

Congress Proceedings



IV ENGLISH TEACHING CONGRESS



428.0071

P963c Proceedings of the IV English teaching congress (2022: noviembre-diciembre: Región Huetar Norte, Alajuela, Costa Rica)
IV English teaching congress Huetar Northern Region / compiladora Patricia López-Estrada; editor Escuela de Idiomas y Ciencias Sociales, Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica. -- 1 edición. -- Cartago, Costa Rica: Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica, 2022.
1 recurso en línea (1 archivo pdf 6Mb): ilustraciones, gráficas, tablas.

Referencias bibliográficas

ISBN: 978-9930-617-21-2 (e-book)

1. Inglés -- Congresos, conferencias, etc. 2. Inglés -- Estudio y enseñanza
3. Inglés -- Educación superior -- Congresos, conferencias, etc. 4. Inglés -- Enseñanza -- Congresos, conferencias, etc. 5. Actas I. López-Estrada, Patricia, compiladora II. Escuela de Idiomas y Ciencias Sociales, Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica. III. Título.

Proceedings of the IV English Teaching Congress

Huetar Northern Region, Costa Rica
November and December, 2022

All proposals/abstracts have been peer-
reviewed

ISBN: 978-9930-617-21-2

Published by
Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica
(9968-641)

Mailing address: Campus Cartago, 1 Km al sur de la Basílica de Los Ángeles
Cartago, Costa Rica

Website: www.tec.ac.cr

Publication Type: E-book
Published in: Alajuela, Costa Rica
Date of publication: June 2023

Edited by: Escuela de Idiomas y Ciencias Sociales, Instituto Tecnológico de Costa
Rica

Copyright © 2023

The authors of individual papers are responsible for technical, content, and linguistic
correctness.

Proceedings of the IV English Teaching Congress

Huetar Northern Region, Costa Rica
November and December, 2022

Editorial Committee

Dr. Patricia López-Estrada
MA. Lucy Toner Toner
Assist. Estefanía Pérez-Hidalgo

Congress General Coordinador

Dr. Patricia López-Estrada, Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica

Congress Organizing Committee

Dr. Patricia López Estrada, General Coordinator

M.Ed. Gabriela Castillo Hernández, Universidad Técnica Nacional, Sede San Carlos

Lic. Ana Yansy Morales Solís, Universidad de Costa Rica, Sede de Occidente

M.A. Pablo Ramírez Alvarado, Universidad de Costa Rica, Sede de Occidente

Dr. Roy Gamboa Mena, Universidad de Costa Rica, Sede de Occidente

Lic. Jorge Chaves Blanco, Escuela Técnica Agrícola e Industrial, Instituto Agropecuario Costarricense

M.Ed. Gerardo Matamoros Arce, Universidad Técnica Nacional, Sede San Carlos

M.Ed. Eduardo Castro Miranda, Universidad Técnica Nacional, Sede San Carlos

Lic. Patricia Leitón Montoya, Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje, Unidad Regional Huetar Norte

M.Ed. José Miguel Vargas Vásquez, Universidad de Costa Rica, Sede de Occidente

Lic. Ardui Zur Flores Calderón, Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica, Campus Tecnológico Local San Carlos

Lic. Joselyn Rojas Rodríguez, Colegio Técnico Regional de San Carlos, Ministerio de Educación Pública

Dip. María Paula Molina Hernández, Universidad Estatal a Distancia, Sede San Carlos

Lic. Flora González Arias, Universidad Isaac Newton, Sede San Carlos

Acknowledgments

The Organizing Committee for the IV English Teaching Congress, Huetar North Region 2022, would like to express its sincere gratitude to the following professionals for their participation with proposals and presentations. They generously shared their vast knowledge during this Congress in different fields that contribute to the professional development of the English teachers in the Northern Region of Costa Rica.

1. B.A. José Alejandro Fallas Godínez
2. Dr. Allen Quesada Pacheco
3. Lic. Brian Paz Chavarría
4. M.Sc. Daniela Arroyo Sánchez
5. Dr. Patricia López-Estrada
6. M.A. Jonathan Elizondo-Mejías
7. STU. Estefanía Pérez-Hidalgo
8. M.A. Ana Yeraldín Acosta Salazar
9. B.A. Adrián Fonseca Víquez
10. B.A. David Coto Quesada
11. B.A. Rafael Ignacio Meza Leandro
12. M.A. José Miguel Vargas Vásquez
13. M.Ed. Aaron Torres Rojas
14. M.Ed. Gerardo Matamoros Arce
15. Dr. Elsa Fernanda González
16. M.A. Mohamed El Kakhkhari
17. M.A. Walter Araya Garita
18. Lic. Edith María Pérez Méndez
19. M.Sc. Liseth María González Alfaro
20. M.Ed. Cecilia López Morales
21. B.A. Jeff Betuel Blanco Caballero
22. Lic. Ardui Zur Flores Calderón
23. B.A. Christian Josué Vega Moreira
24. Lic. Jazmín Vindas Carmona

25. Lic. Mayra Liseth Soza García
26. Lic. Shirley Segura González
27. M.A. Mark Foster Cormier
28. M.Ed. Roberto Arguedas Zúñiga
29. M.Ed. Fernanda Ortiz
30. B.A. Bina Ashraf Ali
31. M.Ed. Andrea Cristina Vargas Ortiz
32. M.B.A. Esteban Andrés Fuentes Mora
33. M.A. Cindy Rodríguez Soto
34. M.A. Mary Scholl
35. M.A. Iván Suazo Castillo
36. Dr. Danelle M. Conner
37. Lic. Marcela Vaglio Ureña
38. Dr. Madeleine Monaghan Golda
39. M.A. Karen Taylor De Caballero
40. M.Sc. Shirley Rojas Leiva
41. M.L. Paola Artavia Moya
42. M.Ed. María Gabriela Castillo Hernández
43. M.Sc. Leandro Mora Torres
44. Lic. Randall Centeno Hernández
45. Lic. Livia Gamboa Cordero
46. M.Ed. Diego Bolaños Loria
47. Master Yahaira Barquero Fernández
48. Master Guido Barrientos Matamoros
49. M.E.M. Manrique Rojas Araya
50. Dr. Macedonio Alanís González

More specifically, this Organizing Committee thanks the authors who were willing to write papers and share their knowledge through these valuable academic documents.

1. B.A. José Alejandro Fallas Godínez
2. Dr. Allen Quesada Pacheco

3. Dr. Patricia López-Estrada
4. M.A. Jonathan Elizondo-Mejías
5. STU. Estefanía Pérez-Hidalgo
6. M.A. Ana Yeraldín Acosta Salazar
7. M.Ed. Gerardo Matamoros Arce
8. Lic. Edith María Pérez Méndez
9. M.Sc. Liseth María González Alfaro
10. M.Ed. Cecilia López Morales
11. B.A. Jeff Betuel Blanco Caballero
12. Lic. Ardui Zur Flores Calderón
13. B.A. Christian Josué Vega Moreira
14. Lic. Jazmín Vindas Carmona
15. Lic. Mayra Liseth Soza García
16. Lic. Shirley Segura González
17. M.A. Mark Foster Cormier
18. M.Ed. Roberto Arguedas Zúñiga
19. M.Ed. Andrea Cristina Vargas Ortiz
20. M.B.A. Esteban Andrés Fuentes Mora
21. M.A. Cindy Rodríguez Soto

This Organizing Committee gratefully acknowledges Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica for the allotment of an International Standard Book Number (ISBN) and Digital Object Identifier (DOI), and the School of Languages and Social Sciences for contributing to the edition of the proceedings of the IV English Teaching Congress, Huetar Northern Region 2022.

Contents

<i>Evidence of Validity and Reliability in the English Proficiency Test for MEP Students: The 2021 Cohort.....</i>	9
<i>The Results of the English Placement Test (PDL) and the Delivery of a Digital Language Test in Our Context.....</i>	21
<i>Distance and Combined Education during Times of Pandemic: Voices of English Teachers from the Huetar Norte Region.....</i>	31
<i>The Design of the Test of English for Young Learners.....</i>	42
<i>Experiential Learning: A New Teaching Trend and the Grounded Project.....</i>	53
<i>The Importance of Teamwork Competency to Promoting Interaction and Developing Speaking Skills in Language Classrooms.....</i>	63
<i>Academic Writing: Activities to Bring Writing Outside the Classroom.....</i>	77
<i>The Academic Contribution of the Team-UNA Project to the Participant Tutors and their Professional Growth.....</i>	87
<i>The Influence of Teacher-Implemented Strategies to Elicit Participation During Virtual EFL Lessons</i>	101
<i>Beyond Fill-in-the-Blanks: Meaningful Grammar Activities to Support Acquisition and Promote Collaborative Learning</i>	117
<i>An Innovative eXeLearning Approach to Develop Social Constructivist Skills in a Multiethnic Literature Course.....</i>	127
<i>Engaging and Interactive Digital Materials and Resources for English Teaching</i>	141
<i>Language Elicitation in Virtual Learning Environments</i>	146
<i>Pedagogical Mediation and ICT Tools: The How-to and When-to.....</i>	151

Evidence of Validity and Reliability in the English Proficiency Test for MEP Students: The 2021 Cohort

José Alejandro Fallas Godínez
Universidad de Costa Rica, Costa Rica
jose.fallasgodinez@ucr.ac.cr

Abstract: Statistical techniques for measurement are vital to providing evidence of the validity and reliability of tests. Using statistical methods, test designers are able to develop sound instruments that can assure test takers of the interpretation made of test results. High-stakes testing requires a rigorous process of validity and reliability. In 2021, the *Prueba de Dominio Lingüístico* (English Proficiency Test) for Costa Rican Ministry of Public Education (MEP) students was shown to have valid and reliable measurement instruments. The factorial analysis undertaken supported the unidimensionality of these instruments. Additionally, most instruments showed solid internal consistency indices in which Cronbach's alphas ranged from 0.79 to 0.86. These results endorse the interpretation of the test results for test takers, teachers, and educational authorities.

Keywords: Validity, Reliability, Evaluation, Language, Testing

Resumen: Las técnicas de medición estadística fomentan la recolección de evidencias de validez y fiabilidad de las pruebas. Mediante el uso de métodos estadísticos, los diseñadores de pruebas pueden desarrollar pruebas adecuadas, que aseguren a los aplicantes de pruebas la interpretación de sus resultados en dichas pruebas. Las pruebas de alto impacto requieren de procesos rigurosos de validación y fiabilidad. La Prueba de Dominio Lingüístico para estudiantes del Ministerio de Educación Pública (MEP) en el 2021 demostró instrumentos de medición válidos y confiables. Resultados del Análisis Factoriales aseguran la unidimensionalidad de estos instrumentos. Además, la mayoría de los instrumentos mostraron índices fuertes de consistencia interna, para los cuales el alfa de Cronbach varía entre 0.79 y 0.86. Estos resultados avalan la interpretación de los resultados de la prueba para aplicantes, instructores y autoridades de educación.

Palabras clave: Validez, Fiabilidad, Evaluación, Idioma, Pruebas

1 Introduction

Standardized language test scores aim to provide trustworthy measurements of language skills, which are extremely important given that high-stake tests of language proficiency can directly affect test takers and even curricula. The purposes for which test scores are used can vary, with prominent uses for test scores including the determination of levels for instruction, diagnostic processes, processes involving selection, designation and classification, the provision of advice, and the screening of students or candidates (Martínez et al., 2014, p. 27). Language proficiency tests can be used to “identify students as English learners and qualify them for special ELL (English Language Learning) programs and services, to redesignate students as proficient in English, and for purposes of diagnosis and instruction” (American Educational Research Association et al., 2014, p. 191). Although test purposes may vary, test scores can have significant impact on examinees.

High-stake tests require rigorous procedures to guarantee high quality standards, with validity and reliability being crucial features. These two characteristics are key to the interpretation of test scores, since these “are used to make highly consequential decisions about test takers and programs” (Chapelle & Voss, 2014, p. 6). The results of high-stake tests are highly influential to the implementation of policy by high authorities, and also directly influence examinees and even instructors. For this reason, “efforts need to be made to minimize errors of measurement and errors in classifying individuals into categories such as ‘pass,’ ‘fail,’ ‘admit,’ or ‘reject’” (American Educational Research Association et al., 2014, pp. 188-189).

In Costa Rica, scholars such as Cerdas and Montero (2017) and Zamora (2015) have explored the features of some of these tests, while Araya (2019) has thoroughly examined the complex construct of language testing. The need to study high-stake tests is essential to ensuring the interpretation of test scores, which are ultimately a referent for many social actors such as education authorities, employers, and test takers. This study therefore focuses on the following objectives to describe the evidence of the validity and reliability of the English Proficiency Test of the Costa Rican Ministry of Education (MEP).

1.1 General Objective

- To collect evidence of the validity and reliability of the English Proficiency Test for MEP students by analyzing results of the 2021 cohort.

1.2 Specific Objectives

- To analyze evidence of the validity of the construct defined for the 2021 English Proficiency Test for MEP students, analyzing the internal structure of the instrument by means of exploratory factor analysis.
- To determine the level of reliability of the 2021 English Proficiency Test for MEP students by examining evidence of the instrument’s internal consistency using Cronbach’s alpha.

2 Literature Review

Validity and reliability are desirable features in any test (Villarreal et al., 2015). To assure test takers of a fair instrument, mechanisms have been developed to collect evidence of validity and reliability. This paper focuses on statistical methods used to determine each of these two features. The construct dimension of a test is a main concern of the validity process. While methods have been proposed to measure test dimensionality (Quinn, 2014), this paper focuses on factor analyses to collect evidence of the dimension for the instrument used to test the 2021 cohort. For internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha (1951) was estimated. These analyses aim to provide evidence of the instrument's performance. This literature review introduces the concepts of validity and reliability and their pertinency to measurement instruments.

2.1 Validity

Validity embodies the process of supporting the interpretation of test scores. "It is the degree to which all the accumulated evidence supports the intended interpretation of test scores for the proposed use" (American Educational Research Association et al., 2014, p. 14). The validation process is essential to assuring the trustworthiness of test results while supporting their interpretation. Evidence of validity includes different facets, but most importantly, this process must become a recurrent step. According to Villarreal et al. (2015), some of the facets evaluated during the validation process include content, the item response process, internal structures, relations with other variables, and test consequences. Martínez et al. (2014) state different methods for validation such as internal, external, and content validation.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is a statistical technique used to explain patterns of correlation between items, which give rise to the dimensionality of a test. In this type of study, "factors are the underlying dimensions which account for the observed variance in the observed variables" (Zhang & Luo, 2019, p. 244). EFA analysis makes it possible to assess the construct of a test by analyzing its underlying internal structure (Martínez et al., 2014). This study addresses the internal structure of the instruments used in 2021 by means of exploratory factor analysis.

2.2 Reliability

Reliability stems from the consistency of the measurements of a test. Formally defined, reliability aims to demonstrate how consistent the results of an instrument are in measuring the construct by repeating the test multiple times (ALTE, 2011; Mair, 2018). Reliable instruments indicate that a small variation in measurements over time is expected. The variability of a group and the length of the test affect the estimation of reliability coefficients (Martínez et al., 2014). Two well-known methods to measure internal consistency are Cronbach's alpha (1951) and Spearman-Brown's split-half method (1910). This paper only employs Cronbach's alpha to report the measurement consistency of the instruments. Strong consistent instruments have Cronbach's coefficients of 0.8-0.9 (Mair, 2019; Martínez et al., 2014). Although reliability also supports the interpretation of test

scores, it does not provide conclusive evidence of validity (Villarreal et al., 2015), and thus both processes must be analyzed and interpreted separately.

3 Methodology

Evidence of validity and reliability in this study was established through data and the statistical analyses. Analysis was made of ten instruments developed by the *Programa de Evaluación en Lenguas Extranjeras* (Program of Evaluation of Foreign Languages, PELEx) of the School of Modern Languages at the University of Costa Rica and administered in 2021. The instruments measured two English skills, listening and reading, with five instruments used to assess each skill. All instruments were composed of 50 items. The instruments were aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CERF), with test scores reporting CERF bands (A1, A2, B1, B2, and C1) separately for each skill.

This study includes analysis of 72,217 observations made in 2021 in the Costa Rican public and private educational system, in their different modalities. For the administration of the test, examinees were randomly assigned to a form for each of the two skills. Instruments were administered online by PELEx, using its own platform. Test takers had 60 minutes to complete each of the instruments. The data used in this study was made up of binary datasets in order to protect the identity of test takers.

The following sections describe the analyses and methods used to collect evidence of validity and reliability. Exploratory factor analyses were used to analyze evidence of validity. As for reliability, Cronbach's alphas were estimated. Analyses were applied to the five reading and listening instruments, since scores were reported separately for each skill.

3.1 Factor Analysis

Factor Analysis (FA) is a technique used to collect information about the internal structure of tests. Establishing the dimension or number of factors that constitute the test is relevant to test analysis (Martínez et al., 2014), since this provides evidence of the latent traits or constructs being measured. Factor analysis is divided into two types: Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The main purpose of EFA is the definition of the internal structure of a particular test, determining its dimensionality. It does not suppose any number of factors nor any hypothesis *a priori*. In this scenario, items are assigned to the factor that explains the variability of most of the items. In contrast, the CFA seeks evidence to prove the hypothetical and theoretical structure of the test. CFA models assume a test structure, and the model then seeks evidence of this hypothesis.

This study used exploratory factor analysis to analyze each of the instruments. Tetrachoric correlations were used for the estimations of eigenvalues, based on the results from a study by Freiberg et al. (2013). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measurement (KMO) was estimated to measure the adequacy of each of the datasets. The dimension of the instruments was determined by means of the eigenvalues, the Very Simple Structure (VSS)

method and graphical analysis. The relationship between the first and second eigenvalues (Eigen1/Eigen2) and the percentage of variability explained by the first prominent eigenvalues were considered to be indicators of the construct's dimensionality. The Very Simple Structure (VSS) index estimates simpler loadings matrices to fit a factor model. "The higher this value, the better the simple loadings structure represents our data" (Mair, 2018, p. 32). Graphical analyses were done taking the acceleration factor into consideration. This acceleration factor refers to the abrupt change that occurs, also known as the elbow method.

3.2 Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's alpha is a statistical measurement developed by Cronbach (1951) to measure the internal consistency of an instrument. This coefficient has later been recognized as a measurement of reliability. Cronbach's alpha uses the variance of the items and the variance of the total scores to estimate a coefficient of reliability. Cronbach (1951) established his formula to estimate the lower boundary of a test's reliability, as seen in Equation 1.

$$\alpha = \frac{n}{n-1} \left(1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n V_i}{V_w} \right) \quad (1)$$

n is the number of total items in the test, V_i is the variance of item i , and V_w is the variance of the total scores.

For the statistical analyses, data were analyzed using R Version 4.1.3 (R Core Team, 2022), employing the packages nFactors Version 2.4.1 (Gilles & Magis, 2020) to estimate EFA, psych Version 2.2.3 (Revelle, 2022) and ShinyItemAnalysis Version 1.4.0 (Martinková & Drabinová, 2018) to estimate Cronbach's alphas.

4 Results

Table 1 shows descriptive measurements for each of the instruments. Similar means and close standard deviations were found for instruments for every skill. Means for the listening instruments ranged from 52.7 to 57.7. Examinee means for the reading instruments ranged from 47.3 to 49.7, showing lower performance compared to the previous skill. The instruments for the English Proficiency Test showed similar performance levels, even though the items were not the same for all instruments. The following sections explore the evidence collected with respect to validity and reliability.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics. English Proficiency Test, 2021

Statistic	Form				
	I	II	III	IV	V
Observations	20639	12945	12896	12926	12811
Listening					
Items	50	50	50	50	50
Mean	52.70	54.98	51.47	57.71	55.25
SD	16.63	16.50	14.54	15.32	15.30
Reading					
Items	50	50	50	50	50
Mean	49.77	53.46	47.26	46.18	46.23
SD	15.53	13.73	16.93	16.18	15.58

Note. Mean and standard deviation on a scale 0-100.

Source: English Proficiency Test for MEP Students, 2021. School of Modern Languages.

4.1 Validity

In the first stage, the four instruments were analyzed using exploratory factor analysis for each of the two skills. Table 1 summarizes the indices estimated for each of the instruments. For all instruments, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index for sampling adequacy was superior to 0.93. Regarding the Very Simple Structure (VSS) index for factor identification, all instruments presented one factor as the optimal first level of complexity (VSS₁).

The first and second optimal simple structures (VSS₁ and VSS₂) range from 4% to 8%. All the instruments show a one factor solution to explain most of the variability of the items, suggesting the existence of one dimension. The relationship between the first and second eigenvalues (Eigen₁/ Eigen₂) equals 3.15 or above in each case, which supports the same degree of unidimensionality. The percentage of variability explained by the first eigenvalue is reasonably high compared to the second and third ones, with the stress in the third form on the reading skill. This information supports the premise that all the 2021 instruments measured only one dimension.

Table 2
Exploratory Factor Analysis Indices by Instrument and Skill

Index	Form				
	I	II	III	IV	V
Observations	20639	12945	12896	12926	12811
Listening					
Items	50	50	50	50	50
KMO	0.93	0.97	0.94	0.96	0.97
VSS ₁	0.77 (1)	0.81 (1)	0.76 (1)	0.74 (2)	0.79 (1)

VSS ₂	0.85 (2)	0.87 (2)	0.81 (4)	0.81 (3)	0.84 (3)
Eigen ₁ /Eigen ₂	3.15	3.81	3.61	3.32	4.05
<i>Eigenvalues^a: EFA</i>					
Eigen ₁	24.12	25.98	22.17	20.42	24.03
Eigen ₂	7.66	6.82	6.15	7.56	5.93
Eigen ₃	2.98	3.14	2.85	3.66	3.03
Reading					
Items	50	50	50	50	50
KMO	0.97	0.96	0.98	0.97	0.95
VSS ₁	0.75 (1)	0.69 (1)	0.81 (1)	0.79 (1)	0.77 (1)
VSS ₂	0.80 (2)	0.75 (2)	0.84 (2)	0.83 (2)	0.83 (3)
Eigen ₁ /Eigen ₂	3.98	3.40	5.76	4.14	3.78
<i>Eigenvalues^a: EFA</i>					
Eigen ₁	21.27	19.27	44.34	23.62	23.02
Eigen ₂	5.35	5.68	7.69	5.70	6.09
Eigen ₃	2.79	3.26	2.92	2.53	3.03

Note. KMO = Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin general index.

VSS = Very Simple Structure. Number of factors in parentheses.

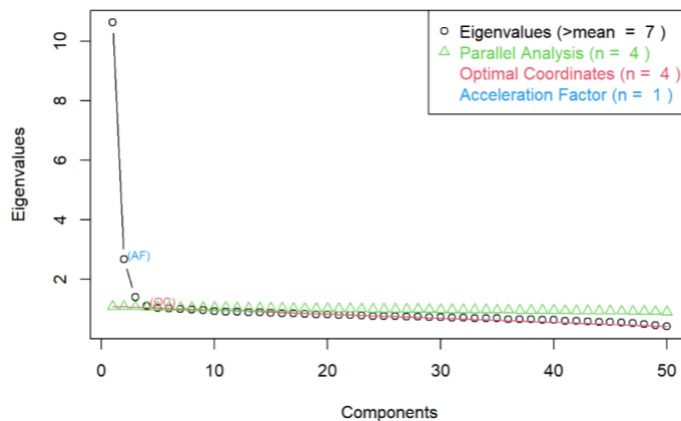
^a Percentages of the variability explained by eigenvalues in the EFA.

Source: English Proficiency Test for MEP Students 2021. School of Modern Languages.

Figure 1 and Figure 2 show the graphical results of Form I corresponding to listening and reading skills. Graphically, the second eigenvalue suggests the possibility of a second factor. If this is the case, a test is considered multidimensional measuring the language skill and another skill or subskill. However, previous evidence refutes this hypothesis, although some scholars have acknowledged the existence of difficulty factors when using binary data (Martínez et al., 2014). These factors seem to provide evidence of so-called multidimensionality, but these factors emerge because of the item's difficulty resulting in spurious correlations rather than actual dimensions.

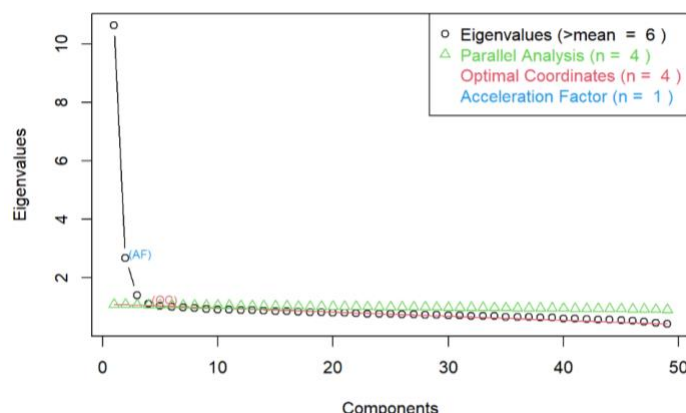
Figure 1

Scree Plot of Exploratory Factor Analysis, Listening Test. Form I



Source: English Proficiency Test for MEP Students, 2021. School of Modern Languages.

Figure 2
Scree Plot of Exploratory Factor Analysis, Reading Test. Form I



Source: English Proficiency Test for MEP Students, 2021. School of Modern Languages.

One prominent factor is presented in the graphs (see Figure 1 and Figure 2); in both instruments, the second eigenvalue load sharply decreases, accentuating the acceleration factors after the first ones. This pattern endorses only one factor; consequently, the graphic evidence supports the unidimensionality of these instruments. Along with the previous indices, these results validate the unidimensionality of each of the ten instruments. Similar scenarios are presented for the remaining instruments (see Figure A.1, Figure A.2, Figure A.3 and Figure A.4 in appendices).

4.2 Reliability

Concerning the instruments' internal consistency, Table 3 summarizes the Cronbach's coefficients estimated for each instrument by skill. With the exception of the second form for the reading skill, the instruments showed Cronbach's alpha at between 0.83 and 0.86. These indices of internal consistency indicate sound instruments for the English Proficiency Test in 2021. As suggested in the literature (Celina & Campo, 2005; Martínez et al., 2014), high-stake tests require indices of internal consistency of over 0.80 to comply with the necessary quality standards.

Table 3
Cronbach's Alpha by Instrument and Skill

Statistic	Form				
	I	II	III	IV	V
Observation	20639	12945	12896	12926	12811
Total items	50	50	50	50	50
Listening					
Cronbach's α	0.865	0.865	0.822	0.841	0.838
Reading					
Cronbach's α	0.842	0.798	0.860	0.858	0.848

Source: English Proficiency Test for MEP Students, 2021. School of Modern Languages.

5 Conclusions

Those who are directly and indirectly involved in standardized testing should become aware of the process behind the quality standards of the instruments applied. High-stake tests require constant supervision of their measurement properties. As presented in this paper, the use of statistical methods facilitates the collection of evidence of the validity and reliability of tests. These methods can ensure test takers that flawless instruments for language assessment have been developed.

Educational authorities, language instructors and test takers deserve high quality language assessment tools with interpretable results. To assess construct validity, this paper highlights the use of factor analysis to study the dimensionality of the instruments employed. Regarding reliability, Cronbach's alphas for the 2021 English Proficiency Test for MEP students support the interpretation of the test results, so guaranteeing test takers, teachers, and authorities of the quality of this test.

The School of Modern Languages has demonstrated its commitment to ensuring the quality of its instruments. This effort is proven by the resulting evidence of validity and reliability in the 2021 English Proficiency Test for MEP students to assess listening and reading skills in a second language, which also supports the interpretation of the test results, guaranteeing test takers that this is a valid and reliable test.

More frequent studies with respect to the validity and reliability of tests should be undertaken and their results should be made public. The validation of tests should be a mandatory practice undertaken to enforce their trustworthiness. This study only explores the use of factor analyses and Cronbach's alpha to provide evidence of the validity and reliability of tests. Future studies should explore other methods and measurements available, to contrast these with the results of this study.

For high-stake testing, instruments need to comply with credible standards, particularly when consequences seriously affect test takers. This study supports the use of the instruments used in the 2021 English Proficiency Test for the MEP. Indeed, these results show that this test makes a trustworthy assessment of listening and reading skills.

6 References

- American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education. (2014). *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/e577932014-003>
- Association of Language Teachers in Europe (ALTE). (2011). *Manual for Language Test Development and Examining*. Language Policy Division, Council of Europe.
- Araya, W. (2021). Dominio lingüístico en inglés en estudiantes de secundaria para el año 2019 en Costa Rica. *Revista de Lenguas Modernas*, (34), 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.15517/RLM.V0I34.43364>
- Celina, H., & Campo, A. (2005). Aproximación al uso del coeficiente alfa de Cronbach. *Revista colombiana de psiquiatría*, 34(4), 572-580.

- Cerdas, D., & Montero, E. (2017). Uso del modelo de Rasch para la construcción de tablas de especificaciones: Propuesta metodológica aplicada a una prueba de selección universitaria. *Actualidades Investigativas en Educación*, 17(1), 79-95. <https://doi.org/10.15517/aie.v17i1.27299>
- Chapelle, C. A., & Voss, E. (2013). Evaluation of Language Tests through Validation Research. *The Companion to Language Assessment*, 3, 1079-1097. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118411360.wbcla110>
- Cronbach, L. J. (1951). Coefficient Alpha and the Internal Structure of Tests. *Psychometrika*, 16(3), 297-334. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf02310555>
- Freiberg, A., Stover, J. B., De la Iglesia, G., & Fernández Liporace, M. (2013). Correlaciones policóricas y tetracóricas en estudios factoriales exploratorios y confirmatorios. *Ciencias Psicológicas*, 7(2), 151-164. <https://doi.org/10.22235/cp.v7i1.1057>
- Mair, P. (2018). *Modern Psychometrics with R*. New York, NY: Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93177-7>
- Martínez, M. R., Hernández, M. J., & Hernández, M. V. (2014). *Psicometría*. Alianza Editorial.
- Quinn, H. O. C. (2014). *Bifactor Models, Explained Common Variance (ECV), and the Usefulness of Scores from Unidimensional Item Response Theory Analyses*. [Master's Thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill]. Carolina Digital Repository. <https://doi.org/10.17615/t6ff-a088>
- Villarreal, M. P., Alfaro, L., & Brizuela, A. (2015). Construcción de pruebas estandarizadas en el ámbito de la medición educativa y psicológica. *Serie Cuadernos Metodológicos del IIP*. Instituto de Investigaciones Psicológicas. Universidad de Costa Rica.
- Zamora, J. A. (2015). Análisis de la confiabilidad de los resultados de la prueba de diagnóstico matemática en la Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica utilizando el modelo de Rasch. *Actualidades en Psicología*, 29(119), 153-165. <https://doi.org/10.15517/ap.v29i119.18693>
- Zhang, L., & Luo, W. (2019). Application of Exploratory Factor Analysis in Language Assessment. In *Quantitative Data Analysis for Language Assessment Volume I*, 243-261. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315187815-12>

7 Biography

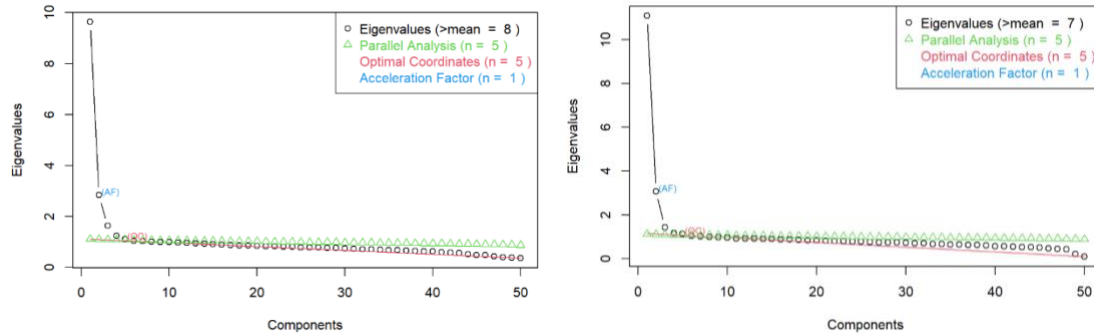
José Alejandro Fallas Godínez

Alejandro holds a bachelor's degree in English and is currently finishing a bachelor's degree in Statistics. He has studied both programs at the University of Costa Rica (UCR). Alejandro is an advanced student in the master's program in Applied Linguistics with a focus on ESP at the Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica. He is interested in quantitative research, especially measurement techniques. Alejandro has done research on standardized language testing. Alejandro currently works as a statistician at PELEX, UCR, where he applies statistical analyses and models to analyze evidence of the validity and reliability of standardized language tests.

8 Appendices

Figure A.1

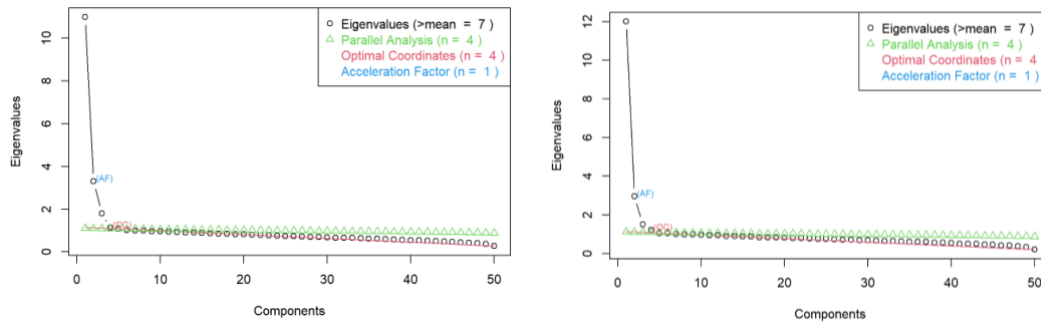
Scree Plot of Exploratory Factor Analysis, Listening Test. Forms II (Left) and III (Right)



Source: English Proficiency Test for MEP Students, 2021 Cohort, School of Modern Languages, UCR.

Figure A.2

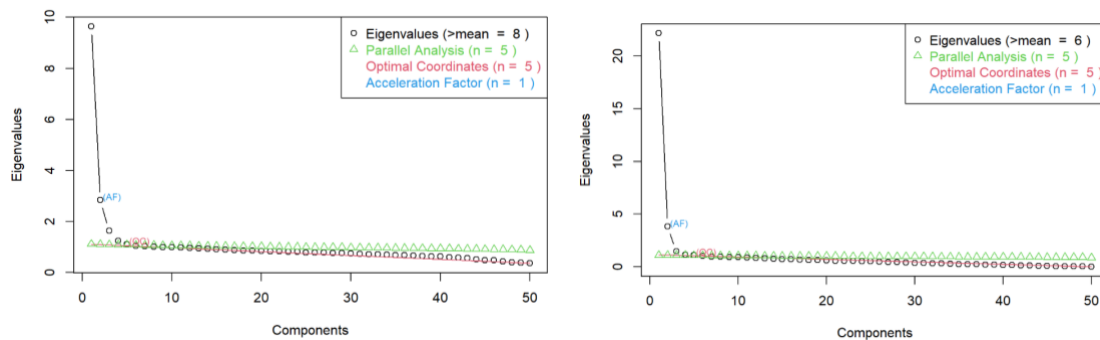
Scree Plot of Exploratory Factor Analysis, Listening Test. Forms IV (Left) and V (Right)



Source: English Proficiency Test for MEP Students, 2021 Cohort, School of Modern Languages, UC

Figure A.3

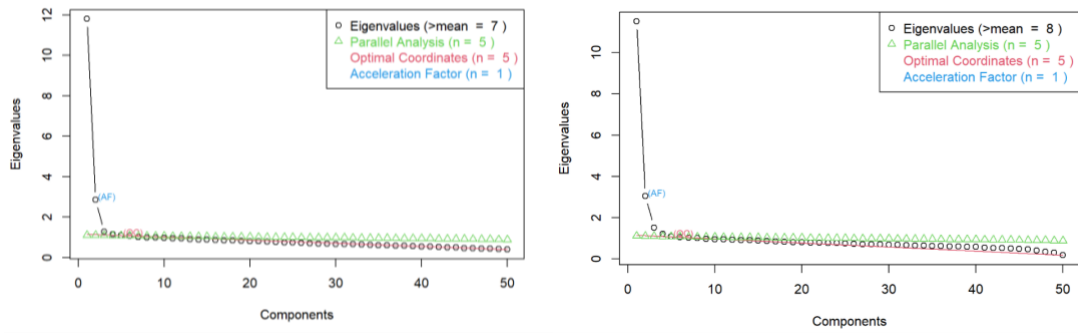
Scree Plot of Exploratory Factor Analysis, Reading Test. Forms II (Left) and III (Right)



Source: English Proficiency Test for MEP Students, 2021 Cohort, School of Modern Languages, UCR.

Figure A.4

Scree Plot of Exploratory Factor Analysis, Reading Test. Forms IV (Left) and V (Right)



Source: English Proficiency Test for MEP Students, 2021 Cohort, School of Modern Languages, UCR.

The Results of the English Placement Test (PDL) and the Delivery of a Digital Language Test in Our Context

Allen Quesada Pacheco
University of Costa Rica
allen.quesada@ucr.ac.cr

Abstract: This article is about the implementation of the application of the English Language Placement (PDL) test designed digitally and applied to Costa Rican Ministry of Education diversified education (high school) students by the University of Costa Rica. There will be a brief explanation of the contents evaluated and the implications of the test results. There is a marked trend that English proficiency test scores fall mainly between bands A1 and A2 (60% to 70%). However, improvement is noted in the upper bands (B1, B2, and C1) in Bilingual Experimental Schools and Bilingual Groups.

Keywords: English Placement Test, Reading Comprehension, Listening Comprehension, Language Proficiency Test, Computer-Assisted Language Test

Resumen: Este artículo trata sobre la puesta en marcha de la aplicación de la prueba de Dominio Lingüístico de inglés (PDL) diseñada por computadora y aplicada a los estudiantes de educación diversificada del Ministerio de Educación de Costa Rica por la Universidad de Costa Rica. Habrá una breve explicación de los contenidos que se evalúan y de las implicaciones de los resultados de la prueba. Hay una tendencia marcada de que los resultados de las pruebas de dominio lingüístico de inglés se concentran entre las bandas A1 y A2 (entre un 60% a un 70%). Sin embargo, se nota un mejoramiento en las bandas superiores (B1, B2 y C1) en los colegios Experimentales bilingües y Secciones bilingües.

Palabras clave: Examen de ubicación de inglés, comprensión de lectura, comprensión de escucha, Prueba de Dominio lingüística, examen de inglés asistido por computadora.

1. Introduction

The University of Costa Rica has designed and developed computer-based standardized English Proficiency/Placement tests for different populations, e.g., children, teenagers, and adults since 2019. In the presentation made at the IV English Teaching Congress-Huetar Norte Region 2022, explanation was made of the results and delivery of a diagnostic test of English proficiency that was tailor-made for the Ministry of Education to comply with the *Prueba de Dominio Lingüístico* (Language Placement Test, PDL) for high school students. In this paper, some features of the test will be explained, along with

other aspects related to the application of a standardized test. Finally, the results of the 2021 application of the PDL for the Northern Region will be presented.

2. Paper-and-pencil assessment

Before 2019, the University of Costa Rica used paper-and-pencil tests for different language users. Paper-and-pencil assessment refers to traditional student assessment formats such as written tests and standardized tests that ask students to use pencils to fill in bubbles on a scannable answer sheet (Douglas, 2012). As of 2019, all language tests developed at UCR have been computer-based. There are many advantages to using this type of digital format. Today the use of computer technology has become so common worldwide, especially in the field of language assessment and testing, that most testing companies deliver their language tests digitally, either on computers or via the internet.

3. The Framework behind Computer-Assisted Language Testing (CALT)

A number of frameworks exist for the use of computers in language testing. Mohammad Sulaiman and Ahmad Khan (2019) and Chappelle and Voss (2016) have distinguished the following motives for using technology in language testing: efficiency (automated writing evaluation (AWE) and automated speech evaluation (ASE) systems); equivalence (research on making computerized tests equivalent to paper-and-pencil tests); and innovation (a true transformation of language testing). These same authors note that nine attributes for computer-assisted language testing (CALT) can be distinguished (Suliaman & Kahn, 2019):

- a) **Directionality:** Computer-assisted language testing can be linear, adaptive, or semi-adaptive. Linear tests administer the same number of test items in the same order to all test takers. In some linear tests, test takers may go back to previous questions and review their responses. On the other hand, computer-adaptive tests (CATs) are based on item response theory (IRT). In other words, tests are personalized and flexible, and results are based on user performance.
- b) **Delivery format:** Language tests can be administered with the help of computers, either on a computer (Computer-Based Tests, CBTs) or on the Web (Web-Based Tests, WBTs).
- c) **Media Density:** One of the advantages of computer-assisted language testing is the availability of different media formats, e.g., audio-only tests, text-based reading tests, or multimedia tests.
- d) **Target skill:** Computer-based language tests can assess single language skills (i.e., reading, writing, speaking, or listening) or a set of integrated skills (for instance, speaking and listening).
- e) **Scoring mechanisms:** test takers' performance can be evaluated by human raters or by computers.
- f) **Stakes:** The results of the language tests may be low (no consequences), medium (class progress), or high stakes (a job requirement) for test takers.

- g) **Purpose:** Language tests can have various purposes: curriculum-related and other, or non-curriculum-related.
- h) **Response type:** There are two main types of responses during computer-delivered language testing: selected responses (multiple choice) and constructed responses (the creation of a short answer).
- i) **Task type:** There are numerous types of tasks such as multiple-choice questions, yes/no questions, written and oral tasks, matching, and drag and drop.

Many language tests have been designed and developed for non-native speakers of English, and may have a low, mid, and high impact on accreditation purposes. That is, some of these tests (TOEIC® Exams, IELTS, Cambridge, and so on) certify the performance and mastery of a foreign language user.

The University of Costa Rica, through its *Programa de Evaluación de Lenguas Extranjeras* (Program for the Assessment and Certification of Foreign languages, PELEx), has developed a suite of language tests for different populations, such as the Test of English for Young Learners (TEYL), the UCR English Proficiency Test (UCR EPT), and the UCR English Placement Test. All these tests are aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which plays a central role in language and education policy worldwide. It is key that UCR language tests provide features such as reliable evidence of English language proficiency, security, practicality, fairness, and real-life scenarios.

Important test development standards have been established for language testing. The World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium's assessment system provides an excellent example of these. WIDA standards can be used to guide the development of test blueprints, being organized by grade level cluster (PreK-K, Grades 1-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12) and by language domain (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Within each grade cluster and domain, there are five model performance indicators (MPIs), one for each language proficiency level, going from 1- Entering, to 5 - Bridging.

Another long-standing set of standards lie in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, which provide a description of what users can do with language in terms of speaking, writing, listening, and reading in real-world situations in spontaneous, non-rehearsed contexts. The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for each skill identify five major levels of proficiency: Distinguished, Superior, Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice.

Finally, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is currently one of the most used standards. It is commonly drawn on by language testers and examination boards, and has helped to define language proficiency levels and to interpret language qualifications for educational institutions and workforce entities worldwide.

The CEFR describes language ability on a scale of levels commencing at A1, representing beginners, and going up to C2, representing those who have mastered a language. This makes it easy for anyone involved in language teaching and testing (learners, teachers, teacher trainers, etc.) to comprehend the level required in different qualifications.

The CEFR organizes language proficiency into six levels, A1 to C2, which can be regrouped into three broad levels: Basic User (A1, A2), Independent User (B1, B2), and Proficient User (C1). The Costa Rican Ministry of Public Education (MEP)'s English Curriculum has been aligned with the CEFR since 2017.

4. Development of the UCR English Placement Test for the MEP

The MEP Student Language Placement Test (PDL) is a digital standardized English language proficiency test that places students in the bands of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) based on their performance in the instrument used for receptive skills (reading and listening comprehension).

UCR language tests assess students' listening comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing and speaking abilities. The speaking test measures a student's ability to communicate orally in English in an educational and everyday context.

It is relevant to mention that the UCR English Placement test is based both on the Ministry of Education English curriculum and on global standards, measuring the competencies, skills, and abilities needed for successful communication.

UCR language tests can be taken online, in a hybrid fashion, or without internet connectivity. The language tests present each student with multiple-choice items with the correct level of difficulty according to CEFR bands. To this end, an instrument has been created that selects the respective questions to assemble the instrument from a significant group of questions known as an *item bank*, and delivers the results based on the student's performance.

The UCR language test was designed in such a way that it complies with the basic principles of standardized assessment: practicality, reliability, validity, authenticity, and impact (Chapelle & Voss, 2016):

Practicality: The test can be applied *en masse* (8000 students per day) and results are available in real-time.

Reliability: The results are consistent with the needs of students, the MEP, the UCR, and the construct of the test.

Validity: During the process of construction of the instrument, research was carried out to find evidence of the validity of the contents and of its consequences or impact, among others.

Authenticity: It presents authentic tasks that can be extrapolated to the Costa Rican work context.

Impact: The instrument allows data to be gathered that can be transformed into information about test users.

The UCR English Placement test consists of two sections: language proficiency in reading comprehension, and language proficiency in listening comprehension. Although there are many uses for the test results, UCR language tests can be used for different purposes:

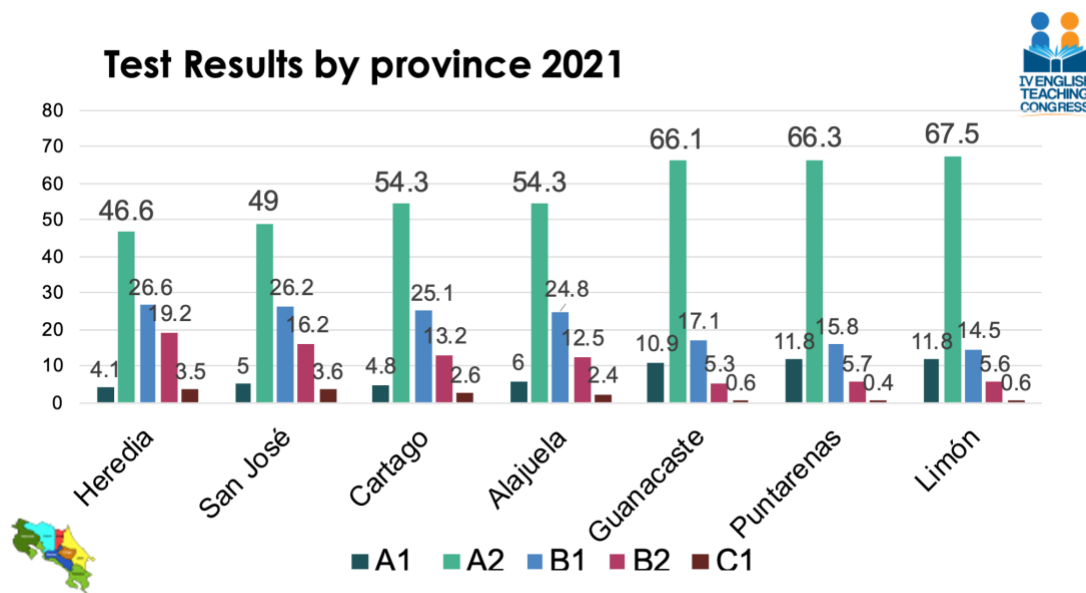
- a. They can be used to track students’ progress over time, providing students, parents, and teachers with objective information about students’ growing and developing English skills.
- b. They can be used to support placement decisions. That is, the tests can serve as measurement tools that can help to place learners in programs and classes.
- c. Finally, they can be used to support instruction by providing information about learners’ proficiency to teachers, parents, and other stakeholders.

To assist high school students become familiar with the format of the test, a mock test was developed. The UCR English mock test (practice test) is not administered under the same test-secure conditions as language tests administered at the University of Costa Rica operational test sites. Therefore, any scores that students achieve in this mock test may not necessarily reflect an accurate estimate of the score they may get upon actual UCR language test administration.

5. PDL Test Results by Province

The results according to the Common European Framework of Languages of the English Language Placement test (PDL) by province are shown in Figure 1 below. The proficiency levels are described as follows: **A1 – Breakthrough or beginner; A2 – Waystage or elementary; B1 – Threshold or intermediate; B2 – Vantage or upper intermediate; C1 – Effective operational proficiency or advanced; C2 – Mastery or proficiency.** According to CEFR standards, A1 and A2 levels are considered basic users, B1 and B2 are independent users, and C1 and C2 are proficient users (Council of Europe, 2020).

Figure 1



Source: MEP PDL 2021 results by province

In Heredia, where the majority of students achieved better results, 4.1% of the population of students who took the English placement test placed as beginners and 46.6% were considered elementary-level students. In other words, 50.7% are basic users of the English language. However, 45.9% of the students who took the language placement exam placed at either B1 or B2 levels and are considered independent users, while 3.5% are considered proficient users.

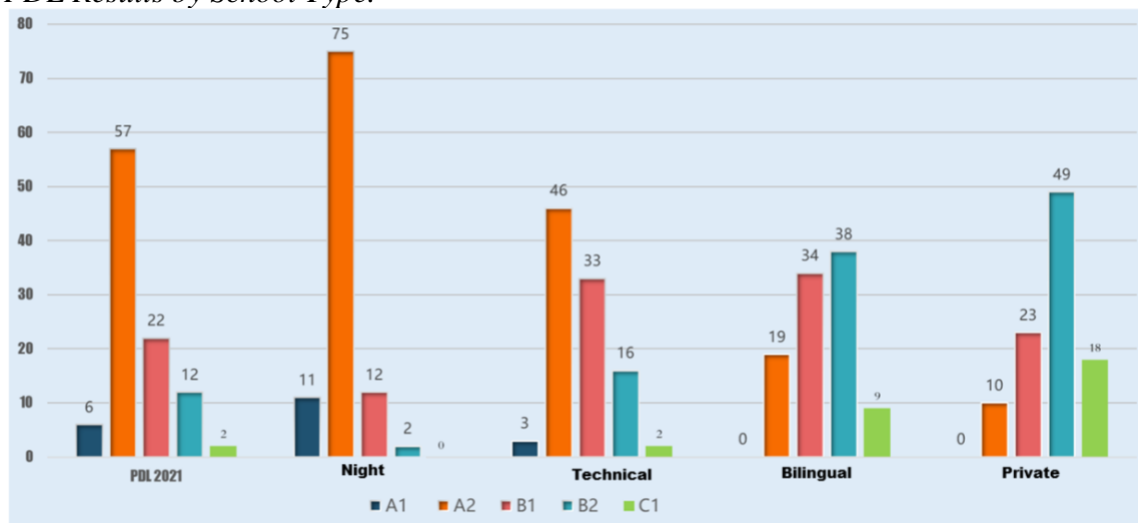
In Alajuela, 60.9% of the population of students were considered basic users, 37.3% placed as independent users, and 2.4% as proficient users. In contrast, in Guanacaste, 77% of the population of students were considered basic users, 22.4% were ranked as independent users, and 0.6% were ranked as proficient users. Similarly, Puntarenas’s results for the English placement test detected that 78.1% of the students were basic users, 21.5% were independent users, and 0.4% were proficient users of the English language.

6. PDL Test Results by School Type

Analysis was also made regarding students’ levels of English language proficiency according to the school type. Schools types included were public, night, technical, bilingual, and private schools. In public schools, it was found 63% of the students were basic users, 34% were independent users and 2% were proficient users. In contrast, in night schools, 86% were basic users, 14% were independent users and none of the students, or 0% of these, were considered proficient users. Regarding technical schools, 49% of the students could be considered basic users, 49% were independent users, and 2% were proficient users.

Figure 2.

PDL Results by School Type.



Bilingual and private schools show significantly different results. Students from bilingual schools who took the English proficiency exam had the following levels of proficiency: 19% placed as basic users, 72% were independent users, and 9% were proficient users. In contrast, in private schools, 10% of the students placed as basic users, 72% as independent users and 18% as proficient users.

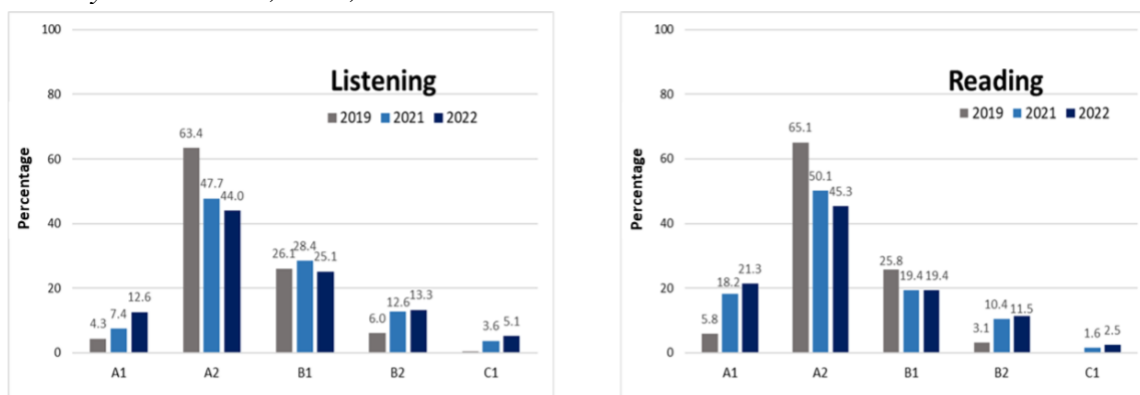
7. PDL Test Results by Skill: Years 2019, 2021 and 2022

Comparative results are shown in the following graphs associating growth in the acquisition of English as a foreign language with respect to two skills, listening and reading. This comparison portrays levels of English proficiency during the years 2019, 2021, and 2022 (Araya, 2021).

In 2019, 67.7% of the students were basic users in terms of listening skills, while in 2021, 55.1% had basic listening skills, and in 2022, 56.6% did. In 2019, 32.1% of students had independent listening skills, while in 2021, 41% of the students placed at this level, and in 2022, 38.4% did. Regarding those ranked as proficient, in 2019, none of the students placed in this category, while in 2021, 3.6% were so ranked, and in 2022, this number rose to 5.1%. Clearly and significantly, students can be seen to have developed in listening skills from being basic users to independent and proficient users of the English language in these three years of the comparative study.

Figure 3.

PDL by skill in 2019, 2021, 2022.



Regarding the skill of reading, similar results are seen. In 2019, 70.9% of the students had basic reading skills, while in 2021, 68.3% did, and in 2022, 66.6% did. Similarly, in 2019, 28.9% of the students had independent reading skills, in 2021, 29.8% had such skills, while in 2022, 30.9% did.

In 2019, none of the students had proficient reading skills in English, while in 2021, 1.6% were found to be proficient in terms of such skills, and 2.5% of students were rated proficient in 2022. This means that if we compare the level of acquisition of listening and reading over these three years, students were shown to be more proficient in listening than reading according to their levels of acquisition. Likewise, during these 3 years, as occurred for listening, students can be seen to have progressed in terms of their level of English between 2019 and 2022.

8. PDL Huetar Norte Region Results: Listening and Reading

In regard to the northern region of Costa Rica, Figure 4 below shows English listening proficiency levels from 2019-2021, based on the test results. In 2019, 91.4% of these students were considered basic users of the language in terms of this skill. However, in 2021, 81.4% placed as basic users, and by 2022, 82.4% had this same level of proficiency. Significant differences in the A2 and B1 bands for Listening were found.

Figure 4

Huetar Norte PDL listening results by year.

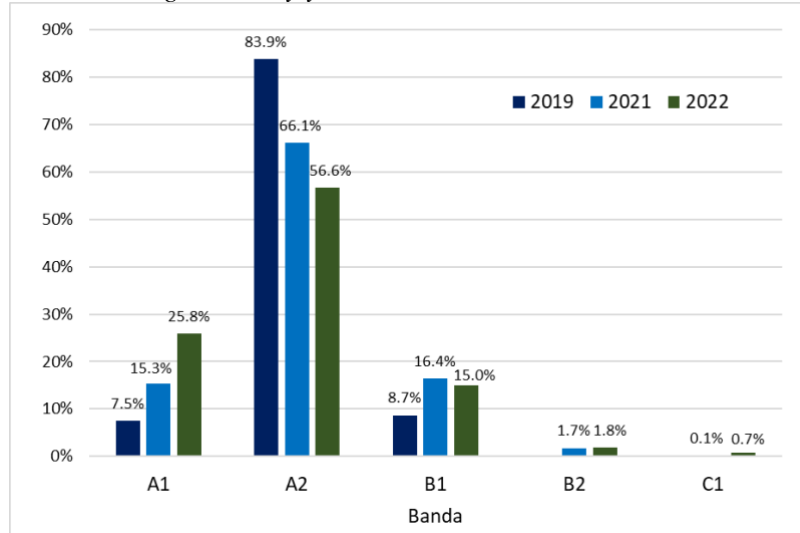
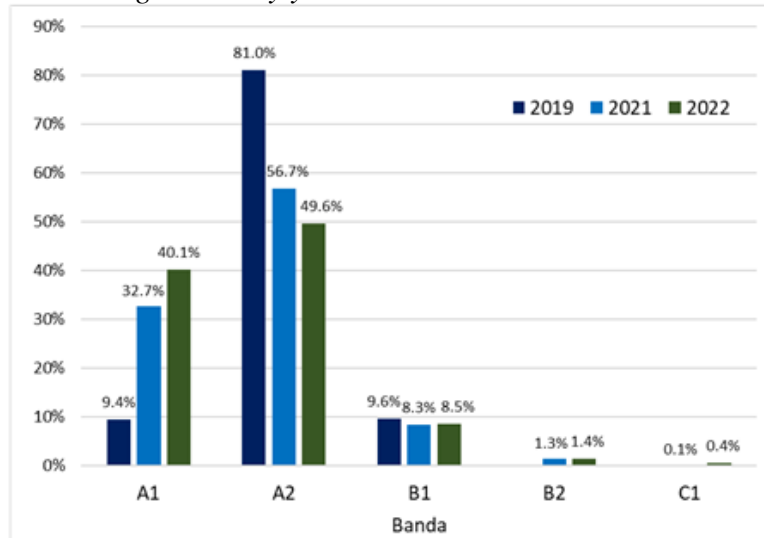


Figure 5

Huetar Norte PDL reading results by year.



Comparing the two skills, listening and speaking, during the same years, the following analysis is provided for reading skills in the Huetar Norte Region:

- 90.4% of the students were basic users in reading skills in 2019. This number decreased to 89.4% in 2021, and still further to 85.7% in 2022.
- With regards to users with independent reading skills, 9.6% of the students were placed at this level in 2019, as was the same percentage of students (9.6%) in 2021; in 2022, 9.9% of these students were considered independent users.
- Very few students were ranked as proficient or advanced users (C1) in listening: 0.1% in 2021 and 0.4% in 2022.

9. Conclusion

In today's multicultural world, it is essential that the Costa Rican Ministry of Education assess the English curriculum based on hard data and rich evidence. The results of English placement tests like the PDL can help stakeholders such as the MEP to make informed decisions to find the weaknesses and strengths of its programs to make changes as required. It is important that an independent language testing entity such as the UCR provides the instrument required to assess students and teachers. Such an independent language testing entity can provide unbiased data, with no vested interest in the outcome, ensuring the standardized evaluation of all students. It can therefore guarantee the validity and reliability of the language tests to ensure they meet CEFR standards, employing up-to-date methods and technologies.

Based on the English Placement Test (PDL) results, it is recommended that more English listening resources be assigned to schools as well as greater focus on managing, designing, implementing, assessing, and monitoring teacher training. There is a need for teachers to become familiar with the new English curriculum, and to have more hours of English instruction in some types of schools, such as night schools and academic schools. Finally, it is recommended that class sizes in many schools be reduced to 15 students. The PDL results can be used either to measure the English proficiency of MEP students or to measure the extent to which the English curriculum has achieved its learning goals. It is time for the Ministry of Education to move forward and continue with the assessment of productive language skills such as writing and speaking. In this regard, the University of Costa Rica has the technology (AI), logistics, and resources to assist in this project.

10. References

- Araya, W. (2021). Dominio lingüístico en inglés en estudiantes de secundaria para el año 2019 en Costa Rica. *Revista de Lenguas Modernas*, (34), 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.15517/RLM.V0I34.43364>.
- Chapelle, C. A., and Douglas, D. (2006). *Assessing Language through Computer Technology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 138 pp. ISBN 0 521 54949 3

- Chapelle, C. & Voss, E. (2016). Utilizing Technology in Language Assessment. 10.1007/978-3-319-02326-7_10-1.
- Council of Europe (2020), Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, available at www.coe.int/lang-cefr.
- Douglas, D. (2012). Technology and Language Testing. 10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal1182.
- Sulaiman, Zain & Khan, Mohd. (2019). Computer Assisted Language Testing (CALT): Issues and challenges. 1-11.

11. Biography

Allen Quesada Pacheco

Allen Quesada Pacheco, is a researcher and full professor at UCR. Dr. Quesada is the Chair of the School of Modern Language. He obtained a PhD in C&I (TESOL) and an MSc in Educational Technology from the University of Kansas, an MA in TESOL from New York University and BA in TESOL. Allen has taught courses in BA, Licentiate and MA TEFL programs, and has performed research in the areas of technology-enhanced learning, bilingualism, telecollaboration, and language testing. He is the creator and developer of the Cyberlab software (<https://cyberlab.ucr.ac.cr>) for the Costa Rican Ministry of Public Education. He has published articles in academic journals in various countries.

Distance and Combined Education during Times of Pandemic: Voices of English Teachers from the Huetar Norte Region

Jonathan Elizondo-Mejías

Universidad Estatal a Distancia, Costa Rica
jelizondom@uned.ac.cr

Patricia López-Estrada

Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica, Costa Rica
plopez@itcr.ac.cr

Estefanía Pérez-Hidalgo

Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica, Costa Rica
eperez96@estudiantec.cr

Abstract: The Costa Rican educational system was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This caused changes in the teaching modality from the in-person model to distance education in 2020, and combined education in 2021. During this scenario, two qualitative research projects were carried out to describe the experiences and voices of ten primary school English teachers from the San Carlos Regional Directorate of Education and the Norte-Norte Regional Directorate of Education. The studies were qualitative, with data being collected through in-depth interviews, document gathering (self-study guides), videos, and photo-elicitation. Findings highlighted the pedagogical, administrative, and emotional challenges faced by these teachers, involving multiple feelings, mostly with negative connotations. This paper seeks to create a reflective space in which to share the teachers' voices regarding their experiences and the lessons learned in order to better understand their professional contexts.

Keywords: Combined education, Distance education, English teaching, Qualitative research, Huetar Norte Region

Resumen: El sistema educativo costarricense fue interrumpido por la pandemia del COVID-19. Esto causó cambios en la modalidad de enseñanza que pasó del modelo presencial a educación a distancia en 2020 y educación combinada en 2021. Durante este tiempo, dos proyectos de investigación educativa fueron implementados para describir las experiencias y voces de diez profesores de inglés de primaria en la Dirección Regional de Educación San Carlos y la Dirección Regional de Educación Norte-Norte. Los estudios fueron cualitativos y se recolectaron datos mediante entrevistas a profundidad, recolección de documentos (Guías de Trabajo Autónomo), grabación de videos y foto elicitación. Los hallazgos destacaron los retos pedagógicos, administrativos y emocionales de los docentes, así como la aparición de múltiples sentimientos, en su mayoría de connotación negativa. Este artículo busca crear un espacio reflexivo para compartir las voces de los docentes sobre las experiencias y lecciones aprendidas para una mejor comprensión de su contexto profesional.

Palabras clave: Educación a distancia, Educación combinada, Enseñanza del inglés, Investigación cualitativa, Región Huetar Norte.

1 Introduction

The COVID-19 health crisis forced the Costa Rican Ministry of Public Education to change the modality of the educational system in order to continue with the school year. Over the two years following the outbreak of the pandemic, two inductive qualitative research projects were conducted to describe the perceptions of four primary school English teachers from the San Carlos Regional Directorate of Education and six teachers from the Norte-Norte Regional Directorate of Education regarding distance and combined education, respectively.

These research projects started in 2020 and 2021 with the researchers carrying out validation of the proposals with authorities from the Ministry of Public Education, the Alliance for Bilingualism, and Universidad Estatal a Distancia (UNED). The first project was registered at the Project Management Department (*Area de Gestión de Proyectos*, AGP), UNED, while the second project emerged under the auspices of the Vice Rectory of Research and Extension at Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica and the UNED's Project Management Department (AGP), as part of the efforts for inter-university cooperation.

Both projects are also based on United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (United Nations, 2018, p. 27). In this respect, of particular importance and relevance to these projects is Objective 4.1, which seeks to ensure “that all children finish primary and secondary education which must be free, equitable and with high quality standards to produce pertinent and effective learning outcomes (United Nations, 2018, p. 27).

The study regarding distance education indicated the presence of strong feelings, struggles with educational management processes, individual teacher's senses of self-efficacy, the normalization of abrupt changes to the school year, and explored the character of distance education. The second study on combined education suggested that despite better acceptance of the modality, teachers still struggled to fully apprehend the educational management processes and emphasized the ubiquitous need to return to in-person education. Giving teachers a voice provides the Ministry of Public Education with a closer view and understanding of how the pandemic affected daily pedagogical practices, and thus may enable it to better cater to teachers' professional needs.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Emergency Remote Teaching

Due to the worldwide public health crisis that took place in 2020 resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, schools throughout Latin American and the Caribbean were suddenly closed, leading to educational processes taking place at home. “By April 2020,

95% of the students, around 166 million, were not attending face-to-face classes” (Elacqua et al., 2021, p. 2). Countries in Latin America and, indeed, the entire world, therefore adopted an emergency remote teaching model.

Emergency remote teaching can be defined as a teaching modality that has not been planned, instead involving an abrupt change from traditional teaching methods as a response to a sudden event (Elizondo-Mejías et al., 2021, p. 39). This means that even though students started to attend classes at home, the pedagogical approach employed did not vary for a considerable amount of time, with teachers instead using a similar approach to that traditionally used in the classroom. The term itself, *emergency remote teaching*, came to be used after discussion between researchers and in-service teachers identified the need to separate distance education and virtual teaching from the teaching modality employed when external circumstances prevented the system from offering face-to-face classes, leading to education delivery being generally aided by virtual tools and information and communication technologies (ICT) (Hodges et al., 2020).

2.2 Distance Education

2020 was the year of sudden changes in educational systems worldwide, and Costa Rica was not an exception. The Ministry of Public Education (MEP by its Spanish acronym) not only implemented a distance education modality, but also established four scenarios into which students had to be classified according to their access to internet connectivity and electronic devices, as follows (MEP, 2020a):

- 1) Students with an electronic device (a cellphone, tablet or computer), and internet connectivity.
- 2) Students with an electronic device, but reduced or limited connectivity.
- 3) Students with an electronic device, but no internet connectivity.
- 4) Students with neither an electronic device nor connectivity.

Chaves Torres pointed out that it is not easy to provide a definition for the concept of distance education due to multiple changes that have affected society (2017, p. 25). Furthermore, for teachers with little experience in the field, this concept might not be clear, particularly in the current environment in which online learning, virtual teaching, and the use of ICT have boomed and are probably at their summit. As indicated by Garrison (2000, cited in García Aretio, 2011), there is a major misconception around the distance education phenomenon, the new technologies that are to be applied, the tools available, and the programs to be used, all of which pose enormous challenges to the implementation of this modality (p. 258). Hence, establishing a theoretical definition of the concept of distance education is key to better understanding the phenomenon under study.

García (2002) and Aliste (2006, as cited in Chaves Torres, 2017) consider that distance education must be based on multidirectional communication that uses ICTs and a tutoring process to engage with students who are unable to attend on-site classes. Therefore, distance is not the only element of importance; teachers and the institution must additionally have a clear strategy that guarantees educational access to the entire student

population through the use of multiple methods. Along similar lines, García (2006, as cited in Abarca Amador, 2014) includes among the elements essential to distance education a lack of on-site instruction, continuous communication, students working autonomously, out-of-classroom tasks, the use of technological resources and technical media, the use of collaborative technology, and clear teacher-student separation (p. 286). This implies that in distance education, students must possess and develop the autonomy required to achieve the expected learning while working outside the classroom with minimum teacher guidance. Furthermore, technological and audiovisual resources that promote the achievement of the expected learning outcomes in accordance with the syllabi should be employed.

2.3 Combined Education

During the 2020 school year, many countries, including Costa Rica, implemented varied educational models; in fact, in Costa Rica it was found that only 13% of lessons were imparted under the face-to-face modality, while the other 87% were taught remotely, representing the longest period of class suspension in recent Costa Rican history (Programa Estado de la Nación, 2021, p. 39). However, very few countries at this time had sufficient internet connectivity and digital tools available to the population to adequately support remote schooling (Arias Ortiz et al., 2020, p. 3), and in this regard Costa Rica was no exception. For the 2021 school year, Costa Rican educational authorities therefore decided to resume face-to-face instruction as far as possible.

With the implementation of *Plan Regresar* (Return Plan), the MEP ventured into a combined educational model which alternated face-to-face and distance education. This model included students' collaborative and autonomous work along with the use of technology, taking into consideration the four possible scenarios established during distance education (MEP, 2021a). This model was defined by Elacqua et al. (2021) as a type of teaching that combines educational practices, face-to-face classes and activities at a distance, mediated by technology (p. 6).

It is worth taking into account the observation of Hodges et al. (2020) that on a global basis this concept of combined education was commonly used out of political expediency, without taking into prior consideration the depth of the changes required and the investment that should be made in professional development and infrastructure in order to effectively implement this teaching modality.

2.4 Pedagogical Approaches Employed during the Pandemic

Pedagogical approaches employed in English as a Foreign Language classes in the context of distance education vary considerably when compared to face-to-face instruction. As indicated by Roux et al. (2014), the selection of material and the way this is presented to students varies depending on values, the resources available and the syllabus being implemented. In this regard, in Costa Rica the MEP promoted two documents intended to guide teachers in this process: (a) *Orientaciones para el apoyo del proceso educativo a distancia* (Guidelines to Support Distance Education); and (b) *Pautas para la*

implementación de las Guías de Trabajo Autónomo (Guidelines for the Implementation of the Self-Study Guides).

The first of these documents instructs teachers to create self-study guides for students to work on autonomously; these consisted of the planned sequence of activities supported by virtual or distance learning tools to be undertaken by students in either of these scenarios, either independently or with the support of their families (MEP, 2020a, p.15). Teachers therefore had to substitute their usual pedagogical approach with documents they provided to students via different means, taking students' contexts into consideration.

The second document gives guidelines on implementing these self-study guides (MEP, 2020b), including a section giving a series of recommendations to English teachers. These included the implementation of three stages in the self-study guide: (1) Self-preparation to complete the work in the guide; (2) Recalling previous knowledge and/or learning; and (3) Applying what was learned. Teachers also needed to ensure that each guide could be completed in a maximum of 80 minutes with a short break. Furthermore, instructions needed to be clear, allowing the performance of linguistic tasks based on the assessment strategies established in the syllabus in a way that included all the MEP's required teaching stages: warm-up, pre-task, task rehearsal, and task assessment. Teachers also had to make sure they followed the order suggested with respect to the scope and sequence provided in the teachers' guide (MEP, 2020b, p. 24). Finally, a self-evaluation and self-regulation section at the end of each guide needed to be included for students to assess their own performance.

Similarly, during the implementation of combined education in 2021, the MEP created and promoted a document with specific guidelines regarding the pedagogical approach to be taken up for this educational modality. This document indicated that teachers were to use the 2017 syllabus for English classes, except for the sixth grade, for which the 2005 syllabus was to be employed (MEP, 2021b).

Some of the responsibilities that the guidelines indicated were expected of teachers included identification of the expected learning that had not been covered in the previous years and the incorporation of this in the students' grading process during 2021. The guidelines further established that at least two face-to-face lessons had to be imparted each week for both primary school and secondary school, representing at least 80-minutes of on-site classes on a weekly basis (MEP, 2021b, p. 45).

Another key element of the pedagogical approach to be employed during combined education was the incorporation of four pedagogical stages: connection, clarification, collaboration, and application. In the first stage, teachers are expected to activate students' prior knowledge for the introduction of new topics. The second stage, clarification, provides time for activities in which teachers present and clarify new concepts and content. During collaboration, students are expected to work with their peers, family or teachers on constructing new knowledge that is to be applied in the final stage of the educational sequence. It was required that this whole sequence be present and easily identified in the

self-study guides which had to include color coding to separate face-to-face interactions from distance components (MEP, 2021b).

Finally, teachers were asked to create two self-study guides a month which included the four macro skills as well as the self-evaluation rubric or performance scale for students to assess themselves, which also was to act as a basis for teacher feedback to their students.

3 The Projects

3.1 Methodology

Both projects adopted the case study format for their research design, with the intention of studying a particular case with a descriptive focus (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Flyvbjerg, 2011; Lichtman, 2013). There were two units of analysis, one for each project: distance education and combined education. This type of design was selected in order to undertake the detailed systematization of cases, using extensive in-depth data to conduct research on a current phenomenon in a real context (Yin, 2018). The purpose of both studies was to describe the opinions and experiences of a total of ten MEP English teachers in order to better understand their professional contexts. The sites of study were the San Carlos Regional Directorate of Education (in 2020) and the Norte-Norte Regional Directorate of Education (in 2021).

The studies were based on qualitative inductive research, since the descriptions emerged from specific elements present within the data collected, which were converted into semantic constructs also known as categories (Hatch, 2002). The intention of these research projects was to apprehend two complex social phenomena: distance education and combined education in times of pandemic. Additionally, the studies sought to describe the lessons learned with regards to decision-making processes in Costa Rican public primary education.

Data collection techniques employed in both projects included semi-structured in-depth interviews and document gathering. In the study on distance education, teachers recorded videos to present their professional realities, whereas in the study on combined education, researchers implemented the photo elicitation technique. The interviews were carried out using the Zoom platform and were transcribed for later analysis. All quotes from the interviews included in this paper were translated from the original Spanish by the authors. As part of the attempt to “understand human experiences through the perceptions of those who lived such experiences” (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2006, p. 21), the interviews were carried out using an open-question matrix and follow-up questions were employed to clarify and broaden the participants’ responses (Yin, 2009).

The studies relied on content analysis (Hatch, 2002), which requires ongoing critical and systematic reading of the data. Internal validity was ensured through data triangulation (Merriam, 2009), member checking, and researcher reflection (Hatch, 2002). Codebooks were also created for each case to summarize the relevant minimal semantic units and to identify the significant categories.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling. They each signed the corresponding letter of informed consent, and confidentiality was ensured through the use of pseudonyms. Furthermore, as part of the recruiting process, each participant was required to comply with specific criteria which included being tenured English teachers at primary schools in the corresponding region, working with students in scenarios three and four as proposed by MEP, having had no prior experience of distance education or combined instruction, and working in rural areas (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, 2018) at schools with an enrollment of no more than 200 students.

3.2 Results and analysis

In both projects, results reflected the feelings experienced by the participants during the processes of distance and combined education, also demonstrating the set of self-efficacy skills that allowed teachers to overcome the difficulties they faced and to achieve their professional goals in both years, as well as to make the appropriate management of both micro and macro aspects of the work required.

3.2.1 Feelings during the pandemic

Teachers are not exempt from experiencing feelings on being subject to processes of sudden change, on encountering the unknown, and on facing challenging moments in their careers. The teachers interviewed reported a set of strong feelings, most of which had negative connotations. These included work overload, feelings of being discriminated against, frustration, tiredness, confusion, a sense of difficulty, and of uncertainty. Besides these negative feelings, teachers also expressed empathy towards the administrative authorities, parents, and students, as well as feelings of responsibility and of satisfaction.

Reports were made of feelings of suffering from discrimination during combined education with regards to the difficulties faced in rural areas as compared to urban ones. One participant stated, “Sometimes for us in rural areas, things were more difficult. There are much greater opportunities in urban schools which we lack.” Another participant pointed out, “Even just in terms of the lack of connectivity in their houses, the children are at disadvantage.” Similarly, teachers felt discriminated against when distance education was employed; one participant indicated, “Decisions are often made behind a desk without considering teachers’ needs and students’ contexts: high poverty rates, and no access to many services.”

3.2.2 Self-Efficacy skills

In the context of these studies, self-efficacy can be understood as the set of skills, including those of a personal, technological, and reflective nature, that allowed teachers to make decisions on their own to successfully implement both educational modalities despite the suddenness of the changes to these, and the teachers’ lack of prior knowledge and experience in their implementation. In this sense, personal and reflective skills were categorized as self-efficacy since they helped teachers to cope with the unexpected and to compensate for their lack of expertise in both distance and combined education. Teachers

used their personal skills to find ways in which they could print out self-study guides and deliver these to students' families; during the implementation of distance education, when schools were closed, teachers contacted colleagues to help them, and sometimes used the national mail service for deliveries of the guides to students, among other options. During the implementation of combined education, teachers engaged in the design of the self-study guides, in many cases, completely redoing this work. Furthermore, teachers stated they had to undergo constant reflection in order to modify their planning, teaching, and evaluation processes to ensure that these adequately catered to their students' needs. In 2020, DI-2 reflected on the amount of work sent to students, "I noticed that they were not going to do all of it, so I preferred to send only one activity per week, making sure students did this on their own." During combined education, DI-1 expressed, "At one point I sat down, thought, and analyzed the situation, thinking about everything we had lived through, and I said to myself, 'Come on! You can do it! You can!'"

3.2.3 School-based and MEP-based management

The participants had to deal with two kinds of management in the educational system during the pandemic: 1) Management at the school level, carried out by their principals; and 2) Management coming from the main MEP authorities, including the Minister of Education and the ministerial advisors.

Regarding school-based management, during the period of distance education some school principals played crucial roles in supporting and providing effective and assertive communication. Others were alleged not to have provided any help, even sending confusing instructions. Similarly, the principals' support was perceived during combined education to be more flexible, for example, in terms of schedules, in ensuring teachers were able to comply with the requirements of two different schools some teachers worked at, or in providing resources for the printing of the self-study guides.

MEP-based management was not necessarily perceived as 100% positive, and even though some teachers showed empathy towards the authorities, most of them stressed the difficulties caused by the constant changes in the guidelines and policies promoted, as well as due to delays in the communications sent by the main authorities.

4 Conclusions

Conducting qualitative research was paramount to better apprehending the social educational aspect of the health crisis in the region. The studies undertaken focused on the impact of both the distance and the combined educational modalities on vulnerable populations in rural scenarios, whose contexts were more drastically affected due to other social disadvantages.

It is essential that authorities at all levels take teachers' experiences, concerns, and knowledge into account when making decisions that deeply affect everyone in the system. In taking part in the decision-making processes, teachers may not only feel included, but

they will also feel more identified with the whole process, most likely leading to better results in the process.

By applying a bottom-up approach in the research undertaken, teachers became the main informants and were celebrated as the sole protagonists. These studies thus aimed at giving voice to teachers to validate their knowledge, pedagogical practices, and unique experiences during the pandemic; all this arises from the application of a humanistic perspective seeking to create forums for reflection with the objective of providing the MEP with genuine recommendations for future decision-making processes, particularly in the Huetar Norte Region.

5 References

- Abarca Amador, Y. (2014). La interacción tutor-estudiante en ámbitos de educación a distancia. *Revista de Lenguas Modernas*, (20), 285-294
<https://revistas.ucr.ac.cr/index.php/rm/article/view/14984>
- Arias Ortiz, E., Brechner, M., Pérez Alfaro, M., y Vásquez, M. (2020). *De la educación a distancia a la híbrida: 4 elementos clave para hacerla realidad*. Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo. <http://eduteka.icesi.edu.co/articulos/bid-hablemos-de-politica-educativa-2-de-la-educacion-a-distancia-a-la-hibridan>
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191-215.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control*. New York, NY: W. H. Freeman.
- Baxter, P. y Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study Design and Implementation for Novice Researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 544-559.
<https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol13/iss4/2>
- Chaves Torres, A. N. (2017). La educación a distancia como respuesta a las necesidades educativas del siglo XXI. *Revista Academia & Virtualidad*, 10(1), 23-41.
<https://doi.org/10.18359/ravi.2241>
- Elacqua, G., Navarro-Palau, P., Prada, M. F., y Soares, S. (2021). *Educación a distancia, semipresencial o presencial. ¿Qué dice la evidencia?* Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo. <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/spanish/document/Hablemos-de-politica-educativa-en-America-Latina-y-el-Caribe-5-Educacion-a-distancia-semipresencial-o-presencial-Que-dice-la-evidencia.pdf>
- Elizondo-Mejías, J., López-Estrada, P., y Pérez-Hidalgo, E. (2021). Propuesta metodológica de un estudio de caso sobre la educación a distancia en tiempos de pandemia. *Revista Espiga*, 20(42), 33–48. <https://doi.org/10.22458/re.v20i42.3669>
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2011). Case Study. In Norman, K. D. y Yvonna, S. L. (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4a ed. pp. 301-316). Sage.
- García Aretio, L. (2011). Perspectivas teóricas de la educación a distancia y virtual. *Revista española de pedagogía*, 249, 255-271
- Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing Qualitative Research in Education Settings*. State University of New York Press.
- Hodges, C., Moore, S., Lockee, B., Trust, T. y Bond, A. (March 27, 2020). *The Difference between Emergency Remote Teaching and Online Learning*. EDUCAUSE Review. <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2020/3/the-difference-between-emergency-remote-teaching-and-online-learning>

- Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos. (2018). *Clasificación de distritos según grado de urbanización*. <https://www.inec.cr/documento/2018documento-metodologico-clasificacion-de-distritos-segun-grado-de-urbanizacion>
- Lichtman, M. (2013). *Qualitative Research in Education: A User's Guide*. Sage.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Ministerio de Educación Pública. (2020a). *Orientaciones para el apoyo del proceso educativo a distancia*. <https://www.mep.go.cr/educacion-distancia>
- Ministerio de Educación Pública. (2020b). *Pautas para la implementación de las Guías de Trabajo Autónomo*. http://www.ddc.mep.go.cr/sites/all/files/ddc_mep_go_cr/adjuntos/pautas_para_la_implementation_de_las_guias_de_trabajo_autonomo_07-05-2020vf.pdf
- Ministerio de Educación Pública. (2021a). *Orientaciones de mediación pedagógica para la educación combinada*. <https://www.mep.go.cr/sites/default/files/page/adjuntos/orientaciones-mediacion-pedagogica-educacion-combinada.pdf>
- Ministerio de Educación Pública. (2021b). *Orientaciones específicas de mediación pedagógica para la educación combinada, en la Educación Preescolar, Escuelas Unidocentes, Aula Edad, Educación Especial, Educación Religiosa, Educación Indígena, Colegios Deportivos y Artísticos y Lenguas Extranjeras*. <https://www.mep.go.cr/sites/default/files/page/adjuntos/orientaciones-especificas-02-03-21.pdf>
- Programa Estado de la Nación. (2021). *Estado de la educación*. https://estadonacion.or.cr/informes/?utm_source=Google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=PEN
- Roux, R., Guzmán, T. N., y González, F. (2014). Distance Education for EFL Teachers: Perceptions of Learner Support. *Gist Education and Learning Research Journal*, 9, 157-178. <https://doi.org/10.26817/16925777.148>
- United Nations. (2018). *La Agenda 2030 y los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible Una oportunidad para América Latina y el Caribe*. <https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/40155-la-agenda-2030-objetivos-desarrollo-sostenible-oportunidad-america-latina-caribe>
- Yegidis, B. y Weinbach, R. (2006). *Research Methods for Social Workers*. Pearson Education Inc.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case Study Research: Design and method*. Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*. Sage.

6 Biography

Jonathan Elizondo-Mejías

Jonathan Elizondo holds an MA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language and a BA in Primary Education with an emphasis in teaching English, both from the University of Costa Rica. He also holds licentiate and bachelor's degrees in teaching English from Universidad Americana and TESOL certification from the SIT Graduate Institute in Vermont. He has been a presenter in conferences and congresses in Costa Rica, Peru, Panama, Venezuela, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic. He currently works at the Centro de Capacitación en Educación a Distancia in the Universidad Estatal a Distancia.

Patricia López-Estrada

Patricia López holds an Education Doctorate from University of Florida. She is an advocate for promoting high-quality education and making this accessible to all students. She firmly believes in professional development as a fundamental mechanism for academic growth. She is passionate about teaching with a purpose and believes in teaching philosophies which are at once affectionate and demanding to promote meaningful learning in students. She is a qualitative researcher and an extensionist. She currently works as an associate professor in the School of Languages and Social Sciences at Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica, San Carlos Campus.

Estefanía Pérez-Hidalgo

Estefanía Pérez-Hidalgo is an advanced student in Business Administration, currently majoring in Computer Engineering at Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica. She has been an assistant in two extension projects focused on diagnosing and enhancing the linguistic competences of a rural community in the Northern Region of Costa Rica, as well as in three qualitative research studies regarding perceptions of primary school English teachers regarding distance and combined education during times of pandemic, and on the perceptions of empowerment of women in a rural community in Sarapiquí, Costa Rica. She has grown as a professional through assisting academic projects.

The Design of the *Test of English for Young Learners*

Walter Araya Garita
University of Costa Rica, Costa Rica
walter.arayagarita@ucr.ac.cr

Ana Yeraldín Acosta Salazar
University of Costa Rica, Costa Rica
Anayeraldin.acosta@ucr.ac.cr

Abstract: The *Test of English for Young Learners* (TEYL) is an assessment test of language competence aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, created by the Modern Languages School of the University of Costa Rica. The target population for this instrument are children between 10 and 12 years of age in the Costa Rican educational system. The objective of this document is to describe the development of the TEYL and the results of a piloting exercise. This information is provided in different sections highlighting context, conceptual bases, and the practices that allowed the building of the test constructs. Finally, it describes the research needed to develop the different validity arguments required to ensure consistency in the instrument developed.

Keywords: standardized tests, bands, diagnosis, CEFR, language competence

Resumen: El *Test of English for Young Learners* (TEYL) es un examen de evaluación de conocimiento del inglés, alineado con el Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas, creado por la Escuela de Lenguas Modernas de la Universidad de Costa Rica. La población meta para este instrumento son niños del sistema educativo costarricense con edades entre 10 y 12 años. El objetivo de este documento es presentar la descripción del desarrollo del TEYL y los resultados de su pilotaje. Esta información se presenta en diferentes secciones que resaltan la contextualización, base conceptual y las prácticas que permitieron llegar a los constructos de la prueba. Finalmente, se describe la investigación necesaria para desarrollar los argumentos de validez requeridos para la consistencia en el desarrollo del instrumento.

Palabras clave: exámenes estandarizados, niveles, diagnóstico, Marco Común Europeo, conocimiento del lenguaje

1 Introduction

The Test of English for Young Learners (TEYL), a language competence test for young learners, arises from the need for a standardized English language examination for elementary school in Costa Rica. This test is aimed at students in the Costa Rican educational system aged between 10 and 12, both in public and private institutions. These youths receive about five English lessons per week in the public sector (Ministerio de Educación Pública, 2016), while the number of lessons varies in the private sector. This population has limited opportunities to use the English language inside and outside the classroom. Likewise, in most cases, this population learns the language from non-native instructors within the classroom context through the Task-Based Approach (TBA). Target participants were placed in Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) bands in a range between levels A1 to B1. The test was created in 2020 and was developed and piloted in 2021.

2 Literature Review

Brown (2019) highlights the importance of using language in real-life contexts, a position established since the 1960s when the European Council identified the need to facilitate the study of second languages based on real tasks in order to meet the needs of the language user. The idea of creating the CEFR emerged during the symposium *Transparency and Coherence in Language Learning* held in Europe in 1991. This framework commenced with several drafts specifying objectives, evaluation methods, and certification, and after consultations with more than 3,000 institutions and experts, it was officially published in 2001 (Council of Europe, 2002). The importance of this document, not only for the learning of second languages, but also for its evaluation, lies in the fact that the CEFR provides a tool to assess users as they progress through different levels of linguistic proficiency on the basis of common objectives, contents and methodologies. Further, this is conducted in a way that favors the transparency of the courses, materials, and tests employing this framework (Council of Europe, 2002). Thus, aligning a language proficiency test with CEFR descriptors and developing this through the application of authentic tasks (Ellies, 2017) related to the needs of the target population generates greater reliability with respect to the evidence provided by the instrument on user performance. This performance can be extrapolated to the tasks they can perform in real life, leaving aside the traditional practices of the Costa Rican educational system such as pure memorization.

Papp (2019) states that when determining the most effective type of assessment for a group of young learners, age, instructional context, amount and type of exposure to English, assessment purpose and result use should all be taken into account (p. 389). In this regard, it is important to highlight that in its English curricula for the first and second cycles, the Costa Rican Ministry of Public Education (MEP for the initials in Spanish) specifies the skills expected from students according to their respective levels (from preschool to sixth grade) (MEP, 2016). In addition, it presents a clear differentiation in the roles expected from students, the types of texts that should be used according to the target level and skill, and the competencies to be developed in the light of Costa Rican culture.

Therefore, when building a standardized English test for elementary school, it is essential to study in detail these documents for the correct selection of the type of test to be used, and subsequently the basic characteristics of the items to be incorporated therein. Another important element to take into account when designing the first draft of such a test is to include the views of those responsible for managing the educational policies of the MEP in the classroom (Chapelle, 2008, p. 323).

When seeking standardization of language learning and, consequently, improvement in levels of language proficiency, it is recommended that references such as the CEFR be used as a support (Papp, 2019). Recognizing this, in seeking to prepare bilingual citizens with better opportunities to master two or more languages, the MEP has modified the English curriculum to adjust it to CEFR proficiency levels. Students thus begin language instruction in preschool, and by the end of the second cycle of elementary education, they are expected to obtain CEFR level A2 (MEP, 2016). This is why, when creating a standardized English test for this population in Costa Rica, MEP objectives should be based on valid arguments that demonstrate consistency between the construct and its interpretations (American Educational Research Association et al., 2014).

3 Developing and Piloting the Test of English for Young Learners

The approach to developing the construction of the TEYL was not only qualitative but also quantitative, since data was presented in numbers. The main objective is to generalize the results obtained in order to establish the correlations required to create the basic foundations for the language evaluation instrument. In accordance with that set out by Hernandez Sampieri, Fernandez Collado, and Batista Lucio (2014), the data was both reliable and hard.

In order to collect the information to design the test, different sources were analyzed and reviewed. Likewise, an exploratory instrument, the *Test of English for Young Learners Survey*, was designed for teachers in direct contact with said population.

3.1 General Information

The MEP provided the contact information of 40 teachers who were asked to complete the instrument, which became the sample population. Two weeks after the MEP sent an official email, 23 responses were obtained.

3.1.1 The Listening Component

Regarding the listening component, analysis was made of the characteristics of the materials and the items used, and the fulfillment of the objectives established by the MEP. In the first cycle (grades 1 to 3), three predominant types of audios used to teach the listening component were found: First, songs were the only ones that were used by 100% of the participants. These teachers probably considered that music is more in line with the population in the first cycle of schooling as it makes the language more attractive, allows the association of the message with music, and helps memorization. Second, 73.9% of all

teachers stated that they use conversations as part of the listening component. Third, isolated phrases and sentences were employed by 65.2% of the participants. These last two can also be considered natural to the teaching-learning process, with teacher-student and student-student interactions usually being made up of simple conversations, which may contain errors, and which depend on the oral component in a way that allows students to become familiar with the structure of conversations and the type of responses that can be expected from participants. Likewise, many of these students may rely on phrases and basic vocabulary during class to stay engaged. Regarding audios, there is no one length of audio that significantly predominates over the others. The audio length that seems to be mostly used goes from 30 seconds to a minute, as chosen by 39.1% of participants. With a slight difference, the next most common length is one to two minutes, chosen by 34.8%.

The most common type of item employed were multiple choice items, used by 73.9% of participants. This item is probably so widely used as it is commonly incorporated into activities and evaluations used in different subjects, even during the first years of instruction. Second were items of letter-sound correspondence to identify words, matching, dragging and dropping objects/drawings according to what was heard, used by 60.9% (14) of the participants. Third were items relating pronunciation to the respective drawing, used by 43.5% (10) of the participants. It is important to highlight that the second and third most common item types focus on identifying an aspect of an audio that is played, to relate it to the respective input; this type of response by students is commonly used in beginning levels and is probably incorporated due to its simple nature.

3.1.2 The Reading Component

As was done for the listening component, the reading component tries to identify the characteristics of the texts and items used both in class and in evaluations, investigating the fulfillment of the objectives established by MEP.

The results present a clear difference in the type of texts most frequently used. First, the use of phrases and sentences is employed in 82.6% of instances; despite this representing a high number, the frequent use of these can be attributed to the fact that phrases and sentences are basic elements that make up the texts, also commonly forming part of students' daily class dynamics. Second, with results very similar to those obtained in the listening component, conversations or dialogues are used by 78.3%. Considering that these are also used by 73.9% of participants for the listening component, it can be assumed that the target students are familiar with the structure and implications of conversations. In the field of reading, as well as of listening, incorporating these into class dynamics helps to appropriately contextualize situations for students. Third was the use of three different types of texts: cartoons, isolated words and descriptions, at 47.8% each. Although these are not incorporated by a majority of participants, it is important to take them into account because the three types of texts tend to form part of the daily life of many students. Finally, news is not used at all by the participants, probably due to its complexity and length, which are not likely to be appropriate to the cycles under study.

An ideal description of texts for first and second cycle students in the current Costa Rican context can be developed since three key characteristics for these are mentioned by a majority of teachers. First, the selected text should incorporate vocabulary familiar to the student, an item chosen by 82.6% of participants. Moreover, as mentioned above, the MEP provides a list of vocabulary that should be included at each level, clearly identifying what students should be familiar with. The second characteristic to include is that texts should be accompanied by images to assist their understanding. This was selected by 78.3% of the respondents. Images not only help students to understand a text, but also allow them to make predictions about it, and frequently act as a factor increasing motivation and/or contextualization. Again, the emphasis is on the importance of choosing illustrations attractive to students in the current Costa Rican educational system. The most used types of items are matching at 73.9%, multiple choice at 69.6%, and dragging and dropping objects/drawings according to what is read at 65.2%.

3.1.3 Constructs

Based on the above, the construct of the standardized test of language proficiency is defined for the listening and reading comprehension skills for children in the Costa Rican educational system as follows:

- Language domain in the skill of listening comprehension is understood as the demonstration of the understanding of different audio texts in general English in various contexts at regional and global levels, in the formal and informal, personal and educational domains of the CEFR for the second cycle school student population of Costa Rica.
- Language domain in the skill of reading comprehension is understood as the demonstration of the understanding of different written texts in general English in various contexts at regional and global levels, in the formal and informal, personal and educational domains of the CEFR for the second cycle school student population of Costa Rica.

3.2 Development of the test

As shown above, this assessment tool was developed in different stages, as follows:

1. Theoretical foundation: Presented in Sections I to IV of the document as a basis for decision-making.
2. First-hand stakeholder information: Instrument described in section IV.B
3. Contact with different stakeholders.
4. Design of item specifications: Based on MEP specifications aligned with the CEFR and the considerations set forth in the theoretical foundation, taking into account practical experience.
5. Training for item developers: This stage was carried out in November 2020.

6. Test assembling: The reception of items, reviewing and editing these for acceptance (completion, rejection or modification), the search for voice actors (audios), and the creation of images.
7. Pre-Piloting: May 2021
8. Piloting: September 2021
9. Discussion of results: Timely decision making to develop validity arguments.
10. Test application: 2022

3.3 Structure and Content of the TEYL Test

The TEYL test is to be digital, and given the MEP's resources, it will be offered in three different formats: online, in hybrid mode, and without requiring internet connectivity. Each test consists of a total of 40 items per skill: ten items for Pre-A1, ten for A1, and twenty for A2 to determine if the target band has truly been consolidated.

The test champions students' autonomy to advance at their own pace since students themselves can decide when to move on to the next question, how many times to read texts, and they may listen to audios up to twice within the time established for test completion. Item formats respond to the suggestions given by the teachers interviewed at the beginning of the process, the literature consulted and the characteristics of standardized tests. Thus, closed response items, such as multiple choice, drag and drop, matching, and drop-down list items are used. Therefore, in addition to the fact that students can choose the answer that they consider to be correct by clicking or moving elements, no reviewers are needed because the system does all the work automatically.

When the test was being developed, the MEP was requested to provide the best candidate teachers as item developers. The aim of this was to guarantee the validity of the items by choosing those teachers in direct contact with the target population as item creators. Once the items were received from each designer, they were subjected to three filters: two filters related to format, band suitability and language, while the third filter was review by a native English speaker for grammatical correctness and the naturalness of the communicative tasks in the target language. In some cases, minimal corrections were made, and in others developers were asked for a second version of an item submitted.

3.4 Reporting of Results and Band Assignment

Grades are to be reported based on the CEFR band obtained. In addition, students will receive a descriptive report of the skills they can perform. Details on how the band is to be assigned to each person is shown below.

The answers to the TEYL for listening and reading comprehension skills are marked as either correct or incorrect. Upon obtaining the total number of correct answers, these are calibrated on a scale of 0 to 100, with the evidence of the student's performance corresponding to a minimum of 80% for placement in a particular band. Additionally, items were to be analyzed after the first pilot application, which was intended to reach 6000 students. The items for both skills (listening comprehension and reading comprehension)

were analyzed using the Item Response Theory, as well as other measurements that allow measurement of the consistency of the different assessment instruments used to determine their reliability. The purpose of using these tools is to statistically relate the degree or level of difficulty of the item to the probabilities of answering correctly given the estimated linguistic level of the person taking the test.

In the first stage of item analysis, these were calibrated and assessed separately. Items presenting linguistic problems that suggested sensitive issues or that could be solved based on general rather than linguistic knowledge were removed.

As stated above, reports on the score obtained also include a description of the level achieved according to the band assigned. This report has a critical function (Roberts and Griel, 2010), because it explains what is expected from the student and how results should be interpreted. This is achieved thanks to the mapping of the tasks that students must perform and their direct relationship to CEFR descriptors based on the context of education in the first and second cycle of Costa Rican primary education.

3.5 Pilot Exercise and Results

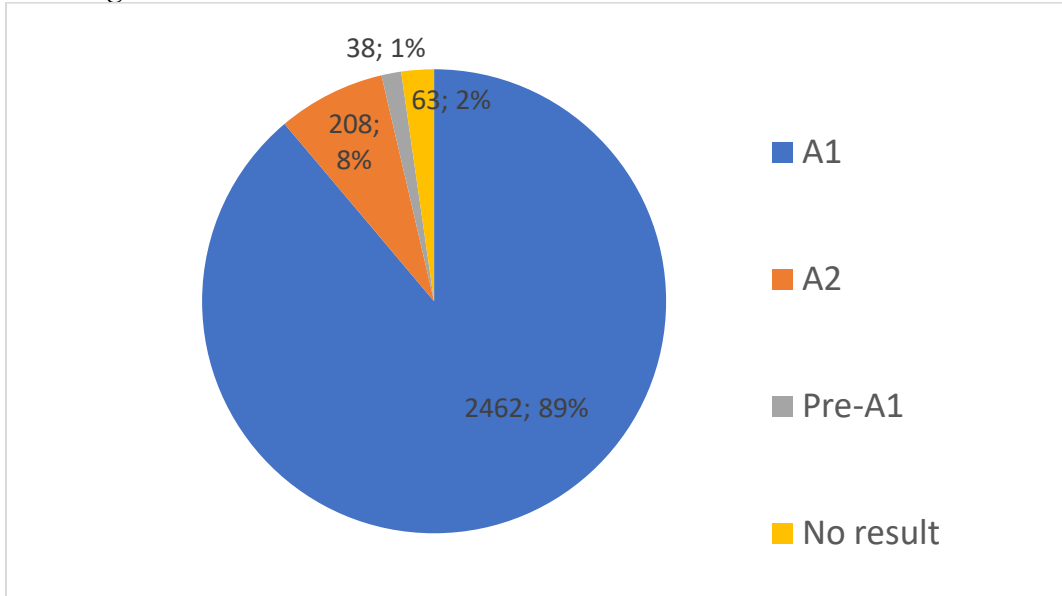
A pilot exercise was carried out in September 2021. The objectives of this specific exercise included measuring test delivery capacity, given the target population of more than 100,000 students all over the country. Second, this served as a scanning exercise to determine the technological capacity of the Ministry of Education in terms of delivering a digital test. The final objective was to determine the reliability and consistency of the test by performing statistical analysis of the different items.

It is important to mention that the test was administered during the COVID-19 pandemic. Under this scenario, students had the option to attend regular face-to-face classes or to do these remotely. Out of the 6000 students who were registered to take the test, only 2771 completed it, coming from 184 schools in the MEP's 27 different regions.

3.5.1 Listening results for the pilot exercise

As can be seen in Figure 1, almost 90% of the total population tested was ranked as A1. In other words, only 8% of the target population was placed in the band for their level based on the MEP curriculum. 1% of the population was placed in Pre-A1 and 2% of the population was not evaluated in listening comprehension due to different accommodations or adaptations (for example, for deaf students).

Figure 1
Listening Results

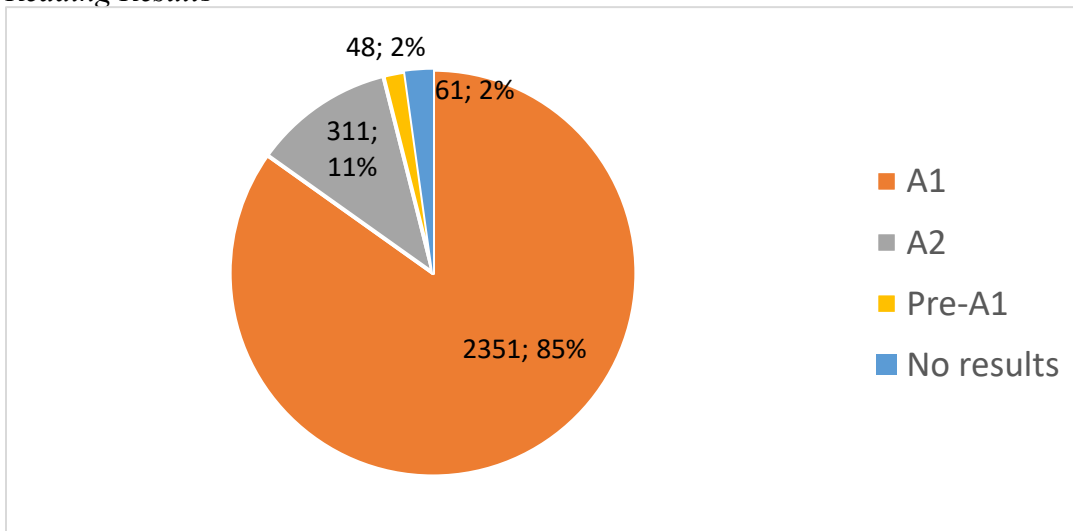


Source: Own creation

3.5.2 Reading results for the pilot exercise

Students' performance was superior in reading comprehension as compared to listening tasks. 11% of the test takers were placed in A2, an increase of 3% as compared to listening comprehension. On the other hand, 85% of students were placed in A1. 2% of students placed in Pre-A1, and 2% of students did not take the reading section.

Figure 2
Reading Results



4 Conclusions

In developing this assessment instrument, efforts were focused on providing guidance and support for its design, seeking evidence for a limited number of inferences to consolidate validity arguments. As has been noted several times, multiple sources were consulted in defining the target language domains as well as both constructs.

Different statistical measurements must further be conducted to determine the degree of accuracy of the assessment instrument through the tasks performed. This evidence will be necessary for the formal application of the instrument in the year 2022. Moreover, an application will be developed to determine the installed capacity for the virtual application of the instrument, as well as its compatibility with existing resources. That is, the TEYL must meet the psychometric standards designed for educational assessment, which will provide greater consistency to conclusions based on assessment inferences.

5 References

- Araya, W. Elizondo, F. and González, C. (2022). Familiarizing Users and Stakeholders with the Reasoning behind UCR's Language Proficiency Test Construct for MEP. *Estudios de Lingüística Aplicada* 75. (Forthcoming).
- American Educational Research Association [AERA], American Psychological Association [APA], National Council on Measurement in Education [NCME], & Joint Committee on Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (U.S.) (2014). *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*.
- Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE). (2020). *ALTE Principles of Good Practice*.
<https://alte.org/resources/Documents/ALTE%20Principles%20of%20Good%20Practice%20Online%20version%20Proof%204.pdf>
- Brown, D. (2019). *Language Assessment: Principles and Classroom Practices*. White Plains, N. Y.: Pearson Education.
- Chapelle, C. A. (2008). The TOEFL Validity Argument. In C. A. Chapelle, M. K. Enright, & J. M. Jamieson (Eds.), *Building a Validity Argument for the Test of English as a Foreign Language* (pp. 319-352). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Che, Y. (2014). A Study on the Application of Schema Theory to English Newspaper Reading. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 4(2), 441-445.
- Coombe, C. (2018). An A to Z of Second Language Assessment: How Language Teachers Understand Assessment Concepts. British Council.
<http://www.britishcouncil.org/exam/aptis/research/assessment-literacy>
- Coombe, C., Folse, K. and Hubble, N. (2007). *A Practical Guide to Assessing English Language Learners*. Michigan: The University of Michigan Press. Japan Society of English *Language Education & the British Council*, pp.145-158.
- Council of Europe. (2002). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Cambridge, U.K. Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge

- Ellis, R. (2017). Position Paper: Moving Task-Based Language Teaching Forward. *Language Teaching*, 50(4), 507-526. DOI:10.1017/S0261444817000179
- Fulcher, G. (2010). *Practical Language Testing*. Hodder Education.
- Gallagher, C. (2003). Reconciling a Tradition of Testing with a New Learning Paradigm. *Educational Psychology Review* 15(1), 83- 99. Retrieved from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23361535>
- Garton, S. & Copland, F. (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Teaching English to Young Learners*. Routledge: New York.
- Green, A. (2014). *Exploring Language Assessment and Testing*: Routledge: New York
- Hernández Sampieri, R., Fernández Collado, C. and Baptista Lucio, P. (2014). *Metodología de la Investigación* (6th Ed.). Mexico: McGraw Hill.
- Ministerio de Educación Pública (MEP). (2016a). Programa de Estudios de Inglés: I Ciclo. San José: Costa Rica.
- Ministerio de Educación Pública (MEP). (2016b). Programa de Estudios de Inglés: II Ciclo. San José: Costa Rica.
- O'Sullivan, B. (2016). Adapting Tests to the Local Context. *New Directions in Language Assessment*, Special edition of the JASELE Journal. Tokyo.
- Papp, S. (2019). Assessment of Young English Language Learners. In Garton, S. & Copland, F. (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Teaching English to Young Learners* (pp. 389-407). Routledge: New York.
- Pourhosein Gilakjani, A. & Sabouri, N. (2016). The Significance of Listening Comprehension in English Language Teaching. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 6(8), 1670-1677. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0608.22>
- ProCon.org (2020). Do Standardized Tests Improve Education in America? Britannica ProCon.org. Retrieved from: <https://standardizedtests.procon.org/>
- Rixon, S. (2013). *British Council Survey of Policy and Practice in Primary English Language Teaching Worldwide*. Retrieved from: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/D120%20Survey%20of%20Teachers%20to%20YLS_FINAL_Med_res_online.pdf
- Roberts, M. R., & Gierl, M. J. (2010). Developing Score Reports for Cognitive Diagnostic Assessments. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, 29(3), 25–38.
- Slopp, D.H. (2005). Teaching and Assessing Language Skills: Defining the Knowledge that Matters. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 4(3), 141-155. <http://education.waikato.ac.nz/research/files/etpc/2005v4n3art8.pdf>
- Watkins, P. (2017). *Teaching and Developing Reading Skills*. Cambridge University Press.
- Zucker, S. (2003). *Assessment Report: Fundamentals of Standardized Testing*. London: Pearson.

6 Biography

Walter Araya Garita

Walter Araya Garita is an English instructor. He holds a MA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language and a MSc in Administration, both from the University of Costa Rica, where he graduated with honors. He also has a specialty in educational planning and administration from the National University of Educational Planning, India. He has worked in the School of Modern Languages for more than 15 years in teaching and administrative positions. He has taught courses for the BA and master's English Program. Currently, he is responsible for a Social Extension Program on Standardized High Stakes Language Assessment. He has also published articles in national and international journals, and has offered talks about language assessment and planning in countries such as Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Cuba and Chile.

Yeraldín Acosta

Yeraldín Acosta graduated from the Professional master's in Teaching English as a Foreign Language at UCR. Over the years, she has worked at UCR, teaching different courses and collaborating in programs such as ED2203, the Foreign Language Evaluation Program (Programa de Evaluación de Lenguas Extranjeras, PELEx), and the Institutional Program for Senior Citizens (Programa Institucional para la Persona Adulta y Adulta Mayor). Additionally, she has taught various courses for future English teachers at UNA. She is part of Proyecto Citrino, and has published the short story *Lágrimas de Angel*, the article *Evaluating an English for Specific Purposes Course for Law Students*, and two volumes of her novel, *Himitsu no Mori*.

Experiential Learning: A New Teaching Trend and the Grounded Project

Gerardo Matamoros Arce
Universidad Técnica Nacional, Costa Rica
gmatamoros@utn.ac.cr

Abstract: The Grounded project is an experiential learning activity promoted by York University in Toronto, Canada. It combines the assignments of students from Global Health courses with those of Costa Rican university students. The purpose of this study is to identify the positive outcomes of this experiential learning project in terms of language-related improvements in university students. Likewise, the study aims to understand the extension of comprehension in terms of critical thinking achieved by the students at Universidad Técnica Nacional with respect to the communities and populations at risk that were part of the project. To collect the data, focus groups were done and two evaluations were made by the coordinators of both institutions. As part of the results, the conclusion was made that descriptors improved, and the perceptions of the participants indicated extension and greater comprehension of the communities involved in the activity. This resulted in a win-win situation in terms of language and critical thinking for the participants.

Keywords: Experiential learning, collaboration, experiential education, Grounded project

Resumen: El proyecto Grounded es una actividad de aprendizaje experiencial promovida por la Universidad de York en Toronto, Canadá. En él se combinaron las tareas de los estudiantes de los cursos de Salud Global y de estudiantes universitarios costarricenses. El propósito de este estudio es identificar los resultados positivos de un proyecto de aprendizaje experiencial en términos de mejoras relacionadas con el lenguaje en estudiantes universitarios. Asimismo, el estudio pretende conocer la extensión o comprensión en términos de pensamiento crítico de los estudiantes de la Universidad Técnica Nacional sobre las comunidades y poblaciones en riesgo, que formaron parte del proyecto. Para la recolección de los datos se realizaron grupos focales y dos evaluaciones por parte de los coordinadores de ambas partes. Como parte de los resultados, se concluye que los descriptores mejoraron, y las percepciones de los participantes indicaron la extensión y comprensión de las comunidades involucradas en la actividad. De este modo, los participantes salieron ganando en términos de lenguaje y pensamiento crítico.

Palabras clave: *Aprendizaje experiencial, colaboración, educación experiencial, Proyecto Grounded.*

1 Introduction

The need for language development in students taking English as a Second Language increases the desirability of efforts to put them in authentic contact with speakers from English-speaking countries. Although this is not easy to achieve, some efforts have been made to promote these encounters. Under an experiential learning framework, the Grounded Project tailored an interaction between Canadian and Costa Rican students. This study presents the outcomes of this international interaction.

York University in Toronto, Canada (YU) and Universidad Técnica Nacional (UTN) are the institutions involved in this academic interaction called the Grounded Project. This activity emerged as a way to minimize the impact of the pandemic on the practicum course for York students.

The Grounded Project was undertaken in three main phases, as follows:

Stage 1: Students were requested to transcribe some interviews performed by a technical team (set up by York University) in Costa Rican communities with low economic growth.

Stage 2: After the interviews were transcribed, students from both institutions were put in contact to discuss the context and panorama revealed in the interviews in weekly student meetings and biweekly meetings with the coordination team.

Stage 3: Students from Canada made a short film representing the context and concepts learned during this process.

This study represents an opportunity to understand the benefits for Costa Rican students of international collaboration within an experiential learning framework. It aims to determine the influence that this collaborative international project achieved on Universidad Técnica Nacional students, both in terms of linguistic performance in their second language and evolution in their thinking about socio-cultural issues. It is extremely important to define the way this interaction with Canadian peers within an authentic context was able to impact on the students' language proficiency as well as their comprehension skills.

Setting up projects like this represents the important and necessary step of promoting real experiences and real learning in educational institutions. This experiential project intends to exemplify activities that promote interaction and the development of macro and micro skills in students learning English, giving them more opportunity to engage in authentic language practice, so increasing their levels of communication in the language.

Another reason to promote experiential learning opportunities is that these allow students to work within other study areas and learn in a more integral fashion. This could function as a model for higher institutions to emulate to promote the impact and success of experiential education in their classrooms.

The study's first objective is to identify the growth in linguistic skills of project participants. It thus sought assessment of the linguistic, conversational and interactional shifts of English as a Foreign Language students with their Canadian peers on diverse social topics.

The second objective is to analyze the evolution of thought about socio-cultural issues achieved by English as a Foreign Language students at San Carlos campus through discussion with Canadian peers in the Grounded project.

The two main elements to be explored in this study are thus related to the effectiveness of an experiential learning activity in terms of linguistic development, and how this represented an opportunity for growth regarding critical thinking and social perceptions related to communities with low economic development.

2 Literature Review

The pandemic deepened the problem of achieving interaction among students, increasing the importance of promoting the active collaboration in class so vital to second language acquisition. According to Boscán (2017), collaborative spaces are an alternative proposal complementing teacher training. It can also be said with total certainty such spaces are vital for students, and can be promoted through the use of new technologies applied to education. In this case, such collaborative spaces were achieved through taking advantage of virtuality, giving an example of the promotion of good teaching practices that draw on extracurricular resources to encourage English students to leave their comfort zone.

Experiential learning is used in many different areas to promote better communication between projects and students at different levels. A study by Ting-Chia, Abelson and Van Brummelen (2002) described the results of the use of experiential learning by students in Artificial Intelligence courses. Some studies also showed positive results in different subjects such as mathematics, business, and even in the military context. High school students in Costa Rica (under the auspices of the Ministry of Education) can be given the opportunity to increase their speaking skills by participating in projects that take on different dimensions, both locally and internationally.

Experiential learning allows participants to gain insight into cultures and languages. In the case of students learning English, the experience can be favorable in terms of communicative skills and the understanding of social contexts. “Both educational theory and practice are currently characterized by the use of humanizing and modernizing approaches. These trends should also clearly include a method of learning through which children become familiar with the world around them and through their own personal experiences” (Alexandra, 2018, p. 242). Learners engaging in different contexts can thus have a better understanding of different cultures while practicing their English.

The changes brought about by technology and high-speed communications make it possible for institutions to strengthen internationalization through academic experiences and events outside their local area. This is necessary both to position the university in a more academic environment and to complement language learning for students more comprehensively. Along these lines, Gacel-Ávila comments that in the institutional field, the development of new educational paradigms is necessary, which requires new approaches to curriculum and pedagogy. She further stresses that in the global society, it is no longer possible to continue teaching and producing knowledge with the same paradigms and parameters as before, that were basically of a national nature. (2003, p.37)

This is a path that needs to be mapped out, incorporating more activities that involve a focus on internationalization.

3 Identifying the effects of involvement in the Grounded project on UTN students

This study takes up a mixed approach. It combines qualitative and quantitative methods in accordance with Creswell (2007), employing an instrument of qualitative and quantitative measurement that uses evaluation matrices for the quantitative elements and focus groups for the qualitative elements. These results are denoted by the number of scores or assignments the Grounded Project technical team granted each of the descriptors and their level of development. This is a descriptive study since a detailed description of the collaborative activity is made. It is also rates as an exploratory study, since it seeks to serve as a model for other projects.

3.1 The Instruments

3.1.1 Instrument 1

For measurement of the linguistic aspect, a performance guide or matrix was used based on descriptors from the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), measurable with a numeral from 1 to 5, in which 5 is the highest value. These descriptors come from online interaction and the conversation category of the latest version of the CEFR, published in 2020. The matrix was applied first diagnostically, and later in the final stage as a final evaluation. The Grounded Project technical team, made up of four members, was in charge of the linguistic evaluation made through the descriptors. (See Appendix 1).

3.1.2 Instrument 2

For the assessment of development in terms of understanding of social and cultural issues (critical thinking), two focus groups were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide, applied in two stages of the project. These interviews were conducted by a member of the project's technical team.

3.2 The Sample

A total of 8 students participated in the study. They were drawn from several majors at UTN, San Carlos Campus. They had either previously taken English programs or were undertaking the English as a Second Language major. They were invited to participate in the study with no further requirements than having a good level of communication in English.

3.3 Results

The study showed significant results with respect to this experiential learning opportunity. These results were validated by the presence of the technical team and the YU coordinator, which acted as the active evaluation group for all activities. The first proposed objective dealt with the

linguistic growth of the participants (students with some command of the language from different majors), as shown through online interaction evaluated according to CEFR criteria.

3.3.1 Linguistic development

One of the first visible achievements of the project was the application of different CEFR oral interaction descriptors. Even more significant was the growth seen in these descriptors in the evaluation made by the project's technical team. The following table shows that the descriptors show some mastery to noticeable mastery.

Table 1.

Evaluation results from CEFR descriptors. Diagnostic application

Descriptors	Noticeable Mastery	Good Mastery	Some Mastery	Little Mastery	No Mastery
Cooperation ¹	1	2	-	-	-
Mediation ²	2	1	-	-	-
Oral interaction ³	-	2	1	-	-
Oral production ⁴	1	2	-	-	-
Goal-oriented cooperation ⁵	-	3	-	-	-
Oral comprehension ⁶	1	2	-	-	-

Table 2.

Evaluation results from CEFR descriptors. Final application

Descriptors	Noticeable Improvement	Good Improvement	Some Improvement	Little Improvement	No Improvement
Cooperation ¹	1	3	-	-	-
Mediation ²	2	2	-	-	-
Oral interaction ³	1	3	-	-	-
Oral production ⁴	1	3	-	-	-
Goal-oriented cooperation ⁵	3	2	-	-	-
Oral comprehension ⁶	2	2	-	-	-

¹ Can exploit a basic repertoire of language and strategies to help keep a conversation or discussion going. Can summarize the point reached in a discussion and so help focus the argument.

² Can collaborate with people from other backgrounds, showing interest and empathy by asking and answering simple questions, formulating, and responding to suggestions, asking whether people agree, and proposing alternative approaches.

³ Can communicate with some confidence on familiar routine and non-routine matters related to their interests and professional field. Can exchange, check and confirm information, deal with less routine situations and explain why something is a problem. Can express thoughts on more abstract, cultural topics such as films, books, music, etc.

⁴ Can reasonably fluently sustain a straightforward description of one of a variety of subjects within their field of interest, presenting it as a linear sequence of points.

⁵ Can follow what is said, though they may occasionally have to ask for repetition or clarification if the discussion is rapid or extended. Can explain why something is a problem, discuss what to do next, and compare and contrast alternatives. Can give brief comments on the views of others.

⁶Can follow much of everyday conversation and discussion, provided it is clearly articulated in standard language or in a familiar variety. Can generally follow the main points of extended discussion around them, provided it is clearly articulated in standard language or a familiar variety.

Tables 1 and 2 show the linguistic development of the participants achieved during the academic encounter. All categories show improvement achieved over the process of involvement in the project. An outstanding example occurs in improved performance in the oral production descriptor, showing that the learners managed to increase their oral production during the project. This may be due to their active interaction over several months with their Canadian peers. In the oral interaction segment, notably better grades are seen, with “some mastery” grades being eliminated and changed to those of good and noticeable improvement. The descriptor that achieved the highest growth in the final evaluation was Goal-Oriented Cooperation, which obtained the most noticeable improvement in the final evaluation of the students’ performance.

3.3.2 Growth in critical thinking

A second notable achievement of the project was changes in the UTN participants’ perceptions regarding growth in critical thinking about welfare issues in the communities that were interviewed. These individual perceptions were made clear in the two focus groups that were held. Table 3 summarizes some of the students’ perceptions about this development of ideas.

Table 3

Participants’ perceptions of growth in critical thinking and thinking assessment during activity

Patterns of participant perceptions	Common phrases
Humanitarian Awareness	Participant: “I think this documentary helped me a lot to realize the reality of the sector, at least in the sector where I live, which is in San Carlos.” Participant: “So it’s like taking a little bit of courage and learning to treat people well.” Participant: “So seeing it from these perspectives is something that really opens our eyes and is something that we enjoy at the project level because I think it enriches a lot the reality in which we have to live.”
International peer collaboration	Participant: “Kuthar was a lot of fun to work with because she was very patient and sensitive with me to work with me.” Participant: “This is translated like this and that’s it, now I was translating it into English because it didn’t make sense at all, then I had to tell Sara to review it and I would tell the context of what the person was saying so that Sara would say the best way to say it would be such.”
Academic development	Participant: “So it was very good to practice active listening, to listen to them, to see new types of sentences.”

	Participant: “I have the basic knowledge, but I don’t practice it, so on a personal level with respect to the project, the interaction I had with them and with Anthony was very helpful.”
Professional formation	Participant: “So I think that in that professional part, it was very enriching for me to put into practice the English that I was learning at that time.” Participant: “In fact, right now I am working for a Canadian bank and sometimes there are people who tell me something and I automatically understand what they are trying to tell me because I had already worked with Canadians before, so it has helped me a lot at work.”

- *Humanitarian awareness*

The people participating in the project were able to acquire humanitarian awareness by realizing the issues that the members of the communities forming part of this experience go through. One participant said, “Seeing it from these perspectives is something that really opens our eyes, and it is something that [we enjoy about the] project because I think it enriches the reality in which we have to live.” Critical thinking in this aspect was a factor of integral growth for the participants. Most of the participants used phrases that suggest this awareness, so it is evident that the results expected were achieved.

- *Collaboration among international peers*

One of the points that the participants noted was the academic collaboration that existed between peers. Each peer had different contexts and dynamics that were established during the weekly active conversations suggested by the UTN and YU team. One of the participants mentioned, “With Kuthar, it was a lot of fun to work because she had patience with me and the sensitivity to work.” It is therefore evident that this connection also helped linguistically, as well as in an integral fashion.

- *Academic development*

There is a lot of evidence in the participants’ comments of their academic (and even linguistic) formation arising from this experience. This academic growth occurs even at an unconscious level through experience and learning. There are many aspects that come into play when it comes to intercultural communication. For example, in the words of one participant, “So something very good for one to put into practice [is] what active listening is, to listen to them, to see new types of sentences.” These are simple examples of what this connection provided to those involved. It is evident that experiential learning provided a dynamic that promoted great academic growth.

- *Professional formation*

There were repeated occasions in which holistic training became a focus of this project. The growth in critical thinking and the development of tools for effective communication, teamwork and holistic understanding are evident in many of the comments made by the participants. A true and undeniable example of this lies in the following quote: “In fact, right now I am working for a Canadian bank and sometimes people tell me something and I automatically understand what [they] are trying to tell me because I had already lived with Canadians before, so it has helped me a lot at work.” The fulfilment of the objectives of the project is more than evident in terms of integral growth and critical thinking when it comes to community wellbeing and culture.

4 Conclusions

During this project, it was notable that experiential learning is a concept that education professionals do not yet master. In this sense, it is necessary to carry out further research on this topic and, more importantly, to apply this within educational institutions in Costa Rica’s Northern Region. Although experiential education is not a new topic, it has not been internalized in the pedagogical practices of teachers. This leaves a very large field of action for future research activities.

From the beginning of the connection with YU, it was intended that students from Canada would be able to do fieldwork in the Northern Region of Costa Rica in alliance with UTN. This project promoted such interaction. Furthermore, the attempt will be made that in the first quarter of each year, a group of Canadian students perform fieldwork in the area related to global health issues. This connection will allow San Carlos campus majors such as Occupational Health, Environmental Management and English as a Foreign Language to conduct research in health in the region alongside students from Canada. English students may choose to participate as interpreters or interview transcribers. Furthermore, some courses in the curriculum, especially with some redesigning, may choose to conduct research in this area.

Thanks to the future systematization of the activities included in this project, the internationalization of different majors at UTN can begin to be guaranteed. The connection with YU allows different lines of academic growth for both parties to be agreed upon. This macro agreement will allow collaboration in several academic outreach, research and project areas. Occupational Health, Environmental Management and English as a Foreign Language are the most clearly benefitted study areas, since these fields have a natural affinity with the work YU’s Global Health Faculty is most willing and committed to carrying out in the region.

The need for further work on experiential learning is a task that will take some time to be developed. Educational leaders and authorities need to incorporate this dynamic into future workshops and academic encounters. The Ministry of Education should eventually incorporate more ideas for experiential learning activities in their programs.

Acknowledgements

The work, collaboration and guidance of the Grounded Project team is highly appreciated. They set up this great idea for students and faculty to include UTN as one of their academic partners. Thanks to Julie Hard, International Relations Manager from the Faculty of Health at York University. The guidance and support of Douglas Barraza, associate professor at UTN and member of the project's technical team is also highly appreciated.

5 References

- Alexandra, P. (2018). Elements of Experiential Education in Individual Concepts of Teaching. *International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on Social Sciences & Arts SGEM*, 5, 237–245. <https://doi.org/10.5593/sgemsocial2018/3.5>
- Boscán, A. E. (2017). Propuesta educativa: Captación del profesorado en nuevas tecnologías a través de la participación de proyectos de innovación dentro de espacios colaborativos (ES-CO) de aprendizajes. *Tendencias Pedagógicas*, 29, 259-268. <https://doi.org/10.15366/tp2017.29.012>
- Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. (7th Ed). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Designs: Choosing among Five Approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Gacel-Ávila, J. (2003). *La internacionalización de la educación superior: paradigma para la ciudadanía global*. Universidad de Guadalajara. <https://elibro.utn.elogim.com/es/lc/biblioutn/titulos/74203>
- Rodríguez, M. A. G., & Rubio, J. E. (2020). Implementacion del aprendizaje experiencial en la universidad, sus beneficios en el alumnado y el rol docente/Experiential Learning at Universities and its Benefits for Students and Teaching Faculty. *Educación*, 44(2), NA. <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A631900391/IFME?u=anon~db7e6be2&sid=googleScholar&xid=f00fc0c5>
- Ting-Chia Hsu, Abelson, H., & Van Brummelen, J. (2022). The Effects on Secondary School Students of Applying Experiential Learning to the Conversational AI Learning Curriculum. *International Review of Research in Open & Distance Learning*, 23(1), 82–105.
- Zoglowek, H., & Kuhl, H. (2022). Experiential Education: An Opportunity for Compensatory Education. *Journal of Elementary Education / Revija Za Elementarno Izobraževanje*, 15(1), 17–30. <https://doi.org/10.18690/rei.15.1.17-30.2022>

6 Biography

Gerardo Matamoros Arce

Gerardo obtained a bachelor's degree from the Universidad de Costa Rica. He graduated in education from Universidad Estatal a Distancia in 2007 and achieved a master's degree in English teaching from Universidad Latina de Costa Rica in 2017. He worked for the Ministry of Education for 10 years and is currently a full-time professor at Universidad Técnica Nacional for the English as a Second Language major. He has been working on topics such as feedback, projects related to experiential learning, and study abroad programs. He teaches English-related courses and works on different projects with universities in the United States and Canada.

7 Appendices

Appendix 1

Matrix of CEFR descriptors (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, 2020).
Based on B1 level for descriptors.

1. No improvement or not practiced of descriptor
2. Little improvement of descriptor
3. Some visible improvement of descriptor
4. Good improvement of descriptor
5. Noticeable improvement of descriptor

CEFR Descriptors	1	2	3	4	5
Co-operating Can exploit a basic repertoire of language and strategies to help keep a conversation or discussion going. Can summarize the point reached in a discussion and so help focus the argument.					
Mediation Can collaborate with people from other backgrounds, showing interest and empathy by asking and answering simple questions, formulating, and responding to suggestions, asking whether people agree, and proposing alternative approaches.					
Oral interaction Can communicate with some confidence on familiar routine and non-routine matters related to their interests and professional field. Can exchange, check and confirm information, deal with less routine situations and explain why something is a problem. Can express thoughts on more abstract, cultural topics such as films, books, music, etc.					
Oral production Can reasonably fluently sustain a straightforward description of one of a variety of subjects within their field of interest, presenting it as a linear sequence of points.					
Goal-oriented co-operation Can follow what is said, though they may occasionally have to ask for repetition or clarification if the discussion is rapid or extended. Can explain why something is a problem, discuss what to do next, and compare and contrast alternatives. Can give brief comments on the views of others.					
Oral comprehension (conversation between other people) Can follow much of everyday conversation and discussion, provided it is clearly articulated in standard language or in a familiar variety. Can generally follow the main points of extended discussion around them, provided it is clearly articulated in standard language or a familiar variety.					

The Importance of Teamwork Competency to Promoting Interaction and Developing Speaking Skills in Language Classrooms

Edith Pérez Méndez

Fundación Tecnológica de Costa Rica, Costa Rica

edith.perez@fundatec.com

Abstract: Working as a team is an effective strategy to improve communicative skills in language students of all levels and ages, through activities that involve them in a process rich in discussion as they seek to solve problems, complete tasks and present results. Teachers play an important role in proposing and monitoring the activities undertaken. The classroom environment and the characteristics of the class (level, age, likes) are some of the variables the teacher should take into account when designing and selecting the activities. In brief, teamwork provides opportunities to use language inductively, so that students feel challenged and comfortable at the same time that they are improving their language and communicative skills.

Keywords: ESL, teamwork, communication, interaction, cooperation, English learning.

Resumen: El trabajo en equipo es una estrategia muy efectiva para mejorar las habilidades de comunicación en los estudiantes de un segundo idioma (indiferentemente de su nivel o edad) a través de actividades que involucren un proceso rico en discusión en el que resuelvan problemas, creen productos y presenten resultados. El docente tiene un rol predominante al proponer actividades y monitorearlas durante el proceso. El ambiente y las características de la clase (nivel, edad, gustos) son parte de las variables que se deben contemplar al diseñar las actividades. En resumen, el trabajo en equipo provee a los estudiantes de oportunidades para usar el segundo idioma de un modo inductivo, sintiéndose retados y cómodos al mismo tiempo, mientras mejoran sus destrezas conversacionales.

Palabras clave: enseñanza, inglés, trabajo en equipo, comunicación, interacción, cooperación.

1 Introduction

Teamwork represents one of the most important competencies of this era, making it essential to introduce and practice teamwork skills in learning a new language. It is no secret that many companies promote teamwork in their workforce, since this helps take advantage of individual team member's differing abilities and making a fusion of these skills can obtain more positive results in tasks.

If teachers translate this practice into the language classroom, all team members can be enriched by their partners' knowledge and abilities, helping them to grow faster in their language acquisition process. That is why teachers should look for the best strategies to create appealing

activities to take advantage of the benefits of teamwork in promoting and practicing English speaking in their lessons.

General objective:

- To promote teamwork in language classrooms as a tool to improve speaking skills.

Specific objectives:

- To share the benefits that teamwork can provide to the practice of teaching English.
- To provide strategies and techniques to teach conversational skills through teamwork activities.

2 Literature Review

2.1 What is teamwork?

The art of working as a team is more than working with people in groups. It implies coordinating differing abilities to achieve a common goal in benefit of all team members.

Working as a team efficiently is a challenge for people of all ages and it is necessary to develop this skill through training. It is therefore important that those engaging in teamwork understand what it entails, its requirements, and how to work with other people effectively.

Kinghorn (2020) asserts there are 4 principles (communication, respect, commitment, adaptability) that make teams work effectively, and that when all these factors are successfully integrated, increased productivity, work quality, and participant motivation will result.

2.2 Grouping Students

Working together favors interpersonal interaction when the activities are designed appropriately by the teacher, such that they involve students in producing a result. Harmer (2015) noted that working in groups provides many advantages to language communication: it increases the amount of talking, allows students to share different opinions and to benefit from varied contributions, encourages cooperation and negotiation, and promotes learners' autonomy by allowing them to make their own decisions.

The way teams are put together is key to yielding good results; however, different kinds of groups can be created depending on the task goal. It should be borne in mind that working in groups is not the same as teamwork, and teachers should establish the teams according to the goals set in the activity. How students are grouped should thus depend on the final goal. Teachers can let students choose their own teams to give them a sense of responsibility with regards to efficient teamwork. Alternatively, groups can be created by the teacher according to ability (choosing a variety of abilities to make up a team), by level (sometimes to give more support to students with difficulties), according to participation skills (so that more participative students can motivate quieter ones to speak), or randomly, as can be more appropriate for short tasks (Harmer, 2015). It is also important that teachers vary the groups in each activity or project, so that students can interact with different classmates, share differing perspectives and points of view, and develop

abilities such as showing agreement or disagreement, being persuasive, and establishing an argument.

2.3 Learner Interaction and Communication Activities

The best way to learn a language is by putting skills into practice. It is necessary that students invest time in their receptive skills, with texts and media that challenge them to increase their vocabulary and knowledge of the language. Otherwise, productive skills cannot be properly developed. In the Costa Rican education system, students mostly manage receptive skills well, but have trouble producing language, in writing and especially by speaking. This is when the implementation of effective teamwork can help students improve their communication skills.

The only way to learn how to speak is by practicing. Bearing in mind that low levels of anxiety increase the significance of the learning process, teachers should promote a secure environment in which students can make mistakes without continuous corrections, and where they can feel free in expressing themselves in the target language, talking about topics of their interest as they would do in their mother tongue. This does not imply, however, that teachers should not make corrections at all, but rather that feedback should be offered at the end of the conversational activity, with elicitation of the students' opinions regarding the corrections required, such that they become active participants in their feedback in a way that makes it more significant. Commonly when students work in teams, one team member's mistake becomes kind of "contagious", and when this is corrected for a specific student, all those committing the same error can learn from this.

The big question thus becomes: How can activities be designed so that interaction can be the protagonist? There are seven principles that Brown (2007) mentions to guide teachers in creating significant activities that promote real interaction in the classroom, as follows:

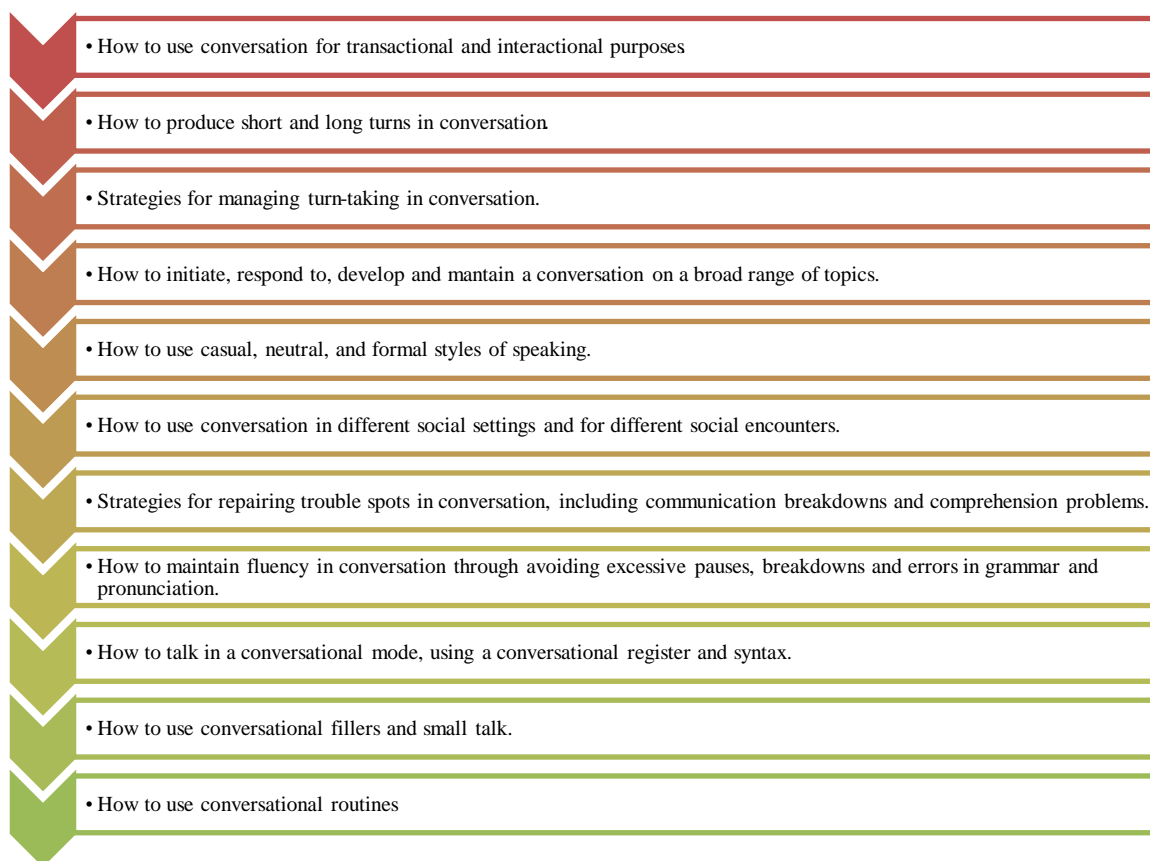
1. Focus on fluency and accuracy, depending on the class objective.
2. Provide intrinsically motivating techniques
3. Encourage the use of authentic language in meaningful contexts.
4. Provide appropriate feedback and corrections.
5. Capitalize on the natural link between speaking and listening.
6. Give students opportunities to initiate oral communication.
7. Encourage the development of speaking strategies.

If teachers take these recommendations into consideration when planning activities, adjusting them to take into account group interests, likes, and age appropriateness, these should be very successful in terms of promoting interaction and the use of English. Being familiar with the group is a must for teachers, so that students become really engaged with the activities and are open to participating in and contributing to the discussions.

Another important factor is that teachers explain to students how to carry out discussions from the first time they attempt this, such that they have enough tools to do so. Some suggestions given by Brown (2007) to guide students in participating in discussions are summarized in the chart below (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Features of conversation that can receive specific focus in classroom instruction



Note. The features summarized in Figure 1 show techniques suggested by Brown (2007) referencing Richards (1990) as the main strategies to implement when teaching conversation (p. 333).

2.4 The Use of English

The biggest challenge for any language teacher is to take advantage of the benefits of teamwork to develop and improve communication skills, especially when students do not normally use the target language in the classroom. That is why teachers should implement strategies to achieve the goal of making students use English when performing activities in class.

Harmer (2015) suggested that teachers should set clear guidelines before beginning any activity, choosing appropriate tasks for each level and age, creating an English-speaking atmosphere in the classroom by introducing students to its culture, and telling students to speak in English when necessary. Insisting on this can become tedious for teachers, but it is the only way students become accustomed to speaking in English in class. If the teacher implements the previous strategies consistently, results will soon be seen.

2.5 The Teacher's Role during Teamwork

When students are working in teams, teachers should be monitoring and ready to offer feedback when necessary. They should also be participants in students' conversations, noting mistakes in order to make corrections at the end of the communicative activity, and also acting as a facilitator when students need new vocabulary or have doubts.

3. Context

3.1 Teaching Conversation through Teamwork Divided by Age

Teamwork is highly effective when it is used in conversational classrooms. However, the way a teacher incorporates this depends on the population he or she is dealing with. The same approach should not be used for children whose learning style is more focused on games and concrete materials as that used for teenagers in the process of developing the capacity to deal with abstract matters, nor that used with adults who possibly already know how to work in teams given that this is a requirement for most jobs.

Based on the previously mentioned characteristics, it can be deduced that the way a teacher should teach their students to approach teamwork and the procedures used to implement this in class will depend on the students' ages and the students' likes, so that the activities are engaging to them. This means being familiar with the best activities for each stage of life, with it being necessary to check the students' needs according to age, and then using the previously mentioned speaking techniques to create the activities that will best match the group of students the class is being planned for. Harmer (2015) suggests a good summary of students' characteristics by ages that a teacher can take into consideration when planning lessons. These are summarized in Figure 2.

Figure 2
The Age Factor

Children	Teenagers	Adults
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enthusiastic about learning. • Learn through games and enjoyable activities. • Use their five senses to learn. • Use language skills without analysis. • Have lively imaginations • Will participate a lot if they are engaged. • Are comfortable with the idea of following rules. • Have short attention spans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their brains are adjusting functions and processes. • Decision-making and abstract thinking are developing. • Do not enjoy slow-paced or long activities. • Like music and sports. • Creative thinking and humor are important at this age. • Enjoy activities that are relevant to their lives. • Need to be involved in the decisions about what they are learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are more critical and demanding. • Have previous learning experiences that influence the way they learn in the present. • Can engage with abstract thought. • Have a whole range of life experiences to draw on. • Know why they are learning, have clear goals. • As they are more critical, sometimes they are afraid of speaking in the target language. • More likely to miss lessons.

Note: The previous chart summarizes some ideas proposed by Hammer (2015) that can apply to any classroom according to age.

Understanding the needs of each age group and the strategies that can be applied to work on conversation with these will assist teachers in deciding how to convey the principals of teamwork and apply these in the design of the activities to be used in class.

4 Methodology for the Activities

I. Children

Considering the characteristics of children, it is necessary that teachers clearly establish the rules for teamwork and speaking in English from the first day of classes. Tasks should not be very long, or if this is unavoidable (such as in the case of a project, for instance), these should be divided into short-term goals, so that the children feel engaged during the entire process.

In order to make their short-term goal achievements visible, it is recommended to have a visual chart that demonstrates the teams' progress while they are completing the tasks. A good example is an "achievement card" (see Appendix 1). This card works like an adult credit card which accumulates miles when buying products, with the difference that every time students accomplish a task by applying teamwork principles and speaking in English, the students get a point (which can be symbolized by a sticker or stamp on the card). At the end of the process, they can exchange the card for a class privilege.

Sample activity: Story Telling

General Objective: To create a story with drawings and tell it to the class.

Specific objectives:

1. To apply basic negotiation skills to decide on a common story.
2. To speak in English during the whole creation process.

Procedures:

- The teacher will create the groups, establish the rules for team, and assign a leader in each group as a "helper".
- Next, the teacher will show an example of a sequence of pictures that make up a story and will ask the students to tell her what could happen in each picture (See Appendix II).
- When telling the story of the sequence, the teacher will tell the students they need to create a sequence of pictures as a team, and the team that accomplishes the goal by speaking in English while working, will get a point on their "achievement card".
- While the children are working, the teacher goes around the class offering help with negotiation and being a mediator, as well as correcting language mistakes, asking students to use English, and helping them with vocabulary if needed. Monitoring is the key for these activities to be successful.
- Finally, the students present their stories to the class while showing their pictures.

Note to the teacher: The quality and length of the stories will depend on the students' level and it is not expected that they use 100% English; however, is necessary to remind them to talk in English as much as possible.

Materials: White paper, color pencils, markers.

Time: 80 minutes

Variation: In higher levels, this can be done as a literary competition in which the best story will be exhibited on a bulletin board or presented to other groups as a recognition.

II. Teenagers

As teenagers are developing their capacity for abstract thought along with the rational part of their brains, it is necessary that they understand more than just the basic rules of teamwork. It is thus better for the teacher to take some time at the beginning of the class to explain the principles of teamwork. This can be achieved by using videos and performing “team building” activities that can help students understand the importance of communication, commitment, adaptability, and respect when working in teams.

Once students know what the difference between teamwork and working in groups is, the teacher can propose the activity. There are many options to consider at this point, including problem solving activities, competitions, and group discussions. Even though there is a curriculum to implement, teachers can combine study topics with student likes or adjust those stipulated to make them more appealing and engaging to a particular group.

Independently of the kind of activity that it is going to be undertaken, it is necessary to let the students know what is expected of them in terms of speaking performance. The teacher should share some tips as to how to carry out a conversation, offering some prompts to show agreement, disagreement, how to give opinions, and any other tool that may be helpful to encourage students to speak as much English as possible.

Sample activity: The History of Basketball

General objective: To discuss a topic based on a reading.

Specific objectives:

1. To ask and answer questions about a reading.
2. To discuss a topic in English and make decisions as a team.

Procedures:

- The teacher reviews the teamwork principals before beginning the activity for the students to know what is expected of them.
- Groups are created based on the teachers' previous observations using the most appropriate grouping technique.
- Each group decides on a team name and this is written on a scoreboard on the board.
- The teacher explains the rules:
 1. Each group will receive a summary of the History of Basketball (see Annex III) and three cards.

2. Each group has the chance to read and discuss different events about the history of basketball.
 3. They should think about three difficult questions to challenge the other teams' comprehension of the reading.
 4. They should write their questions with the corresponding answers on the cards (one question per card)
 5. When they are ready, they should give the cards to the teacher.
- During the group discussion and the question creation, the teacher should circulate around the different groups, offering help with vocabulary, checking question structure, and offering feedback as necessary.
 - On collecting all the cards, the reading is to be removed, such that students base their answers on their previous discussion.
 - Each team challenges another, and the teacher reads a question for each team to answer. They will choose a group spokesperson, and discuss the answer for a minute to arrive at a final answer. If the answer is correct, the team gets a point (which is written on the scoreboard) and if they fail, a point is given to the creators of the question.
 - The game continues until all cards are used, and the team with most points wins the game.

Note to the teacher: This activity is planned for a B1-level teenagers, so if the level is higher, preparation time can be adjusted.

Materials: Handout or web site for the History of Basketball, cards, whiteboard, markers (See Appendix III).

Time: 60 minutes preparation time/40 minutes presentation

Variations: If basketball is not one of the group's favorite sports, the teacher can choose any other sport or even the history of a band or a singer.

III. Adults

When planning activities for adults, the premise is that they have previous experiences that help them navigate different situations, and they know, at least in a limited fashion, how to work as a team. However, it is good to remind them what is expected of them when working as a team and then putting them into a situation where this can be used naturally.

Sample activity: Business Role Play

General objective: To play roles and solve some problems as a team.

Specific objectives:

1. To present and discuss different topics in a group discussion.
2. To find solutions for the problems that favor the interests of all members.

Procedures:

- The teacher decides how groups are going to be made up according to the activity roles per group.

- The teacher sets the situation of the activity: “Each of you works in a department of a software company. Your senior manager convenes you for a meeting so that you can fix some problems that need to be solved in the different departments. Read your card and prepare arguments to present your position in a group discussion and work together to offer solutions that can benefit all departments to present these to your CEO (in this case, the teacher).”
- Students receive their role cards and start the group discussion. At this point, it is important to remind them about the strategies to use during the conversation, to listen actively, and to share opinions.
- During the discussion the teacher should monitor students’ work and take notes to offer feedback at the end to avoid interruptions.
- When the discussion is over, the students with the role of senior manager should synthesize the results and present these to the class. All the proposals are to be compared in order to decide which ones are more appropriate and why.
- Finally, the teacher takes some minutes to give some feedback, eliciting the participation of students.

Materials: Role cards handout (see Appendix IV)

Time: 30 min discussion/ 20 min presentation

Variation: This activity is planned for B1 level and up. If it is going to be used with lower levels, the topic for the role cards can be simpler so that students can express themselves according to their possibilities and limitations.

5 Conclusions and Limitations

Teamwork is a remarkable tool to develop speaking skills because it promotes students’ interaction throughout the task they are completing, and students really do not notice that they are working on the target language. Teamwork also promotes collaboration and creates a low-anxiety environment that can help students to feel comfortable and make their learning process much more favorable. Finally, when working as a team, students have the opportunity to learn from their partners’ knowledge and to interchange ideas and opinions that can help them to grow, acquire new vocabulary, and express themselves on a variety of topics.

Limitations may include how prepared to undertake a discussion and share ideas that students are, and their possible lack of interest in practicing the language when undertaking the activity proposed. The teacher’s intervention is therefore crucial at this point.

6 References

- Brown, H. Douglas, (2007). *Teaching by Principals*. Third Edition. Pearson Education, Inc.
- Harmer, Jeremy, (2015). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Fifth Edition. Pearson Education, Inc.
- Kinghorn, Lauren, (2020). A Sense of Camaraderie. *4 Keys to Effective Teamwork*.
<https://inspiringmompreneurs.com/4-keys-to-effective-teamwork>

7 Biography

Edith Pérez Méndez

Edith Pérez holds a bachelor's degree in teaching English. She began her studies at Fidélitas University and continued on to get a bachelor's degree at Universidad Latina de Costa Rica. She started her career as a teacher in 2008, teaching in an institute. She later worked as an elementary school teacher, a high school teacher, and in Ingles Tec and CONARE programs. Her interests include writing, reading, and arts, which have enriched her professional practice, especially when teaching literature, one of her passions. Currently, she is a mentor teacher in the Inglés Tec Program, and a high school teacher.

8 Appendixes

I. Achievement Cards (Children)

Achievement Card

Team's name: _____

Achievement Card

Team's name: _____

Achievement Card

Team's name: _____

Achievement Card

Team's name: _____

Achievement Card

Team's name: _____

Achievement Card

Team's name: _____

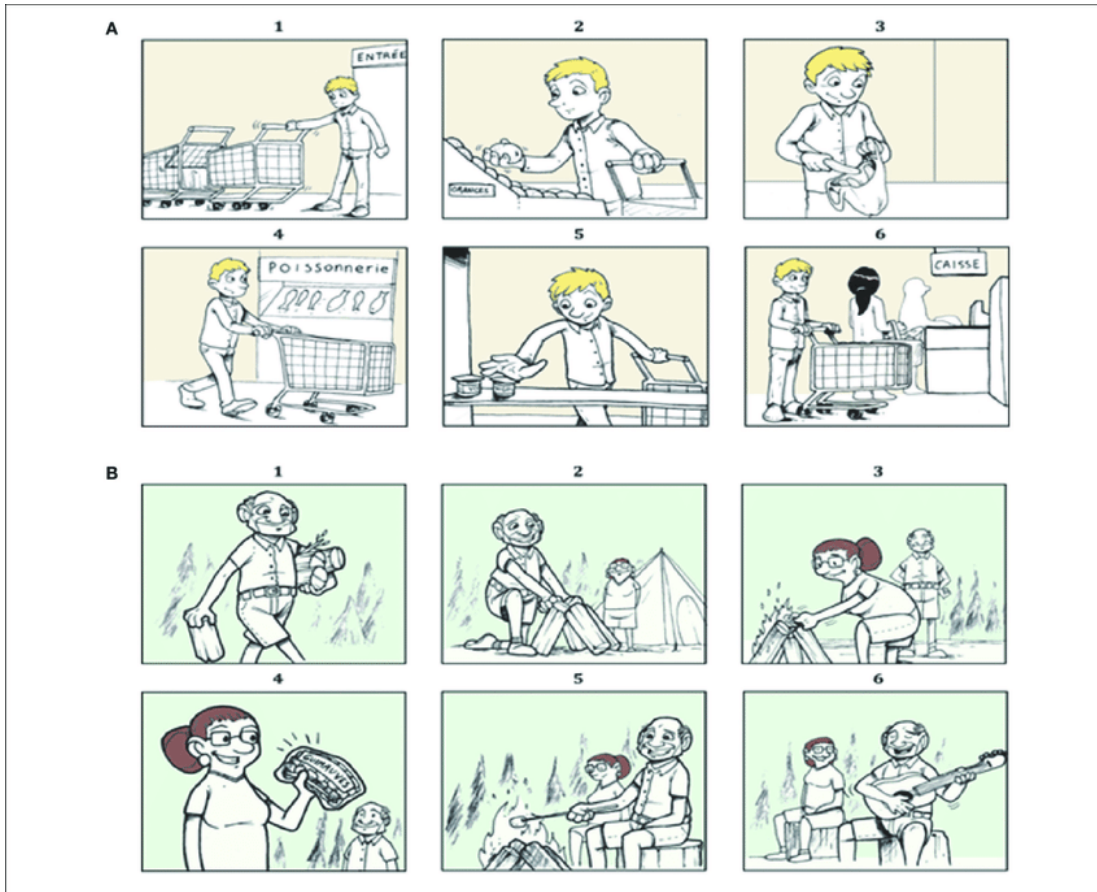
Achievement Card

Team's name: _____

Achievement Card

Team's name: _____

II. Sequences of Images (Children)



Taken from: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Examples-of-story-sequences-used-in-the-storytelling-in-sequence-task-A-Complexity_fig1_323297191

III. The History of Basketball (Teenagers)

A Brief History of Basketball By: Keith Kingston



Meet the Inventor of Basketball

Dr. James Naismith is known world-wide as the inventor of basketball. He was born in 1861 in Ramsay township, near Almonte, Ontario, Canada.

The beginning of a brief history of basketball

The concept of basketball was born out of his early school days when he played a simple game known as duck-on-a-rock outside his schoolhouse. The game involved attempting to knock a 'duck' off the top of a large rock by tossing another rock at it.

That is how it all started.

Naismith served as at the YMCA Training School in Springfield, Massachusetts, USA in 1891. This is where the sport of basketball was born. Naismith was faced with the challenge of finding a sport that was suitable for play inside during the winter for the students. Naismith wanted to create a game of skill that could be played indoors in a relatively small space. The very first game of basketball was played with a soccer ball and two peach baskets used as goals. The history of basketball started right here.

James Naismith devised a set rules for these early games as follows:

- The ball may be thrown in any direction with one or both hands.
- A player cannot run with the ball, but instead the player must throw it from the spot on which he catches it.
- The ball must be held in or between the hands, not any other body parts.
- No shouldering, holding, pushing, striking or tripping in any way of an opponent is permitted. The first infringement of this rule by any person shall count as a foul: the second shall disqualify him until the next goal is scored.
- If either side, make three consecutive fouls it shall count as a goal for the opponents (consecutive in these rules means without the opponents in the meantime making a foul of their own).
- A goal is scored when the ball is thrown from the ground into the basket and stays there. If the ball rests on the edge of the basket and the opponents move the basket, it shall also count as a goal.
- When the ball goes out of bounds, it shall be thrown into the field and played by the first person touching it.
- The umpire shall be judge and have the power to disqualify or foul players as required.
- The referee shall be the judge of the ball and decide when it is in play in bounds, to which side it belongs, and shall keep the time.
- The time shall be two 15-minute halves with five minutes rest between.
- The side scoring the most goals in that time shall be declared the winners.

Today basketball has grown to become one of the world's most popular sports, all thanks to Dr Naismith.

Taken from: https://www.streetdirectory.com/travel_guide/41417/recreation_and_sports/a_brief_history_of_basketball.html

Website to share link.

https://www.streetdirectory.com/travel_guide/41417/recreation_and_sports/a_brief_history_of_basketball.html

IV. Role Cards Handout (Adults)

Role Cards

1. You are the senior manager of a software company. You will be having a meeting to decide on new guidelines for how your call center staff should deal with customers' complaints.

2. You work in the legal department. You think that the most important thing is that the call center staff don't say anything that could be taken as accepting responsibility.

3. You are from the accounting department. You believe it is necessary to deal with calls as quickly as possible so that the number of call center staff can be reduced to cut down costs.

4. You are from the sales department. You think that call center staff should use all calls as a chance to sell upgrades of the software.

5. You are the manager of the customer service department. In your opinion the most important point is that staff assists people in a polite way.

6. You work in the R&D department. You think that complaints from customers should be used as an opportunity to get as much information as possible on what is going wrong with the software.

Academic Writing: Activities to Bring Writing Outside the Classroom

Liseth María González Alfaro
Colegio Técnico Profesional Calle Zamora, MEP, Costa Rica
liseth.gonzalez.alfaro@mep.go.cr

Abstract:

Writing is a key skill that has been left behind in English learning classrooms. Its development can lead to successful future English communicators. People tend to associate writing with texts they have to write, or essays they probably find boring. However, there is much more to writing than that. Integrating a variety of writing skills in a language classroom can boost students' progress exponentially, encouraging them to develop all the other skills in a more complete way. Using activities that bring the writing process outside the classroom and include it into the context of students' daily lives is an amazing way of helping them become great learners and future users of the English language. This proposal aims to provide teachers with five main activities that can be used in English lessons to bring writing tasks from the classroom into the students' world.

Keywords: Academic Writing, writing activities, writing outside the classroom.

Resumen:

La escritura es una de las habilidades más importantes en el aprendizaje y avance del idioma inglés. Su desarrollo consiste en práctica constante y en interiorización de dicha habilidad dentro y fuera del aula. La integración de actividades que desarrollen la escritura en inglés dentro y fuera de las clases es primordial para que el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje del idioma sea integral y significativo. El usar actividades que le brinden al estudiante una posibilidad de llevar el idioma a sus propios contextos y vida cotidiana es una forma de lograr un dominio adecuado del idioma y un desarrollo idóneo del mismo. La presente propuesta brinda a docentes de inglés cinco actividades que pueden ser utilizadas en una lección de inglés y que además pueden ser llevadas al contexto del estudiante en su vida cotidiana.

Palabras clave: Escritura académica, actividades, enseñanza del inglés.

1 Introduction

Communication is an art. From the beginning of time, people have communicated, whether using signs, gestures, or sounds. With the evolution of languages, humans started to learn more and more about their own native language, as well as second and foreign languages.

In English language learning, writing is one of the most important skills for foreign language students to master. Writing is an important language skill because it means to learn,

discover, develop, and improve language skills (Astuti et al., 2020). According to Defazio et al. (2010), there is a great need for students at all levels not only to be good written communicators, but also to understand the importance of excellent writing skills. These authors also highlight the importance of being able to critically assess the writing of others as part of mastering written communication.

As English teachers, the key question becomes: What are some of the most effective educational activities that bring writing outside the classroom in an academic English learning context? Today's students are immersed in a world full of written communication, generally through texting or emailing. However, one of the main problems with these types of communication methods is that they can rely on the usage of abbreviations and informal language. Also, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, organization, and flow may be forgotten as a way of saving time. Moreover, because of the immediacy of these communication methods, there is almost no time for reflection on either what is received or what is being sent.

Preparing students to communicate in the real world, personally and professionally, is a challenge for educators in higher education. This is why activities that focus on the development of writing skills have become core parts of any teacher's lesson plan. Nonetheless, finding significant techniques that are also authentic and that can be adapted to students' contexts is an extremely difficult task.

The following research has three goals. The first goal is to identify five of the most effective educational activities that bring writing outside the classroom in an academic English learning context. Second, it seeks to describe these five effective educational activities that bring writing outside the classroom, so other teachers can recreate them with their own students. This will be presented through examples and explanations of the activities. Finally, this research seeks to determine the effectiveness of the five educational activities presented by giving examples and adaptations of their usage in a real-life academic context.

2 Literature Review

2.1 The concept of writing

Writing is a process of understanding and communicating ideas and thoughts by choosing and putting together words in written or printed form. It has been part of humans' communication since the beginning of times and nowadays is a huge part of any social, economic, cultural and academic communication exchange. Nowadays, written language has an important social and educational function and holds high social prestige (Urbanova and Oakland, 2002, mentioned in Klimova, 2012, p. 9). Writing represents a major part of the way humans utilize language. There are many different definitions of writing stated by experts. For instance, Wingersky (2002) defines writing as a process of communicating with others in which a writer sends his or her ideas in written form to readers. Additionally, it is a process of thinking, which means that the writer has to discover, organize, and communicate his or her thoughts to the reader.

Similarly, several authors have stated that writing is one of the most necessary skills in English language learning. As a matter of fact, it is considered to be one of the most difficult of

the skills. It shapes the scientific structure of human life either verbally or in written form, and assists the development of other language skills, such as listening, speaking, and reading (Javed, Juan, & Nazli, 2013; Nodoushan, 2014). The skill of writing has the effect of relating directly to students' academic success. It also enables students to reinforce grammatical structure and enhance their vocabulary. It is therefore essential that writing be consciously taught and improved in the classroom, as an end in itself and as a gateway to improving other skills.

2.2 Academic writing

Writing can be used as a communication form in several contexts. When talking specifically about academic writing, it is important to define it. According to Oshima and Hogue (2007), academic writing is the type of writing used in high school and college classes. The authors state that it is different from other types of writing because it is formal and complete, and ideas should be organized in academic ways. It is truly different from other types of writing, because it involves a formal tone, formal vocabulary and is done in an academic context. Tasks such as college admission essays, research papers, research proposals, theses and dissertations, lab reports and literature reviews, among others represent examples of academic writing.

2.3 The stages of academic writing

As is well-known, writing is about communicating with words, however, academic writing is about choosing words carefully to communicate complex ideas to a variety of readers. When practicing and developing the skill of writing in academic contexts, it is necessary to follow certain steps to be able to do this efficiently.

The first step of academic writing is called inventing or prewriting. According to Rumisek and Zemach (2006), the prewriting process is the step before writing. It involves the planning and organization of the writer's ideas. This process lets the writer transfer abstract thoughts into more concrete ideas in the written form.

There are many prewriting techniques that can be helpful in all stages of the writing process, for instance, brainstorming, free writing and mapping. Brainstorming is a way of gathering ideas about a topic. It is a "useful way of getting started or generating new ideas. Once learners are familiar with the process, they can use this activity on their own when they are stuck, revising their work, or moving on to a new phase" (Mogahed, 2013, p.64). On the other hand, free writing is a common technique frequently used by writers. It consists of the person writing freely about a topic for a set amount of time. According to Rumisek and Zemach (2006), free writing helps the writer develop fluency because accuracy is not that important at this stage. The last technique for the inventing stage is called mapping. It is way of allowing the writer to visualize ideas on paper using circles, lines, and arrows. It is also known as clustering. According to McMahan et al. (2017), the way to map or cluster ideas is the following:

Begin with a blank sheet of paper. In the center, write a crucial question about the story that you want to investigate, and circle the words. Then, draw a line out from that circle, write an idea or a question related to the central idea, and circle that. Spiraling out from that circle, add and circle

any further associations that you can make. Continue drawing lines from the center, like spokes radiating from a wheel, and record any other ideas or questions that are related. When you finish, you will have a cluster of related ideas. (p.13)

The second step when writing a text in an academic context is drafting. This is the stage of the writing process in which the writer develops a complete first version of a piece of writing. Gagich & Zickel (2018) mention that in this stage, the writer puts all parts and ideas together into a full-length draft. The authors further state that this is a first/rough draft, and the goal is to get all the writer's thoughts and ideas into writing, not generating a perfect draft. Similarly, Regan (2019) establishes that "this stage involves a student developing a more cohesive text by translating ideas into well-constructed sentences and putting these sentences into organized paragraphs" (p.80).

The third step is called revising. When revising the text, the writer may correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, or sentence construction. During this stage, sentences may be clarified by rewording or deeper elaboration of ideas may be made (Regan, 2019). This is an important step because it allows the writer to expand his or her ideas and create more meaningful texts.

Finally, the last step of the writing process is editing. McMahan et al. (2017) mention that "during revision, you focused on making your paper organized, well developed, and coherent. In the editing stage, you should concentrate on improving your sentences and refining your use of language" (p.55). Editing thus involves proofreading and the identification of issues such as grammar, wording, and style. Additionally, when editing the writer can check their tone and verify if they cite their sources accurately.

All stages of the writing process are absolutely necessary to write accurate and complete texts. In this regard, Gezmiş (2020), mentions that:

as dividing the writing process into many stages and naming each stage can lead students to confound that the stages are linear, teachers should explain that the stages are interactive, organic and cyclical. If one of the stages is not completed in an appropriate and whole way, students cannot start the next stage. Besides, if students realize a failure in one stage, they should return back to the stage which causes this failure and fulfill all the requirements of each stage. (p.570)

As teachers, it is important to encourage students to write as much as they can in class and at home, so they can improve their vocabulary, grammar, critical thinking and other important elements which form key parts of written communication. It is essential to remember that writing is the fuel that drives communication, and communication serves as a structure for society.

2.4 The importance and impact of teaching writing

As mentioned before, writing is one of the most important skills in an English classroom. Childs (2020), establishes that:

writing is a skill that is necessary and relevant in many settings. Students benefit from writing tasks in every subject area (core and elective). This should be done with creative, culturally relevant, and engaging curriculum and instruction and open-ended prompts that allow students to fully develop responses. (p. 44)

According to Tavşanlı, Bilgin, and Yıldırım (2021), the act of writing does not only mean transmitting a message through writing. It also “gives clues about how one sees her/himself and how s/he represents. It cannot be considered that the expressions mentioned in individuals’ writings, their perceptions about writing and the places they emphasize in their writings are disconnected from their lives” (p. 2074).

It is common that writing is only taught in English classes. However, as stated before, as teachers, it is essential to bring writing outside the classroom by creating activities in lesson plans that allow students to leave the English classroom and continue practicing and developing these skills. This paper aims to provide teachers with some examples of activities that can help students enhance their writing skills inside and outside the academic context.

3 Context

The context of the present paper is based on several aspects. The first of these is the linguistic level of the students. All activities presented in this paper are activities for high school students (12 to 19 years old). Activities can be adjusted to the students’ linguistic level. Teachers can adapt these activities to their students’ levels, contexts, and resources. However, students with B1, B2, C1 and C2 linguistic levels can perform these activities more efficiently.

The activities presented in this paper can be used in academic high schools in academic English lessons, in bilingual high schools in reading and writing classes, in technical high schools in conversational English lessons, or in technical course English classes. They can also be used in any lesson that allows the teacher and students to practice writing skills.

The following activities require follow-up tasks in order to help students bring writing into their daily lives and contexts. Consequently, when using these activities in the classroom, it is important for teachers to plan their lessons using different tasks, assignments, or activities that students can take to their homes and work on.

4 Methodology for the Activities

The following educational activities represent five ideas that teachers can use in their English lessons to practice and improve students’ writing skills.

Activity #1: Writing journals

This activity consists of helping students develop a journal that can be used in the classroom, as well as at home. Teachers should ask students to use a regular notebook or an actual journal depending on what the students can afford and bring to class. This activity can last as long

as the teacher desires. The teacher must explain to the students that they will be writing in this journal, and it is up to them if they share their writing with others or not. However, due to the fact that students require constant feedback on their writing, it must be shared with the teacher. The teacher will provide students with journal entry ideas. Students will start their journal entries in class. For instance, they can take a walk around the school and write about what they observed. Next, students will have to do the same at home. They can write about their surroundings, their neighborhood, or their house, among others. Every time the student goes to English class and it is time to work on the journal, they can share their ideas and thoughts for the week. It is important that the teacher establishes a schedule or specific time for the journal task, so students can develop the discipline of writing at home and having something already prepared for class.

The students' level of English will dictate the type of journal entry that the teacher will assign. For example, if the students have an A1 level, the entries could be vocabulary related. If the students are in a B1 level, the entries can require more information. This activity can be adapted to any level, as long as the teacher establishes the characteristics required of the journal entries.

Some examples of journal entries that teachers can use for their classes, as well as for home assignments are:

- **Nature walk entries:** Students write about elements they can see on a walk through nature.
- **Feelings entries:** Students write about their feelings and how they handle these in school and at home.
- **Letter to loved one entries:** Students can write letters to their loved ones. These can include their parents, pets, friends, etc.
- **Open-ended question entries:** Answering questions such as “What do you imagine your future will look like?” or similar allows students to just start writing whatever comes to mind and will help them develop their creativity, as well as several soft skills.

Activity #2: Summary Creation

This activity consists of creating summaries of texts or videos studied in class. It can be performed by students at any level, as long as the texts or videos used are on the same level as the students. The first step is to teach the students how to make a summary. First, students must understand the stages of the writing process.

After that, they have to be able to understand the text or video that will be used for their summary. It is recommended that students read or watch the input several times, until it becomes clear enough for them to understand. The teacher can then help students with a sample summary. Generally, summaries include a short introduction, a body, and a brief conclusion. They must state the main ideas of a larger piece of work.

Some important aspects to take into account when writing a summary are:

- Always include the author's name, title of the work, and a general overview of the work, such as the genre or overall idea of the text or video.
- Include all of the main points or ideas in the work, but avoid smaller details or ideas.

- A summary should be written using the student's own words.
- The main ideas should be presented objectively, avoiding personal opinions.
- Avoid including direct quotes from the work within a summary.
- The summary can be concluded by restating an overview of the work in one sentence.

Activity #3: Chain Story

This activity is an effective way of practicing free writing and stimulating the students' creativity when writing. First, the teacher organizes the students in a circle. Then, the teacher asks the students to take out a piece of paper and a pen and write their name on that paper. After that, the teacher explains the activity to the students. They must write a story about any topic the teacher wants to study, or even a free topic, depending on what vocabulary or grammatical structure the teacher needs to reinforce. The students must start a story by writing whatever they can in a specific period of time. It can be 1 minute, 2 minutes or 3 minutes, depending on what the teacher desires. After the time has passed, students must pass their paper to their classmate on the right. Then they must continue writing the story that has been handed to them. This same situation will continue until each student gets their original paper back. After that, the students can read their stories and share them with their classmates. It is important that the time given for students to write increases as the activity develops, because the more they write, the more they need to read. It can therefore take a lot of time to actually finish this activity. This activity is recommended for groups no larger than 20 students. However, it can be done in larger groups if these are divided into smaller ones.

This activity can be done by students of all levels. In a beginner's class, students can write short sentences to complete the story. In a more advanced class, students can write more information and add details to the story.

A way of using this class activity outside the classroom is by asking the students to take the story home and write an alternative ending. Alternatively, they can rewrite the story or even write more stories derived from the one they created in class. This is a very interesting activity because students can be extremely creative and collaborate with others on a single piece of writing.

Activity #4: Review Creation

This activity is similar to a summary. Nonetheless, it involves a more personal perspective on a piece or work from the student. The main aim of creating a review is to understand the students' point of view regarding a resource such as a text, song, book, audio or video.

Just as in the summary creation, the students should first learn the writing process and how to write a review. The teacher provides the students with an input resource about an interesting topic. The teacher will then explain the writing process and the parts of a review. A review must have an introduction, a body and a conclusion. It must have personal opinions and the students' thoughts based on their understanding of the resource that is being used. It is important that the teacher explains to the students that a review should always provide useful and constructive feedback. It should also include a wide range of ideas about what the student liked or disliked about the resource. This task brings the students a great opportunity to take a side on a topic or matter and defend or attack it.

One way in which this activity has proven to be very effective is by utilizing a book as a main resource. Students can read a chapter per week and at home, as homework, write a review of each chapter. Students of all levels can perform this activity. Beginners could use short stories or even music videos and write short sentences about them. Students in a more advanced levels can read entire books or larger pieces of writing.

Using resources that cover interesting topics such as politics, economy, globalization, technology, environment, among others, can be a key factor in increasing the effectiveness of this activity.

Activity #5: Magazine Article Creation

Magazine creation is a way of helping students use their knowledge and writing skills in a way that can highlight their creativity and intelligence. This activity can be developed in class or as a home assignment. Students can use technology or create their magazine with regular school supplies.

The teacher must explain the writing process to the students. After the students have understood this, they must choose a topic on which to write a magazine article. The topic can be chosen by students or established by the teacher, depending on the class objectives. This activity can be done by students at all levels. The teacher can provide beginners with simple topics and more advanced students with more difficult ones.

A way of using this activity that involves all students in the writing process is by using peer feedback. Students can do brainstorming and write the first draft of their magazine article. After that, instead of giving this directly to the teacher for feedback, they can be paired up with a classmate to provide each other with feedback. After several classmates have given feedback, the teacher can give the students a final review of the draft. Then students can go ahead and create their magazine layout. For this, students can use technological resources or school materials that they already own.

It is important to mention that for all the activities explained above, the teacher and the students must be familiar with the writing process and should be willing to practice this and reinforce it as much as possible.

5 Materials

The following section will provide teachers with several resources that can be useful in performing the activities described above efficiently.

Webpages:

- <https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/american-teens-talk> : *Americans Teens Talk!* is a collection of interviews of American high school students in both written and audio format. Each interview is accompanied by vocabulary notes and discussion questions. It is really helpful for student to practice writing reviews and summaries.

- <https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/skills/reading> : The British Council provides teachers and students with texts about different topics. They are divided by levels and generally are accompanied by handouts full of activities. This is a really helpful resource for finding interesting texts.
- <https://slc.berkeley.edu/writing-worksheets-and-other-writing-resources/you-start-writing-paper>: The Berkely Student Learning Center offers several resources and materials for teachers and students to learn more about academic writing and how to teach and learn about this.

6 Conclusions

This paper addresses the importance of teaching and developing academic writing in an English classroom, as well as providing five efficient and interesting activities to bring writing from the classroom into the students' context.

It is a fact that students need to develop their writing skills in order to succeed in their personal, academic, and professional lives. Therefore, during their classes teachers should emphasize and enhance the development of formal writing skills. Evidently, this could mean much more of a burden for teachers afterwards, since they have to provide their students with proper feedback on their writing, as well as creating activities that are clear and interesting.

As has been stated in this paper, writing skills are essential for the efficient communication of ideas and thoughts. Students must learn writing skills and understand these just as much as all other English skills. This is why the use of strategies and activities that help students improve their writing skills and practice these both inside and outside the classroom can make the difference in a students' learning journey, as well as helping them communicate in more effective and significant ways.

7 References

- Astuti, W., Maghfiroh, A., & Ekanti, R. Palupi A. (2020). Enhancing Students' Writing Ability by Implementing Problem-Based Learning Method at the English Department Students in Muhammadiyah University of Ponorogo in Academic Year 2019/2020. *Edupeedia Journal Muhammadiyah University of Ponorogo*, 4(2), 155-161.
- Childs, K. R. (2020). Write Away: Writing Across the Curriculum and Beyond. *Texas A&M University - Commerce*, 7, 44–48. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1286844.pdf>
- Defazio, J., Jones, J., Tennant, F., & Hook, S. (2010, June). Academic Literacy: The Importance and Impact of Writing across the Curriculum: A Case Study. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 10(2), 34–47. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ890711.pdf>
- Gagich, M., & Zickel, E. (2018). In Practice: A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing. *MSL Academic Endeavors* <https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/csu-fyw-rhetoric>
- Gezmiş, N. (2020). Difficulties Faced by the Undergraduate Students in the Process Writing Approach. *Dil Ve Dibilimi Çalışmaları Dergisi*, 16(2), 565–579. <https://doi.org/10.17263/jlls.759249>

- Javed, M., Juan, W. X., & Nazli, S. (2013). A Study of Students' Assessment in Writing Skills of the English Language. *International Journal of Instruction*, 6(2), 129–144. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED544075.pdf>
- Klimova, B. F. (2012, January 15). The Importance of Writing. *Paripex - Indian Journal of Research*, 2(1), 9–11. <https://doi.org/10.15373/22501991/jan2013/4>
- McMahan, E., Funk, R., Day, S., & Coleman, L. S. (2017). *Literature and the Writing Process* (11th ed.). Pearson Education. <https://r5ed20ga1d.pdcn1.top/dl2.php?id=158085376&h=117e15c230eae17fe7dc6df8e1045997&u=cache&ext=pdf&n=Literature%20and%20the%20writing%20process>
- Mogahed, M. (2013). Planning Out Pre-Writing Activities. *International Journal of English and Literature*, 4(3), 60–68. <https://doi.org/10.5897/IJEL12.120>
- Nodoushan, M. A. S. (2014). Assessing Writing: A Review of the Main Trends. *Studies in English Language and Education Journal*, 1(2), 128–138. <https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v1i2.1831>
- Oshima, A., & Hogue, A. (2007b). *Introduction to Academic Writing* (Third Ed.). Pearson Education. https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/3928474/mod_resource/content/1/Introduction%20to%20Academic%20Writing.pdf
- Regan, K. (2019). Supporting the Writing Process with Technology for Students with Disabilities. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 55(2), 78–85. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1053451219837636>
- Rumisek, L., & Zemach, D. (2006). *Academic Writing: From Paragraph to Essay*. Macmillan. <https://library.unmas.ac.id/repository/EBK-00032.pdf>
- Tavşanlı, O., Bilgin, A., & Yıldırım, K. (2021). Elementary School Students' Views on Process-Based Writing Modular Program Intervention and Writer Identity. *International Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, 13(3), 2072–2100. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1312863.pdf>
- Wingersky, J., Boerner, J., & Holguin-Balogh, D. (2002, August 16). *Writing Paragraphs and Essays: Integrating Reading, Writing, and Grammar Skills* (4th ed.). Cengage Learning.

8 Biography

Liseth María González Alfaro

Liseth González is an English teacher at Colegio Técnico Profesional Calle Zamora where she has been in charge of conversational English and technical English classes for eight years. She began her English teaching career at the University of Costa Rica. After obtaining this first degree, she procured a second degree in Science for Primary Education with a focus on English. Later, she obtained a licentiate degree in English teaching and recently finished her master's in Education Administration. Her personal development interests are related to teaching English using different approaches and activities, such as the task-based approach and writing activities for the classroom.

The Academic Contribution of the Team-UNA Project to the Participant Tutors and their Professional Growth

Cecilia López Morales

Universidad Nacional, Campus Coto, Costa Rica

Cecilia.lopez.morales@una.cr

Jeff Betuel Blanco Caballero

Universidad Nacional, Campus Coto, Costa Rica

Jeff.blanco.caballero@est.una.ac.cr

Abstract: The English Teaching Major at Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica is committed to graduating ethical professionals who are linguistically and pedagogically engaged in developing their future second language learners' social and cognitive skills. Over four or more years, the transition through their developmental sequence enables students to acquire intellectual and pedagogical proficiency. It prepares them to successfully embrace their teaching context once they get immersed into the labor force of the country, whose main scenario is the Ministry of Public Education (MEP). The Team-UNA, Coto Campus project, registered at the System of Academic Information (SIA) as 0007-19, is a service-learning community project implemented at Universidad Nacional, Coto Campus since 2019. It offers high school students tutoring to reinforce their four language skills (reading, speaking, listening, and writing). The university tutors in charge of teaching high school participants have been third- and fourth-level students of the English Teaching major. This research aims to investigate the professional contribution the project has made to the tutors in terms of personal, academic, and pedagogical growth.

Keywords: Team UNA, personal improvement, academic growth, professional development.

Resumen: La carrera Bachillerato en la Enseñanza del Inglés tiene la misión de graduar profesionales pedagógica, lingüística y éticamente comprometidos con el desarrollo de habilidades sociales y cognitivas de sus futuros estudiantes. A lo largo de cuatro o cinco años en la carrera, los estudiantes son llevados en su proceso de aprendizaje continuo para que logren competencias intelectuales y pedagógicas que los capacite a asumir los retos del contexto educativo al cual se van a enfrentar cuando formen parte de la fuerza laboral del país, cuyo principal escenario es el Ministerio de Educación Pública (M.E.P). El proyecto Team UNA Campus Coto, inscrito en el SIA como 0007-19, es una actividad académica con el componente de extensión que ha estado en el Campus desde 2019 ofreciendo tutorías de inglés a los estudiantes de secundaria con el objetivo de reforzar las cuatro habilidades del idioma [el habla, la escucha, la escritura y la lectura]. Las personas estudiantes quienes son los encargados de impartir las tutorías a los participantes de secundaria son comúnmente estudiantes de III y IV nivel de la carrera del Bachillerato de la Enseñanza del Inglés. Esta investigación está dirigida a ahondar en la contribución profesional que el proyecto ha tenido para los tutores en términos pedagógicos, académicos y personales.

Palabras clave: Team UNA, mejoramiento personal, crecimiento académico, desarrollo profesional.

1 Introduction

As stated in the institutional curriculum of the English Teaching major at Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica (2013), one of its objectives is to strengthen second language education in both public and private institutions. This is why the major is designed to fulfill the educational needs of the Ministry of Education, the institution that provides the Team-UNA, Coto Campus project with its participant population.

The Team-UNA, Coto Campus project is an extension project designed to link the university with its surrounding communities. It also supplies third- and fourth-level students from the English Teaching major with the opportunity to start their teaching career as tutors, for which they are formally paid and included in the System of Academic Information (SIA). At the same time, the project supplies these students with pedagogical skills and experience by following a proposal initially substantiated on the principles of the Communicative Approach and its transition to the Action-Oriented approach. As previously explained by Lopez & Lopez (2020), this process generates a commitment between the university, the tutors, and the students in benefit of all participants.

Team-UNA is currently recognized as an academic space for participant tutors to commence getting expertise and pedagogical training, acting as one of the strengths of the project in the region. Belatrech (2018) concluded that training is an essential part of the academic development of new EFL teachers. He explained that most of the time, if such new teachers do not receive proper training during their major, they initially do not feel identified with their teaching career or its professional worth, increasing the existing negative barriers to teaching and learning processes.

On this occasion, this research is focused on investigating and understanding the pedagogical and professional importance of Team-UNA to the formation of the tutors that have been part of the project since 2019. The opportunity to gain experience and be evaluated as professionals during the learning process makes Team-UNA a highly-sought experience for foreign language students at Coto Campus. Involvement in substantive actions stemming from the pillars that support the so-called “Necessary University”, such as teaching, extension, research, and intellectual property production, definitely generates educational awareness about the teaching world and the importance of performing an outstanding job. This paper seeks to investigate the academic benefits of being part of Team-UNA, 0007-19, showing the impact this professional experience has on foreign language students and identifying the skills that are developed and acquired throughout the teaching process in the school year from the perspective of the tutors.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Action Research

Action Research is a process in which the researcher and the participants become actively involved and participate together to come up with an “outcome” which might improve a process, surpass an expectation, or solve a problem (Morales, 2016). One of the branches of action research is also known as participatory action research, in which the researcher becomes part of the process

of improvement and starts taking actions that help the effective development of the community being studied. The research problem is not evaluated by the researcher, but comes from the population that identifies it and wants a solution based on their experience (Morales, 2016).

2.2 Team-UNA

This experience opens the opportunity to construct new solutions to the interests and needs of the educational reality for both virtual and face-to-face teaching, with future professionals being provided with concrete and real learning tools. Team-UNA links university students' professional formation to the local community by teaching English as a foreign language as the main tool to achieve its goals (SIA, 2022).

2.3 University Principles

The University's substantive action is achieved through teaching, research, extension and intellectual property production, and other instances which complement and nurture the action established by the institutional regulations. The substantive action taken also integrates diverse practices and propitiates dialogue including different areas of expertise through a systematic, transforming, and innovative approach. (Universidad Nacional, 2015). The Team-UNA, Coto Campus project, through teaching, reinforces the university principles in the tutors, whose participation in innovative and creative substantive action produces knowledge that transforms both themselves and high school students.

2.4 University Pillars

Team-UNA is concerned with the participation of each of the tutors and motivates them to start defining their professional identity based on the project's objectives and achievement indicators. Vu (2016) defined professionalism as "resulting from professionalization or the process for an occupation to gain the status of profession" (p. 134). The professional values required to graduate as EFL teachers are reinforced by Team-UNA, Coto Campus, which provides its students not only with the opportunity to practice teaching but also to investigate, gather information, and produce intellectual property.

2.5 Pedagogy

The Pandemic affected the second language teaching and learning process, forcing the Team-UNA, Coto Campus project to implement technology as one of the pedagogical tools about which to achieve and develop knowledge, both during and after the pandemic. After this emergency virtual teaching process, positive technological didactical outcomes became an enhanced part of the new "normal". However, as stated by Arley & Arrieta (2013), the concept of "pedagogical mediation", the humanistic teaching approach implemented and promoted by the university, highlights the teacher as a mediating instrument that becomes an academic mentor and transmitter of values, attitudes, and skills, which are difficult to transmit through technological sources alone, representing instead a "human doing" capacity (p. 24). In the Team-UNA, Coto Campus project, pedagogy is understood to be based on the university's vision and mission, which should be applied in every single field, including extension projects that integrate teaching.

In this sense, Kotyk, Romanyuk, and Kisil (2022) pointed out that pedagogy goes beyond the mere research process, integrating disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary characteristics to define an integral methodology of research. It is important to note that this set of characteristics is mainly acquired through practice. This is why students in the English Teaching major need to be involved in all the elements included in pedagogy to understand the complexity of this process. Moreover, it is worth taking into consideration the conclusions of Villacañas de Castro (2017) that it is important to make sure that students receive a meaningful educational experience that motivates them, reassuring them of their intellectual capacities for teaching language in a way that is better, more creative, and more interesting than those experiences they received in the past in their own educational process.

2.6 Teaching

Teaching is generally perceived and advocated as the process of transmitting knowledge from one person to another, and this perception has set the basis of all the educational procedures that are currently used in the field. However, it is relevant to remark that the meaning of teaching is continually modified and updated according to social and human needs. As an example, Sequeira (2022) defines the concept of teaching as: “A set of events outside the learners which are designed to support the internal process of learning” (p. 3). Teaching is more than just providing information; more importantly, it supports the creation of knowledge according to the capacities of each individual. Team-UNA, Coto Campus acknowledges that it is important to be aware of the real context of society, which is why it provides students with the opportunity to face this experience with the tools that generate teaching based on their own perspectives.

2.7 Learning

After having explored this concept, it could be said that learning is a never-ending process, whose semantics become outdated with every single advancement provided by the development of education. De Houwer, Barnes-Holmes, and Moors (2013) affirmed that it is almost impossible to provide “learning” with a specific definition that could encompass what this word means because learning derives from different human perspectives, which are sometimes alike and sometimes completely different. In the case of Team-UNA, the project bases its learning strategy on the Action Oriented Approach (AOA,) which privileges action over simple communication. During the implementation of this methodology, the learner gets to be an important sociocultural actor, with their actions forming part of their motivation to keep on learning (Kaliska, 2016). Respecting MEP guidelines, the AOA is used in this project to promote students’ independence in their learning by linking this to social action in which they use English as part of their daily life.

2.8 Graduate Profile

Graduates from the English Teaching major at Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica are prepared to work in public and private institutions. The curriculum is elaborated with the aim that these professionals are enabled to take charge of planning, organizing, guiding, and imparting second language teaching and learning processes. Their responsibilities include the preparation of didactic materials, evaluation of contents and skills, and promotion of creative activities to make the educational act a free and permanent dialogue. The classroom becomes a research setting that

generates insights used to boost meaningful feedback. As professionals, second language graduates have to be aware of the construction and interpretation of reality by updating the concepts, principles, and theories of pedagogy and didactics (Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica, 2013). The Team-UNA, Coto Campus project gives tutors the opportunity to start dealing with the professional responsibilities the major requires.

3 Context

Due to the purpose of this research, the authors selected a qualitative approach to collect the data required. According to Creswell (2014), referenced by Asenahabi (2019):

Research design is the overall plan for connecting the conceptual research problems to the pertinent and achievable empirical research. It is an inquiry that provides specific direction for procedures in a research study.
(p. 77)

With the focus on retrieving all the pertinent information about the process carried out in the project, the main instrument applied was a ten-question questionnaire using the Google Forms platform. The bases of this mechanism rely on the main objective, which is to study the experience of the tutors during their participation in the project. Once the data collection was completed, the researchers tabulated the results of the experiences in categories such as personal growth and professional development.

3.1 Participants

The tutors participating in this research were eight English Teaching major students: three women and five men. Three of these were undergraduates, and the other five participants were graduates, whose collaboration provides the insight necessary to analyze the unit of study by answering ten questions. Participants were selected via the determination of the researchers to include all tutors who have been part of the project for at least one year. It is important to mention that three of the graduates are already working as teachers. Another two work as customer support agents at a call center, and the remaining four are postgraduate students.

3.2 Category Analysis

The unit of analysis of this research is the impact of the Team-UNA project on the participant students during and after their teaching experience as tutors. The categories are presented as part of the researchers' work to reduce qualitative data into relevant conceptualization by using the questionnaire (See Annex 2). Tables 1, 2, and 3 present the categories of analysis and their corresponding conceptualization, showing the relationship between these. The answers of each tutor are presented in each chart, and their names are not used to ensure their anonymity. The coding used for this purpose is T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, and T8. When quoting the participants, the same symbols are used in place of names.

4 Methodology for the Activities

4.1 Thematic analysis

In order to categorize the data collected, the researchers used thematic analysis to divide the information into different branches. This method has changed over time, going from being a tool merely used in psychology and social health studies to being used in other fields to extract the most important information from studies made employing the qualitative approach (Clarke, Braum, and Hayfield, 2015). In accordance with the purpose of this research, thematic analysis was carried out after having gotten all the answers to the questionnaire and then classifying this information into specific categories of thought. Thematic analysis is used in the educational field as a tool to summarize results rather than as a tool of analysis, and it is usually used to indicate the main topics before analysis is carried out by the researchers (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, and Braun, 2017).

4.2 Personal and professional achievement (See Table 1. Annex #3)

4.2.1 Personal Achievement

After defining the categories of analysis [codes], the researchers triangulated the information obtained from the questionnaire. As it is shown in Table 1, which is related to personal achievement, T1 considered having a job as a personal achievement. On the other hand, T2 mentioned the development of values such as self-discovery to identify what to improve. In the same vein, T3 reported having become aware of his/her strengths, which forms part of human growth. Two of the participants agreed on the same value, with T4 and T8 indicating the development of patience as a personal improvement. T5, on the other hand, realized that his or her teaching desire continued to exist, and T6, the most experienced of the tutors, recognized aspects such as organization and problem-solving as personal achievements obtained while working on the project. T7 stated that he or she became a bigger humanist, advocating, in this sense, in favor of the project as providing the opportunity to become a better person.

4.2.2 Professional Improvement

In terms of professional development T1, T2, T4, T5, and T6 agreed that the project gave them the opportunity to improve their teaching. On the other hand, T3 considered that improving confidence in public speaking was a professional result from acting as a tutor in the project, making this an excellent scenario for university students to overcome their fears. As Shinyoung Grace Kim mentioned, one of the reasons why it is hard to learn a second language is that “people are afraid to be wrong” (TEDx, 2018, 1:36-1:41). Finally, T7 demonstrated a novel vision of teaching by reporting that to be good professionals, teachers have to go beyond. In turn, T8 valued the fact of having had the chance to work with teenagers.

4.3 Participation, Experience, and Responsibility

4.3.1 Participation

In terms of participation, three of the tutors (T1, T2, and T3) used adjectives such as frustrating, difficult, and challenging to describe their early involvement in Team-UNA, Coto Campus. Nevertheless, T1 recognized that after that difficult beginning, the experience was “awesome”, while T2 reflected that the process of dealing with difficulties was necessary to become a strong teacher. In the same vein, T4 and T6 used adjectives such as grateful and amazing, while T5 mixed the three relevant concepts of living, challenging, and learning, which was actually summarized by T7 in just one concept: “A roller coaster”. Regarding this last answer and the feeling the tutor had in terms of ups and downs, learning skills, and getting experience, Hardy (2011), cited in Chavez & Rodriguez (2018), explained that language teaching is a career that requires specialized skills: First, we need a high level of proficiency in the language we teach, but proficiency alone isn’t enough. We also need explicit, declarative knowledge about the language in order to teach (p. 374). T8 recognized that by working as a tutor, he could participate in acquiring knowledge about learning styles and the adaptability of contents.

4.3.2 Experience

After analyzing the tutors’ answers related to their experience, it was found that Team-UNA is not only a project that enables participants to practice and learn about the teaching context, but that it also provides significant experiences for each participant tutor. T1, T2, T5, and T7 stated that their experience included being able to get involved in different teaching activities, starting with planning. In the case of T3 and T4, they stated that their experience came from interacting with other people (students), improving their social skills, teaching knowledge, and vocabulary. T6 stated that in the end, being guided by the experienced teacher in charge of the project made evident the difference between theory and practice. In the same way, aspects such as interaction with the real teaching world, the different daily academic encounters, and responsibility for the whole substantive action made this participant feel really experienced. On the other hand, T8 was very specific, and just focused on evaluation and learning how to create tests.

4.3.3 Responsibilities

The conceptualization of the word “responsibilities” was mainly expressed as “teaching”. T1 answered “being a teacher”, showing the idea that the role has different connotations depending on the future goal of the person. In the case of T2, T3, T4, T5, and T8, answers were centered on the role of teaching and developing didactic materials. This portrays that most of the participants have shown a commitment to the teaching process during their time in the project. Additionally, T6 noted the university’s substantive action within the project, not only in carrying out the relevant processes, but also in going further in the accomplishment of the goals. At the end, T7 declared that his or her process and responsibilities were intimately related to the basis of education, which involves taking care of students and transmitting knowledge.

4.4 Academic and Professional Legacy (See Table 2, Annex 4)

4.4.1 Academic Improvement

The question asked regarding academic improvement encompassed both the process and the development of different skills. Positively, all the participants agreed that being part of the project provided them with improvement in didactic materials, which benefitted the courses of the teaching major, mainly the teaching practicum. In analyzing of this aspect, T1 mentioned his or her improvement in managing large groups, while T2 emphasized improvement in remote teaching. T3 also remarked on the influence that participating in the project had on the teaching practicum and seminar course, which made up part of the didactic production within the project, while T4 reported greater expertise in the creation of educational tools and assessment. T5 added increased development and knowledge about the MEP's syllabus. Finally, T6 and T7 mentioned that soft skills and familiarity with teaching skills also made up part of the academic improvement they achieved during this process.

4.4.2 Professional Legacy

All the participants agreed on the fact that the project enriched their future careers. T1 mentioned aspects such as dealing with large groups and learning how to use content-based activities. From a more integral perspective, T2, who had already graduated, spoke about the acquisition of all the abilities a teacher needs to teach in a real-life context. Undoubtedly, variables such as the tutor's year of graduation, educational approaches, and the differences in individual social context conditioned every answer. The transition from face-to-face classes to virtual teaching meant tutors were provided with experience in another modality of teaching, and T5 explained that the techniques used in both virtual and face-to-face modalities resulted in greater teaching creativity. T3 recognized that the experience of tutoring meant familiarity with the MEP curriculum in terms of teaching speaking skills. Having blended groups from different institutions represented a great opportunity for Team-UNA tutors to start developing expertise.

Regarding high school, for example, the Costa Rican Ministry of Education, attempting to establish a general teaching principle, explained that:

The teaching of speaking at all levels aims at the practice and production of speech that is fluent and phrasal, not limited to isolated words. The learner has to be taught survival language and fillers to negotiate and get meaning across in and out of the classroom. (MEP, 2016, p. 46)

T4 reported that this project represented the opportunity to update the knowledge learned during the major and to put this into practice. This coincided with the opinion of T7, who also spoke about his or her knowledge and accepted the importance of planning. T6 proudly stated that the project was a great forum in which to learn that there is a gap between the theories learnt during the major and practice when teaching. Lastly, T8 referred to the professional legacy of the project as being "love for teaching". This participant focused on the development of values rather than pedagogical skills.

5 Conclusions

The aspects mentioned by the participants shed light on two general categories going beyond teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language. The researchers stated that Team-UNA, Coto Campus fulfills the purpose of education at a personal and social level, focusing on the development of the participants' values as human beings, and also on professional benefits, untangling all their academic fears to finally become involved in the social system.

Multiple conclusions were drawn from analysis of the information compiled. First, Team-UNA, Coto Campus moved from the Communicative Approach to the Action-Oriented Approach respecting MEP guidelines, expanding the conceptualization of teaching and learning that every tutor had prior to participating in the project. In fact, as they mentioned, teaching in Team-UNA was an encounter with real-life contexts which offered tutors the opportunity to truly experience the role of teachers. Second, as a result of their participation, the project provided a niche of knowledge that supported them during their time in the teaching major, refining their skills in courses such as the teaching practicum, curriculum, and second language acquisition. Third, the participants recognized having had the privilege of discovering pedagogical, methodological, and theoretical knowledge that could only be reached by experiencing the teaching context. Kalaja & Ferreira Barcelos (2012) discussed the importance of teachers' beliefs, in terms of:

(a) their reflections about their own practices (whether this helps them to reflect or prevents them from doing so); (b) the actions taken and decisions made by them in their everyday practice; (c) their responses to changes or innovations; (d) their process of learning to teach; and (e) the possible resistance to new methods or activities in the language classroom on the part of the students. (p. 1)

Additionally, the preparation of didactic material was developed in two different educational settings, virtual and face-to-face teaching. As a result, tutors were strengthened both in terms of methodology and prospects thanks to the educational transition Universidad Nacional had to embrace because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Interestingly, in terms of personal development, the participants already working expressed that they experienced personal development in skills rather than just academic improvement. On the other hand, those who were not working emphasized that they grew more academically than personally. Along the same lines, some of these qualities developed according to their own perspectives include skills in communication, listening, collaboration, adaptability, empathy, and patience. Other characteristics of effective teaching include an engaging classroom presence, valuing real-world learning, the exchange of best practices, and developing a lifelong love of learning. This research demonstrates that Team-UNA, Coto Campus also provides an opportunity for self-reflection because each tutor became aware of their personal and professional improvement, and how the project impacted their academic life.

6 Limitations

The researchers realized that participant's personal and professional aspects have to be understood as one integrated whole. The answers to the questionnaire provided by the tutors portrayed that in order to be a great teacher, it is necessary to be a great human being as well. Unfortunately, some of the questions prepared by the researchers separated these aspects. Secondly, the fact that some participants were postgraduates became a challenge due to their time constraints and job responsibilities. Nonetheless, the outcomes showed that this extension project provides participants with skills, knowledge, and proficiency.

7 References

- Arrieta, V. y Arley, E. (2013). Aspectos Metodológicos docentes que intervienen en la enseñanza de la habilidad oral en inglés en un grupo de estudiantes de undécimo año al concluir su bachillerato en un colegio académico diurno de la provincia de Heredia- Primera edición. Heredia. Costa Rica: Centro de Investigación y Docencia en Educación. Universidad Nacional
- Asenahabi, B. M. (2019). Basics of Research Design: A Guide to Selecting Appropriate Research Design. *International Journal of Contemporary Applied Researches*, 6(5), 76-89. <http://ijcar.net/assets/pdf/Vol6-No5-May2019/07.-Basics-of-Research-Design-A-Guide-to-selecting-appropriate-research-design.pdf>
- Belatrech, H. S. K. (2018). Novice EFL Teachers' Challenges in Mostaganem Rural Areas. *Social Sciences*, 7(3), 125-132.
- Chaves, O., & Rodríguez, J. D. (2018). Professionalism in Foreign Language Teaching: An Everlasting Challenge. *Revista de Linguas Modernas*, 28, 373-386.
- Clarke, V., Braun, V., & Hayfield, N. (2015). Thematic Analysis. *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods*, 222(2015), 248. <https://books.google.co.cr/books?id=AAniDgAAQBAJ&lpg=PA17&ots=don5mpziNX&dq=thematic%20analysis%20pdf&lr&hl=es&pg=PA17#v=onepage&q=thematic%20analysis%20pdf&f=false>
- De Houwer, J., Barnes-Holmes, D., & Moors, A. (2013). What Is Learning? On the Nature and Merits of a Functional Definition of Learning. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 20(4), 631-642. doi:10.3758/s13423-013-0386-3
- Kalaja, P., & Maria Ferreira Barcelos, A. (2012). Beliefs in Second Language Acquisition: Learner. *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*.
- Kaliska, M. (2016). An Action-Oriented Approach to Language Corpora in Foreign Language Teaching. *Lingwistyka Stosowana*, 17(2), 29-41.
- Kotyk, T. K., Romanyuk, S., & Kisil, M. (2022). Features of Interdisciplinarity of Modern Pedagogy. *Revista Tempos e Espaços em Educação*, 15(34), 7. ISSN-e 2358-1425
- López Morales, C., & López Barboza, A. (2020). Team-UNA: The Social and Linguistic Impact on the Coto Regional Headquarter: A Perspective from the Participant Students. <http://hdl.handle.net/11056/18442>
- Ministerio de Educación Pública (MEP). (2016). Educar para una Nueva Ciudadanía: Programa de Estudio de Inglés, Segundo Ciclo de la Educación Básica - Educating for a New Citizenship. San José, Costa Rica. https://www.mep.go.cr/sites/default/files/programadeestudio/programas/ingles_2ciclo.pdf

- Morales, M. P. E. (2016). Participatory Action Research (PAR) Cum Action Research (AR) in Teacher Professional Development: A Literature Review. *International Journal of Research in Education and Science*, 2(1), 156-165. EISSN-2148-9955
- Sequeira, A. H. (2012). Introduction to Concepts of Teaching and Learning. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. doi:10.2139/ssrn.2150166
- TEDx. [TEDx Talks]. (2018). *Learning a Second Language / Shinyoung Grace Kim/ TEDxYouth@AISR* [video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXF9ZvbxnI&t=111s&ab_channel=TEDxTalks
- Terry, G., Hayfield, N., Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic Analysis. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 2, 17-37. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781526405555>
- Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica. (2013) Plan de estudios de la carrera Bachillerato en la Enseñanza del Inglés. Heredia, Costa Rica.
- Universidad Nacional. (2015) Estatuto Orgánico de la Universidad Nacional. Publicaciones de la Universidad Nacional. Heredia.
- Universidad Nacional. Sistema de Información Académica (SIA). <http://www.sia.una.ac.cr/>
- Villacañas de Castro, L. S. (2017). ‘We Are More than EFL Teachers–We Are Educators’: Emancipating EFL Student-Teachers through Photovoice. *Educational Action Research*, 25(4), 610-629.
- Vu, M. T. (2016). The Kaleidoscope of English Language Teacher Professionalism: A Review Analysis of Traits, Values, and Political Dimensions. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 13(2), 132–156. doi:10.1080/15427587.2016.1146890

8 Biography

Cecilia López Morales

Cecilia López Morales holds a master’s degree in Education with a minor in University Teaching from Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica. Her teaching experience started in 1994 for the MEP, including institutions such as public high schools, Colegio Humanistico Costarricense and CONED. She has also worked at private universities (Universidad Latina de Costa Rica and Universidad Católica). From 2001 to 2008, she worked at Uceda Institution as a second language teacher for specific purposes. She has currently been working at Universidad Nacional, Coto Campus, for over 10 years, where she is the coordinator of the Team-UNA project, whose aim is to foster social engagement with the community and public high schools in the region. Her research interests are EFL, teaching, assessment, higher education and its impact on society, technology, blended learning and teacher identity.

Jeff Betuel Blanco Caballero

Jeff Betuel Blanco Caballero holds a bachelor’s degree in English Teaching from Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica (UNA). He is currently studying a licentiate degree in Pedagogy with an emphasis in Didactic Resources at the UNA. As part of his experience in extension programs, he has worked as a tutor at Team-UNA 007-19, Campus Coto, Universidad Nacional, for over 2 years, teaching English to high school students. He has also participated in leadership programs implemented in the regional branches of the UNA. Additionally, he has

served as president of the Coto Campus Student Association, and as representative on the commission on regional matters of the Students' Federation of the Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica. His research interests include language teaching, language learning, assessment, technologies, language acquisition, evaluation, and language education.

9 Appendices

Appendix #1

Questionnaire: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1ezw5J1LYpAFLiyCG4_JS364NC85krR5Zr-CUwFzAB_4/viewanalytics

Appendix #2

Questions

1. According to your experience, what is Team-UNA?
2. What were your responsibilities in the project?
3. How did the Team-UNA Coto Campus project help you to grow professionally?
4. What teaching aspects did you develop during your participation in the project?
5. Which of the courses that you were taking while being part of the project were positively affected by your participation in the project?
6. Which qualities of your participation boosted the courses you were taking during the time you were part of the project?
7. Do you have a job? Yes or no? After working on Team-UNA Campus Coto, how has participation in the project helped you develop your teaching skills?
8. How did your personal life improve thanks to being part of the project?
9. How would you describe your teaching experience while being part of the project?
10. What activities done during the project help you now? How?

Appendix #3

Table 1.

Code. Personal and professional improvement

Tutors	Personal improvement	Professional improvement	None
T1	To be able to get a job	Improvement of teaching skills	
T2	Reflecting on myself and knowing what to improve	Development of teaching skills for virtual scenarios	
T3	Knowing my strengths	Development of public speaking confidence	
T4	Development of patience	Creation of and designing classes [planning]	
T5	Awesome days, my desire to teach is still alive.	Practice teaching	
T6	Learning to organize tasks and problem solving as soon as possible	Being a real educator	

T7	Growing as a humanist	Going beyond to achieve goals
T8	Patience and understanding language learning and language acquisition	Classroom management working with groups of teenagers

Appendix #4

Table 2.
Code. Participation, experience, and responsibilities.

Tutors	Participation	Experience	Responsibilities
T1	Two semesters defined as frustrating in the first one and awesome in the second one.	Big groups Content-based activities	Being a teacher
T2	Difficult process that taught me that teachers have to be quite strong.	Experience needed in the educational field	Implementing classes, developing didactic materials, and assessments.
T3	Challenging at the beginning.	Teaching practices	Teaching, didactic materials, planning lessons,
T4	A grateful opportunity	Improvement of my vocabulary and knowledge	Teaching in both modalities
T5	Living, challenging, and learning	Planning and becoming creative	Teaching and learning
T6	Amazing	The difference between theories and practice when teaching	Substantive action
T7	A roller coaster	Warm-ups to motivate learning	Taking care of students and transmitting knowledge
T8	Learning styles and adaptability of contents	Creating tests experience (evaluation?)	Teaching, didactic materials, planning lessons

Appendix #5

Table 3.
Code. Academic improvement and professional legacy

Tutors	Academic improvement	Professional legacy	none
T1	Group teaching collaboration Teaching practicum	Attending big groups, content-based activities	
T2	Improvement of virtual didactic skills and pedagogical improvement.	Acquire all the abilities that a teacher needs to teach in real contexts.	

Teaching practicum	
T3	Teaching practicum and seminar course. Getting to know the English Curriculum developed by MEP Teaching speaking skills
T4	Expertise in creation of plans, materials, tests, and homework. Updating knowledge and putting it into practice Teaching practicum
T5	Getting to know the MEP syllabus. Techniques in face-to-face and virtual classes and creativity to plan classes. Development of didactic materials, and acquaintance with the student's needs. Teaching practicum
T6	Development of didactic skills, a critical perspective, and a better understanding of the teaching system. Determine the difference between theory and practice. Establishing the bases for future teaching methodologies to use. Most of the courses
T7	Improvement of the soft skills and intercultural communication Practice of the knowledge gained during the major. Acknowledging the importance of the planning activities (warm-ups) Improvement of each of the courses
T8	Understanding of didactic planning, Love for teaching, evaluation knowledge, classroom management, and effective planning. teaching practicum, and language acquisition courses.

The Influence of Teacher-Implemented Strategies to Elicit Participation During Virtual EFL Lessons

Jazmín Vindas Carmona
Fundación Tecnológica de Costa Rica
jazvindas@gmail.com

Ardui Flores Calderón
Fundación Tecnológica de Costa Rica English Program Coordinator,
Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica
zflores@itcr.ac.cr

Shirley Segura González
Ministerio de Educación Pública.
shirley.cgura@gmail.com

Mayra Soza García
BA and Lic. English Teaching, Universidad de Costa Rica.
Ministerio de Educación Pública
mayraliseth15@gmail.com

Christian Vega Moreira
Centro Cultural Costarricense Norteamericano
chris.jvm.93@gmail.com

Abstract: Thousands of institutions were forced to transform traditional programs to virtual ones, with the changes implemented being insufficient to achieving the correct process of learning English through participation. There is an evident lack of studies to address this problem, especially in the Costa Rican education system. This research therefore aims to identify some teacher-implemented strategies to foster participation during English virtual lessons and to determine the effectiveness of these strategies. The data analysis performed included a mixed-method that combines quantitative statistical and qualitative thematic analyses. Findings revealed that certain strategies represent the most recurrent in English-teaching virtual environments, and that the more strategies are implemented, the more students respond. Conclusions indicated that English instructors prefer in-person teaching over remote teaching since the latter hinders participation and interaction. Lastly, the analysis reflected a disagreement between instructors' and students' perceptions regarding teaching-related practices.

Keywords: Participation, Online learning, Virtual lessons, Strategy.

Resumen: Miles de instituciones se vieron obligadas a transformar los programas tradicionales a la virtualidad. Se tiene como objetivo identificar algunas estrategias implementadas por los docentes para fomentar la participación durante las lecciones virtuales de inglés y determinar la efectividad en función de las percepciones de los docentes y los estudiantes. El análisis de datos incluyó métodos mixto de análisis cuantitativos estadísticos y cualitativos temáticos. Se evidencia que estrategias como la gamificación y el método de respuesta a preguntas son algunas de las más recurrentes en

los entornos virtuales de enseñanza de inglés y que cuantas más estrategias se implementan, más responden los estudiantes. Las conclusiones indicaron que los profesores de inglés prefieren la enseñanza presencial a la enseñanza a distancia por la dificultad con participación e interacción. Por último, el análisis reflejó un desacuerdo entre las percepciones de los profesores y los estudiantes sobre las prácticas relacionadas con la enseñanza.

Palabras clave: Participación, aprendizaje en línea, Clases virtuales, Estrategias.

1 Introduction

In recent years, remote learning has become a familiar subject in most educational systems worldwide. As noted by Castelli and Sarvary (2020), enrollment in courses taught remotely “has been on the rise, with a recent surge in response to a global pandemic. While adapting this form of teaching, instructors familiar with traditional face-to-face methods are now met with a new set of challenges” (p. 3565). Not all instructors were ready for an unexpected change in education, and current changes may not have been enough to achieve the correct learning process for English as a second language in terms of student participation. In Costa Rica, the expertise instructors had before the pandemic regarding virtual learning may not have been strong enough to implement this as the only method of instruction. This is suggested by the fact that the transition required extra efforts in order to succeed. For this reason, the learning process has faced a significant number of challenges. One of the most frequently experienced of these is difficulty in achieving interaction within virtual environments, which in turn reduces language achievement. Several scholars discuss factors that negatively impact participation and interaction in remote learning, and the following section aims to review some of those deterrents.

2 Literature Review

2.1. Factors Hindering Participation

Scholars have performed analyses about factors that hinder participation in virtual EFL classes (Chien & Valcke, 2020; Jacobi, 2014; Kaisar & Chowhury, 2020; Méndez & Bautista, 2017; Soojeong, 2013), and most of these agree on the significance of emotional factors in this regard. For instance, Soojeong (2013) and Kaisar and Chowdhury (2020) claim that shyness and low self-esteem are reasons why students lower their participation in class. Students experience feelings of apprehension, discomfort and uncomfortable sensations when they find themselves in online environments, and this feeling prevents them from participating and performing in virtual classes (Soojeong, 2013). Concerning self-esteem, Soojeong (2013) argues that learners first need to have a sense of accomplishment to improve their ability to express themselves and participate in class.

Also related to emotional factors, several authors affirm that the presence of anxiety causes negative reactions toward participating in online classes (Kaisar & Chowdhury, 2020; Méndez & Bautista, 2017; Murphy et al., 2020). According to Kaisar and Chowdhury (2020), this anxiety is caused by a variety of circumstances, such as the isolation and discomfort that virtual environments

can cause in learners as compared to physical classrooms. The authors state that the absence of a teacher makes students feel uncared for, and the absence of classmates results in a lack of interaction that affects the group's performance. Similarly, in Méndez and Bautista's (2017) research, learners reported anxiety about public speaking caused by the lack of classroom community.

Moreover, other authors assert that some factors deterring learners from participating and interacting in class are related to concern about personal appearance or that of their physical location (Castelli & Sarvary, 2020). In this sense, they mention that students report that some of the anxiety caused by online lessons is the feeling of being observed by other classmates. Additionally, the lack of interactive activities and the tediousness of teacher-centered classes often led to unwillingness to participate in virtual English classes (Kaisar & Chowdhury, 2020). In this line, Chien and Valcke (2020) report that students feel restricted during spoken interactions because of difficulties in relation to content topics within the course, and their own attitudes towards the learning activities.

2.2. Similar studies

Many qualitative and quantitative studies have explored different strategies to foster participation and interaction in both virtual and face-to-face learning environments, such as using gamification (Barata et al., 2013), social networks (Ghounane, 2020), peer e-tutoring (Sansone et al., 2018), negotiation (Uztosun et al., 2018), and visualization (Jing, 2017). Key findings from these studies included significant improvements in the participation rate of the groups under study. Their purpose was to compare the data from both gamified and non-gamified years to demonstrate how gamification improves student engagement.

Another attempt to enrich the literature on the topic of promoting participation in virtual lessons was made by Ghounane (2020). The researcher describes how teachers have been forced to cope with new technologies and mix these with language teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The author's purpose was to show that social networks such as Facebook and YouTube are more influential to students' attitudes and perceptions than educational networking platforms. The research was part of a higher education program at a university in Algeria with a total of 98 participants.

Another study on strategies to elicit participation in online environments was developed by Sansone et al. (2018). The main objective of these authors was to promote active participation in online courses by implementing peer e-tutoring during group activities. Results from this study indicated that the strategy implemented promoted substantial active participation in discussions carried out online.

In another study, Uztosun et al. (2018) propose student negotiation as a means to fostering learner engagement and participation in class. Negotiation allows students to choose the activities they would like to do in class. That is, it gives them the opportunity to engage in making classroom-related choices.

Sung-Hee (2017) conducted a study to explore the effects of visualization as a tool to engage students in active participation in online learning communities. This strategy consists of having students visualize their own individual and group online participation in order to make them aware of their participation level. A total of 118 undergraduate students took part in this study. They were enrolled at a university in Korea, and they were divided into two experimental groups and one control group. The findings revealed that the strategy encouraged learners' online participation since they logged into the system more and wrote more original and follow-up posts. It is worth mentioning that despite performing team-based activities, learners were more motivated by levels of individual participation rather than those of the group.

In addition to the previously mentioned studies, there are others that have not necessarily focused on particular strategies to elicit participation in remote learning, but have generated subordinate ideas in this regard. For instance, research has found that feedback plays an important role in fostering participation (Au & Bardakçi, 2020; Jacobi, 2014; Li et al., 2019). On these lines, Au and Bardakçi (2020) carried out a study to compare peer feedback and teacher feedback as ways to enhance learner self-efficacy levels, which is the self-perception of a person's proficiency in the language.

Carrying out discussions is another research-supported strategy to get students to participate collaboratively in remote learning. Sansone et al. (2016) explore the implementation of "role taking" in collaborative discussions as a way to support constructive interaction in blended courses. Likewise, the results shown in Selvi's (2010) research study support the use of discussions in online courses for these purposes. The author specifies that learners nominate freedom of discussion as a motivating factor with respect to participating in collaborative discussions (Selvi, 2010).

The literature also mentions other strategies that promote greater participation and interaction in online environments. Some of these strategies are mentioned very generically; however, they are of practical use because they happen to be specific educational activities that can be concretely put into practice during virtual lessons. For instance, Selvi (2010) suggests the question-answer method, in which the instructor asks direct questions to the students on any topic. These questions can be of any kind, such as probing questions, whether closed- or open-ended, inductive or deductive, or other.

In a similar way, Kaisar and Chowdhury (2020) make a series of recommendations to reduce anxiety in virtual classes, and, consequently, to increase learner participation. These researchers advocate for innovation from the teacher to engage students, group work, the provision of feedback, and occasional consultation with the group about the strategies and tools used in class in order to determine which ones work better for the learners. Ultimately, Ling and Hwang (2018) affirm that using "flipped classrooms" as a strategy makes classes become more active and interactive, since students prepare the lessons themselves, so increasing their participation and sharing of ideas during classes. According to these authors, flipped classrooms are especially effective in increasing learner participation and performance, and facilitating these to "engage in out-of-class learning as well as in-class activities of an English course" (Lin and Hwang, 2018, p. 206).

3 Context

The participants were English beginner students enrolled in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses in San Carlos and their corresponding instructors. The facilitators were all females aged between 25 and 33 years old with more than two years of teaching experience. In the case of the students, a total of 37 agreed to participate in the research; 16 of these were male, and 21 were female. This population ranged from very young teenagers up to middle-aged adults. The occupations they reported varied significantly, from homemakers to retired people, but the majority claimed to be full-time students. Most of these participants were beginning English learners at time the study was undertaken.

4 Methodology for the Activities

Given the need to apply both qualitative and quantitative research instruments to obtain the amount and type of data desired, a mixed research approach was deemed most appropriate. The research team also decided to employ a descriptive research design because of the diverse data collection methods employed. Another reason to implement this design was its descriptive nature when focusing on the strategies that acted as variables influencing participation in online environments. Finally, none of these variables were influenced in any way.

4.1. Data Collection Methods

In order to collect the data, the researchers administered four different instruments, with expert validation conducted for each instrument prior to their application. Eight non-participatory observations of recorded lessons were carried out for three different groups of two different basic English levels. A structured observation sheet (see Appendix A) provided a list of observation criteria for observation, divided into three main aspects: the strategies implemented, the teacher, and the students. The observations took place from the middle of March to the end of June, 2021.

The second instrument used to collect data was a survey completed by the teachers (see Appendix B). To complete this survey, the instructors were given an editable document to fill in with their answers to later send to the research group via email. The survey contained factual questions aimed at compiling personal information, and behavioral questions aimed at collecting information. The last part of the survey featured two open-ended questions for teachers to share other strategies they use to encourage participation.

Once teachers completed the survey, they were asked to participate in a complementary semi-structured interview, the protocol for which is included in Appendix C. The interview included six open-ended questions and was conducted and video-recorded using the Zoom platform. The interview sought to gather information about virtual learning environments, challenges instructors face, and methods implemented to overcome the lack of participation during lessons.

The final instrument was a survey completed by the students (see Appendix D). The survey was completed by all students at the same time during a synchronous session monitored by the researchers.

4.2 Data Analysis Procedures

Given that this research takes up a mixed approach, researchers relied on procedures to analyze both qualitative and quantitative data. For the qualitative data, thematic analysis was used to analyze the information gathered from the observations and the interviews. First, each recorded class was observed by two different members of the research team who then met to compare and discuss the resulting findings. Next, the verbal descriptions obtained from the interviews were transcribed using a transcription website. The data gathered from these two instruments were then manually grouped according to the most recurrent themes found. These themes were identified by using different colors and deductive coding as seen in Appendix E, although a more detailed review of the transcripts and codes could be performed.

In regard to the quantitative part of the research, descriptive statistics procedures were used to analyze the numerical data gathered from the surveys and observations. Google Forms software compiled the results obtained from the surveys. For the remaining data, the research team used Microsoft Excel spreadsheets to perform manual data wrangling. The following section presents the findings and analysis of this per the research question.

5 Conclusions

We are currently living in a new era in which technology and virtuality are taking a pivotal place; not only because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also due to the role technology is playing in today's world. As a consequence, learning and teaching processes have been challenged by technology-related issues, and have had to adapt to the requirements of online educational environments. This study leads to numerous and valuable findings related to the challenges experienced by instructors in the transition to online teaching.

Given the constraints and challenges this transition to virtuality has involved, instructors prefer traditional classrooms over online settings since they have experienced more disadvantages than advantages in the latter. For instance, getting students to participate during virtual lessons turns out to be very difficult. Consequently, one of the most recurrent challenges teachers have to face is related to the lack of participation and interaction in this new way of teaching. This study therefore aimed to identify the different strategies teachers resort to in order to foster learners' participation in online classes.

Most of the strategies mentioned in this study were reported in the previous literature, but a few emerged unexpectedly as part of the research process. The findings provide further evidence and more detailed descriptions of their implementation and effectiveness. Some of the most recurrent strategies used to elicit students' participation shown in all the instruments are gamification, the question-answer method, collaboration, using point systems, flipped-classrooms and personal instructions given to specific students by calling on them by name.

Several of the strategies proposed were combined with each other when actually applied. For instance, many gamification activities unavoidably involve the use of technology because teachers commonly employ predesigned games found online instead of designing them. The use of Zoom breakout rooms is usually combined with collaborative activities, as are discussions. The question-answer method includes questions related to everyday life, aimed at collecting the students' opinions.

Another important conclusion reached in this study is related to the disagreement existing between the opinions that teachers and students have concerning the effectiveness of the strategies when promoting pupils' participation. By acknowledging these differences, instructors can make more sound decisions when determining their teaching practices in virtual EFL classes so that these truly assist facilitators in encouraging students to engage in the class activities.

6 References

- Au, H. Y. C., & Bardakçi, M. (2020). An Analysis of the Effect of Peer and Teacher Feedback on EFL Learners' Oral Performances and Speaking Self-Efficacy Levels. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching*, 7(4), 1453–1468.
- Barata, G., Gama, S., Pires, J., & Gonçalves, D. (October 2013). *Improving Participation and Learning with Gamification* [Paper presentation]. First International Conference on Gamification, New York, NY, United States. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2583008.2583010>
- Castelli, F. & Sarvary, M. (2021). Why Students Do Not Turn on Their Video Cameras during Online Classes and an Equitable and Inclusive Plan to Encourage Them to Do So. *Ecology and Evolution*, 11(8), 3566-3576. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ece3.7123>
- Chien, M. Y., & Valcke, M. (2020). A Study of the Difficulties and Instructional Support Related to Spoken Interaction in an EMI Course for Higher Education Students. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, 10(1), 129–144.
- Ghounane, N. (2020). Moodle or Social Networks: What Alternative Refuge Is Appropriate to Algerian EFL Students to Learn during COVID-19 Pandemic. *Arab World English Journal*, 11(3), 21–41.
- Jacobi, L. (2014). What Motivates Students in the Online Communication Classroom? An Exploration of Self-Determination Theory. *Journals of Educators Online*, 15(2), 1-16. https://www.thejeo.com/archive/archive/2018_152/jacobipdf
- Kaisar, M. T., & Chowdhury, S. Y. (2020). Foreign Language Virtual Classroom: Anxiety Creator or Healer? *English Language Teaching*, 13(11), 130–139. [10.5539/elt.v13n11p130](https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v13n11p130)
- Li, J., Wong, S. C., Yang, X., & Bell, A. (2020). Using Feedback to Promote Student Participation in Online Learning Programs: Evidence from a Quasi-Experimental Study. *Educational Technology Research & Development*, 68(1), 485–510. <https://doi.org.ezproxy.sibdi.ucr.ac.cr/10.1007/s11423-019-09709-9>
- Lin, C., & Hwang, G. (2018). A Learning Analytics Approach to Investigating Factors Affecting EFL Students' Oral Performance in a Flipped Classroom. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, 21(2), 205-219. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26388398>
- Mendez, M., & Bautista, M. (2018) Motivating and Demotivating Factors for Students with Low Emotional Intelligence to Participate in Speaking Activities. *PROFILE Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 19(2) 151-163. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15446/profile.v19n2.60652>

- Sansone, N., Ligorio, M. B., & Buglass, S. L. (2018). Peer e-Tutoring: Effects on Students' Participation and Interaction Style in Online Courses. *Innovations in Education & Teaching International*, 55(1), 13–22. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.sibdi.ucr.ac.cr/10.1080/14703297.2016.1190296>
- Soojeong, L. (2013). Can Speaking Activities of Residents in a Virtual World Make Difference to Their Self-Expression? *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, 16(1), 254–262. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/jeductechsoci.16.1.254>
- Sung-Hee, J. (2017). Using Visualization to Motivate Student Participation in Collaborative Online Learning Environments. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, 20(2), 51–62. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/90002163>
- Selvi, K. (2010). Motivating Factors in Online Courses. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2(2), 819–824. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.03.110>
- Uztosun, M. S., Skinner, N., & Cadorath, J. (2018). An Action Research Study into the Role of Student Negotiation in Enhancing Perceived Student Engagement during English Speaking Classes at University Level in Turkey. *Educational Action Research*, 26(1), 106–126. <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.sibdi.ucr.ac.cr:2048/10.1080/09650792.2016.1270223>

7 Biographies

Jazmin Vindas Carmona

Jazmin is an English professor with seven years of practical experience teaching young people and adults. She is interested in educational research in the pursuit of better conditions and opportunities for the teaching and learning process. She is currently working as an English as a second language teacher, performing functions such as planning lessons and creating didactic materials, as well as preparing and applying tests and other evaluations.

Ardui Flores Calderón

Ardui obtained his bachelor's degree in English Teaching at the Universidad de Costa Rica, and a licentiate degree in the same field at the Universidad Americana. His experience includes teaching English for the Costa Rican Ministry of Public Education, and training at INA (Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje). He currently works for the Tecnológico de Costa Rica. His work is related to tailored output within contextualized situations with effective feedback, taught under a consistently friendly class atmosphere.

Mayra Soza García

Mayra Soza is an English teacher with eight years of experience in teaching English. She has done research on speaking activities and appropriate materials to foster oral participation during virtual EFL lessons. She believes that technology is an essential tool to help teachers facilitate language learning. Mayra currently teaches literature to seventh grade students at a public high school.

Shirley Segura González

An English Professor with twenty-five years of experience teaching primary school children for the MEP, Shirley has also worked as a language teacher for Fundación Tecnológica de Costa Rica for three years, and as a university professor at a private institution for seven years. As a primary school teacher, she's part of the English as a Second Language program developed by the English advisor in Costa Rica's Western Region that creates strategies and provides educational opportunities for the school population.

Christian Vega Moreira

Christian is a self-motivated, progress-driven EFL instructor with an extensive background in this field. He has developed and executed strategies that bring value to all sorts of companies. His work experience has allowed him to strengthen abilities in problem-solving, critical thinking and group management. Organized, detail-oriented, and a capable manager of time, Christian currently works as an instructional designer for a transnational company.

8 Appendices

Appendix A

Observation Sheet

Universidad de Costa Rica
Sistema de Estudio de Posgrado
Escuela de Lenguas Modernas
Master's Program in Teaching English as a Foreign Language
PF-0312 Classroom Research
Research: Eliciting Participation in Online Environments

This instrument aims to gather information about strategies used by English teachers to foster students' participation in virtual lessons.

General Information

INSTITUTION:			
HOST TEACHER:		LENGTH:	
OBSERVATION #		DATE:	
TARGET CONTENT:		LEVEL:	

Aspects to observe:

- **Strategies to elicit participation**

OBSERVATION CRITERIA	Yes	No	Number of times used	Comments
1. Gamification				
2. Social network interaction				
3. Peer-feedback				
4. Point-system				
5. Collaborative work				
6. Interest-based groups				
7. Think-pair-share				
8. Discussions				
9. Flipped classrooms				

10. Question-answer method				
11. Students' opinions				
12. Break out rooms				
13. Questions related to everyday life				
14. Brainstorming				
15. Case studies				
16. Cameras on				

• **Teacher**

OBSERVATION CRITERIA	Yes	No	Comments
1. Encourages students to participate with repeated/recurrent comments.			
2. Asks students' opinions about the strategies implemented in order to have their feedback for future interventions.			
3. Operates the platforms' features in a competent way.			
4. Develops student-centered activities.			
5. Formulates questions in a way that students can perceive their answers are valued.			
6. Promotes collaborative activities.			
7. Develops interactive mediation activities.			

• **Students**

OBSERVATION CRITERIA	Yes	No	Comments
1. Seem encouraged by the strategies implemented by the professor.			
2. Express their satisfaction with the development of the lessons.			

Appendix B

Survey for teachers



UNIVERSIDAD DE
COSTA RICA

SEP Sistema de
Estudios de Posgrado

PPEILE

Programa de Posgrado en
Enseñanza del Inglés
como Lengua Extranjera

Universidad de Costa Rica
Sistema de Estudio de Posgrado
Escuela de Lenguas Modernas
Master's Program in Teaching English as a Foreign Language
PF-0312 Classroom Research

Eliciting Participation in Online Environments

This survey aims to collect data about strategies used by English teachers to elicit participation in online environments. This instrument is part of the evaluation assigned for the course Classroom Research (PF-0312). The information provided here is merely confidential, and it will take you around ten minutes to complete it. We appreciate your help and time invested in answering it.

General Instructions: Please provide your answers based on your experience in remote learning. There are no right or wrong answers.

I Part. Personal information.

Name (optional): _____

Gender: _____ Male

Age (optional): _____

_____ Female

_____ Prefer not to say

_____ Other

Occupation: _____

Months/Years of experience: _____

Professional degree: _____ Bachelor's degree

_____ Licentiate degree

_____ Master's degree

II Part. Teacher-implemented strategies.

Instructions: Based on your experience during virtual English lessons, please indicate whether you have used the following strategies with your students to encourage them to participate in class. If you have used them, please rank their effectiveness on a scale from 1 to 4 where 1 means ‘not encouraging’; 2 means ‘poorly encouraging’; 3 means ‘encouraging’ and 4 means ‘very encouraging’. If you do not know what some of the strategies are about, you can check on the glossary we have provided at the end of this survey.

Strategy	Yes	No	Effectiveness			
Gamification			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Social-network interaction			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Peer-feedback			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Point system			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Collaborative work			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Interest-based groups			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Think-pair-share			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Discussions			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Flipped classrooms			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Question-answer method			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Students' opinions			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Breakout rooms			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Questions related to everyday life			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Brainstorming			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Case studies			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
Cameras on			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>

III Part. Extra strategies.

1. Please, add any other strategy you use to promote participation in virtual environments

2. What are your three most effective strategies for eliciting students' participation in your online lessons?

By submitting this survey, I grant my consent so that my answers are solely used as a means for this investigation as long as my personal information is not publicly disclosed.

Appendix C

Teachers' Interview

Universidad de Costa Rica
Sistema de Estudio de Posgrado
Escuela de Lenguas Modernas
Master's Program in Teaching English as a Foreign Language
PF-0312 Classroom Research

Instructors' Interview: Eliciting participation in online environments

This instrument gathers information about English instructors' perceptions regarding advantages and disadvantages of online environments for eliciting participation.

Instructions: This is a semi-structured interview. The questions will be asked without any specific order and questions can be omitted if pertinent. Also, if at the moment of interviewing a new and unexpected question arises, it will be included, and a note will be attached to these questions later. This interview will be recorded. The expected duration is from 15 to 20 minutes.

Q1. What is your opinion towards the new alternative modalities of education established during the COVID-19 pandemic? Is online learning as effective as face-to-face learning?

Q2. Do you think that there are challenges for teaching in online environments? If so, which challenges have you faced or have you seen others face when teaching virtually?

Q3. What is your perception of students' participation in online settings? Is it higher compared to the face-to-face environment or is it inferior? Why?


Q4. In general, what are some advantages and disadvantages of online environments for eliciting participation?

Q5. In the survey, you mentioned your three most effective strategies for eliciting students' participation, what makes them the most effective?


Q6. I see that you use other strategy/strategies that was/were not listed in the survey. How has/have _____ (strategy/strategies) been effective for eliciting participation?

Thank you for your time, we really appreciate this information you have shared with us.

Appendix D Student survey



UNIVERSIDAD DE
COSTA RICA



SEP Sistema de
Estudios de Posgrado

PPEILE
Programa de Posgrado en
Enseñanza del Inglés
como Lengua Extranjera

Estrategias para Promover la Participación en Clases Virtuales

El propósito de esta encuesta es recopilar la opinión que tienen los estudiantes sobre las estrategias que usan los profesores de inglés para promover la participación en las clases virtuales. La información brindada es meramente confidencial. Completar la encuesta, le tomará aproximadamente 10 minutos. Agradecemos profundamente su colaboración.

Siguiente

Parte I. Información personal

Nombre (opcional)
Tu respuesta _____

Edad
Tu respuesta _____

Género *

Femenino

Masculino

Prefiero no decirlo

Otro: _____

Ocupación: *
Tu respuesta _____

Nivel de inglés: *

Básico

Intermedio

Avanzado

Otro: _____

Atrás **Siguiente**

Appendix E
Interview transcripts

Color	Meaning	Code	Meaning
yellow D	Disadvantages of online learning (D)	S	Strategies
orange A	Advantages of online learning (A)	ES	Extra strategies
light purple EFF.	Effectiveness of online learning (EFF.)		

Color	Strategies (S)	Color	Extra strategies (ES)
light blue	Strategy Discussion	light green	Gaining ss' trust
purple	Question-answer method	Red	Directly stating ss' names
wine	Gamification	"salmon"	Podcast
light orange	Cameras on	blue	Virtual book
fuschia	Extra points	brown	Catchy material
"gold"	Flipped classrooms	dark green	Extra recommendations

ASPECT	Mark
Pause	...
Emphasized word(s) with rising intonation	CAPITALIZED

Beyond Fill-in-the-Blanks: Meaningful Grammar Activities to Support Acquisition and Promote Collaborative Learning

Mark Foster Cormier

Centro Cultural Costarricense Norteamericano, Costa Rica

mcormier@centrocultural.cr

Abstract: Despite the importance of grammar instruction in language teaching, there is a considerable lack of variety in the practice exercises offered by most commercial textbooks and online teaching resources. An overreliance on structure focused fill-in-the-blank and transformation items does not offer sufficient quality input to support acquisition. Therefore, it is essential that teachers develop the ability to design their own grammar practice activities that are more likely to support students' noticing of the relationship between form and meaning and help them view grammar as a communicative resource. In this session, participants will review VanPatten's Processing Instruction model and see how it can be used to create engaging, collaborative tasks that can be adapted to different topics connected with students' interests. Participants will also see how activities using discourse frames can provide scaffolding to support speaking and writing that incorporate target structures.

Keywords: English teaching, grammar, Processing Instruction, discourse

Resumen: A pesar de la importancia de la instrucción de la gramática en la enseñanza de idiomas, existe una considerable falta en la variedad de los ejercicios de práctica ofrecidos en la mayoría de los libros de texto comerciales y en los recursos didácticos en línea. El uso excesivo de ítems con enfoques de completar espacios en blanco y de transformación, no ofrece "input" de suficiente calidad para promover la adquisición. Por consiguiente, es esencial que los docentes desarrollen la capacidad de diseñar sus propias actividades de práctica gramatical más propensas a apoyar a los estudiantes en notar la relación entre estructura y significado y ayudarles a considerar la gramática como un recurso comunicativo. En esta sesión los participantes revisarán el modelo de VanPatten de la instrucción basada en procesamiento y considerarán cómo se puede utilizar para crear tareas atractivas y colaborativas que pueden ser adaptadas a diferentes temas relacionados con los intereses de los alumnos. Los participantes también verán cómo actividades que utilizan los marcos discursivos pueden proveer el andamiaje para apoyar a la expresión oral y escrita incorporando las estructuras estudiadas.

Palabras clave: Enseñanza del inglés, gramática, instrucción basada en procesamiento, discurso

1 Introduction

Grammar is an essential component of any foreign language course and students need ample opportunities to clarify, practice, and produce target structures. Despite its importance, many students find grammar learning to be boring and tedious. This is not surprising given the repetitive fill-in-the-blank style exercises found in most commercial English language teaching textbooks and, more recently, in online resources and games. Besides its detrimental effects on motivation, an overemphasis on mechanical form-focused drills consisting of discrete items with minimal contextualization does little to help students make the necessary form-meaning relationships that support acquisition (Wong & VanPatten, 2008). For this reason, it is important for teachers to develop a repertoire of activity types that can be used to teach and review grammar points so that they can select, adapt, and develop grammar teaching materials and activities that better meet their students' needs and interests and that are in alignment with contemporary theories of language acquisition. At the same time, teachers need to develop their own criteria for thinking critically about the materials they find or create themselves in order to make use of those that are most likely to be effective for their teaching context.

This practice-oriented presentation and accompanying paper highlight two meaning-focused grammar instruction techniques with high potential for student engagement that are in alignment with contemporary theories of second language acquisition (SLA): VanPatten's Processing Instruction model for grammar acquisition through structured-input activities and the incorporation of discourse frames in grammar lessons to support the communicative use of new structures in spoken and written output.

2 Literature Review

The following section reviews relevant theory from the professional literature related to comprehension-based approaches to grammar instruction and the use of discourse frames to introduce and clarify new grammar items as well as to provide scaffolding to promote learners' meaningful production of the new structures. Lastly, a series of principles for language teaching materials development is introduced to provide further justification for the inclusion of comprehension-based approaches and discourse frames activities in grammar instruction.

2.1 Comprehension-Based versus Practice-Based Approaches to Grammar Instruction

Krashen's (1982) monitor model introduced the comprehensible input hypothesis that states that language acquisition results from the successful comprehension of messages in abundant quantities of input over time. This view underscores the power of incidental learning of language forms while learners are processing input with a focus on meaning. Despite the impact of the hypothesis on other areas of language teaching pedagogy, the continued reliance of teachers and materials writers on drills and mechanical practice as the primary means of grammar instruction indicates that there is still much work to be done. Wong and VanPatten (2008) claim that the continued popularity of drills is due to

erroneous beliefs associated with now outdated behaviorist language teaching approaches like Audiolingualism, that view production of language forms as the means to acquisition.

VanPatten's (1993) model of SLA states that linguistic items are acquired as the result of a three-stage process. Learners are exposed to linguistic forms in the input which they must process to result in intake, the "subset of the input that is comprehended and attended to in some way" (p. 436). This in turn is added to the learners' developing language system over time through the psychological processes of accommodation and restructuring. Eventually, language forms once acquired are made available for use in output and in monitoring. The problem with traditional grammar instruction according to VanPatten is that not enough class time and student energy is spent in processing the input to convert it successfully into intake. When teachers explain a new grammar structure and then immediately require learners to produce it through mechanical drills, they are "putting the cart before the horse when it comes to acquisition" (VanPatten, 1993, p. 436).

VanPatten proposes a pedagogical intervention called processing instruction in which learners receive an explanation about the target structure as well as information about first language processing strategies that might have a detrimental impact on their ability to process the structure correctly. They are then asked to complete input processing activities rather than drills or other mechanical practice that require production of the target forms (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). These input processing tasks are also known as structured-input activities because they are designed in a way that requires students to attend to the target forms to comprehend the meaning of the text and complete the task (Ellis, 2011). All structured-input activities require students to respond to the input, not by producing their own samples but by classifying the responses in some way such as ticking a box, marking a picture, agreeing or disagreeing, or indicating the speaker of a statement. Activities can additionally be classified into two varieties according to the required response types. Referential activities are those that have one definite correct answer and affective activities are ones which require a personal response from the learner such as agreement or disagreement or preference. In either case, the task cannot be successfully accomplished without adequate processing of the target forms to comprehend the input (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011).

2.2 Supporting Communicative Use of Grammar Structures

While comprehension of input is a prerequisite for language acquisition, the communicative use of new target structures is also very important. Swain's output hypothesis highlights the role of real time spoken interaction in pushing learners past their current communicative ability levels. She lists three functions for output in SLA including the noticing of gaps in one's communicative ability, the opportunity to test hypotheses about how the language works, and a metalinguistic function in which the learners benefit from being required to consciously focus on how to construct their utterances to convey their intended meaning (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011).

The development of communicative ability in lower levels is challenging because learners lack the linguistic resources to maintain a conversation. The ability to converse

requires control of language at the discourse level, any use of the language beyond a single sentence. Celce-Murcia (2016) argues that lower-level learners can benefit from the presentation of discourse models in the form of short texts provided by the teacher from which sample organizational phrases or discourse frames can be introduced. The texts used by teachers to introduce new language structures to students are in the form of dialogues or monologues that show how the target forms fit within typical organizational patterns. After highlighting the target structures in their communicative context, similar discourse frames can be provided to allow students to communicate their own ideas using the same structures. Celce-Murcia gives the example of a family tree diagram and the following accompanying discourse frame. “This is my family. I am -----. My mother is ---- and my father is -----. My sister is ---- and my brother is ---- (Celce-Murcia, 2016, p. 4).” After the teacher models with her own family information, students can use the frame to tell their partners about their families. This approach provides necessary scaffolding to the learners by offering a supportive framework to organize and communicate their own ideas while incorporating target grammatical structures.

The flexibility of language use in communicative scenarios presents a common challenge for teachers of intermediate level students because learners can often avoid using newly introduced language structures in their speech by rephrasing their output. Teaching an appropriate discourse frame associated with the structure under study can make it more likely that learners will use it appropriately in communicative activities.

2.3 Principles of Materials Development for Grammar Instruction

Grammar teachers are also materials developers since they are responsible for selecting, modifying, and creating learning resources for their lessons, so it is important for them to develop effective strategies for designing these resources. Tomlinson (2010) argues for the importance of taking a principled approach to materials development for language teaching rather than relying on one’s intuitions about what is appropriate or simply copying the design features of commercially successful publications. He outlines 10 criteria for materials development based on principles of language acquisition and teaching. The author of this paper cites how five of Tomlinson’s principles are exemplified through the use of structured-input and discourse frames activities during grammar instruction.

The first principle states that “a prerequisite for language acquisition is that the learners are exposed to a rich, meaningful, and comprehensible input of language in use” (Tomlinson, 2010, p. 87). Comprehension-based approaches to grammar instruction do just that. Structured-input activities are meant to provide learners with more extensive exposure to the target grammar structures in context with the aim of helping them process the structures, identify the form-meaning relationships in the input, and add this knowledge to their developing linguistic system. The use of discourse frames to support meaningful communication also fulfills this principle as conversation with classmates is a legitimate source of input of language in use.

Principle two says that “in order for the learners to maximize their exposure to language in use, they need to be engaged both affectively and cognitively in the language

experience” (Tomlinson, 2010, p. 88). Structured-input tasks have a high potential for affective and cognitive engagement. The content, examples, and response tasks the teacher designs in a structured-input activity can be localized to better reflect topics that students are interested in. Additionally, the need to be cognitively engaged in the language experience is fulfilled through the intellectual effort of attending to the relevant features of the input to complete the task.

The third principle states that “the teacher needs to be able to personalize and localize the materials and to relate them in different ways to the needs, wants, and learning-style preferences of individual learners” (Tomlinson, 2010, pp. 96-97). Teachers know their own students’ needs, likes, personalities, and learning context far better than a commercial materials writer. Therefore, teachers are in a unique position to develop appropriate learning materials that catch their students’ interest. Examples used in structured-input tasks can be contextualized to reflect current events, celebrities, people and places students are familiar with, and other aspects of their reality. The use of discourse frames to encourage communication between lower-level students helps center the topic of discussion on students’ lives, experiences, preferences, and opinions.

Principle four claims that “language learners can benefit from noticing salient features of the input” (Tomlinson, 2010, p. 93). Structured-input tasks are designed to require learners to attend to the grammatical forms present in the input in order to complete the activity. Discourse frames also provide learners with models of how the target grammatical structures can be used to express meaning.

The fifth and final principle of Tomlinson’s framework states that “learners need opportunities to use language to try to achieve communicative purposes” (2010, p. 94). When completed in pairs, a structured-input activity provides the opportunity for communicative language use as learners collaborate and negotiate meaning in order to complete the task. Additionally, discourse frames help lower-level students combine their own ideas with target grammar structures to facilitate communicative interaction.

3 Context

The use of discourse frames and comprehension-based approaches to grammar instruction can be applied at any level. Discourse frames are particularly well suited for students at lower levels who lack the linguistic repertoire needed to carry out conversations. However, they can be used effectively at higher levels as well, and to aid in the development of student writing. Structured-input activities are also well suited for beginners, but upper-level students can also benefit from the processing of more complex grammatical structures.

4 Methodology for the Activities

This section provides an overview of the steps teachers can follow to create and implement their own structured-input and discourse frames activities.

4.1 Designing and Implementing Structured-Input Activities

Nassaji and Fotos (2011) highlight six guidelines that have been proposed to help teachers design structured-input activities. Teachers should, “keep meaning in focus” (p. 28), “present one [linguistic] item at a time” (p. 29), “use oral and written input” (p. 29), “move from individual sentences to connected discourse” (p. 29), “keep learners’ processing strategies in mind” (p. 29), and “have learners do something with the input” (p. 29). The final guideline is worth exploring in more detail. Some form of response is needed to require students to attend to the forms in the input to extract the meaning. This can be as simple as checking a box to indicate whether the sentences refer to the present or the past or to indicate the students’ agreement with the assertions of the statements. Indicating the time of an action in a sentence is an example of a referential activity, one that has a definite correct answer. Responding with an expression of agreement or disagreement is an example of an affective activity which does not have one definite correct answer, but the comprehension of form and meaning must be achieved to successfully respond. The following two excerpts from Nassaji and Fotos (2011) show examples of referential and affective activities respectively.

Instruction: Listen to the following sentences and decide whether they describe an action that was done before or is usually done.

	<i>Now</i>	<i>Before</i>
1. The teacher corrected the essays.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The man cleaned the table.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I wake up at 5 in the morning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The train leaves the station at 8 am.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The writer finished writing the book.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The trees go green in the spring.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(Nassaji & Fotos, 2011, pp. 30-31)

Instruction: Read the following sentences and decide whether you agree with the statement.

	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
1. The book was boring.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I am bored when someone tells a joke.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. People who gossip a lot are very irritating.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I get irritated with small talk.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. It is interesting to talk about yourself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The book was interesting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(Nassaji & Fotos, 2011, p. 32)

Teachers can make their activities more complex by providing an initial text followed by a set of related sentences which students need to respond to. In the following original example students are required to evaluate the truthfulness of the statements regarding Jaimie’s routine and then to decide if the statements are true or false for their own routine.

Instructions: Look at Jaimie's weekly schedule. Then read the sentences below and decide if they are true or false. Then mark which sentences are similar to your own schedule.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
-Wake up at 7 am -Breakfast -University at 10 am -Lunch -Dinner -Bed at 12 am	-Wake up at 11 am -Breakfast -Work at 9 am -No lunch -Dinner -Play with cat -Bed at 1 am.	-Wake up at 11 am. -No breakfast -Yoga class -Work at 9 am. -Lunch -Dinner -Bed at 11:55 pm.	-Wake up at 7:30 am -Breakfast -Swim class -Work at 9 am. -Lunch -Dinner -Bed at 12:30 pm.	-Wake up at 5:30 am. -Breakfast -Gym -Work at 9 am. -Lunch. -Dinner -Bed at 2 am.

Sentences	For Jaimie	For me
1. Jaimie always wakes up early.	T / F	T / F
2. Jaimie usually eats breakfast.	T / F	T / F
3. Jaimie rarely does exercises.	T / F	T / F
4. Jaimie never goes to bed early.	T / F	T / F
5. Jaimie usually has dinner.	T / F	T / F
6. Jaimie sometimes works in the morning.	T / F	T / F

Teachers can complement structured-input activities with communicative extension tasks that have students personalize the topic. Consider the following example in which students need to write their own sentences incorporating the target structure, in this case, adverbs of frequency and daily routine vocabulary. Then they read their sentences to a partner who decides whether they think each statement is true or false. To answer the question, students need to attend to the form and meaning of the input and compare it to what they know or can infer about their partner.

Extension: Now make true and false sentences about your routines using adverbs of frequency and some of the following actions: *go to the gym, watch tv, practice English, eat dessert, wake up early, play video games, read a book*. Read your sentence to your partner and see if they can guess which are not true.

1. _____.
2. _____.
3. _____.
4. _____.
5. _____.

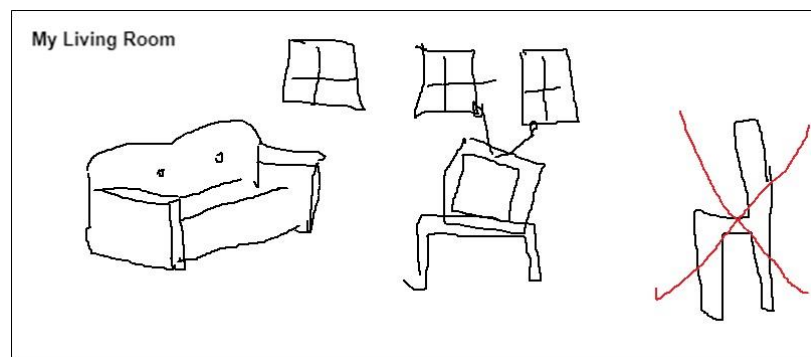
Even without communicative extension activities, structured-input activities are excellent collaborative tasks and students should be encouraged to work in pairs to complete them. The negotiation between the learners as they choose the appropriate responses to the input provides the opportunity for meaningful communication as well as the potential to enhance the processing of the target structures.

4.2 Designing and Implementing Discourse Frame Activities

Teachers can make use of discourse frames as scaffolding to support the communicative use of grammar structures among lower-level students. The frames consist of prototypical language patterns associated with target grammar structures that contain gaps that learners can fill with their own information. Teachers are encouraged to follow a three-stage instructional sequence: introduce, interact, report.

The teacher starts by providing a sample text containing examples of the target language that the teacher reads and makes comprehensible through context clues, gesture, exemplification, drawing, or other techniques. Afterward, the teacher provides a discourse frame by erasing certain words and replacing them with a line to indicate content to be provided by the students. In the original example below, the teacher draws a simple picture to help learners understand the meaning of the forms as she reads the description of her house and living room. Then she provides a discourse frame based on the original text.

Introduce



Sample Text:

This is my house. My house is beautiful. It has three bedrooms. My favorite place in the house is the living room. There is a sofa. There is a television. There are some windows. There aren't any chairs.

Discourse Frame 1:

This is my house. My house is _____. It has _____ bedrooms. My favorite place in the house is _____. There is a/an _____. There is a/an _____. There are some _____s. There aren't any _____s.

Next the teacher introduces and clarifies two interaction prompts which the students can use to elicit a response from their partners. In the example below students are encouraged to ask a general question about their partner's house and then a specific question about their favorite room to trigger the response. They are also encouraged to record their partners' responses by making simple drawings like the one created by the teacher.

Interact

Interaction Prompts: -Tell me about your house. -What's your favorite place in your house?		
Recording Responses: Talk to three classmates. Draw a picture of their houses.		
Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 3

Students can then be placed in new groups to report information they learned from the classmates they interacted with. This provides more opportunities to use the target structures communicatively. It also allows the teacher to make slight modifications to the discourse frame. In the example below the teacher shares a reporting prompt that students can use to elicit information from their new partners. She also provides an updated discourse frame that incorporates pronouns and possessive forms.

Report

Reporting Prompt: Tell us about _____'s house.
Discourse Frame 2: This is _____'s house. His/Her house is _____. It has _____ bedrooms. His/Her favorite place in the house is _____. There is a/an _____. There is a/an _____. There are some _____s. There aren't any _____s.

5 Materials

All materials presented in this practice-oriented session along with a summary of the content and additional resources are available in the following blog post: <https://tesoltrainingdev.blogspot.com/2022/11/english-teaching-congress-iv.html>

6 Conclusions

This practice-oriented presentation and accompanying paper argue that traditional practice-based approaches to grammar instruction have low potential for affective and cognitive engagement among learners and it is claimed that they are also not effective because they forego the necessary opportunities for meaning focused processing of the target forms required for acquisition. Two alternatives to mechanical grammar practice

drills are suggested. Structured-input tasks have learners attend to the target structures in the input to comprehend meaning and provide a task-appropriate response. This increases the chance of input being converted to intake which can be incorporated into the learner's developing language system over time. Texts rather than sentence-level examples can also be used to introduce structures in context. Teachers can draw students' attention to prototypical organizational patterns associated with the structures and provide them with similar patterns in the form of discourse frames which students can use to express their own ideas using the target grammar forms. By adding these two activity types to their repertoire of instructional techniques, teachers can improve the quality of their grammar instruction.

7 References

- Celce-Murcia, M. (2016). The Importance of the Discourse Level in Understanding and Teaching English Grammar. In E. Hinkel (Ed.) *Teaching English Grammar to Speakers of Other Languages*. Routledge.
- Ellis, R. (2010). Second Language Acquisition Research and Language-Teaching Materials. In N. Harwood (Ed.) *English Language Teaching Materials: Theory and Practice* (pp. 33-57). Cambridge University Press.
- Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Pergamon Press. Inc.
- Nassaji, H. & Fotos, S. (2011). *Teaching Grammar in Second Language Classrooms*. Routledge.
- Tomlinson, B. (2010). Principles of Effective Materials Development. In N. Harwood (Ed.) *English Language Teaching Materials: Theory and Practice* (pp. 81-108). Cambridge University Press.
- VanPatten, B. (1993). Grammar Teaching for the Acquisition-Rich Classroom. *Foreign Language Annals* 26(4), 435-450. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.1993.tb01179>.
- Wong, W. & VanPatten, B. (2008). The Evidence is IN: Drills are OUT. *Foreign Language Annals* 36(3), 403-423. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2003.tb02123>.

8 Biography

Mark Foster Cormier

Mark is an English teacher, trainer, and teacher educator. He has a master's in TESOL from Marlboro College and undergraduate degrees in English teaching and Latin American studies from Universidad Americana and Appalachian State University. Mark's interests include teacher development, reflective practice, materials design, and online teaching. He is currently Head of Training and Professional Development at Centro Cultural Costarricense Norteamericano and professor in the school of education at Universidad Latinoamericana de Ciencia y Tecnología.

An Innovative eXeLearning Approach to Develop Social Constructivist Skills in a Multiethnic Literature Course

Cecilia López Morales

Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica, Costa Rica
cecilia.lopez.morales@una.ac.cr

Roberto Arguedas Zúñiga

Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica, Costa Rica
roberto.arguedas.zuniga@una.ac.cr

Abstract

Teaching English as a foreign language in a formal environment goes beyond traditional classroom methodologies and didactic materials. For EFL professors at Universidad Nacional, Coto Campus, the integration of technology into the existing curricula has become a necessity to provide students with more lively classes and inclusive learning environments by using different platforms and digital tools available to promote interaction. This research is aimed at creating a “Learning Object” using the language methodology of social constructivism, to be applied to fourth level students in the Multiethnic Literature course forming part of the English Teaching major. The purpose is to analyze how this learning object designed using the eXeLearning platform contributes to the students’ foreign language learning process, and how technological activities ranging from substitution to redefinition designed as a single unit innovate classroom interaction.

Key words: technology, literature, social constructivism, innovation, eXeLearning

Resumen

La enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera en un ambiente formal va más allá de las metodologías y materiales didácticos tradicionales. Para los académicos de la Universidad Nacional, Campus Coto, la integración de la tecnología en la currícula existente se ha convertido en una necesidad pedagógica que ofrece a los estudiantes clases y ambientes de aprendizaje más dinámicos e inclusivos por medio de las diferentes plataformas y herramientas digitales que promueven la interacción. Esta investigación está enfocada en crear un objeto de aprendizaje cuyo lenguaje metodológico es el constructivismo social. Dicho objeto será aplicado a los estudiantes del curso Literatura Multiétnica de IV nivel de la carrera Bachillerato en la enseñanza del inglés. El propósito es analizar cómo este recurso diseñado en la plataforma eXeLearning contribuye al aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera y como las distintas actividades tecnológicas diseñadas como una sola unidad desde la sustitución hasta la redefinición pueden innovar la interacción de clase.

Palabras claves: tecnología, literatura, constructivismo social, innovación, eXeLearning

1 Introduction

“Each learning activity in the course should be intentional, meaningful, and useful” (Huang et al., 2019, p. 127). Designing a learning object implies helping students to continue developing their abilities in oral and written communication as well as improving their comprehension of the topic by appealing to critical thinking and technology, blended as one. For effective learning object design, analyzing the course of study is the first step to choosing activities that are contextualized and linked to the institution’s educational philosophy, program, objectives, as well as its population, and the roles and learning needs of these. As stated by Kim (2010), for social constructivism, the importance of learning lies in the relationship between culture, context, and society. The construction of knowledge is actually based on the understanding that reality is shaped by human activity at a personal and collective level (Hall, 2007), that interactions and intersubjectivity create meaning and knowledge, and, thus, the social process that is learning.

As Hall (2007) summarized, several features of sociocultural learning design must be contemplated, such as the aim of the course, the learning context, the instructor’s role, students’ roles, orientation, and the activities, which may range from reciprocal teaching, peer collaboration and problem-based instruction to reflective practices, among others. Thus, the validation of the learning object becomes the goal of yielding positive results upon its implementation. That is, the purpose of the learning object is to provide students with technological activities, which are initially individual and later collaborative, and tasks that reinforce students’ socio-cultural understanding of the world through multicultural literature. As explained in the institutional curriculum of the English Teaching major at the Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica (2013), the socio-cultural disciplinary area involves the vision of learning a foreign language within its particular socio-cultural context and understanding the relationship between these. Naturally, the Multiethnic Literature course serves as scaffolding to integrate communication in context, including a focus on interlocutors’ roles, socio-linguistic rules in terms of appropriateness, social rules, and pedagogical, communicative and socio-cultural disciplines to promote language. For this purpose, the principles of social constructivism are used to design activities connected to socio-cultural aspects of language to achieve the relevant objectives.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Overview of the language teaching methodology and the teaching context

“Social constructivism is a highly effective method of teaching that all students can benefit from since collaboration and social interaction are incorporated” (Kalina & Powell, 2009, p. 241). In the foreign language teaching and learning process, students need to access knowledge and learn at their own pace, and that process can be promoted by the togetherness created by social interaction. The language teaching methodology chosen for this teaching context is social constructivism. Social interaction becomes the main strategy to develop knowledge because it is pedagogically suited to the objectives and contents of the Multiethnic Literature course. All of Vygotsky’s research and theories are collectively

involved in social constructivism and language development, such as cognitive dialogue, the zone of proximal development, social interaction, culture, and inner speech.

It is important to understand that the aims of education, especially those in English Language Teaching (ELT), often refer to a mixed-focus curriculum design which encompasses learning as both a product and a process (Finney, 2002). Thus, the integration of technology as part of the changes occurring in the ‘new normal’ in higher education has become imminent and unavoidable. As Rogers (1983) forewarned:

We are, in my view, faced with an entirely new situation in education where the goal of education, if we are to survive, is the facilitation of change and learning. The only man who is educated is the man who has learned how to learn; the man who has learned how to adapt and change; the man who has realized that no knowledge is secure, that only the process of seeking knowledge gives a basis for security. Changingness, a reliance on process rather than upon static knowledge, is the only thing that makes any sense as a goal for education in the modern world. (p. 152)

It has been said that enjoyment is a main goal of extensive reading (Nation, 2014), yet, as Ferrer and Staley (2016) noted, “although the importance of reading today is clearly acknowledged, many students, particularly second language learners, struggle with not only enjoying reading but also excelling at basic literacy” (Ferrer & Staley, 2016, p. 79). Instructors must thus design courses carefully to encourage reading and make this as enjoyable and relevant to learners as possible. This can be assisted, for example, by having students engage in making joint efforts that often result in deeper understanding of literary themes (Ferrer & Staley, 2016). Along similar lines, Parker and Kim (2017) proposed the idea of a multidimensional zone of proximal development (ZPD), stressing that “it is not that a particular individual is in all respects more highly developed than another. Instead, different individuals can be more capable for different tasks at different times and can thus help other learners and themselves” (p. 72). Lastly, Brun-Mercer (2019) proposed three strategies to guide online reading instruction: (1) Focus on the purpose, which addresses choosing search terms, texts, skimming texts, evaluating texts and avoiding distractions; (2) Determine credibility, which emphasizes favoring trustworthy sources of information, distinguishing between fact and opinion, and establishing a sense of reliability; (3) Consolidate information, assuming nonlinear paths, tracking sources and synthesizing information.

2.2 Designing Activities for Multiethnic Literature

Before addressing learning activities, it is important to establish four learning conditions: repetition, retrieval, creative use, and deliberate attention (Nation, 2014). In the same sense, Tung and Chang (2009) also outlined recalling, retrieving, and reflecting on previous experiences to build meaning in and from the text used in literature reading. This approach should then be transposed to the different reading activities. In all cases, a mixture of incidental and deliberate learning should be promoted.

In general terms, as Huang et al. (2009) state, “To implement reading strategy instruction in L2 classes, teachers can raise students’ awareness of strategy use, model the strategies, scaffold learning, guide practices, evaluate, and provide feedback” (p. 23). Pre-activities, activities used during reading, and post-reading activities should all be contemplated. In terms of the latter, Brun-Mercer (2022) claimed that “post-reading activities are designed to develop learners’ linguistic, cognitive, and metacognitive skills [...] by cultivating listening, speaking, and/or writing skills in addition to fostering the development of vocabulary and grammar structures” (p. 4), a specific case-in-point being book creation.

In order to plan activities to promote literacy skills, critical thinking, and language skills, it is important to take several guidelines into consideration. A crucial warning as to what to avoid is the old-school attitude that “teaching which is not directed at the test is irrelevant” (Wilson, 2016, p. 4). This mentality often deterred the implementation of teaching critical thinking, along with its so-called confusing nuances, in the EFL classroom. In contrast, Tung and Chang (2009) concluded that “developing critical thinking is a vital objective in higher education and to achieve this aim, using literature reading to encourage students to think critically is a highly feasible approach” (p. 306).

Another key element to consider is the choice of texts, which can vary according to the themes and genres found in the syllabus, and the right vocabulary level for the learners (Nation, 2014). In the case of the Multiethnic Literature course, these include Native, North American, Precolonial, Colonial, African American, Asian, Mexican and Chicano literature, with texts ranging from myths, legends and historical tales to multiethnic narratives.

In this line, certain texts may resonate with student preferences to become more engaging (Ferrer & Staley, 2016), but those selected to be worked on must also be challenging, triggering students’ imagination without danger of becoming overwhelming or creating a false sense of achievability (Wilson, 2016). Additionally, these texts should lead students to find creative means of using their literacy and language skills, whether through completing related tasks individually or collaboratively, using simpler or more complex mental processes, along with extensive and/or intensive reading (Ferrer & Staley, 2016; Wilson, 2016).

A final element that cannot be forgotten after the completion of class activities is feedback. Ferrer and Staley (2016) remarked that successive implementation and modifications lead to tangible benefits regarding students’ confidence, levels of engagement, and productive output. In fact, they state that “constant tweaking” is the key to the continued success of reading plans, which marks an important point of analysis for the implementation of the learning object proposed in this study.

3 Context

Researchers often refer to purposive sampling as the hallmark of qualitative research (Creswell, 2018; Wa-Mbaleka, 2017), namely the intentional selection of

participants based on criteria that makes them suitable as information-laden participants. This descriptive case study specifically focuses on 14 fourth level (senior) students, six women and eight men, who represent 100% of the students registered in the final level of the major, who are enrolled in the Multiethnic Literature course, and who are undertaking the bachelor's degree in English Teaching at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Regional Branch, Coto Campus. This selection for the validation of the learning object responded to several criteria: (a) The group already had previous knowledge from two other literature courses with regards what is expected to be undertaken; (b) They had already completed their teaching practicum and had been tested as B2 and C1 users, deeming them to have sufficient linguistic skills to engage in critical thinking activities, a proficiency level which has been advised as desirable in order to engage in literature review; (c) The group has previous digital skills suitable for the blended learning methodology proposed in the learning object; (d) The group has been exposed to a balanced mix of learning modalities (in-person and remote teaching) in concordance with the modalities of the activities proposed, thus, meeting the specific criteria that tie into the study's objectives and goals.

This study details the underlying principles of social constructivism that drive the learning object, its theoretical foundation, the language teaching methodology and teaching context, the design and implementation of the study itself, as well as the feedback obtained from the learning object. The objective of the study is to analyze how the learning object designed using the eXeLearning platform contributes to the students' foreign language learning process, and how technological activities ranging from substitution to redefinition designed as a single unit innovate classroom interaction.

4 Methodology of the Activities

4.1 An eXeLearning object for multiethnic literature

A virtual classroom using Zoom and Google Meet platforms served as the technological setting for both synchronous and asynchronous proposals, which students could access by using either their mobile phones or laptops. The teacher, as a guiding participant in the teaching and learning process, provided instructions and ideas to be discussed in the different activities, focusing on creating forums for dialogue and knowledge exchange using technology.

Dhawan (2020) proposed one of the main concerns when dealing with online classes:

Students want two-way interaction which sometimes gets difficult to implement. The learning process cannot reach its full potential until students practice what they learn. Sometimes, online content is all theoretical and does not let students practice and learn effectively. (p. 4)

In this respect, this difficulty was effectively overcome thanks to the technology used and activities carefully selected to avoid these problems in the eXeLearning object created.

Thus, in the first lesson, which is designed to be synchronous, an embedded Padlet created using Padlet.com is used for students to provide their ideas individually, although everyone can see these in real time. The activity therefore allows the whole group to interact and share their previous knowledge related to the content, promoting enjoyment of the learning process, a main goal of extensive reading (Nation, 2014).

Another of the synchronous activities chosen for this learning object is a debate. This particular activity was chosen due to promoting critical thinking while also developing learners' speaking ability (Iman, 2017; Zare & Othman, 2015). Debates engage learners in an active learning process and allow them to build and share knowledge as they plan what to say before expressing their opinion, as well as encouraging them to explore how and why they draw conclusions (Iman, 2017). As Santalla Fernandez and Lasa Álvarez (2020) posited, "special care must be devoted to finding compelling arguments (*inventio*), structuring and arranging them in a logical sequence (*dispositio*), and setting the correct tone to convey the message (*elocutio*)" (p. 56). In short, in debates, students are encouraged to think and talk critically rather than just to mention facts or information that may be obtained through rote memorization. To prepare for the debate, students are given a YouTube video about a specific topic which is later debated using the Chatango platform.

The next synchronous activity employs the eXeLearning iDevice "FPD - Guidelines Students". First, the instructions for the activity are provided by the teacher; then, students use the device "FPD - Free Text" to define each of the set words via groupwork, without being able to employ any other resources than their own knowledge.

After this, using Wheeldecide.com, a roulette was embedded to make a selection from three different tasks shared using an iDevice text in eXeLearning. The students spin the wheel to randomly select a specific context they have to work on, later simulating one of the situations. Asynchronously, using the Genially platform (genial.ly), an interactive map is shown to the students. They can click different areas of this map to display information about authors and literary pieces depending on where they click. After choosing one of these texts, students carry out literary criticism analysis on content from the Pre-Colonial era. To reinforce knowledge and criticism asynchronously, students work on another embedded Padlet in chronological order; they are instructed to produce knowledge by using pictures presented in historical order indicating the year of the events, and containing a short description based on the North American Pre-Colonial period (see Appendix A, Table 1, for a more detailed description of each activity).

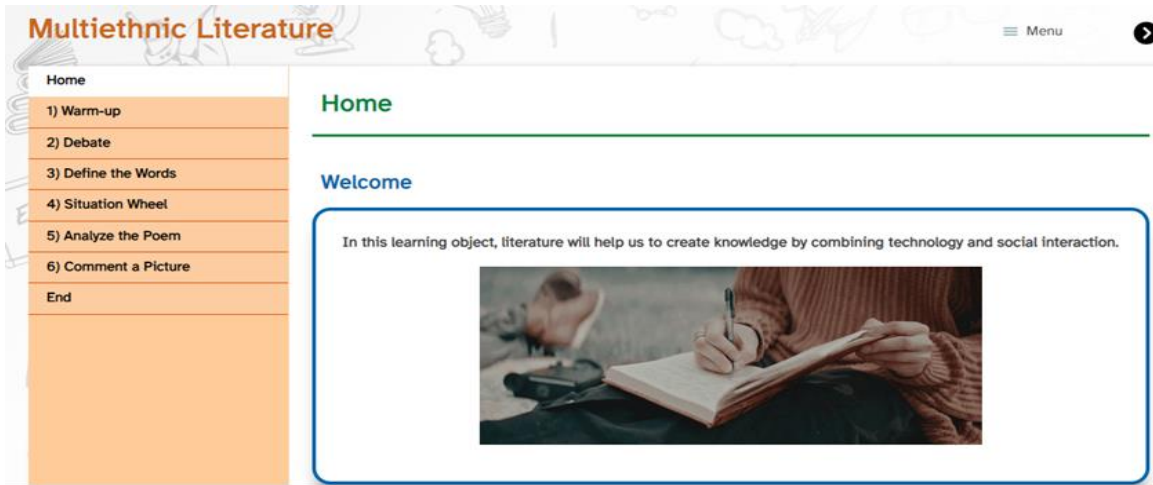
Watson's (2010) warning that "in learning object design, an emphasis on visual attractiveness and high technological impact has seemed to persist while content frequently reflects a lack of clear pedagogical basis for the application of learning objects for online learning" (p. 41) was thus effectively heeded in the creation of this eXeLearning object through the careful selection of appropriate content.

5 Materials

Because it is impossible to adequately visualize the contents of the learning object through text alone, this section displays some illustrations of the design and activities, which can be found at <https://graasp.eu/resources/62c98e3921fb2e211564d955/raw>. Figure 1 illustrates the home page and the layout for the activities on the left-hand side menu.

Figure 1

Home page of the eXeLearning object

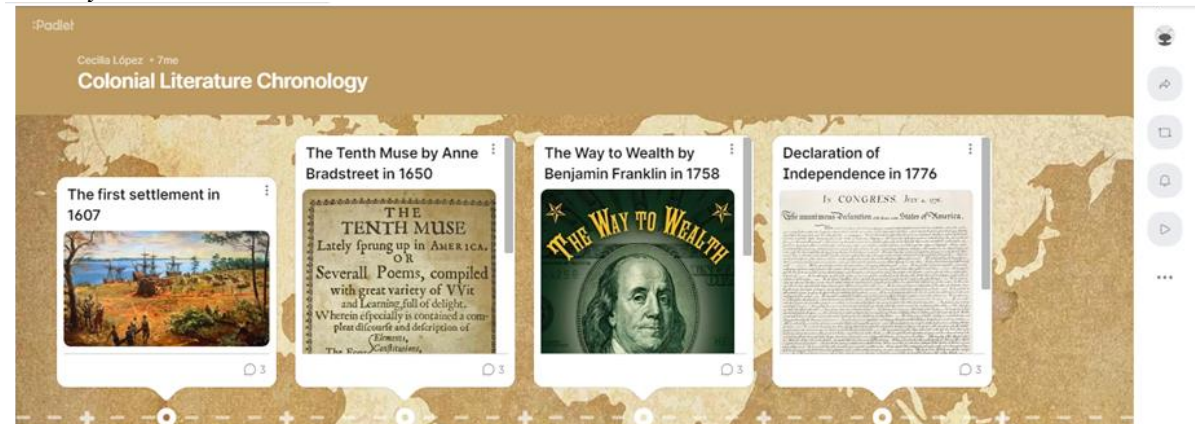


Note: The learning object can be found at the following URL: <https://graasp.eu/resources/62c98e3921fb2e211564d955/raw>

Figure 2 illustrates different periods of North American Literature. Students were asked to select and comment on one of these pictures.

Figure 2

Activity #2 Debate



Note: The learning object can be found at the following URL: <https://graasp.eu/resources/62c98e3921fb2e211564d955/raw>

6 Conclusions

Rather than focusing on generalizations, we addressed particular theoretical and practical contributions regarding the methodology of the learning object (contents and activities) as well as the experience of learners, leaning more towards identifying recurring patterns (Wa-Mbaleka, 2017; Yin, 2018) to reflect on the implementation of the learning object. From this, we seek to propose implications, recommendations and further research opportunities (Wa-Mbaleka, 2017) primarily through narrative means (Creswell, 2018). The implementation of the learning object garnered different perspectives regarding its overall positive contributions and weaknesses. Table 2 illustrates the varied responses provided by the participants (See Appendix B).

This learning object was created to provide students with pedagogical mediation supported by technology. Each of the activities presented employs the language methodology of social constructivism, and is based on the contents of the Multiethnic Literature program. On being surveyed, students reported that the learning object is interactive, innovative, entertaining, and that it promotes groupwork. This was crucial to the aims of the learning object, as enjoyment of extensive reading and the development of literacy skills should go hand-in-hand (Ferrer & Staley, 2016; Nation, 2014). Students also mentioned that the learning object gave them the chance to expand their knowledge, especially regarding literary concepts and topics, an idea that resonates with Vygotsky's ideas as well as those laid out in Parker and Kim's (2017) multidimensional zone of proximal development (ZPD), which stresses that peers may positively influence each other and themselves in the process. Practice using the four skills, as suggested in the iteration of activities by Nation (2014), and use of the first Padlet, which consisted of a brainstorming activity, were mentioned by most of the students. The fact that their classmates' answers can be seen in the activities is reported as a strength of the learning object. According to students, the learning object made them pay more attention to the class and facilitated learning.

Aspects such as the colors used, the breakout rooms, the design itself, the pictures, the topics, the map activity, the diversity of the activities, and clear instructions were also highlighted as positive features of the learning object. One description said that it is an eye-catching presentation of tasks. Students reported that the learning object made them realize how much theoretical and historical knowledge they have with respect to literature. The learning object fostered abundant opportunities for discussion, with students commenting that it contributed to improving their speaking ability, their oral performance, and the development of their critical thinking skills, all representing fundamental aspects of literature reading (Ferrer & Staley, 2016; Huang et al., 2009; Nation, 2014).

The learning object starts with an animated image and a welcome message. All the students participated in the validation of this technological proposal. Unfortunately, some of the students found Activity No. 6, which asked them to find the historical and literary meaning of some pictures, not to have been so interesting or interactive, with them defining it as not very engaging. Some students felt that to complete all tasks successfully, they had to know a lot of history. Suggestions and changes proposed by the group included: the inclusion of more images, more detailed instructions, making sure that all students participate at the same time, and providing more engaging activities, especially those

related to history. Researchers agreed with one of the students, who recommended posting a video with instructions to learn to smoothly navigate through the learning object's activities. Nonetheless, the researchers do believe that if this work had been done in class, students would have received the instructor's instructions and immediate feedback and this initial navigation process would have gone more smoothly. Finally, the activity requiring words to be defined reminded one participant of the exams he had to do in the course, suggesting that the exercises closely resembling testing should be designed differently.

7 References

- Ali, A. M., & Razali, A. B. (2019). A Review of Studies on Cognitive and Metacognitive Reading Strategies in Teaching Reading Comprehension for ESL/EFL Learners. *English Language Teaching*, 12(6), 94-111. <https://www.doi.org/10.5539/elt.v12n6p94>
- Brun-Mercer, N. (2019). Online Reading Strategies for the Classroom. *English Teaching Forum*, 57(4), 1-11. https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/etf_57_4_pg2-11.pdf
- Brun-Mercer, N. (2022). Motivating Student Reading through Post-Reading Book Creation. *English Teaching Forum*, 60(3), 1-13. https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/60_3_pg02-13.pdf
- Creswell, J. (2018). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (6th ed.). Pearson.
- Dhawan, S. (2020). Online Learning: A Panacea in the Time of COVID-19 Crisis. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, 49(1), 5-22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047239520934018>
- Ferrer, E., & Staley, K. (2016). Designing an EFL Reading Program to Promote Literacy Skills, Critical Thinking, and Creativity. *CATESOL Journal*, 28(2), 78-1104. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1119613.pdf>
- Finney, D. (2002). The ELT Curriculum: A Flexible Model for a Changing World. In J. C. Richards & W. A. Rendandya (Ed.s), *Methodology in Language Teaching: An Anthology of Current Practice*, (pp.79-79). Cambridge University Press
- Hall, A. (2007). Vygotsky Goes Online: Learning Design from a Socio-cultural Perspective, *Learning and Socio-cultural Theory: Exploring Modern Vygotskian Perspectives International Workshop 2007*, 1(1), 2007. <https://ro.uow.edu.au/llrg/vol1/iss1/6>
- Holmes, A. G. (2019). Constructivist Learning in University Undergraduate Programmes. Has Constructivism Been Fully Embraced? Is There Clear Evidence That Constructivist Principles Have Been Applied to All Aspects of Contemporary University Undergraduate Study. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 8(1), 7-15.
- Huang, H., Chern, C., & Lin, C. (2009). EFL Learners' Use of Online Reading Strategies and Comprehension of Texts: An Exploratory Study. *Computers & Education*, 52(1), 13-26. <https://www.doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2008.06.003>
- Huang, R., Spector, J. M., & Yang, J. (2019). Designing Learning Activities and Instructional Systems. In *Educational Technology*, (pp. 125-147). Springer, Singapore.

- Iman, J. N. (2017). Debate Instruction in EFL Classroom: Impacts on the Critical Thinking and Speaking Skill. *International Journal of Instruction*, 10(4), 87-108. <https://doi.org/10.12973/iji.2017.1046a>
- Kalina, C., & Powell, K. C. (2009). Cognitive and Social Constructivism: Developing Tools for an Effective Classroom. *Education*, 130(2), 241-250.
- Kim, B. (2010). Social Constructivism. In M. Orey (Ed.), *Emerging Perspectives on Learning, Teaching, and Technology*, (pp. 55-61). Global Text. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Kakali-Bhattacharya/publication/302947319_Piaget_and_cognitive_development/links/60730722a6fdcc5f779c8716/Piaget-and-cognitive-development.pdf
- Nation, P. (2014). Designing Reading Tasks to Maximise Vocabulary Learning. *Applied Research on English Language*, 3(1), <https://doi.org/10.22108/are.2014.15481>
- Park, H.-R., & Kim, D. (2017). English Language Learners' Strategies for Reading Online Texts: Influential Factors and Patterns of Use at Home and in School. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 82, 63-74. <https://www.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2017.01.002>
- Rogers, C. (1983). *Freedom to Learn*. Macmillan.
- Santalla Fernández, A., & Lasa Álvarez, B. (2020). Un argumento a favor de la argumentación: los debates como recurso didáctico en el aula de inglés. DIGILEC: Revista Internacional De Lenguas Y Culturas/International Journal of Languages and Cultures, 6, 54-74. <https://doi.org/10.17979/digilec.2019.6.0.5963>
- Tung, C. A., & Chang, S. Y. (2009). Developing Critical Thinking through Literature Reading. *Feng Chia Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 19(1), 287-317
- Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica. (2013) *Plan de estudios de la carrera Bachillerato en la Enseñanza del Inglés*. Heredia, Costa Rica.
- Watson, J (2010). A Case Study: Developing Learning Objects with an Explicit Learning Design. *Electronic Journal of e-Learning*, 8, 141- 50. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ880098.pdf>
- Walliman, N. (2022). *Research Methods: The Basics* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Wa-Mbaleka, S. (2017). Fostering Quality in Qualitative Research: A List of Practical Strategies. *International Forum*, 20(1), 58-80. <https://journals.aiias.edu/info/article/view/79/70>
- Wilson, K. (2016). Critical Reading, Critical Thinking: Delicate Scaffolding in English for Academic Purposes (EAP). *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 22, 256-265. <https://www.doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2016.10.002>
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (6th ed.). Sage.
- Zare, P., & Othman, M. (2015). Students' Perceptions toward Using Classroom Debate to Develop Critical Thinking and Oral Communication Ability. *Asian Social Science*, 11(9), 158-170.: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ass.v11n9p158>

8. Biography

Cecilia López Morales

Cecilia López Morales holds a master’s degree in Education with a minor in University Teaching from the Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica. Her teaching experience started in 1994 for the MEP, including institutions such as public high schools, the Colegio Humanístico Costarricense and CONED. She has also worked at private universities (Universidad Latina de Costa Rica and Universidad Católica). From 2001 to 2008, she worked at Uceda Institution as a second language for specific purposes teacher. She currently has been working at Universidad Nacional, Coto Campus, for over 10 years, and she is the coordinator of the Team-UNA project, whose aim is to foster social engagement with the community and public high schools in the region. Her research interests include EFL, teaching, assessment, higher education and its impact on society, technology, blended learning and teacher identity.

Roberto Arguedas Zuñiga

Roberto Arguedas Zúñiga holds a master’s degree in Education with a minor in English Language Learning from the Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica. He has worked as a professor at Universidad Nacional, Regional Branch, Coto Campus, for over five years, imparting English Teaching major courses, as well as other language courses for other majors. He has also worked as a professor at the Universidad de Costa Rica, Southern Branch in Golfito. He currently works at Universidad Nacional, Coto Campus, where he acts as the coordinator for the major. His research interests include matters regarding language teaching identity, language ideologies, assessment, technology, and language education.

8 Appendices

Appendix A

Table 1

Description and modality of the activities in the eXeLearning object

Name of the Activity	Tool
Home (S)	<p>The welcome message is introduced by an animated image providing students with the first meaningful insight.</p> <p>The “FPD – instructions” iDevice was used for all instructions and the “activity” iDevice was used for all activities. iDevices are modules used to add content to the pages in eXeLearning. They serve different purposes, including giving instructions and the creation of different activities such as multiple-choice exercises.</p>

<p>Warm-up (S)</p>	<p>In this section, a Padlet was created and the embedded HTML code provided by this website was copied and inserted in eXeLearning using the HTML code function. The three topics covered in this learning object were supplied to the students, who had to brainstorm words and place these under each topic.</p>
<p>Debate (S)</p>	<p>In this activity, an audio was recorded and inserted using the upload audio function to give the topic for the debate to the students. A YouTube video related to the topic was also inserted using the HTML code function. Finally, a Chatango room was created and inserted using HTML code. The debate rules were displayed in a message. One important feature of this platform is that users don't need to sign up, they can use a temporary name which saves time, and makes using the tool more accessible.</p>
<p>Define the words (S)</p>	<p>Students provide their own definitions of words in an activity that was designed by using an embedded HTML code Google form, with images for every single concept. Thanks to Google forms, teachers can keep track of the students' answers after they finish the activity.</p>
<p>Situation wheel (S)</p>	<p>The carousel text effect lends an interactive nature to each of the situations. A wheel from PickerWheel.com was also embedded to reinforce the activity. This provides an HTML code to embed the wheel in the learning object.</p>
<p>Poem Analysis (S)</p>	<p>Genially was the tool used to create an interactive image with interactive windows that open when students click on each of the numbers. Elements such as some authors, pictures, and poems complemented the exercise, and once again the HTML code function was used to embed the interactive image. The SoundCloud player provided a relaxing atmosphere while working on this activity. The HTML code for the SoundCloud player came from the chosen song's sharing options. Students had to analyze the poem and submit their analysis using an embedded Google form.</p>
<p>Comment on a Picture (A)</p>	<p>A Padlet in chronological order, embedded using the HTML code, was used to display some pictures related to important events in colonial literature. Students had the option to open these and comment on them.</p>
<p>End (A)</p>	<p>An animated image was selected and inserted, to match an inspirational phrase allusive to the literature studied.</p>

Note. S= synchronous, A= asynchronous. The learning object can be found in the following URL: <https://graasp.eu/resources/62c98e3921fb2e211564d955/raw>.

Appendix B

Table 2
Student feedback on the eXeLearning object

Responses	Responses
<p>Likes S1: the map and the pictures. S2: explore our knowledge and build up more S3: the diversity of the activities; the process was entertaining S4: I enjoyed the approach; discussing the books we read in detail. S5: the warm-up; Padlet is a collaborative tool that allows us to see the different answers and points of view.</p>	<p>Likes S6: The first Padlet because it was interesting to see my classmates' answers. I feel it was interactive S7: The debate because I can read what my classmates feel and understand, and it helps to enrich my understanding of the information provided S8: I liked the part of the debate; acquiring knowledge and at the same time practicing speaking. S9: The ones in which I had to analyze images and videos. S10: Everything</p>
<p>Positive Contributions S1: reviewing the contents in the Multiethnic Literature course. S2: improve my understanding of literature and appreciate it more, which made studying easier. S3: reviewing the content seen in class. S4: It helped me to pay attention to details. S5: It helped me to remember and put into practice concepts and knowledge acquired throughout the Multiethnic Literature course. In addition, I liked this review because it was very interactive.</p>	<p>Positive Contributions S6: I think it helped me review topics S7: It helps me to establish a better connection with my emotion and understanding based on what we see and the interaction between my classmates and I. S8: This learning object helped me to remember concepts that we learned at the beginning of the course, to practice speaking, to put into practice my critical thinking, to socialize, and to know a new tool through the use of technology in the classroom. S9: I could remember most of the theory. S10: It contributed to my student performance</p>
<p>Strengths S1: map, pictures, content, instructions, and interactivity S2: Development of critical thinking, development of creativity, and a space to share. S3: Interactive, entertaining, ideal for understanding the content using different tools S4: It helped me to develop my opinion and critical thinking. S5: Concise and useful practices, innovative tools, virtual tools, Eye-catching presentation of tasks</p>	<p>Strengths S6: It is better than just reading a book and notes. I liked that it was dynamic. S7: No response S8: I think that through this learning object all the four skills were put into practice. For that reason, I believe it is complete and really helpful. Some strengths are the use of all the four skills, different types of activities, and the use of technology S9: Practical, entertaining, and educational S10: The approach</p>

<p>Weaknesses S1: none S2: Not everyone participates. S3: provide a video on how to use the platform at the beginning of the activities to have a better handling of it and to complete the activities easily. S4: I like the fact it involves interaction; I could not find any weakness. S5: In my case, I had to refresh the page several times as the warm-up did not appear complete.</p>	<p>Weaknesses S6: Students can feel it a little long. S7: The variety of the activities and content. It needs more activities for interaction. S8: None S9: Group work is kind of difficult but maybe it is because we are in vacation time S10: The internet connection</p>
<p>S1: none S2: That not everyone got enrolled into some classes because there are minds that work with the knowledge differently. S3: I liked every part of the tool. S4: I think everything was good and enriching to review what we learned. S5: I liked all parts of the Learning Object; they were interesting and helpful</p>	<p>S6: The last one about the map. I am not that good at analyzing. S7: It did not feel engaging in the parts we were asked about historical information. Moreover, defining words or concepts is something that appears in our exams, which is why that section did not feel engaging S8: I liked all the parts. They were different and meaningful. S9: Most of the parts were interesting but what I liked the most was the one about the debate. S10: The technological devices were good; the issue was related to the internet.</p>

Note. Data obtained from the Google Forms survey administered to the participants.

Engaging and Interactive Digital Materials and Resources for English Teaching

Andrea Vargas Ortiz

Fundación Tecnológica de Costa Rica, Costa Rica

andrea.vargas@fundatec.ac.cr

Abstract: This paper seeks to emphasize the importance of materials and resources and their creation for English teaching to engage students in the learning process in a fun and relaxed way that achieves the objective of building confidence in the use of the English language. It considers the importance of including digital resources created for the specific needs of the class, and how to develop and design these in an easy way, showing how to create boards, games, and interactive materials that will allow you to get your students engaged in class, to interact and to build the language by using it with a purpose. A further benefit lies in the creation of an environment that will ease fear of judgement, to build a strong, confident foundation for language development.

Keywords: Engage, interactive learning, creativity, material, digital resources.

Resumen: Importancia y creación de materiales y recursos para la enseñanza del inglés con el fin de lograr que los estudiantes se comprometan con su proceso de aprendizaje de manera divertida y relajada, construyendo confianza en el uso del idioma inglés. Aprender acerca de la importancia de incluir recursos digitales creados para las necesidades específicas de la clase y cómo diseñarlos y desarrollarlos de manera fácil. Creación de pizarras, juegos de mesa, juegos y materiales que le ayudarán a lograr que sus estudiantes se comprometan en el proceso de clase, que interactúen y construyan el lenguaje a través del uso, con un propósito comunicativo, bajo un ambiente de juego creado con el fin de aplacar los miedos a ser juzgados, permitiendo construir bases fuertes y sin miedo al lenguaje.

Palabras clave: Compromiso, aprendizaje interactivo, creatividad, material recursos digitales.

1 Introduction

Nowadays, technology must be present in class, even when we are face to face. This not only makes the learning process more attractive to students, but it can also relieve and reduce teachers' stress when creating materials, which can be modified and re-used, and are not damaged by excessive or incorrect use made of them by the students.

Technology can allow students to explore beyond physical limits, causing them to forget the fact that they are "learning" as they focus on tasks and objectives. Learning thus becomes just part of the fun and the process of having new experiences. This applies not only to kids, but, believe it or not, also to grown-ups.

The objectives of this workshop are to show teachers the importance and benefits for students of using digital resources in class, as well as to demonstrate how to create and adapt them to their classroom needs.

2 Context

The resources and material creation proposals in this workshop are suitable for any linguistic level as well as students of any age. These resources and materials are mainly focused on language teaching, however, they could be adapted to any other needs, subjects, and topics. The linguistic abilities worked upon through the resources created are mainly communicative, but can be adapted to exercise other abilities.

3 Workshop Objectives

- To show teachers the importance and benefits for students of using digital resources in class.
- To demonstrate how to create digital resources and adapt these to classroom needs.

4 Activities and Time

Time	Content	Material
6:20 to 6:25	Presenter's self-introduction	
6:25 to 6:30	Use of Mentimeter to create word actively answering the question: Why are resources important in class?	Electronic device https://www.mentimeter.com/ www.menti.com
6:30 to 6:35	Show a picture of a brain on screen and ask teachers to use annotation tool to recognize where learning takes place.	Electronic device
6:35 to 6:40	Explanation of how, according to neuroscience, emotions and physical activity influence learning.	Electronic device

6:40 to 6:45	Short Neurolinguistic Programming simple physical exercise demonstration and explanation.	
6:45 to 6:50	Explanation of the way class structure and timing, via alternating activity types in the right order, small group work, and changing groups, can help boost the interest and engagement of students in class, along with the theory of attention spans.	
6:50 to 6:55	Question to answer on Zoom chat: What problems do we have when making resources to work in class?	
6:55 to 7:00	Show different resources created and adapted by the presenter, as well as two main pages that will be used for the workshop. Also show comments from students and former students on successes achieved.	
7:00 to 7:05	Show how to use the first tool: WordWall.	Electronic device. Access to www.WordWall.net
7:05 to 7:15	Work a real-time Word Wall activity for teachers to follow step by step.	Work a Pac-man quiz.
7:15 to 7:20	Divide the group into pairs for each teacher to show another teacher the WordWall Activity created.	
7:20 to 7:30	BREAK	
7:30 to 7:40	Show how to use the second tool: Genially	Electronic device. Access to www.genial.ly
7:40 to 7:45	Work a real time Genially template for teachers to follow step by step.	Work a Quiz template
7:45 to 7:50	Divide the group into pairs for each teacher to show to another teacher the Genially Activity created.	
7:50 to 8:10	Fill in a real-time Genially blank presentation for teachers to follow up on by creating their own activity adapted to their classroom needs.	Fill in a blank Genially.
8:10 to 8:15	Divide the group into pairs for each teacher to show another teacher the Genially Activity created or advances made so far.	
8:15 to 8:25	Additional tips and tricks for teachers to use in their creations.	

8:25 to 8:30	Questions & Answers and contact information for further assistance.	
--------------	---	--

5 Materials

Participants **must** have an account already created on the following websites, ready to be used during the workshop:

- www.WordWall.net
- www.genial.ly

After the workshop, the teachers can visit the genially tutorial page created for them through a link sent at the end of the workshop.

6 Educational Implications

Digital resources are important for use in both virtual and face-to-face classes. However, the benefits of these may vary or be counterproductive if the teacher does not balance the activities correctly with the learning process.

Attention span, methodology and emotions play a big part in the learning process, and balancing activities and adapting them correctly can mean the difference between an enriching learning process and a meaningless class. Given the fact that all students, regardless of age, can engage in activities and games that challenge their knowledge and abilities while promoting fun peer interaction, knowing how to create engaging activities properly nowadays, and how to adapt these to a particular class is a must-have skill for teachers in general.

Though activities and games used to require a significant amount of time to be created, this can now be achieved in a more effective and less time-consuming way using digital platforms and services. Furthermore, digital resources can be created once and then be reused or simply readapted according to the group and class. As any learning process is definitely better for the learners when it makes them act, interact and engage with the tasks, the implementation of resources is the way to improve and activate the learning experience in a physical-mental connection, taking students beyond memorization to actually acquiring and developing meaningful and long-lasting knowledge through experiences.

Limitations to the usage of these resources could mainly be lack of the availability of technology in areas where students do not have their own devices or where the educational institution lacks electronic devices to be used. However, even when it comes to just one available device, teachers can adapt their resources in a way that could have all students interact.

Another enriching point of the workshop is the technique of using activities not only with an objective but knowing how to alternate these according to the students' attention spans. This could benefit teachers in many ways, as they will not only learn about

this, but will also experience it during the workshop, to refresh their mindset on how to organize their classes in the future to be more productive and entertaining for their students.

Creating digital resources goes beyond choosing a template, handing out worksheets, or playing games simply to have fun. Digital resources, and resources in general, used in the correct order and with the right objective can make the difference in our learners' knowledge acquisition.

7 Biography

Andrea Vargas Ortiz

Andrea Vargas has a BA degree in English teaching, a master's degree in teaching and is currently taking her master's degree in graphic design. Her fields of interest include art, science and neuroscience, which has led her to attend online webinars and courses about these topics to enrich her English lessons.

Language Elicitation in Virtual Learning Environments

Esteban Andrés Fuentes Mora

Fundación Tecnológica de Costa Rica, Costa Rica
esteban930@hotmail.es

Abstract: Language elicitation, seen as a tool for language acquisition, is one of the most powerful tools for creating meaningful learning environments in all modalities (whether face-to-face or virtual learning). As a result of the recent dire world situation, the classroom has moved from the physical to the virtual universe where teachers have encountered substantial challenges in translating what they were used to doing to a new modality. Therefore, this interactive workshop aims to help teachers with some theoretical reminders of what elicitation is, how it is approached at FUNDATEC, and to give teachers the space to create a learning lesson plan with activities based on content they are currently teaching/plan to teach.

Keywords: language elicitation, language acquisition, virtual learning, learning strategies, meaningful learning

Resumen: La elicitación del lenguaje, vista como una herramienta para la adquisición del lenguaje, es una de las herramientas más poderosas para tener entornos de aprendizaje significativos en todas las modalidades (aprendizaje presencial o virtual). Como resultado de las terribles situaciones mundiales recientes, el aula se ha trasladado del universo físico al virtual donde los maestros han encontrado desafíos sustanciales para traducir lo que estaban acostumbrados a hacer a otra manera. Por lo tanto, este taller interactivo tiene como objetivo ayudar a los docentes con algunos recordatorios teóricos de lo que es elicitación, cómo se aborda en FUNDATEC y brindar a los docentes el espacio para crear un plan de lecciones de aprendizaje con actividades basadas en un tema específico que están enseñando actualmente/enseñarán.

Palabras clave: elicitación de lenguaje, adquisición de lenguaje, aprendizaje virtual, estrategias de aprendizaje, aprendizaje significativo

1 Introduction

Learning has faced important challenges all over the world as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw learning institutions sent home along with everyone else and having to maintain classes through computers, cellphones, tablets, and other technological devices, adding more uncertainty to this new reality. In the face of this, teachers have had to somehow get by, playing their cards with more enthusiasm than ever to accomplish the desired levels of student learning. As a result of this period of history, so much has changed in the classroom, forcing teachers all over the world to find new strategies, turning to those most appropriate to virtual learning environments. In this context, one of the topics teachers most definitely need to be informed about is language elicitation to achieve meaningful learning through a screen.

Language elicitation (or teaching inductively) is defined as the moment:

when learners **WORK OUT THE RULE** (guided discovery) for themselves by tapping into the grammar knowledge they already have buried in their mind. They do not learn grammar explicitly—it's similar to the way that a native speaker can use grammar correctly but cannot explain why a sentence is grammatical or not. (Walter, p.2)

With respect to this concept of language elicitation, the four main research questions to consider are:

- 1) To what extent can elicitation be fostered in virtual environments for meaningful learning?
- 2) How is second language acquisition improved through tasks that draw on elicitation?
- 3) To what extent is elicitation possible when teaching beginners?
- 4) How can elicitation be achieved through virtual learning tools?

As the only hypothesis of this research, it is expected that elicitation needs a few accommodations when being used in e-learning compared to being used in face-to-face modalities. What varies in this case would be the channel through which students and teachers receive, create, analyze, and work on information. Elements such as students' responsiveness, attention spans, and anxiety levels could be affected negatively when working via virtual classes. As a result, the proposal is that these elements should be accommodated for in order to achieve effective and significant elicitation processes.

2 Context

Regarding students' linguistic level, the workshop is open to any level of language acquisition. Activities that include elicitation need to be based on students' previous information and efficient schema activation for its successful completion. Students' ages can range from those of early learning stages up to and including adulthood, and the program/course modality is mostly related to virtual environments. However, with teaching

expertise, instructors will be able to adapt what is presented/created in the workshop to the face-to-face modality.

The linguistic abilities dealt with in the workshop are related to students' self-agency, independent learning processes, meaningful communication, inquiry making, and reflection on information. Elicitation opens the door to many other skills, but those previously mentioned make up the focus for this workshop.

3 Workshop Objectives

As mentioned, this workshop follows the SMART technique (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) in setting its goals. Those goals are:

- 1) To raise awareness about the impact of elicitation on students' performance during a school term.
- 2) To open a creative space in which teachers design a lesson plan that includes elicitation in their activities to teach a specific class.
- 3) To empower teachers to use elicitation in their everyday classes for a school term.

It is important to mention that the workshop's objectives can only be reached through collaboration and feedback generated with other attendees. Collaboration and teamwork are essential for enriching the product and for ensuring its quality.

4 Activities and Time

This interactive workshop is made up of four stages: a theoretical explanation, production, peer work, and a conclusion (reflection). Firstly, the workshop will be introduced with some theoretical reminders on what language elicitation is (in any case, if a teacher does not know what this is or how it works, he/she will be able to attain the information needed to participate in the event while having their curiosity aroused about the topic itself). This explanation will be made using the organization's PowerPoint template to present the content. Although this is a "master class" type of explanation, the presenter will include questions, some trivia, and some ice breakers based on the topic of discussion to make it more appealing. The presenter will not be the only source of information, as attendees will briefly share their knowledge and experiences. This is a 30-minute segment.

After this master segment, attendees will work individually for 40 minutes to create a lesson plan that is based on language elicitation for their next lesson plan period (if they are currently working). If attendees do not currently teach, they could create the lesson plan for further reference in future teaching endeavors. The product will follow each person's lesson plan template. After this second segment, teachers will be put into groups to share their work (each person has 5 minutes to share, so everyone has the chance to explain their work), and everyone gets comments and feedback on what they just heard about language elicitation. Since Zoom only allows you to have up to 50 breakout rooms in a virtual

session, the expectation is that there will not be more than 200 attendees in this workshop, so there can be 50 breakout rooms of 4 people each. If attendance surpasses this amount, the sharing and feedback segment will be done in writing using a Google Drive file, in which everyone from the sub-group will be able to add comments and feedback on their group members' products. This third section will take 30 minutes.

For the last segment, attendees are expected to share general comments and opinions to create a collective process of insight generation based on what attendees just did, what they understood/did not understand, and how they plan to incorporate language elicitation in their teaching (if they consider doing so). This segment will take 20 minutes. The importance of this concluding segment is that attendees get to have a conscious, collective reflection process in which new goals are set, and people can construct and deconstruct the way they have been working with their students. The idea is to get new inspiration for teaching, and the soul of this workshop is to build knowledge as a professional community, so everyone has the chance to leave with more questions than answers, so as to start exploring new ways to tackle language acquisition.

5 Educational Implications

The relevance of this paper lies in the need to shed light on elicitation as one of the key elements language instructors can use for making language acquisition meaningful. It is indeed necessary to reflect on what has happened with the forced change to adapt the physical classroom into a virtual one. This sudden change has created many challenges for teachers and students all over the world who were doing the best they could to achieve significant performance levels in class. By bringing elicitation into virtual learning environments, teachers will be able to return to basics, but this time, in a way that draws these techniques into the digital universe.

One of the limitations of this work is the lack of updated information on the topic of elicitation in virtual modalities. Little has been published and researched on this during and after the pandemic, so a recent theoretical framework is absolutely required. However, it is important to know that elicitation, as historically established, is and will remain the same at core. Nevertheless, as the world keeps on changing, teachers need to be equipped with new ways to tackle core components of language acquisition to be able to respond eloquently to new challenges.

6 References

Walter, C. (2015). *Teaching Grammar Inductively*. British Council.

7 Biography

Esteban Andrés Fuentes Mora

Esteban completed his bachelor's degree in English teaching at UCR and his master's degree on management and assessment of English programs at ULACIT. He has 11 years of experience in the field of English teaching. He is interested in the impact of digital tools on learning, the relevance of feedback, the way rapport is built and how it affects learning, and elements related to assessment. He is currently working at FUNDATEC as a full-time language teacher.

Pedagogical Mediation and ICT Tools: The How-to and When-to

Cindy Rodríguez Soto

Universidad Técnica Nacional, Universidad de Costa Rica, Costa Rica

crodriguezso@utn.ac.cr

cindy.rodriguez_s@ucr.ac.cr

Abstract: This workshop intends to accompany educators in the process of reflection on and the design of learning spaces that use Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools only when the educational context truly requires it. It aims for the implementation of ICT tools with a clear pedagogical intention, based not only on learning outcomes and contents, but also on the learners and the educational context. The workshop encourages teachers to rethink whether the tools used serve learning needs and not the opposite. Finally, participants are invited to look at five appropriate moments to teach using technology for learning and knowledge (TLK), and not just as a requirement.

Keywords: ICT, TLK, pedagogical mediation, learning strategies

Resumen: El siguiente taller tiene la intención de acompañar a las personas docentes en el proceso de reflexión y diseño de espacios formativos que utilicen herramientas de tecnología de información y comunicación (TIC) solamente cuando el contexto educativo lo requiera y con clara intencionalidad pedagógica, basado no solo en los objetivos y contenidos de aprendizaje, si no en las personas aprendientes y en la realidad educativa. Se invita a repensar si los recursos vienen a servir al aprendizaje o lo contrario. Finalmente, se acompaña a la persona participante a mirar momentos para la mediación del aprendizaje utilizando la tecnología como aprendizaje y para el conocimiento (TAC), y no como una obligatoriedad.

Palabras clave: TIC, TAC, mediación pedagógica, estrategia de aprendizaje

1 Introduction

This interactive workshop was developed with the intention of redirecting educators' attention to the design of classes based on the pedagogical context and not on the use of ICT tools. This was chosen given the reality that educators have been bombarded with the idea that ICT tools provide quality and meaningful education, which is not true. The hypotheses addressed in this workshop include: First, ICT tools should not be mandatory, but instead should be used to serve learning needs, and not the opposite; Second, it cannot be assumed that students know, like, or want to use ICT tools in their learning process; and third, the sole presence of ICT tools does not guarantee quality education. Thus, the main questions answered during this session are: Why and when should I use ICT tools to facilitate a class? And how can I teach a class using ICT tools?

2 Context

This workshop was addressed to educators teaching English as a Foreign Language in Costa Rica, from levels going from K-12 up to university.

3 Workshop Objectives

By the end of the workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Analyze some of myths behind the use of ICT tools in education in order to consider how this applies in their context.
2. Discuss why and when ICT could be used in a way that maximizes its effectiveness for learning.
3. Rationalize the five moments approach to use TKL in their specific context.

4 Activities and Timing

4.1 Opening

4.1.1 Participant experiences

This section is meant for participants to share their experiences when using technological tools. Some of the questions that are asked include:

- What tools have you used?
- Have you felt forced to use ICT tools?
- Talk about the use of ICT tools before and after the pandemic.

4.1.2 Interaction

During the opening, interactions will be performed through a quick brain storming session using a word cloud in Mentimeter (www.Mentimeter.com). After this, a brief subgroup discussion will take place, and finally a plenary session will be held to exchange experiences.

4.2 Part I: The Myths

This second part aims at debunking some myths around the use of ICT tools in education:

- Myth 1: Teachers must use Information Communication Technology tools.
- Myth 2: All students are tech savvy.
- Myth 3: ICT tools motivate students.

4.2.1 Interaction

This is managed through hand raising and the spontaneous participation of the participants.

4.3 Part II: Why to, When to

Three main concepts are introduced: Constructive Alignment (Biggs, 2012), Pedagogical Strategies (Tobón, 2006), and Technology for Learning and Knowledge (TLK) as an approach to pedagogical design based on learning outcomes and responding to the educational context (Avendaño et al., 2022).

4.4 Part III: The Use of TLK

This last section accompanies participants in the process of reflection on the selection of tools with a purpose and the actual educational approach to be taken before class, during the class, and after the class to best serve learning and learners.

4.4.1 Interaction

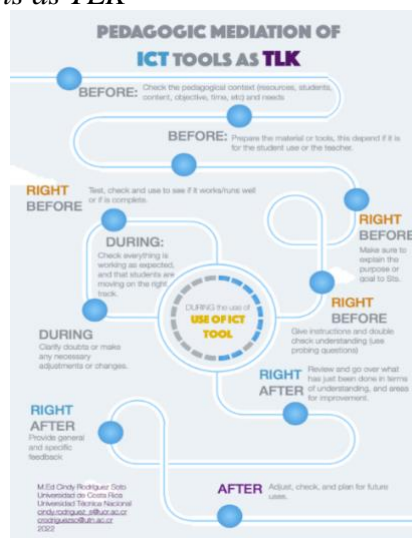
Participants will be asked to design a class they have previously taught using a tool, but reflecting on and employing the 5 moments presented: Before, Right Before, During, After, and Right After. These moments were inspired by a workshop received at the TESOL course taught at Mary Scholl's TESOL Learning Center in 2013.

5 Materials

To support participants during the analysis of the five moments, the following PDF was used:

Figure 1

Educational Use of ICT Tools as TLK



Note: This infographic was produced to show the path through the five moments to use ICT tools as TLK during the learning process. Created by the author (2022)

6 Educational Implications

ICT tools should not be mandatory, they should serve learning needs and not the other way round. Understanding this has deep implications to class design. Students, learning outcomes, content and the pedagogical context should guide the reflection and design process. Below are some final analyses and implications of each of the points developed during this workshop.

6.1 The Myths

These myths are out there through word of mouth or in educational policies. Analyzing our practices around these may bring clarity to when and why we use ICT tools.

6.1.1 Myth 1: Teachers must use Information Communication Technology tools.

This is a myth you have probably heard and even believed in. Who can affirm such a thing? Certainly, policies and initiatives exist encouraging teachers to use ICT tools, which is the case in Costa Rica via the Ministry of Education and its policy on information technologies in education (MEP, 2020). Nonetheless, these should be seen as efforts to encourage the use of ICT, but not an obligation for educators.

ICT tools have been used to improve learning, to encourage students, to facilitate the systematization of learning, and even to assess students. However, this does not mean that if ICT tools are not present, learning will not take place, nor does it mean that their mere application guarantees learning and appropriate usage.

6.1.2 Myth 2: Students are tech savvy

This is a common myth based on the generation gap and the fact that students use cellphones every day, often going online to use different social media apps. However, students need instruction, mediation, and guidance. It cannot be assumed that they know how to use an app intuitively just because it seems easy to do so and because they already have smartphones. Students may know how to use a lot of apps, devices and media, but that does not mean that they intuitively use these for educational purposes (Çoban et al., 2022; Wastiau et al., 2013).

6.1.3 Myth 3: ICT tools motivate students

ICT tools help to promote high-quality courses by increasing student motivation, connecting learners to a variety of knowledge sources, supporting active in-class and out-of-class learning settings, and

allowing instructors to devote more time to facilitation. (Essuman et al., 2022)

This is an affirmation that can be often found in education-related papers. It sounds logical but it is not necessarily true. Why? Because quality in education can be reached through a wide variety of elements, and the sole presence of ICT does not imply the existence of quality (Wastiau et al., 2013). Student motivation, active classes and teacher facilitation do not rely solely on the presence/use of ICT tools, but on the actual educational approach and design of a class that serves the context, and not vice versa. Student motivation cannot be achieved through the application of ICT tools, but instead, the application and use of context-based class design.

7 Why to Use and When to Use Technology

From a pedagogical point of view, in this proposal, ICT tools should be used in education with one aim: to improve learning. So, does this leave fun and interactivity aside? No. The sole reason why ICT tools should be used in education is for educational purposes. If it is used to create a fun environment to practice something based on educational outcomes while taking into account the context and the students, then can it be stated to have a good, intentional educational purpose. So, why should educators use ICT tools? To encourage learning, with the wide range of uses this implies.

There is a new concept which is translated from Spanish sources as Technology for Learning and Knowledge, TLK (Gomez, 2022; Torrado, 2021). This concept addresses the main problem of ICT tools as mentioned in this paper. ICT was not necessarily created for education, but when intentionally, purposefully used for education and learning, it takes on a new form, merging with the purpose of education, and weaving itself into the educational design and the decision-making process. This must be then taken into account as part of the reflections and decisions made by the educator to meet the class objectives and to serve the educational context and the students' needs. So, why use ICT tools in class? When this is truly needed.

7.1 When to Use ICT in Class

The ICT applied as TLK should respond to the educational context, not the other way around. From a strategic educational point of view (Tobón, 2006), educators should analyze needs, and then design the class using ICT as TLK with intentionality, keeping goals and students in mind. There is an important concept that must be introduced as a means to analyze and then define the “when to” of using ICT tools, coined by John Biggs (2014): constructive alignment. This concept has to do with the idea that learning outcomes, class experiences, student actions, and assessment should all be aligned. This implies thorough reflection by the educator before learning takes place, so that the actions undertaken by the students are coherent with the outcomes and the assessment they will do in order to evaluate and review their own learning. With this in mind, TLK should come into action way before the class, being purposefully selected in accordance with the context (resources, time, students, etc.) so as to serve learning.

7.2 How to use ICT in Class

After going over the ideas, perspectives, and concepts of TLK in cases in which ICT tools serve the learner, when truly necessary and with an intentional design, then educators can implement their use in the classroom. How? This should be done in 5 “moments”. Notice the word selected is moments and not steps. These moments are to be cultivated by the educator, with students having an active role in the moments involving the actual class (whether on-line or face-to-face). The intention of these moments is for the educator to work through a process of reflection, intention and design, followed by a process focused on action in which the learner and learning come in to play, and finally, a moment of reflection and planning for the future. Each moment is never the same, shifting and changing depending on the context, but should always be guided by two major factors: the learner and the learning outcomes.

- I. **Before:** This moment may take place weeks or days before the actual use of the tools. This is when educators consider learning outcomes, time, content, resources, and the students, as well as any other elements relevant to the pedagogical context. It is a moment of planning, and a moment to consider class design. “Before” is when educators decide if a tool may be useful or fulfill a valuable purpose, which is to say, if it is actually needed for learning. This marks an important time to be openminded in the search for new tools, consulting with colleagues, checking publications or just searching online as part of the intentional decision-making process.
- II. **Right Before:** This happens just before the actual use of the tool (whether used synchronously or asynchronously, online or face-to-face). The “right before” moment has three main purposes: first, to check that everything is working and running properly (for example, if internet connectivity is available and whether the required devices/apps are working); second, to explain the purpose of the activity (this may include explaining why such tools are going to be used); and third, to give instructions and guide students into a full understanding of how to use the tools and what is expected of them. This may sound obvious, but instructions need to be carefully planned, without assuming they will be transparent.
- III. **During:** This moment takes place when the tools are actually in use. This can be synchronous or asynchronous, on-line or face-to-face. Here the educator is required to check understanding, activity development, and whether outcomes are going as expected. Students play their most active role in using the tool. For example, if students are using a video forum, teachers can check if students’ participation is as expected, and whether interactions are happening as intended (in the form of replies and comments). This moment can also imply ongoing feedback to make the most out of the activity. Feedback can be given individually or to the group. Having the active presence of the educator in this moment may be encouraging to the students.

- IV. **Right after:** This moment happens the moment the activity is over. It is an essential moment for learning. Here students are as active as during the use of the ICT, but now they discuss and reflect on the outcomes, the difficulties faced and the advantages of using the tool for their learning. The educator plays a key role in guiding the students through this stage, not only with questions, but with activities that allow them to go back and check their performance or process when using the tools. Ideally, this moment is planned and designed to occur within class time, with the purpose of extending the process of learning and student awareness. Metacognition may be useful as a means to lead students back to working through their own processes. Educators can play an active role as well, providing more insight and feedback, and redirecting learning as needed.
- V. **After:** This moment is essential for the educator. It is an intentional pedagogical moment, which may be even performed intuitively, when the teacher reflects on the experience and the learning outcomes that arose from the actual class design. Was the tool useful? Did it meet the intended purposes? What should be changed/improved next time? Would it be helpful to use it again? These and other questions can be answered in this stage.

8 Conclusions

Going back to basics, reflecting and intentionally choosing what to do in class is the answer to the questions posed in this workshop. ICT tools should respond to learning needs, transforming them into technology for learning and knowledge (TLK). Carefully and purposefully selecting tools for learning can lead to more meaningful classes, in which technology acts as a support, not a goal. Finally, the five moments carefully prepared by educators can help to constantly analyze the context, so assisting to successfully achieve the objective outcomes for the students.

9 References

- Avendaño, V., Bohórquez, C. & Correal, R. (2022) Complexity and the Development of Transdisciplinary Competencies in Virtual Learning Environments of Higher Education Institutions in Mexico and Colombia. *Journal of Positive Psychology & Wellbeing*. 6(2), 1982 – 1997.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/365367037_Complexity_and_the_development_of_transdisciplinary_competencies_in_Virtual_Learning_Environments_of_Higher_Education_Institutions_in_Mexico_and_Colombia
- Bouton, E., Tal, S., & Asterhan, C. (2021). Students, Social Network Technology and Learning in Higher Education: Visions of Collaborative Knowledge Construction vs. the Reality of Knowledge Sharing. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 49, 100787.
- Çoban, M., Nilüfer Okur Akçay, Çelik. (2022). Using Virtual Reality Technologies in STEM Education: ICT Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions. *Knowledge Management & E-learning*, 14(3), 269-285.

- Coetzee, Marijke, Coulter, Duncan, Cotterrell, Deon, Leung, Wai Sze. (2021). ICT Education: 50th Annual Conference of the Southern African Computer Lecturers' Association, SACLA 2021, Johannesburg, South Africa (Vol. 1461, Communications in Computer and Information Science). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Essuman, S., Korda, D. R., Essigyan, P., Febiri, S., & Aboagye, D. (2022), Usage of ICT Tools in the Teaching and Learning of Mathematics in the Basic School Classroom, *European Journal of Education*.
- Lindberg, O., Olofsson, A., & Fransson, G. (2017). Same but Different? An Examination of Swedish Upper Secondary School Teachers' and Students' Views and Use of ICT in Education. *The International Journal of Information and Learning Technology*, 34(2), 122-132.
- Ministerio de Educación Pública (MEP). (2020). Política en tecnologías de la información del Ministerio de Educación Pública. Costa Rica
- Shirazi, F., Ngwenyama, O., & Morawczynski, O. (2010). ICT Expansion and the Digital Divide in Democratic Freedoms: An Analysis of the Impact of ICT Expansion, Education and ICT Filtering on Democracy. *Telematics and Informatics*, 27(1), 21-31.
- Tobón, S. (2006). *Formación basada en competencias: Pensamiento complejo, diseño curricular y didáctica* (2. edición. ed., Colección Textos universitarios. Educación y pedagogía). Bogotá, D.C.: ECOE Ediciones Ltda.
- Torrado Cespón M (2021) TIC/TAC y COVID-19: uso y necesidades del profesorado de secundaria en Galicia. [Digital Education Review](#); Barcelona
- Gómez Contreras, J., Bonilla Torres, C., & Esteban Ojeda, Y. (2022). Uso de TIC y TAC en la educación superior. *Revista Complutense De Educación*, 33(3), *Revista complutense de educación*, 2022, Vol.33 (3).
- Wastiau, P., Blamire, R., Kearney, C., Quittre, V., Van de Gaer, E., & Monseur, C. (2013). The Use of ICT in Education: A Survey of Schools in Europe. *European Journal of Education*, 48(1), 11-27.

10 Biography

Cindy Rodríguez Soto

Cindy is a passionate educator who truly enjoys everything related to learning and education. She graduated as an English teacher (UCR) and then obtained an MA in Translation (UNA) and a MEd in Educational Management (UNED). Cindy is currently working on her Doctorate dissertation on Early Childhood Language Learning Theory. She works at UTN and UCR, in this latter as an educational assessor. She is interested in pedagogical mediation, ecopedagogy and assessment. She is constantly looking for new learning experiences.