una... por eso lo pongo con signos de interrogación, es una posibilidad simplemente. Quizás sea... es una de... quizás sea una de las causas o un agravante de la mala situación económica.

M.: Entiendo.

EA.: Que es lo que lleva a todo lo demás.

M.: Entiendo.

EA.: ¿Quién siente lástima? Toda la familia en realidad.

M.: ¿Y lástima por qué, por quién?

EA.: No sé, quizás no fue la palabra... correcta. Eh... en realidad ahora lo borraría y simplemente diría que... la angustia... afecta a la familia o envuelve a la familia.

M.: Está bien. Borrarnos lástima entonces.

EA.: Están siendo afectados por la angustia.

M.: Perfecto. Y esto significa que el clima festivo genera más angustia.

EA.: Exactamente. Como ellos lo mencionan en un momento, eh... ellos están haciendo la fiesta en su casa mientras escuchan todos los gritos y las... las fiestas alrededor. Eso en realidad lo hice un poco por experiencia personal de que cuando uno está deprimido y la gente está festejando alrededor...

M.: ...es peor.

EA.: ...se pone peor.

M.: Está bien. (Pausa) Ah, bueno, ya me contestaste a qué te recuerda: te recuerda poner las zapatillas a los Reyes Magos. Y la misa de Gallo que no tenés ni idea de qué es. Nada más de acá.

Lula

Melina: Estamos con Lula y el texto en español. No entiendo esta última parte del log de reflexión. (Pausa) "Desde el punto de vista cultural" (Pausa) "...son aspectos difíciles de comprender porque en nuestra sociedad quizá las cosas son bastante diferentes. Uno tiende a cerrarse en lo que conoce, y resulta difícil de entender lo que difiere de nuestras costumbres y comportamientos".

Lula.: Porque ellos... Era más que nada por el tema de la familia, que... en parte... o sea, es algo que en realidad yo no conozco, pero quizá en otros sectores de la sociedad sea más común. El... el tío que les da plata a los chicos y no el padre o la madre, y el padre que en el medio de la cena se levanta y se va... sin decir nada...

M.: Hm.

L.: Y se puede llegar a entender que... no sé, los padres están separados y se juntan para la cena de Navidad pero... en ese fragmento del texto no decía nada, entonces... eh... era eso.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) Acá decís que "es una familia numerosa de Brasil".

L.: Más que nada por el nombre del chico este, Zezé, que... por lo que yo he escuchado es brasileño... Yo me he ido de vacaciones a Brasil varias veces y los nombres que menciona

ahí son más parecidos a los de Brasil que a los de cualquier otro lado que yo haya escuchado.

M.: Entiendo. "...Estos sentimientos de continua zozobra y malestar". "Zozobra y malestar" es distinto de "angustia y tristeza". ¿Por qué ponés vos "zozobra y malestar"?

L.: Ah, no lo pensé realmente eso. Sí, (?) los adjetivos. Eh... en mi mente me hice una imagen muy parecida, ellos...

M.: ¿Muy parecida a qué?

L.: A lo mismo, mucha tristeza, amargura, eh...

M.: Es todo lo mismo... están asociados...

L.: Sí.

M.: Entiendo.

L.: Ellos están así todo el tiempo, de que no tienen plata para comer y están todo el tiempo pensando en eso porque... porque es básico en la vida de todos, ¿no?

M.: Sí, sí. (Pausa) "...representa una fuerte creencia religiosa". ¿Dónde ves eso vos?

L.: Porque ellos están todo el tiempo hablando de Dios y del diablo, y de que por qué no nos recompensan si nosotros rezamos todos los días... y eso también, de que... existe una oposición entre las creencias de la familia y la manera en que esas creencias les responden, como que ellos... rezan y están continuamente venerando o haciendo lo que ellos creen que Dios quiere que ellos hagan, pero Dios evidentemente no toma en cuenta porque ellos viven en esas condiciones.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) Esto sí que me quedó escueto, la reformulación visual.

L.: Sí.

M.: ¿La esperanza es de todos?

L.: No, no.

M.: Es de los niños...

L.: Es de los niños, solamente de los niños. Porque justamente el contraste que yo hice es... hay una familia religiosa que se representa en el tema de la fiesta de Navidad y todo lo que se dice alrededor de eso, pero que... al contrario de lo que debería ser una fiesta de Navidad, los... la gente de esa casa vive en amargura, tristeza y con el llanto de uno de... llora la madre y creo que una de las otras chicas que había. Y bueno, la familia es numerosa y carenciada y por eso esto se da en torno a la fiesta de Navidad, y bueno, un contraste entre los mayores, que presentan estas características, y los niños, o más que nada Zezé, que todavía tiene una esperanza y que lo representa con el tema de la... los zapatos de los Reyes Magos...

M.: Está bien. ¿Y eso cómo lo interpretaste, "el zapato de los Reyes Magos"? ¿Qué tienen que ver los Reyes Magos?

L.: En realidad no entendía bien porque me parece que la noche de Navidad está a unos cuantos días de los Reyes Magos, por eso no...

M.: ¿Y puede ser algo que sea navideño en esta cultura?

L.: Claro, sí, en...

M.: ¿Lo pensaste o no lo pensaste?

L.: Lo pensé pero... no... no le di... me lo tomé más por el tema de la esperanza, de seguir creyendo en eso que.. ponerme a pensar en por qué podía ser que dejaran los zapatos afuera.

M.: Está bien. Y acá en el cuestionario [questionnaire about the text, administered after the participants produced the reading response and the visual representation tasks] ponés que la mayor dificultad fue el tema. ¿Por qué el tema de la Navidad es complicado?

L.: No, no fue el tema de la Navidad.

M.: ¿Qué tema?

L.: Porque lo tuve que leer varias veces para poder pensar... cuál era en sí lo que estaba tratando de representar el texto, a eso me refería.

M.: Ah, está bien. Entiendo. Para poder saber vos cuál era el tema.

L.: Claro, yo lo tomé por ahí. Por ahí yo lo tomé por otro lado.

M.: Entiendo.

Luz

Melina: Estoy con Luz con el texto en español. Vos ponés que no comprendés... ¿la historia del casino Bangu es ésta? "Referencia línea 9". ¿Qué te hace suponer que eso... que es algo cultural?, te pregunto yo. "Creo que se debe a no saber particularidades de la cultura", ponés vos.

Luz: Claro, eh.... yo pienso que... que todo el texto en sí está relacionado, o sea lo que es la parte religiosa, está muy dentro de la cultura, y en especial de esta familia. Se ve reflejado que... si bien es una familia, parece ser, de clase baja, de media para baja, y... bueno, y que tienen muy arraigado el tema de la religión, y se ve claramente por... por las palabras cuando hacen referencia por ejemplo a lo que es Misa de Gallo, palabras que comprenden en sí en la familia y... como que le dan una parte muy importante de sus vidas.

M.: Entiendo, pero vos acá ¿a qué historia me estás haciendo referencia? La historia de la línea 9, ¿no es la historia del Casino Bangu?

L.: No, yo puse... ah, sí, sí.

M.: Sí, y vos ponés ahí: "Creo que se debe a no saber particularidades de la cultura". Yo supongo que vos suponés que esto es algo cultural.

L.: Claro.

M.: Por eso. ¿Qué te hace suponer que es algo cultural y no otra cosa? ¿Por qué se te ocurrió que es cultural?, es mi pregunta. Por ahí no sabés contestarla...

L.: Claro, sí, no... en realidad... Claro, sí, acá veo como que está hablando algo que me parece que es cultural por el hecho de que ellos lo comparten, o sea, la familia lo comparte, pero... no sé, se me ocurrió que puede ser parte de su cultura.

M.: Entiendo.

L.: Pero no sé el significado ni...

M.: Bueno, va más allá de la familia, eso me querés decir.

L.: Claro, sí.

M.: (Pausa)

L.: Ah, en esta parte... claro, donde habla de los Reyes Magos y... o sea, de los Reyes Magos no, justamente en nuestra cultura, bueno, lo asocié... el hecho de poner las zapatillas, lo relacioné... Inmediatamente tuve que hacer referencia a lo que es mi cultura y buscar una conexión porque creo que si no... si en nuestra cultura no tuviéramos eso de poner las zapatillas para los Reyes Magos, no comprendería que está haciendo referencia...

M.: ...a algo de regalos.

L.: Claro, a los nenes... al nene poniendo la zapatilla.

M.: Claro, pero tiene que ver con la Navidad.

L.: Claro, sí.

M.: O sea que es algo distinto a lo nuestro.

L.: Sí, en parte sí. (Pausa) Y bueno, y justamente en esta parte... que está marcado como que... cuál es la esperanza del nene, yo lo que quise poner es que él se duerme con... esperanzado de que su regalo no va a ser el... al ser una familia pobre es como que tenían el mismo regalo...

M.: ...para compartir...

L.: Sí, para compartirlo o... por ahí hasta se repetían regalos, ¿no? Y el hecho de que hay una esperanza no sólo a nivel regalo sino... me parece que va más allá de los objetos, va... o sea, esperanza de... de por ejemplo, de tener... o sea, a nivel económico... por ahí, de levantarse... porque acá también... "mañana será un nuevo día", decía. Entonces es como que está relacionado con que por ahí el año que viene ellos puedan llegar a tener un,... no sé, un mejor porvenir.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) El texto es muy interesante, el que escribís, porque explicás qué es la Navidad, explicás qué es la Navidad. ¿Esto está relacionado con qué?

L.: Eh...

M.: Vos ponés por ejemplo: "En dicha cultura se ve que para Navidad suelen hacerse regalos por un tal Papá Noel", o sea, estás suponiendo que el lector no va a saber que en Navidad hay un Papá Noel, ¿verdad?

L.: Claro, sí. O sea... lo que compartimos nosotros justamente con... con esta familia es que... viene una persona, supuestamente llamada Papá Noel, que deja regalos a los niños. Eh... Bueno, la realidad es que Papá Noel... o sea, son los mismos padres, o las mismas familias, y el hecho de que por ahí lo que yo a veces me planteo es que se ve, bueno, en muchas películas, o... o varias veces como que... ¿en las familias pobres qué pasa? O sea, hay un Papá Noel en las familias ricas o en las familias medias, pero en las familias que... no sé, que no... No existe esa... creación por ahí de lo que es una familia, no tienen papá, son los hijos abandonados... o sea, ¿qué pasa en esos chicos? Entonces es como que...

M.: Bueno, porque de hecho no lo mencionan. ¿Por eso decís vos? ¿Está mencionado Papá Noel en el texto?

L.: No, no.

M.: No. Pero eso tiene que ver con que son pobres. Vos decís como que ellos no tienen el concepto de Papá Noel.

L.: O sea...

M.: No tan arraigado...

L.: No tan arraigado y por ahí el hecho de que ellos esperen... de hecho esperan un regalo, entonces... bueno, yo supongo que es de Papá Noel pero... hasta no sé hasta qué punto ellos... o sea, van a creer en una persona tan ideal, si saben que... por ahí hasta los mismos padres les tienen que decir: "Bueno, Papá Noel no existe" de movida por el hecho de que... por la situación en la que están viviendo.

M.: Entiendo. Entonces esto... no fue que vos suponés que la persona que va a leer tu texto no sabe quién es Papá Noel: es algo irónico, se me ocurre...

L.: No, no, para mí no, no sabe... por eso es que lo hago específico.

M.: Ah, está bien. Porque las instrucciones decían: "Contá el texto para alguien que no sabe"... Entonces por eso lo explicás, suponés que no lo...

L.: Claro.

M.: Perfecto.

L.: Y también... bueno, trato de explicar el... o sea, qué es lo que... el hecho de la Navidad que va más allá de... o sea... qué es lo que se hace, por ejemplo las comidas típicas, y justo en esto... Más o menos trato de contar un poco la importancia de la parte religiosa que... que creo que es importante cuando el nene dice: "Voy a ser una buena persona" o "Voy a ser una mala persona", como que se hace replantear, "Si soy una buena persona voy a tener un regalo; si no, no".

M.: Entiendo. ¿Cuál es el "ideal cristiano"?

L.: (Pausa) Eh... Y, justamente eso, que estén... que el comportamiento de una persona sea el adecuado para llegar a ser como una persona buena... y justamente, bueno, los niños por ahí se plantean: "Si soy una persona buena voy a tener un regalo".

M.: Entiendo. "La esperanza la tienen quienes son"... O sea, ¿los niños y los inocentes tienen esperanza? ¿Por qué vos ponés que "con esa esperanza infantil e inocente"? ¿Para tener esperanza hay que ser niño y ser inocente?

L.: No, en realidad... lo que pasa es que... No, pero me parece que a medida que es como que vamos creciendo nos vamos dando cuenta de que (?) la realidad, y no sé, y por ejemplo en este caso por más que los padres tengan esperanza de que... no sé, de que van a conseguir un mejor trabajo, que va a ser mejor la vida en la parte económica, es como que el nene por ahí se... se acuesta durmiéndose y que mañana va a llover plata, o van a encontrar algo que los va a... como que los va a salvar de esa situación.

M.: Entiendo.

L.: Me parece que se va perdiendo a medida que vamos creciendo.

M.: Creciendo. A eso hace alusión, esto es esa referencia que yo no entiendo en tu reformulación visual, "mañana será un nuevo día", a esa esperanza exacerbada del narrador.

L.: Claro. E inocente porque es como que el nene no... no tiene todas las herramientas como para... decir o... bueno, discernir por ahí qué es lo que... no sé, la realidad de la casa. Si bien sabe que son pobres y hace... justamente acá la comparación y... compara la comida... O por ahí... yo lo que quise representar acá es una... en su casa, como algo muy pobre, sólo un plato de comida...

M.: Sí...

L.: ...que hasta ni los perros ni las personas... o sea, hay un silencio en lo que es la familia... una tristeza que ni disfrutaban de... de lo que están comiendo... O sea, ese día que supuestamente es tan importante, y se ve reflejado en todo, en cómo se visten, que no se arreglan... No sé si es que no se quieren arreglar, yo no sé si es que tienen... Creo que hay cosas más importantes para ellos que resolver...

M.: ...que arreglarse.

L.: Claro, que arreglarse. En cambio, bueno, en ésta... o sea, el plato caliente...

M.: Y esto vos pensaste en hacer un solo plato para todos, ¿un solo plato tiene un significado o es algo... circunstancial, por ahí, un solo plato de comida?

L.: No, sí, que tienen que... o sea, como... comer todos de ahí... muy... o sea, lo mínimo es la comida.

M.: Está bien.

L.: En cambio en éste no, en éste está... sí, o sea... Éste no era caliente, era... con olor.

M.: Con olor, está bien.

L.: Como rico, así...

M.: Entiendo.

L.: O sea, esta comida no motiva... la de la casa pobre, supuestamente, no motiva ni para comerla. En cambio ésta... no sé, por ejemplo, puse dos vinos...

M.: Sí (?)

L.: Claro. Todos los platos y bueno, y se ve... la felicidad de las personas.

M.: Perfecto. Bueno. (Pausa) ¿Por qué si le das tanta importancia en tu reformulación visual a la comida, ¿por qué ponés la rabanada mojada en vino como auxiliar [in the comprehensibility grid]? Porque le atribuís importancia acá.

L.: Sí, pero... justamente... pienso que la comida puede ser ésa... esto por ahí tiene más que ver con... por ahí medio referido con lo religioso... eh... en cambio, para mí puede ser cualquier cosa, no sé, si bien soy católica, o sea, religiosa, por ahí no soy... muy practicante, por ahí más de chica sí, entonces es como que a medida también que uno va creciendo es como que... por ahí se va perdiendo y ves la vida de otra manera y a su vez como que... ves distintas situaciones de vida, justamente lo que es la pobreza, lo que es vivir más o menos tirando a pobres y lo que es las personas ricas, y para mí que el significado de la comida, o sea, lo que es Navidad, va más allá de lo que es la comida en sí: va en el hecho de estar toda la familia unida... O por ejemplo el arbolito, para mí el arbolito tiene otro significado, el hecho de que toda la familia se junte para hacer algo.

M.: Entiendo. Y entonces específicamente, por lo que acabás de decir, la rabanada es una comida religiosa...

L.: Sí, para mí sí. Está referida con... o sea con... el pan de... con lo que se hace en la iglesia, ¿no?, el pan, el vino...

M.: Entiendo.

L.: Pero para mí va más allá de... de esa comida.

M.: Bueno, muy bien.

Miranda Dana

Melina: Estoy con Miranda Dana y el texto en español. La historia del Casino Bangu, ¿qué te parece que es, algo cultural eso o es algo que le pasó a la familia, es algo que pasó en el país...?

Miranda Dana: Me pareció que era algo que tenía que ver quizás con la cultura, o puede ser, no sé. Como no sabía qué era, podía ser que sea algo relacionado con la cultura, porque tampoco hay mucha especificación, no sabemos de qué cultura estamos hablando.

M.: No.

MD.: Entonces puede ser quizás algo de la cultura o quizás algo del país, no, no sé. Puede ser cualquier cosa, porque justamente como no sabía el significado...

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) Vos ponés: "Es muy interesante observar cómo la ausencia de regalos y de una comida abundante es atribuida en principio al mal comportamiento". ¿Por qué es interesante?

MD.: Y, me pareció interesante porque como está contado desde la... desde la perspectiva de un niño o niña, como que queda quizás muy inocente o.. depende, quizás por la influencia religiosa de la familia, atribuirlo al mal comportamiento me pareció que era inocente y por eso me pareció interesante pero...

M.: ¿Como naive?

MD.: Claro, claro, sí, sí... o muy crédulo quizás, no sé... Porque además cuando uno crece después tiene otra opinión de la religión o... Cuando sos chico creés en todo lo que te dicen.

M.: Claro.

MD.: Por eso.

M.: ¿Y a qué lo atribuí vos entonces? ¿Vos sos religiosa?

MD.: Sí, yo soy católica pero...por ejemplo no voy demasiado a la iglesia y esas cosas.

M.: Está bien.

MD.: Sí creo en Dios, por ejemplo.

M.: Está bien.

MD.: Lo que pasa es que por ejemplo... como era...

M.: Pero no atribuí el destino de uno a factores religiosos o a creencias...

MD.: No, no, o por lo menos no en esta cuestión, como en... en relación a la abundancia por ejemplo de la comida en las fiestas y eso, eso no se debe a una cuestión de Dios sino quizás a una condición social de la familia que el nene en ese momento no se daba cuenta, por eso me pareció que era ingenuo...

M.: Entiendo.

MD.: Y después acá cuando vos me preguntás...

M.: Cómo sabés que el nene se da cuenta...

MD.: Cómo se da cuenta. Volví en relación cuando leí esto que me comentabas, releí el texto. En realidad no hay una... no dice nada explícito. Como que me pareció, debo haber hecho una inferencia...

M.: ...tu percepción...

MD.: ...claro, de que cuando habla con la... con la otra nena, ahí me pareció que se daba cuenta, aparte como que lo compara con las otras familias ricas, dice... hay una parte como que dice que... si todos en su familia eran buenos... viste que le pregunta si tal era bueno... si todos eran buenos, ¿por qué les pasaba esto? Como que ahí cambia por lo menos de la percepción más ingenua que tenía al principio.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) Acá no entiendo. ¿Por qué "...hasta hay llanto"? ¿Qué querés poner con el "hasta"? Es representativo eso...

MD.: Como que...

M.: ...lingüísticamente.

MD.: Claro. Eh...

M.: Porque en realidad lloran. ¿Por qué ponés "hasta lloran"?

MD.: Claro... como que era un extremo, me pareció.

M.: Un extremo...

MD.: Que estaban todos que no comían, por ahí bueno, que estaban deprimidos, pero... "hasta hay llanto", me pareció que era demasiado extremo quizás... la depresión.

M.: Entiendo.

MD.: Por eso.

M.: Y... ¿y por qué demasiado extremo? ¿Vos qué harías en una situación parecida?

MD.: No sé, la verdad, no sé, pero... yo supongo que...

M.: Te parece muy extremo para lo que se refleja.

MD.: Claro, porque además quizás... no es una situación que se dio de un momento para el otro: quizás la situación social de la familia ya es... viene hace un tiempo, no sé, me parece demasiado extraño que lloren así a tal extremo en una celebración... cuando tendrían que estar, no sé, más acostumbrados quizás.

M.: Hm, entiendo.

MD.: Como que no es nada nuevo, entonces... me pareció eso.

M.: ¿Cuál es la relación de las zapatillas?...

MD.: Eso es algo que yo marqué como que me parecía difícil de entender en el texto.

M.: Está bien.

MD.: Porque yo relacioné, por lo menos me pareció, que lo de las zapatillas, eso tiene que ver con la celebración de los Reyes Magos o algo así, me pareció, viste que tenés que dejar los zapatitos para que te vengan a traer los regalos. Pero no entendía por qué eso lo habían puesto cuando supuestamente el tema es la celebración de la Navidad, porque... era en otro día.

M.: ¿Y puede ser algo navideño en otra cultura?

MD.: Claro, no... no sé.

M.: Ni idea.

MD.: No, la verdad, no tengo idea.

M.: (Pausa) Vos ponés "cambia de lugar".

MD.: Ah, cambia de lugar las zapatillas.

M.: ¿Por qué "cambia"?

MD.: Dice que las pone del otro lado de la puerta, me parece.

M.: Ah.

MD.: Cambia de lugar pero como una... comodidad física, digamos, las mueve de lugar.

M.: Y después acá te pregunto: el abrazo...

MD.: ...si es sinónimo de resistencia acá, porque yo puse: "Zezé resiste, abraza a su tío". No es... en realidad el abrazo no es una resistencia pero... sí quizás es como para cambiar de actitud, como lo comparo con el resto de la familia que está abatido, deprimido, que lloran, Zezé en lugar de unirse a la depresión, lo que hace es tratar de consolar.

M.: Ah, entiendo.

MD.: Como que en ese sentido se resiste, digamos.

M.: Ah, entiendo.

MD.: No se quiere unir sino que consuela al tío, y me parece que a la madre también y... bueno, también me pareció que cambie de lugar la zapatilla era como que tenía esperanza de que las cosas cambien.

M.: Para distanciarse de los otros.

MD.: De los otros, claro, por eso lo comparo.

M.: Entiendo. Y acá es muy interesante esto que ponés de la duda, que él tiene una duda...

MD.: Claro, con lo que habíamos dicho de... si era por una cuestión de mal comportamiento o por la situación social, me pareció que...

M.: Ah, o sea que está mencionado acá.

MD.: Claro.

M.: La duda, no está la palabra.

MD.: Claro, no puse "duda", pero más o menos creí que la idea...

M.: Estás mencionando el contexto. Sí. Está bien, perfecto. (Pausa) ¿Cuál es el problema con el velorio del Niño Jesús?

MD.: Que no... no me acordaba como... Claro, "No lo recuerdo", decía [in the comprehensibility grid]. No me había dado cuenta, creo que lo menciona por acá, cuando dice... No, tenía a Jesús y el niño diablo... no...

M.: No lo recordaste.

MD.: No lo recordé en el momento cuando hice esto...

Scarlet Rose

Melina: Vos acá ponés que "Light" mandó a cortar algo. ¿Cómo, si una luz no es un instrumento capaz de cortar?

Scarlet Rose: Sí.

M.: Yo te pregunto, ¿puede ser una cosa?

SR: Sí, pero... podía ser una cosa, pero no lo entendí ahí.

M.: Está bien, lo pensaste, pensaste que podría ser una cosa.

SR: Sí.

M.: Ah, listo.

SR: Pero igual no me cerraba.

M.: Muy bien. En la respuesta textual... (Pausa) Bueno, vos decís que el texto refleja una cultura caracterizada por la desigualdad. Y yo te pregunto: La desigualdad es algo social, estamos hablando de desigualdades sociales. ¿Eso es lo mismo que algo cultural? ¿Lo social es lo mismo que algo cultural para vos?

SR: Eh... yo tomo el aspecto social como parte muy importante de una cultura.

M.: Está bien.

SR: Y no... no lo quería analizar nada más desde el punto de vista de la comida tradicional esto, sino de que tiene algo más profundo.

M.: Está bien. (Pausa) ¿Cómo sabés que es en Brasil si antes pusiste que no habías leído el texto?

SR: Ah, lo supuse por los nombres.

M.: ¿Por los nombres? ¿Qué nombres?

SR: No me los acuerdo pero...

M.: ¿Qué nombre es... o refleja...

SR: Bueno, el... la terminación "-inho", eso primero y principal, y... y después, bueno, Totoca... Eh... Pero principalmente por el "-inha".

M.: Está bien, se te ocurrió así.

SR: Sí. No sé si es Brasil o (?), pero arranqué con eso.

M.: Está bien. (Pausa) Y acá ponés: "La pérdida de fe en la religión y en la sociedad marca una ironía. Nosotros, desde nuestro punto de vista como argentinos, tenemos un estereotipo de que los brasileros son gente alegre. El texto demuestra que no siempre es así". ¿Éste es el propósito del texto para vos?

SR: Eh... No sé si... no sé si es el único propósito pero uno de los tantos me parece que sí. No... No digo que el propósito sea mostrarnos a los argentinos específicamente que los brasileros no son siempre alegres.

M.: Pero mostrarlo.

SR: Pero mostrar una realidad.

M.: Perfecto. (Pausa) En la reformulación visual te pregunto qué es esto.

SR: Los fuegos artificiales.

M.: Los fuegos artificiales. ¿Y esto?

SR: Un arbolito... pobre, flaco y sin...

M.: ¿Pero representa el árbol de Navidad?

SR: Sí.

M.: Ah, está bien. ¿Y éstos quiénes son?

SR: Es el papá, éste que agarra el sombrero cuando se va...

M.: Ah, sí, el papá y...

SR: Y la nena que lloraba. Es básicamente para contrastar el...

M.: Con el cuadro 2 [in her visual representation].

SR: Con la familia del doctor, claro. Que acá el árbol está lleno y están todos contentos, y acá no.

M.: Perfecto. Y ¿por qué no vale la pena?

SR: Porque si no salís más desilusionado.

M.: Ah, está bien. Y acá con respecto al cuestionario, te pregunto por qué marcás que no esperar regalos para no desilusionarse es auxiliar...

SR: No, es esencial.

M.: Ah, perdón. No, poner las zapatillas del otro lado de la puerta es auxiliar... O sea, acá tu reformulación termina con (?)

SR: Sí, es muy contradictorio.

M.: No, si es que lo podés explicar.

SR: (Pausa) No, nada más lo dibujé porque era la última parte, era lo que él hacía...

M.: Está bien.

SR: Pero lo que él decía me pareció más importante que eso.

M.: O sea que de cualquier manera pensás que es algo...

SR: Auxiliar.

M.: Está bien. ¿Y qué tiene que ver poner las zapatillas del otro lado de la puerta con la Navidad? ¿Pensaste eso?

SR: Sí, lo pensé y... pero en Brasil no sé qué puede ser, y nosotros zapatillas las ponemos pero en Reyes, entonces pensé que podía ser algo parecido, como en vez de poner las medias ponen las zapatillas para que les den regalos.

M.: Algo típico de la Navidad de allá.

SR: Sí.

M.: Perfecto.

Tacuara

Melina: Estoy con Tacuara y el texto en español. En el log ponés que "la historia del casino Bangu puede hacer referencia o alusión a alguna problemática propia del lugar". ¿Qué lugar? ¿De qué lugar?

Tacuara: Del lugar donde... de la historia, del pueblo, digamos, del que se está hablando... Me parece que por ahí podía hacer alusión a eso, a una historia que... que es propia de ese lugar y que... o sea, que ellos, los personajes, saben o que uno, tal vez como lector, puede ser de ahí, de Brasil, lo puede interpretar de otra manera.

M.: ¿Vos interpretaste que estaba en Brasil? Porque no lo pusiste, ¿o sí lo pusiste?

T.: Ah, no, no lo puse, como tampoco puse que...

M.: ¿Pero te diste cuenta?

T.: Sí. Igual, aparte, el texto.. viste que yo en un momento te dije que lo conocía, que es *Mi planta de naranja lima*, ¿no?

M.: Sí.

T.: Bueno, eso no lo puse. Después en el otro sí te marqué que no conocía el texto.

M.: Está bien. (Pausa) ¿Qué significa esto de "clasista"?

T.: Ah, no, porque me pareció que...

M.: Vos distinguís entre algo clasista y algo cultural por lo que veo.

T.: Claro, es... una cuestión... es decir, no sólo decir si es un país de Latinoamérica o no, o un país europeo... o sea, por ese tipo de definición, y después que dentro también... que dentro de un mismo... de distintos países, ya sea, un país más desarrollado o no, dentro de esos países también hay una división de clases, y que esa división de clases para mí hace que por ejemplo... eh... una persona de cierta clase social de la Argentina pueda tener más en común con una persona de cierta clase social de Europa que entre dos personas dentro de la Argentina, ¿me explico? O sea, si yo comparo... a una persona de una familia más acomodada en un... con el otro extremo de la sociedad, tampoco tan extremo pero... o sea, no vayamos a un cartonero pero qué sé yo, una familia precaria, eh... qué sé yo, por más que vivan dentro del mismo país, van a tener un montón de... van a estar separadas por un abismo de...

M.: Sí. Sería más fácil para vos comprender... alguien de otro país o cultura pero del mismo...

T.: ...que comparta la misma clase, o sea, tiene por ahí las mismas dificultades...

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) Bueno, esto de "sinécdoque" ya me lo explicaste ahí en el texto...

T.: Sí, era eso como... bah, que me parece que se hace... o sea que... es a través de un... de una situación poder representar un montón de cosas más desde la sociedad y... qué sé yo, a partir de... bueno, en este caso como de la situación... de la cena de Navidad y... qué sé yo, es esa cosita que de repente te puede mostrar y decir un montón de cosas.

M.: Entiendo. ¿Sociedad y cultura es lo mismo?

T.: Y, van de la mano, porque a una cultura la hace la... surge de la sociedad misma. ¿A ver dónde lo puse?

M.: Vos pusiste: "Yo clasificaría la sociedad, cultura retratada"... Lo ponés en el mismo plano. ¿Es lo mismo?

T.: Sí, para mí la cultura la tomo como producto de la sociedad, o sea, está creada por la sociedad misma.

M.: Sí, está bien. ¿Y esto de las clases, qué es?

T.: ¿Cómo qué es?

M.: Lo de las clases sociales que acabás de mencionar. ¿Tiene que ver con la sociedad, con la cultura?

T.: Con la estructuración de la sociedad.

M.: (Pausa) "Atrasada" ya me lo explicás... De cualquier manera, si bien tu explicación está bien, son términos duros.

T.: Claro, por eso, por eso los... los explicaba porque no... suena medio... era... contrariamente, o sea, no era una cuestión despectiva a lo que apuntaba.

M.: Entiendo. Acá en el medio: "Teniendo estos conceptos presentes y considerando el fuerte peso que los aspectos milagrosos y religiosos tienen en el texto, teniendo eso en cuenta es que digo atrasado. Por ejemplo, al final del texto, él se levanta de la cama y cuando le preguntan hacia dónde va dice: A poner mis zapatillas". (Pausa) ¿Por qué hacés tanto hincapié en lo milagroso y lo religioso?

T.: Porque me parece... eh...

M.: Lo milagroso es religioso...

T.: Sí...

M.: O lo religioso es milagroso... ¿Cómo es?

T.: Sí, lo veo muy parecido y... es que son... o sea, me parece que es un bloqueo terrible, o sea, digo, por ejemplo, el querer que... ese esperar que las cosas cambien por sí solas, o sea... que hace sujetos completamente pasivos, resignados a... y más... digo, por ejemplo en esta familia y... creo que está muy ligado a eso, que mientras más humildes son, eh... más... se apoyan en una contención religiosa o... entonces esperar que, bueno, las cosas en algún momento van a cambiar, y si no es acá en otra vida, la vida será justa... tener que buscar otra vida, otro plano que excede a lo terrenal porque acá... o sea, ya está... las cosas son así, el pobre es pobre y... y hay que lidiar con eso y... me parece que hace a eso.

M.: O sea que nuestras creencias están asociadas a la educación. Entiendo que me querés decir también eso...

T.: Sí, son...

M.: Que cuanto más educado es alguien menos va a creer en esas cuestiones.

T.: En parte yo creo que sí. Igual... depende también qué educación tenga, o sea, porque vos podés, digo, venir de una familia buena, tener... acceso a una buena educación en el sentido de una educación privada y... una educación privada... una educación privada, por ejemplo, que hoy está tan bien vista, y qué sé yo, podés tener una formación religiosa. Pero... qué sé yo, me parece que sí, el tema de la religión yo lo veo que lleva a una resignación y a... qué sé yo, a aceptar un montón de cosas que no tendrían que ser así pero bueno, como a uno lo excede, deja todo... la justicia en manos de Dios.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) "A mi juicio este fragmento y otros que justifican o tratan de justificar la ausencia de regalos y comida atribuyendo esta carencia a la falta de bondad de la persona muestran lo sometida que está esa cultura". No entiendo esto.

T.: Yo creo que era... sí, que decía...

M.: Los fragmentos que intentan mostrar...

T.: Sí, eran fragmentos, por ejemplo... cuando dice: "Yo soy bueno..." o sea, como que si uno es bueno recibe, y si uno es malo no recibe.

M.: Eso es lo que quiere transmitir el escritor, pensás vos.

T.: Claro, sí... en una parte... No, es... no, lo que los pensamientos, cómo ellos mismos creen eso. Por ejemplo, si yo soy bueno... O sea, "¿Yo soy malo, que no me van a traer regalos?", viste que pregunta.

M.: Sí.

T.: Es esa cosa de decir...

M.: Eso refleja que estamos hablando de una cultura sometida.

T.: Claro, para mí... tiene otra vez que ver con esto de que "si soy bueno Dios me premia, y me va a dar". En ese sentido, otra vez volver a caer en lo mismo, ¿entendés? O sea, que nunca se planteó una cuestión de "por qué no tengo" y ver... qué sé yo, cuestiones más de...

M.: ...profundas.

T.: Sí, pero profundas en el sentido de... de concretas, también, de cómo está organizada...

M.: ...de la realidad.

T.: De la realidad, de cómo está organizada, de cuáles son las consecuencias, y no caer en...

M.: ¿Y qué tiene que ver eso con el sometimiento?

T.: Es que... es otra vez lo que decíamos hace un rato, con lo que yo... cómo lo entendía yo, "atrasada" y... como el estar... estar sometidos a creencias y a... estar otra vez estancado en ese lugar y esperando que las cosas cambien.

M.: Entiendo. En la reformulación visual, haceme un... ¿Qué significa esto?

T.: A mí me pareció... viste más o menos... el final del fragmento, que él deja la zapatilla y... una cuestión que todavía tiene esperanza pero... es, esperanza de que pase algo... no de una, o sea, no hay una idea de que uno puede hacer o transformar de alguna manera, sino una idea de esperar algo más allá, esperar algo que venga de afuera... Por eso en este dibujo me pareció que se reflejaba así un poco la pared y eso, relacionada con la casa precaria que me imagino en la que se vive, y... bueno, esa zapatillita así...

M.: ¿Ladrillos?

T.: Sí, son todos ladrillos.

M.: Entiendo.

T.: No tiene revoque.

M.: Ah, ladrillos... entiendo.

T.: Y... y la zapatilla...

M.: O sea que eso es importante, la zapatilla.

T.: Sí. Y está ahí como que... esperando que vuele, o sea... que salgan solitas las alas y... Y también lo que significa el volar... digo, todas las connotaciones o cómo uno asocia el hecho de volar, la libertad... qué sé yo.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) ¿El tema de la Navidad es problemático? ¿O vos determinás, o vos llegar a entender cuál es el tema?

T.: Ah, puse... Ah, igual... no, eso, pero medio que... lo puse por... más por descarte, o sea, no es que me costó pero como se tenía que elegir lo puse así.

M.: Ah, está bien. (Pausa) ¿Por qué todo esencial? Me llama la atención. A ver si me podés decir por qué todo es esencial.

T.: Porque justo las cosas que marcaste me pareció que son ese tipo de cosas que configuran códigos que hacen a la lectura. O sea... eh... digo.. las cuestiones más ideológicas que se transmiten en un texto, cómo pueden estar... basadas, no de manera

explícita pero a través de los códigos de ropa, comida... son justo cosas que me parecía que eran... hacían a la comprensión de lo que se refiere el texto.

M.: Entiendo.

Tess

Melina: Estoy con Tess con el texto en español. Te pregunto en el log de reflexión qué es lo no dicho en el texto.

Tess: Eh... me parecía... cuando... en el momento en que lo escribí no me puse a ver bien qué detalle era lo no dicho, pero me parecía que seguramente algo de la celebración de Navidad no se decía o se dejaba implícito, no sé...

M.: Eso.

T.: Sí.

M.: "...para sectores de otros orígenes". ¿Qué orígenes?

T.: Dije "otros orígenes" como para decir algo amplio, porque no sabía si ponerle... qué palabra usar, si otras culturas, otros países... porque a veces es como que se confunden los términos.

M.: Ah, o sea que es algo...

T.: ...y se me ocurrió poner "orígenes".

M.: Está bien. Es una solución ahí... ¿Pero qué pensaste? ¿A vos, a tu mente qué se vino?

T.: No sé...

M.: ¿Qué pensaste, en países, pensaste en... clases sociales, en culturas, en qué?

T.: No, en culturas, creo.

M.: En culturas.

T.: Pero bien remotas, porque la Navidad dentro de todo me parece como algo bastante extendido, por lo menos en todo América, entonces tiene que ser algo bien remoto. Por eso no sabía bien si poner "culturas", porque puede ser de otras culturas diferentes pero que coincidan en eso, en cómo festejan la Navidad o... y que lo entiendan igual, aunque no sea exactamente lo mismo.

M.: A vos, eso ¿qué motivó este comentario, el hecho de las zapatillas?

T.: (Pausa) Sí, por ejemplo, y que no es exactamente lo mismo como se dejan los regalos... pero la idea es más o menos la misma.

M.: Hm.

T.: Se puede comparar por lo menos, no es tan distinto como para que no haya...

M.: Y vos estás pensando en alguien que no conoce la Navidad.

T.: Claro, por ejemplo en el texto anterior, que hablaba del indio, directamente no tienen esa celebración.

M.: Entiendo.

T.: No tienen con qué comparar.

M.: Entiendo, perfecto. En la respuesta textual, por acá ponés... "Se intenta explicar la falta de regalos culpando al niño". ¿La intención es culpar al niño, la intención de los personajes o del escritor? Todo, y del escritor...

T.: No, no, el escritor me parece que no, por ahí elegí mal...

M.: Porque es una palabra fuerte, "culpar".

T.: ...la palabra. Por ahí es su modo más de justificarse ellos o de explicarle, de hacerle entender al nene por qué no tiene regalos, que no sufra tanto, como no crearle expectativas o ilusiones si después no va a tener regalos.

M.: Entiendo.

T.: Por ahí sí, elegí mal la palabra.

M.: ¿Y qué pondrías entonces?

T.: (Pausa) No sé... Por ahí solamente: "Se intenta explicar la falta al niño", más de un modo como una fábula o de un modo más... relacionado con la misma historia de que vienen los Reyes o que viene Santa Claus... "Si te portaste mal no vas a tener una recompensa" pero...

M.: Entiendo.

T.: Más como un modo... fantasioso de explicarle al chico por qué pasan las cosas.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) "El origen humilde del Niño Dios". ¿De dónde sacaste eso en el texto?

T.: (Pausa) No sé si lo saqué del texto o lo... o lo pensé.

M.: Ah. ¿Querés fijarte?

T.: (Pausa) Ah, es esta parte que dice: "Por eso creo que el Niño Jesús quiso nacer pobre sólo para exhibirse". (Pausa) En la línea 60.

M.: ¿Es así? ¿Vos sabés que eso es así? ¿El origen de Dios fue humilde?

T.: Más que nada por la representación del pesebre, de... nace en el medio del campo, con pastores...

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) En la representación visual ponés "aislamiento".

T.: Sí, ahí me parece que por ahí, también... tampoco fue una buena palabra para elegir, porque yo lo que quise poner es que cada persona estaba ensimismada o...

M.: Entiendo.

T.: ...aislados entre ellos, como que les falta comunicación o...

M.: (Pausa) ¿Y en qué sentido Zezé representa la ternura? Porque "milagro" y "esperanza" es claro, ¿no es cierto?, a través de las zapatillas y esperar un regalo... pero ¿y la ternura? ¿Por qué te generó ternura?

T.: Me parece más que nada por... porque lo veo como... los niños, la ternura... la inocencia... quizás por la edad del personaje y también la parte cuando estaba... en el pesebre, cómo jugaba con el pesebre...

M.: Entiendo.

T.: Que agarraba los caballitos...

M.: ¿Y al final qué es este vínculo entre la pobreza y la resignación en la esperanza? No sé, ¿qué interpretación es ésa? "¿Son dos caras?", te puse yo.

T.: Me pareció, después pensando que podían ser dos... como actitudes de los personajes...

M.: ...ante la pobreza.

T.: ...frente a esa situación.

M.: Unos se resignan y otros están esperanzados.

T.: Sí. Igual me parece que también me faltó alguno que... que algunos personajes pueden tener más como... una actitud... no de resignación sino que... lo ven como una injusticia y... y no... no se resignan, no lo aceptan como... en su realidad.

M.: Entiendo. Y acá, que pusiste, "el nacimiento del niño diablo", no lo recordaste.

T.: Sí. Después volví al texto y... en el momento me acordaba pero... no me acordaba qué relación tenía con la historia, en qué momento aparecía, entonces después para marcar si era esencial o no... volví al texto y ahí lo vi.

M.: Está bien. ¿Por qué algunos aspectos religiosos son esenciales y otros auxiliares? O sea, lo religioso, ¿es todo importante o no es todo importante? ¿O es posible discriminar entre distintos aspectos de lo religioso?

T.: No, me pareció que algunos no eran tan importantes, como la Misa de Gallo...

M.: Entiendo. ¿Y la comida? (Pausa) ¿Qué entendiste que era la rabanada?

T.: La verdad, no... no me puse a pensar mucho. Una comida.

M.: Está bien. Pero no... Es algo superficial, digamos.

T.: Claro, me conformé con saber eso. Después, algunos... me hicieron pensar algunos comentarios que hacían, puede ser una comida por ejemplo de una casa más humilde... o que no la tuvieran, que significaba también como pobreza... Como cuando uno dice "el pan" como algo esencial y que no le puede faltar a la casa.

M.: Ah.

T.: Puede tener un significado... más importante.

M.: Claro, entiendo. Perfecto, gracias.

Victoria

Melina: ¿Cómo sabés que la acción transcurre en Brasil?

Victoria: Bueno, eh... se basa en la lectura de la obra que tenía hecha yo hace bastante.

M.: Ah, lo sacaste de ahí pero no...

V.: No, no del contexto del texto sino... O sea, el texto no lo muestra, si fuéramos a basarnos en lo que dice el texto no tendría mucha idea excepto por algún comentario quizás respecto a alguna (?) específica o a alguna cosa así, que ahí incluso hasta a veces me sería un poco ajeno porque... desconozco muchas de las...

M.: Entiendo.

V.: Pero no, lo tomé de la... de la lectura del texto.

M.: Está bien. (Pausa) Mencionás el sentimiento de desazón de los adultos, "...incapaces de regalar a sus niños"... ¿Y no hay sentimiento de desazón en los niños?

V.: En los niños sí, pero en los niños quizás está más atenuado por un sentimiento de esperanza, es decir... Al final del texto, del fragmento, vemos que el chico de todas formas deja la zapatilla, para ver si quizás, con suerte, Papá Noel pasa y deja algo. Es decir, hay desazón porque en... en el niño... Lo que ocurre es que me parece que el adulto tiene comprensión cabal de la situación que se está viviendo.

M.: Entiendo.

V.: El niño... no capta quizás el sentido de que Papá Noel, bueno, no es Papá Noel, que son los adultos.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) ¿Cuál es el "quasi cuestionamiento teológico"?

V.: Me refiero cuando... se plantea por ejemplo el tema de... de la injusticia respecto a... bueno, a la falta de... esta falta de posibilidades... de regalo... digamos, lo planteo así por el tema de que está... el diálogo se establece entre una persona, digamos, adulta aunque es joven en el texto (una de las hermanas del protagonista), y el niño, es decir... el niño, la

incomprensión del niño le genera, bueno, esa suerte de esperanza final, pero el adulto, como que casi se cuestiona asimismo hasta dónde el Niño Jesús o Dios mismo es bueno si permite este tipo de injusticias.

M.: Entiendo.

V.: (Pausa) Si hubiera sido entre dos niñas... entre dos niños no tendría quizás esa cuestión teológica porque habría una incomprensión total de todo.

M.: Directamente. (Pausa) Vos acá ponés que... "Es importante reconocer aspectos culturales concretos relacionados con la Navidad y sus usos, comidas y tradiciones. ¿Son importantes estas cosas? O sea, ¿la comida es relevante?"

V.: Es decir, yo creo que lo que es importante no es tanto la comida sino, por ejemplo, eh... quizás es diferente lo que se come en ciertas fiestas en una casa rica y en una casa humilde.

M.: Hm.

V.: Es decir, en ese sentido puede tener relevancia... Los usos y costumbres quizás sí porque si yo no comprendo, no conozco que en Navidad hay un Papá Noel o un Santa Claus que regala cosas, es imposible... entender el sentido del texto.

M.: Sí. (Pausa) "La resignación tiene sus ventajas".

V.: Eh...

M.: Vos ponés: "Evita decepciones".

V.: Sí, en el sentido de que... Claro, lo plantea... creo que es una cita de uno de los personajes. ¿En qué contexto está puesto eso? O sea, ¿en dónde es que lo cito?

M.: Ponés... en la reformulación visual comenzás con el diálogo entre Zezé y Totoca, "cuestionamiento sobre la bondad del Niño Jesús", "justicia o injusticia de la falta de regalos".

V.: Claro, es decir, para... Para el niño, de alguna manera, que no puede resignarse, porque no comprende... o sea... no hay... digamos, la desventaja que tiene una esperanza que va a ser frustrada, porque a la mañana siguiente no va a tener nada.

M.: Por eso tu uso de "aparente".

V.: Exacto.

M.: Bien. (Pausa) ¿Y esto de la crítica social? Luego de todo eso ponés: "Contraste con la riqueza que viven otros, crítica social a la injusticia del dinero mal distribuido."

V.: Sí...

M.: ¿Es un texto que tiene este propósito?

V.: Yo no.. o sea, no sé si el propósito del texto... yo tendría que releer el... es decir, lo estoy tomando de nuevo de mi lectura. En este fragmento no habría ningún tipo de... digamos, no se ve un propósito, sí se ve una... digamos, situación de crítica en cuanto a que se está contrastando... el contraste tiene que tener una función en el texto, supuestamente (?) evidente...

M.: O sea que vos podés hacer una lectura crítica social.

V.: Exacto, yo lo que estoy haciendo...

M.: Desde tu punto de vista.

V.: Exacto. Lo que estoy haciendo es interpretar, digamos, en base a lo que se ve, lo que puede estar intentando el texto. De hecho toda la obra transcurre en una situación de... no digo de indigencia pero de bastante pobreza.

M.: Entiendo.

V.: Y creo incluso que en el texto alguno de los personajes trabaja en alguna casa de ricos, de manera que, bueno, intuyo que algo de esto tiene que haber.

M.: Claro. (Pausa) "Niños como protagonistas". Eso es relevante. "Mayor sentimiento de injusticia".

V.: Y sí, sí en el sentido... claro, en el sentido de que justamente, el niño no comprende, por lo tanto hay... incluso el lector reacciona de otra manera si el que vive una Navidad triste es un niño que si es un adulto.

M.: ¿Por qué?

V.: En el sentido de que el adulto de alguna manera tiene más armas para resignarse, porque insisto, la... la esperanza frustrada no se produce, es decir, el adulto sabe que no hay regalo y no espera regalo; el niño... no entiende por qué no tiene regalo... Quizás... acá me estoy derivando a otra cosa, pero quizás tiene que ver con el enfoque que se le da a la Navidad en general, como una cosa absolutamente mucho más material que... que espiritual en cuanto al sentido de la fecha.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) Del cuestionario [comprehensibility grid], Todos te parecieron accesibles, los ítems.

V.: Sí.

M.: ¿Y por qué te parece que la rabanada es algo auxiliar?

V.: A ver, es auxiliar en el sentido de que si bien tiene... digamos, intuitivamente podría llegar a suponer que esto es una comida, digamos, de familia humilde, sí creo que es... auxiliar en el sentido de que para comprender el texto, el texto aporta otros datos que compensan quizá... o sea, en ningún momento, aunque yo no entienda qué es una rabanada, voy a dejar de entender que se trata de una familia humilde... bueno, con unas carencias de todo tipo.

M.: Entiendo.

V.: En ese sentido me parece que no es relevante para la comprensión total del texto.

M.: Está bien. ¿Algunos de los aspectos religiosos.. Vos ponés en la reformulación visual esto de... de la injusticia divina y del cuestionamiento teológico, pero después cuando venís a evaluar, no sé cómo decirlo, estos elementos del nacimiento del niño diablo...

V.: No, yo lo... lo que considero... o sea, no lo pongo...

M.: Me llama la atención que pusiste todos los ítems como auxiliares [in the comprehensibility grid] cuando en tus otros textos lo religioso tiene su componente importante.

V.: Lo que pasa es que creo que incluso... o sea, a ver, lo baso en esto: Lo baso en lo que acabamos de decir: si bien es importante en cuanto a que hay un cuestionamiento de bondad o maldad del Niño Jesús y todo lo demás, eh... para los protagonistas, digamos, desde su punto de vista sí es importante este tema, pero para leer el texto, dada la orientación materialista que se le da a la Navidad, para comprenderlo, para el lector, digamos, de afuera, se va a omitir... si no comprende estos aspectos, se va a omitir ciertas cosas, evidentemente, pero el meollo del texto, es decir, es una Navidad triste de una familia pobre, lo va a captar. A eso voy, a la orientación que se le da al texto.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) ¿Y cómo interpretaste lo de poner las zapatillas del otro lado de la puerta?

V.: Bueno, yo lo pensé incluso por contraste, ¿no?, con esta cuestión... digamos, con lo que nosotros hacemos en Reyes, que la ponemos debajo del árbol, los niños.

M.: O sea que es algo cultural, característica cultural.

V.: Claro, lo tomé como una cuestión... digo, por contraste lo comparé con la cultura nuestra, que no es tan diferente, digamos, o tiene puntos en común, o sea, puntos en que pueden contrastarse... y sí, una cuestión cultural.

M.: Entiendo. Nada más.

Yanina

Melina: Estoy con Yanina. Te pregunto, en el log de reflexión vos ponés que te ocasionó dificultad la comprensión de la historia del casino Bangu. Y acá ponés que puede ser real. ¿Qué te hizo pensar que puede ser real y no ficción? ¿Qué significa "real"? No entiendo.

Yanina: Que existe en la realidad.

M.: En el país éste... en la cultura o...

Y.: Donde se escribe el cuento. Y quizás si existía, y yo lo conocía lo iba a entender mejor.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) ¿De dónde sale toda esta interpretación tuya de los pobres? "Muchos niños trabajan para poder sobrevivir o como en este caso, para que un familiar querido tenga un regalo en el día de Navidad". ¿Eso está en el texto o...

Y.: Yo lo saqué del texto, de mi interpretación... Creo que es la primer parte, donde dice que está trabajando para que el hermano pueda tener un regalo para Navidad.

M.: Está bien, entonces vos...

Y.: Que quizás iba a ser algo usado y viejo pero al menos iba a tener algo.

M.: Está bien. Eso lo asociás con la pobreza de nuestro país.

Y.: Sí.

M.: Eso es lo que quisiste poner acá.

Y.: Sí, acá me comí la palabra "país", "en nuestro país hoy en día", de la pobreza. Dentro de la pobreza... bueno, hay chicos que tienen que trabajar, muchas veces por comida o porque los mandan, o en este caso porque quería que el hermano tenga un regalo.

M.: Está bien. Después ponés: Los pensamientos que pertenecen... En general el tipo de pensamiento que se manifiesta ahí pertenece a adultos, ponés ahí. ¿Por qué, un niño no es capaz de reflexionar?

Y.: Porque pienso que un niño que... que vive con una familia que está bien económicamente, por lo general no se pregunta o no piensa sobre problemas económicos, sobre la plata, porque es algo como que está dado ya.

M.: Hm.

Y.: Pero los niños que ven que los padres no tienen para darles un regalo o que no tienen suficiente alimento y ven que otros, sus vecinos, sí lo tienen, entonces se empiezan a preguntar por qué, y les parece quizás injusto si son religiosos, que Dios les dé a unos y no a otros.

M.: Entiendo. (pausa) "Es entendible que ante tanta desigualdad social, niños y adultos se pregunten por qué Dios les da a algunos y no a otros", o "a otros no".

Y.: Sí, y... es parecido... o sea, sale de la parte de arriba... Uno... o sea, si uno cree en Dios y supuestamente Dios nos ama a todos, ¿por qué a unos los hace vivir bien, digamos, y a otros les hace faltar mucho?

M.: O sea que estás de acuerdo con... te asociás o te identificás con la postura de... del niño.

Y.: Del niño.

M.: Te pregunto.

Y.: Yo no... no soy tan religiosa y... no... no voy a misa ni nada. Creo que quizás exista Dios, y... es difícil, porque tengo como en la cabeza la costumbre de que "Bueno, Dios sabe por qué hace" o "Si Dios lo hace", o "por algo será"...

M.: Hm.

Y.: Como cuando alguien se muere, que dicen, no sé, "quizás está mejor en el cielo". Pero en realidad no... no sé si realmente lo creo, pero entiendo esa postura.

M.: La entendés. Está bien. (Pausa) ¿Qué significa esto de "tener luz"?

Y.: Tener... que... que les cortaron la luz el día de la cena.

M.: Ah, está bien.

Y.: Eso es así, ¿no?

M.: Sí.

Y.: Que ellos ni siquiera podían tener luz el día de Navidad para poder cenar, tuvieron que cenar como a la luz de una vela.

M.: Hm. ¿Por qué la cultura está relegada por la sociedad y el estado? ¿Cuál es la diferencia entre la sociedad y el estado y cómo sabés? ¿Esto es una interpretación tuya o está en el texto?

Y.: Eh... es más una interpretación mía. No está en el texto. Para mí la cultura, esa cultura que se refleja ahí, que es las... las personas que menos tienen, esa cultura está relegada porque... las personas, por ejemplo, muchas veces se escucha que si alguien cometió un delito, seguro que es pobre o que vive en la villa, y de una manera u otra es como que quedan relegados o discriminados.

M.: Hm.

Y.: Y por el Estado también, porque... como que si al estado le importara haría algo.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) ¿Hay alguna diferencia entre lo social y lo cultural entonces? Vos estás hablando de cuestiones sociales: pobreza, desigualdad... ¿Y esto es lo mismo que algo cultural para vos?

Y.: Pienso que en una sociedad pueden haber diferentes culturas, dentro de una misma sociedad. Entonces no es lo mismo sociedad y cultura para mí.

M.: OK. (Pausa) Esto del bebé...

Y.: Hay un bebé al final.

M.: ¿Dónde dice?

Y.: Eh... "El reyecito, que dormía con el dedo en la boca sí era feliz. Y dice... le dijo "Mi chiquito"...

M.: Está bien. Entiendo. Y... "Pone sus zapatillas en la puerta". ¿Con qué asociás eso, qué significa eso?

Y.: Eso me parece un poco extraño, no sé, porque... yo lo asocio con Reyes.

M.: Pensaste que era extraño.

Y.: Sí. Porque yo lo asocio con Reyes y acá es Navidad.

M.: Sí.

Y.: Pero me imaginé que era algo como para pedir que llegue un regalo.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa)

Y.: ¿Eso era un bebé, no? O yo lo interpreté mal...

M.: No, sí, sí, te estaba preguntando cómo sabías. (Pausa) La Misa de Gallo ¿por qué la marcaste como difícil? ¿Porque no sabés lo que es?

Y.: La misa de Gallo... Ah, sí, no sé lo que es.

M.: No sabés lo que es. ¿Y por qué la rabanada mojada en vino es algo auxiliar?

Y.: Eh... Yo lo... entre auxiliar y esencial lo tomaba como... ¿sin eso puedo seguir entendiendo lo que me quiere transmitir el texto?

M.: Está bien.

Y.: Y lo puedo entender igual sin la rabanada.

M.: Lo podés entender igual. Bueno, perfecto, gracias.

Cat's Eye

Immediate reflection logs

Beryl

Básicamente, mi mayor problema ha sido entender el significado cultural de “Jolly Green Giant”. Considero que el problema puede radicar en el hecho de que no me hallo familiarizada con la fábula anglosajona, no en su completa extensión, por lo que se me dificulta comprender por qué razón se hace mención a este sujeto en la literatura leída.

Me sorprende saber que para navidad en EE.UU., de donde asumo que proviene originalmente este relato, se coma pavo. Siempre consideré que era una tradición de Acción de Gracias, la cual tengo entendido no es lo mismo que la Navidad. Creo que este descubrimiento radica en el hecho de que, usualmente, uno solo se queda con las “verdades” televisivas y éstas, muchas veces, forman parte de la ficción, no de algo cierto y real.

Enrique Alejandro

A) El “Jolly Green Giant” mencionado al comparar el padre del narrador. La forma en la que se lo enuncia hace pensar que se trata de una criatura popular, pero carezco del conocimiento cultural necesario para identificarlo, a menos que se trate del Grinch, lo cual dudo.

B) “You can't fly on one wing”. Sencillamente, no tengo idea. Puede que sea una expresión popular o una metáfora, pero no poseo suficiente información para deducir su significado.

C) “Drumstick”. Evidentemente hablan de los muslos del pavo, pero no conocía esa expresión.

Lula

A decir verdad, no encontré dificultades de aspecto cultural. La celebración de la familia es una típica celebración navideña de muchas partes del mundo salvo por el invitado especial que tienen.

Es entendible que el individuo se sienta incómodo (para mí) porque, si bien no sabía que en la India no festejan la navidad, es totalmente entendible que no lo hagan. La navidad está ligada a la religión y en ese país la religión difiere muchísimo del cristianismo.

Luz

Creo que las dificultades de comprensión se deben en la mayor parte a la falta de entendimiento de algunas palabras; a su significado. Esto a su vez está relacionado, a que no se desconocen la cultura de los personajes y hacen referencia a personas, frases o comparaciones que son bastantes incomprensibles para mí. Entiendo que los padres y en sí el relato quiere dejar y transmitir una enseñanza, pero por ejemplo, considero en parte que esa comprensión, en mi caso, no llega a ser completa justamente por no conocer parte o toda su cultura. Cuando el nene hace la división entre “wild” y “tame” imagino que “tame” puede ser lo contrario a salvaje, pero al desconocer el significado de la palabra “tame” no puedo cerrar mi idea de la división de grupos que hace el niño. Por ende no comprendo

totalmente el texto y no llego a encontrarle y apreciar esa enseñanza que se trata de comunicar.

Miranda Dana

El texto no presenta demasiadas complicaciones. Las partes que marqué son, mayormente, palabras que desconozco y sólo un fragmento que no comprendo la relevancia. Quizás desde el punto de vista cultural, el baile alrededor de Jesús tenga un significado especial, de ritual, de tradición.

Scarlet Rose

No tengo dificultades para entender el texto desde el punto de vista cultural.

Tacuara

De los términos que marqué como problemáticos [gravy, Jolly Green Giant, spindly, double-heat the coop] algunos están más relacionados a problemas de vocabulario, otros hacen referencia a alguna comida o personaje. En cuanto a estos últimos, creo que el desconocimiento por parte del lector de aspectos como comidas, etc. del lugar del que se lee puede resultar en una pérdida importante de significado ya que me parece que este tipo de información configura una especie de código.

En cuanto a términos referidos a vocabulario desconocido, me parece que es menos importante y que el problema se soluciona con la lectura misma, es decir, a través de la lectura uno va ampliando su vocabulario.

Tess

No encontré muchas dificultades desde el punto de vista cultural. Si bien no conozco algunos personajes o platos típicos que nombran, no conocerlos no impide comprender el texto. Alcanzan los datos del contexto o las descripciones para imaginarse a qué apunta cada cosa. Me parece haber leído textos parecidos donde se recibía a un extranjero en una casa de familia en inglés, y puede ser que eso ayude también a entender mejor el texto.

Creo que en el subrayado número (3) debe haber una frase hecha que no conozco, o puede ser que en la situación imaginaria de los personajes haya elementos en los que se basa la broma del padre (más allá de que los dos, él y el estudiante, están interesados en la biología). Se me ocurre que la frase hecha puede ser una fórmula o chiste para que el invitado se sirva algo.

Victoria

En este texto, yo como estudiante de inglés como segunda lengua me enfrento a dos problemas: en primer lugar, el hecho de que hay palabras específicas, giros idiomáticos, etc., que pueden resultar complejos ("son of a gun" es un ejemplo); por otro lado, la presencia de Mr. Banerji introduce un elemento que me es incluso culturalmente más lejano. Esto, aun sin volver el texto incomprensible, le agrega una profundidad cultural que obliga otro nivel de análisis. En algún caso puntual, por ejemplo (estoy pensando en "Jolly Green Giant"), ignoro si mi incapacidad de comprender algún pasaje se debe a que el texto hace referencia a un elemento cultural de USA o de India.

Yanina

En el renglón 19 hay una oración que dice el padre que no entiendo. Creo que es un chiste. Sé que dice “no se puede volar sólo con un ala”, pero creo que es una expresión idiomática y por eso no la puedo interpretar. Creo que en mi cultura no tenemos esta expresión, por eso no puedo interpretarla. Este tipo de frases dependen de un conocimiento que va más allá del conocimiento léxico-gramatical. En la historia, Mr. Banerji se ríe y responde. Creo que él sí entiende la broma a pesar de ser de una cultura diferente. Seguramente hace un tiempo que vive en ese país y ha aprendido la expresión.

El resto de la historia es bastante entendible, sobre todo porque en nuestra carrera hablamos mucho de las distintas culturas y qué es lo que sucede cuando personas de diferentes países interactúan. En este caso, uno es de India y la familia, creo, es de Estados Unidos. Infiero que son de US porque comen pavo en navidad, pero no estoy segura si también se come en Inglaterra o Australia, por ejemplo.

El otro tema que trata la historia es el de los animales y creo que también lo entiendo bastante porque si bien en nuestra cultura no hay mucha conciencia sobre los animales, el maltrato a ellos o sus derechos, yo lo tengo presente y es un tema que me interesa.

Algo que no entiendo muy bien es porqué la niña o el niño que cuenta la historia dice que ella es “alien and apprehensive” cuando se compara con Mr. Banerji.

Es difícil de entender la figura de Banerji porque no sé mucho sobre India. Sé que su cultura es muy diferente a la de EEUU y por eso no se siente demasiado cómodo. Pero no sé cómo se festeja navidad en India o cómo son las formas de interactuar entre ellos.

No termino de entender el final = “lost flight”

Reading response tasks

Beryl

Desde mi punto de vista, la cultura reflejada en este texto es meramente estadounidense. Asumo que es así porque se describe mucho la cena típica de Acción de Gracias.

El tema del texto parece reflejar una cena navideña que, en comparación, con el texto anteriormente leído, de un grupo de personas de clase media. Infiero que es así por el hecho de que el protagonista/narrador comenta que están cenando un pavo que, evidentemente, se encuentra abundantemente relleno. Además, las bebidas que se describen no denotan una carencia dentro de tal familia, visto que no solo se toma vino sino también jugo de frutas.

El texto comenta el choque de culturas entre una familia clase media estadounidense y un estudiante extranjero, posiblemente de la India, que comparte con ellos la cena navideña. El evento transcurre con preguntas respecto a las tradiciones del extranjero y con comentarios sobre el pavo doméstico en contraposición con el salvaje.

Las contraposiciones entre tipos de pavo parecen ser una analogía entre culturas, pero también parecen mostrar una postura diferente sobre la navidad: es a partir de la simple cena como el protagonista arriba a conclusiones inesperadas que parecen reflejar algo más allá de la simple lectura. Hay un mensaje escondido entre líneas que el lector debe dilucidar.

Enrique Alejandro

Culturalmente, el cuento presenta una cena navideña perfectamente estereotípica en que crea que son los Estados Unidos con una familia reunida y comida típica de las fiestas americanas (pavo y puré), la cual es un tanto distorsionada por la inclusión de un extranjero que se siente intimidado por el ritual desconocido.

Describir el tema del cuento desde un punto de vista cultural es más complicado. Es tentador describirlo como el encuentro entre dos culturas, lo cual suena convincente si solo se lee la primera mitad: El indonés incomodo en la fiesta decididamente occidental y el/la narrador/a que se maravilla ante este ser extraño. Lamentablemente para esta interpretación, el narrador parte de las comparaciones culturales para explorar otras dicotomías: lo salvaje y lo domesticado, lo natural y lo artificial. El tema cultural es solo una de las dicotomías que pondera el narrador, por lo que me es imposible reducir el tema principal (Que podría llamar “Opuestos”) tan solo a ese fragmento inicial. Describiría el relato como las ponderaciones de un/a niño/a sobre opuestos, inspiradas por el ambiente y las conversaciones de la fiesta, de las cuales la cultura es solo un elemento.

Lula

El texto refleja una típica celebración navideña de una familia, podríamos decir, estadounidense. Todos sentados a la mesa en noche buena (o Noche Buena), tomando vino o jugo, comiendo pavo... En este contexto de lo que se podría tomar como una cena típica, hay un ingrediente atípico: un invitado extranjero. Pero no es éste un extranjero de occidente, viene del otro lado del hemisferio, del oriente, de la India.

Hago esta referencia a los hemisferios porque considero que es importante para hacer la distinción cultural. Las costumbres y las creencias cambian radicalmente una vez que se

cruza esa línea invisible que separa el occidente del oriente. El invitado puede que no comprenda algunas de las costumbres propias de la familia con la que comparte la mesa. Se siente incómodo porque inclusive la comida es muy diferente, y probablemente no sepa cómo hacer para rechazar aquello que no desea comer. Quizá, lo más probable en realidad, es que considera que resulta grosero rechazar lo que se le ofrece. Lo que es más, en la India no comen carne, por lo que el señor Banerji parece estar preso de una lucha interna que no puede resolver: ¿cómo comer carne, si no está bien para su propia cultura? ¿Cómo rechazar la carne, que esta cultura que lo recibe tan amablemente, le ofrece?

El tema de este texto, desde mi punto de vista, es esta relación intercultural, o, en cierto sentido, el choque de las dos culturas que se presentan. Hay una tensión en ambas partes: tanto los anfitriones como el individuo sienten cierta incomodidad al no saber cómo responder o cómo comportarse ante lo desconocido. Ambas partes buscan la manera de sobrellevar una situación en la que se pone en juego la capacidad de cada uno, cómo ser humano, más allá de las diferencias culturales, de comunicarse con el otro, que ve el mundo de una manera radicalmente diferente.

Luz

El texto trata de una familia que está celebrando la navidad, en EEUU o Canadá, por ejemplo, y tienen un invitado de la India. Como cena especial ellos tienen un pavo, a raíz de esto cuentan la leyenda de un ave que termina siendo tonta, con falta de inteligencia. Inmediatamente el niño de la casa saca sus propias conclusiones, separando y comparando a las personas de su entorno con las aves. Aquellos que él considera “wild” e inteligentes por un lado, mientras que aquellos que él considera “domesticados” y tontos por otro.

Finalmente también a raíz de ese relato, el padre habla con el alumno haciendo referencia a las ciencias y expertos que muchas personas defienden la naturaleza y otras juegan y se burlan de ésta.

El niño se queda pensando en el relato y concluye que el ave es tonta ya que no pudo escaparse de que él la comiera y dice que no pudo volar¹.

Miranda Dana

En este texto es muy importante prestar atención al contraste cultural entre la familia del narrador y el estudiante de la India; en especial en cuanto a la celebración de la Navidad, ya que el estudiante desconoce la festividad por completo, “no hay Navidad en su país” dice el narrador.

Por esta razón, los temas que se tratan en la mesa navideña pueden resultar incómodos para la familia o para el estudiante. Por ejemplo cuando la madre le pregunta al estudiante si hay pavos en su país, él dice que no y más adelante en el texto el narrador dice que él está asustado, que les tiene miedo.

¹ Es difícil integrar a una persona de una cultura diferente, más aun cuando en su cultura no se celebran los mismos rituales. Es complicado hacerle entender a la otra persona una determinada celebración cuando en su cultura ni siquiera existe. Entran aquí en juego varios aspectos: como el hecho de hacer sentir a la persona invitada amena, como si estuviera en su propia casa, con su propia gente; así como también los miedos que esta tiene. Es por esta razón, que el padre trata de integrar al alumno haciéndolo participe de esta celebración, de su familia, comidas típicas y entablando temas de conversación en los cuales el alumno se sienta no solo confiable y seguro, sino también poseedor de un conocimiento en común con las otras personas. Este construye ciertos lazos que hacen que la persona no se sienta tan “sapo de otro pozo” en la otra cultura.

Luego, debido a la falta de temas en común, por las diferencias culturales, la conversación gira en torno a la biología y al pavo. Hacia el final, el padre y el estudiante hablan de experimentos con animales, de experimentos genéticos parece, y podemos apreciar cómo el resto de la familia es ahora excluida de la conversación.

También es muy importante ver cómo el punto de vista del narrador en cuanto al pavo cambia. Al principio sólo lo ve como la cena, sin pensar demasiado en los aspectos biológicos, como el hecho de que es un ave que no vuela o que no es muy inteligente. Pero, luego, cuando todos estos aspectos surgen en la conversación, el narrador deja de ignorarlos y es en lo único que puede pensar. Lo compara con un bebé sin cabeza y podemos inferir por la manera en que termina el texto, que quizás no va a comer demasiado.

En resumen, considero que los temas principales del texto son: por un lado, el reflejo de las diferencias culturales en relación a los temas que se tratan en la cena (hay que mencionar además que la Navidad per se no es un tema predominante en la conversación, probablemente para no excluir al estudiante); y por otro, cómo es posible cambiar el punto de vista a partir de la opinión de otro (en relación a la idea del pavo, por ejemplo, que tiene el narrador).

Scarlet Rose

El texto refleja cómo una familia norteamericana celebra la Navidad en una situación inusual, no tradicional: invitando a un estudiante indio a la típica gran cena navideña. Este no es un texto cualquiera ya que no describe simplemente cómo pasan la Navidad en los Estados Unidos: el tema central es el contraste entre dos culturas muy diferentes (Oriente/Occidente).

La cultura norteamericana refleja, en el texto, el estereotipo de una blanca Navidad con abundante comida (¡y el clásico pavo!). Desde el punto de vista emocional, se nota que a la familia norteamericana le importa pasar las fiestas felices (“...as long as they make people happy”) y se sienten incómodos con los silencios producidos por el enfrentamiento de las culturas. El contraste principal (que puede notarse mejor al final del fragmento) es el del mundo capitalista (EEUU) y el mundo “naturalista” (India), por llamarlo de algún modo. Mientras que al padre le preocupan más los gastos del experimento reciente hecho con un pavo, el estudiante indio se concentra en el hecho de que al hombre no le importa “jugar con la naturaleza”, que no la respeta. Como el narrador dice, el padre norteamericano se preocupa por cuidarse a sí mismo, no al medio ambiente (“Wild things (...) look out for themselves”).

Tacuara

El texto está fuertemente atravesado por un contraste cultural que le permite al autor no sólo describir ciertos aspectos de cada cultura, sino también hacer alguna especie de crítica.

En cuanto a las culturas retratadas en el texto, por un lado está el chico de la India que aparece como respetuoso, educado, sumiso. Por otro lado, está el narrador y su familia. Éstos últimos reflejan una cultura muy diferente de la del chico de la India; la familia muestra una actitud más fuerte, un pensamiento más racional y utilitario.

Tess

El fragmento relata una cena de celebración de Navidad en una casa de familia, aparentemente en Inglaterra (ya que se hace referencia a la cadena de noticias de la BBC

para describir cómo habla uno de los personajes). Se trata de una comida entre los miembros de la familia que reciben para el festejo a un extranjero que viene de la India y que, por eso mismo, no conoce esta celebración religiosa y se siente incómodo e inseguro, sin saber bien cómo comportarse en la mesa. La situación se describe desde la perspectiva de uno de los hijos del anfitrión, que aunque parece ser un niño tiene un gran poder de evaluar las sensaciones del invitado.

El texto se centra en la distancia cultural entre el indio y la familia anglosajona, y en los aspectos del invitado que llaman la atención del niño. Si bien gran parte de la timidez que se ve en el extranjero puede deberse a que la familia que lo recibe es la de su profesor, creo que también se está representando la personalidad de los indios como una de humildad y recatamiento. Es amable y trata de complacer, pero a la vez es silencioso, casi no habla. El texto también nos muestra que de esas diferencias pueden surgir diálogos interesantes: justamente el momento en que el estudiante habla con más entusiasmo es cuando le preguntan por su país, y también cuenta una leyenda de allí sobre los pavos. El narrador también señala que hay similitudes entre ellos. Una de las características que nota es que ambos se sienten alienados o extranjeros de algún modo.

Considero que el principal aspecto cultural que se trata es de cómo la cortesía nos obliga a adaptarnos a las reglas o costumbres del otro, teniendo que superponernos a dificultades, miedos o incomodidades. Esto en la historia se ve de ambos lados, tanto de la familia como del Indio: por ejemplo, la mujer del profesor acepta que el tema de conversación en un momento sea el de serpientes venenosas, aunque no le agrada, porque ve que el invitado se siente cómodo con ese tópico y está más alegre e involucrado en la charla. Para el indio toda la cena le resulta un desafío, porque no sabe qué se espera de él, qué le van a dar de comer, etc. Incluso puede ser que queriendo ser amable e incluso complaciente se equivoque con lo que diga o la manera en que lo diga. A pesar de estos roces, el fragmento nos muestra también que se trata de una cultura hospitalaria la de la familia, que se esmera por hacer sentir bien al invitado y que no pase solo las fiestas. Analizando un poco más esta actitud y las conversaciones en la mesa también podemos interpretar que hay falta de comprensión en la familia de la cultura del indio, y más que nada desconocimiento. Asumen que deben invitarlo en esa ocasión para que no se sienta solo en la Navidad sin pensar que para él no debe tener ningún significado en especial esa fecha.

Victoria

En el texto se observa cómo en una celebración navideña tradicional se introduce de pronto un elemento culturalmente ajeno, que debe ser insertado. Una familia aparentemente típica (al menos en cuanto a su manera de celebrar la cena de Navidad), recibe como invitado a un joven indio. Esto introduce dos puntos de vista en la narración: por un lado lo que podríamos llamar el “punto de vista local”, entendiendo como “local” el punto de vista de la cultura en que la historia del texto se desarrolla, y por otro lado la perspectiva del extranjero que intenta insertarse o ser insertado en ella. Por un lado, la compasión (“We're having him to Christmas dinner because he's foreign, he's far from home, he will be lonely, and they don't even have Christmas in his country”), la fascinación ante lo desconocido: “I think he is very beautiful, with his brown skin and brilliant white teeth and his dark appalled eyes”. Por otro lado el recelo, el temor (“He's afraid of us. He has no idea what we will do next, what impossibilities we will expect of him, what we will make him eat. No wonder he bites his fingers”). Sin embargo, algo tienen en común las dos perspectivas, algo que los jóvenes parecen advertir con más claridad:

I know he's miserable, underneath his smiles and politeness. I'm developing a knack for this, I can sniff out hidden misery in others now with hardly any effort at all.

Mr. Banerji doesn't have a costume, only a jacket and tie like other men. Nevertheless I can hardly believe he's a man, he seems so unlike one. He's a creature more like myself: alien and apprehensive.

Es innegable que el texto refleja un esfuerzo de integración de ambas partes. Sin embargo, las dos culturas son extranjeras, la una para la otra. Para una de ellas, la “local”, resulta casi inconcebible que en otras partes del mundo las cosas sean diferentes (“they don't even have Christmas in his country”). Por otro lado, el joven indio acepta sin comentarios las normas de la cultura en que intenta insertarse, cuyos rituales le son ajenos y en la que incluso el lenguaje puede darle problemas.

My father ladles out the stuffing, deals the slices of dark and light; my mother adds the mashed potatoes and cranberry sauce and asks Mr. Banerji, enunciating carefully, whether they have turkey in his country. He says he doesn't believe so.

.....
"Meleagris gallopavo," he says, and Mr. Banerji leans forward; the Latin perks him up.

Es interesante observar otro factor que ambas culturas parecen tener en común:

"Fooling with Nature, sir," says Mr. Banerji. I know already that this is the right response. Investigating Nature is one thing and so is defending yourself against it, within limits, but fooling with it is quite another.

Esto podría pasar por un tópico común: El joven indio es un estudiante de biología, y el padre del narrador es su profesor. Sin embargo, ¿cuánto de simbólico podría tener un comentario de este tipo? Implica la idea de no experimentar con la naturaleza, de no intentar adaptarla a las necesidades del hombre, y cabe preguntarnos hasta qué punto el hecho de integrar a un hombre a una cultura extranjera al punto de intentar que se asemeje a la local no es querer adaptar lo foráneo a nuestras propias necesidades, aun cuando esto se lleve a cabo con las mejores intenciones.

Victoria (reflexión posterior al cierre de recolección de datos)

Sobre el texto en inglés, hubo un par de cosas que me llamaron la atención. En primer lugar, me interesó mucho la progresión que vi en las relaciones entre los personajes, la cual implicaría una evolución psicológica en lo que se refiere a la visión del extranjero. Entiendo por “progresión” el hecho de que se produce un cambio gradual a lo largo de la cena navideña relatada en el texto. En un principio, el extranjero era un ser extraño al que se contemplaba con la fascinación que se emparenta con el prejuicio ante lo desconocido (creo recordar que en el texto incluso se calificaba al extranjero de “beautiful”), o con la compasión de quien no concibe que haya gente que viva en países en que las cosas sucedan de manera diferente a como suceden en el propio. La cultura local (la que refleja el punto de vista del narrador), considera inadmisibles, por ejemplo, que el joven hindú no celebre las fiestas navideñas en su país, y hasta lo compadece por eso (marco aquí una frase que me parece relevante y que recuerdo casi textualmente, y subrayo la palabra que considero que aboga a favor de mi comentario anterior sobre la compasión: “They didn't even have Christmas in his country”). Se supone, también desde el punto de vista local,

que el joven extranjero se sentirá solo en las celebraciones navideñas si nadie lo invita a pasarlas en familia; sin embargo, este presupuesto pasa por alto que mal puede sentirse solo en la celebración navideña aquél para quien la Navidad no constituye una celebración.

Por su lado, el extranjero acepta las normas de la cultura local e intenta integrarse a ella, o al menos no rechaza esta posibilidad al aceptar la invitación a un festejo cuyo sentido le es culturalmente ajeno.

A lo largo de la cena no se tocan temas importantes ni que lleven al narrador y a su familia a conocer mejor al extranjero. Por el contrario, se abordan tópicos comunes, en un intento explícito de integrar al hindú a las conversaciones. Sin embargo, sobre el final de la comida la perspectiva y el punto de vista han sufrido un cambio. Respaldo mi idea en dos factores:

1. El hermano del narrador hace la pregunta sobre serpientes venenosas. Esto podría parecer algo trivial, y sin duda lo es como tópico. Sin embargo, por primera vez se está haciendo referencia a un tema que es más común al hindú que a los demás. Es un tema sobre lo que el extranjero tiene algo que decir, sin limitarse ya a estar de acuerdo o a hacer comentarios generales. Esto podría indicar un quiebre en la interacción, hasta ahora guiada y conducida por representantes de la cultura local. El texto no me permite ir más allá de esta hipótesis. Sin embargo, el punto 2 intenta reafirmarla.

2. Se habla de un pavo ya sin relleno, vacío, sin el encanto de haber constituido el plato central de la cena de Navidad. Me atrevo a comparar la visión final del pavo con la del extranjero, y respaldo esta idea con la siguiente comparación, que también recuerdo casi textualmente: se compara al pavo con un “headless baby”. La palabra “baby” nos hace pensar inmediatamente en un ser humano, y la idea de “headless” podría representar, simbólicamente hablando, la remoción de las diferencias. La cabeza contiene la cara, las facciones, gran parte de lo que nos hace especiales y únicos a primera vista. Un “headless baby” podría ser simplemente un ser humano como todos, sin diferencias esenciales con sus congéneres. Esto respalda mi idea de que la visión del extranjero ha cambiado, pasando de ser observado como alguien extraño y fascinante, distinto a todo lo conocido, a ser visto simplemente como un ser humano igual a tantos... igual, incluso, al narrador. Claro que esta hipótesis es una mera interpretación personal, carente de más contexto que el provisto por el fragmento leído. De hecho, la idea de comparar al pavo con un “headless baby” podría tener también otras implicancias que acaso contradijeren lo expresado más arriba. El fragmento no me proporciona más elementos para decidir al respecto.

Yanina

Esta cultura la describiría como una cultura anglosajona de una familia de clase media. La historia se sitúa en la noche de navidad. Para esta cena, la familia tiene abundante comida y solo les interesa pasar un buen momento. Es totalmente diferente a la lectura anterior donde había una familia que no podía festejar el día de navidad porque apenas tenían para comer. En esta familia hay solo una niña y su hermano, es decir, es una familia pequeña y esto es bastante común en las familias de clase media. El padre parece ser un profesor de biología que invita a un estudiante extranjero para cenar con ellos en navidad. Estos detalles muestran que es una familia educada, que no tiene problemas económicos.

Es interesante ver que la niña no piensa en los regalos de navidad como muchos otros niños lo hacen. Sino que está muy concentrada en analizar a su invitado. Lo ve como alguien o algo muy extraño, diferente completamente a ella. Esto se debe a que él es de India. Cualquier actitud que parezca discriminatoria o algo similar, no se ve tan así porque

el punto de vista es el de una niña. Es decir, no entiende todavía bien qué es discriminar o cómo actuar frente a “lo distinto”.

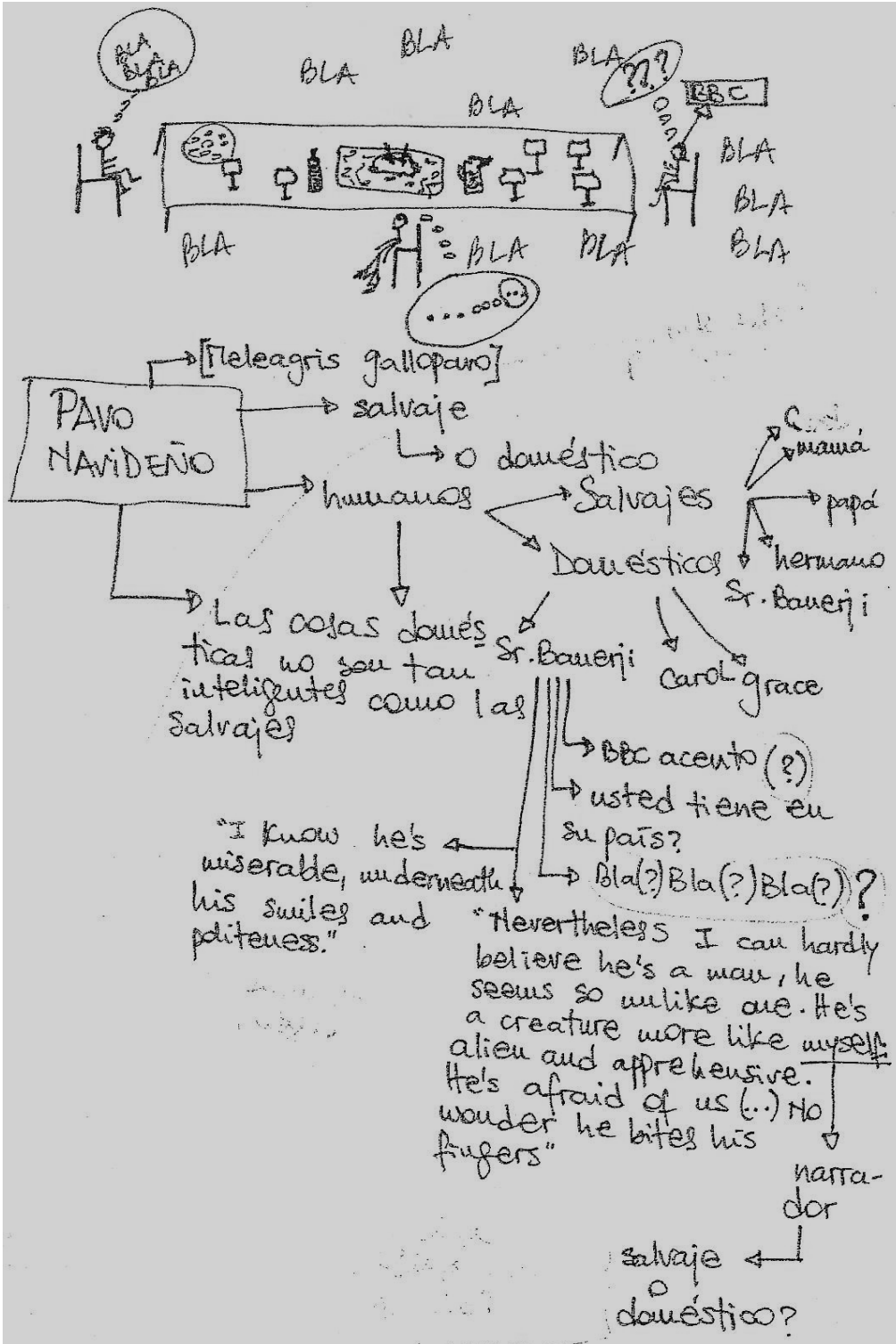
Además de pensar en el hombre piensa en los animales, sobre todo en el pavo. Escucha que su padre habla sobre las distintas clases de pavo y ella misma adopta esa distinción y la lleva al plano de las personas. Ella separa a su familia y amigos entre los fuertes y débiles. Además escucha a su padre hablar sobre las ansias del humano de dominar a los más débiles, como los animales. Ella misma dice que investigar la naturaleza o defenderse de ella está bien, pero manipularla no lo está.

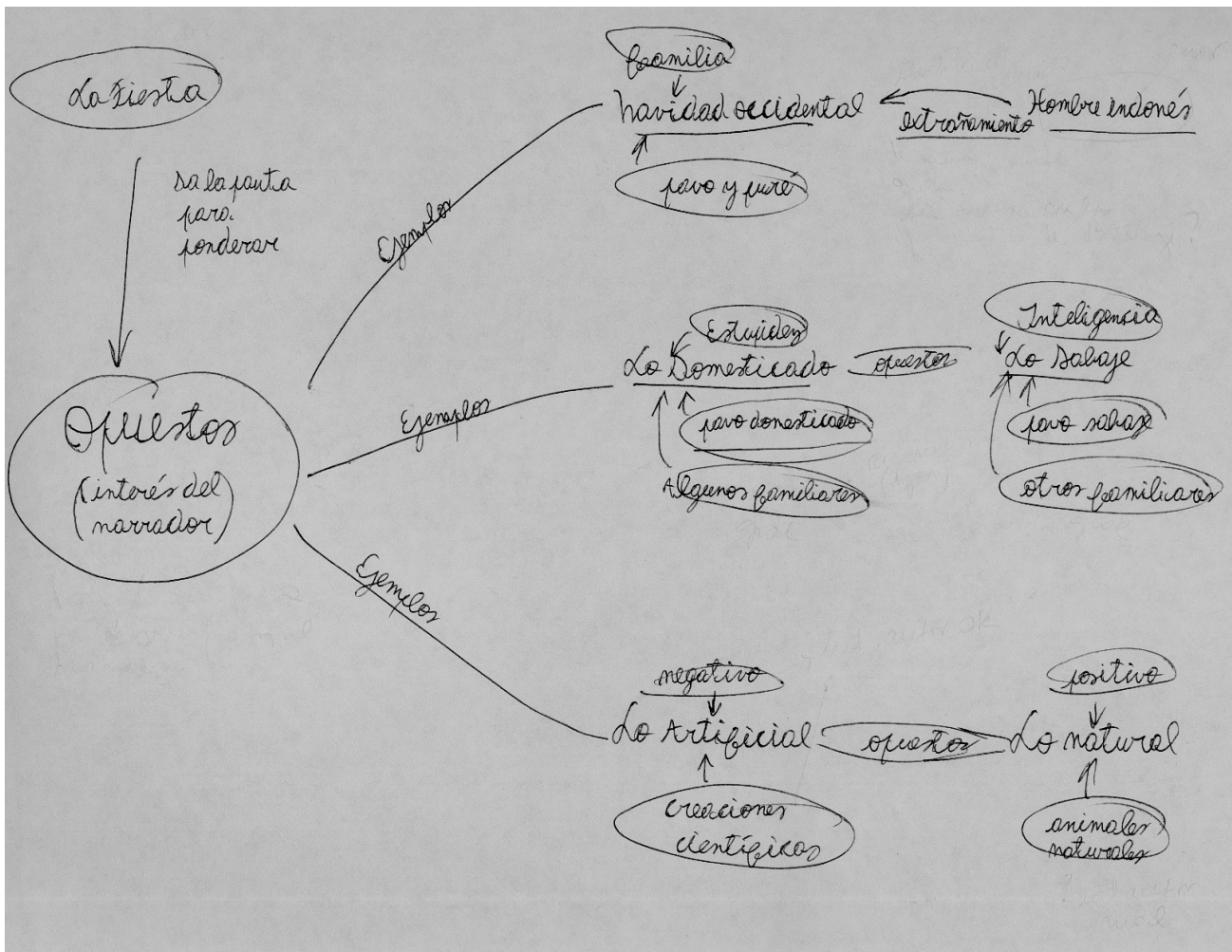
Es interesante ver como la historia comienza como una historia de navidad pero luego se transforma en una historia que trata sobre las diferencias culturales y la avaricia del hombre por conquistar el mundo y dominar a los mas débiles.

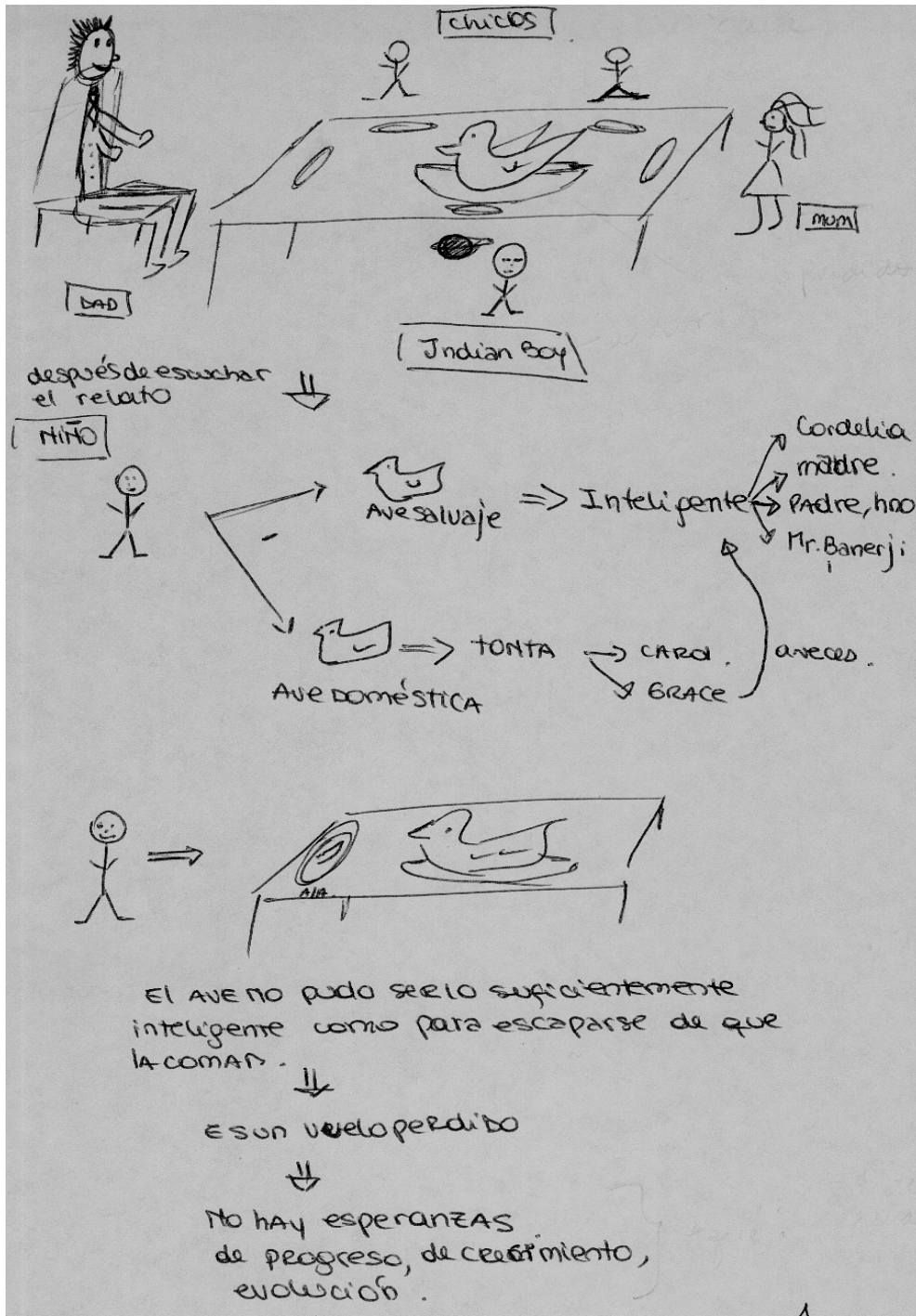
La historia también refleja, a nivel interpersonal, cómo la conversación gira en torno a temas generales y compartidos. En ningún momento se habla de cosas personales. Por un lado, no sería apropiado porque no se conocen demasiado y además tampoco tienen mucho en común más allá de la biología o temas comunes a una sociedad.

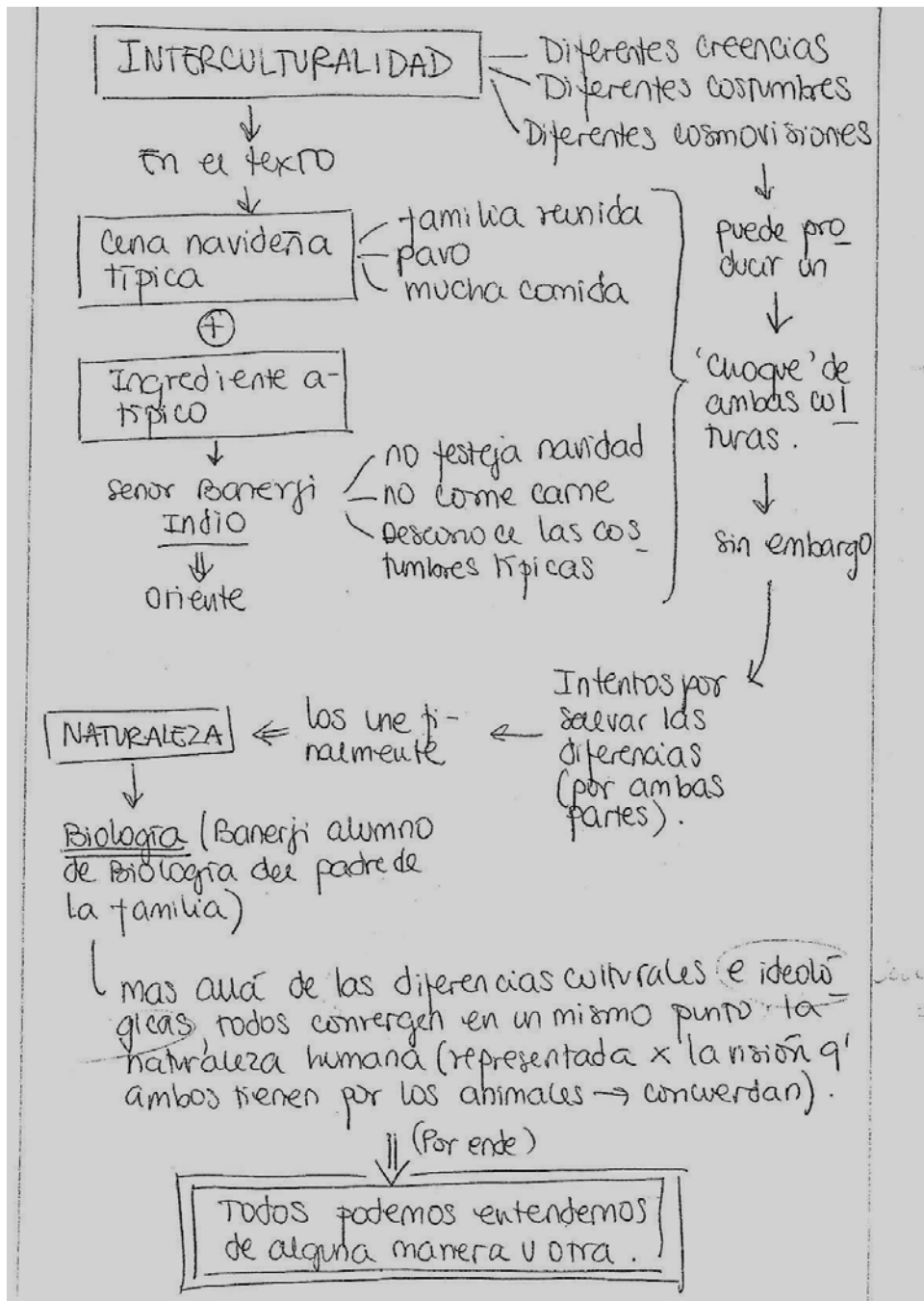
Visual representations

Beryl











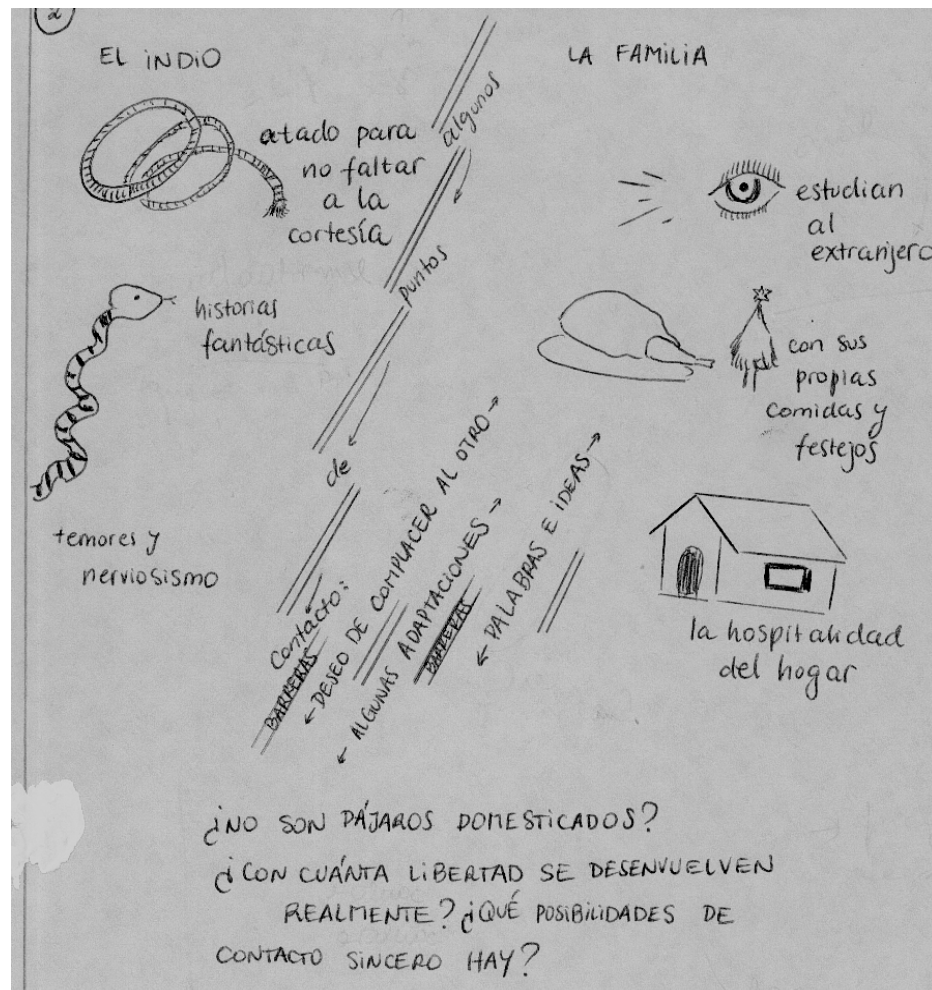
Scarlet Rose



Tacuara



Tess



Victoria

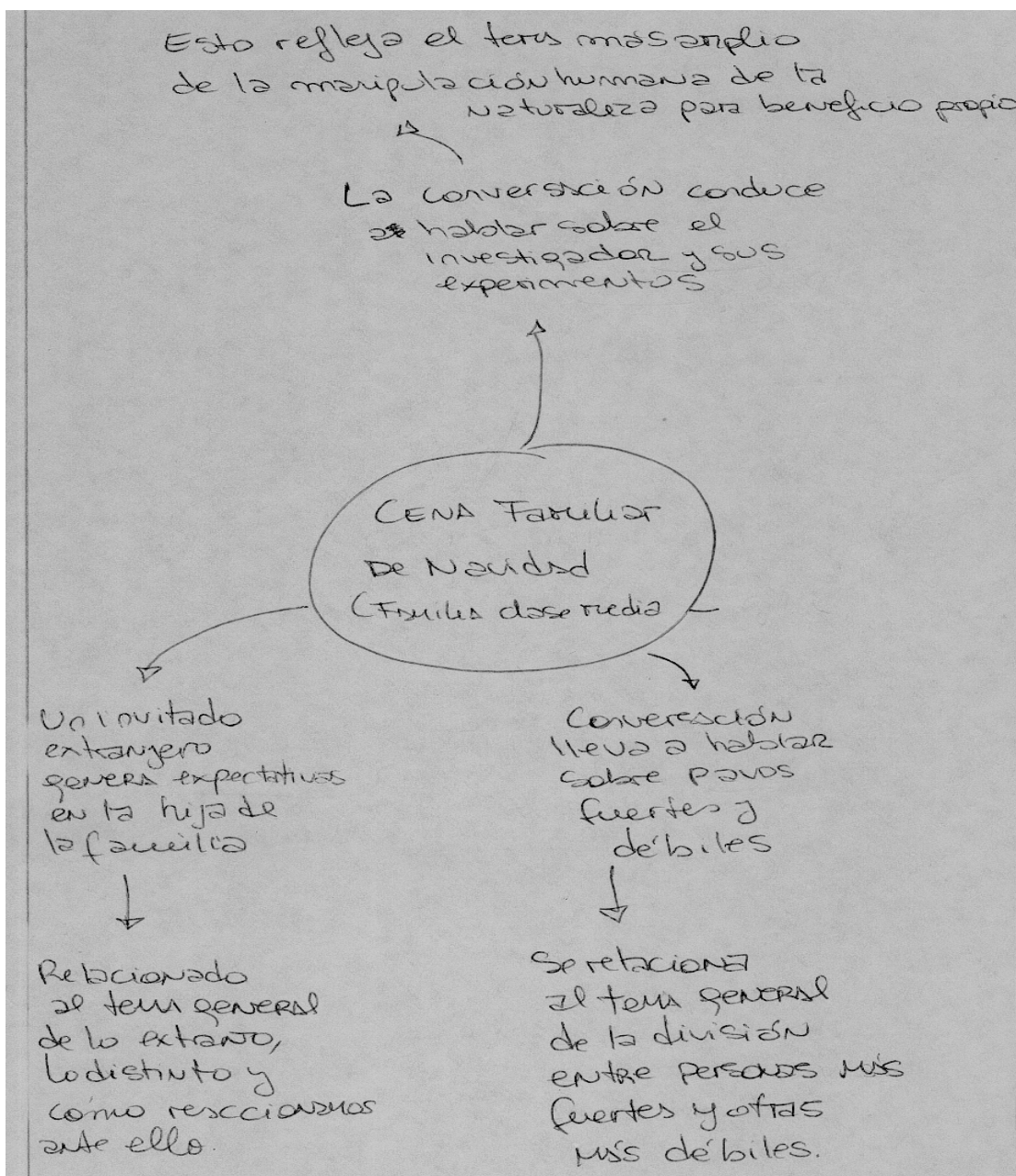
- 1, Situación. Planteo de la situación y las condiciones en que se va a desarrollar la cena de Navidad. Mención del joven indio a quien han invitado a celebrar con ellos, y explicación de las razones por las que se lo ha invitado. Visión de la cultura extranjera (india) como diferente y “extraña”. Descripción de la aprehensión del indio ante los rituales que no conoce (comida de Navidad). Referencia a diferencias lingüísticas (“...in his voice that sounds like the BBC News”). Posible complicidad ante el recelo al enfrentarse a lo desconocido (“Last year or the year before we might have tied our shoelaces together, under the table, so we could signal each other with secret jerks and tugs”).
2. Intento de comunicación, diálogos breves y tensos, basados en la cortesía del indio y en una intención explícita por parte de la cultura local de integrar al extranjero. Observación mutua.
3. Establecimiento de tópicos comunes (biología, relación del hombre con La naturaleza). Siempre es la cultura local la que dirige el diálogo. Visión del pavo no ya como comida

típica navideña sino como animal con características biológicas propias, proporciona mayor posibilidad de diálogo.

4. Serpientes venenosas, tópico conocido por el indio, aunque introducido por el hermano del narrador. Mayor posibilidad de interacción, mayor sensación de integración (“My mother smiles, because this is going better than she thought it would. Poisonous snakes are fine with her, even at the dinner table, as long as they make people happy”).

5. Reflexión del narrador sobre el pavo como criatura tonta y desmitificada, ya sin el encanto de haber servido de cena navideña; probable simbología con el ser humano, desnudo de viejos prejuicios y fascinaciones, visto ahora simplemente como criatura igual a tantas otras.

Yanina



Interviews

Beryl

Melina: Estoy con Beryl y el texto *Cat's Eye*. En el log de reflexión te pregunto qué significa "fábula anglosajona". ¿Es una ironía?

Beryl: No, no, es que me pareció precisamente que "Jolly Green Giant" creí que lo había explicado, ahora veo que no, y me pareció que refería a la fábula anglosajona, es decir, que podría ser alguna historia... como un cuento con moraleja. Por eso dije...

M.: Ah, una fábula anglosajona, entonces.

B.: Sí...

M.: "La fábula anglosajona"...

B.: No, no...

M.: ¿Hay una fábula anglosajona?

B.: No, me refería a la fábula anglosajona en el sentido de los cuentos con moraleja, ¿no?

M.: Ah...

B.: Los cuentos generalmente infantiles con moraleja.

M.: Ah, al género te estás refiriendo.

B.: Claro, exacto, creí que antes había explicado a qué me parecía que se refería pero veo que no.

M.: Está bien.

B.: Yo estaba convencida de que sí.

M.: Bueno. (Pausa) Esto es nuevo para vos, que se come pavo en Navidad.

B.: Sí, creí que sólo era en Acción de Gracias. Hay uno de los chicos que están en ese grupo en Argentina de Crusades for Christ...

M.: Ah, sí.

B.: Bueno, uno de ellos me comentó más o menos la diferencia entre... o sea, me dijo que había una diferencia entre Navidad y Acción de Gracias, yo no estaba muy familiarizada con el tema, y creí que el pavo era sólo para Acción de Gracias, que es una festividad aparte.

M.: Claro.

B.: No sabía que para Navidad también era una especie de tradición el pavo.

M.: O sea que eso te generó dificultades.

B.: Sí, sí, me sorprendió en sí cuando me di cuenta.

M.: En la respuesta textual (pausa) Vos ponés que describe mucho la cena típica de Acción de Gracias.

B.: Sí.

M.: Y yo te pongo: "Bueno, pero no es Navidad".

B.: Exactamente, precisamente porque me llamó la atención lo de que... lo de que se comiera pavo, me parecía que la acción, o sea, y además decía que había un "staffing" en el...

M.: O sea que...

B.: ...en el pavo...

M.: O sea que no te quedó claro que era de Navidad.

B.: Me quedó claro que era de Navidad, pero me parecía que reflejaba más que nada Acción de Gracias.

M.: Entiendo.

B.: No sé si Navidad.

M.: Entiendo.

B.: Porque yo los veía como celebridades aparte con diferentes rituales en todo caso.

M.: OK.... Acá hacés un comentario, yo te pongo "intertextual", con respecto a... o sea, vinculado con el texto anterior. ¿Eso te surgió naturalmente?

B.: Sí, yo te pregunté incluso si podía...

M.: Sí, me acuerdo de eso.

B.: Sí, sí, sí, porque me pareció...

M.: Pero te surgió...

B.: Y sí, cuando leí la segunda vez el texto me pareció que... que podía hacerse una comparación en ese sentido.

M.: Hm. ¿Por qué ponés "posiblemente de la India" si el texto dice que era de la India, que era hindú Banerji?

B.: ¿Dice? Bueno, se me debe haber pasado...

M.: Se te pasó.

B.: Se me pasó, sí.

M.: Es genuino, el "posiblemente" es genuino.

B.: Sí, sí, totalmente. Totalmente genuino.

M.: (Pausa) "El evento transcurre "con preguntas respecto a las tradiciones del extranjero". ¿Cuáles? ¿Cuáles tradiciones?, te pregunto yo, si Banerji no celebra la Navidad?

B.: Porque yo me acuerdo que en un momento... eh... la persona que relataba decía que su madre le hacía muchas preguntas con respecto a si ellos tenían Navidad o no tenían Navidad...

M.: Ah...

B.: ...si comían pavo o no comían pavo... eh... cosas así, ¿no?, entonces hay diferentes tipos de tradiciones.

M.: Ah, tradiciones generales, no navideñas.

B.: No, no, no, no me refería a las navideñas. Incluso que él dice que él no sabe.

M.: Entiendo.

B.: Algunas preguntas que le preguntan, dice que él no sabe.

M.: Está bien. (Pausa). "Hay un mensaje escondido entre líneas que el lector debe dilucidar". ¿Cuál es este mensaje? No aparece en tu respuesta.

B.: Me parece... No, no, porque eso es lo que todavía estoy intentando dilucidar.

M.: Ah.

B.: Me quedó dando vueltas el texto bastante. Me parece que cada uno puede interpretar cosas diferentes. Creo que como entre líneas se pueden ver diferentes... representaciones del texto en sí.

M.: Hm.

B.: Entonces, o sea... no sé, yo todavía estoy intentando... me... me resultó bastante complicado el texto en el sentido de que había... eh... mucha conjunción de diferentes temas.... como mezclados... Era como una ensalada de temas...

M.: Entiendo.

B.: Y es difícil poder separar y ver a qué es lo que quiere apuntar cada uno.

M.: Bueno. Entonces cuando te caiga...

B.: Cuando me caiga, sí...

M.: Cuando te caiga la ficha me mandás... me escribís.

B.: Totalmente, totalmente.

M.: Perfecto. En la reformulación visual... te pregunto... ponés textual del latín, el nombre del pavo.

B.: Precisamente por eso. Porque hay una ensalada de tantos temas, que uno de los temas...

M.: Para reflejar...

B.: Claro. Uno de los que más... o sea, se hace hincapié desde mi punto de vista, es el tema de la biología. Esta persona, este extranjero invitado, recién logra sentirse un poco más cómodo cuando... cuando el... el padre de este... del relator dice que... cuando le habla del... le dice el nombre del. del pavo en... en latín.

M.: Hm.

B.: Entonces es como que... da la sensación de que el se siente un poco más... menos incómodo con la situación.

M.: Entiendo. Entonces quisiste reflejar esa ensalada de temas.

B.: Claro, sí, sí, totalmente. Por eso hay muchos "blas".

M.: "Bla" (eso te iba a preguntar), refleja la variedad de temas de conversación.

B.: Sí. Es como cuando ves tiras cómicas por la televisión, que siempre se dice: "Bla, bla, bla"...

M.: Entiendo.

B.: ...y se juntan muchos "bla".

M.: Entiendo. ¿Y los signos de pregunta?

B.: Claro, porque me parece que... o sea, que hay temas, por ejemplo, como éste, ¿no?, que evidentemente son... muy naturales para la familia porque el padre de... esta persona que relata es biólogo. Pero de todas formas como que sigue siendo un poco fuera de la situación, ¿no?

M.: Eso es lo que querés representar con los signos.

B.: Claro, como que hay cosas que no se terminan de entender.

M.: Entiendo.

B.: En lo que se dice, no en lo textual.

M.: Hm.

B.: Me refiero a los diálogos que hay entre uno u otro personaje.

M.: Hm. Estas citas en inglés, ¿por algo en inglés?

B.: Sí, yo te había dicho que si le podía poner la cita, porque me parecía importante cuando él dice... cuando el relator dice que sabe, o sea que él más allá de todo se da cuenta que este hindú se siente miserable.

M.: OK.

B.: Y como traducirlo me parecía que perdía un poco el verdadero sentido, ¿no?

M.: (Pausa) Y otra cosa, ¿estas citas son representativas de estos supuestos que vos marcás?

B.: Son representativas de Mr. Banerji, que por eso yo lo había sacado desde ahí. Lo que sí acá por ejemplo hice la diferencia, porque... la persona que relata hace la diferencia entre que el pavo navideño... es... más o menos la historia transcurre entre que el pavo

navideño... es o salvaje o doméstico y hay historias que tienen que ver con uno o con el otro, pero él marca que también los humanos pueden ser salvajes o domésticos.

M.: Sí.

B.: Entonces me parece que es como una analogía entre lo que es un animal muerto que se come... y... eh... las personas que están alrededor de la mesa en esa festividad.

M.: OK. (Pausa) ¿Por qué duplicás este contraste? ¿Por algo lo duplicás?

B.: Sí, porque el narrador...

M.: Entre salvaje y doméstico.

B.: Sí, porque el narrador es como que... para mí no está especificado... o sea... de una forma es como que no se sabe si él es salvaje o... él o ella, si es salvaje o doméstico.

M.: OK.

B.: Entre la clasificación que hace...

M.: Sí, sí, se entiende. Bueno, sos consistente acá [in the questionnaire about the text] que ponés que el texto te resultó bastante difícil...

B.: Sí, sí.

M.: (Pausa) "Jolly Green Giant" te produce dificultad porque no sabés lo que es...

B.: Exacto.

M.: Simplemente por eso. (Pausa) y yo acá te pregunto, ¿cuál es el problema de estas anécdotas? O sea... mi pregunta es: si el discurso científico es accesible, y estas anécdotas reflejan... son una ejemplificación de discurso científico, ¿por qué las anécdotas te generan dificultad y el discurso científico no?

B.: Me generan dificultad en el sentido de que... eh... yo siempre que leo un texto intento imaginar... las representaciones descriptivas, ¿no?

M.: Hm.

B.: ...y por ahí me costó manejar lo del "turkey with two stick... two drumsticks, with four drumsticks". O sea... no lo puedo representar en mi cabeza...

M.: ...en tu mente...

B.: Cuál... claro, cuál sería la diferencia entre uno y el otro, y a qué hace esa diferencia.

M.: Entiendo.

B.: Me parece, no... no logro ver cuál es la diferencia entre... entre que tenga two drumsticks o four drumsticks.

M.: Entiendo.

B.: El discurso científico porque por ahí tiene cuestiones mucho más obvias, por ejemplo el nombre del pavo en latín... o por ahí la anécdota de... de que existen pavos que son salvajes, otros que no...

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) ¿Por qué algunas comidas son esenciales y otras auxiliares?

B.: Me parece que las que son más esenciales son las que... eh... se notan como más grandes... en el sentido de que me parece que... que haya green and red Jello salad no me parece que sea sustancial, totalmente sustancial, en comparación con que haya un enormous turkey.

M.: OK.

B.: Me parece que la... no sé si la cantidad o la variedad, pero el... el tamaño de la comida es lo que hacía la diferencia... si querés reflejado con el otro texto, de que sí tenían qué comer y que tenían bastante, ¿no?

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) Acá te pregunto si ponés que el "Jolly Green Giant" es auxiliar porque no sabés lo que es.

B.: Totalmente.

M.: OK.

B.: Como yo no sé lo que es no puedo... o sea, para mí lo que es auxiliar y no sé lo que es... es auxiliar precisamente porque no puedo determinar qué es.

M.: O sea... OK. Las dos referencias... este "Sunday school" y "Sunday school missionary paper", ¿a qué puede hacer referencia? ¿Sabés a qué puede hacer referencia o lo pusiste como auxiliar porque no lo...

B.: No, no, más o menos tengo una idea a lo que puede llegar a hacer referencia, ¿no?

M.: Pero globalmente, ¿a qué...

B.: Globalmente me parece que... es esta cuestión de que... generalmente los estadounidenses tienen... eh... los domingos es muy típica la práctica de la misa, y que los menores a veces tienen... eh... como una Sunday school, a la que van y practican como el Catecismo para nosotros.

M.: Ah, OK.

B.: Es como la clase de Catecismo, ¿no?

M.: Entiendo.

B.: Eh... pero no me pareció demasiado relevante porque me parece que el foco no estaba en sí, ¿no?, en ciertas cuestiones religiosas sino en el choque de culturas, no desde lo religioso.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa). Bueno, y acá te pregunto lo mismo, ¿por qué, si todos ejemplifican... las anécdotas de la naturaleza, por qué, si todas ejemplifican el discurso científico, algunas son más relevantes o esenciales para vos que las otras?

B.: Me parece que por ahí... yo ahora que lo revisé me parece... por ejemplo el... "story of turkeys that died during a thunderstorm", éste me parece esencial porque eso es lo que marca la diferencia, eso es lo que comienza el discurso de la diferencia entre que unos pavos son domésticos mientras que los otros son salvajes.

M.: Sí.

B.: Ése es el punto de partida, y esto me parece que son sólo contrastes que hacen parte de la historia. Son esenciales como... como... contraste con la historia de que el pavo es doméstico o es salvaje.

M.: Entiendo.

B.: Y como que pueden haber otros animales que tienen ciertas características similares, pero... o sea, el discurso sigue reflejando lo doméstico o lo salvaje.

M.: Sí. Mientras que éstos no, éstos reflejan otras cuestiones, los tomates y los...

B.: Sí, los tomates... o sea, no...

M.: El turkey con cuatro patas.

B.: No... no sé, no le encontré... me parece que es parte más de la descripción que... como... como junto a... como "green and red Jello salad".

M.: OK.

B.: Me parece que es más como... describir, estirar un poco más la descripción de lo que hay en la mesa.

M.: OK.

Enrique Alejandro

Melina: Estoy con Enrique Alejandro y el texto de *Cat's Eye*. Decime primero si reconociste el texto.

Enrique Alejandro: No.

M.: No lo habías leído nunca.

EA.: No, nunca.

M.: Bueno.

EA.: Esa pregunta no estaba ahí.

M.: No, no estaba ahí.

EA.: El Grinch era un personaje de Dr. Seuss, la historia de cómo el Grinch robó la Navidad, ¿no la conoce?

M.: No.

EA.: Es... me parecía que era bastante conocida. Era la única cosa que podría...

M.: Estás hablando de una película...

EA.: Era un cuento de Dr. Seuss que después se hizo una película, se hicieron miles de películas.

M.: Bueno, puede ser... o sea... el hecho es que me lo estás diciendo vos.

EA.: Sí. Era la única criatura... verde que podría reconocer pero... precisamente era lo opuesto a "jolly", a feliz.

M.: Entiendo.

EA.: Precisamente. Era la única cosa que... que me sonaba, pero como dije, no... dudaba que fuera...

M.: Bueno, pero fue un vínculo que se te vino a la mente.

EA.: Sí, pero dudo mucho que tenga nada que ver.

M.: Está bien. (Pausa) "Cultura popular", y "popular" por "conocida"?

EA.: Sí, como dije, era... para mí era un personaje completamente... de dominio público.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) En la respuesta textual...

EA.: La conexión entre BBC y los Estados Unidos, no es una... o un canal o una... sí, es un canal de noticias, por eso... pensé... que el lugar en que pasaba esto eran los Estados Unidos porque se estaba mencionando a la BBC.

M.: Sí, pero ¿a qué... Por eso, o sea, vos pensaste: "La BBC es de Estados Unidos".

EA.: Es.

M.: No es.

EA.: Ah, entonces era...

M.: Pero tu link era ése, ésa es la conexión...

EA.: Era... sí, sí.

M.: Que vos lo asociabas a Estados Unidos.

EA.: Entonces me equivoqué.

M.: No, está bien, no hay problema.

EA.: "...y la cual un tanto distorsionada por la inclusión de un extranjero". ¿"Distorsionada" para quién?... la fiesta... bueno, la Navidad familiar es una fiesta familiar usualmente, el tener una persona desconocida es... no... no de manera shockeante pero medio cambia un poco las cosas porque uno hace de anfitrión.

M.: Por eso, yo te pregunto si puede ser que en Estados Unidos ese hábito sea común.

EA.: Eh...

M.: ¿Vos sabés?

EA.: ¿Qué hábito?

M.: El de invitar a un extranjero.

EA.: Eh... no pero... no sé, lo... por alguna razón lo dudo.

M.: Te suena raro.

EA.: Sí.

M.: Entiendo.

EA.: Eh... Esta pregunta no se la entendí muy bien. "¿Hay o puede haber variaciones culturales en lo que es salvaje"...

M.: ...domesticado... Vos ponés... Esto viene porque vos ponés que lo de las comparaciones culturales es para explorar otras dicotomías: lo salvaje y lo domesticado, lo natural y lo artificial... Yo te pregunto como si eso fuera un... no sé cómo ponerlo... un absoluto...

EA.: No, por supuesto todos estos valores dependen de quien los esté viendo, ¿no? Para una persona en el contexto... en la cultura donde vive el narrador algo va a ser salvaje y algo va a ser domesticado, etc., pero esos valores cambian dependiendo de quien los... de quien los esté viendo.

M.: Está bien, pero las dicotomías son universales.

EA.: Entonces necesito un diccionario porque... Pensé que era una oposición entre dos opuestos.

M.: Está bien, o por ahí no me estoy explicando, pero vos decís que este concepto de oponer lo salvaje y lo domesticado es algo que trasciende a las culturas.

EA.: No, no, desde el punto de vista de...

M.: Las sutilezas estás diciendo vos que son culturales.

EA.: Exactamente, qué es lo salvaje y qué es lo domesticado depende de la... ¡Ah, ahora entiendo!

M.: Si para todas las culturas existe este opuesto de... estos dos opuestos.

EA.: Sí, sí, lo que es salvaje y lo que es domesticado. Bueno...

M.: O que exista tal oposición.

EA.: Para la mayoría de las culturas... occidentales sí, los dos conceptos son opuestos, por lo menos hasta donde sé. Quizás haya alguna cultura en la que todavía no exista una... en donde no exista una diferencia entre las dos pero... usualmente pensaría que sí.

M.: Perfecto.

EA.: Que las oposiciones son universales.

M.: OK. (Pausa) Y en la reformulación visual...

EA.: Eh... "¿Por qué le interesa ponderar opuestos al narrador?" Por qué no podría saberlo, quizás sea simplemente algo a lo que le presta atención, es algo psicológico que no... no conozco suficiente del personaje para decirlo.

M.: Está bien.

EA.: Eh... "Extrañamiento entre Banerji"...

M.: Perdón. Eso... mi pregunta viene porque vos en la respuesta textual ponés: "Describiría el relato como las ponderaciones de un niño sobre opuestos". Ah, está bien.

EA.: Por qué exactamente le interesa no podría decirlo.

M.: Sí. Está bien.

EA.: "Extrañamiento de quién y ante quién? ¿Qué pasa con la perspectiva de Banerji?"
Eh... no podría saberlo, lo único... todo se ve desde la perspectiva de la niña. Se muestra que el indonés está un poco... bueno, está un poco tímido, se siente un poco... no me sale la palabra...

M.: Inhibido...

EA.: Inhibido por... por todo el... la situación. Puse la flecha apuntando de él a la Navidad porque la familia no parece tan... intimidada por él, es él el que se siente inhibido.

M.: Hm. ¿Y la narradora tampoco?

EA.: Eh... la narradora lo... lo estudia, le parece fascinante pero...

M.: Claro.

EA.: ...no le teme...

M.: Está bien.

EA.: Acá puse esto, no se me ocurría otra cosa.

M.: Pero ¿qué significa eso?

EA.: Ah, es el... me olvidé la...

M.: ¿Que no aplica?

EA.: Sí.

M.: Ah, está bien, sí, sí...

EA.: Estoy tan acostumbrado a los documentos ingleses que ya me olvidé cómo se hace.

M.: No, yo entendí lo mismo pero por eso te preguntaba.

EA.: (Pausa) "¿Cuál es el problema con square tomatoes, turkeys"... Eh... Bueno, es algo ridículo esto de los tomates cuadrados, el pollo con las... el pavo con las cuatro patas... Lo puse, que era muy...

M.: ¿En qué sentido es ridículo? ¿Es ridículo pero existe o... es ridículo y es ficticio?

EA.: No, es ficticio, es... Lo puse como muy difícil de comprender desde un punto de vista realista. Es... es algo ridículo que puedo imaginar...

M.: que pueda existir.

EA.: Puedo imaginarlo pero no... no me parece que... que exista.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) Vos ponés: "Elaine as a strange creature" como esencial [in the comprehensibility grid].

EA.: Hm.

M.: ...yo te pongo: "Relacionar con la flecha de extrañamiento". A ver si ya lo contestaste...

EA.: Ella... ah... eso es... ah, ahora que me acuerdo, eso es otro detalle por lo que podría pensar que es esto, por qué le interesan los opuestos. Ella se reconoce a sí misma como algo extraño... con respecto a todo lo demás.

M.: Sí.

EA.: Así que... más o menos podré... quizás ésa sea la razón que le interesan tanto.

M.: Entiendo.

EA.: Eh... ¿Y en este caso?

M.: No... Entonces lo que yo supongo que te quise preguntar ahí, del Elaine como "strange creature", es por qué el extrañamiento... o sea, entiendo por qué el extrañamiento va del hombre hindú a la Navidad occidental, pero ¿por qué no vuelve la flecha?

EA.: Eh... bueno...

M.: Si ella también se siente una criatura extraña...

EA.: Pero se siente una criatura extraña ella misma, no... no lo considera a él una criatura... Bueno, lo considera interesante, pero... no es la misma emoción que trataba de explicar acá, es un sentimiento de inhibición, "¿qué estoy haciendo acá?"

M.: Entiendo.

EA.: Ella... ve todas esas cosas como si fuera algo científico, una... una comparación de opuestos.

M.: Está bien. Y ahí, con esas historias, con todas las anécdotas, te pregunto por qué discriminás. Podemos decir que desde los tomates hasta el final...

EA.: Éste me equivoqué, debería haber estado en esencial.

M.: Son todos esenciales.

EA.: Sí.

M.: Ah, está bien.

EA.: Porque... bueno, son...

M.: Bueno, entonces aún no entiendo, por qué son todas... por qué todas las anécdotas referidas a la manipulación de la naturaleza o de la biología son esenciales mientras que el concepto de discurso científico es auxiliar [in the comprehensibility grid]?

EA.: Eh... Éstos son los elementos que son comparados a... los naturales.

M.: Hm.

EA.: El pavo con las cuatro patas comparado al pavo normal. Como eso, como la comparación me parecía la parte más interesante me... quería que fuera esencial.

M.: La pusiste como esencial.

EA.: Sí. Discurso científico... no tanto, en realidad no sé a qué se refiere, ¿al hecho de que están hablando de ciencia?

M.: Sí.

EA.: No tanto, es simplemente lo que da la pauta para que se den estos ejemplos.

M.: Ah, entiendo.

EA.: El hecho de que hablen de ciencia no me parece tan... tan importante.

M.: Está bien. ¿Por qué son esenciales y los marcaste como problemáticos? Pero igual, los percibiste a pesar de que...

EA.: No, eso era la forma mía de explicar que era algo que... podía entender pero era raro.

M.: Raro. Entiendo. Perfecto.

Lula

Melina: Estoy con Lula, con el texto de la Navidad en los Estados Unidos. (Pausa) Vos ponés: "En ese país"... ¿India?

Lula.: Sí.

M.: "...la religión difiere muchísimo del cristianismo".

L.: Porque... ellos... creo que son budistas... tienen... o sea que el cristianismo.. sí, puede llegar a existir pero en un sector mucho más chico de la sociedad. En general ellos... tienen esa religión más... budista y... no sé bien yo exactamente qué religión es pero...

M.: ...pero sabés que es otra.

L.: ...pero sé que es otra, sí.

M.: Está bien. (Pausa) En la respuesta textual, te pregunto ¿para quién es atípico tener un invitado en la cena?

L.: Para ellos. Pero atípico el invitado, ¿no? El ingrediente atípico me refiero a que es un invitado de otra cultura. No que es un invitado a celebrar... un ingrediente atípico.

M.: Ah.

L.: Quizás no lo expresé bien.

M.: Es atípico que el invitado sea de otra cultura.

L.: Claro.

M.: Está bien.

L.: O él es atípico...

M.: Está bien, él es atípico...

L.: ...en esa cultura.

M.: Está bien. YO entendí que la costumbre de tener un invitado en la cena de la celebración navideña era atípica.

L.: No, no.

M.: No te parece. OK. (Pausa) "En India no comen carne". ¿Dice el texto eso?

L.: No, pero... es algo que... he escuchado que no comen carne allá, que... No sé si no comen peces, pero por lo menos sé que carne de los animales terrestres...

M.: No comen. (Pausa) Sí... "como ser humano". Te marco "como ser humano" porque ahí dice, una de las cosas que dice en la narradora es que Banerji no parece humano. ¿Es humano?

L.: Sí, por supuesto.

M.: Está bien.

L.: Por eso, yo lo que quería decir es que a pesar de todas las diferencias que se encuentran, diferencias físicas y de... de las creencias, de las culturas de cada uno, uno como ser humano siempre tiene la capacidad de comunicarse con otros.

M.: Está bien.

L.: Nunca la comunicación en este caso va a ser... completa, pero por lo menos pueden llegar a tener un entendimiento parcial.

M.: Y claramente para vos el texto va más allá, porque hacés algo más abarcativo respecto de Oriente y Occidente...

L.: Sí...

M.: O sea, no estamos solamente hablando de la cultura americana... (?)

L.: No, no, para mí había justamente... el intérprete de ese contraste entre... porque además... justo eligió un personaje de India y además, lo único que los une a ellos en toda la charla es la biología, siempre hablando de animales y de lo que sienten por los animales y... que es algo... que los animales son iguales en todos lados.

M.: Hm.

L.: Por ahí hay animales en algunos lugares que no son típicos de otros lugares, pero digo... Eh... es como... lo natural es... el ser humano, somos seres consentimientos y que... tenemos conciencia de que existen los animales... y coinciden en el trato... como es el trato de los humanos con los animales; en eso coinciden, más allá de las creencias y de las costumbres y el color de piel, coinciden en esas cosas.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) En la reformulación visual te pregunto por qué "choque" de ambas culturas, "choque" entrecomillado.

L.: Porque...

M.: ¿El contacto entre dos culturas produce un choque siempre?

L.: No, porque un choque en el sentido de que... hubo un choque en tanto ellos se sienten incómodos. Entonces... es como que no pueden llegar a entenderse del todo, y uno... ninguno de los dos va a llegar a saber si lo que está haciendo está bien para el otro o... es decir, qué es exactamente lo que tiene que hacer, como que hay una tensión, entonces un choque en ese sentido, de que... no es algo que ellos puedan... no desarrollarse sino... comportarse comúnmente. Tienen que tener en cuenta qué puede llegar a pensar el otro.

M.: Está bien. Bueno, y en base a lo que vos ponés te pregunto, una... no sé cómo decirlo, que dos culturas entren en contacto ¿va a producir un choque?

L.: (Pausa)

M.: Según tu opinión.

L.: No un choque en sentido negativo, pero siempre va a haber un choque en cuanto a la comunicación, porque nunca... cuando tenés una cultura tan diferente podés llegar a comunicarte de manera... es decir, entenderte de manera completa con la otra persona. Porque por ahí vos podés hacer entender algunas cosas, pero tu manera de ver el mundo es diferente, entonces nunca va a ser exactamente igual la forma de tratar las cosas. A eso me refiero.

M.: Y después también mencionás ahí abajo: "Más allá de las diferencias culturales e ideológicas"...

L.: Bueno, la ideología está dentro de la cultura pero...

M.: ¿Por qué, qué... No entiendo qué...

L.: Por... es por la... por el tema de la religión, que ellos tienen creencias diferentes y que... para este señor Banerji ni siquiera existía la Navidad, entonces es como que él está ahí en esa situación que le es totalmente ajena, porque ellos lo llevan a participar de esa cena porque decían: "Bueno, está solo", pero quizás a él ni siquiera le molestaba estar solo porque para él no tenía el significado que tiene para ellos.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) Y en el cuestionario [comprehensibility grid], te pregunto, ¿vos sabés que es el "Jolly Green Giant"?

L.: No.

M.: No.

L.: Pero...

M.: ¿Y pusiste auxiliar porque no sabés qué es?

L.: Sí, en parte por eso y porque además... en el texto dice que ella... se estaba riendo, o no sé, "como el jolly green giant". Entonces yo lo tomé como una alusión quizá a algún personaje común para ellos.

M.: Está bien.

L.: (Pausa) "...beaming like the Jolly Green Giant". Entonces... supuse que era algo... bueno, sí, en realidad es parte de su cultura, entonces en ese sentido sería esencial, pero... como...

M.: ¿De la cultura de quién?

L.: De la... la familia, que lo puse como auxiliar a eso y a los demás porque son aspectos de su cultura que contribuyen a... a entender que en este caso se está tomando como importante, o sea, queriendo hacer un contraste entre las culturas. Eh... pero sí, o sea, en ese caso, para entender, yo no sé exactamente a qué se refieren cada una de ellas.

M.: No entiendo lo que acabás de decir. ¿Que lo pusiste como auxiliar porque son importantes para hacer un contraste entre las culturas?

L.: Claro. Es decir, son ingredientes que... pero en ese caso sí serían esenciales. Son ingredientes que él utiliza para demostrar que está contrastando las culturas.

M.: ¿"Él", quién? ¿El escritor?

L.: El escritor.

M.: Entiendo. Está bien. Y acá te pasa, entonces, lo mismo con estos dos.

L.: Claro.

M.: Que no sabés exactamente, "Sunday School" y "Sunday school Missionary paper"...

L.: Pero imagino que son... cosas particulares de ellos porque no... nosotros no tenemos Sunday school y eso.

M.: No.

Luz

Melina: Estoy con Luz y el texto de *Cat's Eye*. Te pregunto, en el log de reflexión, vos ponés: "No comprendo totalmente el texto y no llego a encontrarle y apreciar esa enseñanza que se trata de comunicar". ¿Por qué vos decís que el texto tiene el propósito de dejar una enseñanza?

Luz: Pienso que al la madre contarles la anécdota a los chicos, es como que quiere dejar una enseñanza haciendo la comparación entre las aves... que yo no entendí muy bien si eran... si la palabra era "domésticas", no estaba muy segura, por el contexto me di cuenta de que podía llegar a ser "doméstica" contra la "salvaje". Y...

M.: ¿Quién cuenta esa anécdota?

L.: La madre.

M.: Sí.

L.: Se la cuenta a los chicos.

M.: Hm.

L.: Y... pero finalmente el nene... como que... dice: "Este ave no pudo volar", entonces... eh... como "qué tonta que fue el ave".

M.: Claro.

L.: Eh... entonces es como que hay una enseñanza, es decir... bueno, las aves salvajes... son inteligentes porque pueden... no sé si está bien.

M.: No, no, está bien.

L.: ...porque pueden escaparse o...

M.: Hm.

L.: ...o ser libres, y... bueno, las aves que están.. domesticadas es como que están... tienen su fin o... terminan en un plato, por decirlo así.

M.: Entiendo perfectamente. (Pausa) O sea que el texto sí tiene un propósito de enseñanza.

L.: Para mí sí.

M.: Entiendo.

L.: Sí.

M.: En la respuesta textual te pregunto por qué omitiste el aspecto religioso.

L.: Sí, recién cuando lo estaba volviendo a...

M.: Si no lo percibiste o si puede ser no relevante al texto... Simplemente te pregunto.

L.: Yo no puse... También en esta parte estaba como que lo había puesto yo como auxiliar.

M.: Hm.

L.: Es más, cuando ahora lo volví a leer de nuevo, no encontraba en qué parte, o sea... es como que lo pasé...

M.: ...de largo...

L.: ...de largo otra vez. Eh... y... después cuando, bueno, lo volví a buscar, detalladamente dónde estaba... eh... hace como una mención en la parte en que, bueno, de la vestimenta... de que el chico... eh...

M.: El hindú.

L.: ...el hindú no... no compartía las mismas vestimentas y esas cosas... y también es como que en una parte decía que... no importaba si... de qué raza era pero como que estaban todos unidos.

M.:Entiendo. En la reformulación visual, vos ponés al final, como sería... no sé, una especie de moraleja, ¿verdad?, o de...

L.: Claro, ésa es la enseñanza que para mí era...

M.: ...tiene el texto.

L.: Claro, Claro.

M.: Y ponés: "No hay esperanzas de progreso, de crecimiento, evolución".

L.: Sí.

M.: Yo te pregunto por qué.

L.: Y porque el ave, al estar...

M.: Por qué, que no entiendo, que me expliques la moraleja con tus palabras, no por qué, o sea... Si querés justificar podés justificar, pero...

L.: Eh... Yo lo que quise poner era justamente eso, que el ave al ser doméstica termina... siendo el alimento de la familia. Entonces lo que se ve reflejado por ahí en el chico es decir: "Bueno, si yo soy esa ave doméstica... voy a terminar con este... o sea, mi fin va a ser éste. En cambio si yo soy un ave salvaje, eh... voy a poder progresar... voy a poder ser libre" Y... bueno, eso le va a permitir evolucionar en su vida.

M.: Entiendo. En el subrayado del texto ponés que te imaginás, con respecto al "Jolly Green Giant", que debe ser "un hombre sabio y muy grande".

L.: Sí.

M.: "Muy grande" supongo que por "Giant".

L.: Sí.

M.: Pero "sabio" ¿por qué? ¿Por qué se te ocurrió "sabio"?

L.: Sabio porque era como que el padre en esa familia está... o sea, lo comparan con. el padre, esa comparación es justamente con el padre y... como que se sentaba en la cabecera de la mesa y... y como que todos lo escuchaban a él., y a su vez... hablaba sabio porque tenía un montón de conocimiento en la parte de la naturaleza, la biología... y bueno, me dio esa impresión.

M.: Está bien.

L.: Supongo que debe estar haciendo referencia a algún personaje de algún cuento o... pero no sabía bien, lo interpreté pero no... no lo conozco.

M.: Está muy bien. (Pausa) Bueno, en el cuestionario, ¿cuál es el problema? Algunas anécdotas... Estoy con las anécdotas de los tomates y de los pollos y todo eso. ¿Por qué algunas anécdotas las marcaste como "completamente accesibles", como la de los pavos que se mueren ahogados, y otras te producen más dificultad, como la de los gatos sin pelaje o las serpientes venenosas como forma de conversación?

L.: Creo que... como que era tanta mezcla que... por ahí me perdí, o sea... distintos tópicos estaban hablándose y... varios ejemplos y es como que por ahí por momentos me perdía, por eso creo... y no entendí a qué hacía referencia, todavía no entiendo a qué por ahí hace referencia con lo de los gatos...

M.: ...sin pelaje.

L.: Sin pelaje, claro, no sé a qué apuntaba, o si había detrás de eso una enseñanza, si no...

M.: Está bien.

L.: No lo pude captar.

M.: O sea que todas estas pequeñas anécdotas fueron... problemáticas en un punto.

L.: Sí. Quizás, justamente, bueno... es por el hecho de no compartir parte de su cultura, entonces al no tener ese conocimiento no pude interpretar... esas anécdotas.

M.: Yo te pongo acá, cuando medís la clasificación de las personas en tame y wild, que tu interpretación del texto es adecuada. Ahora, yo te pregunto por qué tu duda con respecto a si tu interpretación del texto es la adecuada.

L.: Yo no sabía el significado de tame.

M.: No importa, pero lo pudiste deducir correctamente.

L.: Lo pude deducir, sí, pero no sabía si estaba bien. Por eso es que dudaba.

M.: ¿Pero al punto de hacerte dudar sobre tu propia interpretación, que fue correcta? O, correcta no, que fue dentro de los parámetros textuales, digamos...

L.: Y sí, porque tranquilamente podía ser... eh... salvaje opuesto a otra palabra, no justamente doméstica... No sé, se me ocurrió... Digo, capaz que es "doméstica", capaz que no.

M.: Entiendo.

L.: Es más, lo busqué y digo: bueno, estaba bien pero... me podía esperar una respuesta de no... de que el significado no sea eso.

M.: Entiendo. Después te pregunto por qué, si marcaste "green and red Jello salad" como que no lo recordás [in the comprehensibility grid], ¿por qué lo ponés como esencial en la celebración?

L.: (Pausa) Porque... sí, es verdad. O sea...

M.: No, bueno, podés no saber. En realidad me podés decir "No sé".

L.: Sí. No, creo que por ahí... eh... lo puse que era esencial por el hecho de decir que... la comida en esa familia por ahí era esencial y como que hacían todos referencia al pavo y... y bueno, era otra parte... le daban mucha importancia a lo que era... es más, a raíz del pavo viene el cuento que se cuenta, ¿no?, la enseñanza del cuento. Entonces creo que...

M.: Hm. Y... ¿por qué algunas comidas son auxiliares y otras esenciales? ¿En qué te basaste para discriminar que unas fueran esenciales y otras auxiliares? Donde dice: el pavo, la salsa de arándanos, el vino, el jugo, el puré de papas... vos marcaste algunas comidas... no pusiste todas esenciales o todas auxiliares. Por ahí no te acordás lo que te pregunto. ¿Por qué? Hay un criterio ahí, vos usás algún criterio...

L.: Sí, yo creo que... bueno, justamente el pavo me parecía esencial a raíz de que a partir de eso se cuenta una historia. Después... que tomen jugo o que tomen vino... no creo que era tan relevante...

M.: Ah, entiendo.

L.: ...o que los tomates... no sé, capaz que había detrás de eso algo que yo no pude leer, o sea...

M.: Entiendo. No, no.

L.: Entre líneas por ahí había...

M.: Está bien.

L.: Eh, pero no lo capté, o sea... creo que por eso.

M.: Y acá te pregunto, donde dice... bueno, Banerji como criatura extraña, Elaine como criatura extraña, (?) y la incomodidad de Banerji, ¿por qué todo eso es esencial y no aparece en tus tareas? No hablás de eso vos en las otras dos tareas. ¿Por qué?

L.: Sí, creo que es esencial para hacer la diferencia de que la persona, de que el hindú era extraño, y que por momentos el nene se veía reflejado en él, y... y creo que el hecho de decir... que no tenía... eh... o sea, el conocimiento de esa cultura o que no sabía nada de lo que era la Navidad... hacía como que él fuese pobre en ese sentido... y me parece que es esencial. Sí, yo no lo puse ni en el dibujo ni en ningún momento pero... pero me parece que es importante, más que nada para la relación con el nene... y es como que el nene va a ir sacando sus propias conclusiones... viendo que... bueno, el chico este habla con el padre de ciertos temas que él no comparte, o sea, que no sabe...

M.: Entiendo.

L.: Me parece que es por eso importante.

M.: Bueno. ¿Y por qué, ahora también referido a la biología, por qué son todas las anécdotas relacionadas con el manejo de la naturaleza esenciales, si la palabra o el concepto de discurso científico las podría englobar? ¿Entendés lo que te pregunto?

L.: Sí.

M.: Vos podías marcar el discurso científico como esencial y todas las anécdotas ser una ejemplificación solamente. Vos le das a todas la misma importancia.

L.: Sí.

M.: ¿Por algo en particular o...

L.: Eh... no, en realidad me parece que eso... es lo mismo, no... algunas... yo había puesto como que algunas no,... no las había entendido...

M.: Hm.

L.: Entonces para mí que aunque yo no las haya entendido, creo que por ahí sí tienen un significado importante porque por algo... o sea, todo lo que se nombra en el texto... es por algo, y si están... más lo que es una anécdota, si la está nombrando creo que tiene una enseñanza detrás. Pero sí, tranquilamente se podían englobar en uno de los otros.

M.: Bueno, eso es todo.

Miranda Dana

Melina: Estoy con Miranda Dana con el texto de Banerji.

Miranda Dana: Esto ahí me quedó muy breve pero porque no... no tenía mucha dificultad quizás.

M.: No, está bien. (Pausa) ¿Cuál es la relación causal entre estar incómodos... Vos ponés: "Parece ser que hay una relación causal entre estar incómodos en la celebración y el hecho de que Banerji no conoce la Navidad".

MD.: Claro, porque con la cuestión de la elección de los temas que elige para conversar, me pareció, porque como él no conoce la Navidad los temas... no tienen nada que ver.

M.: ¿Y de qué se habla en Navidad?

MD.: No sé, qué sé yo... depende, si hay por ejemplo una familia muy religiosa quizás pueda hablar... de la relación con el nacimiento de Jesús o alguna cosa así... supongo de algo más religioso, o generalmente como son familias y amigos, de cuestiones que tienen en común, pero como él era de otra cultura... ni siquiera son conocidos porque él era un estudiante alumno del padre, como que no tienen demasiados temas en común, y la mujer se ve que le quiere... como que lo quiere hacer sentir cómodo y le pregunta si hay por ejemplo pavos en la India y el otro le responde que no, entonces como que terminan hablando por ejemplo de la biología y de otros temas que... que aunque no fuera en el contexto de la Navidad quizás en un... ambiente común de charla entre familia y amigos no se pondrían a hablar de esas cosas.

M.: Claro.

MD.: Como para llenar el...

M.: ...el hueco...

MD.: ...el hueco, hay que hablar de algo que tengan en común.

M.: (Pausa) Sí, es todo lo que ponés en el resto.

MD.: Claro, desde los temas, después quizá salen hablando de, por ejemplo, si hay serpientes, los nenes le preguntan si hay serpientes... y les empieza a contar los tipos que había... como que los temas son medio extraños.

M.: Extraños.

MD.: Claro, para un ambiente... para un festejo que supuestamente tiene que ser familiar... o un entorno más...

M.: ¿Dónde dice esto del bebé sin cabeza?

M.D.: Ah, acá al final, cuando... bueno, aparentemente es una nena, yo había...

M.: Es una nena.

MD.: Pensé que era un nene cuando lo leí, como no dice el nombre... Eh... cuando dice que... está comiendo el pavo al final y como que lo ve distinto, menciona "headless baby". Es una mención nada más.

M.: Ah, está bien. Entiendo.

MD.: Lo tomé como una... Ah, porque yo había puesto que era como un cambio, al principio era la cena, pero después de que tienen toda la charla y como que... ve la opinión del otro, como que cambia su percepción.

M.: Sí. Y al final ponés que "El tema principal es el reflejo de diferencias culturales en relación a los temas que se tratan en la cena", lo que acabás de explicarme.

MD.: Claro. Y también lo de... cambia la percepción con la... desde el punto de vista de todos. Lo que pasa es que esto lo puse en realidad porque...

M.: Te pregunto, ¿existen otras diferencias culturales?

MD.: ¿Acá en el texto?

M.: Digamos, vos hacés mucho hincapié en esto de que uno modifica su... su hablar o su... la elección de temas...

MD.: Claro, el comportamiento, digamos...

M.: Sí.

MD.: Sí... si hay alguna otra...

M.: No sé, eso es lo más relevante...

MD.: Sí, para mí de lo que se ve en el texto, eso es lo más relevante, porque como lo quieren hacer sentir cómodo, entonces tienen que tratar de involucrarlo con temas que

tengan en común, y como las culturas son tan distintas, y están justo por la época de Navidad que para el otro ni siquiera... no existe ese festejo para él.

M.: Claro.

MD.: Entonces... por eso me pareció que era lo más importante.

M.: Está bien. ¿Y qué me ibas...? Te interrumpí, ibas a decir algo.

MD.: Ah, no, que este... como este párrafo final es medio explicativo lo puse al final porque... me había dado cuenta de que me había colgado hablando de los temas de conversación y eso y no había puesto cuál era el tema principal, que era lo que decía la pregunta, por eso lo puse al final como para que quedara más claro pero... nada más.

M.: Bueno, y esto es... ¿qué? Uno en contacto con otros, ¿va a cambiar su forma de ver el mundo?

MD.: Claro, no necesariamente...

M.: ...pero es posible.

MD.: Pero es posible. En este caso... no es tampoco la forma de ver el mundo pero... con el pavo, por ejemplo, como que era algo que tomaban por hecho, digamos, era algo que tomaban como por sabido... (Pausa) Y el cuadrito...

M.: No, acá en el cuadrito lo único que tengo es esto, ¿qué es esto de Dios? "Juega a ser"... Porque ahí dice, el texto dice: "Fooling with nature", o "playing with nature", y vos ponés: "Jugar a ser Dios".

MD.: Claro, como una interpretación, viste que siempre se dice que cuando... con el tema de la modificación genética o eso de los bebés que hacen in vitro... todo eso... bah, me pareció, que se dice como que se juega a ser Dios porque crean una especie, digamos, que no existe o como que modifican la vida.

M.: Entiendo. Y con respecto al cuestionario... No sabés, no sabés lo que es... lo que está en 5 [option 5 in the comprehensibility grid] no sabés qué es.

MD.: Claro, no... no sé qué es el Jolly Green Giant y todo eso no sé qué es, por eso puse que era imposible de comprender, porque no...

M.: Está bien.

MD.: Quizás no sea tampoco tan relevante para...

M.: No, está bien, ¿pero por ese motivo ponés que es auxiliar el Jello salad?

MD.: Sí. Igual me pareció que era como un comentario al pasar, lo menciona dentro de los elementos de la mesa, la ensalada ésta entonces, por eso me pareció que...

M.: Ah, está bien.

MD.: ...que era auxiliar y no era tan... Me pareció que lo esencial en el texto era justamente el tema de la conversación y lo del pavo... y lo de las visiones que tiene cada uno. Por eso lo puse como auxiliar.

M.: Está bien. ¿Y por qué entonces ponés el Jolly Green Giant, que no sabés también muy bien qué es, como esencial?

MD.: Porque eso quizás... eso quizás tenga que ver con... a pesar de que no sé lo que es, me parece que quizás tenga que ver con una caracterización del padre, porque como dice que el padre... lo compara con el Jolly Green Giant, entonces quizás uno, conociendo el significado, quizás puede como agregar algo extra para entender las relaciones quizás del padre con el estudiante, o del padre con la familia... Por eso me pareció que quizás era más esencial en este... en el sentido de que quizás sea más relevante para aportar algo a la relación entre los personajes que lo de la ensalada. Eso me pareció.

M.: Está bien, perfecto. ¿Y por qué entonces "Sunday school" y "Sunday school missionary paper" son auxiliares?

MD.: Ah, cuando lo... cuando comenta... me pareció que era como un comentario también medio aparte, porque... el nene, bueno, la nena, cuando lo ve...

M.: Por más que no sepas, ¿con qué puede estar relacionado?

MD.: Me pareció que tenía que ver con una asociación que hizo la nena al ver a... al estudiante, al indio, con... se le vino a la mente la imagen de... de los distintos chicos porque ahí se (?) de todos colores, como que hay muchas razas y quizás muchas culturas en este tipo de acto o de... representación.

M.: Entiendo.

MD.: Me pareció que era como un recuerdo, como una asociación que hizo...

M.: ...de un actor o de una representación...

MD.: Claro, que no tenía que ver demasiado con... con el resto del texto.

M.: Entiendo. ¿Y por qué ponés acá que Elaine como criatura extraña es esencial [in the comprehensibility grid]?

MD.: Eh... porque acá me parece que es como que ella se... dice en realidad que tanto Elaine como el invitado, el... ¿cómo era?... Banerji, que los dos se ven como extraños, entonces quizás lo puse como esencial justamente por las relaciones entre los personajes de la cena.

M.: Sí. Listo.

Scarlet Rose

Melina: Te pregunto del texto de *Cat's Eye*, qué es el "Jolly Green Giant". ¿Sabés?

Scarlet Rose: Yo pensé que era un gigante de los cuentos, no sé qué es Jolly Green pero...

M.: No, está bien. O sea, un personaje de ficción.

SR.: Sí.

M.: ¿Y "Sunday school"?

SR.: ¿No tiene que ver con la misa? ¿Con la religión?

M.: Sí, es algo religioso, pero ¿sabés qué es? (Pausa) No exactamente...

SR.: No exactamente pero...

M.: OK. ¿Y el "Missionary paper"?

SR.: Paper no sé, pero el Missionary lo entendí en esa parte, cuando mezcla todas las culturas y habla de los colores de la piel o algo así.

M.: ¿Pero qué quiere decir "Missionary entonces"?

SR.: Eh... ¿cómo decimos acá, los misioneros? No...

M.: ¿Pero es algo religioso entonces, para vos, o qué?

SR.: Para mí es una mezcla de culturas.

M.: Mezcla de culturas.

SR.: Sí.

M.: Está bien.

SR.: Capaz que está mal pero...

M.: No, no, está perfecto. (Pausa) ¿Por qué decís en tu argumentación... en tu respuesta textual, que la situación de invitar a un extranjero es inusual? ¿Puede ser usual allá? ¿Pensaste si podía ser usual allá?

SR.: Eh... Me pareció que no iba con el estereotipo, no pensé si podía ser usual. Pero me pareció que...

M.: ¿Y cuál es el estereotipo?

SR.: Y, una cena en familia y todos norteamericanos.

M.: OK.

SR.: No se me ocurrió que podían invitar a un extranjero.

M.: Está bien. (Pausa) "El texto marca el contraste entre dos culturas", ¿y por qué enfrentamiento? El contraste produce enfrentamiento?

SR.: Ah, no... como un sinónimo lo puse, no como algo grave.

M.: Ah, OK. (Pausa) ¿De dónde se desprende que Estados Unidos es un mundo capitalista y el hindú es un mundo naturalista?

SR.: Es lo que deduje yo por la última parte de... del texto, cuando hablan de...

M.: ¿De qué?

SR.: Capaz que está todo mal pero...

M.: No, no, no estoy juzgando, estoy preguntando.

SR.: No, cuando hablan del experimento con el pavo, y el papá... hace todo un razonamiento para decir que te termina saliendo más, no que es más barato, y después, inmediatamente, seguido de eso, lo que dice el indio, bueno, él se enfoca en eso, "fooling with nature", no en el precio que te puede salir experimentar con un pavo.

M.: Entiendo. ¿Comprende esto que me acabás de decir vos el profesor, el padre de la familia?

SR.: Y... no, no creo.

M.: No, no creés. (Pausa) En la reformulación visual te pregunto quién dice lo que está en el primer [frame of her visual representation]...

SR.: El narrador.

M.: El narrador. ¿Y quién es el narrador?

SR.: Es un... para mí era un niño, pero después de leer el cuestionario, que decía "Elaine", pensé: "Capaz que es una nena".

M.: Bueno, pero puede ser un narrador... una niña, está muy bien. ¿Y qué representa la lupa? Esto es una lupa...

SR.: Sí.

M.: ¿Qué representa?

SR.: Que lo están examinando.

M.: ¿Todos?

SR.: Sí, más que nada el narrador.

M.: OK. Y acá, ¿quién es, quién dice esto: "Nos tiene miedo"?

SR.: Él mismo. Es la lupa para que te des cuenta de quién hablaba. Esto es una lupa.

M.: ¿Pero quién es el que sostiene la lupa?

SR.: El niño.

M.: El niño. Perdón, no te había entendido. Está bien. (Pausa) ¿Y esto?

SR.: Y esto... no es que lo van a comer la próxima Navidad, es para... para hacer énfasis en esto de... de que se siente excluido y miserable y... y que no puede entender... Bueno, lo del pavo que dijimos antes, bueno, un poco marcado en esto, y el sentimiento de aislado...

M.: Perfecto. (Pausa) ¿Por qué te parece que lo religioso es auxiliar?

SR.: Porque yo me concentré en otra cosa, en lo del capitalismo y la naturaleza, no en lo religioso.

M.: Está bien, pero pensás que es auxiliar a la comprensión del texto. Sí...

SR.: Sí.

M.: Y lo último que te pregunto es qué puede significar esto: "Elaine como criatura extraña"? ¿Con quién se siente representada la narradora?

SR.: Ella dice que está igual de... de isolated que el indio.

M.: Hm.

SR.: Pero...

M.: Pero no te parece tan relevante como...

SR.: No, yo me concentré en el... en el extranjero.

M.: Bueno.

Tacuara

Melina: Estoy con Tacuara y el texto de *Cat's Eye*. (Pausa). Bueno, mencionás muchas palabras... acá, en la respuesta textual, ponés que "el chico de la India aparece como respetuoso, educado, sumiso".

Tacuara: Hm.

M.: Y te pregunto por qué "sumiso".

T.: Sumiso porque me parecía... eh... como que... estaba bastante inhibido el chico ahí, ¿no?, entonces... en ese sentido... eh... tratando más de evitar el intervenir que el interactuar, como que por ahí el hecho de interactuar era más un peso que otra cosa. De hecho el narrador en un momento dice... eh... cuando hablan de ciencia, como que era de alguna manera... le sacaba un peso de encima porque era... no tenía que ver con cuestiones más culturales o sociales que era donde por ahí se podían dar conflictos para interactuar, en el sentido como... más quietito...

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa). Y después ponés: "La familia muestra una actitud más fuerte, un pensamiento más racional y utilitario". Y... Esto que vos ponés implica que Banerji ni es racional ni utilitario.

T.: Digo que al menos...

M.: ¿Qué se te cruzó por la mente?

T.: No, es por... más que nada por toda la descripción que él tiene... bueno, para empezar con toda la cuestión del narrador... oler la miseria en la otra persona... separar a la gente en fuertes y débiles... todas esas cosas, una cosa sumamente racional y... y después todo lo que es el pensamiento utilitario cuando hablan al final... eh.. lo que es la ciencia y... qué sé yo, subordinar el sabor de una comida por otra cosa... Cuando hablan así de... de los nuevos tomates, así sumamente transgénicos, eh... los pollos... toda esa cosa, que de hecho en un momento dice, es decir, el sabor... claro, el sabor no importa, se sacrifica.

M.: Pero qué... ¿cuál es la intención ahí, quién tiene esa conversación?

T.: Eh... el papá del narrador con el chico, con el alumno.

M.: Con el alumno. ¿Y qué... no están...? ¿Qué están haciendo en realidad?

T.: No, sí, en realidad yo...

M.: ¿Ellos adhieren a esta perspectiva?

T.: No, en realidad medio que la... la... ahora cuando la... bah, lo vi ahora de vuelta, eh... medio como que no adhieren en realidad,, como que critican un poco hacia la ciencia en ese sentido, pero... no, antes me había parecido que...

M.: Que era...

T.: Como que era más...

M.: Una concepción más utilitarista.

T.: Hm.

M.: Y... ¿vos recordás qué edad tiene el narrador? Es una niña en realidad.

T.: Ah. Eh... no, la edad...

M.: Te lo acabo de decir en realidad, cometí el error yo. Quería saber si te habías dado cuenta de que era un niño.

T.: ¿Un niño?

M.: Es una niña, pero quiero decir que un...

T.: Yo pensé que era un...

M.: No un adulto, eso quiero decir.

T.: Ah, no, sí, que no era un adulto sí, porque... dice lo de atarse los cordones con el hermanito...

M.: Ah, está bien.

T.: Eso sí.

M.: Y... Bueno, y entonces, ¿qué te llama la atención? O sea... ¿por eso ponés "racional"? ¿Porque lo dice un niño o porque te parece racional para el adulto también?

T.: Claro, la manera en... de razonar eso, o sea, de pensarlo así, más allá de que sea un niño o no. De hecho peor si es un niño, porque ya de chiquito tener eso en la mente, tener esa cosa... muy marcada...

M.: Entiendo. Digo, porque podría interpretarse como una capacidad de... de reacción más profunda, ¿o no?

T.: Eh...

M.: O sea, veo que lo percibís como algo negativo.

T.: Y a mí me parece muy fuerte, qué sé yo, me parece... sí, muy... muy tajante, muy... no sé...

M.: Entiendo.

T.: Dividir la gente así no... no me gusta...

M.: Entiendo, entiendo. Perfecto. Y... en la reformulación visual, dibujás las alas... y rotas... y te pregunto por qué la lluvia, ¿por qué llueve?

T.: Ah, eh... la lluvia es como una manera de simbolizar la tempestad, una... un... un algo así.

M.: Una tempestad.

T.: Sí, sí.

M.: Perfecto. (Pausa). Eh... "cómo se conecta con" ¿qué? No entiendo...

T.: El criterio de utilidad.

M.: (Pausa). Cuál es el criterio de utilidad ya me lo pusiste...

T.: Hm.

M.: O me explicaste qué es la utilidad en realidad.

T.: Sí.

M.: ¿Y el criterio de utilidad cuál vendría a ser?

T.: Pensar las cosas... eh... en términos de eso, de... de utilidad, o sea que ése sea el criterio para valorar algo. O sea, por ejemplo... Eh... No sé, cuando habla... cuando habla de los pollos, que los van a hacer pelados para que no pierdan... no tiempo pero... la energía en producir las plumas, para que puedan producir más. Una cosa completamente utilitaria y re... terrible, o sea, con ese criterio... terrible para mí. En ese sentido apuntaba a eso...

M.: Bueno, pero vuelvo al... al punto anterior, en un punto están criticando eso en la conversación.

T.: Sí, sí.

M.: Eso te pasó desapercibido.

T.: Claro, como que en el momento no me pareció tan... tan como que estaban distanciados de eso.

M.: Que estaban adhiriendo.

T.: Hm. Igual cuando él dice... (Pausa) por ejemplo, a mí... igual me llamó la atención cuando él.. el alumno le dice: "Fooling with nature, sir., y la narradora, el narrador, la narradora, dice: "I know already that this is the right response". Como si fuese algo muy...

M.: Hm.

T.: Qué sé yo, pareciera que al final fuese más una formalidad, o sea el... pretender que... era la respuesta correcta como... ya eso es demasiado...

M.: Entiendo. ¿Cómo se conecta esto con el quiebre?

T.: Y, porque...

M.: Pobreza, miseria, separar a la gente en... tame and wild...

T.: Porque me pareció toda una cosa... ¿no?, que lo analicé bastante negativamente y... también medio el final y eso de... como que los débiles no tienen lugar.

M.: Hm.

T.: Entonces... eh... me pareció eso una cosa re-trágica, o sea... todo, todo conectado, esa cosa de dividir a la gente así, después toda esa cosa muy fuerte del utilitarismo, y encima... claramente que... eso, que sólo los fuertes sobreviven, que los débiles no tienen lugar, son una cosa horrible, me pareció.

M.: Entiendo.

T.: Fue lo que... con la tempestad y las alas quebradas.

M.: Perfecto. Y del cuestionario te pregunto si sabés que es "Sunday school" y "Sunday school missionary paper".

T.: No, me pareció... bah, pensé que era alguna... algo así medio... lo asocié con la religión.

M.: Ah, está bien.

T.: Por "Sunday".

M.: Entiendo.

T.: Y "missionary" después.

M.: Entiendo. ¿Y por qué no recordás "Banerji como criatura extraña" ni "el aspecto físico".

T.: Eh... claro, porque cuando lo hice, como no tenía el texto para poder volver, por ahí no me acordaba en realidad.

M.: ¿Y por qué no lo tenías?

T.: Porque te acordás que esto te lo mandé por mail porque ese día yo no lo hice.

M.: Tenés razón. Entiendo.

T.: Entonces en el momento no me acordaba y no podía volver al texto.

M.: Entiendo.

T.: Pero sí, y lo de "extraño", claro, ahora me acordé que es cuando él dice que... como que se siente identificado en Banerji y que lo ve menor.

M.: Hm. (Pausa). ¿Por qué la religión es auxiliar?

T.: Sí, en realidad no tendría que ser auxiliar porque...

M.: No sé, te pregunto.

T.: No, sí... No, porque estoy pensando que en realidad no tendría que ser auxiliar porque... bah, es una cosa que... es fuerte, o sea, cuando está presente, marca algo. En realidad, puede ser, no tendría que ser auxiliar, aparte porque es característica de la familia.

M.: Y me llama la atención que... que digas que el aspecto... está bien, acabás de decir que no te acordabas que Banerji era retratado como una criatura, pero sí que... ¿quién es Elaine? Elaine es la narradora.

T.: Hm.

M.: Ella sí, como criatura extraña, eso te resulta esencial.

T.: Porque me llamó la atención como... eh... me acordaba, sí, que... eh... como la posición en la que estaba, como que veía todo y a la vez... esa cosa de sentirse ajena a todo eso.

M.: Entiendo. Y acá la pregunta que tengo es si el discurso científico, o sea, todas estas anécdotas de los tomates... de los pollos sin pelaje, etc., pueden o son ejemplificaciones del discurso científico, ¿verdad?

T.: Sí.

M.: Y bueno, ¿por qué todo es esencial? ¿Son las anécdotas esenciales?

T.: Claro, no, yo como... digo... una me parecía esencial porque era representativa, ahora al poner una y como el resto no, o sea... como que la calificué como eran... todas apuntaban a lo mismo, entonces...

M.: Está bien. No pudiste discriminar entre...

T.: Claro, no, dije... apuntan... representan todas lo mismo y...

M.: Entiendo. Y ahora que releíste el texto, ¿te acordás que es "lost flight" o qué puede ser?

T.: Eh... no...

M.: No me tenés que decir que sí, te pregunto...

T.: No, no, no sabría explicarlo.

M.: Bueno, perfecto, listo.

Tess

Melina: Bueno, ahora es el texto de *Cat's Eye*. (Pausa) Vos ponés que "Ocurre aparentemente en Inglaterra". ¿Por qué?

Tess: En el momento pensé por la mención de la BBC, y después me acordé que habíamos hecho un cuestionario y el conocimiento previo era sobre Estados Unidos.

M.: Bueno, pero no importa eso. Digamos, ¿por qué?...

T.: Yo por la BBC nomás, y porque... no sé por qué relaciono más que envíen a un indio con Inglaterra, no sé por qué.

M.: No, está bien.

T.: Por lo de la colonia, no sé.

M.: Puede ser. A lo que yo hago referencia es por qué, si vos estás dentro de la cultura inglesa hasta decir que la voz era como la BBC, que es algo de tu propia cultura, es decir... no sé, sería como decir acá que... que la población es blanca, digamos, ¿para qué lo vas a mencionar si somos todos blancos?

T.: No sé, me pareció que por ahí la familia no hablaba como la BBC, entonces le llamaba la atención.

M.: Ah, que él sí.

T.: Que él sí.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) Cuando ponés: "Las personalidades de los indios, de los "indios", ¿querés decir de la India o de los indígenas?

T.: De la India.

M.: De la India. "Como una humildad y recatamiento" "¿Por qué pensás que es posible generalizar?", te pongo yo. ¿Por qué son los hindúes, o por qué asociás a los hindúes con la humildad y el recatamiento?

T.: No sé, me pareció...

M.: Está bien, yo te pregunto...

T.: No sé, es que... como en el texto él se presenta más como indio que como persona individual, me parece que todo lo que se dijera de él se aplicaba... desde la mirada del texto para la familia se aplicaba a toda la población de la India, en general. Él estaba representando a su cultura.

M.: Hm. (Pausa) "El narrador también señala que hay similitudes entre ellos. Una de las características que nota es que ambos se sienten alienados y extranjeros de algún modo". Yo te pregunto por qué el narrador o la narradora está alienada. ¿Es posible concebir a un niño (porque es una niña en realidad) alienada? ¿Cómo es posible que un niño esté alienado?

T.: Esa parte creo que la saqué del texto, que ella...

M.: Sí, pero ¿cómo vos interpretás eso?

T.: No sé...

M.: ¿Es posible que un niño esté alienado para vos?

T.: Para mí algunas de las palabras que usaba parece que no eran la mentalidad de... de un nene.

M.: Que era algo más... ¿más qué?

T.: Más adulto, que racionalizaba las acciones de otra forma más crítica, como eso que dividía entre personas domesticadas y salvajes...

M.: Hm. ¿Y qué puede reflejar que un niño haga este tipo de... de comentarios? ¿Es revelador de alguna otra cosa? Digamos, no es menor que lo hace una niña, que esos pensamientos ocurren en la cabeza de una niña. Porque en realidad son pensamientos, no habla de eso. Ella no habla de eso en la mesa.

T.: (Pausa) Hm, no sé... Viéndolo en el texto por ahí es... como que las costumbres o los modos de actuar que van... van cambiando el modo de pensar, lo van modelando distinto a lo que era antes, porque la nena actuaría de otra manera si no estuviera con la familia o si no le impusieran ser de tal manera...

M.: Hm.

T.: Por ahí debe ser eso. Por ahí, siendo el adulto que está recordando lo que... lo que vivió cuando era nena y entonces pone su propio pensamiento.

M.: No te entendí.

T.: Claro, la adulta escribe como...

M.: ...como si fuera una niña.

T.: Claro.

M.: Ah, o sea que en realidad no estamos... ¿Ah, es un adulto que escribe recordando memorias de niño?

T.: Sí. Y pone... No sé.

M.: Está bien. (Pausa) En la reformulación visual dibujás una sogá, eso es muy interesante. "Está atado para no faltar a la cortesía".

T.: Por ahí cortesía me suena muy poco a lo que yo quería decir. Yo quería dar la sensación... o da la sensación el texto, que él está como quieto, como si estuviera momificado y que no se anima a decir ni hacer nada porque no sabe cómo van a reaccionar los otros.

M.: Hm.

T.: Por eso puse como que estaba atado.

M.: Está bien. ¿Por qué las historias son fantásticas?

T.: (Pausa) Me parece que... el tipo de historias que contaba el niño parecen más fábulas o... historias...

M.: ...inventadas.

T.: Claro, más de la tradición oral.

M.: ¿Cuáles, cuáles en particular, por ejemplo?

T.: Sobre todo la del pavo, dice cómo se morían ahogados los pavos. En cambio el profesor cuenta historias que parecen más sacadas de... de revistas científicas... como que hay un contraste.

M.: Y yendo a más detalles, la de los pavos que mueren ahogados, ¿y qué otra puede ser fantástica?

T.: (Pausa)

M.: ¿Alguna otra o solamente ésa pensaste?

T.: Después cuando hablaba de toda la variedad de serpientes que hay...

M.: Ah.

T.: ...y animales venenosos...

M.: Hm. (Pausa) "Palabras e ideas". Esto no lo entiendo, ¿qué significa o a qué te referís?

T.: Me parecía que por ahí ellos en el diálogo, en la conversación que tienen en la mesa eso es una vía de contacto para ellos.

M.: Una...

T.: Vía de contacto.

M.: Vía de contacto...Ah, que las palabras e ideas son el contacto, está bien. Y acá ponés, concluís con pregunta. Te pregunto por qué pregunta, por un lado, y qué significa "¿No son pájaros domesticados?" ¿Quiénes? "¿Con cuánta libertad se desenvuelven realmente?" ¿Quiénes?" ¿Qué posibilidades de contacto sincero hay?" ¿Quiénes son pájaros domesticados?

T.: Para mí tanto el niño como la familia, pero... serían como las preguntas que me quedaron después de leer el texto.

M.: Hm.

T.: Me parecía que cualquier persona se puede preguntar eso, a pesar de que el nene decía que ellos eran salvajes, no domesticados, por ahí en el sentido de que no... de que cuestionaban más las cosas o que tenían más inteligencia, parece que ellos siempre están limitados a lo que tenían que hacer, cómo actuar, qué decir, estaban un poco también...

M.: La familia y el hindú, todos...

T.: Sí, todos.

M.: O sea que a eso hace referencia "¿Con cuánta libertad se desenvuelven realmente?", que no habría una libertad genuina de manifestarse ahí en (?) Y "¿Qué posibilidad de contacto sincero hay?", no hay, estás cuestionando que haya la posibilidad de un contacto sincero.

T.: Para mí hay posibilidad pero está limitada.

M.: Hm.

T.: Por ahí justamente con ese diálogo como que ellos un poco se van desmitificando, cómo ven al otro.

M.: ¿Y está limitada por qué, porque son de culturas distintas o por otra cosa?

T.: En parte sí me parece porque son culturas diferentes, y también... por el temor a cómo va a reaccionar el otro, por ser corteses, por...

M.: Sí.

T.: Y en parte por su propia cultura, como el que ponía que la familia tenía sus propias costumbres, festejos, y le costaba desde esa visión ver al indio, porque no se ponen a plantearse... Por ejemplo, pensaban que ellos invitan a Navidad para que no esté solo. No se ponen a pensar que para el indio es un día común...

M.: Claro.

T.: No es que se va a sentir más ni menos solo, entonces están como que su propia cultura los limita en la relación.

M.: Claro, bien. (Pausa) Trajo dificultades lo de la ensalada....

T.: Sí, un poco. Igual me pareció que no era muy importante.

M.: No es muy importante, no. Y el "Jolly Green Giant" trajo dificultades pero ¿es importante?

T.: Tampoco me pareció porque decía: "Se reía como el gigante", entonces ya cuando imaginaba... uno podía imaginar igual la expresión aun sin conocer lo que era.

M.: (Pausa) ¿Lo religioso? No está muy presente en... en las tareas. Eso de "Sunday School" y "Missionary paper"... Lo ponés como accesible [in the comprehensibility grid], ¿sabés lo que es?

T.: Me parece que la escuela dominical, pero... más de los Simpson me parece que lo saqué.

M.: Lo sacaste de los Simpson.

T.: Sí, ahí van a la escuela.

M.: (Pausa) Elaine como criatura extraña... O sea, ¿por qué "Banerji como criatura extraña" es accesible o comprensible, y por qué "Elaine como criatura extraña" no lo es?

T.: Porque como no... no dice por qué ella se veía extraña o por qué se siente aislada, no dice...

M.: No menciona las motivaciones entonces. Y acá te pregunto por qué si podemos decir que la referencia a la biología o el discurso científico, o sea, todas estas historias del

tomate, los pollos sin pelaje y qué sé yo, son ejemplos del discurso científico de la referencia a la biología, ¿verdad? ¿Y por qué las anécdotas en sí mismas te produjeron más dificultad que el tema en general?

T.: No sé... por ahí el... me parecía que las anécdotas siempre hacían alusión a algo extraño, a una característica extraña, no sé... los pollos y los tomates... Yo cuando lo veía no sabía si estaba entendiendo bien primero, porque era algo que no... que no me esperaba. Entonces cuando yo leía de los pollos, digo: "Pero ¿estoy entendiendo bien? ¿Está hablando de lo que me imagino o no?"

M.: Está bien. O sea, ¿es algo real? ¿Puede ocurrir eso en la vida real? Lo de los tomates, lo de los pollos...

T.: Sí, puede ocurrir pero no... O sea, podría llegar a ocurrir pero...

M.: ...pero no es real.

T.: ...parecería raro.

M.: Entiendo. ¿Por qué una comida es esencial, como el turkey, y otras, todas las otras, son auxiliares?

T.: No sé... El pavo como que no llegué a descifrar bien todas las connotaciones que tenía en la historia pero como se mencionaba mucho...

M.: ...tiene que ser importante.

T.: No sé, me parecía...

M.: Hm.

T.: También hablaba de los... comparaba con las personas domésticas y salvajes...

M.: ¿Y por qué lo religioso es auxiliar? No sé si me contestaste antes.

T.: (Pausa) Me pareció porque... digamos, no hacían comparaciones con el hindú...

M.: Ah, porque no estaba atado relacionado a la cultura. Muy bien. (Pausa) Acá marcás que todas, todas las historias relacionadas con la naturaleza, los tomates, los pollos, los gatos, qué sé yo, son todas esenciales, y a su vez ponés que el discurso científico de la biología es algo auxiliar. ¿No hay una contradicción? ¿No son ejemplos, todos éstos, de la referencia a la biología, del discurso científico?

T.: Sí, lo que pasa es que... no lo relacioné tanto con el texto científico a la biología y los ejemplos sino con mostrar lo raro, lo distinto... Por ese lado.

M.: Ah.

T.: Hago la asociación con el hindú, no tanto con el discurso científico o con la biología.

M.: ¿Y por qué está asociado con el hindú?

T.: Por eso de encontrar algo raro que a ellos les parecía extraño.

M.: ¿A quiénes?

T.: A la familia

M.: Ah, en estas cosas, en los gatos, ¿en eso?

T.: Sí.

M.: Y no entiendo la relación con el hindú.

T.: Claro, que para ellos el hindú les parecía raro, o algo extraño.

M.: Ah, como los tomates, como los pollos. Entiendo.

T.: El discurso científico por ahí me parece que está más relacionado con la religión, pero eso... como que esa parte no la analicé pero... pensé que estaba relacionado con... si el hombre puede jugar a ser Dios, qué límites tiene, pero no exploré mucho ese lado, por eso.

M.: No, está bien. Bueno, gracias.

Victoria

Melina: Estoy con Victoria. En el log de reflexión ponés que no sabés si el Jolly Green Giant es un elemento cultural. Sí sabés que es un elemento cultural.

Victoria: O sea, sé que es un... lo que no sé si es un elemento cultural... de qué cultura.

M.: De cuál de las dos. Por eso. El texto no te permite darte cuenta de qué cultura es.

V.: Exacto, al menos lo que me falta es ya sea contexto de... digamos, dentro de la obra, o me faltaría, digamos, el contexto situacional o el cotexto que implique una referencia más específica o más clara a qué alude.

M.: Entiendo. En la respuesta textual... (Pausa) Es interesante ver que decís: "cultura local hace referencia al punto de vista local".

V.: Sí, local desde el... desde el punto de vista del narrador, digamos, no desde el del indio.

M.: Sí, está bien. Desde el punto de vista del narrador.

V.: Por eso aclaré qué es lo que entiendo por "local".

M.: Está bien. "El contacto con esta otra cultura del hindú, genera por un lado compasión"...

V.: Hm.

M.: Eh... no entiendo bien por qué compasión.

V.: Compasión en el sentido de que... es una persona que está... digamos... A ver, no, perdón. Cuando dice "por un lado" se refiere al primer lado, que es el lado del local.

M.: Hm.

V.: O sea, porque primero creo que... o sea, estoy usando paralelismo sintáctico: "Por un lado", lo empecé por el lado de la cultura local, "por otro...", ¿sí? Vuelvo a plantear por un lado la compasión y planteo el punto de vista local, un extranjero que está solo, que ni siquiera tienen Navidad en su país, y que lo... lo... digamos le dan hospitalidad por... justamente por este tema de que va a pasar una fiesta que para ellos, para la cultura local, es importante, y la va a pasar solo.

M.: Sí.

V.: En ese sentido.

M.: Dos veces usás este paralelismo vos: "Por un lado lo que podríamos llamar el punto de vista local, y por otro la perspectiva del extranjero". Y luego ponés: "Por un lado la compasión"...

V.: Para que se interprete a qué lado se refiere.

M.: Está bien, exacto. Entonces desde el lado de la cultura local hay compasión y fascinación ante lo desconocido, y del lado del extranjero, el temor.

V.: Exactamente.

M.: Entiendo. "Sin embargo las dos perspectivas tienen algo en común". Y ahí ponés una cita.

V.: Sí, exacto. Ahí... en realidad es un... una cita, digamos, que... creo que hay dos...

M.: Dos, dos citas, sí. "I know he's miserable, underneath his smiles"...

V.: Claro, en el sentido de... Exacto. A pesar de pertenecer a la cultura local, digamos, puede comprender, el narrador, ciertos sentimientos que van más allá de cualquier cultura y trascienden cualquier marco local o extranjero, puede comprender quizás... Yo puse ahí... creo que algo como que los jóvenes pueden darse cuenta... o algo así...

M.: Sí, "Los jóvenes pueden advertir esto".

V.: Porque intuyo... sospecho, digamos, que el hindú es joven, es un hombre joven.

M.: Sí.

V.: Y el...

M.: ...el narrador también.

V.: ...el narrador supuestamente también porque está con su padre, su madre, su hermano... o sea, vive en un ámbito de familia, de lo cual sospecho que se trataba de un hombre joven.

M.: Sí. O sea, lo que tienen en común es esta perspectiva de... de poder...

V.: Y por otro lado, los dos son... en la cita siguiente...

M.: Sí.

V.: Los dos son extranjeros para el otro, es decir, esa cosa de ser aliens.

M.: Sí. Los dos son.

V.: Los dos son para el otro, extranjeros.

M.: Entiendo. "Sin embargo hay un esfuerzo de integración de ambas partes".

V.: Es decir, el extranjero quiere...

M.: ¿Quiere el extranjero insertarse, te parece a vos? Vos ponés ahí que quiere insertarse.

V.: Por lo pronto está manejándose con una... cortesía que al menos demuestra un sometimiento a las normas.

M.: Hm.

V.: Es decir, de hecho él está aceptando una invitación a festejar una fiesta que no es ni siquiera culturalmente conocida, o sea, una fiesta que le es ajena.

M.: Entiendo.

V.: Quizás por curiosidad, quizás porque el que lo invita es un profesor... pero él de hecho está, digamos, dando, haciendo un movimiento, digamos, si pensamos en un tablero de ajedrez, moviendo una pieza que implica una aceptación de ciertas reglas.

M.: Entiendo.

V.: Y del otro lado sí, evidentemente hay una intención explícita de... de integrarlo.

M.: Sí. (Pausa) "Hay otro factor que tienen en común", y ponés esto de "fooling with nature".

V.: Esa cuestión de que los dos están de acuerdo en.. bueno, en que el hombre con la naturaleza debería ser cuidadoso...

M.: Hm.

V.: Por eso incluso lo tomé un poco más abajo de un punto de vista simbólico.

M.: Está bien.

V.: Es decir, esa cosa del... el hombre, digamos, con el extranjero... Pienso en la fascinación que tienen incluso ante la mirada, digamos... al mirar al extranjero, digo, ¿hasta qué punto lo miran como un ser humano y no como a un objeto de disección biológica en algún sentido.

M.: Sí. Bueno, y ahora estoy con la otra... "Visión de la cultura extranjera como diferente y extraña", acá entrecorillás "extraña", ¿y por qué no "diferente"?, te pregunto.

V.: Eh... "extraña" quizás porque... o sea, diferente me parece un término... eh... casi más neutral, de alguna manera.

M.: Sí, entiendo.

V.: "Extraña" tiene una connotación en este caso quizás un poco más peyorativa, en cuanto a que es extraña y es inconcebible.

M.: Sí.

V.: Hay una parte (incluso después lo marco), donde se dice "Ni siquiera tienen Navidad en su pueblo", es decir, "¿cómo no van a tener Navidad!", es inaceptable.

M.: Sí. ¿Por qué es una diferencia lingüística la voz de la BBC?

V.: Pienso en el... RP English, o sea, estoy pensando en esa cosa que ellos detectan como diferente, porque no es su lenguaje habitual y lógicamente le da un tinte de extranjero al extranjero, es decir, aunque yo no sepa, aunque... yo no lo estoy mirando al extranjero, sin embargo sé que es extranjero por su manera de hablar en una localidad donde no se habla así.

M.: Posible complicidad ante el recelo a enfrentarse a lo desconocido.

V.: Sí, la cita...

M.: "Last year or the year before we might have tied our shoelaces together, under the table, so we could signal each other with secret jerks and tugs".

V.: El padre y el... O sea, hay una cuestión de... o un intento o un posible intento o una posibilidad de una... digamos de establecer, o quizás de poder haber establecido en algún momento del tiempo, una complicidad que... "Y mirá lo que hizo", o "Mirá lo que dijo", o "Mirá cómo lo dijo".

M.: ¿Quién?

V.: El padre... supuestamente... creo que está hablando del padre y él porque hablan de... justamente... de que el padre dice una cosa, él dice otra... es decir, se habla sobre... por supuesto que la complicidad se establecería entre el protagonista y uno de su familia.

M.: ¿Quién es el protagonista?

V.: El... bueno, el hijo del que invita...

M.: O sea el narrador.

V.: El narrador, exacto.

M.: Está bien.

V.: Me refiero... el protagonista no, el narrador del texto.

M.: Entonces la complicidad...

V.: ...sería entre el narrador del texto y algún miembro, que creo que es el padre... algún miembro de su familia.

M.: Está bien. Y entonces... yo sigo sin entender qué es esto de lo desconocido. ¿Qué tiene que ver esto de... de... atarse los cordones es... un reflejo o de, o simboliza...

V.: O sea, ahí lo que plantea... lo que está planteando ahí es lo siguiente: por un lado... digamos, esa cosa de "secret"... no me acuerdo cómo decía ahí...

M.: "Secret" (Pausa) "secret jerks and tugs".

V.: O sea, si yo lo estoy entendiendo correctamente, habla de... como unir cordones de zapatos para permitir un cierto contacto... no visto por los demás.

M.: Está bien.

V.: Entonces en ese sentido, como que: "Mirá lo que hizo", "Mirá lo que dijo" a través de un código secreto que ellos entenderían y el extranjero no vería.

M.: Está bien.

V.: En ese sentido me refiero.

M.: "Siempre la cultura local dirige el diálogo".

V.: La que introduce el tópico común va a ser la cultura local, aun en el caso de las serpientes venenosas, que es un tópico más común para el extranjero, pero aun iniciado por un miembro de la cultura local.

M.: Sí. "Mayor posibilidad de integración", por la conversación, decís vos...
V.: Exacto.
M.: (Pausa) "Probable simbología con el ser humano, desnudo de viejos prejuicios y fascinaciones". Explicame eso que es muy interesante.
V.: Después de la... de la cena de Navidad...
M.: Dice: "...visto ahora simplemente como una criatura igual a tantas otras".
V.: El pavo se deja de ver como una comida navideña.
M.: Hm.
V.: Hay un momento en que el pavo queda desnudo de cualquier tipo de relleno y de cualquier tipo de cobertura.
M.: Sí.
V.: En el caso del extranjero, yo creo que después de conocerlo, después de mirarlo de otra manera, después de quizás observarse mutuamente, después de toda esta interacción que se produce... "Uy, es un ser humano igual que yo"...
M.: Claro.
V.: O sea... como que se deja de ver al... y en todo caso si el pavo es una criatura tonta y el extranjero es una criatura diferente, quizás más tonta que yo, o más grosera o más lo que sea, da la casualidad que yo también soy igual que él.
M.: Entiendo.
V.: Como ser humano, digo.
M.: Perfecto.

Yanina

Melina: Estoy con Yanina y el texto de Cat's eye. "Expresión idiomática", es decir que tiene otro significado, no se refiere a "volar" con un ala.
Yanina: Yo pienso que sí, pero no lo entiendo.
M.: Está bien.(Pausa) "Creo que sí entiende la broma". ¿Qué broma?
Y.: Yo pienso que esa expresión es como un chiste o una broma, porque el otro también se ríe... pero no entiendo cuál es el chiste...
M.: ...muy bien qué es lo que pasa. Está bien.
Y.: A veces uno se da cuenta que algo es un chiste pero no entiende cuál es la gracia.
M.: (Pausa) Acá lo que te pregunto. Es que ella se siente "alien and apprehensive". Y... en el último cuestionario [comprehensibility grid] vos marcás que eso, "Elaine como criatura extraña"...
Y.: Sí, al principio no me daba cuenta quién era Elaine porque no dice en el texto.
M.: Ah...
Y.: Después me di cuenta.
M.: Lo marcás como algo secundario, auxiliar, "Elaine as a strange creature". ¿Eso es porque no comprendés completamente la motivación?
Y.: Claro, no entiendo qué... por qué. En una de las partes también puse que no llego a entender por qué ella dice que es... alien o strange.
M.: Está bien. (Pausa) En la respuesta textual, "sólo les interesa pasar un buen momento", ponés vos. Y yo te pregunto: ¿Y entonces por qué invitan a un foráneo, a un extranjero a compartir un momento íntimo?

Y.: Porque... uno puede pasar un buen momento con otro... o un invitado, o sea... lo que quise poner es que no están preocupados por otras cosas, como otras familias en Navidad.

M.: ¿Como qué?

Y.: Como en el otro cuento que estaban preocupados porque no tenían para comer, no tenían regalo y...

M.: Ah.

Y.: Y en éste... o sea... es... lo que realmente se supone que es, es un festejar.

M.: Festejar, entiendo.

Y.: Y... invitan a alguien y también festejan con ese alguien.

M.: Bueno, ¿y pasan un buen momento?

Y.: Sí, yo pienso que sí.

M.: Que sí. (Pausa) A pesar de...

Y.: Por momentos es medio... awkward, porque... son muy diferentes entre ellos, o sea entre la persona de la India y las personas de la familia, pero creo que igual pasan un buen momento.

M.: OK. Alguien que invita a un extranjero es alguien educado? ¿Qué tiene que ver esto con invitar... Vos decís que el hecho de que hayan invitado al extranjero muestra que es una familia educada.

Y.: No, yo no... YO dije... Esto no se refiere a que hayan invitado a un extranjero.

M.: "Estos detalles", ponés vos.

Y.: Claro.

M.: Bueno, cuáles son "estos detalles"?

Y.: Como por ejemplo. que... que él es un profesor de biología, que... o sea, tienen... en esa cena de Navidad no se tienen que preocupar por otras cosas...

M.: Eso era lo que pusiste de los regalos y la comida.

Y.: Claro.

M.: Ah, está bien.

Y.: Esto de que es una familia pequeña y que se asocian con la clase media y no a las familias de veinte chicos, esas cosas.

M.: Está bien, entiendo. (Pausa) "Cualquier actitud que parezca discriminatoria o algo similar no se ve tan así". ¿Cuáles son las actitudes que pueden parecer discriminatorias en el texto?

Y.: Cuando ella dice que... se viste como un hombre pero en realidad no parece un hombre, porque lo ve como algo, como una cosa que es extraña a ella.

M.: Entiendo.

Y.: Y después dice que es un alien y todo eso, pero... quizás no... no es lo mismo si lo dice un chico que si lo dice un grande.

M.: O sea que por eso no es discriminatorio, pensás.

Y.: Que puede parecer... se puede pensar que no es.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa)

Y.: O se lo puede excusar, digamos.

M.: Sí, entiendo. (Pausa) "Su padre habla sobre el afán del ser humano de dominar a los más débiles, como los animales". O sea que vos pensás que eso... las anécdotas con la manipulación de la naturaleza tienen una implicancia que trasciende o que llega a las personas.

Y.: Sí. Y... o sea, a todo, y ahí ella misma dice en un momento que... o sea, investigar la naturaleza, todo, está bien, pero hay un límite, y yo creo que a veces se pasa ese límite, con los animales y también con las personas.

M.: Con las personas. ¿Este es el propósito del texto? ¿El escritor del texto pensás que quiso comenzar con una historia navideña tradicional y común o siempre tuvo la intención de... de manifestar eso que ponés acá, de transformar el texto en algo sobre diferencias culturales y la avaricia del hombre?

Y.: ¿Cómo, cuando él empezó a escribir?

M.: Es lo que yo entiendo que vos ponés acá: "Es interesante observar cómo la historia comienza como una historia de Navidad y luego se transforma en una historia que trata de las diferencias culturales y la avaricia". ¿Esto es a propósito de parte del escritor?

Y.: Yo pienso que todo lo que hace un escritor es a propósito. O sea, no creo que sea una casualidad que se puso a escribir y lo publicó, o sea... Pienso que... lo debe haber querido hacer así.

M.: O sea, comenzar con algo tradicional para luego contrastarlo con esta perspectiva que ponés acá, ¿eso es lo que quisiste poner?

Y.: Sí... puede ser, no sé muy bien qué...

M.: No podés explicar demasiado.

Y.: No.

M.: ¿Pero estaría bien si yo digo eso?

Y.: Que él comienza... como puse ahí, que él comienza...

M.: Claro.

Y.: La historia, o sea, al principio es como que se centra en la cena de Navidad pero después va para otro lado.

M.: Entiendo.

Y.: Quizás se sigue hablando de la cena de Navidad, pero los temas ya son distintos...

M.: Entiendo. "Un invitado extranjero genera expectativas en la hija de la familia". ¿Qué expectativas?

Y.: Eh... expectativas en el sentido... de que ella lo ve como algo extraño y lo quiere como investigar y analizar y lo mira todo el tiempo a ver cómo es, y cómo se comporta, cómo se siente, si está incómodo, si no está incómodo...

M.: Entiendo. En relación a Banerji entonces.

Y.: Sí.

M.:(Pausa) ¿Tenés idea qué es el "Jolly Green Giant"?

Y.: No.

M.: Y ponés estas cosas... ¿Qué de acá que pusiste auxiliar [in the comprehensibility grid], pusiste auxiliar porque no sabés exactamente a qué se refiere? El Jolly Green Giant... y "Sunday school"...

Y.: "Sunday school"... no, no sé bien a qué se refiere.

M.: Está bien. Entonces mi pregunta es, ¿pusiste auxiliar porque no sabés a qué se refiere?

Y.: Sí.

M.: ¿Y es lo mismo con éstos? "Missionary paper".

Y.: Sé que es un... un diario y Missionary es como los que hacen misiones, de la parte religiosa, entonces yo asocié la school, la Sunday school, con la... como con una escuela... más como religiosa, de la iglesia, pero no estoy segura.

M.: ¿De qué iglesia, católica?

Y: Y... sí.

M.: Sí. OK.

Y.: Y lo demás lo puse auxiliar, pero no porque no lo entienda.

M.: Bien.

Desert Wife

Immediate reflection logs

Beryl

No conozco nada sobre los rituales/cultura de los Navajo y eso es un poco problemático para entender por qué hacen lo que hacen, según la descripción del texto.

No termino de comprender la diferencia entre los navajos y los Utcitys, pero sé que puede deducirse algo aunque no sea lo correcto.

De todas formas, considero que la falta de información previa hace la lectura un poquito dificultosa desde el aspecto socio-cultural.

Enrique Alejandro

A) “running pell mell”. Probablemente sea vocabulario desconocido, posiblemente alguna forma de movimiento. Nunca había escuchado la expresión antes.

Lula

Quizá la dificultad más grande en tanto contenido cultural sea la gran diferencia que parece haber (según lo que entiendo) entre la forma de festejar la navidad de los indígenas y la nuestra. Me resulta difícil imaginar la situación, hacerme una imagen del festejo. Nunca había leído ni había visto nada acerca de personas cuyo festejo navideño difiera tanto del que o los que conozco.

Luz

1. [flounces]. Creo que es importante culturalmente ya que es relevante para la fecha esa, además hace hincapié en la longitud. Tranquilamente puede ser un bordado o decorado de la ropa.

2. [piñon]. Es importante ya que es el humo de esa fogata que ellos realizaron y parece ser algo (un ritual) muy importante en dicha cultura. Igualmente el nombre del humo no impide que el lector no entienda el texto.

3. [cedar]. Está nombrando comidas, deduje que puede ser un tipo de comidas pero no sé específicamente qué.

Miranda Dana

A pesar de que el texto describe una celebración de otra cultura, el texto es en sí bastante comprensible. Abunda en descripciones que ayudan a comprender la sucesión de eventos.

Solamente algunas palabras que no conozco pueden presentar dificultad, pero en general el texto es perfectamente comprensible. Lo que no queda claro, porque no hay mención en el texto, es por qué la pareja (Ken y San Chee) pasa la Navidad con los Navajo.

Scarlet Rose

Lo que me resultó difícil de este texto fueron ciertas palabras que, calculo, están relacionadas con la cultura Navajo, de la cual no sé nada. Por ejemplo, no sé qué es “cedar” pero inferí que era una especie de condimento o comida. Igualmente, mi obstáculo

principal fue “the heathen”. Por lo que interpreté, son una tribu más...pero como se menciona al principio y en la mitad del texto pensé que eran importantes y me molestaba no saber bien quienes eran para entender mejor, por ejemplo, por qué algunos de ellos “had not had a square meal for a month”. ¿Es por alguna tradición religiosa? ¿Por qué es la tribu más pobre?

Tacuara

Para mí el problema principal es que desconozco por completo la cultura de la que se habla, entonces no tengo familiaridad con las cosas, rituales que se describen, por lo tanto dependo más de la comprensión de la lengua (vocabulario más que nada), y como no puedo usar diccionario, se me dificulta la lectura.

Tess

Los aspectos culturales que me causaron dificultad en el texto en general no aparecen subrayados porque se podía comprender todo leyendo con cuidado. Quizá lo que sí me pareció es que el texto era demandante porque había que prestar atención a los detalles o a ciertos pasajes (como el de los chicos y los caramelos) no se entienden del todo en una primera lectura. Pero creo que como la narradora es una observadora externa a la cultura de los navajos, la describe desde nuestra perspectiva y en un grado de detalle que la hace comprensible, aunque varíe el modo de festejar la navidad en varios aspectos. Me gustaría saber algunas cosas que no se mencionan en el texto, como el sentido que los navajos le dan a la celebración, pero no son aspectos sin los cuales no se pueda entender el fragmento.

Victoria

En este texto el problema (o el desafío) que encuentro es la introducción de elementos que me resultan del todo ajenos, sobre la celebración de las fiestas navideñas en una cultura que me es del todo desconocida y sobre la que, para bien o para mal, tampoco me había formado ninguna idea. Hay, por tanto, términos que desconozco. Lo primero que captó mi atención fueron los nombres (sospecho que para los navajos un nombre es algo más que una manera de llamarse unos a otros, y que deben de implicar algún significado que defina de alguna manera a su portador). También me resultó llamativo el nombre con que se designa a la Navidad, “Kismas”, nombre que sospecho que es una derivación fonética del inglés “Christmas”.

Por otra parte, hay términos que desconozco, sin duda porque tienen que ver con una cultura que también desconozco, aunque bien pudiera ser que simplemente no comprendiera la palabra inglesa; como estudiante de inglés como segunda lengua no puedo descartar esta posibilidad. Son ejemplos palabras como “heathen” o “mesa”.

Yanina

Una de las cosas que no entendí es cuando Betty pone su nariz en la mano de San Chee, la narradora. No sé si es una costumbre de los Indios Navajos o simplemente algo que ella hace. Pareciera como si tuviera miedo de algo y buscara protección en San Chee.

Tampoco entiendo bien si ellos querían invitarlos (a los Navajos) o no. Por momentos dice que la pasaron bien y les gusta que pasen navidad con ellos. Pero luego cuando se van piensa que ahora pueden comer. Esto implicaría que no la pasaron tan bien si es que tuvieron que trabajar tanto. Además, después de comer San Chee piensa que es bueno que la ayuden a lavar los platos porque al menos hacen algo por la comida que recibieron.

Desde mi punto de vista, cuando invitamos a alguien no esperamos que nos ayuden, sino que hacemos las cosas nosotros. Igualmente, sé que hay gente que cree que si el invitado no ofrece su ayuda es maleducado. Quizás depende de la cultura o la educación que recibe cada uno. Lo que algunos consideran descortés es aceptable para otros.

Recuerdo que una vez invite a estudiar a una compañera del interior y ella intentaba ayudar todo el tiempo con la comida, los platos, etc. Me pedía que le dijera dónde estaban las cosas así yo no me molestaba en alcanzárselas. Para mí, en realidad, era como una invasión. No me gusta que la gente tenga tanta confianza.

También me daba cuenta de que cuando yo iba a su casa y no ayudaba, a ella le parecía que yo era haragana.

Obviamente, tenemos diferentes formas de ver las cosas. Puede ser porque ella es del interior o simplemente en su casa fue educada así. No conozco la cultura Navaja como para decir que a ellos les parece bien que el anfitrión haga las cosas, pero quizás sea algo parecido.

Otra cosa que no llego a entender es qué hacen San Chee y Ken ahí. Están en la reserva creo. No sé bien de qué cultura son. Las costumbres que tienen para celebrar navidad no son las que siempre vemos en familias inglesas o norteamericanas. San Chee es un nombre que no suena inglés, aunque Ken sí. Casi al final ella dice que extraña su lugar, pero no se dice de dónde son.

Reading response tasks

Beryl

La cultura reflejada en el texto es netamente ritualista, puesto que está basada en tradiciones típicas de las comunidades indígenas en las que las danzas y la música son muy importantes.

Sin embargo, es posible ver cómo esta cultura se halla embebida, en parte, de las prácticas culturales de otras comunidades. Un ejemplo de ello es el hecho de que estos indígenas (los Navajo) podían hablar inglés.

Sin embargo, no todas sus prácticas culturales coinciden o son similares a las de otras comunidades. Vemos así, otra vez, el choque de culturas. Entre los Navajo, los Utcity y la cultura de la narradora. Visto que entre ambas comunidades nativas (según mi inferencia los Navajo y los Utcity) hay prácticas diferentes, como el hecho de que las canciones cantadas y danzadas son realizadas por los Utcitys, que son los que saben hacerlo; mientras que los Navajo parecen no poder realizarlas por ser muy jóvenes.

En mi opinión, el tema del texto es el enfoque cultural, no visto como choque, sino como fraternidad en armonía. Es decir, diferentes grupos sociales/culturales pueden compartir una celebración, tal como lo es la Navidad, sin imponerse unos a otros, sino compartiendo las diferentes prácticas culturales y aprendiendo de las mismas.

Más allá de que las diferencias están manifestadas por la narradora del texto, estas son de carácter secundario, puesto que se reflejan más claramente los conceptos de unión entre personas y de lo cultural como aprendizaje.

Enrique Alejandro

El relato describe las fiestas navideñas de los indios Navajos desde el punto de vista de una mujer de origen indeterminado pero definitivamente extranjera a los nativos. La narradora describe la fiesta como caótica y carente de ritualización o formalidades, desordenada y puramente alegre. A pesar de la longitud del texto, este es relativamente breve desde un punto de vista temático: La narradora vive la fiesta y luego siente nostalgia por su propia cultura. La fiesta se narra de forma anecdótica aunque bastante objetiva, por lo que cuesta llamar al evento un “choque de culturas” o nada tan violento. Es, en resumen, una anécdota de cómo una mujer extranjera y su pareja viven una celebración desconocida con una apacible fascinación, aunque sintiendo nostalgia por su tierra natal.

Lula

El texto presenta una típica celebración navideña de los indios Navajos vista desde la experiencia de una mujer que no pertenece a tal comunidad. Ella está ahí trabajando en una tienda que provee a los Navajos de comida y leña para su festejo al aire libre.

El sentimiento de nostalgia por su propia cultura –que deja ver al final del texto- y la mención de una reserva parecen indicar que esta mujer está allí como una especie de voluntaria (digo “especie” porque le entregan un pago en determinado momento) y se debate entre el trabajo humanitario y agotador que realiza, y su aparente deseo de volver a casa, a su cultura natal.

El texto muestra una cultura muy diferente a la nuestra: no solamente porque se ven casos de poligamia, sino porque se junta toda la comunidad en un mismo sitio para celebrar la Navidad.

Los Navajos muestran signos de que la comida entre ellos escasea: comen mucho durante la celebración y cuidan con celo la comida que guardan para el desayuno del día siguiente. A pesar de esto, su navidad es una verdadera fiesta: cantan y bailan alegremente. No hay solemnidades ni rituales.

El tema del texto parece ser la similitud de “sentimientos festivos” entre una cultura tan diferente como lo es la de los Navajos (diferente a la de San Chee) y la cultura de San Chee –que sólo podemos imaginar cuál s, pero podemos deducir es estadounidense o inglesa quizá. Esto explica el sentimiento de nostalgia de la mujer: a pesar de lo bien que pueda sentirse con esa gente alegre, no es *su* gente.

Luz

Se describe la navidad en la cultura de los indígenas Navajo. Cómo la celebran y los rituales correspondientes a la celebración. Todo esto es contado por un hindú, quien participa activamente en la celebración y da detalles de la misma. Hay una descripción detallada de la vestimenta como también de la comida. A su vez se relata que las personas de dicha comunidad se reúnen y forman y hacen una fogata alrededor de la cual realizan una serie de bailes y rituales en el cual las personas mayores las experimentadas y quienes enseñan a los “que vienen” los bailes típicos. Se ve reflejado un clima alegre y de amor².

Las actividades están divididas entre hombres y mujeres, cada uno realiza algo específico³. Finalmente se describe cómo hacen el pan y el café, su elaboración y esto parece ser un ritual bastante importante para dicha cultura.

La hindú les regala caramelos y describe la alegría y desesperación por parte de los indígenas sobre lo desconocido.

Miranda Dana

² Los Navajos como también los hindús al celebrar la navidad lo hacen alrededor del fuego, símbolo que los une como comunidad. Pero se diferencian en otros aspectos. Los hindú decidieron presenciar una Navidad con una cultura diferente, ser parte de ella compartir sus juegos, actividades y comidas típicas; a su vez, también quisieron poner algo de su cultura, por eso compartieron caramelos, galletitas y golosinas. Esto es una manera de compartir, integrar, establecer lazos entre ambas culturas y es una muestra clara de que a pesar de tener culturas distintas es posible integrarse y relacionarse.

³ Durante todo un día, desde la mañana, las actividades se encuentran divididas por los integrantes de la familia, algunas realizadas exclusivamente por los hombres y otras por las mujeres; esto no solo se debe a una forma de organizarse sino también a una actividad que se hereda de generación en generación. Como también lo son los bailes típicos de esa cultura, las actividades y la realización del pan y el café.

Los hindú se sienten muy integrados a dicha cultura y tienen participación activa de la misma, aprenden muchas cosas de los Navajos pero en la parte final del texto, luego de un día muy cansador, se puede ver claramente como extrañan su propia cultura, y como ellos mismos se encargan de poner en claro que no se olvidan de ella, y que la llevan en su corazón a pesar de no estar en su hábitat natural.

Lo importante es ayudarse los unos a otros para construir una mejor cultura y no importa el lugar donde te encuentres ya que siempre llevas y tenés presente las costumbres típicas de tu sociedad que nunca te abandonan y hacen que te sientas acompañado.

El texto describe cómo una pareja estadounidense vive la celebración de la Navidad con los indígenas Navajo.

Mencionan cosas en común, como por ejemplo los fuegos, pero con connotación diferente. Para los estadounidenses, los fuegos representan confort, una cálida chimenea; mientras que para los Navajo los fuegos son como fogatas donde cocinan carne, pan y también preparan café.

A pesar del interés por esta cultura nueva, la narradora siente nostalgia por su propia cultura y sus costumbres (por eso hacia el final del relato llora). También es importante mencionar que en un momento del relato, la narradora confiesa que está asustada por tantos fuegos (como también el perro se asusta). Sin embargo, trata de integrarse en las costumbres de los Navajo, se presta para cocinar y para repartir dulces a los niños. Algo que le llama la atención y que resalta en varias oportunidades es que los Navajo tratan de obtener más comida de la que necesitan o de la que les corresponde. Por ejemplo, cuando en la línea 40, la narradora menciona que los Navajo “strolled about with great raw beefsteaks in their hands” porque tenían miedo de que alguien les robara si los dejaban en algún lugar apoyados; o también cuando menciona el incidente con los dulces (las madres hacían que sus hijos pasaran por la fila dos veces para obtener más dulces).

Scarlet Rose

El texto está narrado por una persona externa a la cultura de los Navajos, por una mujer norteamericana que presencia cómo los indios celebran Navidad. Para alguien no familiarizado con los Navajos es interesante ver cómo se describe su cultura a través de una representación que la caracteriza por la comida típica, las tradiciones (bailes, fogata) y, principalmente, los contrastes entre las costumbres indias y las “norteamericanas” (según su estereotipo). El tema central es la Navidad de los Navajos. El fragmento del texto sólo se concentra en describirla (cómo se siente la narradora en el final es un tema secundario).

Tacuara

Para mí el tema principal del texto es la descripción del ritual de la Navidad en una cultura que es ajena a quien narra. De esta descripción se desprende que hay un contraste en las distintas culturas; de hecho al final la narradora dice que extraña.

Tess

El texto “Kismas” se refiere a la celebración de la Navidad por parte de los Navajo, una tribu de aborígenes de los Estados Unidos, con la participación de algunas personas blancas dentro de una reservación. El punto de vista que se adopta es el de una mujer blanca que colabora en la preparación de los festejos, y que los describe desde la perspectiva del asombro frente a lo distinto, lo novedoso, que hace que sea valioso para ser contado. En ese marco, el tema cultural que se aborda es el de la distancia y el de la incapacidad de integración. A pesar de que la narradora parece conocer varias personas dentro de la reservación y se incluye en varias de las tareas que se llevan a cabo, como en la preparación de las comidas, y a pesar de que aprendió el idioma navajo, tiene una nostalgia y un sentimiento de “outsider”. El festejo es descrito desde afuera, como una observadora. Además, hay aspectos de la otra cultura que parecen generarle malestar o incluso desconfianza, como el temor a que las fogatas inicien un incendio, o los comentarios que parecen querer decirle al lector que los indios son perezosos (las mujeres

no lavarían los platos si fuera por ellas) o aprovechadores/ oportunistas (por ejemplo, los niños esconden los caramelos que se les dan para volver a pedir otros). El texto, así, nos muestra al blanco como una persona que puede estar en contacto con los aborígenes pero como colaborador o ayuda, no en una participación de igual a igual, y que se siente incómodo en tal situación. Pareciera que las diferencias se dan principalmente en los comportamientos sociales de un grupo y de otro y en las normas de convivencia, con lo cual la narradora no logra insertarse en la comunidad y añora otro tipo de vida, la que puede llevar fuera de la reservación. Las diferencias aparecen marcadas en muchos casos como críticas hacia el comportamiento de los aborígenes, como si algunas de sus actitudes fueran reprobables.

Victoria

Me permito en primer lugar establecer una mínima comparación con el texto anterior. En ambos casos se observa la integración (o intento de tal) de un extranjero en una fiesta navideña celebrada en una cultura que le es extraña. En el caso del texto anterior, el que intentaba integrarse era un hindú, cuya cultura no considera las fiestas navideñas, a un entorno en el que la Navidad es relevante y muy popular como celebración. En el texto presente, un grupo de representantes de una cultura en que aparentemente también se celebra la Navidad (sospecho que la norteamericana, aunque los datos son pocos) se integran (o intentan hacerlo) a las celebraciones navideñas de un grupo minoritario: una tribu de navajos.

“Christmas to us meant warm fires, red berries, gifts in tissue paper”. Otro elemento que me permite sospechar que se trata de la cultura norteamericana es la posible proximidad geográfica y la expresión: “that little attention made me homesick for something not Indian;” El término “homesick” no se relaciona, creo, aquí, con la lejanía del hogar sino de la cultura, y de ahí la especificación: “...for something not Indian”.

Ya desde el nombre, todo les resulta extraño: “We found that the Navajo “Kismas” included the warm fires, but everything else was novel enough to make history”. Sin embargo, remitiéndome nuevamente a mi comparación con el texto anterior, no se ven en el caso presente (al menos no de manera tan marcada), el recelo y el prejuicio que sí se observaban en el texto anterior, sobre todo de parte de la “cultura local”.

Por otro lado, si mis sospechas son ciertas, quienes intentan integrarse aquí forman parte de lo que podríamos considerar “cultura estándar” (norteamericana), al menos en relación a la cultura del grupo minoritario de los navajos. Quizás por eso, incluso en “terreno ajeno”, se generan escenas en que aparentaría producirse una sutil dominación por parte de quienes sin ser miembros de la tribu ni de la celebración que tiene lugar en ella, representan la cultura estándar:

Other women I set to peeling onions and potatoes, and very handy they were at it too.

.....

After the meal was over, the women cleaned the soot from the tubs and boiler with sand, while I scalded the spoons and pans. They were willing enough to do it, though they would have gone away and left everything dirty, if I had not suggested the dishwashing. I thought it best they do some little thing for their meal.

Es como si, a pesar de hallarse inmersos temporalmente en otra cultura, el hecho de pertenecer a la “cultura estándar” concediera ciertos derechos implícitos de dominación, al

menos sutil, y obligara implícitamente al grupo minoritario a aceptar el status quo incluso en su propio territorio.

Ciertos factores contemplados desde el punto de vista de la “cultura estándar” (cuya mirada, por otra parte, es la que conduce al lector a introducirse en la cultura de los navajos), focalizan en lo que podrían considerarse aspectos negativos de la tribu: “What they did not eat at once they were afraid to put down because some one would steal it, so all the evening they strolled about with great raw beefsteaks in their hands”. (...) “There was a sort of appreciation in the Navajo, but it was the sort that wanted all they could get from any one who wasn't looking”.

La narradora pasa por alto el hecho de que, al menos en este último caso, tampoco su cultura queda excluida de esta conducta negativa.

Se observan (aunque no se comentan en el texto) otros factores que diferencian a ambos grupos, como la mención a vuelo de pájaro de la poligamia (“...the Little Bidoni and his three wives”).

De todos modos, también se consignan elementos positivos relacionados con la tribu (“They were a most fun-loving people”), y ciertos elementos parecen unir a ambos grupos (“and /they/ laughed at the same things we thought funny”), e incluso se ve un interés genuino por parte de la narradora de aprender cosas de los navajos (“Mrs. White Hat and Mrs. Japon began making bread and the efficient way they went about it was a lesson to me”).

La descripción de los festejos resulta, por su contenido, novedosa tanto para el lector como para la propia narradora al momento de presenciar tales festejos. El punto de vista de la “cultura estándar” guía al lector que desconociere las costumbres de los navajos para introducirse en ellas, al menos en lo que respecta a las celebraciones navideñas, y por tanto me resulta interesante esta cita del texto, que acaso resuma brevemente las impresiones de la narradora: “There was nothing cold or solemn about the gathering; every one was laughing and happy”.

Yanina

Ésta es una historia sobre un matrimonio que invita a muchos indios Navajos a pasar navidad con ellos. No se aclara bien de qué país o cultura son los personajes San Chee y Ken (el matrimonio).

Al parecer pasan una linda navidad, aunque el matrimonio parece estar cansado cuando los Navajos se van. No parece haber tensión entre las 2 culturas. Pero el “nosotros y ellos” está presente en varias ocasiones en el texto. Por ejemplo, en un momento la narradora dice que los Navajos también se ríen de las cosas que para ella son graciosas. O luego cree que los bailes que hicieron fueron divertidos para los indios y para ellos. No creo que haya mala intención en sus palabras, pero se muestra que hay diferencias entre ellos.

Hacia el final de la historia la narradora cuenta que se siente triste porque extraña su tierra natal o su hogar natal. Esto demuestra que, a pesar de tener una buena relación con los nativos de ese lugar, ella quisiera volver a sus raíces. Su marido, por el contrario, le dice que mientras estén juntos no importa dónde estén.

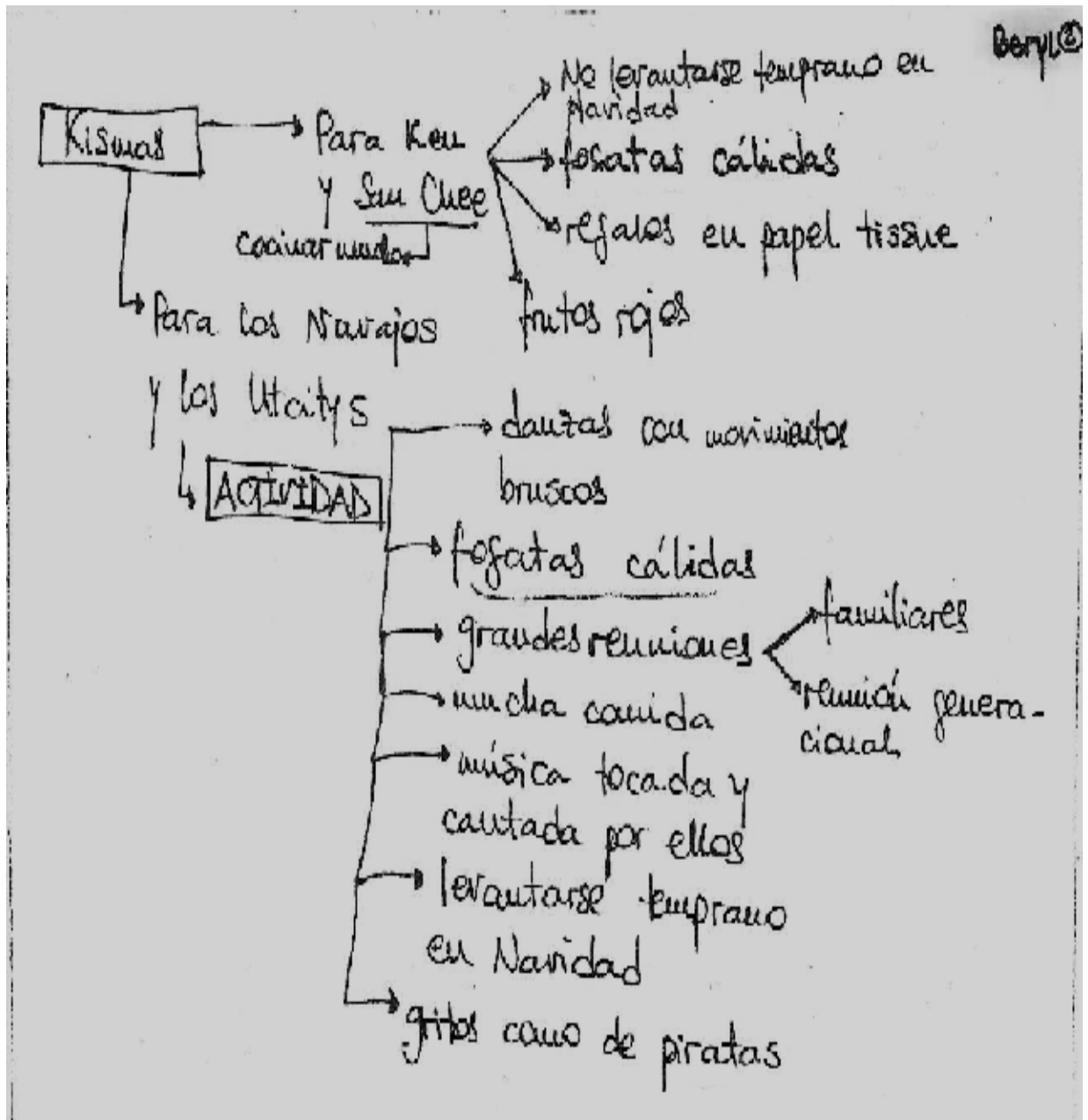
En esta historia dos culturas conviven por un día y luego se separan. No sabemos nada desde el punto de vista de los Navajos. Pero sí sabemos que la narradora no logra acomodarse o sentirse totalmente bien en el nuevo lugar (nuevo aunque ya hace un año que

viven ahí). Esto quizás muestra que es muy difícil la unión de diferentes culturas. Se puede comprender lo diferente, pero muy difícilmente asimilarse y formar parte de la otra cultura, es decir, volverse uno más de ellos.

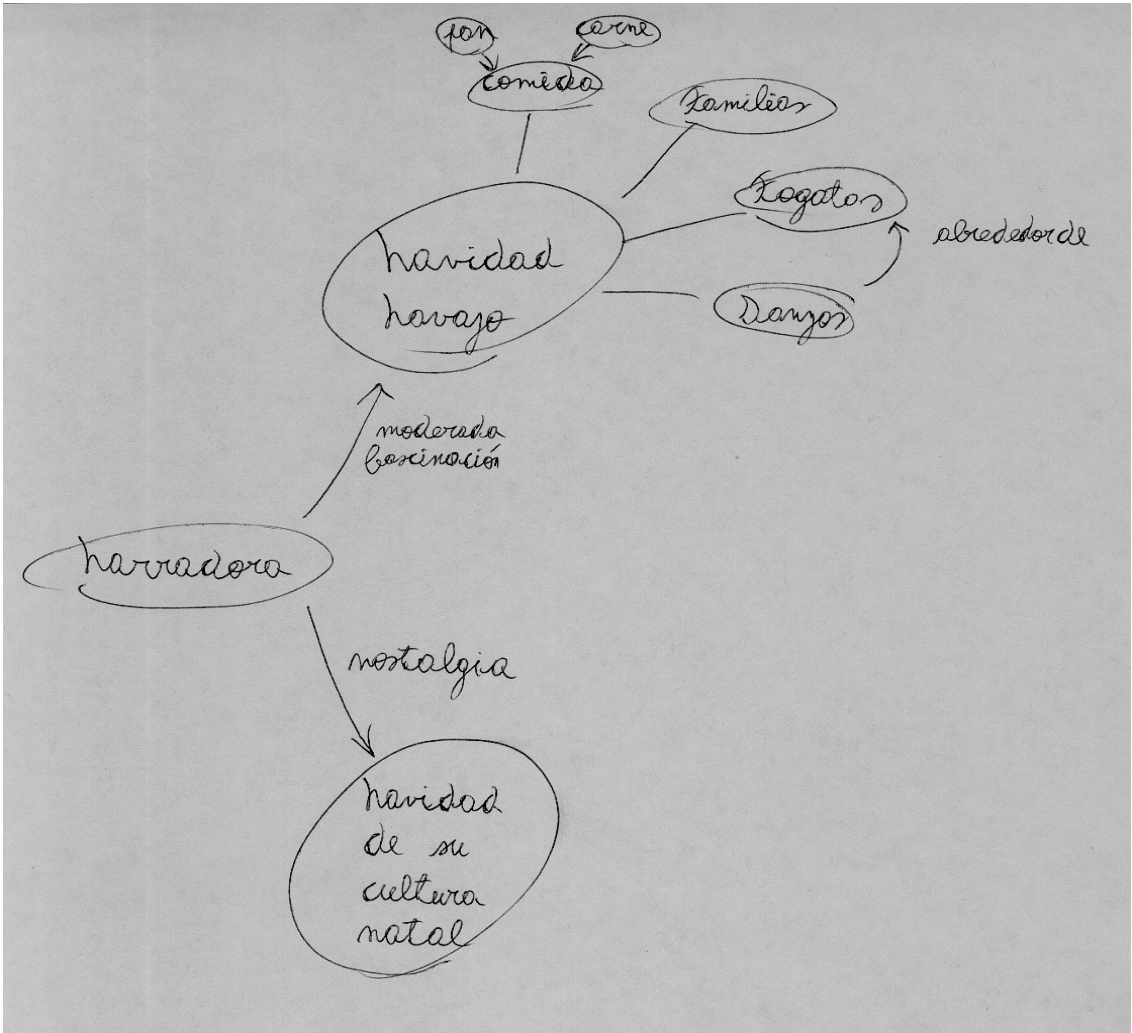
A pesar de esto, lo bueno es que pueden convivir en paz. Es bueno que haya diferencias y es mejor aún que se comprendan y puedan convivir en paz.

Visual representations

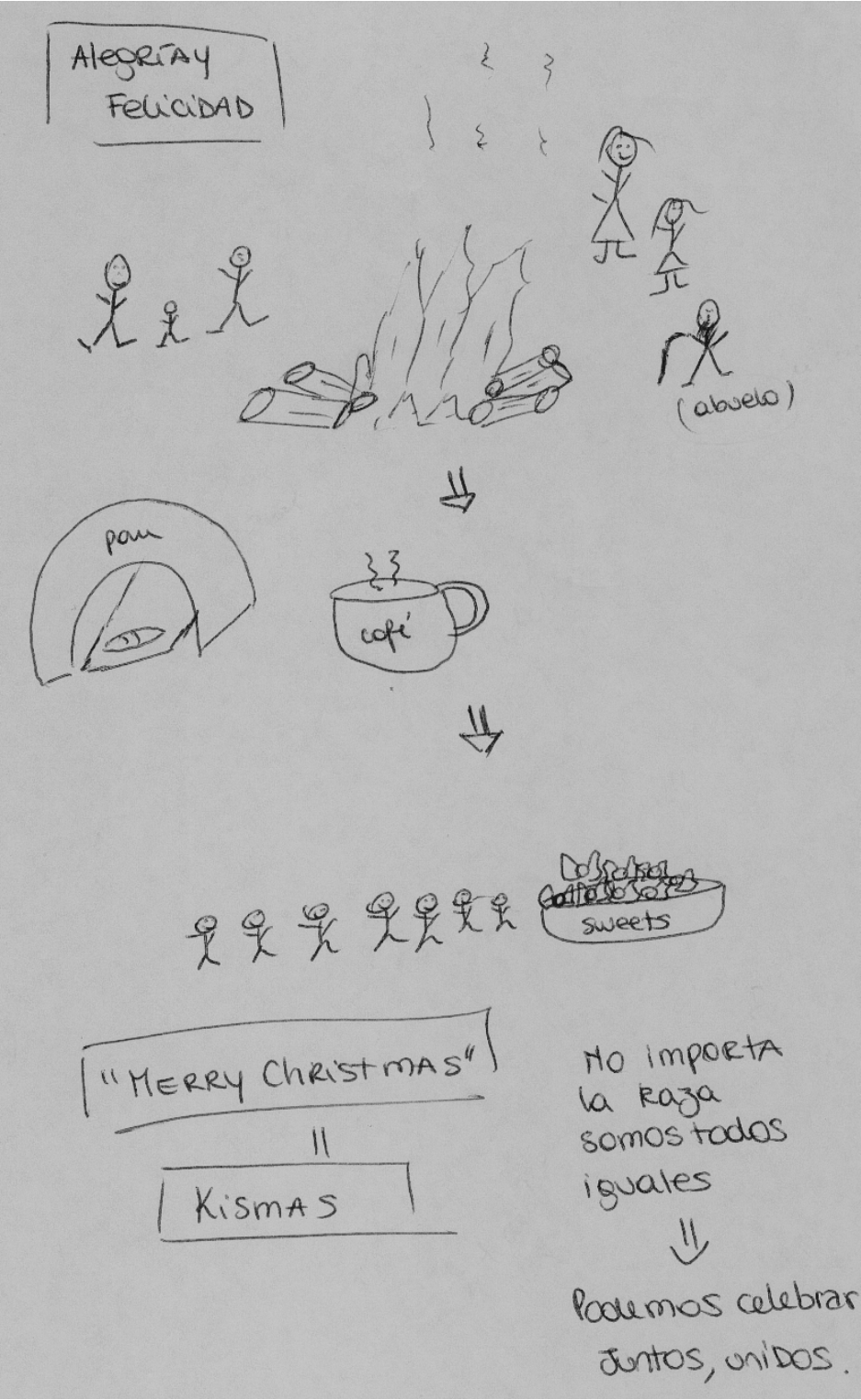
Beryl

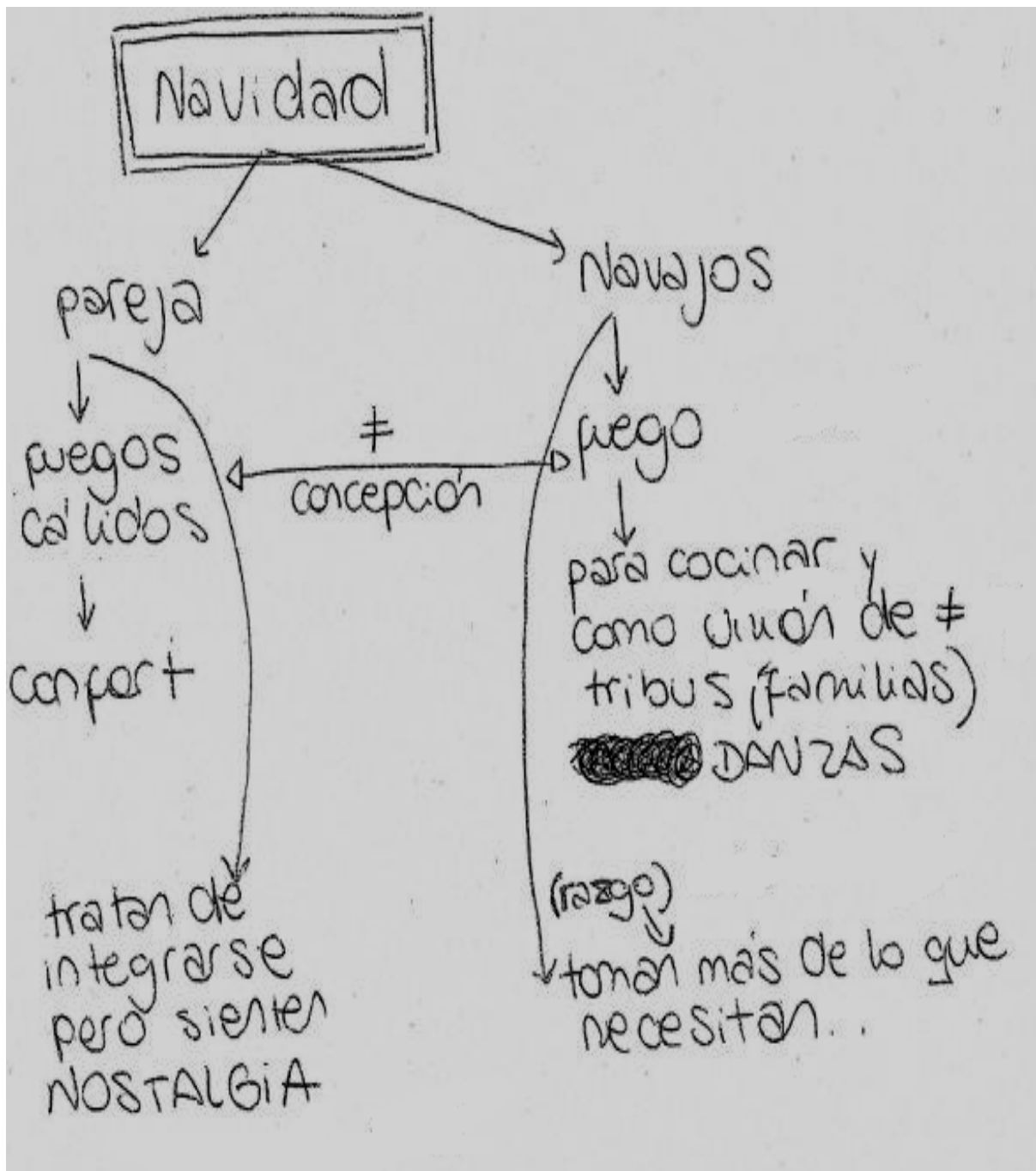


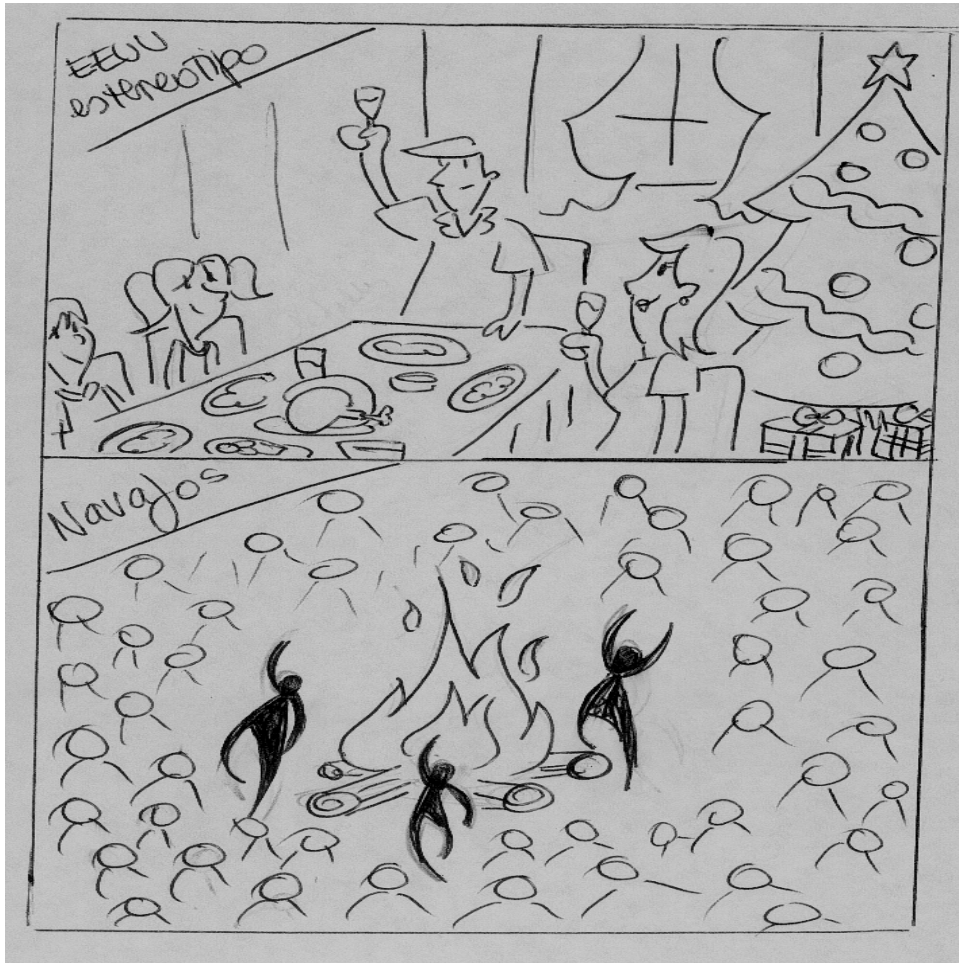
Enrique Alejandro



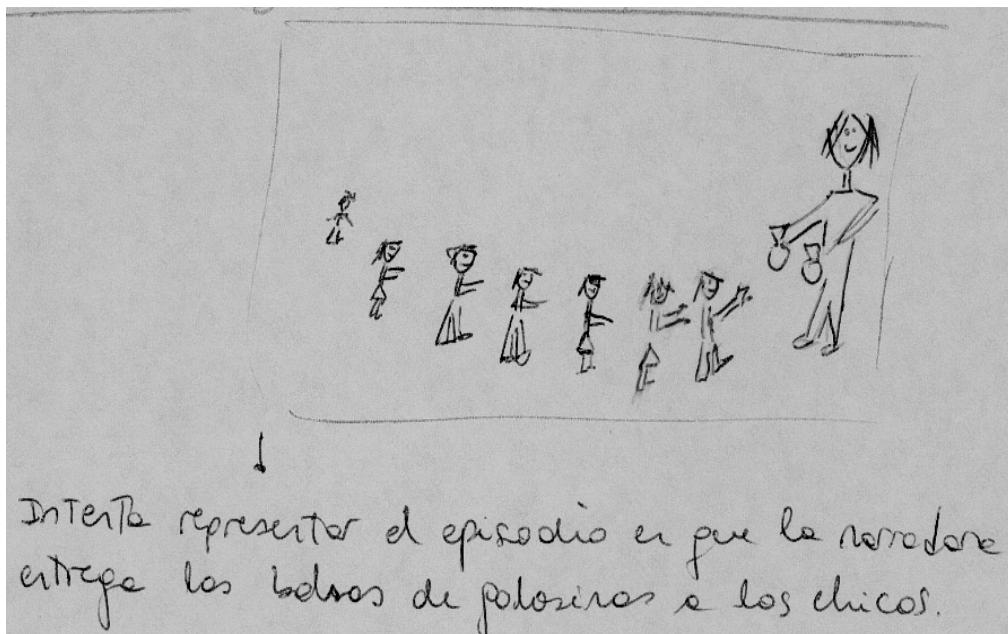






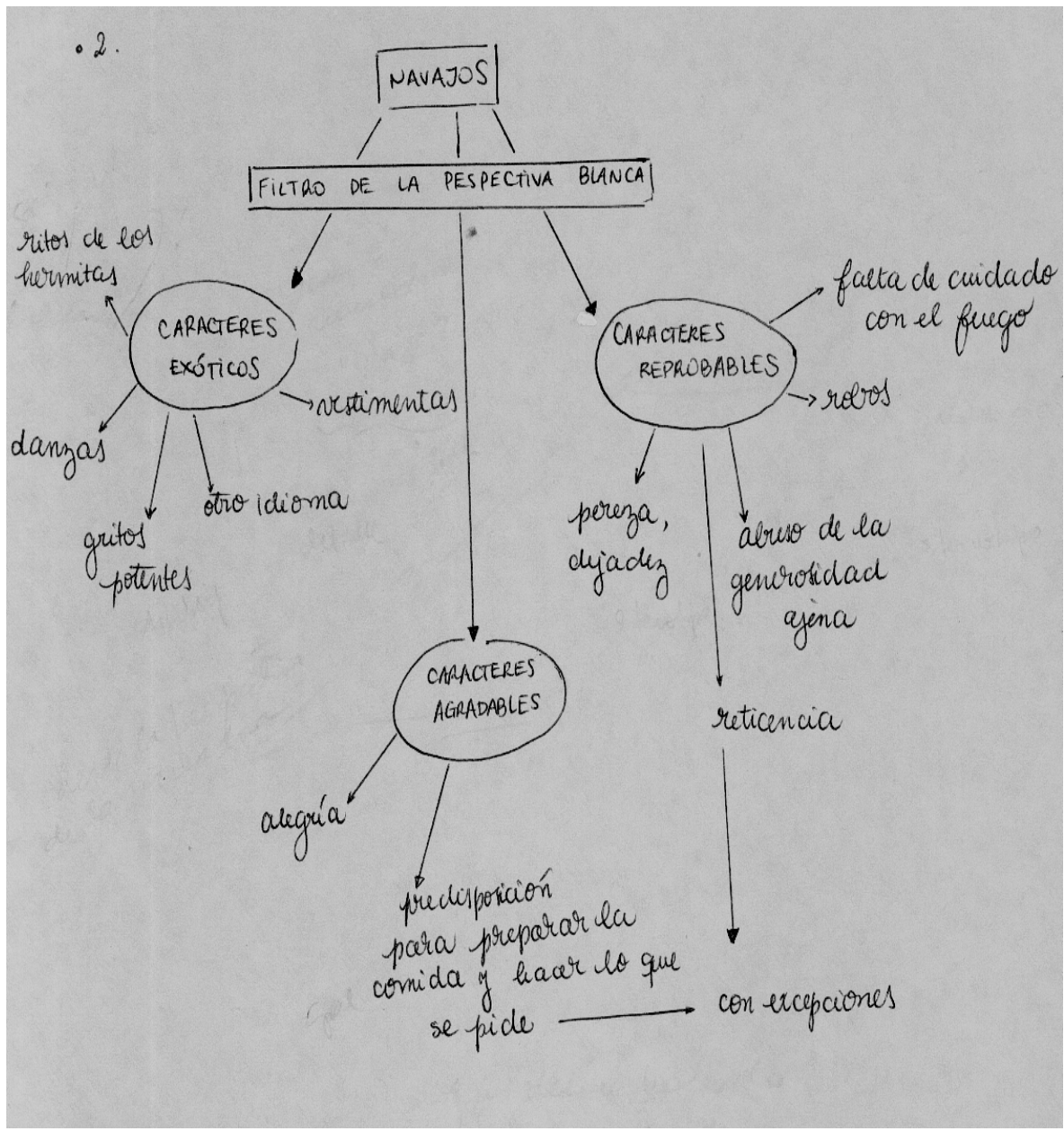


Tacuara



Tess

• 2.

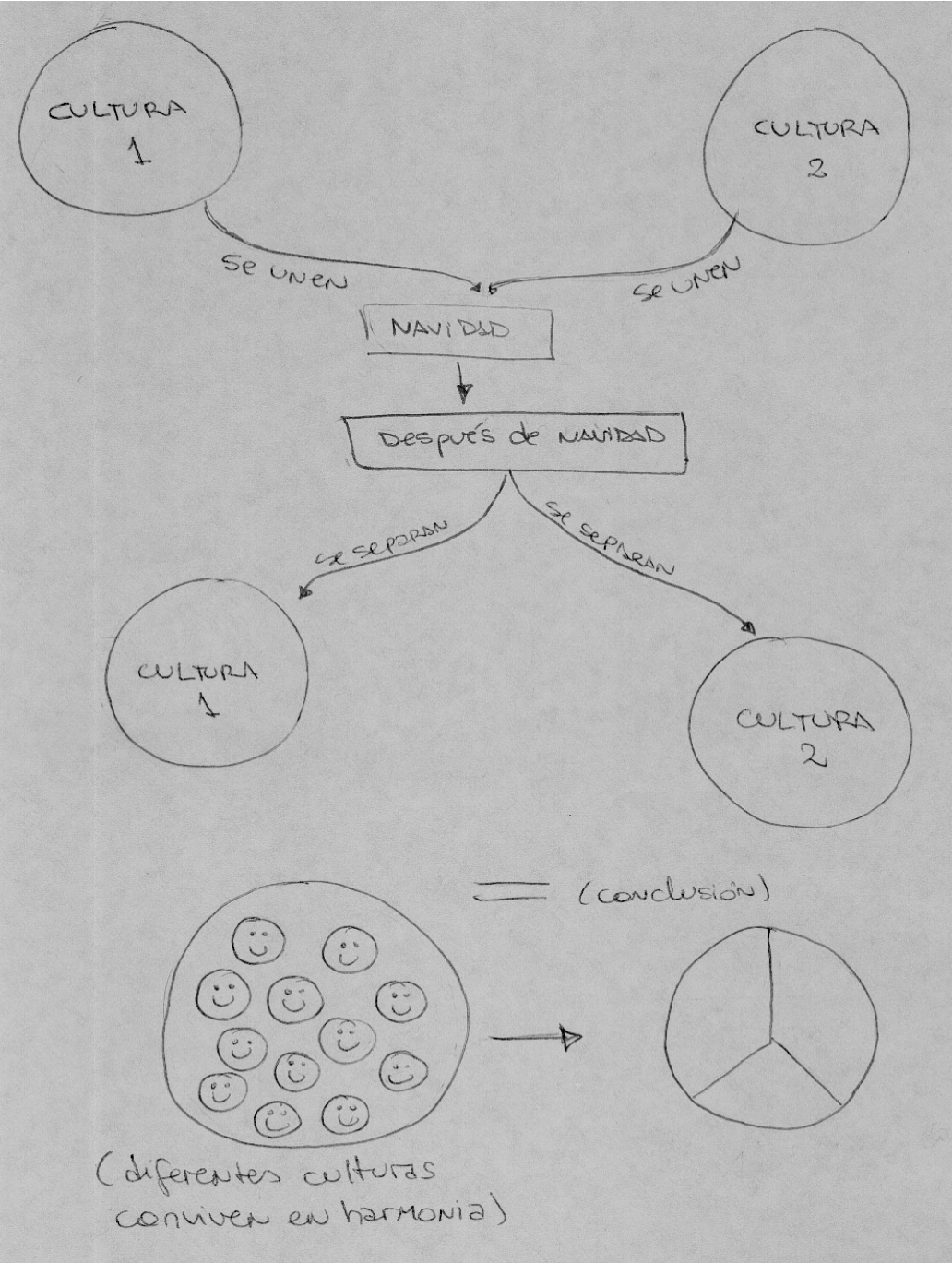


Victoria

1. Situación.- Descripción del escenario en que va a desarrollarse el relato, incluyendo un contraste con la situación típica de la cultura representada por la voz narradora (“Christmas to us meant warm fires, red berries, gifts in tissue paper”).
2. Introducción de la cultura navaja, nombres, vestimentas, comida y celebración de la cena de Nochebuena. Mención de fuegos artificiales como elemento común. Descripción de las danzas, pérdida del elemento ritual/ceremonial: ⁴“Now and then some of them danced a figure from a ceremonial dance but without the costumes and other accessories. (...) “The best dance of the lot was one performed by some of the older men. They had to dance and sing because the younger men knew neither the proper songs nor the dance”.
3. Medianoche.- Final de la fiesta, mención del perro y su aparente desasosiego: “Poor Betty! She didn't get much sleep that night and a hard day she had ahead of her, too. Wild reservation life was no joy to a blooded bulldog like Betty”. Aparente idea de que incluso los perros tienen ideas culturales que dificultan su adaptación a la vida en “wild reservations”.
4. Preparación de la comida.- Mujeres navajas y extranjeras trabajan juntas.
5. Reunión para comer. Comparación del navajo con un pirata, aunque la narradora nunca ha visto uno: ““I never had heard a pirate yell, but I was sure a Navajo must be as good a yell as a Comanche, and nothing else *could* make so much noise, unless it was a pirate”. Connotación de vida salvaje y latrocinio: “What they did not eat at once they were afraid to put down because some one would steal it”.
6. Episodio de los niños buscando las bolsas de dulce. Connotación negativa.
7. Intimidación entre la narradora y su grupo. Conclusiones: “But we agreed we had never seen such a Christmas and would not see another in a lifetime”. Regreso al marco de la “cultura estándar”, vuelta al idioma propio: “Among the last to go was Robert, who came to me and spoke in English, a thing he did not often do, as I had learned Navajo”. Vuelta a las costumbres “urbanas” de limpieza y pulcritud: “He locked the store, polished the lamp chimney which I had not had time to touch”. Contraste con texto anteriormente citado: “After the meal was over, the women cleaned the soot from the tubs and boiler with sand, while I scalded the spoons and pans. They were willing enough to do it, though they would have gone away and left everything dirty, if I had not suggested the dishwashing”.
8. Interés de la cita final. “What difference whether we worked here or there, so we worked together?” Acaso, sólo gesto de amor de la narradora hacia Ken. Otra posible implicancia: pero la narradora y Ken representan a la “cultura estándar”; la unión entre ambos podría significar posibilidad de resistencia a cualquier situación desfavorable, incluso si la tal situación consistiere en continuar el trabajo en la reserva aborigen.

Yanina

⁴ Los jóvenes no saben alguna danza que sí saben los ancianos, ¿pérdida de tradiciones propias? ¿Asimilación con la “cultura estándar” y consiguiente pérdida de identidad?



Interviews

Beryl

Melina: Estoy con Beryl y el texto de los navajos. (Pausa) Acá no entiendo qué ponés: "La diferencia entre los navajos y los".

Beryl: Ah, que... ¿Los Utcitys era?

M.: Sí. Bueno, y ¿qué es eso?

B.: Eh... me pareció que eran una comunidad diferente. O sea, en realidad me pareció... Pensé en dos... de dos lados, ¿no? Como que por ahí los navajos eran los más jóvenes y los Utcitys eran los más viejos porque precisamente hablaba de la danza y decía que sólo la podían hacer los mayores.

M.: Sí.

B.: Pero pensé que por ahí eran dos comunidades indígenas diferentes que... eran amigables entre sí, ¿no?

M.: Está bien. "Pero sé que puede deducirse algo aunque no sea lo correcto". No entiendo lo que me querés poner.

B.: Claro porque... eh... yo dije que no... no podía terminar de comprender la diferencia entre los navajos y los Utcitys, o sea... por qué unos son navajos y por qué los otros Utcitys, por eso te digo, o sea, lo que yo hice fue... sé que se puede deducir algo, o sea, y yo te planteo mis deducciones, que pueden ser que unos sean mayores y otros menores...

M.: Ah.

B.: O sea, como que sean los más antiguos y los otros los más jóvenes y por eso tienen diferencias, o que sean comunidades aparte.

M.: Entiendo. "Falta información para que la lectura"... "Falta información sobre aspectos socioculturales". ¿Qué tipo de información?

B.: Sí, me parece que en realidad, por ejemplo, yo lo que me planteaba son cosas como que por ejemplo, cuando habla de los gritos, que gritaban muy fuerte, ¿por qué? O... por qué las danzas sólo las pueden hacer... porque había ciertas danzas que sólo las podían hacer los Utcitys y no los navajos, ¿por qué sólo ellos las podían cantar?

M.: Entiendo.

B.: ¿Me entendés? Cuestionamientos como éste. O por ejemplo, por qué sentían... se ponía cierto énfasis en... que era muy lindo estar con los navajos pero que así y todo es como que ellos querían tomar siempre todo aunque no fuera de ellos, en cierta forma.

M.: Hm.

B.: Por qué esto, o sea, como que tiene que tener un trasfondo. Me parece que textos así que están claramente... Me parece que en las comunidades indígenas, siempre hay como una información previa que... bah, a mí me parece totalmente necesaria. Yo sé, Neuquén y los Mapuches... es una comunidad muy amplia y muy conocida. Entonces es como que siempre hay que tener una información previa como para llegar a actuar o a trabajar sobre un texto o para... o para poder incluso hablar con ellos, o sea, es como que me parece que para algunas cosas, ciertas prácticas son muy significantes.

M.: ¿Vos sabés de los Mapuches?

B.: No, no, poco y nada, pero...

M.: Sí.

B.: Más o menos sé que para ciertas cosas... o sea, para ciertas situaciones necesitás... tener como una información previa, ¿no? Y me parece que en realidad es para la mayoría de los textos, y lo más gracioso es que yo me acordaba de algo que vimos en Lengua 2 con *The Great Gatsby*.

M.: Hm.

B.: Yo hay cosas que terminé de entender del texto [*The Great Gatsby*] cuando después tuvimos la clase con esta chica, con Ana [a teacher who was doing an internship in the course English Language II at the time Beryl was enrolled in it]. Había cosas que no entendía, ciertas descripciones que no entendía, y con este texto... lo que me pasa es que cuando lo leí no me resultó complicado pero de todas formas encontraba cosas como que yo decía: "Bueno, ¿pero esto por qué es así? ¿Por qué es de esta forma?" Especialmente con lo de las danzas, y con lo de la diferencia entre los navajos y los Utcitys. Entonces me parecía que la información previa es necesaria como para que uno pueda llegar al texto más preparado, ¿no?

M.: Entiendo. En la respuesta textual, cuando decís "otras comunidades", supongo que serán las Utcitys una, ¿y alguna otra?

B.: En sí, me pareció que no pude terminar de determinar si la cultura de Ken y San Chee, si ellos eran en todo caso anglosajones, sé que hablaban inglés pero no sé si eran exactamente anglosajones. Entonces me parecía como que había un enfoque de tres tipos de culturas, ¿no? Un poco lo de los Utcitys, lo de los navajos y lo de esta gente que si bien se acomodaba, era acoplable, se ve mucho cómo la chica tiene... tiene una sensación de querer retornar en parte a lo que ella vivió antes, ¿no? Entonces me parece que sí puse "otras comunidades" refiriéndome a las tres, en sí.

M.: Habla en inglés y entonces qué... qué comunidad pensás vos?

B.: No, pensé que por ahí era... pensé que podían ser anglosajones, porque hablaban inglés, pero después dije: Bueno, hay muchos países que tienen como segunda lengua obligatoria el inglés, por ejemplo los países nórdicos, entonces dije: Bueno, pueden ser; pero también por otro lado pensé, bueno... San Chee, y dije: Bueno, pueden ser de algún país asiático... y después medité y dije: Pueden ser descendiente de inmigrantes y viven... no sé, si querés en Estados Unidos, me pareció, ¿no? Saqué muchas conjeturas, pero es que... me es natural hacer eso cuando leo.

M.: Está bien.

B.: Si no, no... no me sirve.

M.: Estas conjeturas que me estás mencionando.

B.: Sí, yo necesito... es como que los interrogantes para mí tienen que estar... no es como que... te quedás con lo que leíste y nada más.

M.: Hm. (Pausa) "Las diferencias son de carácter secundario, puesto que se reflejan más claramente los conceptos de unión entre personas y de lo cultural o aprendizaje".

B.: Sí, porque yo esto lo apunté a lo que escribí antes de que me parece que las diferencias son secundarias en el sentido de que la narradora en un momento menciona esto que yo te dije antes, que por ahí es como que los navajos que mencionaba el episodio con las golosinas. Como que quieren tomar más de lo que deberían.

M.: Claro.

B.: Pero me pareció como que lo tomó como un punto un poco secundario, porque creo que el tema central era precisamente que, no como un choque de diferentes culturas, sino

como un enfoque viendo culturas diferentes, cómo pueden unirse entre sí, interactuar y relacionarse entre sí, y así aprender del otro, porque yo creo que es más que nada un texto de aprendizaje desde lo que ve la narradora, ¿no?

M.: Hm.

B.: O sea, porque se nota que es muy observadora y lo que ve en base a cómo se manejan los navajos y los Utcity con ciertas cuestiones prácticas, ¿no?

M.: (Pausa) En la reformulación visual hacés un contraste entre ellos dos...

B.: ...y los otros.

M.: Y los otros. ¿Y por qué en común las fogatas cálidas?

B.: Bueno, porque ella al principio dice que ellos para Navidad estaban acostumbrados precisamente a las fogatas cálidas, a los regalos en.. en un papel específico y a los frutos rojos, y dice que los... los navajos compartían sólo las fogatas, dentro de eso, o sea, lo que tenían en común eran las fogatas. Por eso lo puse, no sólo como contraste sino como... Ése era el punto de conexión, ¿no? Pero lo puse como más que nada lo que era importante para Ken y San Chee dentro de lo que es la Navidad y lo que es importante para esas comunidades indígenas. Y ése era el punto donde ellos... como que había un encuentro; ¿no?, por ese lado.

M.: ¿Y relacionado con tus conjeturas previas? ¿Con cuál de todas las conjeturas previas se une más este hecho de las fogatas para Navidad?

B.: Bueno, ahí tuve otra conjetura nueva, que... ella al final del texto menciona que no sabía... bah, ella se preguntaba después para qué... seguir viviendo era lo mismo, seguir viviendo en la comunidad de los navajos o tener una granja si total de todas formas iba a estar junto con Ken, ¿no? Entonces me pregunté qué tipo de comunidad cultural es la de San Chee y la de Ken, y... no pude evitar compararlo con los otros textos, donde tenemos un texto de una pobreza no extrema pero de una pobreza... bastante carenciada, ¿no?, la situación. Tenemos un texto de la gente que tiene bastante dinero, que es pudiente, si se quiere, y tenemos un texto donde vemos cosas completamente diferentes, es como un (?), es como un medio, ¿no? Y me parece que evidentemente ellos también tienen prácticas específicas, porque... ellos están acostumbrados...

M.: ¿“Ellos” quiénes?

B.: Ken y San Chee, ¿no? Ellos están acostumbrados a los frutos rojos y a las fogatas. Mi Navidad no es de frutos rojos ni fogatas, ¿no?, y por lo que tengo entendido hasta ahora de lo que es la Navidad en Estados Unidos tampoco es ese estilo. ¿Entonces qué tipo de comunidad eran ellos? Ésas fueron otras de las cosas que me pregunté.

M.: Muy bien.

B.: Y lo de los gritos como de piratas, es porque en un momento decía que... ellos gritaban y parecía, se asimilaba con un grito de piratas pero que era mucho más fuerte.

M.: Sí. ¿Tiene alguna connotación eso?

B.: A mí me parece que debe tener alguna connotación, sé que hay comunidades como los gorneos por ejemplo que tienen un grito específico para cuando amanece, como si fuera para nosotros el canto del gallo, digamos.

M.: Claro.

B.: Es un grito específico para indicar que amaneció. Entonces me pareció que por ahí tenía que... debía tener algún contenido relacionado con la naturaleza, me pareció.

M.: Está bien. (Pausa) ¿Cuál es el significado de que se paseen con la carne abajo del brazo? ¿Tiene alguno? ¿O el problema... o... ¿Por qué no es uno y es dos?

B.: Porque... o sea... cuando releí el texto por segunda vez, como que es muy detallista el texto, entonces cuando lo releí por segunda vez es como que adquiero ciertos detalles que en la primera lectura no... no los consigo. Y por otro lado porque justamente, a mí me pareció comprensible pero como que no era totalmente relevante a la situación, ¿no? Pero lo terminé de comprender en la segunda... en la segunda lectura.

M.: El episodio del lavado de los platos, ¿te sugiere algo?

B.: Eh... A mí no... me sugirió algo desde el punto de vista de la organización, ¿no?, de... de la organización social para ciertas cuestiones de cada grupo, ¿no? Que para nosotros es común quizás almorzar, cenar o tomar cualquier bebida y no sé si instantáneamente pero lavar los platos, que quizás para ellos... no sé, había que esperar, no sé, a que llegue la lluvia y los lave solos, por decirte algo, o esperar días, no sé... Me pareció que tenía que ver con la cuestión de la organización social, por eso no me resultó tan importante, ¿no?

M.: Está bien. Y este hecho de la narradora, que es la que sugiere qué cocinar, o hacer las galletitas...

B.: Me pareció en realidad como que ella era una especie de coordinadora de toda la situación ahí, ¿no? Como que en realidad no es como que ellos estaban de visita, con el propósito específico de: "Bueno, vamos a pasar una Navidad diferente con los navajos", sino que como que ella era alguna especie de coordinadora de... como para armar el evento en sí, ¿no?, más como organizadora.

M.: ¿Y por qué ella iba a organizar una celebración que no le es propia?

B.: No, me parece que una celebración que es propia de otros, quizás... pero que además, o sea, como que... uno siempre busca un planeamiento para las cosas, ¿no? Es como que no es todo así, sale de la nada, bueno, hacemos esto y mañana hacemos lo otro.

M.: Pero quiero decir, ¿por qué no la planificaba un navajo? Si vos estás diciendo que ellos no eran... no son navajos...

B.: No sé, me parece que quizás como invitados... funcionaba su papel desde otro punto de vista, ¿no? Por eso te digo que me parece que la información previa es como necesaria para entender este tipo de cosas.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa). ¿Por qué es esencial que los navajos son eficientes y... inteligentes o...

B.: Bueno, yo hay ciertas cuestiones que las marqué como esenciales porque es donde yo veo el contraste que la narradora hace con su propia cultura. Por ejemplo lo de los... lo de los platos, de que si era por los navajos, ellos los dejaban a que nadie los lave.

M.: Hm.

B.: Y en su momento, bueno, hace la comparación de que los navajos son tan eficientes como... o sea, la comparación a mí me pareció esencial como para ver el entrelíneas, ¿no?

M.: ¿Y cuál es el entrelíneas?

B.: El entrelíneas me parece que también de fondo es como marcar las diferencias culturales, las diferencias desde un punto de vista organizativo social que tienen las diferentes culturas, ¿no?, en este caso una cultura indígena con una cultura occidental quizás.

M.: ¿Por qué es auxiliar que comen y comen?

B.: No sé, a mí me pareció un detalle el hecho de que coman y coman. No encontré cuál era la relevancia en el texto de que comieran y comieran.

M.: Está bien.

B.: Había mucha comida, por supuesto, y además eran muchísimas personas.

M.: Claro.

B.: Entonces uno asume un montón de cosas pero no me pareció que eso fuera algo esencial del texto.

M.: ¿Y el saludo de Robert? ¿Por qué es importante?

B.: A mí me pareció importante porque, bueno, primero, es importante para la narradora, ella lo marca como un evento muy importante, como el punto cúlmine de la historia.

M.: ¿Por qué?

B.: Y es el punto cúlmine porque ella es como que cuando encuentra... o sea, cuando se encuentra en relación con el otro, en una relación directa con una sola persona, cuando ve que... uno de esta comunidad se acerca a ella exclusivamente a decirle "Feliz Navidad", es como que hay un individualismo, es tomar en cuenta a uno solo en particular, quizás con el "Feliz Navidad" que él le dijo incluso en inglés, como para adaptarse a la cultura de ella...

M.: Hm.

B.: ...implica un montón de cosas más, ¿no? O sea, el "Feliz Navidad" como "Gracias por todo lo que organizaste" o "Gracias por estar acá", pero por otro lado que lo dijera en inglés. Es decir, vos pasaste mi festividad a mi manera, yo me adapto en este momento a saludarte en tu idioma, a tu manera, ¿no? Desde ese punto de vista lo vi.

M.: ¿Hay algo en el texto que te indique que la... la visión de la narradora respecto de los indios puede ser... denigratoria, condescendiente, racista o algo por el estilo?

B.: No, lo que me pareció es que... hacía un contraste... de cierta forma no sé si exactamente objetivo porque la objetividad es subjetiva, pero me pareció como... un contraste pseudoobjetivo de las diferentes culturas y de cómo se organiza cada una, ¿no? O sea, son mínimos eventos como el hecho de... precisamente que creo que es uno de los más importantes, el hecho de que se laven o no se laven los platos como los diferentes modos de organización de las culturas, ¿no? Pero no, me pareció... yo lo vi como una cuestión un poco más objetiva, como: "A ver, bueno, nosotros somos así pero ellos son de esta otra forma". Pero sí me pareció un poco condescendiente cuando hace comparaciones como: "Ellos son tan eficientes como"... O sea, el "como" está implícito pero... la comparación es obvia, o sea... Ellos son muy inteligentes y son eficientes, tanto como podemos serlo nosotros. Es como una cuestión denigratoria, a mí me parece, ¿no?, ver que el otro, porque es de una comunidad indígena, es más eficiente o menos ingenioso que uno porque uno está en el mundo occidental.

M.: Y que por eso hay que mencionarlo, porque si no ¿para qué lo menciona?

B.: Claro, por eso, totalmente, por eso yo en su momento puse... ese punto, que es... el L, lo puse como esencial, es el entrelíneas que yo veo en el texto. En la superficie simplemente la comparación y la cuestión del aprendizaje a través de las diferentes culturas, ¿no? Como pueden congeniar entre sí. Pero me parece que el trasfondo también tiene que ver con esto, ¿no?

M.: Muy bien, gracias.

Enrique Alejandro

Melina: Pasamos al texto de los navajos...

Enrique Alejandro: Éste me... me fue un poco frustrante, porque a pesar de que es tan largo no tenía mucho que decir.

M.: No te pareció substancioso.

EA.: No...

M.: Ah. Comparado con el otro...

EA.: Exactamente.

M.: Es mucho más rico el otro.

EA.: Hm.

M.: En la respuesta textual... bueno, es muy interesante el uso que hacés de los adjetivos. Bueno, primero te pregunto... la mujer es extranjera. ¿Extranjera a qué, o desde el punto de vista de quién?

EA.: Ah, evidentemente a los indios, no es de ésas.

M.: ¿Ajena?

EA.: Sí.

M.: Ajena. Y usás muchos adjetivos que son interesantes, te voy a pedir que me expliques. ¿Por qué o en qué sentido es la fiesta "caótica"?

EA.: Durante todo el relato se tiene la... tuve la sensación de que estaban apurados, haciendo cosas de un lado a otro.

M.: Hm.

EA.: Que... venían los indios, agarraban las cosas, se iban a comer, se ponían a bailar, prendían fuegos por todas partes... que era bastante desordenado.

M.: Entiendo.

EA.: "Puramente alegre": Eso es...

M.: "Puramente". ¿Qué implica "puramente"? Implica algo "puramente".

EA.: Eh, sí, que yo debería dejar de usar un... vocabulario tan... florido.

M.: No, está muy bien.

EA.: ...cuando no llega... cuando no tiene ningún propósito. En lo que dicen que se...

M.: Estimo que tiene un propósito.

EA.: Sí, lo puse para... para... hacer contraste con esto. No hay ninguna ritualización, no hay ninguna formalidad, no hay ninguna parte de solemnidad, es simplemente una fiesta.

M.: Una fiesta. Hm. O sea que no tiene nada que ver con lo religioso.

EA.: No, no, precisamente.

M.: No pensaste en lo religioso.

EA.: Es simplemente alegría. No hay nada más.

M.: Está bien. (Pausa) "Se narra de forma anecdótica".

EA.: Sí, esto tiene... tiene que ver con esto, que es un... no es... no lo puedo llamar un... choque de culturas, porque... más bien porque la palabra "choque" es demasiado fuerte. Simplemente es un... lo cuenta como algo que pasó, no... no es demasiado calificativa durante la descripción. Narra los eventos, las cosas que pasan y... listo.

M.: Y listo.

EA.: No da demasiada opinión.

M.: Bueno, por eso entonces te lo... lo uno con lo otro, por eso ponés que es objetivo.

EA.: Precisamente. Simplemente narra lo que pasa.

M.: ¿Y por qué... por qué "bastante" objetivo? Ahí...

EA.: Precisamente no hay ninguna... no hay mucha calificación en la descripción, no... no dice "maravilloso", o... "desastroso"... Como dije, el caos lo tuve que inferir yo, no... en ningún momento dice que es desordenada la misma fiesta.

M.: Sí.

EA.: Todas las... las apreciaciones las... hay que inferirlas, ella simplemente se limita a narrar lo que está ocurriendo.

M.: ¿Entonces vos esperabas apreciaciones?

EA.: No, simplemente que, ¿no?, que ésa es la manera en la que... en la que narra.

M.: Está bien. ¿Qué te hace suponer a vos que este texto iba a ser sobre el choque de culturas?

EA.: Es una mujer extranjera en una fiesta... a la que no es... de una cultura a la que no pertenece. Por los elementos puestos ahí, esperaba... algo parecido.

M.: Entiendo. Y... ¿por qué decís vos que la celebración navideña es una festividad de los navajos?

EA.: ¿Por qué digo que es una festividad de los navajos?

M.: Sí. ¿Por qué... qué te hace suponer a vos que la Navidad es una celebración... o sea... típico de quién es la celebración de Navidad?

EA.: La Navidad...

M.: ¿De la narradora, de los indios, de quién?

EA.: Eh...

M.: Vos estás suponiendo acá que es de los indios y no la narradora, claramente lo ponés.

EA.: Sí, sí, esa fiesta... lo dice ella misma, que "nunca habíamos esperado que fuera algo así", y que "nunca íbamos a volver a ver algo parecido". Es la fiesta de los indios. A pesar de que no veo qué tanto tienen que ver con la Navidad.

M.: Entiendo. Eh... "Apacible fascinación".

EA.: Eh... otra vez con la falta de... de calificativos, lo dice en un momento que... o por lo menos describe... su... sentimiento, eso como que: "Nunca habíamos visto nada parecido, nunca... nunca volveríamos a ver nada parecido", lo que demuestra algún... grado de fascinación, pero por otra parte el mismo texto, como dije, es objetivo. En un... por una parte dice: "Nos sentimos muy... impresionados", pero por otra parte no muestra ninguna impresión.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) ¿Qué "dispara su nostalgia"?

EA.: Ah, es un comentario de uno de los... supongo que es uno de los indios, que... la saluda como alguien... de su propia cultura.

M.: ¿Y qué significación tiene eso? Sí, ése es el disparador, tenés razón. ¿Y qué significa? ¿Por qué dispara semejante nostalgia?

EA.: Eh... bueno, en el medio de una fiesta a la que no pertenece, repentinamente es tratada como si estuviera en la fiesta de su propia cultura. Por eso, repentinamente le hace recordar a su propia... a su propia tierra.

M.: Ahora... ¿Qué ahora? La Navidad no porque ya me dijiste que no celebra la mujer la Navidad, pero ¿qué ahora entonces? La nostalgia es la añoranza de algo...

EA.: Y sí... Eh... ¿Cómo que no... que no festeja la Navidad ella misma? ¿Yo dije algo parecido?

M.: Yo... creí entender que me dijiste que la Navidad es una celebración propia de los indios...

EA.: No, no, esta celebración...

M.: En particular.

EA.: ...es propia de los indios. Es la versión de la Navidad de los indios navajos.

M.: Está bien. La narradora celebra en su...

EA.: Evidentemente tiene una Navidad en su propia tierra. Por eso hace la comparación entre la Navidad de los navajos y la suya.

M.: Está bien.

EA.: Ella...

M.: Y entonces ¿qué añora?

EA.: Añora... directamente lo que añora es su propia Navidad. Indirectamente, probablemente sea la cultura entera.

M.: Eh... Navidad en su cultura, ¿cómo será? ¿Vos decís que no podés identificarla con... ninguna cultura en particular?

EA.: Suena vagamente occidental. Por lo que dice... la mención de las fogatas medio me confundió, no sé de dónde pueda ser. Pero suena... de la zona europea, americana o... lo que sea.

M.: Está bien. ¿Existe alguna evidencia de alguna mirada condescendiente, racista, negativa o inferior de la mujer hacia los indios?

EA.: "Heathens", cuando los llama "herejes". Eso también, otra cosa que me confundió.

M.: No lo pusiste a eso.

EA.: No lo puse porque me pareció contradictorio otra vez. Durante el texto no menciona ninguna... no hay ninguna otra mención despectiva de los indios. Todo el resto los trata como si fueran gente. Es más, dice que "aprendí esto, les mostré esto"... No hay ninguna otra mención despectiva. Quizás esto fue escrito en un contexto cultural en el que la religión era muchísimo más importante, los que no fueran cristianos eran herejes a pesar de que fueran perfectamente... normal. Esa contradicción me llevó a no... a no contarla porque... es tan raro que no...

M.: Sí. ¿O sea que sería una visión... una posible visión nuestra, desde el siglo XXI?

EA.: Sí, precisamente, como que no lo menciona de esa manera porque los desprecie, simplemente que los menciona... porque quien no es cristiano es un hereje, punto.

M.: Sí, entiendo. Y no sé si recordás que hay una pequeña narración del lavado de los platos, donde ellos... donde la narradora... sugiere el lavado de los platos.

EA.: Sí, ah...

M.: Eso... porque ellos no iban a hacer nada. ¿Eso te... te representó algo... te vino a la mente algo?

EA.: ¿Por qué los... ellas no iban a lavar los platos? No sé, puede haber varias razones... Eh... que esperen que alguien más los lave, que ellos no laven platos... no... no puedo entender bien cómo es la situación pero...

M.: Sí, no podés decir por qué es relevante o por qué está ahí mencionada.

EA.: Sí, por qué... No podría decir por qué los navajos no... no tienen la costumbre de lavar platos.

M.: Está bien. Y... hay otra... o varias cosas que... cuando menciona por ejemplo la comida, si va a alcanzar la comida, y que vamos a hacer las galletitas de esta manera o en el horno en vez de así... ¿Eso qué te... te sugiere algo? La narradora va haciendo sugerencias, o sea, que, "Bueno, así no va a alcanzar"...

EA.: Ella es la que se asegura de que llegue la... la comida para todos. Quizás en los navajos no está... está más... antes había una... una mención de que si dejaban los... la carne sin comerla alguien más se la iba a agarrar. Quizás en la Navidad de ellos usualmente no hay comida para todos y no alcanza, y al final se terminan todos peleando por la... por la comida.

M.: ¿En la Navidad de quién?

EA.: De los navajos.

M.: Sí.

EA.: Ella es la que se encarga de que sí, de que llegue la comida a todos, mientras se da cuenta de que ellos mismos no toman el cuidado.

M.: ¿Y entonces cómo explicás eso? Entonces ahí no te entiendo, porque si estás diciendo que estamos participando en una celebración de la Navidad de los navajos...

EA.: Eso es una... Ella se está metiendo en la fiesta de ellos.

M.: Ah.

EA.: Que al principio dice simplemente que iban a mirar, pero después ella está trabajando...

M.: ...participa...

EA.: ...con todos los demás...

M.: ¿Y entonces qué es ella? No es invitada.

EA.: No, es... participante, organizadora...

M.: Organizadora...

EA.: Sí... Ella... como dicen, ellos dan la... la madera para que hagan las fogatas, como que... están viendo la fiesta de ellos pero le meten el... la parte organizativa de la... de los occidentales, para asegurarse que todo está...

M.: ...que tiene que estar. Está bien. (Pausa) Y en el cuestionario, a ver si me podés decir... "Están vestidos con las mejores ropas, ¿cuál es la dificultad en eso?"

EA.: Eh... no me... me cuesta un poco imaginar cuáles son las ropas.

M.: Estaban descriptas ahí.

EA.: Sí, sí, pero no... Precisamente no.. no es algo que yo... considere como familiar. Precisamente no... no lo registro con facilidad.

M.: Está bien.

EA.: Tengo que ponerme a imaginar.

M.: Lo mismo...

EA.: "Piñon smoke from the Christmas fires". No estoy acostumbrado a fuegos en Navidad, precisamente. Por eso el olor al humo no... salvo de la pirotecnia. Eh... "Navajos as efficient and ingenious". No me parece nada raro que un pueblo pueda desarrollar eficiencia.

M.: Sí. Pero ¿por qué la narradora va a mencionar justamente eso? Porque justamente es el punto. Si menciona que son... que tienen inteligencia y que son eficientes....

EA.: Esperaría que no lo fueran.

M.: Claro. ¿Lo viste así? ¿Lo interpretaste en ese momento así?

EA.: No lo... no está tan marcado para mí. Lo menciona pero... está bien, son inteligentes en esto... listo, no hay razón por la que no lo fueran o por que no lo fueran en otra... en alguna otra cosa.

M.: Muy bien.

EA.: Ella... otra vez vuelvo al ejemplo de cuando dice que aprendió cómo hacer el pan más eficiente de ellos, y les enseñó a hacer otra cosa. No necesariamente van a ser todos buenos para una cosa o todos malos para otra. Eh... "¿Por qué navajos... se puede relacionar con nuestra celebración?"

M.: Lo de las ropas.

EA.: No me pareció demasiado importante... Es auxiliar, sirve para pintar el panorama pero... no me parece demasiado... relevante.

M.: Y ¿qué refleja el hecho de que se paseen con los bifes abajo del brazo?

EA.: Eh... volvemos a... si lo volviera a hacer ahora probablemente lo pondría como esencial porque... muestra esa parte... es un ejemplo de los problemas de organización que hay usualmente en las fiestas, que caminan con la comida porque no quieren que se las saquen, lo cual significa que usualmente no hay suficiente comida para todos. Probablemente me arrepentiría ahí.

M.: Bueno, está bien, yo lo marco como que te arrepentiste. Y... ¿y la relación entonces con que "comen y comen", que lo marcás como esencial?

EA.: Y eso... y, parece algo importante en las fiestas, que están comiendo todo el tiempo.

M.: Está bien. ¿Pero por el motivo que acabás de decir?

EA.: Es algo característico de las fiestas y sí, también, que tiene que ver con esto. (Pausa) "Robert's greeting". Ah, esto es importante porque es precisamente lo que... lo que hace que ella... le dé el ataque de nostalgia, y por el contraste, es un... es una forma de saludar que pertenece a otra cultura.

M.: Hm.

Lula

Melina.: Estoy con Lula y el texto de los navajos. (Pausa) En el log de reflexión te pregunto, vos ponés que "el festejo navideño difiere tanto del que conozco o los que conozco".

Lula: Porque los que yo conozco son básicamente el nuestro, y tengo idea de lo que festejan por ahí algunas en Europa o en Estados Unidos por las películas que veo...

M.: Hm.

L.: Son bastante parecidos más allá de la diferencia que exista, y por ahí... como... cómo se toman el tema... bueno, los regalos, o la cena o eso, pero en sí el clima es más o menos parecido. Y en este texto es algo totalmente diferente porque ellos, es la comunidad entera que se junta, si bien en diferentes... así como grupitos, pero se junta la comunidad entera en el mismo lugar, y no es una... es decir, bueno, se juntan en una casa o en una choza...

M.: Sí.

L.: No sé... una familia y se hacen regalos... no regalos así, comprados en una tienda, pero regalos... cosas que les pueden servir a ellos, sino que se juntan así... festejan de esa manera, y no es común, acá no... no se festeja así.

M.: Hm. Y entonces la Navidad es una celebración de los indios.

L.: Y, me da a entender que sí.

M.: (Pausa) Vos ponés que "ella es... A ver si... ¿vos sos la que me pone de la cultura que es la narradora? (Pausa) No, me confundí. Vos ponés que ellos están ahí para vender, que tienen una tienda, que venden comida o proveen. Supongo que venden... ¿Quisiste poner que venden? Porque vos usás una palabra que no... no ponés "venden", ponés "proveen"..

L.: Claro, porque no entiendo muy bien qué están... qué están haciendo ellos ahí, pero en un momento mencionan una reserva.

M.: Hm.

L.: Entonces yo me lo tomé como que es... una especie de... ¿viste como ponen las selvas, así... selva en galería? Que los protegen o... como los parques nacionales, entonces yo me lo tomé como que eso es un área que está protegida de alguna manera por el gobierno, para que no los... para que ellos puedan seguir viviendo ahí, pero que esto es como una tienda... que tienen para... eh... qué sé yo, por ahí ellos... como tienen un determinado... margen, digo, donde se pueden mover si eso es una reserva, no tienen lugar donde ir a cazar o a pescar o juntar comida...

M.: ¿Quiénes?

L.: Los indios.

M.: Los indios.

L.: Los indígenas, eh... entonces ellos ponen ahí una tienda donde...

M.: ...para abastecerse.

L.: ...para abastecerlos a ellos.

M.: O sea, el gobierno.

L.: Claro.

M.: Algo así.

L.: Claro. Y ella es de una manera voluntaria porque no cualquiera va a trabajar ahí, pero recibe un sueldo, por eso era algo...

M.: Entiendo. "Es trabajo humanitario y agotador", ponés.

L.: Sí, porque ella menciona que ese... eso... por lo menos en el día del festejo trabajó muchísimo y terminó muy cansada, porque tenía mucha gente que tenía que atender.

M.: Hm. ¿Y a qué cultura pertenece ella?

L.: Y, yo... no sé... yo puse que era por ahí... estadounidense o inglesa, sí.

M.: Ah, sí. ¿Qué te hace suponer?

L.: Y porque por ahí menciona, dice: "Me habló en inglés", no sé, puede ser de otro lugar de Europa o... quizás de... Sudáfrica...

M.: Está bien. "La comida escasea", ponés vos, "entre los indios". ¿Por qué escasea, suponés, por eso que decís antes?

L.: Por eso de... sí, que están adentro de la reserva y...

M.: ¿Y por qué no van a tener acceso a los lugares de... si están justamente en una reserva natural, por qué no van a tener acceso a cazar, porque quién les va a prohibir cazar? No entiendo bien lo que me decís.

L.: Claro, porque en...

M.: Entiendo, sí, pero ¿por qué si están en una reserva natural...

L.: Porque una reserva natural es... por lo... o sea, una reserva natural está hecha para preservar todas las especies que están ahí, y en este caso el hábitat de esta gente, pero si ellos se ponen a matar los animales y...

M.: Está bien, porque está prohibido cazar, entonces...

L.: Claro.

M.: Entiendo.

L.: Entonces ellos buscan la manera de... Pero aun así... bueno, siempre... qué sé yo, los subsidia el gobierno por ahí...

M.: Hm. (Pausa) Y ¿cómo concuerda el que... Chee es...

L.: Ella, pero yo pensé que en una de éstas puede ser el nombre que se le... que le dan ahí, que los indígenas le pusieron a ella.

M.: Ah, justamente te iba a preguntar cómo era congruente con decir que ella era norteamericana...

L.: Sí, yo pensé... es decir, puse el nombre de ella porque es el único que aparece, pero... me parece, pero... me parecía que es un nombre que... le han puesto los indios navajos a ella.

M.: Está bien. ¿Y qué dispara la nostalgia de ella hacia el final? Vos la mencionás, vos ponés "nostalgia por la fecha", ¿por la Navidad?

L.: Claro, porque ella... es decir, ahí te dice que el único... nunca más voy a ver una Navidad de éstas, o es algo único... entonces es como que ella está... no es que está triste de estar ahí o... pero... ese festejo, que es muy importante en la cultura en la que ella está, le hace acordarse de los festejos que ella pasó con su familia, con sus amigos en su cultura. Por eso.

M.: ¿Y qué dispara esa nostalgia?

L.: ¿Cómo, qué dispara? No te entiendo.

M.: ¿Qué genera, o... no, cómo se origina la nostalgia? Ella la siente en un momento, no en toda la celebración.

L.: Sí, cuando se van todos y... queda sola...

M.: Hm. (Pausa) ¿Cuáles son...? Decime cuáles son los problemas con... con los fuegos.

L.: Eh... no... no sé qué significa "piñón" o "piñon" smoke...

M.: ¿Y por qué es relevante saber qué es "piñon"? ¿No te satisface saber que es "smoke"?

L.: Sí, pero... Ah, bueno, sí, por ahí... Yo porque como no lo había entendido lo marqué como...

M.: ...como algo problemático [in the comprehensibility grid].

L.: Sí, lo tomé como algo... no problemático para entender el texto sino problemático por el tema de que no sé qué es "piñon", por ahí es algo que ellos... algo particular que puede... no sé si significar algo para ellos... porque como no sé bien qué es...

M.: Y ¿los early rising habits?

L.: No es común que la gente se levante... no sé, yo nunca me levanté temprano en Navidad y no conozco a nadie que se levante temprano en Navidad. Sí, bueno, por ahí en Estados Unidos, que se acuestan más temprano para levantarse y abrir los regalos, pero tampoco es... tan temprano...

M.: ...tan temprano como para que lo mencione.

L.: Claro.

M.: ¿Y esto de que los navajos son eficientes y "ingenious"?

L.: ¿Qué?

M.: No sé cuál es el problema que tenés ahí, o por qué lo pusiste como 2 [option 2 in the comprehensibility grid].

L.: 2 es... "moderadamente comprensible". Ah, no...

M.: Por nada en particular.

L.: Capaz que me equivoqué, sí, capaz que me equivoqué. Porque no, porque es... es común que ellos... que las tribus sean ingeniosas porque hay cosas que yo he visto o escuchado que ellos hacen y que yo creo que... cómo se las ingenian ellos para... vivir y sobrevivir en un ambiente que... no tienen por ahí instrumentos que tenemos nosotros para algunas cosas y ellos siempre se las ingenian para... para todo.

M.: ...para hacerlo.

L.: Sí.

M.: Y después ponés episodios particulares como el del lavado de los platos, de la preparación del pan, la preparación del guiso... como "con cierta dificultad".

L.: Sí, porque no... no entendía cómo... es decir, ella explicaba todo el proceso y yo no me podía imaginar lo que estaba haciendo.

M.: Claro. Ése es el problema.

L.: Claro.

M.: Y ¿algo para decir del episodio del lavado de los platos? ¿Qué, representa algo o no?

L.: Supongo que representa algo pero no... porque ella dice que la ayudaron, no tuvieron problema en ayudarla pero que no lo iban a hacer si ella no se los pedía.

M.: Hm.

L.: Entonces... No sé... a qué se debió ese comentario así, porque a mí no se me ocurriría pensar que estos indígenas fueran gente perezosa.

M.: No se te ocurriría...

L.: No.

M.: ¿Pero a la narradora sí? No entiendo. ¿A la narradora sí?

L.: No, no, pero... no... yo supongo que lo habrá mencionado como algo... es decir, ellos por ahí pensaron que... los estaban agasajando, como que si eran invitados, entonces no tenían que lavar pero...

M.: Puede ser, ¿por qué no?

L.: Y que ella les haya pedido que la ayuden también porque era muchísimo lo que tenía que lavar.

M.: Bueno, por otra parte vos decís que la... o sea, ¿por qué van a ser invitados a una celebración que ellos...

L.: ...que es de ellos...

M.: ...que es... sí, hay una contradicción, ¿no?

L.: Sí.

M.: Y...

L.: Es complicado porque... en primer lugar no estoy muy segura de por... de cómo es la cuestión. O sea, evidentemente es una reserva... lo que yo imaginé es eso, una reserva con un subsidio del gobierno, en el sentido... ellos se ocupan de proveerle de lo que ellos necesitan para celebrar su fiesta. Pero eso es típico de ellos, como que ellos se ocupan de que eso pueda llevarse a cabo... Pero por ahí ellos se lo toman como que los están agasajando porque siempre... están acostumbrados, o por lo menos históricamente han estado acostumbrados a hacerse todo ellos y a conseguirse siempre sus cosas, entonces es una situación... diferente.

M.: Sí. (Pausa) ¿Por qué es esencial lo de las ropas, y lo de que son 200?

L.: Ah... esencial porque... te está... para mí te está... mostrando que... o sea, eso es algo que tienen parecido a lo que hacemos nosotros porque está bien, no se visten de la misma manera, y no consideran la mejor ropa lo mismo que nosotros consideramos la mejor ropa, pero consideran que esa celebración merece...

M.: ...la mejor ropa.

L.: ...ponerse la mejor ropa.

M.: (Pausa) ¿Por qué es esencial que ellos se paseen con la comida abajo del brazo?

L.: Por lo que dije de que por ahí la comida escasea, entonces... les daban y ellos para que nadie se los robe andaban con la comida abajo del brazo.

M.: (Pausa) Todos estos... la descripción de los eventos en particular la pusiste como auxiliar.

L.: Como auxiliares de... para... sí, porque me parece que... o sea, cómo preparar el pan y... yo no me lo tomé como que era un ritual para ellos, es decir, simplemente es... una descripción de cómo hacen la comida en la Navidad, por eso es.

M.: Está bien. Y mucha importancia de nuevo a la comida por... por el mismo motivo que decís antes...

L.: Claro.

M.: ...que la comida escaseaba.

L.: Que la comida escaseaba. Y que como es una celebración...

M.: ¿Y existe alguna... o sea, la visión de la narradora puede ser peyorativa o racista, condescendiente...

L.: No, no, simplemente... ¿Picture se dice?

M.: Un retrato.

L.: Sí, hacer un retrato típico de una Navidad de...

M.: ...de otro lado.

L.: De otro lado.

M.: Bueno, gracias.

Luz

Melina: Bueno, estoy con Luz y el texto de los navajos. Te pregunto... (Pausa) Ah, esto de "flounces", debe ser, decís, un adorno.

Luz: Sí, o una parte del vestido, una tela del vestido...

M.: Ah, sí, sí.

L.: No sé a qué hace referencia, o sea, no sé el significado, en general de las tres palabras, puse lo mismo, que no sabía el significado.

M.: ¿Por qué ponés... o decís que la fogata es un ritual?

L.: Creo que es como parte de lo que están... del festejo,... en su festejo navideño es bastante importante y es como... no sé, como ritual, o sea ritual, por ejemplo como en el otro texto había sido el hecho de la comida, en este caso era la fogata y todo.... o sea, todo el acompañamiento de la comida, el baile...

M.: Hm.

L.: Creo que es de bastante importancia en este texto.

M.: Sí.

L.: Y justamente, bueno... se ve algo que era... yo al leer este texto, no lo había leído nunca y no tenía idea de lo que era la cultura esa y qué hacían en Navidad, y supuse que... que acá lo recalca bien, que las personas mayores era como que cedían su conocimiento a los que venían... o sea que se enseñaban las tradiciones de su cultura.

M.: De su cultura. (Pausa) Bueno, acá te preguntaba lo mismo, ¿por qué estos son rituales? Vos ponés que hacer el pan, hacer el café parecen ser rituales. Me llama la atención la palabra "ritual".

L.: Sí...

M.: Porque ¿ritual no está asociado a lo religioso? ¿Es religioso esto, o por qué ponés "ritual"?

L.: Sí, creo que... la... sí, puede ser que esté asociado a algo religioso pero... yo creo que el pan en... o por lo que tengo entendido es como que es... no sé... en nuestro caso, en los que somos católicos es el pan y el vino, como que a su vez... va más allá de lo que es la comida, o sea que es eso que une, que es lo que pongo acá. El tema de por ejemplo trabajar todos juntos, no sé hasta lo del lavado de la vajilla, era como trabajar todos juntos para... que haya esa unión, y tenían su parte las mujeres, hacían una actividad y los hombres otra.

M.: Hm. Sí, entiendo. Y después ponés: "La hindú les regala caramelos, y describe la alegría y desesperación por parte de los indígenas sobre lo desconocido". ¿Por qué "desesperación"?

L.: Bueno, en lo... lo de la fila, o sea, creo que tiene algo para leer entre líneas, ¿no? El hecho de decir, estaban... por comer algo que era extraño, o sea, desesperación a lo que es extraño a su cultura.

M.: Hm.

L.: Por ahí... no sé, en la... lo que era en la fila ésa por ahí volvían a ser los nenes, las madres los mandaban a que vuelvan a pedir caramelos, pero es como que tiene un doble sentido, es decir: "Bueno, quiero más de lo que no es nuestro", vendría a ser, o ser, "quiero más de la otra cultura".

M.: ¿Y cuál es esta otra cultura? ¿Quién organiza esto de los caramelos?

L.: La chica... hindú, yo entendí que era una chica... sí, hindú.

M.: ¿Hindú... en contraposición al navajo? No te entiendo ahí.

L.: Sí....

M.: Porque vos estás diciendo que organiza ella y que para los navajos es desconocido, pero a su vez ponés que ella es hindú. ¿Hindú de indígena?

L.: No, hindú de... Ah, yo puse hindú.

M.: No sé, te estoy preguntando...

L.: No, no, quise poner...

M.: ¿Indígena?

L.: No, no, quise poner... acá estaba la palabra... (Pausa) "An Indian".

M.: "An Indian". OK. Bueno, o sea, los navajos son "indios", son "Indians".

L.: Ah, está bien. Para mí era distinto.

M.: Ella es distinta.

L.: Sí, es como que... no sé... no es aborigen ella, o sea, no es indígena, para mí ella era... no sé, por ejemplo de los Estados Unidos, una persona... común y... que va a explorar su... y a compartir su... la cultura de los indígenas.

M.: Está bien. Entonces no entiendo por qué ponés "Indian". O pusiste "hindú" pero es lo mismo. ¿Por qué ponés, o por qué decís que es "Indian"? Acabás de contradecirte. ¿Te das cuenta?

L.: Sí, sí. Sí, no... La idea es que es ajena a... a esta cultura.

M.: Hm.

L.: No sé de qué... o sea, no sé si es... a qué cultura hace referencia.

M.: Está bien. Bueno, pero ¿y por qué entonces, qué te hizo poner acá que es "hindú"? Porque que es hindú los asemejás, o lo alineás con los navajos. ¿O fue un error? Puede ser un error, tranquilamente.

L.: Sí, sí, no... Quise poner como que eran dos cosas distintas.

M.: Perfecto. Bueno. Los indígenas por un lado y bueno, y ella explorando... ¿Y qué es lo desconocido acá? ¿Qué es lo desconocido en eso de formar la fila para los caramelos?

L.: Y, que es...

M.: ¿O lo desconocido en general?

L.: Sí... no, en realidad... o sea... lo que es específico es que... en una parte como que lo dice, que es todo bien natural, bien propio de ellos... Como que ellos elaboran todo, y esto es medio... los caramelos es algo conocido artificialmente, entonces es... eso a lo nuevo, al mundo nuevo, es como que va más allá en ese sentido. Una... como que se abren puertas a eso nuevo que viene de... como de la civilización que... sí, de... de lo que es la ciudad a lo que es... lo que ellos viven que es todo naturaleza.

M.: Hm.

L.: Es como una conexión, no sé.

M.: Acá "El abuelo" hace referencia, estimo, a lo que dijiste antes, que los mayores transmiten la cultura a los más chicos.

L.: Sí.

M.: Bueno. Veo que los fuegos, tan grandes, representan la importancia que vos decís que tienen las fogatas o el fuego en...

L.: Sí, para su cultura. Lo que... bueno, yo no.. lo que puse era... ese fuego especial, que ellos lo llaman de un nombre, creo que para ellos... una de las preguntas era si era importante a nivel cultural. Creo que sí, o... todas las palabras que te puse, las considero importante pero... si bien desconozco a qué hacen particularmente, se pueden sacar por contexto, pero creo que son importantes para... para ellos mismos.

M.: Hm.

L.: Es como decir acá, el asado, o sea... sí entendemos... por ahí otra cultura entiende que es una comida, pero para nosotros es una palabra...

M.: Entiendo.

L.: Hay algo detrás.

M.: Perfecto. (Pausa) "No importa la raza, somos todos iguales". Y yo te pregunto, ¿somos todos iguales? Según el texto, ¿somos todos iguales?

L.: (Pausa) Yo... entendí que sí, pero no estoy segura.

M.: Según lo que vos...

L.: Es que no estoy segura, porque la última oración... eh... la última parte se me complicó bastante lo que por ahí... Es a partir de esta parte, de... de que le llega el sobre, y es parte como que yo ahí me perdí un poco, y... y acá queda una pregunta abierta, ¿trabajamos juntos? Entonces es como que lo entendí... como que sí, que podemos trabajar todos juntos.

Por eso puse que... éramos todos iguales, que no importa la raza, el color, que somos todos iguales. Pero no sé, dudé en esa parte.

M.: Está bien.

L. No sé si apuntaba a eso.

M.: (Pausa) ¿Y el paisaje desértico? No te habías dado cuenta... O... o no es que... no lo percibiste, no es que tuvo dificultades...

L.: No lo percibí.

M.: Está bien. ¿Y por qué la cierta complejidad de que se paseaban con los bifés abajo del brazo?

L.: (Pausa) Porque...

M.: Podés no saber...

L.: Porque... "Stroll with" no...

M.: Es una dificultad del vocabulario.

L.: Claro, sí, no... no supe. Entendía que estaban... que sí se paseaban con carne pero... no... como que lo entendí como que lo llevaban en el palito... no sé, capaz que...

M.: Listo para comer.

L.: Claro.

M.: (Pausa) Del episodio del lavado de los platos, ¿te acordás algo?

L.: Lo interpreté también con el episodio de lo que era hacer el pan o lo que fue hacer el café, como... que todos... hacían parte del trabajo, pero... a su vez me quedó algo ahí en el tintero como que... tenía algo... para mí había una enseñanza ahí que no la... no la pude captar, me parece.

M.: ¿Por qué, y por qué tenés esa percepción?

L.: Y, porque... para mí que si... o sea, está acá como duda es que por ahí se... y lo nombra, y le da tanta importancia, lo desarrolla... da tantos detalles del proceso, creo que es importante y...

M.: En realidad da... da detalles de todos y cada uno de los ítems que hay acá.

L.: Claro, sí, por eso, pero por ejemplo...

M.: ¿De todos pensás lo mismo entonces?

L.: Y, de lo que es hacer el pan y hacer el café yo creo que le da la misma importancia, y ahí hubo algo de ahí que no capté... o sea, lo que capté de los tres era que para unión y para trabajar todos juntos, pero más de eso no...

M.: Está bien. (Pausa) ¿Y el saludo de Robert al final? Ah, no te lo acordás, ponés. (Pausa) ¿Por qué es esencial que los navajos se visten con las mejores ropas? ¿Qué... a qué se asocia eso?

L.: Y, se asocia bastante con lo que es nuestra Navidad también, que está... tenemos... y a su vez lo que es su... la fogata, es como que... es... es su ritual, o lo que ellos hacen como nosotros nos vestimos, preparamos la... la mesa, si bien por ahí no utilizan la mesa, utilizan ese fuego y comparten... y es como que la forma de expresarse... como que estar de fiesta para... es una celebración importante.

M.: Claro. (Pausa) ¿Y lo mismo esto de que están presentes 200 navajos?

L.: Sí, eso... yo lo... lo había... también... las preguntas previas, yo había puesto que... o sea... debo haber leído algo, conocimientos previos, de que ellos comparten, festejan todos juntos. Por ahí nosotros tendemos a festejar con la familia, los más cercanos, amigos o...

por ahí dos familias unidas... depende. Pero es como que ellos como comunidad festejan. Por eso... me parecía importante...

M.: Sí.

L.: Que hay más... o sea, hay más unión y justamente se da que... esta persona está... la integran... fue distinta, distinto de la integración que hicieron con... en el texto previo del hindú a... a esa integración que es... como una familia muy grande, y bueno, y puede entrar, según lo que entendí yo, y tiene participación también.

M.: Hm.

L.: Acá yo pongo que...

M.: Acá supongo que ésta me la pusiste como auxiliar, la de "wrestling and racing", porque no te la acordabas.

L.: Sí.

M.: Bueno. Y veo que le asignás mucha importancia, como me dijiste recién, a cada episodio en particular. Lo pusiste como esencial, ¿verdad?

L.: Sí, sí a pesar de que algunos no llegué...

M.: ...a comprender...

L.: A comprender lo que quería decir.

M.: Bueno. ¿Y por qué... no sé si me podés repetir por qué el saludo al final, del hindú, es... auxiliar. (Pausa) Bueno, esa parte me dijiste que no la habías entendido bien.

L.: Claro, porque no la había entendido, por eso lo puse como auxiliar.

M.: Sí. (Pausa) ¿Existe algo de parte de la narradora que a vos te haga pensar que ella tiene una visión peyorativa o inferior de los indios?

L.: Sí, justamente, bueno... no... creo que en la última parte es como que... si bien no entendí mal es como que los dos amigos discuten o... hablan del tema ése de... de estar integrados y... justamente eso es lo que no me cierra a mí, si... están a favor... Me parece que uno está a favor y por eso demuestra, que es la persona que decide... ser parte de esa celebración, y la otra persona es como que... la persona que toma parte de... de la fiesta, es como que está a favor y le quiere demostrar a la otra persona que podemos estar unidos. Pero no sé si...

M.: Está bien.

L.: ...sí fue ésa la interpretación.

M.: Bueno, creo que no tengo nada más.

Miranda Dana

Melina: Bueno, Miranda Dana, ¿cómo estás?

Miranda Dana: Bien.

M.: "San Chee", ¿qué es?

MD.: Es... el nombre de... cuando...

M.: Sí, el nombre de ella.

MD.: Porque no sabía cómo escribirlo, es el nombre de ella, cuando está... era Robert que le habla en inglés hacia el final.

M.: Sí, ¿y ellos de qué cultura son?

MD.: Yo puse que eran estadounidenses porque no sabía.

M.: Bueno.

MD.: En realidad como no dice bien por qué están con los indios, no... no sé si es porque ellos son como investigadores, si fueron a estar con esta cultura o en sí por algún trabajo... no sé, como de caridad, o de... para preservar... no sé, la cultura indígena, la verdad no...

M.: Bueno, ¿y cómo es congruente, si son estadounidenses, que el nombre sea San Chee? ¿No te resulta raro?

MD.: Sí, es raro, no me había puesto a pensar. Y quizás sea... no sé, San Chee me suena algo chino o japonés, no sé... Sí, la verdad, no sé... Bueno, pero hay tantas cosas en Estados Unidos, muchas culturas, así que podría ser tranquilamente.

M.: ¿Celebran los indios la Navidad?

MD.: Eh... no sé... no, le puse celebración porque...

M.: No, no, te pregunto.

MD.: No sé... Parece, bueno, no sé si es una celebración, pero un festejo, por lo menos de lo que cuenta de dos días, tienen, que cuentan todas las preparaciones de la comida y las danzas y todo lo que hacen al otro día... que es medio celebración quizás.

M.: Está bien. Mencionás la nostalgia. ¿Qué dispara la nostalgia de ella?

MD.: Cuando el... al final Robert, me parece que era...

M.: Sí.

MD.: ...que le habla en inglés, porque ellos habían aprendido a hablar el idioma de los... de los indígenas navajos, cuando le habla en inglés... ahí como que se pone triste y le gustaría estar pasando esta época en su casa, y como que llora... no sé.

M.: ¿Y por qué es importante eso, que le hable en inglés?

MD.: Eh... quizás porque...

M.: No, no sé, te pregunto, por ahí...

MD.: Porque... quizás marca una intención... entre... quizás marca un agradecimiento...

M.: ...de parte de Robert...

MD.: ...de parte de Robert. Porque tranquilamente se podían haber comunicado en el idioma de los indígenas, capaz... Sí, quizás puede ser como agradecimiento, o como de gratitud... Quizás como ya el último día que se iban también, quizás hayan...

M.: ¿Que se iban a dónde?

MD.: Ya después de la celebración la pareja se volvía a su casa... supongo...

M.: Ah.

MD.: No... Me parecía...

M.: No, está bien, está bien, te preguntaba qué querías decir con eso.

MD.: Ah, me parecía que era, por eso.

M.: Después ponés acá, y lo ponés en inglés como cita: "...strolled about with great raw beefsteaks in their hands".

MD.: No, porque quería copiar la cita pero no sé si copiarla en inglés, si traducirla, si ponerla en español...

M.: No, te pregunto qué refleja eso.

MD.: Ah, que ella...

M.: ¿Por qué es importante para que vos la cites o decidas incluirla como está?

MD.: Ah, porque ella menciona como modo de crítica de la cultura o de la manera de comportarse de los indígenas, que son como... no sé, como... no avaros, pero que toman más de lo que necesitan... y esa parte cuando dice que andan caminando por todos lados

con un montón de comida en las manos porque tienen miedo de... como que se las roben entre ellos o las otras familias o tribus...

M.: ¿Y puede haber alguna otra motivación para ese comportamiento? ¿O a vos se te ocurrió pensar que podía haber otra motivación?

MD.: No, ¿cómo otra motivación? No...

M.: No sé, te pregunto.

MD.: No. No sé, no se me hubiera ocurrido, no. Me pareció que ella quería mostrar como un rasgo característico de la personalidad de ellos. También con lo de los caramelos, que me parece que también lo menciona...

M.: Sí.

MD.: O la parte cuando... lo de lavar los platos, que dice que si fuera por ellos los hubieran dejado todo sucios.

M.: ¿Y qué significa eso?

MD.: Como que... no sé, como que son... vagos, lazy... una cosa así.

M.: Claro. Está bien.

MD.: Y... esto no sabía cómo hacerlo...

M.: No, está muy bien. Te pregunto esta flecha entre el fuego y los fuegos cálidos...

MD.: Ah, era para... para diferenciar... Claro, porque como que... viste que al principio ella dice que... como que lo único que tenían en común, digamos, los festejos, la celebración, eran los... warm fires...

M.: ...fires...

MD.: ...o algo así dice, entonces me pareció que quizás el fuego... en el... en la pareja, del lado de la pareja, significaba como puse acá por ahí un confort o algo más... cómodo y tranquilo, en cambio para los indios, o para los indígenas, era... como para la unión de todas las tribus, dice que hay un montón de gente que viene a celebrar y aparte cocinan, hacen café, panes, carne, todo... las fogatas... y también están las danzas, por eso... como que esto me parecía que tenía otro significado distinto.

M.: Concepciones distintas del...

MD.: Sí, del... del fuego...

M.: Y también el fuego como unión, ponés vos.

MD.: Claro, porque de distintas tribus o familias, viste, que como venían tantos y hacían tanto, me pareció que quizás nunca... me pareció que quizás se reunían en estas ocasiones, es decir, bueno, para Navidad o el festejo y quizás para algún otro ritual que tengan, pero como que vivían separados y más aislados, me parece.

M.: Está bien. (Pausa) ¿Es un rasgo, un rasgo como identificador de... de la raza...?

MD.: Claro, que ella quiere presentar, sí, o de sus costumbres, me pareció, que tomaran más de lo que necesitaban.

M.: Bien. ¿Y quiénes sienten nostalgia? ¿Por qué plural? Porque en el (?) hablás de ella.

MD.: Ah, Sí, habla de ella pero me pareció que... No, no sé por qué en realidad lo puse en plural. Porque... él trata como de no... él se da cuenta que ella está llorando hacia el final pero mucho no le dice, quizás para no ponerla peor... Me pareció que... que quizás era un sentimiento compartido y él no quería... expresar sentimientos.

M.: Que podía ser un sentimiento compartido.

MD.: Sí.

M.: (Pausa) A ver si me podés decir cuál es el problema con... O sea, por qué los pusiste 3 [option 3 in the comprehensibility grid] y no 1 [option 1 in the comprehensibility grid] a los fuegos...

MD.: Porque no entendía... qué... por qué era importante el... el olor del humo de ese... no sabía... porque como que ella dice que cambia algo con... cuando sentían el aroma de ese humo, y entonces no entendía bien qué significado tenía, por eso me pareció que era quizás un poco más...

M.: (Pausa) ¿Por qué proveen madera ellos a los navajos?

MD.: Para... ¿los fuegos?

M.: Sí, pero ¿por qué? Son un millón de navajos, ¿por qué van a hacer eso?

MD.: Eh... No, no, no me puse a pensar.

M.: (Pausa) Ah, el episodio este de los platos dijiste que podían ser lazy.

MD.: Claro.

M.: (Pausa) ¿Por qué es auxiliar que estaban vestidos con las mejores ropas?

MD.: No me pareció demasiado importante para... porque como el... me parecía que el texto se centraba en la descripción que hacía la mujer, esa extranjera, digamos, de esa cultura, y no me pareció demasiado importante que... porque para ellos, como era una celebración importante justamente porque se reunían, justamente por eso supongo que se vestirían con sus mejores ropas pero...

M.: Está bien. ¿Y la presencia de 200 navajos?

MD.: Eso sí me pareció importante porque justamente por eso, porque era una congregación especial, me pareció que generalmente vivirían muy aislados, solos, por ahí una vida más solitaria o entre familias o grupos reducidos, y solamente se juntaban para este tipo de celebración, y por eso me pareció más importante que la vestimenta.

M.: Hm. ¿Y por qué eso de que se pasean con la comida...

MD.: Ah, con la comida...

M.: ...es esencial?

MD.: Había puesto porque justamente ella es como una... una crítica que les hace a la personalidad de ellos, porque ya habíamos dicho que tomaban más de lo que necesitaban... Eso sí me pareció más esencial para describir a... a los indígenas.

M.: Hm. "Los navajos comen y comen", ¿por qué será eso, o por qué es auxiliar?

MD.: Sí, no... en realidad como... cuando venía leyendo la lista, digo: "Los navajos comen y comen", no sé por qué estaba incluido [in the comprehensibility grid], porque...

M.: Por qué está acá...

MD.: Claro, porque sí, comían y comían porque había comida, había comida y comían, es lo de todas las fiestas.

M.: ¿Por qué ponés que el episodio del lavado de los platos es auxiliar mientras que decís que es algo revelador de ellos, de la personalidad de ellos?

MD.: Claro, porque quizás me concentré más en el... lo de los caramelos y lo de la comida, y no... no...

M.: No, está bien. ¿Y el saludo de Robert?

MD.: Eso era importante porque le hablaba en su idioma y ahí como que se...

M.: Cierito.

MD.: Lo de la nostalgia quizás, que estaba disparado ahí.

M.: Y te pregunto si pensás que la visión de la narradora respecto a los indios puede llegar a ser en algún momento peyorativa o... denigratoria, racista o condescendiente o algo por el estilo.

MD.: No, no sé, quizás sí hay crítica con estas cosas que estábamos diciendo pero no... cuando leí el texto no percibí algo demasiado peyorativo, muy racista, no. Es más, ellos como que se incluyen, ayudan a cocinar y a... No me pareció.

M.: Bueno, perfecto.

Scarlet Rose

Melina: Estoy con Scarlet Rose y el texto de los navajos. Yo te pregunto, vos ponés acá, en el log de reflexión, que no habían comido por un mes, en alguna tradición religiosa. Yo te pregunto cuál puede ser esa tradición que involucre no comer por un mes. ¿Es posible no comer por un mes? Porque no dice "un día", dice "un mes".

Scarlet Rose: No, lo que pasa es que yo pensé en algo así como... viste la gente que no come durante un ciclo de luna...

M.: Sí.

SR.: En algo parecido. No me... no le encontré una razón lógica.

M.: Está bien, ¿pero un ciclo de la luna puede durar un mes?

SR.: No, pero no sé. Por eso, tampoco sabía si era una costumbre, porque eran pobres... no sabía ni siquiera quiénes eran, si eran parte de... para mí eran parte de los navajos pero aparentemente de diferentes grupos, y no se me ocurría cómo uno puede ser más pobre que el otro si están todos celebrando juntos y...

M.: Está bien, entiendo. Y después, ¿cuál es el obstáculo éste de...

SR.: Claro, del grupo, de lo que...

M.: ¿Sabés qué significa "heathen"?

SR.: Hm.

M.: OK.

SR.: Por eso, yo pensé que era una tribu.

M.: Pensaste que "the heathen" es una tribu.

SR.: Claro, y que decía que ellos no comieron por un mes, y... no entendí eso.

M.: Bien. En la respuesta textual ponés que la mujer es norteamericana. ¿Cómo sabés que es norteamericana?

SR.: Lo supuse porque... no investigué nada a propósito, pero para mí los navajos, por lo poco que sé, son de Estados Unidos, y... como la narradora está observando como ellos festejaban la Navidad y hablaba en Inglés, y... ella tenía un nombre más oriental, pero... supuse que era norteamericana.

M.: Está bien. ¿Y cómo puede tener un nombre más oriental si es norteamericana?

SR.: Capaz que su familia era de Oriente y ella nació ahí o... puse "norteamericana" por una cuestión de lugar, no sé dónde nació.

M.: Está bien. Después ponés: "Es interesante ver cómo se describe su cultura, a través de alguna representación que la caracteriza por la comida típica"... ¿Cuál es la comida típica?

SR.: Por la carne, en realidad.

M.: La carne.

SR.: Sí.

M.: "...las tradiciones, y principalmente los contrastes entre las costumbres indias y las norteamericanas, según el estereotipo". ¿Cuál estereotipo? ¿El estereotipo de quién?

SR.: De los norteamericanos. Porque como no sé nada de los navajos, y sé más de los norteamericanos, cuando lo leía yo misma iba haciendo el contraste... dice... cuando dice: "Un hombre con sus tres esposas", o que ellos cazaban su comida.

M.: Ah. ¿Y qué... eso qué es, eso es de los navajos?

SR.: De los navajos.

M.: Está bien. Y después decís: "El texto sólo se concentra en describir la Navidad".

SR.: Sí.

M.: ¿Y éste es el objetivo del texto? ¿Describir la Navidad de los navajos?

SR.: Pero a través de la descripción te muestra el contraste, que a mí era lo que me interesaba.

M.: Hm.

SR.: Y...me parece que sí, que es lo... lo que hace... lo principal... que después el final, ya cuando se centra más en la narradora, es un pedacito del final... Entonces no me concentré en eso.

M.: Está bien. ¿Por qué es secundario el final? Ponés que la narradora se siente, o hay sentimientos al final que se expresan. ¿Por qué decís que es secundario entonces?

SR.: Y, por esto, porque... ella al final dice que después de haber pasado toda la Navidad con... con la cultura india, estaba homesick, que necesitaba... tener contacto con su familia, por ejemplo. Pero nada más le dedica una columna a eso, y ya sobre el final, entonces...

M.: ¿Qué dispara el sentimiento, al final, de ella? ¿Te acordás?

SR.: La notita de Feliz Navidad del navajo.

M.: ¿Y por qué puede ser esto un disparador de ese sentimiento?

SR.: Y, acá dice que él le habló en Inglés, entonces me parece que después de estar acostumbrada a escucharlos hablando su propio idioma y de estar ahí por un año, dice, escuchar algo de su cultura... por un segundo la hace extrañar.

M.: Está bien. Te pregunto, ¿celebran la Navidad los navajos?

SR.: Y... y, por lo que dice acá, sí.

M.: ¿Pero eso te resulta bien, te resulta raro...

SR.: Me resulta raro, porque yo... no sé nada pero pensé que... que ellos tendrían otro dios, otras costumbres... Aparte, no sé, le dicen Kismas, ni siquiera es la misma Navidad que la tradicional.

M.: Por el título.

SR.: Ya por el título y después, bueno, cómo se celebra es diferente. Entonces no sé si celebran el mismo Dios o a Jesús o a quién, pero ellos le llaman Navidad a algo, y no estoy segura si es lo mismo que nosotros.

M.: Hm. (Pausa) En la reformulación visual, tu primer dibujo me hace acordar al texto anterior, ¿eso es a propósito?

SR.: Sí.

M.: Y ¿acá por qué las fogatas son lo más representativo de este texto?

SR.: Eh...

M.: Porque podrías haber optado por otra cosa, por cualquiera de las otras menciones.

SR.: Sí, en realidad yo quería... parece más... representativa la fogata pero yo quería poner énfasis en la cantidad de gente.

M.: Ah, comprendo. En la...

SR.: Es una comunidad, y la otra es más privada, una familia.

M.: Está bien. ¿Dónde radica... ponés que el texto tiene un nivel de dificultad moderado. ¿Dónde radica la dificultad?

SR.: Para mí en lo que te marqué yo, en... the heathen...

M.: Ah, la confusión con las comunidades y las contradicciones de ésas que mencionaste al principio.

SR.: Claro.

M.: Estas que están marcadas, ¿podés explicar que... el olor, el humo de las fogatas...?

SR.: Sí.

M.: ¿Qué te lleva a ponerle un 3 [option 3 in the comprehensibility grid]?

SR.: Bastante difícil de comprender porque no sé lo que es "piñon", por eso, por la palabra.

M.: ¿Solamente por eso? Pero bueno, con tu conocimiento de inglés podés inferir qué es "piñon". No importa, aunque no sepas la palabra, es un tipo de humo.

SR.: No, no... no sabía.

M.: Ah, digo yo, se me ocurre... OK. ¿Y acá, cuál es la dificultad? "Stroll with raw steaks in arms".

SR.: No lo entendí tampoco.

M.: ¿Sabés qué es "steaks"?

SR.: ¿Carne?

M.: Sí.

SR.: Sí, pero "stroll with raw steaks" no sé.

M.: (Pausa) "Navajos as efficient and ingenious".

SR.: No le presté atención a eso. Entonces...

M.: Está bien.

SR.: No me di cuenta en qué parte lo insinúa.

M.: (Pausa) Acá, que están vestidos con sus mejores ropas es auxiliar.

SR.: Auxiliar.

M.: ¿Y por qué es auxiliar? ¿Te trae alguna relación con la Navidad o no?

SR.: Eh... Sí, no lo pensé desde ese punto de vista, pero lo tiene en común con lo nuestro, pero a la hora de entender el texto no me pareció vital para eso.

M.: Vital para entenderlo.

SR.: Sí.

M.: (Pausa) Esto no entiendo, si acá ponés que el saludo del indio al final es esencial, pero a su vez en la respuesta decís que es un tema secundario. Hay una contradicción ahí.

SR.: No, porque yo lo... bueno, puede ser, pero yo lo pensé desde el punto de vista que el saludo de Robert te dice un montón de su cultura. Te dice en esa oración, te dice que los navajos tienen su propio idioma... era para entender la cultura navaja en realidad, no para aludir a los sentimientos de la chica.

M.: Bueno, ¿y qué más te dice entonces? Decime qué te indicó el saludo. Que tienen su propio idioma, ¿qué más?

SR.: Eh... no... y principalmente eso, porque... en el párrafo ése lo central es que habló en Inglés.

M.: Sí.

SR.: Y después ya salta a ella.

M.: Bueno. Y... ¿recordás la anécdota, anécdota no, el episodio del lavado de los platos?
SR.: Sí, ¿que ella dijo que si no les decía nada iban a dejar todo sucio?
M.: Sí. ¿Eso tiene alguna significación?
SR.: Y, para mí en el momento de leerlo no, fue una anécdota más.
M.: Fue una anécdota más.
SR.: Aparte después...
M.: Nada revelador de los navajos.
SR.: Es que no quería suponer que eran todos sucios.
M.: Digo ¿qué pensaste, qué pensaste cuando lo leíste? ¿Pensaste algo, no pensaste nada...
SR.: No, lo dejé pasar.
M.: Lo dejaste pasar.
SR.: Era muy cortito.
M.: Y... después también, cuando preparan las galletitas y eso... ¿algo que se te vino a la mente con eso? Porque ¿por qué preparan las galletitas?
SR.: Para los chicos.
M.: Sí, pero ¿quién da la orden de preparar, o a quién se le ocurre preparar?
SR.: ¿No es a la narradora?
M.: Sí. ¿Y eso te sugiere algo?
SR.: Que lo trajo de su cultura, de su tradición.
M.: Sí.
SR.: Nosotros también hacemos galletitas.
M.: Está bien. Bueno, nada más.

Tacuara

Melina.: Estoy con Tacuara y el texto de los navajos. ¿Ésta es la misma palabra?
Tacuara: Sí.
M.: ¿Y por qué la ponés dos veces?
T.: Porque empecé primero en inglés y después me di cuenta que tenía que estar en castellano.
M.: Ah, está bien, entiendo. ¿Y jerarquías de qué tipo, de qué pensaste?
T.: Eh... y, así como está el jefe de la tribu y después, qué sé yo, sus subordinados, por decirlo de alguna manera, así, qué sé yo, como que depende del rol, por ahí, el rol que ocupan la mujer, los hijos... ahí están organizados de manera jerárquica. No sé en realidad lo que era.
M.: Está bien. (Pausa) El tema principal es que desconocés por completo de qué cultura se trata. No tenés familiaridad con los rituales.
T.: Sí, el problema, ése era para mí.
M.: Pero, digamos, ¿cuáles son los eventos que se narran ahí, o cuál es la celebración?
T.: La celebración de... de una Navidad... pero... yo vi que la narradora que es ajena a esa cultura...
M.: ¿La de los navajos?
T.: Claro. Lo narra desde su perspectiva, o sea... narra... quizá lo nuevo también para ella. En un momento también dice que es la única Navidad que van a pasar así.
M.: Sí.

T.: Y... no, pero digo... que es un montón de cosas como que no tengo ni idea, por ejemplo, yo a veces cuando me pasa eso, cuando son textos que son... la temática es ajena, me enciclo con el diccionario, o me vuelvo diccionario-dependiente. Por ejemplo, bah, más cuando hay tantas descripciones, necesito buscar las palabras para poder imaginarme mejor, poder... que yo de hecho lo puse ahí, que era una dificultad por ejemplo para mí en estos momentos no tener diccionario. A grandes rasgos, lógico que termino entendiendo ciertas cosas, pero por ejemplo me pasa eso, cuando son textos que más desconozco, más uso el diccionario.

M.: (Pausa) "Es el ritual de la Navidad". ¿En qué es ritualista... en qué sentido es la navidad de los navajos ritualista?

T.: Y...

M.: Ritualista, no sé cómo decir.

T.: Se basa en un ritual. Y, me parecía cómo lo describían, las comidas y todo eso... me pareció que... aparte de la manera en que lo celebran siempre.

M.: Está bien.

T.: Después, ah, hice este dibujo...

M.: No, ¿el contraste entre distintas culturas cuál es? ¿La cultura...?

T.: La de ella...

M.: ¿Que es qué?

T.: Yo calculo que... había un nombre raro igual, no sé de dónde es, por ahí puede ser mismo de ahí de Estados Unidos pero... Puede ser.

M.: Bueno, entonces ¿qué te hizo pensar que es americana? El nombre es San Chee.

T.: Sí.

M.: Entonces bueno...

T.: El nombre no es muy americano...

M.: No sé, no digo nada yo, ¿eh? Mirá que no estoy implicando nada.

T.: No, no. No, no sé de dónde es ella, pero sé que eso le es ajeno y que (?) es extraña y... Pero el... cuando se acerca en un momento uno de... este Robert y le habla en inglés, y ella habla inglés.

M.: Claro, está bien. Y ella celebra la Navidad en su cultura.

T.: Sí.

M.: ¿Y qué es lo que extraña? ¿La celebración de la Navidad o qué?

T.: Yo creo que... su manera de celebrar la Navidad y... también su gente, o sea, como... seguramente su familia, que es como uno... bueno, dependiendo de donde venga, seguramente por ahí la celebrará con la familia... Igual a mí me pareció esto, por ejemplo el tema de los caramelos, que eso es parte de su cultura.

M.: Sí.

T.: Eh... claro, por eso a mí me pareció una... que fue por eso que después hice el dibujo, que fue como el tratar de combinar las dos culturas o tratar de... qué sé yo, esa necesidad de ella de querer compartir un poco de su tradición también.

M.: O sea que es algo que ella insertó en la Navidad de los navajos para...

T.: Sí, lo insertó, por ahí una necesidad para mí de imponer un poco... bah, no imponer de manera negativa pero... también de que... sí, de que esté presente su tradición también ahí.

M.: Entiendo. Y el cuestionario... te resultó moderado [of moderate difficulty to comprehend], será por todo lo que estás diciendo...

T.: Claro, sí.

M.: ¿Cuál es el problema con lo que los navajos están "vestidos con sus mejores ropas"?

T.: Ah, y, porque... bueno, ¿y cuáles son sus mejores ropas? ¿Cómo se visten los navajos? No sé, entonces... por eso.

M.: Menciona. Describe el texto.

T.: Sí, por eso, pero bueno, en esa parte de descripción es cuando hay un montón de cosas que no entendía y que como no las podía buscar no las podía imaginar, entonces sabía que estaban ahí pero eran indescifrables.

M.: Entiendo. Eh... ¿En qué sentido es problemático que festejan con la lucha o con las carreras?

T.: Claro, es que por ahí no me imaginaba cuál era el tipo de actividad que hacían.

M.: ¿Qué tipo de lucha o qué tipo de carrera?

T.: Por ejemplo... esto sabía que es carrera, pero esto no... no sabía lo que era la palabra.

M.: Ah, está bien. (Pausa) Esto, ¿cuál es el problema, "stew preparation"?

T.: No entendí, la verdad, cómo era la... el proceso de cocinarlo no... no lo entendí.

M.: No podrías decir qué fue lo que... cómo lo cocinaron.

T.: No, no, no me quedó claro para nada.

M.: Y lo mismo con el café.

T.: Sí, eso como que un poco más me... imaginaba un poco pero... también justo la palabra clave que era "cedar" era como que no sabía lo que era...

M.: ¿Y no se te ocurrió pensar que era un tipo de café? No importa cuál.

T.: Ah, no pensé que era un tipo de café.

M.: ¿Qué pensaste que era?

T.: Que hacía referencia a la... no sé, como una telita, así, en el medio del pocillo y pensé que...

M.: Ah, está bien. (Pausa) ¿Es auxiliar el hecho de que hay 200 navajos presentes? ¿O sea, qué te hace pensar a vos que es auxiliar eso?

T.: No, no me pareció tan importante... o sea, no sé, me pareció más importante las cosas que hacían a cuestiones más que los describían a ellos o los caracterizaban, que la cantidad.

M.: Ah, vos hablaste de un choque de culturas, o de un contraste de culturas al principio, y suponés que ella es... la narradora es americana.

T.: Sí.

M.: ¿Y cómo puede ser relevante entonces esto?

T.: El... ¿qué, la cantidad?

M.: Sí.

T.: Y, que ella está solita... que ellos son más y...

M.: ¿Pero cómo celebrarán en su propia cultura?

T.: ¿Quiénes?

M.: Ella. Ella y su...

T.: ...y su cultura... Y nada, si es americana... eh... creo que debe ser más parecido a nosotros. A mí igual lo que me llamó mucho la atención es que los navajos...

M.: Hay algo que no te cierra en este texto.

T.: Sí, hay un montón de cosas igual que me quedaron medio flojas. Igual que... cómo es la celebración de ellos, los navajos y... por qué, dónde eso pasa... digo, la Navidad tiene una raíz cristiana, ¿no?

M. Sí.

T.: O sea que alguien se lo impuso eso porque... ¿de dónde sacaron ellos...

M.: Bueno, ¿y no te preguntaste eso?

T.: Sí, por eso me pregunto por qué celebran la Navidad si... De hecho, en el cuestionario anterior yo en un momento puse que no sabía nada de la Navidad de ellos pero me llamaba la atención por qué una comunidad indígena festeja la Navidad si tiene origen cristiano, entonces alguien le impuso esa... ese ritual que no es de ellos.

M.: Está bien. Ésa fue la interpretación que se te ocurrió.

T.: Sí porque... yo no sé cómo... de dónde sacan ellos la Navidad, no tienen... para mí es eso...

M.: ¿Por qué no mencionaste esto en las tareas?

T.: Por qué... no en el prior knowledge, porque no sé si... porque acá en ningún momento tengo para poner eso.

M.: No, pero puede ser algo importante a interpretar como el texto.

T.: Ah, yo en el otro lo puse.

M.: Está bien.

T.: En el cuestionario anterior.

M.: ¿En qué sentido es esencial que... esto de "stroll with raw steaks in arms"?

T.: Ah, me llamó la atención que no los querían dejar en el piso porque tenían miedo de que alguien se los sacase...

M.: ¿Y cuál podría ser la razón para eso?

T.: ¿Para tener miedo?

M.: Sí, ¿por qué alguien quiere... o puede querer llevar los bifos abajo del brazo y no dejarlos? ¿Qué se te ocurre que puede ser?

T.: Eh... y, medio que... desconfianza en el sentido... que creo que... bueno, en varias comunidades así indígenas, qué sé yo, está esa... son desconfiados, o sea que por ahí el blanco (?) son desconfiados. Son desconfiados también porque son un... así un pueblo sumamente golpeado, lógico que tienen...

M.: ¿Los indios?

T.: Sí. Eh... yo... por ejemplo...

M.: Pero digo, ¿quién... Sí, entiendo tu razonamiento. Fue un pueblo golpeado y por eso una comunidad...

T.: Claro.

M.: ¿Pero estaban rodeados por quienes? ¿Mayoritariamente quién celebró esta fiesta?

T.: Y... ah, yo pensé que ellos.

M.: ¿Los navajos?

T.: Hm.

M.: ¿Y bueno, entonces qué, desconfianza de su propia comunidad, decís vos?

T.: No...

M.: No te sigo la línea de razonamiento.

T.: No, sí, está bien. Eh... No, no sé.

M.: No se te ocurrió.

T.: No.

M.: Está bien. (Pausa) ¿Por qué, si la celebración es de los navajos, Hilda y Ken son los que suministran la leña?

T.: No sé, puse auxiliar porque no le encontraba el...

M.: El sentido. (Pausa) No sé si recordás el... por qué es esencial esto del lavar los platos.

T.: Ah, por la... lo marqué porque también me pareció otra cosa que era impuesta a ellos, porque no... eh... dice, ¿no?, que si hubiese sido por ellos lo dejaban así, entonces... nada, me pareció otra cuestión de... nada, de imponer las costumbres de uno, la tradición de uno y pensar... una cosa sumamente etnocéntrica de pensar que lo de uno está bien. O sea, porque... qué sé yo, uno con cierta mentalidad... ¿cuál es el problema de dejar las cosas sucias hasta el otro día? No, uno tiene que terminar de comer, tiene que quedar limpio... Y... qué sé yo, en vez de tolerar eso... no, dárselo, o sea... hacerlo... hacer las cosas a nuestra manera, digamos.

M.: Bueno, entonces hay una... ¿no percibiste vos cierta contradicción entre la interpretación que me estás diciendo y el hecho de que la narradora era la narradora y su marido? ¿Tanto peso tenían la narradora y su marido, que en una celebración de 200 personas van a imponer el lavado de los platos? En realidad ella sola lo impone.

T.: Hm. Sí... llama la atención porque... pero por eso me queda muy... por eso no tengo una interpretación cerrada, una cosa firme del texto, por eso... qué sé yo, me pareció... creo que fue el texto... creo no, fue el texto que más me costó y... eso, como que un montón de cosas no me cerraban.

M.: No te cerraban. (Pausa) ¿Y por qué el saludo de Robert es esencial?

T.: Ah, me pareció importante por eso, porque Robert, como la saluda a ella de la manera que para ella es más familiar o que se asemeja más a... por eso digo... al americano... pero esa... qué sé yo, la importancia de que le vengana a decir "Feliz Navidad".

M.: Muy bien, gracias.

Tess

Melina: Bueno, estoy con Tess, que va a hablar de los navajos. (Pausa) ¿Por qué es tan importante el significado de "flounce"? Le atribuí mucha importancia.

Tess.: No me pareció tan importante en el texto, pero como lo mencionaba dos veces...

M.: Está bien.

T.: Por ahí era un detalle.

M.: Después, en el 3 [item 3 in the immediate reflection log]... No comprendo la actitud de la narradora. ¿Por qué siente que es su deber y responsabilidad hacer que las mujeres navajas laven los platos? ¿Y de dónde deriva su autoridad?

T.: Por ahí no... me pareció, después pensé, no, capaz... No era un aspecto que no comprendiera la idea...

M.: Ah, está bien, un cuestionamiento... algo que te queda pendiente del texto.

T.: Sí.

M.: Bueno, ponés que la narradora es una "observadora externa", lo cual es muy interesante. ¿Qué elementos tenés vos para decir que ella es una observadora externa? Y en todas tus tareas hacés esta distinción entre "ella" como externa y la visión interna. ¿A qué te referís? ¿O podés decirme algo más?

T.: Me daba esa sensación, que... aunque ella estaba participando en las actividades, siempre ponía una distancia, como si fuera que estaba colaborando pero que no era verdaderamente parte de la celebración.

M.: ¿Y su objetivo era observar entonces?

T.: Daba la impresión que sí, como que era una experiencia exótica en su vida que quería presenciar esa... la celebración.

M.: Está bien. (Pausa) ¿Y por qué querría ella describir tanto, con tal lujo de detalle la celebración? ¿Por este motivo que me estás diciendo?

T.: Claro, me dio esa sensación, como si fuera el diario de un explorador que va anotando, que va registrando... los hábitos, las costumbres que ve.

M.: Hm. ¿Celebran los navajos la Navidad? (Pausa) ¿Celebran...?

T.: Sí, no... no sé que es lo que... Yo puse ahí que me quedaba pendiente cuál era el sentido que le daban a esa fecha, porque ellos sí nombran como que están esperando la Navidad, y después cuándo va a llegar, y hablan de la Navidad, pero no queda claro qué sentido le dan ellos.

M.: Sí. (Pausa) "La narradora siente asombro frente a lo distinto". ¿Por qué asombro? ¿Por qué genera asombro lo distinto? ¿O podría haber generado otro sentimiento? ¿Por qué dijiste "sentimiento de asombro", o... no sé, la reacción, como quieras llamarle?

T.: Hm...

M.: ¿Siempre genera asombro lo distinto?

T.: No... me parece que puede generar por ejemplo rechazo... no sé, muchas cosas, repulsión, disgusto... alegría... no sé, indiferencia...

M.: Sí. ¿Y por qué ponés "asombro"? ¿O qué te hace pensar que ella está asombrada?

T.: Me dio esa...

M.: Te dio esa impresión...

T.: Me dio esa sensación.

M.: Pero no tenés algo en particular que me digas: "Por esto".

T.: En el texto me pareció que una... cuando ella dice: "everything else was novel enough to make history". O después al final, que dice que nunca iban a vivir una Navidad como ésa en su vida.

M.: Hm. Después mencionás la nostalgia. ¿Cuál es la relevancia de la nostalgia en el fragmento?

T.: Para mí es... es central, aunque en todo el texto me parece que sólo al final se revela, cuando ella se... cuando termina la celebración y se... que se recluye en lo privado y ahí se ve la nostalgia. Pero parece central porque revela que ella no... no se integró nunca a esa comunidad y que no le gusta vivir en ese lugar.

M.: ¿Y qué dispara la nostalgia? ¿Cómo se genera o cómo se origina la nostalgia?

T.: En parte me parece que puede ser por el indio que le vuelve a hablar en inglés, como que eso trae un poco el recuerdo de su propia cultura.

M.: ¿Por qué es importante que le hable en inglés? ¿O el idioma es importante, me querés decir?

T.: Para mí sí, en este caso sí. Y también a ella le llama la atención, me parece, que el otro se intenta acercar adoptando su propio idioma.

M.: Hm. Después también ponés que "Ciertas cosas a la narradora parecen generarle malestar o incluso desconfianza". Malestar y desconfianza. ¿Estas palabras las pensaste,

las... y mencionás el episodio de los fuegos que pueden provocar un incendio. (Pausa) No estoy cuestionando, te estoy diciendo que me digas algo más.

T.: Me parece que se me ocurrieron nomás, no me acuerdo ahora que estuvieran en el texto.

M.: No, no están en el texto, pero... es lo que vos percibiste.

T.: Sí, me parece que esa sensación de distancia, de que ella fuera una observadora externa genera esa desconfianza...

M.: Hm.

T.: Por ejemplo con el fuego, que tienen que decirle a un grupo que apague un fuego porque puede haber peligro de incendio... y que tiene miedo de... que a veces no son cautelosos...

M.: Sí. Después mencionás muchos ejemplos de... Bueno, los indios son... perezosos, o aprovechadores u oportunistas... Esto... ¿puede entenderse como una lectura racista o peyorativa o discriminatoria de los indios de parte de la narradora o es algo objetivo? Porque vos decís, bueno, narra a la especie de un diario de viaje.

T.: Sí.

M.: En el sentido de que uno trata de ser lo más objetivo posible. Pero también ponés esto. ¿Existe algo, o te parece que existe algo...

T.: Para mí es peyorativo, sí. Por ahí después pensé que capaz era mi propia visión, que ya estaba como con prejuicios en contra de esa narradora que iba a mirar a los indios.

M.: ¿Cómo? Perdón, no te entendí.

T.: Claro, no sé si al final termino siendo yo la que tengo prejuicios contra la narradora blanca pensando que ella va a mirar con prejuicios a los indios.

M.: Está bien.

T.: Pero me dio esa sensación, que aunque muy sutilmente, iba introduciendo críticas.

M. Hm. (Pausa) Y después también retomás eso, de que ella no... "No es una participación de igual a igual". Y yo te sugiero acá esto, ¿alguna idea de dominación quisiste poner? ¿Qué quiere decir que uno no participa de igual a igual en un evento?

T.: Sí, no sé si...

M.: O de superioridad o...

T.: Claro, me parecía como que ellos estaban haciendo caridad en algún momento, por ejemplo cuando les daban los caramelos, en la forma de actuar o... Veo también una relación paternalista, por ejemplo cuando ella les dice que laven los platos, como que tiene que dar indicaciones... Me pareció que era ésa la relación por momentos.

M.: ¿Qué estaban haciendo ellos en la reserva? ¿O por qué están ellos ahí?

T.: No sé, yo creí que estaban colaborando, como haciendo ayuda comunitaria, pero...

M.: Ayuda comunitaria.

T.: Pero no sé si será eso.

M.: No, está bien, está bien. (Pausa) En la reformulación visual... Ah, "...y algunas conductas como reprobables", ponés, las que mencionaste, la de los platos, las de tomar más de lo que necesitan, los caramelos...

T.: O también el robo de carne, que decían que se robaban entre ellos...

M.: ¿Podría haber alguna motivación para eso? ¿Te preguntaste si podía haber alguna otra motivación para que ellos caminaran con la carne, o se llevaran más de lo que necesitaban?

T.: La verdad que no, no lo pensé, no sé por qué tuve la sensación de que ellos pasaban hambre... por todos los comportamientos, pero en realidad no sé por qué.

M.: Tuviste... se te ocurrió pensar que podían llegar a pasar hambre.

T.: Sí. Hay una parte en que dice que ellos "comían y comían", como... me dio la sensación que aprovechaban esa oportunidad porque sabían que en otro momento por ahí no iban a tener qué comer, o como que tenían hambre de mucho tiempo...

M.: ¿Entonces sería una conducta reprochable?

T.: No, en ese caso no.

M.: En ese caso no.

T.: No sé...

M.: No, es muy interesante. Ponés las características... ¿Acá cuando ponés lo del filtro es que es que la visión que tenemos de los navajos está filtrada por la de la narradora?

T.: Sí.

M.: Bueno. Y "... Hay características exóticas como los ritos de los ermitas".

T.: Sí, ahí creo que me confundí una palabra porque... hay una palabra que es "heathen", que después los chicos me dijeron que era "pagano", pero yo lo confundí con la palabra para "ermita", y pensé que...

M.: ¿Qué es "ermita"? No sé qué es "ermita".

T.: Pensé que eran como miembros de la tribu que vivían secluidos o ermitaños y que hacían ritos pero... una parte que decían que habían hecho un ayuno por un mes... Por eso me confundí.

M.: Entiendo. Las vestimentas... ¿Por qué es un carácter exótico la vestimenta?

T.: Me pareció cuando decían que se vestían en una ocasión especial y hablaba de los colores brillantes... Me pareció que era.

M.: No, está bien, no te estoy cuestionando, te estoy preguntando. Los colores brillantes...

T.: Me pareció por los colores o porque tomaba mucho tiempo en describirla, entonces me parecía que a ella le llamaba la atención.

M.: ¿Por qué los indios deben hacer lo que se les pide? ¿Por qué es algo "agradable" la predisposición de los indios para hacer lo que otro les pide? ¿Es algo agradable hacer lo que otro nos pide o...

T.: Porque en los caracteres yo puse exóticos o agradables según la narradora, por eso. O sea que desde su perspectiva era agradable.

M.: Ah.

T.: Parecía que ella lo ponía como algo positivo cuando ellos cooperaban o... o que decía que eran eficientes haciendo el pan, me pareció...

M.: (Pausa) Acá esto de que había 200 navajos te pasó... no lo registraste.

T.: No me acordaba que dijeran cantidad.

M.: Está bien, pero sí percibiste que era... Por eso encuentro una contradicción. Pero sí percibiste que era algo comunitario.

T.: Sí, como iba nombrando grupos y familias, o que comían juntos...

M.: Está bien. (Pausa) ¿Y los navajos como eficientes e ingeniosos?

T.: Eso también, se ve que le presté más atención a lo negativo que la narradora decía, entonces tuve que volver al texto después para ver qué era... en qué parte hablaba de eficientes, no me acordaba que dijera algo positivo de ellos.

M.: ¿Y puede ser esto algo negativo mencionar que los navajos sean eficientes y "ingenious"?

T.: Para mí no, pero visto desde ese punto de vista que hacían lo que ella quería sí.

M.: ¿Por qué?

T.: Porque para ella eran eficientes cuando cumplían con lo que ella les pedía. Según cómo se mire, porque por ahí se puede decir como que son serviles, que son complacientes...

M.: (Pausa) ¿Por qué es esencial entonces eso de que son eficientes?

T.: No sé, me pareció que era importante porque había ahí como una contradicción. Capaz que yo vi sólo lo negativo que ella decía y ahí veo como una contradicción, me pareció.

M.: Hm. ¿Por qué es importante lo del episodio de lavar los platos?

T.: Para mí... cuando lo leí el texto me pareció importante porque... también te lo marqué, que no entendía por qué la narradora creía que tenía derecho a decirles qué hacer. Fue en ese momento del texto que me di cuenta que... que yo tenía una visión un poco negativa o que había hecho muchas críticas. Ahí es como que me llevó a releer otras partes.

M.: Y lo que fue esencial, el saludo de Robert, creo que ya me lo dijiste.

T.: Sí.

Victoria

Melina: Estoy con Victoria y el texto de los navajos. Te pregunto en las dificultades, el término "mesa", ¿por qué te trajo dificultades?

Victoria: En este contexto, o sea... no lo... no lo vi claro. A ver, puedo tener... digamos, sospecha de que es el término que yo conozco, ¿sí?, pero, digamos, dado en una lengua que no es la mía y considerando que estamos hablando de otro... de otra cultura también ajena a la... incluso ajena a la de la narradora, me genera ciertas ambigüedades, o sea, o potenciales ambigüedades, o sea, no sé si se refiere exactamente a eso. Por el contexto quizás pudiera serlo, pero no lo puedo... digamos...

M.: ...certificar.

V.: Exacto.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) Me voy directamente a las tareas. ¿Es posible hablar de una "cultura estándar"?

V.: Me refiero, cuando hablo de "cultura estándar" me refiero... Es decir, los navajos constituyen un grupo bastante... digamos, no sé en cantidad pero sospecho que es un grupo minoritario en cuanto a que hay una cultura, digamos, en la cual se insertan o no pero son parte de... digamos, son indios de los Estados Unidos. Por lo tanto son parte de un país cuya cultura entre comillas "dominante" no es ellos, o sea, no es ese grupo.

M.: Entiendo.

V.: A eso me refiero con "cultura estándar", por contraste con cultura... bueno, navaja o cultura... aborígen.

M.: Sí. (Pausa) ¿Y qué es la "cultura local"? ¿Puede ser que la uses en algún otro punto?

V.: Eh...

M.: ¿La "cultura local" como la de la narradora?

V.: En realidad sí, no sé en qué contexto lo inserté pero supuestamente sí, o sea... pero no usé "local", me parece. Si usé "local" lo usé en contraste con el texto anterior. No, me parece que no usé "cultura local".

M.: Ah, no, tenés razón. Dice: "Remitiéndose al texto anterior, no se ve en el caso presente el recelo y el prejuicio que sí se observaban en el texto anterior, sobre todo de parte de la cultura local".

V.: Exacto.

M.: ¿Cuál era la "cultura local"?...

V.: La cultura local en aquel texto era la cultura del narrador, es decir, el punto de vista del narrador del texto.

M.: Sí. (Pausa) Hablás de dominación, eso es muy interesante.

V.: "Dominación", me refiero a que en un momento dado, por ejemplo hay dos casos puntuales...

M.: Sí, los que citás acá.

V.: Los que cito ahí, en los cuales se genera una sutil situación de dominación en la cual el que pone las reglas, o el que intenta ponerlas al menos, es el foráneo, es decir, paradójicamente ellos están en un... insertos en una cultura que no es la suya, y sin embargo están diciéndoles qué hacer.

M.: Sí.

V.: Es decir, con su cultura, con sus costumbres.

M.: Sí.

V.: Eso es lo que por ahí me llamó la atención.

M.: Y ¿por qué los dominados aceptan?

V.: Y claro, o sea, por eso pongo más abajo que habría una suerte de cosa implícita, de... de... quizás contacto implícito, ¿no?, en el cual la... la cultura mayoritaria o la cultura estándar, en este caso, que podemos llamar cultura estándar, tendría cierto privilegio de dominación. Quizás por eso tampoco se genera ese recelo ante... Yo creo que el recelo incluso es... Estoy pensando en el término inglés "take over", o sea, esa cosa de... de que el foráneo o el extranjero pueda asumir el control.

M.: Hm.

V.: Por lo tanto quizás intuyo que el recelo que se genera en el texto anterior, en el texto en el cual el... la cultura local era la... la... digamos la... donde se insertaba la fiesta, tiene que ver con eso, con esa cosa de temer al forastero como posible competidor o posible... persona que puede tomar el control. En este caso, siendo un grupo minoritario, supongo que esta cosa de la cultura estándar como mayoría a pesar de estar inserta, de ser una minoría en ese momento, tiene su... su... digamos su relación con esto de dominar o de intentar imponer reglas, y de ser aceptados.

M.: Y relacionado con esto, mi pregunta es, ¿existe... o vos ves de parte de la narradora una visión peyorativa o denigratoria de los indios por racista?

V.: En ciertos casos... no sé si denigratoria, sí veo quizás algo condescendiente, y sí veo... Digamos... A ver, veo una objetividad bastante marcada a pesar de... veo... incluso ahí abajo pongo que hay un interés incluso de aprender de la cultura aborígen, esa cosa de... O sea, veo que está bastante objetiva la cuestión. Lo que sí creo es que hay cosas que quizás no pueda evitar.

M.: Ella.

V.: Ella. O sea, quizás como prototipo de una cultura que está dominando justamente, y que domina no solamente al aborígen sino que casi como que al mundo, digamos...

M.: Sí.

V.: Quizás no puede evitar esa actitud de dominador, ¿no?, de... o de conquistador dondequiera que pongo el pie.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) Acá marqué: "Su cultura no queda excluida", pero no sé dónde lo veo...

V.: Eso está donde yo hablaba del aspecto negativo de este episodio de los niños tomando las bolsas de dulce.

M.: Ah, sí.

V.: Yo pongo que se pasa por alto, es decir, la narradora de nuevo parece olvidar, en un punto de vista casi... casi como... no sé si condescendiente o hasta... hasta negativo de ese aspecto de la cultura navaja, parece olvidar que su cultura, mucho de su cultura se basa en esa cosa de hacer o de tomar lo que el otro no ve que le estoy tomando. O sea, si es que...

M.: Eso es fuerte, lo que estás diciendo.

V.: O sea, lo planteo desde el punto de vista de que está... o sea... lo está... digamos, la narradora lo está poniendo desde el punto de vista de "ellos, lo que hacen, mirá, ellos están... cuando nadie los ve están sacando cosas". Bueno, sospecho que muy sutilmente, si mis sospechas son ciertas y... y la voz narradora se inserta en la cultura norteamericana típica...

M.: Sí, es así.

V.: Eh... sospecho, bueno, que... que hay una... o sea... hay una omisión de una información... no sé si deliberada o quizás porque no está mirando... está mirando la paja en el ojo ajeno y se olvida de la viga en el propio, una cosa así.

M.: Claro, claro, entiendo.

V.: Creo que es una cuestión universal, creo que todo ser humano hace un poco eso, ¿no? O sea, mientras lo dejen tomar ventaja quizás lo haga. No sé si todos, pero una... una gran parte del género humano...

M.: Una universalidad ves ahí.

V.: Sí, casi... Casi. No me atrevería a generalizar porque sería por ahí ser injusto con quienes no lo hacen, pero... sí creo que es una cuestión casi, casi intrínseca de la naturaleza humana, esa cosa de: "No me miran"... Digamos, no todo el mundo... no creo que todos podamos decir que nuestras acciones a solas sean las mismas que nuestras acciones cuando nos están mirando, por ejemplo.

M.: Hablás también de introducir... que "la narradora quiere introducir al lector a las costumbres navajas".

V.: No, lo que quiero decir con eso es que si el lector desconoce, como me pasa a mí, las costumbres navajas, las vemos a partir de los ojos de la narradora.

M.: Hm.

V.: O sea, de ahí la importancia del juicio que ella pueda tomar de esto, porque quizás para muchos va a ser el único contacto con la cultura navaja que tengan.

M.: Sí, pero también decís que hay cierta objetividad.

V.: A eso voy.

M.: O sea que es una buena lectura, o una buena introducción.

V.: A eso voy, exacto, o sea, incluso ahí está la conclusión, donde ella dice: "No hay nada frío, ni nada solemne, ni nada acartonado, nada almidonado en esto, la gente es feliz, son gente amable"... O sea, si bien el aspecto... Por eso digo que me parece que está narrado con bastante objetividad, dentro de lo que no puede evitar...

M.: Claro, a pesar de algunos puntos como los que ya mencionaste.

V.: Exacto.

M.: También nombrás los fuegos artificiales.

V.: El punto en común en cuanto... Lo que sí me parece marcar aquí, quizás no lo puse, es que si bien hay una... una cosa en común de que... bueno, se incluyen tanto en el... en la cultura navaja como en la cultura... o sea, esa cosa del fuego, ¿no?, de lanzar al aire...

M.: ¿Qué es lo que lanzan al aire los navajos?

V.: Eh... en alguna parte está... No me acuerdo exactamente cómo decía pero... O sea, yo a lo que voy es a que hay diferencias, si bien es una cosa común, esa cosa de lanzar al aire, hay diferencia en cuanto a la forma y en cuanto a... Por ejemplo se habla de que se sentían... de que los nativos... no, perdón, de que los norteamericanos se sentían como... incómodos ante la proximidad de... o sea, de... digamos, la falta de cuidado si se quiere con que manejaban ese tipo de...

M.: Sí.

V.: ...de maneras, entonces, digo que si bien hay una cosa en común, que ella pensaba que era algo en común en principio porque dice, o sea, decía: "Incluye únicamente"... Está por el lado del principio, algo así como que incluye "warm fires" o una cosa así...

M.: Sí.

V.: Eh... existe... o sea, hay diferencia en cuanto al manejo, en cuanto a la forma, en cuanto al uso, en cuanto a lo que... Es decir que ni aun lo común es tan común.

M.: Sí. (Pausa) Tu referencia o tu mención a que los perros... los perros y las ideas culturales...

V.: Exacto, porque se plantea lo de Lady Betty.

M.: Sí.

V.: Que en realidad me llamó la atención porque habla de una "wild reservation". "Wild", el término "wild", en este caso, refiriéndome a seres humanos... o bien tiene la cosa ésta de... digamos, siguiendo... no sé, la teoría del buen salvaje, ¿sí?, si se quiere, o siguiendo quizás la... digamos, puede tener un aspecto positivo como de naturaleza, o un aspecto negativo como es el que creo... Es como que estamos... poniendo en una... No sé, estamos en una reserva natural donde tenemos animales en peligro de extinción. Es decir, voy a esa cuestión, ¿no?, de... y hasta qué punto en este caso se muestra a un perro hasta más civilizado que... que el salvaje. O sea...

M.: Sí.

V.: O sea, el perro es el que... "Uy, el perro tiene noción cultural, pucha, no puede dormir a la noche porque mirá todo lo que le pasó durante el día"... No es... habla... sobre todo por la última frase, que dice algo así como: "Wild reservation is no joy for a dog".

M.: Sí.

V.: Es decir, me refiero a que quizás... no tanto... o sea, el perro puede estar acostumbrado a una cierta cosa y bueno, perder la costumbre, pero evidentemente en este caso se habla de que "wild reservation is no joy for a dog". ¡Epa! O sea, ¿qué hablamos, de perros de ciudad y de perros de wild reservation?

M.: Está bien.

V.: A eso voy, a los perros como representantes culturales también, ¿no?

M.: Sí, sí, sí. Entiendo. (Pausa) El idioma, mencionás el idioma por ahí, es interesante lo que decís.

V.: Al final me parece interesante esa vuelta a, "he spoke English", o una cosa así.

M.: Sí.

V.: O sea, esa cosa de: "Volvimos al idioma materno, que habíamos abandonado durante toda esta celebración. Volvimos a". Digamos, dentro de ese marco foráneo, si se quiere, se vuelve a introducir ese paisaje doméstico al que supuestamente estamos acostumbrados. Digamos... A ver, nos salimos por un momento de la cosa doméstica, de la... de la situación ésta de... de... culturalmente propia, para introducirnos temporalmente, y sabemos que es temporalmente, (quizás por eso tampoco hay recelo porque sé que me puedo ir cuando quiero).

M.: Hm.

V.: Entonces al terminar esta celebración vuelvo a hablar en inglés, o sea, un símbolo de civilización, ¿no?

M.: Sí.

V.: Esa cosa de pulir... de limpiar... de... que contrasta con esa cosa de suciedad que denota la... el párrafo este donde se hablaba incluso de que ella les pidió por favor que limpiaran algo de lo que habían usado para... para la... preparar la comida.

M.: Sí, sí, sí.

V.: Contrasta esa cosa de pulir, tratar de mantenerse limpios dentro de ese marco, o sea...

M.: Muy bien, gracias. Ahora vamos al cuestionario. (Pausa) Lo que te preguntaría es... (Pausa) Bueno, mencionaste casi todos los episodios que yo te iba a preguntar. Te pregunto cuál es la relevancia de pasearse con los bifés abajo del brazo.

V.: Quizás... eh... si no recuerdo cómo la puse ahí.

M.: Acá lo pusiste como completamente accesible [in the comprehensibility grid].

V.: Sí. O sea, yo voy a que por principio me parece... Digamos, es comprensible en el contexto en el que se produce, o sea, tienen miedo de ser robados, ¿no? Esa cuestión tan (?) además.

M.: Sí. ¿Pero y por qué pueden tener miedo de ser robados?

V.: Yo creo que... el tema es...

M.: Lo pusiste auxiliar.

V.: Claro. Yo no sé si el tema es... o sea, yo cuando me refiero a que algo es auxiliar es en general para comprender la totalidad del sentido del texto.

M.: Sí.

V.: Eh... Yo lo que en este caso no sé porque el texto no me está proveyendo herramientas, es si el miedo de ser robados es entre ellos o por el forastero.

M.: Ah.

V.: O sea, yo no lo puedo...

M.: ...deducir.

V.: ...deducir del texto.

M.: Hm.

V.: Comprendo el sentido. No puedo deducir si el miedo es a ser robado por el forastero o por ellos mismos, o sea... Si es por ellos mismos, vuelvo a pensar en que estamos pasando por alto que esto también pasa en otras culturas, no solamente en la de ellos.

M.: Claro.

V.: Y si es por el extranjero, bueno, vuelvo a pensar que la narradora pasa por alto que su cultura, la que podría robarles, también tiene aspectos negativos.

M.: Hm. También marcás como auxiliar lo del saludo del indio al final, en la lengua de la narradora.

V.: A ver... eh... No, eso se me debe haber ido porque yo lo quería marcar...

M.: ¿Lo querías poner como esencial?

V.: Sí.

M.: Te lo cambio entonces.

V.: Sí. Sí porque me parece que justamente el tema del lenguaje tiene relevancia.

M.: Hm. Y después ponés algo muy interesante de... de cuestiones de la identidad.

V.: Al final.

M.: Sí.

V.: Sí, me... digamos, lo que... hay dos... Yo especulo de dos maneras sobre el último párrafo, la última cita. Esa cosa de trabajar juntos, ya sea porque, bueno, porque tienen una relación entre ellos que evidentemente los mantiene unidos, o quizás porque en los dos casos estamos hablando de "cultura estándar", son dos representantes de la misma cultura.

M.: Hm.

V.: Por lo tanto eso por ahí los llevaría a pensar: "Juntos podemos sorprenderlos a todos, incluso si entre ese "todo" se encuentra trabajar aquí adentro".., o sea... esa cosa de decir: No importa, trabajamos acá pero estamos juntos, juntos podemos formar la cultura local, si se quiere, o la cultura estándar dentro de esto, en este pequeño refugio donde hay una chimenea que pulir, donde hay un lenguaje doméstico que poder usar para comunicarnos... Es decir, mientras haya un otro representante de la cultura esta cultura no muere, por lo tanto yo puedo seguir vivo trabajando donde sea.

M.: Está bien.

Yanina

Melina.: Estoy con Yanina y el texto de los navajos. Te pregunto, en el log de reflexión, quién es Betty.

Yanina: Betty es uno de los navajos, es uno de los personajes.

M.: Y... cuando vos decís "ella"...

Y.: ...pone su nariz en la mano de la narradora.

M.: Ah, está bien, o sea, Betty.

Y.: Sí.

M.: ¿Y cuando más abajo decís: "ellos"?

Y.: el matrimonio, querían imitar a los navajos.

M.: Decís que no sabés de qué cultura son. ¿Algún indicio?

Y.: Cuando leí por primera vez el nombre de ella pensé que era parte de los...

M.: ...de los navajos.

Y.: Sí, de los navajos. Pero después me di cuenta que no, no es. Y... no sé, el nombre parece algo asiático, el de ella, pero el de él, Ken, es como que podría ser de cualquier lugar.

M.: Y ¿hay alguna referencia a la cultura de ellos, que hayas notado?

Y.: Sí, al principio dice que... que Navidad para ellos también son fogatas, pero comen dulces y manzanas, pero yo no tengo idea de una cultura que haga eso.

M.: Muy bien. (Pausa) En la respuesta textual vos ponés que "no parece haber tensión entre las dos culturas".

Y.: Hm, al menos...

M.: ...a pesar que está presente la diferencia entre nosotros y ellos.

Y.: Claro. Superficialmente es como que está todo bien, pero después, las cosas que la narradora piensa, todo el tiempo es "nosotros" y "ellos". Pero quizás eso no esté mal, o no... no significa tensión, significa que son diferentes y ella se da cuenta.

M.: Claro. Y por eso ponés que no es la intención, ¿la intención de hacer diferencia?

Y.: Claro.

M.: Entiendo. (Pausa) Y después más abajo ponés: "Se puede comprender lo diferente pero es muy difícil asimilarse, y forma parte de la otra cultura, es decir, volverse uno más de ellos".

Y.: Sí.

M.: ¿Por qué ponés esto vos? ¿Sería el objetivo de la pareja asimilarse, pensás vos?

Y.: No, no creo, parece como que su objetivo es más ir ahí a trabajar, y más eso que asimilarse con los demás, pero yo me refería en general.

M.: En general, cuando uno se encuentra con otra cultura.

Y.: Claro, o países diferentes y...

M.: Bueno. ¿Por qué es bueno que haya diferencias? Vos decís que es bueno que haya diferencias.

Y.: Porque si todos fuéramos iguales sería muy aburrido, y... creo que si todos pensáramos igual sería más fácil dominarnos, porque es bueno que haya diferentes opiniones, es más constructivo que si todos pensáramos igual y fuéramos para el mismo lado.

M.: ¿Dominarnos por quién?

Y.: Por los gobernantes.

M.: Ah, está bien, por gente con poder. Muy bien. Bueno, y en la reformulación visual...

Y.: Sí.

M.: Está hasta acá la parte de las culturas que se unen para un evento y después se separan, lo entiendo perfectamente, las diferencias...

Y.: Diferentes culturas.

M.: Las diferentes culturas conviven en armonía...

Y.: Sí.

M.: ¿Y esto, qué es esto?

Y.: Es el símbolo de la paz.

M.: ¡Ah! No me había dado cuenta.

Y.: Y acá le hice caritas felices... Iba a poner "cultura 1, 2, 3, 4", pero la carita feliz significa que están bien, que están dentro como de un mundo muchas culturas que están bien y eso sería paz.

M.: Genial. En el cuestionario [comprehensibility grid]... ¿Cuáles fueron los problemas que tuviste con estos... con los que marcaste como más alejados o más inaccesibles. El problema de las fogatas, ¿cuál es el problema que tuviste con eso?

Y.: Yo entendí que era una fogata, pero no sé si ese piñón tiene algún significado especial. O sea, yo lo pasé como una fogata, pero después como se menciona ahí pensé que quizás era algo importante y no lo capté.

M.: Está bien. El paisaje desértico, ¿cuál es tu problema con eso?

Y.: Que... no lo imaginé cuando lo iba leyendo.
M.: No imaginaste un paisaje...
Y.: No. Después cuando quise volver a ver qué había imaginado, ya tenía el... el paisaje desértico y no me lo podía sacar, no me acordaba de qué era lo que había imaginado.
M.: Claro. (Pausa).
Y.: Ah, cuando ellos llevan maderos, leños...
M.: Sí.
Y.: No estoy segura, porque... o sea, no le presté mucha atención a eso.
M.: Ah, bueno, entonces por eso lo marcaste como 5 [option 5 in the comprehensibility grid], porque es casi... pasó desapercibido, digamos.
Y.: Sí.
M.: ¿Está bien? Bueno. (Pausa). Bueno, después mencionás como 3 [option 3 in the comprehensibility grid] el episodio del lavado de los platos que también lo desarrollás en la... Eso es revelador para vos, me doy cuenta, o es algo importante...
Y.: Sí, porque en la primera tarea puse que no estoy segura si lo entiendo, pero hice todo como si fuese como yo lo entiendo.
M.: Sí, sí.
Y.: Y me parece algo diferente, porque creo que ella es como que dice: "Al menos hacen algo por la comida que les damos", y no me parece muy... muy amable que piense eso.
M.: Sí. Lo que yo te pregunto es... El número 3 [option 3 in the comprehensibility grid] es "Bastante difícil de comprender".
Y.: Sí.
M.: Sin embargo vos en las tareas que ponías lo comprendías perfectamente. Entonces ¿cuál es la dificultad de comprensión que tenés?
Y.: Porque yo no sé si está bien lo que yo comprendí, si lo entendí bien.
M.: ¡Ah!
Y.: Pero todo lo hice pensando que está bien.
M.: Pero no estás completamente segura.
Y.: No, yo creo que... quería decir eso ella.
M.: Sí, sí. Después hay una referencia a la descripción de cómo preparan el pan, el guiso y el café, y eso te generó dificultades, o "Muy difícil de comprender" [option 4 in the comprehensibility grid].
Y.: Sí.
M.: ¿Qué es lo muy difícil de comprender ahí?
Y.: Eh... Yo lo leía y más o menos se entendía lo que estaban haciendo...
M.: Hm.
Y.: Pero no... no sé si eso tenía algún significado especial, yo no... no encontré nada especial.
M.: Está bien. O sea que... es una comprensión global que tenés ahí.
Y.: Sí.
M.: No del detalle.
Y.: Sí, sí. Sobre todo del café.
M.: Y por eso justamente supongo que los ponés como auxiliares.
Y.: Sí.

M.: Está bien. (Pausa) Bueno, no entiendo por qué, en base a lo que decís en lo anterior, del paisaje desértico, lo ponés como esencial.

Y.: Porque después que me lo imaginé... pienso que todo el tiempo lo tuve en la cabeza pero nunca lo había pensado.

M.: Hm.

Y.: Después cuando hablan también de... de la granja, entonces es como que ahí ya empecé a pensarlo un poco más... conscientemente, pero creo que lo... como que lo tenía ahí en mi mente mientras lo iba leyendo.

M.: (Pausa) Los navajos están vestidos con sus mejores ropas. ¿Cuál es la importancia de eso?

Y.: Y... para mí es importante porque casi siempre que pensamos en.. en los navajos o en otros indios, nos.. bah, yo no sé bien cómo ellos viven la Navidad u otras festividades, y me parece interesante, además muestra cómo son que se vistan con sus mejores.... con su mejor ropa en esa ocasión como por ahí lo hacemos nosotros también.

M.: Hm. ¿Celebran la Navidad los navajos, entonces?

Y.: Ahí parecía... bah, ahora que me preguntás... era como algo especial para ellos, quizás los otros le estaban mostrando cómo se celebra.

M.: (Pausa) Esto de... "stroll with great raw steaks in arms", es esencial. ¿Qué significa esto? ¿Cuál es la relevancia de esto?

Y.- Eh.... creo que muestra... cómo viven y... qué tan diferentes son del matrimonio, porque los otros ofrecen y dan, y ellos es como que tratan de tomar todo lo que pueden porque saben que es esa vez y quizás después ya no lo van a poder tener.

M.: Y bueno, justamente, ¿cuál puede ser una motivación, o sea, cuál es la implicancia? ¿Que la pareja es generosa y ellos no? No entiendo...

Y.: No, no es que no sean generosos, sino que... no tienen demasiado.

M.: Ah.

Y.: Entonces tratan de tomar por eso, no porque son avaros.

M.: Por necesidad.

Y.: Sí.

M.: Hm. (Pausa) Y después... esta referencia a que los navajos son "efficient and ingenious", ¿lo notaste, cómo lo percibiste a eso?

Y.: Eh... en un momento la narradora dice que... que ella aprende de ellos y que hacen las cosas bien, pero como que no lo toma muy en cuenta, no le importa demasiado. Dice: "Bueno, pero haciéndolo así no vamos a llegar a mucho, entonces lo hago de mi manera, o a mi manera". Entonces no... bah, creo que yo tomé la postura de ella, que no era tan importante que sean así. Como ella lo descartó... no le presté mucha atención.

M.: Ponés la preparación del pan... o estoy equivocada... la preparación del pan como esencial.

Y.: No, creo que está en auxiliar, porque no la había entendido mucho.

M.: Ah, sí, auxiliar, por lo que dijiste antes. Y acá ponés que el saludo de Robert es algo importante. ¿Por qué?

Y.: Porque ahí ella comienza como a decir que está triste, que extraña su lugar. Entonces...

M.: ¿Y qué motiva esa nostalgia o esa tristeza?

Y.: Que quizás el "Feliz Navidad" lo espera de otras personas, de los que realmente son su familia, pienso.

M.: Hm. Y... ¿Robert quién es?

Y.: Uno de los navajos.

M.: Hm. ¿Y te acordás en qué le habla, en qué idioma le habla?

Y.: En inglés.

M.: ¿Y eso es importante?

Y.: Y, sí, es importante, porque ella sabe hablar el idioma de él y él igual le habla en el idioma de ella.

M.: ¿Y qué significa?

Y.: Pienso que... es nostálgico porque ella ve que ellos también se preocupan por... no asimilarse pero sino estar... eh... como más cerca de ellos.

M.: Hm.

Y.: Pero a la vez ella sabe que prefiere estar con otras personas.

M.: Perfecto. Y la última pregunta que tengo es si te parece que hay algo en el texto que revele que la narradora tiene una visión... despectiva o peyorativa de los indios o que los mira como inferiores, o es condescendiente o paternalista en algún momento.

Y.: Por momentos pienso que sí, pero después no... no estoy segura. Por ejemplo con lo de... hacer las cosas, la comida... Quizás no sé si ella lo hace a propósito, quizás es como muy... narrow-minded, y no... o sea, "a mi manera es mejor".

M.: Ella es narrow-minded...

Y.: Sí. Pero... no creo que tenga esa intención, porque si no los invitaría, pienso yo. No sé si tendrá la obligación, pero no creo.

M.: Hm, OK.