Virtual Tourism as Part of the Russian Language Classroom

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Abstract This paper suggests that tourist web resources could successfully become part of the L2 class-room with the effect of reinforcing the students' motivation and adding to their knowledge of the places in which the foreign language is spoken. We aim to show that such resources could be particularly useful if combined with a recently developed teaching methodology relying mainly on oral translation being principally based on work with texts. We suggest that a lecture would become far more exciting if presented in the form of a virtual tour. Such an experience offers not only the possibility to enjoy a virtual visit to new places, but also to learn a lot about them, while learning a foreign language at the same time.

1   Introduction

Needless to say, tourism is generally conceived of as a free time activity and is, therefore, associated with leisure. A lot of types of tourism exist, among which there are even forms that are related to business and other non-excursionist enterprises. Even these kinds, however, in one way or another, are regarded as amusing and stimulating activities charged with positive emotions and energy.

The present study, however, will not be concerned with the traditional type of tourism but will dwell upon the so-called "virtual tourism", in which the trip does not involve the physical movement of the body, but is realized through technological devices (cf. Tavakoli & Mura, 2015; Mura, Tavakoli & Sharif, 2017). It will be suggested here that, though not yet being a well-studied phenomenon, virtual tourism, if combined with a currently developed L2 teaching methodology based on oral translation (cf. Laskova, 2016; 2019; to appear), could successfully become part of the L2 classroom (in this case, the Russian language classroom) and could lead to highly profitable results. It is the effect of positive emotional charging that, combined with the large variety of video and text materials available online, could serve as a trigger, raising the student's motivation thus serving as a stimulus for the language learning process.

Virtual tourism as an in-class activity

Recent developments in technology have allowed the elaboration of electronic devices, enabling the recreation of an abstract reality allowing a person to be immersed in it and experience it as if it were real. These are the so-called Virtual-Reality (VR) products which are classified in the literature as non-, semi-, and fully-immersive VR systems (cf. Beck, Rainoldi & Egger, 2019). As noticed by Mura, Tavakoli and Sharif (2017), there is no clear definition on the notion of *virtual tourism,* but rapid technological development continuously imposes a more stable relationship between *virtual tourism* and VR products. This notwithstanding, Mura, Tavakoli and Sharif (2017) propose to maintain a broader definition which allows any form of virtual "travelling", not necessarily related to the use of specific electronic devices.

The present study adopts this proposal, with the aim of proposing that virtual tourism can become part of L2 classroom activities. Of course, we do not exclude at all a possible future application of VR products inside the classroom but for the moment such devices are rather limited in terms of both use and distribution and, furthermore, are not suitable for widespread use.

Virtual tourism, the way we intend it here, i. e. the way it could be applied to L2 teaching, could be conceived of as a type of virtual experience realized by visiting touristic websites (without excluding the reading of other non-web materials) and searching for, listening to and reading materials available online related to a given touristic destination.

In this work we will consider the way touristic information could be applied to the teaching/learning process if combined with a recently elaborated specific teaching technique. The most natural relationship between the two is the fact that, as we will see below, the proposed methodology is mainly based on teaching through texts. The more interesting and stimulating the text material is, the more motivated the learner is and the better the results are.

In the next few sections we present the methodology that is being elaborated and tested as part of an experimental course of Russian at the International Centre for Plurilingualism at the University of Udine.

3　　Teaching methodology based on oral translation

In Laskova (2019; to appear) an experiment is carried out showing that by adopting oral translation as the main teaching technique, students can successfully develop fluency and accuracy at a higher level than the students taught according to the traditional method, where oral skills are among the last abilities to exercise and develop. The experiment was conducted at the University of Udine as part of a course of Russian. We summarize below the tested methodology and the results, which will cast light on why tourist web sites and tourist printed material might be suitable for the L2 teaching.

The main purpose of this research was to develop a methodology the main purpose of which is to achieve as a primary objective, the ultimate goal of the learning process, i.e. develop oral competence in the L2, in this case, in Russian. This was done by carrying out memorization work in classroom practice through oral translation. The development of good oral skills within the academic hour, allowed the learning process to remain independent of other factors of a more personal nature (like the amount of time one dedicates to the L2 outside the university, one's personal diligence and willingness to learn at home, etc.). In this respect this methodology can be opposed to the traditional training which starts from theoretical presentations, going through drills and leaves oral practice and memorization at the final stage (and most often the latter is only done at home).

This process appears to save time, leading to considerably better results in a shorter period of time, since the immediate achievement of language competences means the remaining time can be dedicated to other activities (i.e. lexical and grammatical drills and various other work done by the student) and to the consolidation of the knowledge the students already have. In this way the proposed methodology can be viewed as a useful premise for any approach to L2 teaching. Last but not least, the immediate results, i.e. the rapid development of linguistic skills, strongly stimulate learners' motivation serving as an impetus to achieve further goals.

We present below in more detail the experiments conducted at the Centre for Plurilingualism at the University of Udine.

4   Why do we need to search for new didactic methodologies?

The development of this methodology was directly inspired by a well-known fact, namely that fluency is very difficult to achieve in an L2 classroom and often remains an unachieved goal (cf. Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 2005; Rossiter et al., 2010). As Rossiter et al put it "although many communicative language teaching (henceforth CLT) classrooms promote general fluency, they do not provide the repetition necessary to achieve automatic fluency" (Rossiter et al., 2010, p. 585).

On the other hand, if classroom activities are mainly centred around the development of communicative competences, this may lead to an underdevelopment of knowledge of the formal features of a language. Indeed, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been criticized also for

underestimating the role of grammar (see for example Ridge, 1992; Swan, 1985 among others).

An important question is: can we develop a teaching methodology which fosters both fluency and accuracy? To this question another should be added: can such methodology help to achieve more rapid results?

For the purposes of our study an experimental group and several control groups were set up. The participants in the experimental group were all first-year students of Russian who, apart from their regular classes of Russian, also attended an additional course at the International Centre for Plurilingualism. Ten volunteers from the course were selected to participate in the experimental group.

In addition to this there was also a small control group of students who took part in oral test activities, consisting in an interview and two comprehension exercises.

For organizational reasons, at the oral and the written parts of the final test the control group was composed of different students (neither of whom attended the course of Russian and German). Furthermore, the written test, was completed by a different group of 33 students.

Furthermore, just for the purposes of the written part of the final test (checking grammar and lexis), another control group was set up consisting of five students who attended the course of Russian and German. These students were taught grammar in a traditional manner during the grammar training period (during the spring term). They achieved their lexical knowledge, however, during the autumn term through oral translation training. The aim was to compare the results of this control group with the results of the students from the other control groups (i.e. the students who had not attended the course of Russian and German) and, of course, with the results of the students from the experimental group.

5   The experiment

5.1   Participants, materials and time span of the work

5.1.1   The composition of the experimental group

The participants of the experimental group were provided with photocopied materials and audio-files elaborated for the purposes of the experiment. The files were sent by email while the handouts were distributed during the work in the classroom.

The lectures of Russian took place twice a week. The total number of academic hours (lasting 60 minutes) was twenty-five. The lecture duration was ninety minutes. These hours were distributed both throughout the autumn and the spring terms. Thus, during each of the terms the students received approximately twelve and a half hours of Russian training.

During the autumn term the students received training which was not specifically related to the development of grammar competences. In this period grammar was taught more implicitly, the students being given only brief explanations. The spring term training was dedicated to both lexical and specific grammar training.

For the purposes of the experiment the grammar training focused on the teaching of one grammar unit, for example, the singular forms of the dative case.

Since the present experiment checks not only the students' grammatical competences but also their overall proficiency, it takes into consideration also the lexical knowledge obtained throughout the whole year.

During the first half of the period, i.e. the autumn term, the students were provided materials in the form of dialogues and other texts. The aim was to teach the following competences: present oneself and other people, be able to ask and answer questions about one's occupation, one's family, one's free time and hobbies, one's plans for the future.

During the second half of the training period the students were provided with materials aimed at developing the ability to speak of one's past experiences and the ability to use the dative case. During this period grammar was taught explicitly whereby special training was provided, which was centred around the oral translation of texts and short repetitive drills exercising the use of the dative case. The structure of the drills was traditional in nature. The original element was not concerned with the structure of the drills but rather the way the drill work was performed by the students, namely translating the examples orally. In the rest of this subsection we present in more detail the materials that were used during the classes.

Initially the students were provided with a fifty-four-word long text, containing a number of substantives used in the dative case. Following this they were presented with drills which aimed at helping the students learn the dative singular endings of nouns and adjectives, learn the various contexts in which the dative is used and the prepositions the dative is used with, as well as the dative pronouns.

Subsequently the students were provided with another sixty-nine-word long text and with yet another sixty-seven-word long text. The role of these texts was to introduce some particular cases in which the dative is used, which might present particular difficulty to an Italian learner.

The two texts were followed by another session of drill work.

Finally, during the second term, each student worked on texts with an overall length of 190 words and on additional grammatical drills.

5.1.2   The control group of students attending the course of Russian

This control group was set up at the beginning of the summer term. Five of the students attending the course were given traditional training on the same materials described above during the spring term. This was done in order to check, on the one hand, how their results would differ from the ones of the control group students not attending the course, and on the other hand, from the results of the students from the experimental group.

5.2   Training of the participants

During the autumn term all of the students attending the course of Russian received a twelve-and-a-half-hour training session in Russian. During this period the training consisted in working on texts (following the procedure explained below). As regards to grammar, the students were provided with short explanations related to the grammatical categories appearing in the texts, but they did no specific grammar drill work.

During the summer term the participants in the course received another twelve-and-a-half-hour training session which included specific work on grammar. This time, however, two groups were formed – an experimental group and a control group, which received different forms of training.

Since our aim was to check whether oral translation can develop language proficiency, the teaching activities carried out during the experiment were reduced to using only this technique. We explain below in more detail what activities the students of each group were involved in.

5.2.1   Training of the experimental group

As mentioned before the main goal of this experiment was to check to what extent oral translation, if used as a teaching technique, can contribute to the development of fluency, accuracy and complexity, as components of language proficiency. For this reason, the training of the students participating in the experiment has been realized exclusively through this teaching technique. Crucial to its application is the use of personal smart phones (or computers) onto which the students could download the audio files and listen to them while translating.

Here follows an outline of the procedure followed. Each student was sent several audio files via email and was asked to download them on their own telephone (or computer) before coming to the class. Before the beginning of the activities the students were asked to open the file containing the new text in Russian recorded with near-native fluency, to listen to it at least three times and try to understand what it concerned. Each person was allowed to work at their own speed and did not need to wait for or catch up with the others. When someone was ready, they were invited to restart the file and start repeating after the speaker, imitating the speaker's speed

and pronunciation, preferably without pausing the recording. Again, everyone was invited to repeat this exercise as many times as they wanted.

After this second exercise the students were presented with the written text and were asked to do the third exercise which consisted in the following steps: everyone was invited to listen once again to each sentence, now reading also the written version. After that the students were provided with short and rapid explanations regarding unknown words, phrases and grammatical units. Then, helping themselves with both the oral and the written versions they were asked to open the file containing the same text in Italian (their mother tongue) and learn to translate the first sentence orally into Russian (while listening to the Italian version), obtaining a sort of simultaneous (or initially consecutive) translation. The aim was to obtain a fluent translation of the sentence without pausing the file and without reading the text in Russian. When a student was ready with the first sentence, they were invited to repeat the same procedure with the second sentence and to put the two sentences together until a fluent translation of both was obtained. The same procedure was repeated with the whole text until the students were able to perform a fluent oral translation of the test without pausing the file and without seeking assistance from the written version in Russian.

During the task, the students were given the instruction to switch from time to time to the audio-file containing the Russian text in order to check their pronunciation and intonation. The time duration needed for each of the texts the students were presented with was about thirty or forty minutes. As soon as a student learned to translate the text, they were invited to perform the oral translation in front of the teacher (the author). If the performance was without errors, the student could proceed with a written exercise but here we will focus only on the presentation of the oral activities rather than the written exercises.

The procedure described above was applied both to the texts and to the grammar drills. The only difference was that the drills were more repetitive and centred around one grammatical unit. Each of the two sessions of drill work lasted for about three academic hours.

5.2.2   Training of the control group formed by students attending the course of Russian

The control group was taught using the same materials but without the use of oral translation. The hours with the control group were more teacher centred classes, compared to those with the experimental group. The texts were initially read by the teacher. Afterwards the learners were encouraged to read them themselves and the unknown words and grammatical units were explained. The students took notes on all of the explanations.

Following from this step the students were encouraged to explain orally what the texts were about thus reproducing parts of them. As a next step, they were encouraged to work in pairs asking questions related to the contents of the text and answering them. In the end each student had to orally reproduce the whole text, helping themselves with the written version. While one student was talking the others were asked to listen and add information in case something was missing. This last exercise was repeated during the following class. Afterwards the group did the same written exercise as the experimental group had done. They had to read a sentence and then try to reproduce it without looking at the original text and repeat the same procedure for the whole text.

The group then worked on the grammar part which was presented in the form of oral drills in which the students had to fill in blank spaces with missing items, translate into Russian or do repetitive drills, taking turns. The control group students were asked to orally repeat the grammar drills at home.

In the following section we explain the way we tested the language skills the students developed during their training.

5.3   Testing of the participants

Since the purpose of this study is to establish whether oral translation training can help to foster language proficiency, we must have a look at how its three components (fluency, accuracy and complexity - CAF) are measured.

It has been suggested that when measuring fluency, one should take into consideration the learner's speech rate, as well as the number, position and the length of the pauses in the learner's production (cf. Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005). Accuracy is tested on the bases of the deviation from the linguistic norms of the target language and is generally measured in terms of the errors learners make (cf. Hammerly, 1991; Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998). Finally, complexity is generally analysed in terms of its lexical and syntactic dimensions (for a more detailed analysis see Skehan, 2009a; Skehan, 2009b; Ortega, 2003; Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005; Kuiken, Vedder & Gilabert, 2010; Bluté & Housen, 2015). The principal difficulty faced was that the complexity of the speech measured was that of L2 learners at beginner level and, therefore, dealt with a limited quantity of oral text. Nonetheless, the analysis of this component elicits differences between the experimental and the control groups which are entirely consistent with the rest of the results.

In the following subsections we explain in more detail how we measured each of the components of CAF.

5.3.1 Testing fluency

The analysis of the speech rate was carried out on the basis of an interview and on an oral translation exercise.

At the interview each student had to answer questions about themselves, their family, friends or relatives, free time and interests and had to express an opinion on a topic. The questions were chosen so as to be familiar also to the students who took part in the control group who had not attended the course. The answers of the students were recorded and analysed.

The second part of the oral test was an oral translation of a text with which the students were not familiar. It was presented in the form of an audio-file containing a text in Italian (the students' mother tongue), which was new to all of the students but contained lexical and grammatical material that the students from both the experimental and the control group were familiar with from their first year of study. The students were free to pause the recording if they wished. They were allowed to make just one attempt, and each student's first translation was recorded.

The students' speech rate was measured by dividing the total number of the pronounced words by the duration of their speech (in minutes).

The analysis of the length of pauses is represented as a percentage of the whole speech time and is based on the analysis of the interview. The interview analysis is also based on the measurement of the position and the frequency of the pauses.

Two more lexically complex exercises were added in order to check and compare the level of comprehension of the two groups. The first one required the students to indicate the correct paraphrasing of eight sentences, which they heard twice before giving their answer and one further time before submitting the answer sheet. The second consisted in listening to a text and completing a multiple choice test containing nine questions related to its content. The students heard the text twice before giving their answers and one further time before submitting the answer sheet.

5.3.2   Testing accuracy

The second component of language proficiency – accuracy – was tested both in an oral and written forms. The oral analysis was carried out on the basis of the analysis of the interview and of the oral translation exercise. The outcome of the analysis of the interview is presented as a percentage of deviation from the norm, i.e. the percentage of grammatical and lexical errors. The outcome of the analysis of the translation is presented as a percentage of correctly translated text. We applied the length of 81 words to all students. For this reason, some students from the experimental group, who translated the text correctly by using a lower number of words, obtained lower results than they actually deserved. In spite of this "small imprecision", the results maintain the general proportional relationship between the results of the students.

The written test consisted of four exercises, checking the grammatical and lexical knowledge of the students. All exercises testing grammar were elaborated with the aim of testing students' knowledge of the forms and the use of the dative case in particular.

The first exercise (a cloze test) was the easiest one. The students were presented with a text in which twenty items were removed and for each of these three possibilities were offered. The student had to indicate the correct item. Most of the items were related to the use of the dative case, but not all of them (otherwise the exercise would test only the form and not the use of the dative).

The second exercise was quite similar, but the possible answers were presented one after another with a slash and not in a column. It was slightly more difficult than the first exercise, since it tested not only grammar (mainly the dative case) but also some lexical knowledge.

The third exercise was the most difficult one. It consisted in twelve sentences containing errors which the students had to identify (and, if they wanted, to correct).

The fourth exercise checked lexical knowledge, giving the students the opportunity to comprehend and complete a complex text with lexical items suggested to them in a column running alongside the text.

5.3.3   Testing complexity

As mentioned earlier, for the purposes of the current experiment we used each student's interview performance in order to test complexity taking into account the amount and type of material used in order to answer a question. First, we measured the general number of words each one used to respond. Second, the number of words used different from those in the question and third, the number of sentences containing an embedded clause, i.e. more than one verb form (infinitival clauses included).

6   Results and discussion

6.1   Fluency

6.1.1   Oral production and comprehension

Table 1 illustrates the interval between the slowest and the fastest speaker from each of the two groups at the interview – the experimental and the control group.

Table 1: Interview. Speech rate interval

	Experimental group	Control group
Speech rate interval	74,9 – 143,1	29,1 – 54,2

The results from the oral tests show, that the students form the experimental group performed with considerably higher speech rate in comparison to those of the control group. This fact suggests that oral translation trained learners are faster speakers with higher comprehension and production skills.

The analysis of the position, length and frequency of the pauses during the oral performance as well as the results from the comprehension tests exhibit the same relationship between the experimental and the control group, as shown in *Table 2*. The overall percentage of pauses is considerably lower with the experimental group and higher with the control group. The data are again presented through an interval.

Table 2: Interview. Length of pauses

	Experimental group	Control group
Length of pauses	0% – 22,5%	37,7% – 68,7%

Two points are worthy of note from the oral comprehension tests: the experimental group's results are not only higher than those of the control group but are also more homogenous (there are no significant differences from one student to another). This again suggests that oral translation training guarantees considerable uniformity of the results and that the students' competence is not strongly dependent on factors of a personal nature (since in the classroom all students have to do the same amount of work).

The fact that students from both groups tend to make more pauses in mid-clause position is simply illustrative of the fact that they are not native speakers of Russian. The overall length of the pauses, however, does differentiate between the two groups. Of particularly significance is the reduced overall length of pauses of the experimental group in clause initial position, since this is illustrative of better comprehension and increased readiness of the student to respond.

6.1.2 Accuracy

The results from the accuracy tests suggest that, apart from being fluent speakers, oral translation trained students are also considerably more accurate speakers. *Table 3* illustrates the percentage of errors of the students of both groups made at the interview.

Table 3: Interview. Percentage of errors

	Experimental group	Control group
% of Errors	0 – 6,7	6,3 – 23,1

The experimental group's written exercise results are again consistently higher and quite homogenous. An interesting fact is that the control group, formed by students who attended the course, exhibits homogenous and high results on the lexical exercise. This is so because, unlike grammar, lexis had been taught to these students during the autumn term through oral translation training.

6.1.3 Complexity

As regards the complexity component, it should be noted that none of the experimental group students used one-word sentences. They also used a higher number of words in order to respond to a question. Furthermore, in their answers these students used a higher number of words different from those heard in the question, and a higher number of complex sentences, as compared to the students of the control group.

In conclusion, returning to the research questions posed earlier: whether we can develop a teaching methodology which fosters both fluency and accuracy and whether such a methodology can help to achieve more rapid results, we can safely give an affirmative response.

As to the reasons why oral translation training proves to be so efficient, we could mention that it offers a form of training whose most immediate goal is to achieve the ultimate result – the development of good oral, lexical and grammatical competences and good memorization of the material. In this respect it is opposed to the traditional form of training which starts from theoretical representations, going through drills and leaves oral practice and memorization for the end (where

most often the latter are only done at home). Crucial to the achievement of this goal is the use of a computer or a smart phone, since the technical device allows each student to do oral (and also written) practice throughout the whole academic hour. Besides, oral translation training is time-saving. It offers the possibility to learn to speak with fewer preliminary theoretical presentations of the material. The student leaves the classroom being already able to speak and having memorized the material. Grammar, writing and further theoretical (lexical and grammatical) studies are done on the basis of pre-existing knowledge of the material (and could also be done by using oral translation). This being so, the acquisition of such skills is carried out on a more conscious level with the effect of consolidating what the learner already knows.

7   Oral translation training and other teaching methods

As was mentioned earlier oral translation training is an excellent premise to communicative classroom activities. It provides the skills necessary for carrying out oral exercises aimed at achieving good communicative competences.

Furthermore, this methodology is heading in the direction suggested by Ellis (2009), regarding the conditions for Task-based language Learning and Teaching (TBLT) proposed by him and should be joined with it in order to become more efficient. The author proposes that the task should be more input-providing. What the present methodology offers to the students is significantly rich in terms of input. However, it also offers a way to memorize this input, so that the students be able to reinforce production.

8   Oral translation methodology and touristic web resources

In this section we would like to dwell upon the issue of how touristic web sites could become useful for the process of L2 teaching through the previously discussed methodology.

As seen in the previous sections, the use of texts is fundamental for the application of the oral translation teaching technique or rather, the oral translation exercises are realized with the help of text materials. The application of texts to L2 teaching is not new, quite the opposite, it is typical of most traditional approaches. Not surprisingly, the issue regarding texts that gains most attention in the literature is the one

regarding the way they can be selected on the basis of their properties. The notions used in the literature are text readability and text levelling. The former regards the syntactic and semantic difficulties of the text (cf. Chall, 1958; Gilliland, 1972; Harris & Jacobson, 1979; Klare, 1984; Harris & Sipay, 1985; Manzo & Manzo, 1995; Ruddell, 1999; Fly 2002; Vacca et al., 2003), while the latter takes into consideration properties such as the appropriateness of the content, the role of the illustrations, length, type of language and other factors (cf. Clay, 1991; Gunning, 1998; Fountas & Pinnell, 1999; Weaver, 2000).

As noted in Fly (2002), however, "readability formula makers have long known that formulas have limitations and do not include such important factors as motivation or appropriateness" (p. 289).

Indeed, some authors point out that the readability and the levelling conditions are not exhaustive of the text features relevant to the teaching-learning process. Works in the field of psychology suggest that the interest and the motivation of the learner are among the crucial factors as well. Schiefele (1991) recognizes that motivational psychology has not paid enough attention to the role of interest and carries out an experiment revealing the very close relationship between interest and learning, especially as far as work on texts is concerned.

Later studies confirm how important it is that didactic materials provoke interest in the students (cf. Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala & Cox, 1999; Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Brozo, 2005; Brozo & Flynt, 2008; Moley, Bandre & George, 2011).

Since tourism, as mentioned at the beginning, is an activity related to exciting, positive experiences, cyber activities related to tourism could successfully become part of the L2 classroom. Thus, amusing and interesting audio and video text materials could prove worthy additions to the L2 lesson/lecture. It is already a well-known fact that Web-based language teaching and learning is recognized as a stimulating, amusing and productive experience (cf. Beauvois, 1994; Felix, 2001; Lee, 2005; Sagarra & Zapata, 2008; Suh, 2002; Ushida, 2005; Wang & Wang, 2010). Adding a touristic flavour or element could additionally increase the motivation in students.

Touristic text materials offer a wide spectrum of possibilities. Of course, many kinds of activities that could be carried out with any other text could be applied to touristic-type texts as well, with the advantage (as already mentioned above) of using interesting and stimulating written and oral texts. One of the advantages of touristic materials is that they may be of various types, given that many different types of tourism exist. Some types of tourism could be seen as more appropriate for the L2 classroom, i.e. those that are related to relaxation, leisure (one of the more modern types of tourism called *literary tourism,* where one finds sites containing information about the places related to the creation of literary works, could be of great value), maybe also health care tourism and, why not, professional tourism too. Any text, however, could be of interest, even ones related to industrial tourism if needs be.

Another advantage of touristic websites is that they are rich in illustrative materials, which offer further possibilities for developing a variety of exercises. Besides, a web-based lecture offers the students the possibility to search for materials themselves and subsequently report the information to the rest of the group. This stimulates individual work and offers the possibility to learn to carry out constructive research on the web.

Another advantage of this type of text is that the Internet provides not only written but also audio and video materials, suitable for developing oral and aural comprehension exercises. If oral translation is applied to a text, any material could be quickly memorized and become the base for any communicative or task-based activity.

In addition to this one could mention that the visiting of a given site related to a literary work or an important author would stimulate the students' interest in literature and further reading.

In our view, a lecture would become far more exciting if presented in the form of a "virtual journey". Such an experience does not require the preparation of luggage and is also entirely without cost. At the same time, it offers not only the possibility to see new places, but also to really learn more about the target culture and customs, while learning a foreign language.

9   Conclusions

This work is an attempt to presents the basic parameters of any future experiment that combines the requirements of achieving rapid results in L2 teaching and the possibilities offered by the stimulating field of tourism. The aim was to suggest a way in which tourist web resources (and other materials) could be used in the L2 classroom in order to reinforce students' motivation and to add to their knowledge of the places in which the foreign language is spoken. We explained that touristic websites would be a precious tool, especially if used together with the teaching technique presented in this work. Since the oral translation methodology is mainly based on the use of texts, the stimulating web resources are an excellent tool to be used both to teach language competences and to stimulate the students' interest in the subject.

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