Audiovisual Translation in Teaching Foreign Languages: Contributions of Dubbing to Develop Fluency and Pronunciation in Spontaneous Conversations

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ABSTRACT: The development of new technologies has led to a greater focus on the active use of audiovisual translation in teaching foreign languages in recent years. This paper constitutes a descriptive pilot research, which primarily looks at the interface between the activity of active dubbing and the oral expression of English students of Spanish. After triangulating the data, it has been established that students have improved their speed by an average of 22 words per minute in only six weeks, their confidence and comfort has considerably increased when expressing orally and, concurrently, students have developed other learning areas indirectly.
Key words: foreign language teaching, audiovisual translation, dubbing, fluency, pronunciation.

La traducción audiovisual en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras: aportaciones del doblaje al desarrollo de la fluidez y la pronunciación en conversaciones espontáneas

RESUMEN: El desarrollo de las nuevas tecnologías ha supuesto una mayor atención en el uso activo de la traducción audiovisual dentro de la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras en los últimos años. Este estudio constituye una investigación piloto descriptiva que analiza primordialmente la relación entre la actividad del doblaje activo y la expresión oral de estudiantes ingleses de español. Tras la triangulación de datos, se ha constatado que los alumnos han mejorado en una media de 22 palabras por minuto en solo seis semanas, ha aumentado considerablemente su confianza y comodidad al expresarse oralmente y, a su vez, han desarrollado otras áreas de aprendizaje indirectamente.
Palabras clave: enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras, traducción audiovisual, doblaje, fluidez, pronunciación.

1. Introduction

Oral expression is an intrinsic skill to every human being. People express themselves orally in their daily life and fluency and pronunciation play a leading role in spontaneous conversations. For learners of a Second Language (L2), there is a desire to communicate efficiently when interacting in L2. This longing is also reflected when sitting the distressing

oral exam, which includes fluency and pronunciation amongst its assessment criteria. Looking at the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), there is no doubt that audiovisual media have become the principal means to receive information. Currently, not only do people rely on TV or computers but also on mobile phones and tablets. As an attempt to adapt teaching to the modern day, it is intended in this research to include audiovisual media in the classroom in order to help students develop their oral expression. Particularly, the interest is given to AudioVisual Translation (AVT) applied to L2 teaching, where methods traditionally employed to translate audiovisual material are used with a specific didactic purpose. In this case, the focus is on the technique of revoicing, more specifically an active dubbing, which consists of replacing the original voice of the actors in a clip with our students' (Talaván, 2013). This didactic resource includes different elements that have been proven to enhance oral expression, such as repetition (Yoshimura and MacWhinney, 2007) or drama techniques (Dougill, 1987; Barnes, 1968) using just one resource. Furthermore, despite authentic material having been used since the appearance of the communicative method in the 1990s (Hymes, 1995), the possibility of using this material with a more active and engaging approach makes students more aware of their own learning process.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Oral expression

Oral expression is one of the main means of communication of human beings. In the field of L2 teaching, oral expression has been considered traditionally as one of the four communicative skills. For its evaluation, different official exam boards have descriptor tables where fluency and pronunciation are two of the main features. In some cases, these features are treated separately, and in other cases, they are considered as part of the same descriptor. The latter is the case in the present study where pronunciation plays a secondary role. Both concepts are, however, rarely defined by the different exam boards, which makes them liable to subjective interpretations. In order to find an adequate definition for our study, two main authors are considered: Lennon (2000) and Segalowitz (2010).

Lennon (2000) defines fluency in two senses: in its broadest sense, it is defined as *global oral proficiency*, in other words, the speaker with fluency is the one who possesses a high command of spoken L2; in a more focused sense, it is considered as a component of oral competency that is often used to assess oral skills in exam candidates. Segalowitz (2010) proposes a triple division of the notions of fluency: cognitive, utterance and perceived. Cognitive fluency is related to the abilities to plan and effectively perform the speech; therefore, it defines the speaker. Utterance fluency is directly related to the act of talking itself and not just the impressions of the listener. It is related to speed, pauses, doubts and self-corrections. In this sense, the study of pauses has been treated separately in different studies (Freed et al., 2004; Guillot, 1999; Chambers, 1997; Lennon, 1990). Most quantitative research is based on this notion of fluency. Finally, perceived fluency refers to the inferences that the listener has about the cognitive fluency of the speaker, taking into account their own perception of utterance fluency.

In this investigation the focus is on the utterance and perceived fluencies. The former is defined as the ability to maintain a conversation in L2 with an adequate speed to promote communication, acceptable pronunciation, the ability to fill the pauses with the same resources as a native speaker and with little repetition of semantic structures, and the ability to self-correct. Perceived fluency is defined as the impression that a listener has of the speech they listen to. Pronunciation is therefore a feature of fluency. For the purposes of this study, its analysis will be only qualitative and it is defined as the acoustic result of producing phonemes as well as the auditory impression obtained from the interpretation of these acoustic waves. A contrastive table between the sounds in the mother tongue (L1) and the L2 will be used.

2.2 Benefits of AVT in L2 teaching

Recent investigations in relation to the use of AVT techniques in L2 teaching have proved to enhance the possibilities of ordinary lessons. Sherman (1945) already addresses the benefits of the use of authentic video in the classroom. This author defends the use of film scenes to improve L2 and even proposes the use of film scripts in class. In recent decades, several authors have declared that the use of video has a very positive and motivating effect, offering variety and entertainment together with its pedagogical function (Brooke, 2003; Dubreil, 2003; Biegel, 1998; Allan, 1985). In recent years, the development of ICT has caused that AVT receives the greatest interest by language teachers (Díaz Cintas, 2012). Currently, the variety of multimedia resources broadens our choices, including a wide range of products such as DVD, multimedia products or the internet.

Different authors indicate a variety of advantages in the use of AVT in L2 teaching in their works (Danan, 2010; Maley and Duff, 2005; Brooke, 2003): the boosting of self-esteem and confidence because the received input is multisensory; the boosting of self-awareness and awareness of others; the focus is on the student while the teacher's role is one of guidance; the integration of the language in a natural way; attentive listening as an intrinsic element; the inclusion of verbal and non-verbal communicative elements; interaction with the real world without leaving the classroom as the language is provided in a specific context; the wide variety of skills and learning areas that can be developed using a specific type of AVT, or several of them at the same time. It is therefore believed that if students make good use of the audiovisual element in the classroom, L2 teaching can be developed in different ways. It is also understood that the use of AVT in L2 didactics gives autonomy to the students, helps them organise their own learning process and encourages independence. Ultimately, it promotes student-centred activities (Jones, 2007). Dubbing, in particular, favours the inclusion of drama techniques in the classroom without the need to perform in front of an audience as it incorporates observation, body language, voice, visual elements and L2 language (Maley and Duff, 2005). There are consequently a great number of benefits that the inclusion of AVT techniques has in L2 teaching contexts.

2.3. Audiovisual translation research in L2 teaching

Translation is almost as ancient as language and writing and "it can be used as a reflection on how to establish communication in any semiotic system" (Peña and Hernández Guerrero, 1994: 30). It was first studied after the Second World War (Dollerup, 1997) and

during the 50s and 60s a wide range of researchers emerged. For instance, Vinay and Dar-belnet (1958) defined translation as the step from Language A to Language B to express the same reality. Nonetheless, it was in the 70s when the term *Translation Studies* was used for the first time (Holmes, 1972). Since then, there have been numerous classifications and typologies. AVT constitutes one of its most modern varieties due to the development of ICT, and it is currently a prominent area of academic research (Díaz Cintas, 2009). The main characteristic is that of the audiovisual text: the convergence of the acoustic and the visual channel. AVT manages not only video, but also texts intended for cinema, TV and multimedia products (Agost, 1999). Its interdisciplinary nature has made possible its study from multiple perspectives and domains, including film studies, linguistics or computer-assisted language learning. The interest in this research is in AVT as part of applied linguistics to L2 teaching. Generally speaking, AVT typologies could distinguish two main categories: revoicing (speaking skills) and subtitling (writing skills). At the same time, these can include various language combinations (Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2007): (a) intralingual or direct, using just the L2 or nonverbal to L2; (b) interlingual from L2 to L1 or viceversa; (c) multilingual, including a third language. The focus of this project is on revoicing intralingually. In the following paragraphs, the most relevant studies related to the first category are going to be analysed.

Revoicing came along with the success of Hollywood films. Traditionally, it consists of the replacement of original dialogues for translation into another language (Chaume, 2004), although, as previously mentioned, different language combinations are also pos-sible. The revoicing could be done by muting the voice of the original actors (dubbing), speaking over the original voices (voice-over) or commenting on the scenes (free com-mentary), amongst others. The inclusion of dubbing in particular, as an activity in class, first started with Duff (1989) when students had to work in pairs to carry out different activities around adapting a drama play to a film. This practice continued years later with Kumai (1996), where students felt motivated by the activity that allowed them to improve their pronunciation, intonation and speed in oral expression. However, it is in the twenty-first century that more focused research starts to provide more reliable data. Burston (2005) facilitates an exhaustive analysis of the pedagogic possibilities of the use of dubbing in the classroom. In turn, Wagener (2006) focuses on the consecutive interpretation of perfect synchronization when dubbing and he works on skills such as listening, vocabulary acqui-sition and independent learning. In the last five years, there have been four main studies in the field of AVT applied to teaching L2: Danan (2010), Chiu (2012), Navarrete (2013) and Talaván and Ávila-Cabrera (2015).

Danan (2010) undertakes a dubbing project with American army students who learn Dari, Pashto or Farsi during one year. The main objective is to include variety in their intensive course as well as boosting collaborative work in groups and promoting students' active participation. The results of this project show that students are highly engaged in the activities, which improve their knowledge of vocabulary and oral expression, developing their motivation at the same time. In this study we can see some of the advantages of using dubbing for L2 acquisition.

Chiu (2012) is the most specific and relevant study considered here. The aim is to find whether interlingual dubbing improves the pronunciation and intonation of students learn-ing English as L2. A traditional conversation method is compared with this AVT technique

where students work in groups with a clip of an English film. They have the scripts with them to practise and they also watch the whole film to know the context. The final task is a performance of the scene in class with the clip in the background. Although the research questions seem to be answered, there is insufficient quantitative data to confirm notable improvements in pronunciation.

Navarrete (2013) was first to conducts a study about the advantages of dubbing as a didactic resource. It also intends to be a guided activity for future works of the project Clip-flair[1]. Students, aged 15, work on the content of the video before muting the voices of the original actors and recording their own, using Windows Movie Maker. The results are positive, although they do not have universal validity due to the reduced number of students, and the fact that there is not a control group to contrast results. This study is relevant because we use the same computer programme and a similar structure when carrying out the dubbing activity.

Finally, the most recent study has been carried out by Talaván and Ávila-Cabrera (2015). It is a quasi-experimental research where a combination of active subtitling and dubbing techniques are employed. The aim is to improve both written and oral expression as well as general translation skills. The results are also positive and the most relevant finding is the unexpected outcome that the oral expression improves more than the written one and also that students prefer dubbing to subtitling.

This literature review facilitates information about the situation of revoicing, and particularly dubbing in L2 teaching. The present study complements the previous data and enhances the number of existing studies in the field.

3. METHOD

3.1. Objective and research questions

This study constitutes empirical and primary research, with a mixed but predominately qualitative method and an observational-descriptive design. The main purpose of this study is to analyse the effect that the introduction of a direct dubbing activity (from Spanish into Spanish) has on fluency and pronunciation in non-prepared conversations. The secondary objectives are: (a) to identify if there is a change in how the student feels when expressing orally in Spanish after the proposed activity and (b) to establish improvements in the staging of this activity for future experimental research.

To this end, students work actively with a variety of short film clips where they practise the dialogues with the help of the scripts and subtitles in the target language, mute the voices of the original actors and record their own instead. The following are the questions considered for this study:

1. Does active dubbing as a teaching tool have a positive impact on the fluency of students in spontaneous conversations?
2. Does active dubbing as a teaching tool have a positive impact on the pronunciation of students in spontaneous conversations?
3. Does active dubbing positively affect how students feel when expressing orally in L2?
4. How can the staging of this teaching activity be improved?

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[1] For further information about this project, see their official website *clipflair.net*

In order to answer these questions, the data has been triangulated using methods typically employed in qualitative studies, which are explained in the next section.

3.2. Participants, data collection and stages of the project

This research has been carried out in a boys' secondary school in England. The initial sample consisted of 20 English native students of whom 3 did not complete all the sessions. All the participants were aged 16-17 and they had an intermediate level of Spanish (B1-B2). They do not have the opportunity to speak Spanish outside the classroom but 5 of these students also learn French at school and 1 of them is bilingual in English and Italian. The subjects were selected on the basis of a degree of homogeneity of their level, gender and the fact that they all studied at the same school. There are three means used to collect the data: individual interviews, questionnaires and teacher's notes.

1. Individual interviews: students were interviewed for 20 minutes before and after the dubbing activity took place. The content of these interviews was general and it included questions with different verb tenses. The most representative 4-minute samples of these interviews were analysed in two different ways:
a) qualitative: three native Spanish speakers, who are teachers of Spanish as L2, analysed the data paying attention to fluency and pronunciation;
b) quantitative: words per minute were counted before and after repetitions and selfcorrections.

2. Questionnaires: there are two different questionnaires in this study:
a) questionnaire I: about how students feel when speaking Spanish before and after the activity. This questionnaire was therefore used twice;
b) questionnaire II: to get specific feedback from students about the use of AVT in the classroom and, more specifically, dubbing. Furthermore, there was an open question about how to improve the staging of this activity in the future.

3. Teacher's notes, taken in two different ways:
a) observing students in lessons;
b) listening to each one of the clips that students recorded.

Given that AVT as a discipline in L2 teaching is relatively new, the material available is limited. Consequently, a more significant proportion of the total time was spent on material preparation (choice of material and subtitling of clips). This project took three months in total and it was distributed as presented in the following table.

Table 1: Stages of the project

Stage 1	Selection of material	Clips: dialogues of the first season of the Spanish TV show *Cuéntame como pasó*.
		Subtitling: exact transcription of the dialogues by the teacher using *Subtitle Workshop*.
Stage 2	Individual interviews	Related to general topics in different verb tenses (20 minutes).
	Questionnaire I (before the dubbing activity)	Regarding how students feel when expressing orally in Spanish.
Stage 3	Taster sessions	Technical problems are solved and final decisions are made about lesson planning. The chosen programme is *Windows Movie Maker*.
Stage 4	Analysis of the initial tests/evidences	Qualitative data: *Excel* is used to analyse Questionnaire I.
		Quantitative data: to analyse fluency, words per minute without repetitions and self-corrections (4 representative samples of each recording).
Stage 5	Dubbing activity	Dubbing of the clip in Spanish.
		Teacher makes notes through class observation and listening to the final recordings of each clip.
Stage 6	Final interview	Similar to stage 2 but with relevant questions for the time of year.
	Questionnaire I (after the dubbing activity)	Students complete the same questionnaire as in stage 2 to analyse if there is any change in how the students feel when talking in Spanish.
	Questionnaire II	Students give their opinion about the influence of the dubbing activity in their learning process.
Stage 7	Analysis of the final tests	In a similar way to stage 4.
	Comparison of results	Initial and final test results are compared.

The dubbing project took 6 weeks. Students worked with a total of 9 clips: 2 for the taster sessions and 7 during the activity time (they had a clip to do for homework in the final week). Students had weekly lessons of 80 minutes to use this didactic tool. Firstly, context was discussed; secondly, the students rehearsed the dialogue of the clips in pairs, and finally, they replaced the voices of the actors for their own using *Windows Movie Maker*. Students listened to their final result and the teacher provided them with formative feedback.

4. RESULTS

These findings are of great importance, both for languages lessons and for the future experimental research that will be conducted following this pilot study. For an adequate data comparison, two groups will be included to contrast the contributions of AVT and more conventional conversation classes. Current results do not have universal validity but they offer well-founded conclusions about the use of dubbing in order to develop oral expression in L2 for the particular case of our students. They are presented in the following paragraphs according to the tools used to collect the data mentioned in the previous section.

1. Individual interviews

In relation to the quantitative analysis, the following graph shows the words per minute before and after the dubbing activity. This graph displays the results after deducting repetitions and self-corrections.

Figure 1. Words per minute after repetitions and self-corrections.
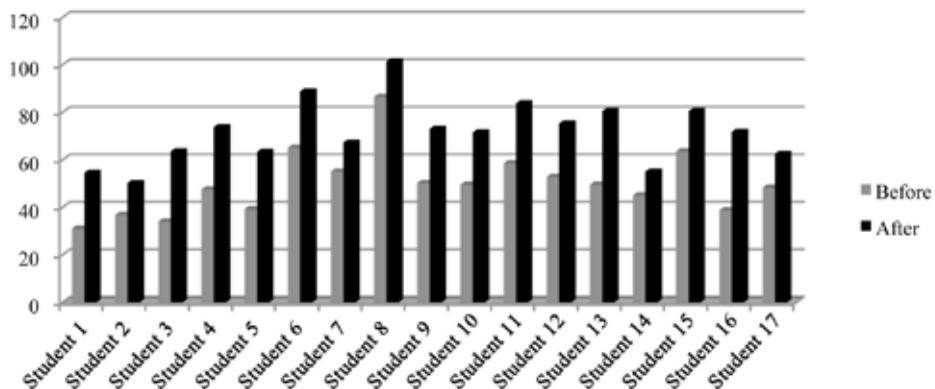
Students improved an average of approximately 22 words per minute. The student who improved the most did so by 29.5 words and the student that improved the least by 10 words per minute. Students who studied other languages showed no relevant difference; it is thought that the improvement depended on personal traits of each student.

The qualitative analysis presents the results obtained from the assessment of the three native speakers who analysed the students' interviews. These results include separately fluency (divided into two parts) and pronunciation. The first part of fluency included the following perceptions: fast and continuous communication, grammar domain, vocabulary domain, ability to self-correct, naturalness when speaking, speech easy to follow and pronunciation in general. The most significant improvements noticed by the assessors were the ability to self-correct, a fast and continuous communication and naturalness when speaking.

In relation to the first one, this could be due to the fact that, with the audiovisual resource, students receive a double input that can help them to be more aware of the language itself, or simply due to the natural evolution in the learning process in other knowledge areas in lessons, or a combination of both reasons. The main changes perceived by the assessors prove that results in the quantitative and qualitative data complement each other. The second part of the fluency analysis contained uncertainties and hesitations, and pauses in complete silence, which decreased considerably. This is promising because, in only 6 weeks, three native speakers noticed a change in this respect. This could also be related to the previous fact that, when offering a faster and more continuous communication, as well as more naturalness, hesitations and silences are reduced.

Regarding pronunciation from a qualitative point of view, 10 main problems have been chosen after analysing the first interviews' recordings. In total, the following 7 consonants and 3 vowels were thought to be the most problematic sounds: /d/, /t/, /ř/, /tr/, /c/, /x/, /h/, /o/, /u/ and /au/. The pronunciation of the sound that has improved the most has been the aspiration of /h/, probably because it presents the greatest difference from writing to speaking. At first, this error was identified in 12 of the recordings, while after the project, it appeared in 8 of them. Other cases such as /d/ and /t/ do not seem to be so easy to perceive. Phonemes like /ř/ o /tr/ hardly changed and this can be due to the difficulty of making the /r/ roll. In relation to vowels, the /u/ – that the students here pronounced as /iu/ – is the most significant change, while the inability to pronounce the diphthong /au/ has remained almost without changing. Therefore, it is believed that it would be necessary to work with pronunciation in a more explicit way.

2. Questionnaires

Both questionnaires offer qualitative data about what students think of the dubbing activity. Questionnaire I indicates how students feel when expressing orally in Spanish before and after the didactic resource used. Students graded ten adjectives from very (1) to nothing (5). These adjectives were good, comfortable, confident, relaxed, intelligent, important, decided, proud, happy and daring. For instance, 18% more of the students felt *very* relaxed after the project and, in general, they all considerably increased the way they felt about each one of the adjectives mentioned. The students felt significantly better, more comfortable, relaxed, confident and decided when expressing orally. This undoubtedly reflects their engagement with their own learning process.

Questionnaire II is divided into three different parts: skills, learning areas and material. Through these results, more information is found about the impact that the dubbing activity has had in the learning process of the students. Students think that the four skills – speaking, listening, reading and writing – have been benefited in one way or another. From 0 to 5, oral expression seems to be the most developed skill (3.88), closely followed by listening comprehension (3.64). It is necessary to highlight that students consider that they have improved in all their skills significantly. Thus, dubbing should not only be explored to work with oral expression, but also other skills or several skills at the same time. As for the learning areas, the sections considered in this questionnaire were: grammar, vocabulary, oral expression, oral fluency, pronunciation, confidence and motivation. Students think that dubbing has been helpful, especially with vocabulary acquisition, closely followed by oral

expression and, in addition, it has been a motivating activity. Grammar is the learning area that has been developed the least (3.11). This results show that even if the focus has been on oral expression, there are other areas that develop in a parallel way and which the learner might consider more relevant. Materials-wise, students consider that the use of *Movie Maker* has satisfied the needs of the task and has been easy to use. Although students seem to be happy with the length and the language in the selected clips, the speed and the content are less popular. It is not believed that the use of a different programme would have improved the results because, before using them, other options were valued and this was the most adequate one, as the taster lessons suggested. In this questionnaire, there is also an open question as part of the students' observations that, due to practical reasons, is included in the section of teacher's notes.

3. Teacher's notes

In this section, it is important to collect the teacher's reflections through the weekly annotations and observations. This, together with the students' comments in questionnaire II, gives valid feedback on the positive and negative aspects of this didactic tool. The main aspects considered to be beneficial about dubbing by the students are:

1. It provides the student with a realistic idea of the speed in native dialogues.
2. It offers more knowledge of the Spanish culture as they can observe it for themselves.
3. It facilitates the learning of new vocabulary and colloquial expressions.
4. It encourages the development of fluency and pronunciation.
5. It increases confidence when expressing orally.
6. It is a motivating activity.
7. It is seen as a fun and different activity.
8. There is more awareness of their learning process as they can listen to themselves and self-assess.
9. Students notice improvement in their pronunciation, intonation and speed when communicating.
10. Indirectly, students notice improvement in their listening comprehension.

All of this is in agreement with previous research on the use of AVT, but it also gives more specific information about the advantages of including a direct dubbing activity in the classroom. Some of the comments about some difficulties of the activity are:

1. Subtitles are not always easy to read.
2. In some occasions, the excessive difficulty of some clips can discourage students.
3. Sometimes, pronunciation and intonation is sacrificed due to the large quantity of continuous speech.
4. Excessive speed and length of some videos could make students feel that they have not improved in any skill.
5. Not all the topics were as engaging (some topics resulted more interesting for the participants).

As can be seen, positive aspects overcome, in an overwhelming manner, the negatives, which are not considered as negatives in this project, but as constructive feedback to improve in a future experimental study. Likewise, students have made relevant valuations about the material used that the teacher would have not possibly done by simply observing. In the future, a wider variety of videos would be necessary, ensuring a progressive level of difficulty and being aware that overly fast videos can generate a contradictory effect. Finally, as a matter of fact, shorter videos have had more success. The data has therefore facilitated information about the usefulness of an active direct dubbing exercise for an intermediate level of L2 Spanish.

5. Conclusion

The present study has proved that the practice of a direct dubbing activity had a positive effect in the learning process of the students involved in this research. As expected, due to the inclusion of the repetitive element, both students and observers noticed an improvement in fluency while performing the dubbing exercise. However, the difficulty arose in concluding whether this type of activity could have a positive impact on subsequent spontaneous conversations. According to the qualitative and quantitative data, it could be inferred that this activity had a positive impact on non-prepared conversations, an area hardly researched regarding AVT in L2 teaching.

Another facet of this study consisted of observing whether it would be possible to improve pronunciation without specifically mentioning phonetic aspects in class. Data in this respect is promising but not conclusive, possibly due to the short duration of the project. Nevertheless, results regarding both fluency and pronunciation in this study open new possibilities to future experimental research. For instance, the focus could be on how students progress on different levels or the extent to which other known languages have influenced the results.

Finally, this study appears to be unique in its use of just the target language to dub in L2 contexts. It is considered especially useful for those students who do not have the chance to live in the foreign country. Whilst innovative in this particular aspect, this research has also intended to continue the work of other professionals in the field, obtaining similar results in terms of students' motivation and self-confidence. Therefore, the current proven benefits of AVT lead to the conclusion that this would be a most convenient and complementary approach for L2 learners in the twenty-first century.

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