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Foreword

The inclusion of digital technologies in language teaching has marked a new era. The use of apps with Artificial Intelligence is helping to facilitate language learning with tools for developing more interactive classes. Language professors, many of whom are young people with experience in the ludic use of digital technologies, are introducing more real environments in teaching and learning languages. Of course, the effect on students' interests is undeniable due to the daily use of technology.

Different technological resources are facilitating the development of learning language skills. New didactic settings in language teaching and learning are realized physically or virtually. There are no limits to access to materials and resources through the internet to obtain or create didactic materials. Now, there are online or mobile app platforms for language learning that professors are taking advantage of.

CIEX Journal is a free space for the publication of research results and reflections on values. The advances of scientific studies help the academic community involved in language teaching and learning. Thus, this research journal invites researchers and specialists in Mexico and the world to submit articles and essays proposals to continue with the dissemination of scientific knowledge in this area to improve language teaching.

This 19th issue of CIEX Journal presents innovative topics on language teaching and learning. In the articles section, research results are presented, such as The use of technology with activities to promote English learning in elementary education, YouTube as a self-directed digital learning tool, Pre-service teachers perspectives on game-based activities for enhancing EFL learning, AI and play-based learning in early English education, Graphic organizers to develop oral competence in virtual environments, and Researching university students' perceptions about how digital tools help them achieve holistic comprehension of English academic texts, and the essay entitled The evolution of language teaching through technological integration. In addition, some summaries of CIEX Symposium are included.

CIEX Journal acknowledges the authors of the published works in different topics. With the 19th issue, this journal achieves its purpose of providing a space for research results and values.

CIEX Journal expresses its gratitude to the members of the editorial and referees' board for their effort for the publication of this 19th issue. The members of each board, researchers and specialists in language teaching, contributed through their accurate reviews and professional experience for this scientific work with high quality.

The work realized by the referees' board, through a rigorous evaluation of each article, improves the proposals in content and format. Also, each published article has been analyzed by a computer software to detect plagiarism and ensure its originality.

Besides, it is necessary to highlight that the content of all the articles and essays only symbolizes the authors' analysis, deliberations, and/or insights so that content does not certainly denote the viewpoints or examinations of the chief editor or the team of editors of CIEX Journal.

M.A. Norma Francisca Murga Tapia

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Research Papers



Artículos de Investigación

The Use of Technology with Activities to Promote English Learning in Elementary Education

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ABSTRACT

This research article seeks to demonstrate how technology with activities enhances students' English learning by developing the four main macro skills. This investigation was conducted at a public elementary school in Chilpancingo de los Bravo, Guerrero, Mexico. The study was performed through a qualitative approach and action research method, which included the teacher-researcher, administrative staff, and sixth-grade students as participants. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews, the teaching narrative, observation, and a questionnaire with the help of didactic treatments to analyze the integration of Edtech apps to implement teaching activities and enhance the target language learning. The results indicated how the use of Edtech apps and digital tools provided students the opportunity to explore new ways of learning entertainingly through gamification, online assignments rich in multimedia, and live interactive tasks, which consequently attracted their attention and improved their language performance in developing reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills.

KEY WORDS:

Applied linguistics, teaching and learning English, developing English skills, education technology, digital applications.

RESUMEN

Este artículo de investigación busca demostrar de qué manera la aplicación de la tecnología con actividades mejora el aprendizaje de Inglés de los estudiantes al desarrollar las cuatro macro habilidades principales. Esta investigación se llevó a cabo en una escuela primaria pública, ubicada en Chilpancingo de los Bravo, Guerrero, México. El estudio se realizó a través de un enfoque cualitativo y método de investigación acción, que incluyó a el docente-investigador, personal administrativo y a estudiantes de sexto grado como participantes. Los datos se recolectaron mediante entrevistas semi estructuradas, narrativas, observación y un cuestionario junto con propuestas didácticas para analizar la integración de aplicaciones de tecnología educativa a través de actividades de enseñanza y fortalecer el aprendizaje de la lengua meta. Los resultados indicaron cómo el uso de las aplicaciones de tecnología educativa y herramientas digitales brindaron a los estudiantes la oportunidad de explorar nuevas formas de aprender de manera

entretenida a través de la gamificación, tareas digitales con multimedia, y ejercicios interactivos en vivo, por tanto, atrajeron su atención mejorando su rendimiento en el idioma desarrollando habilidades para leer, escuchar, escribir y hablar.

Palabras clave:

Lingüística aplicada, enseñanza y aprendizaje de Inglés, desarrollo de habilidades en Inglés, tecnología educativa, aplicaciones digitales.

Introduction

In today's world, technology plays a critical role in education because it offers a variety of technological tools that can help the teaching-learning process become more efficient. The new era assigns new challenges and duties to the modern teacher. As Pourhosein (2017, cited in Ahmadi, 2018) claims, teachers need to understand the use of technology to teach language skills effectively. The tradition of English teaching has been drastically changed with the remarkable entry of technology. For that reason, English teachers should adapt to this new lifestyle and must find methods for implementing this new form of technology in their classes. Teachers should consider including technology as part of an integrated learning experience for students (Eady & Lockyer, 2013). The use of technology to learn a foreign language in Mexican public elementary schools has become a significant problem for many teachers and students due to a diverse range of social, economic, and political factors. This was the case for the participants of this research; students from the Revolución Public Elementary School located in Chilpancingo de los Bravo, Guerrero; who study in the afternoon shift and lack the opportunity to explore technology as part of their academic lives since there are not enough technological resources, training, and comfort conditions to carry out activities with technology inside the classroom. Thus, this study aimed to understand how educational technology can be beneficial for teaching and learning English by proposing some activities including technology for promoting English learning for public elementary school students. The findings of this investigation indicated that the use of technology with activities had a positive impact on students' learning; even though there were some favorable outcomes in integrating and promoting educational technology in the classroom, new challenges arose to continue learning with digital technology.

1.1 Research questions

To better understand how the use of technology can be applied in English teaching activities, the main research question is stated as follows:

- What activities with technology can teachers implement to promote English learning in sixth-grade students at "Revolución" Public Elementary School?

The subsidiary questions that complement and support the main research question are the following:

- How can technology affect in positive or negative ways the English learning process of students?
- How is the student's performance using technology in teaching English inside the classroom?
- How can students use technology to their advantage outside the classroom?
- What are some technological strategies to develop the four macro skills in young learners?
- What are the difficulties that students face with Information and Communication Technologies and how do they become strengths during the learning process?

1.2 General research objective

The general research objective of this study is to propose some activities, including technology, to promote English learning for elementary school students.

1.3 Specific objectives

- To demonstrate the positive or negative effect of technology on the English learning process of students.
- To identify the students' performance using technology in teaching English inside the classroom.
- To explain how students can use technology to their advantage outside the classroom.
- To identify some technological strategies, including the four English macro skills.
- To examine the difficulties that students face with the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and develop strengths during the learning process.

1.4 Justification

This research sets out different barriers when learning English, in which the role of young learners and teachers is involved. That is the reason this study becomes overriding because of its significance in the English area, where there has been a growing interest in the integration of technologies to enhance the acquisition of knowledge.

Nowadays, education systems worldwide are faced with the challenge of using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to provide their students with the necessary tools and knowledge required in the 21st century. The use of technology in classrooms for teachers and learners has become essential in this globalized world. This study is necessary due to the expectations that are principally for students to be prepared to develop their abilities in the technological field.

Concerning this, it is fundamental for teachers to learn new ways of using technology as a helpful tool in the classroom to strengthen and improve teaching methods with the help of technology.

2. Literature review

2.1 Education in the Digital Age

New generations have emerged with contemporary technologies from an early age, having a different vision of the world. There is absolutely no doubt that technology is part of children's lifestyles; they are the ones who are familiar with it and can manage it easily, becoming, according to Prensky (2001a, 2001b, cited in De Florio, 2018), digital natives, although some people who were born in the technological era may not be qualified as digital natives. On the other hand, people who were born before the digital revolution were considered digital immigrants who had to learn to use technology to their advantage. Prensky (2001, cited in Harmer, 2015) claims that "digital immigrant instructors, who speak an outdated language [...] are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language" (p. 2). This could mean that the terms "digital natives" and "digital immigrants" are questionable in today's present because age is not a factor that can be divided into these two categories, it is completely based on cultural and contextual features.

The Digital Education Revolution is something that is happening in diverse countries around the

world. Reinhardt (2019, cited in Lutge, 2022) states that digital technology has been domesticated since it takes place everywhere and at any time, becoming part of the habitus of people's lives with digital connections to media. Students as well as teachers have been heavily influenced by digitalization. It is not possible to imagine schools as places free from electronic technology. Nonetheless, Bennett et al (2008, cited in Eady & Lockyer, 2013) mention that despite the technological era that digital natives are involved in, not all of them are proficient in developing digital skills. For that reason, being part of a digital environment is not just enough to possess one or more technological devices; it is also the way students and teachers can achieve significant growth based on technology to reinforce their abilities. As Morrison et al. (2019) claim "Schools must do a better job of reaching the current generation of students; making technology available to students at school helps educators respond to and address students' unique learning needs" (p. 9).

Language learning and technology exist in various contexts around the world, resulting in each learner having a unique experience with technology. What matters in terms of technology, according to Cummins et al. (2007, cited in Farr & Murray, 2016), is not how schools are equipped with technological devices, but how teachers develop their technological skills effectively. In addition, Egbert and Yang (2004, cited in Farr & Murray, 2016) mention that the key distinction in language learning environments is not who owns the greatest hardware and software, the real question is whether or not language teachers have access to professional development opportunities to support students by using technology. Thus, it is clear that every school, every teacher, and every learner have a variety of causes, but what they have in common is that these challenges can be converted into rich opportunities.

2.2 Teacher education and technology

The role of teacher preparation is a theme that is gaining importance in terms of the academic and skillful development of professional language teachers in our digital world. Establishing some technology standards for language teachers will allow them to keep up and maintain a strong relationship between the use of technology and students as well. According to Kessler (2006, cited in Farr & Murray, 2016), the purpose of developing standards is to evaluate the teacher's abilities with technologies and pedagogical aspects of learning and teaching. The ISTE (International Society for Technology in Education) and NETS (National Educational Technology Standards) are organizations to support and guide teachers. Thus, besides the fact that there are enough organizations in charge of this topic, many teachers present a lack of preparation in the technology field.

Issues in teacher education with the use of technology are something that is happening in every part of the world. Research by Kessler (2012, cited in Soleimani, 2021) shows that the first obstacle is that teachers need to adapt to different situations and be prepared for random changes in the classroom. One of the biggest problems with teachers' preparation is that they are trained superficially, whereas technology training has to do with teaching the basic uses of technological devices instead of making a deep analysis of what resources can be used to the maximum with the technological devices given and how they can be helpful for learners in class. Healey (2011, cited in Farr & Murray, 2016), realized that "teacher educators themselves may be slightly technophobic and may in fact resist technology, or they may feel that the rising generation of digitally adept new teachers may not need technology education" (pp. 143-144). For this reason, to get good professional development, teachers have to keep going with their technology training and make good use of technology, not only by knowing how to turn on and off a device but also by being aware of the maximum potential of the information that the device can give them.

The deficiency of educational technology in schools leads to the necessity of looking into the need for coaching to help teachers provide support for professional learning. Usually, schools focus more on getting new hardware and software instead of giving importance to teachers' training and support. McBride (2021) affirms that "In truth, the most influential factor a school can invest in is the teacher because technology alone changes nothing" (p. 24). In this sense, educational technology coaching takes on relevance due to its main aim being to guide and support teachers as well as the school in technology practices. In addition, having decided to have an ed tech coach in school could make it easier to see how technology is used in every place, and that will allow the best teaching practices because teachers will now know how to deal with technology thanks to the support of educational technology coaches (Liu et al., 2017; Inan & Lowther, 2010, cited in McBride, 2021). Hence, as technology development continues to increase and spread with new technologies around the world, teachers must take responsibility to assume their role as new digital teachers with constant training about the subject with the help of professional coaches.

2.3 ICTs used in language teaching

The integration of ICT into the teaching and learning environment demonstrates its power to support teaching strategies and reinforce knowledge given in class. Patel (2013, cited in Arifah, 2014) mentions that "Technology provides so many options as making teaching interesting and also making teaching more productive in terms of improvement" (p.116). A highly qualified teacher understands that every group of students has different learning styles. In that way, it implements a variety of teaching techniques to get students visually, auditorily, and kinesthetically involved in all the activities. Kalas et al. (2014) argue that the impact provoked by ICT in the language teaching and learning process is significant because teachers and students use ICT for different purposes. Additionally, Chapelle & Sauro (2017) identify that the best way to encourage and motivate students is by assessing them through automated writing evaluation, automated speaking evaluation, and using social networking as part of integration to communicate and learn. Hence, the variety of learning activities integrating ICT will depend on the teaching and learning styles of teachers and students, maintaining a balance among them.

2.4 Educational technology tools for teaching and learning

The integration of educational technology strategies in the teaching and learning context is key for educators and learners when doing activities with digital tools to develop competencies for a digital world. Burns (2021) mentions the importance of including Edtech skills and strategies as indispensable tools for creating learning experiences to lead students on their path with technology; she also points out the teacher's role as a guide and helper to support student's needs while working on tech-friendly tasks to collaborate and interact in digital spaces. Thus, learning environments using technology have become significant in recognizing the importance of having plans of action for technology integration in the classroom.

Edtech tools and digital resources can serve as a catapult to enhance students' learning with technology. Burns (2021) provides a variety of digital tools to work with, focusing on developing specific characteristics to acquire knowledge through mind mapping, podcast and video platforms, virtual and augmented reality, audio recording, movie making, polling, interactive presentations, quizzing, and LMS, among others. However, Hamilton (2018) mentions that the excessive use of digital resources can reduce the students' engagement, and therefore, their academic performance will decrease. Considering the previous information, Edtech tools help create and enhance the students' digital learning experience, but it depends on the educator to

use the most adequate digital tools by thinking about what their needs are.

The growing use of Edtech as a learning tool has changed the paradigm for teachers, forcing them to rethink how students can learn more enjoyably and efficiently by using educational technology. According to Atherton (2018), some digitally available resources can be helpful to develop technology-enhanced learning (TEL, hereafter) through emerging tech: AI and VR in education; assessment tools: GoFormative, Nearpod, VoiceThread; videos and audio tools: Edpuzzle, Podcasting; collaborative working: Padlet, Popplet, Notability; and games, polls, and student response system; Slido, Plickers, Quizlet, and ClassDojo. Thus, the selection of each digital technology will depend on the teacher's lesson and content to create learning scenarios with the implementation of technology.

The use of Edtech tools has to lead to all students being part of learning experiences, no matter their abilities, backgrounds, or preferences. Ardies et al. (2015, cited in Ankiewicz, 2017), who claim that factors such as technology education at home and school, gender differences, the age of students, and technological resources to play with will determine the positive or negative effect on the attitude of students. Additionally, Bugaj et al. (2021) reflect on the integration of an inclusive mindset to provide students with a diversity of options to build a learning environment where each learner has a voice and rights when using digital technology. The integration of inclusive practices helps expand language learning through the use of digital tools such as Flipgrid, Animaker, Slidesmania, Bookcreator, Speakflow, Quizziz, Merge Cube, Brainscape, Cospaces, Pixton, Screencastify, and WeVideo, among others. In that sense, it would help learners personalize their learning according to their learning styles and improve their skills while they are using them.

3. Research methodology

3.1 Research approach and method

Regarding the methodology, the research approach in this study is qualitative, which has been chosen because of the type of study implemented in which people's experiences and perceptions take on relevant status. The qualitative research approach is focused on the examination and understanding of people's perspectives through their experiences based on data analysis, which represents the reflection of individuals (Creswell, 2012). The action research method is also selected to evaluate activities with technology that can be beneficial or that can be improved for learners to achieve the main academic program objectives. This method identifies a specific educational issue and is in charge of solving it through an action plan to obtain meaningful solutions for people who are involved with it (Creswell, 2012).

3.2 Participants

The participants of this study are the teacher-researcher, administrative staff, and the students. The participants were children whose ages ranged between eleven and twelve years old. The selection of students to carry out this study was for those with their own devices to work in class. Regarding their academic background, these children have previously studied English since they started their first grade of school; however, none of them have taken extra English courses outside of school. Aside from being considered "digital natives" due to their advanced technological development, not all of them have the opportunity to explore technology as part of their academic lives, using technology mostly for recreational purposes rather than educational purposes.

The administrative staff played a crucial role in the process of this investigation due to their expertise in the teaching and learning field, their willingness and interest to make real changes in education helped to recollect data from the school and those who were involved.

The teacher-researcher is a 22-year-old enthusiast and hardworking man who finished his Bachelor's degree in English and studied another major in Architecture and Urbanism. Also, he has taught English at different levels, from basic to advanced, to kids and teenagers for three years. His interest in the role of technology in the teaching and learning environment has led him to look for innovative and attractive activities using digital technologies as part of a complement for effective, enjoyable, and engaging learning to connect with students.

3.3 The context of the research

This study takes place at "Revolución" public elementary school, located in the center zone of Chilpancingo de los Bravo, Guerrero. Students take the English subject three times per week for 50 minutes in each lesson. It seems that the level of English they have is basic. In terms of technology, the school is equipped with one technology room with three obsolete computers connected to an unstable Wi-Fi service. It also has one media projector for the whole institution that teachers do not use. The majority of students have cell phones, some of them both cell phones and computers; however, they do not have access to the internet or present some Wi-Fi service limitations when using them in the school.

3.4 Data collection techniques

The different techniques to guide the data collection to answer the main research question and the subsidiary questions of this research are the following:

- **Teaching narrative:** Researchers compose narratives of personal experiences, gather, and narrate anecdotes about people's lives, and describe the lifestyles of specific individuals (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, cited in Creswell, 2012).
- **Interviewing:** Interviews are defined by Kvale (1996, cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrinson, 2007) as "an exchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasizes the social situatedness of research data" (p. 14).
- **Observation:** The essential purpose of observation is to describe societies, circumstances, or places as well as the actions that occur there, the individuals who perform those activities, and the meanings associated with them. (Patton 2002, cited in Hernandez et al. 2010).
- **Questioning:** The questionnaire is a popular and effective tool for gathering survey data since it provides organized, frequently numerical data, can be given without the researcher's presence, and is quite simple to analyze. (Wilson and McLean, 1994, cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrinson, 2007). To carry out the investigation the questionnaire was used to evaluate the perceptions of the students of the learning improvement using the EdTech, since their experience using technology was unique and different from each other. This demonstrates that with the involvement of digital technologies in learning English, every student had diverse results depending on factors like motivation, training in using technology, and the disposal of technological devices.

These techniques were applied before and after the application of this study to comprehend how the use of technology was involved in teaching and learning practices.

3.5 Data collection instruments

Four instruments were used to conduct the present study:

- **Teacher–researcher narrative:** it contains the teacher researcher’s reflections to describe how an activity is carried out and explain the effectiveness of using technology with classroom activities to promote English learning.
- **Interview guide:** to obtain in–depth personal responses from the students’ experiences and administrative staff perceptions, through a semi–structured interview that contains a set of open–ended questions focusing on how technology is used in teaching and learning practices in the institution.
- **Observation field notes:** to obtain information by observing in detail how the student performs with the activities given and to realize if they are helpful for their learning.
- **Questionnaire for the evaluation of the teaching activities:** the type of questions used is closed–ended questions to evaluate the teaching activities with the use of technology proposed for the teacher–researcher to learners, taking into account their perception of the use of digital technologies integrated into class, and to find out if that technology contributes to enhancing their English language learning process through the design and application of new technologies with activities never applied before.

4. Findings

This study analyzed the results from the information and data gathered from the research instruments before and after the proposal’s implementation. The results were obtained from students, teacher researcher, and administrative staff. Additionally, the didactic treatments helped to analyze the integration of Edtech apps to implement teaching activities and enhance the target language learning through four main activities that were focused on developing a particular skill—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—even so, most of the activities involved two or more skills.

The application of each activity with technology was required to be carried out in the computer room and outside of the school to examine and comprehend how the use of technology with activities can promote English learning in elementary school students.

- **Activity 1 “Places in the City”:** It consisted of developing gamified questions, multimedia exercises, fun, competitive quizzes, and interactive presentations to practice and reinforce vocabulary and grammar related to the topic while performing mainly the reading macro skill as well as writing, through the use of Blooket, PearDeck, and Quizizz to assess, monitor, and give feedback to students.
- **Activity 2 “What’s your profession?”:** It consisted of presenting interactive slides with live polls, trivia, and multimedia to introduce and learn more about jobs and occupation vocabulary using Ahaslides. The teacher–researcher made use of Plickers and GoFormative to collect formative assessment data from what students worked on, using QR code cards and “live” assignments by providing them timely feedback and identifying students learning weaknesses and strengths. The main skills developed were writing, reading, and listening skills.
- **Activity 3 “Let’s go shopping”:** It consisted of presenting some interactive online videos related to the topic by adding questions, images, and annotations to spark critical thinking with built–in questions using Edpuzzle, as well as LingoClip to increase engagement by playing videos and lyrics of students’ favorite songs. Additionally, students worked with Classkick based on digital assignments using multimedia and online tools through their devices at their own pace to enhance their listening comprehension, expand their

vocabulary, and boost their grammar. The teacher could observe students' progress in real-time and provide them immediate feedback through a digital formative assessment to reinforce the students' knowledge about previous topics, including vocabulary and grammar related to asking about prices.

- **Activity 4 "Shopping for clothes":** It was designed to practice and perform mainly English-speaking skills by doing role-play, video discussions, and working on dialogues through the use of Speakflow, Flipgrid, and YouTube, where students could write scripts, collaborate in teams, give speeches, and create personalized videos explaining the topic and sharing their experiences with their peers. It was focused on building and strengthening a social learning community by improving their oral skills and having a nice time while they were learning.

Once the activities with technology were applied, the following main findings can be emphasized:

1. **The student's attitudes and perspectives on using technology in their English learning process.** Although students had a different experience learning with digital tools since their conditions were not equal, all of them affirmed that they felt fascinated to be involved in a new experience to learn through various digital technologies, which had impacted positively on their learning in a simple way.
2. **The student's performance using technology in learning English inside the classroom.** The implementation of digital technology in activities caused an improvement in developing more confidence to perform the language among them. The previous knowledge that they had about English content and the management of some technology helped them to be more adaptable to work, practice, and reinforce their English skills. Besides the fact that their contact with technology was varied, they all collaborated to expand and grow their knowledge.
3. **The advantages of using technology outside the classroom.** Making appropriate use of the technology at their disposal, students can practice at home with a diverse set of edtech apps and digital assignments to reinforce the topics addressed in the classroom. It can be such a great opportunity to take advantage of whether students dedicate part of their time to interacting more with digital technology for academic purposes by continuing to pursue improvements in their learning skills.
4. **The technological strategies to develop the four macro skills in young learners.** Teaching and technological strategies are fundamental to implement during the learning-teaching process in the English language. The most significant technological strategy is to design activities with digital tools rich in multimedia in which two or more skills can be developed that allow students to perform the language. Considering that working with edtech apps is important for students to get immersed in improving their productive and receptive skills. Additionally, implementing teaching strategies such as creating a variety of tasks according to the way they like to learn and promoting collaborative work to share technological equipment would be good for developing teamwork skills and digital proficiency in their academic performance.
5. **The students' difficulties in using ICTs and how they become strengths during the learning process.** There are always some challenges that can be managed, while others are out of the teacher's control when using technology during the teaching and learning process. Three main difficulties were reflected in this research: comfort conditions and the lack of sufficient and qualified technological equipment that the school presented, which were solved with the help of teacher researchers to provide technological sources to students, like free internet service and devices to work in the classroom. Then, the lack of teacher training and enthusiasm for using technology to teach provoked the continuous

use of traditional teaching classes, and finally, students were not prepared to work with technology, as well as the lack of their cellphones some of them, which was solved by the teacher-researcher by helping them to use digital tools, making the clearest explanations of the activities, monitoring and giving feedback in and outside the class, and providing them the necessary digital equipment.

5. Main limitations of the study

To carry out this study, many limitations and difficulties were faced, especially about three important agents in education: the elementary school, and the students. The Revolución Public Elementary School located in the center zone of Chilpancingo de los Bravo, Guerrero presents a lack of services to provide students with a qualified education to students, although the school is located in the center of the city, Chilpancingo being a governmental, educational, business, and service place, it does not have all the services; one of them is, for example, an excellent connection to the internet and the lack of technological equipment.

Regarding the sixth-grade students, aside from being considered “digital natives” due to their advanced technological development, not all of them have the opportunity to explore technology as part of their academic lives. Using technology mostly for recreational purposes and little for educational purposes. This demonstrates that students do not dedicate time to do English homework since the teacher in charge of the group does not assign it.

The mostly limitations presented in this study that impacted are related to creating a collaborative and enjoyable environment among students, making students aware that they are capable of working with technologies that they have at their disposal, and taking advantage of the infinity of opportunities to work with them out the class, by using technology for academic purposes. Finally, reflect on the importance of technology in education and continue working with it once the investigation has come to an end.

6. Applications and impact of the research

The outcomes provided by this research give detailed information on how the use of technology with activities enhances students’ English learning with the four main language skills. So, there are several benefits for the English language professors who work at public schools to have a better comprehension of the learning process where technology is involved. Now it might be a good idea to add the use of educational technology apps for students to increase and develop their skills in English and other subjects in elementary education.

7. Conclusions

This research has demonstrated that the implementation of activities with the use of Educational Technology Apps to promote English learning provides sixth-grade students the opportunity to explore new ways of learning in an entertaining manner, which consequently attracts their attention and improves their language performance. EdTech Apps are one example in this research of how ITCs play a crucial role in the implementation of activities with technology. Concerning this, it can be stated that the objectives of the research were successfully obtained because it shows not only the relevance of using digital technologies with activities to enhance the student’s English learning but also presents the challenges in learning with technology that can become strengths during the teaching and learning process.

The outcomes provided by this research affirm that the use of digital technologies with a learning and enjoyable focus allowed the development of interactive activities by enhancing the four macro skills and making their process of constructing meaningful knowledge. The English learning experience using technology is unique for each student, depending on the target language involvement and digital background, as well as how adaptable students are to change. Context is important when developing activities with technology, considering the technology at their disposal may allow them to look for the appropriate teaching strategies according to students' needs to solve technological challenges and make it easier for them to learn the target language.

Having technological resources is not what defines technology at all, it is how educational agents are knowledgeable and prepared enough to work with digital skills while they are learning the target language. The use of technology for learning goes beyond the four walls of the classroom, working with digital technologies in and out of the classroom will allow students to practice and reinforce their English language learning and it will help teachers monitor and assess how technology is used to develop English learning and digital skills. Technology never stops progressing, and challenges never disappear, there are always technological barriers and other conditions that are perhaps not in the teacher's hands but it depends on being adaptable and trained to take advantage of technology and provide students with an innovative learning experience.

The broad extent of technology in education allows to continue searching for discoveries and contributions in the teaching and learning field. Therefore, some recommendations for future research with topics connected to other areas of this study can be made in light of the findings and limitations of this study, including game-based learning in and outside the classroom, the study of edtech coaches, also known as instructional technology facilitators in a learning environment, and the implementation of augmented reality and virtual reality for learning English.

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YouTube as a Self-Directed Digital Learning Tool

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ABSTRACT

During the period of school closures at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, students were left without formal classroom instruction, and many shifted to informal methods to continue learning. While YouTube has been well-studied for its effectiveness in education, its use as a language learning tool by multilingual learners during this period remains largely unstudied. This study addresses the current gap in knowledge by investigating the implicit and explicit YouTube-based activities conducted by multilingual learners to practice English. Semistructured interviews were conducted with six students of various linguistic backgrounds enrolled in an ESL program in the United States to record the digital activities they engaged in during quarantine. While the interviews revealed several digital learning activities, YouTube was the most common and broadly used across language skills. These findings highlight the benefits of YouTube in language learning for its broad range of multimodal activities and increased learner engagement.

KEY WORDS:

Digital learning, self-directed learning, explicit learning, implicit learning, YouTube

RESUMEN

Durante el período de cierre de escuelas al comienzo de la pandemia de COVID-19, los estudiantes quedaron sin instrucción formal, y muchos recurrieron a métodos informales para continuar aprendiendo. Aunque YouTube ha sido estudiado por su efectividad en la educación, su uso como herramienta de aprendizaje de idiomas por parte de estudiantes multilingües sigue siendo inexplorado. Este estudio investiga las actividades implícitas y explícitas basadas en ver videos de YouTube realizadas por estudiantes multilingües para practicar inglés. Mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas a seis estudiantes de ESL en los Estados Unidos se registraron las actividades digitales en las que participaron durante la cuarentena. Entre las actividades varias de aprendizaje digital identificadas, YouTube fue la más común y ampliamente utilizada en todas las habilidades lingüísticas. Estos hallazgos resaltan los beneficios de YouTube en el aprendizaje de idiomas por su amplia gama de actividades multimodales y el aumento de la participación de los estudiantes.

Aprendizaje digital, aprendizaje autodirigido, aprendizaje explícito, aprendizaje implícito, YouTube

INTRODUCTION

The process of acquiring a second language occurs through a combination of different methods of learning. For many adult multilingual learners in the United States, two of these methods of learning are often achieved through 1) formal classroom instruction (explicit learning) and 2) natural exposure to language in realistic and meaningful contexts without conscious gathering of information, (implicit learning) (Ellis et al., 2009). The latter commonly occurs through socialization within the target language and culture. In the acquisition-learning hypothesis (Krashen, 1985), implicit *acquisition* is more vital than explicit *learning* in gaining functional language skills that the learner will use to communicate in real-world, everyday contexts. Conscious learning of explicit grammatical rules serves as a way to monitor and fine-tune implicitly acquired knowledge (Krashen, 1985). The distinction between implicit and explicit learning depends on the learner's awareness of the fact that they are consciously attempting to learn something *and* the nature of what they are attempting to learn (Reber, 1976). Although typically associated with formal education, explicit learning can also take place informally, typically when self-directed by the learner.

In-classroom and self-directed learning have both been considerably impacted by modern technology and the world's increasing digitalization. Hybridization of classrooms through computer-assisted language learning (CALL) allows for the use of mixed media in lessons to appeal to a wider range of learning styles, and programs such as Google Docs and Google Slides encourage collaboration among students even when working remotely (Drotner, 2009). Regarding self-directed learning, the advent of smartphones has also revolutionized the learning experience through mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) by making programs such as Duolingo and Babbel accessible almost anywhere at any time. Apps such as these promote learning "on-the-go" outside of a singular learning space. The prevalence of public wifi also frees these applications from reliance on a private internet connection (Hsu, 2013). Technology-based language learning has improved both classroom and independent learning experiences through the ease of introducing a variety of learning media and allowing ease of collaboration and access to learning materials.

In addition to augmenting the classroom experience and enabling learners to self-direct learning through independent activities, internet access and mobile devices have contributed to the globalization of language learning by allowing learners to practice communication skills with a wide variety of audiences. Social media applications have played an especially important role in globalization as they allow users to instantly communicate with others from around the world, providing the opportunity to practice language with speakers of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Combining the communicative aspects of social media with the multimedia potential of CALL and MALL, video sharing apps such as YouTube have proven to be an asset in both formal and informal language learning. For instance, in the classroom, lessons presented through YouTube have resulted in increased comprehension and collaboration amongst students, and the app also became an important avenue for remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic (Alwehaibi, 2015; Brook, 2011; Adisti, 2022). Among independent learners, YouTube has proven effective in establishing communities of practice through which learners can globally exchange information about language and culture (Benson & Chan, 2010). Thus, the present study will explore the various explicit and implicit language learning activities conducted

by adult multilingual learners in the US using YouTube as they attempted to replace both their formal classroom education and their access to the target language culture during the lockdown period of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020. The purpose of the study is to document the role of technology in self-directed learning by multilingual students in quarantine and answer the following research questions:

1. How was YouTube used as a self-directed learning tool during the quarantine period of the pandemic?
2. In what ways did the learners' engagement with YouTube-based activities contribute to their explicit and implicit language practice during the pandemic?

The following sections will first explore the existing body of knowledge on YouTube as a language learning tool in both formal and informal learning. This knowledge will be used to contextualize the findings of the present study on digital language learning during the 2020 Covid-19 quarantine period which yielded significant results concerning the use of YouTube as a medium for a variety of language learning activities. The article will conclude with a summary of the potential pedagogical advantages outlined by this data.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As technological adaptations to everyday life expand, their influence on education becomes more apparent. Tools that were traditionally used for leisure have been augmented for educational purposes, even as part of formal classroom curriculum. YouTube is one such example, as its various applications in language learning classrooms have been documented and analyzed for their pedagogical efficacy. The multimodality of the video streaming application has allowed it to be adapted by educators to teach various language skills and address different learning styles in the classroom whether it is used as a supplement to traditional lessons or as the primary mode of lesson delivery.

YouTube for Formal Language Learning

YouTube has the potential to provide several advantages over traditional lower-tech lesson formats within the formal learning environment. The website's broad range of topics and opportunities for socialization through commenting afford students increased opportunities to find authentic language practice as opposed to traditional classroom instruction. In studies investigating YouTube as a supplement to traditional classroom methods—meaning that it was used in a single activity among other methods rather than as the main modality of the class—researchers have been able to compare and contrast the benefits of both high- and low-tech modes (Alwehaibi, 2015; Hsu, 2014). For instance, a study conducted among two groups of second year university students in Saudi Arabia investigated the effectiveness of using YouTube as an instructional tool by using it to introduce the theoretical background of a lesson to one of the groups. Findings showed that students in the YouTube group demonstrated higher understanding of content in a post-test compared to their non-YouTube counterparts (Alwehaibi, 2015). According to the researchers, this is likely due to the higher levels of enjoyment and entertainment made possible through YouTube's broad inventory of topics and multimodal display. Another such example includes the audio-visual support made possible by YouTube with subtitles either in English or students' L1 to further support content comprehension. In a study involving four groups of students in a freshman composition class, Hsu (2014) found that audio-visual support showed improvement in students' productive vocabulary as it allowed students to gain meaning through both auditory-verbal and visual-pictorial channels. Interestingly, the study found that students benefited most from audio and visual support without the inclusion of

subtitles (as evidenced by both the post-test and student opinion surveys). This finding was likely due to a perceived competition in dividing attention between videos and text (viewing/listening and reading). However, subtitled YouTube videos have shown their own merits in other studies, to be discussed in the following section.

In addition to its efficacy as a supplement to other classroom models, certain YouTube-based methods have shown potential as replacements for traditional classroom methods as a remote teaching medium and in stand-alone activities. Adisti (2022) found this to be especially true during the Covid-19 pandemic during which time traditional classroom learning was inaccessible due to school closures. The study, which involved students in an English 1 course for at the State Islamic University in Indonesia, corroborated the findings mentioned above which recorded increased understanding and engagement over text-based instruction alone. Additionally, it found improvement in comprehension of collocations and idioms because of the availability of authentic speech and language contexts. YouTube-based activities also contributed to more student focus being placed on the content rather than the instructor, for a more functional method that differed from the classic lecture style. This was demonstrated in a study of tertiary-level English learners assigned YouTube videos to watch as a replacement or supplement to reading material. The results of the study indicated increased engagement and motivation when class material was presented through audio-visuals, in addition to students' heightened comprehension due to their ability to rewatch videos and learn at their own pace (especially when English speech was difficult to understand due to speed and accent). This resulted in students being better equipped to address their individual language challenges as opposed to classroom learning which involves limited time and attention from the instructor. These findings were corroborated by studies on supplementary YouTube-based activities, which found that the combination of audio and visual input increased student engagement and motivation (Hsu, 2014; Almurashi, 2016). These examples document the advantages of integrating Youtube-based activities in the classroom, including increased engagement and availability of different language contexts. The following section will detail further uses of the video streaming site through informal self-directed learning.

Informal Language Learning through YouTube

YouTube-based language learning can continue outside of the classroom and without the guidance of an instructor. Several trends in informal learning through YouTube have shown that students are willing to use it for self-directed learning (Adisti, 2022; Wang & Chen, 2020). Language learning can take place either through videos and pages directly intended for English instruction, or through leisurely engagement taking place in English (such as watching videos, reading subtitles, and commenting in English on videos related to subjects other than language learning). As for the former approach, a study conducted in a university in Taiwan on 20 EFL university students' self-directed viewership of English instructional videos on YouTube corroborated similar perceptions as those documented by Adisti (2022), with viewers reporting that YouTube-based instruction was "more flexible...and more interesting than classroom learning," (Wang & Chen, 2020, pg. 340). They cited the larger number of available resources, the attractiveness of learning English through differentiated instruction, and the possibility of gaining authentic information about the target language culture. Additionally, participants stated that they were more likely to share information through videos and comments with friends than when required to by an in-class activity, creating communities of practice centered around these instructional videos. These communities of practice can also be found in the comments section of non-educational videos that involve translanguaging between two or more languages/cultures. Benson (2015) stated that "the globalization strategies of YouTube create contexts in which commenters are

apt to comment on issues of language and culture raised by the video,” succinctly characterizing the defining feature of the popular video streaming platform concerning language learning. His study employed discourse analysis tools to investigate intercultural learning in comments on videos that featured combinations of English, Mandarin Chinese, and Cantonese translanguaging. The study found that various genres of intercultural exchange occur in the comments section of these videos, including evaluation of language skill and usage, debates on the content of the videos, and negotiation of meaning regarding both cultural and linguistic information. Thus, viewers demonstrated intercultural exchange through translanguaging that went beyond simply reacting to the content of the videos.

Regarding leisure language learning conducted through videos on topics other than English learning, substantial research has been conducted concerning the activities in which learners choose to engage and the specific language skills practiced. In a study involving four seniors enrolled in an EFL course at a private university in Indonesia, Nofrika (2019) divided independent language learning activity choices into three main categories which users chose based on their personal interests; arts and humanities (music videos, films, talk shows, etc), vlogs, and social sciences (“simulations and educational videos”). Despite the videos not being explicitly directed toward language learning, participants reported increased confidence in language practice while simultaneously gaining knowledge in areas of interest. In addition to the aforementioned exploration of interrelated languages and cultures, the study reported that independent YouTube learning also resulted in practice and improvement in language skills typically practiced in the formal classroom. Participants stated that they noticed improvements in listening, speaking, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary (Nofrika, 2019).

Although use of YouTube video streaming as a language learning approach in both formal and informal education has been well-documented, a gap in the research remains concerning the different uses of implicit and explicit language learning activities utilized by self-directed learners. The study presented here will seek to fill this gap by analyzing the implicit and explicit learning methods used by multilingual learners to practice all four language skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Additionally, the study positions this analysis within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic isolation period in March 2020 wherein students did not have access to two of their main sources of language practice: formal classroom instruction and in-person authentic socialization within their target language culture.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study aims to understand what digital activities, if any, multilingual learners engaged in learning during the quarantine period in March 2020 during which time schools were closed and had not yet switched to online learning. Further inquiry into the type, purpose, and explicit or implicit nature of the activities was also recorded. This was established to determine the extent to which learners were able to replace their two primary modes of language acquisition: formal classroom instruction and socialization within the target language culture. The results of the larger study indicated that YouTube was the most widely used digital medium, and was present in both explicit and implicit activities involving listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The present article will further explore the value of YouTube as a language learning tool by addressing the following research questions:

1. How was YouTube used as a self-directed learning tool during the quarantine period of the pandemic?
2. In what ways did the learners’ engagement with YouTube-based activities contribute to their explicit and implicit language practice during the pandemic?

Participants

The six participants in this study were recruited on a voluntary basis from a non-profit adult ESL program run by a church in the southern United States. Participants were all adult women over the age of 40 who came from a variety of sociolinguistic backgrounds. Proficiency levels varied but all were able to read and understand the consent form and participate in the interview in English (high-intermediate and above as described by the ESL program). Table 1 displays their demographics including ages, countries of origin, primary languages, and occupations before quarantine. Aside from those who listed themselves as homemakers, none of the participants were actively employed during the period of study, either because they had retired or were unable to attend work during quarantine.

Table 1
Participant Demographics

	Level in the Program	Country of Origin	Primary L1	Age	Occupation
"Michelle"	6	South Korea	Korean	40	Homemaker/part-time restaurant hostess
"Holly"	4	South Korea	Korean	46	Homemaker
"Hannah"	4	China	Mandarin	60-70	Retired teacher
"Zoey"	4	Iran	Persian (Farsi)	64	Unemployed
"Gloria"	4	China	Mandarin	41	Cancer researcher
"Klara"	6	Belarus	Russian	71	Retired psychiatrist

Interview Protocol

Six interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format according to Smith’s (2005) principles; although there was an area of interest upon which the interview was based, questions were designed to be open-ended to encourage discussion on the part of the participant, with follow-up questions being based on ideas introduced by the respondent (p. 12). Initial discussion questions and recommended follow-up questions are displayed in Appendix 1. The goal was to engage participants in discourse about their online habits conducted in English during the period of study, whether these activities were purposely conducted with the intention of learning English or for another purpose, and whether input alone or a combination of input and output were employed. For example, if a participant answered question 1 (“During the pandemic, how did you spend your time while quarantined?”) by stating that they often used YouTube during their time in quarantine, follow-up questions might pertain to whether they watched or created videos, what the topics of the videos were, and if they ever left comments on videos or engaged in conversation with other viewers through comments. Questions were worded with the intention of soliciting descriptive responses from participants rather than a simple list of the programs and activities they used.

Data Collection and Analysis

This study employed qualitative methods of data collection aimed at gaining an

understanding of what digital activities, if any, language learners used while in isolation that were either intentional or incidental. Following approval from the Institutional Review Board, participants were recruited from the Woodland Baptist Church ESL program and signed informed consent forms detailing the purpose of the study and measures put in place to protect participants' privacy. These included password-protected data storage and the redaction or changing of participants' names in data and in the final written work. Interviews took place via the video chatting app Zoom from November to December 2021 and were recorded using both Zoom's recording feature and a secondary audio recorder. Zoom's auto-transcription feature was used to create transcripts of the interviews which were then manually edited for accuracy using the secondary recordings.

Completed transcripts were analyzed using an implicit/explicit framework based on Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis, with explicit learning being defined as any activity conducted in English with conscious effort of the learner to acquire language skills. Implicit learning activities included any other activities conducted in English for purposes other than language learning but through which learning may have incidentally taken place. The implicit/explicit framework was chosen to investigate if and how participants were able to replace both formal classroom learning (explicit) and exposure to English through interaction with the target language culture (implicit) such as at work, in public spaces, and through leisure or non-language learning activities.

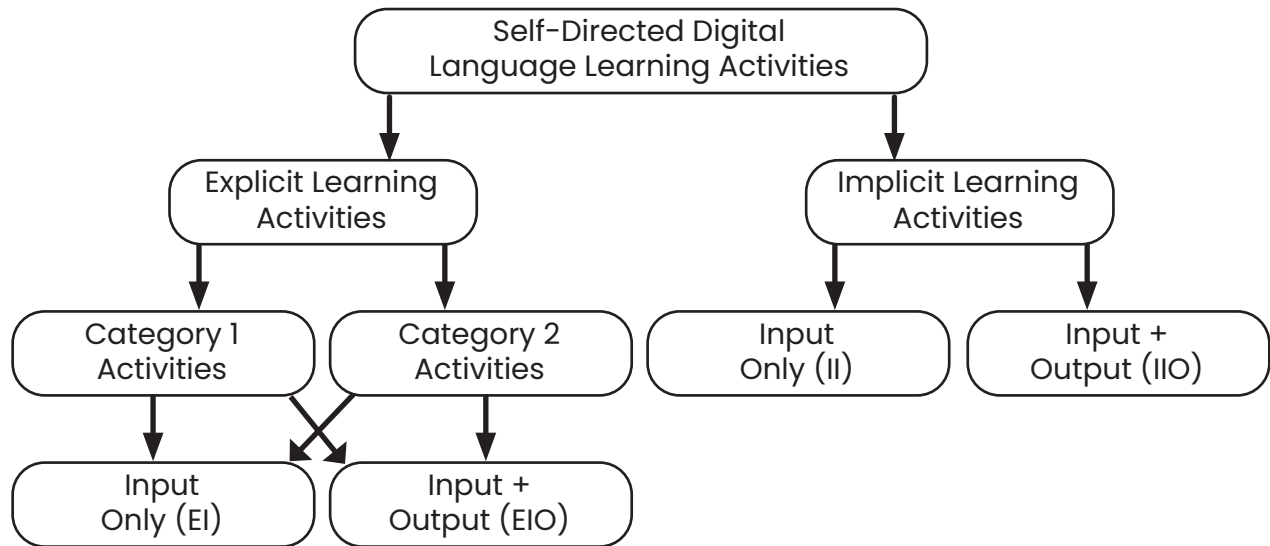
Several trends in data emerged through recursive coding of the data based on grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). An initial round of coding was done to identify all activities and color code them based on their qualification as either explicit or implicit. During a secondary round of coding, each group was sub-grouped based on the activities' use of a combination of receptive and productive skills (reading/writing and/or speaking/listening) or solely receptive skills (reading/listening only). Four coding categories emerged. These were as follows:

1. Explicit, Input-Only (EI): apps, programs, and activities specifically designed/ conducted for the purpose of learning English wherein the participant received input (reading/listening) exclusively,
2. Explicit, Input + Output (EIO): apps, programs, and activities specifically designed/ conducted for the purpose of learning English wherein the participant received input (reading/listening) in addition to producing output (speaking/writing),
3. Implicit, Input-Only (II): apps, programs, and activities conducted in English but designed for purposes other than language learning wherein the participant received input (reading/listening) exclusively, and
4. Implicit, Input + Output (IIO): apps, programs, and activities conducted in English but designed for purposes other than language learning wherein the participant received input (reading/listening) in addition to producing output (speaking/ writing).

A final third round of coding was done to further sub-categorize the explicit groups (EI and EIO) based on learners' intentions to explicitly engage in language learning. Category I explicit activities were those specifically designed for the purpose of language learning; for example, lessons by English teachers recorded and posted on YouTube. Category II explicit activities were those not directly designed for the purpose of language learning but which learners engaged in or augmented for the purpose of practicing English skills; for example, YouTube videos on a variety of topics unrelated to language learning but

supplemented with subtitles in the learner’s first language to directly compare translations. To ensure validity a second rater coded the data for clarity and accuracy of examples. Figure 1 illustrates the sequence of categories that emerged as a result of the grounded theory method employed in data analysis.

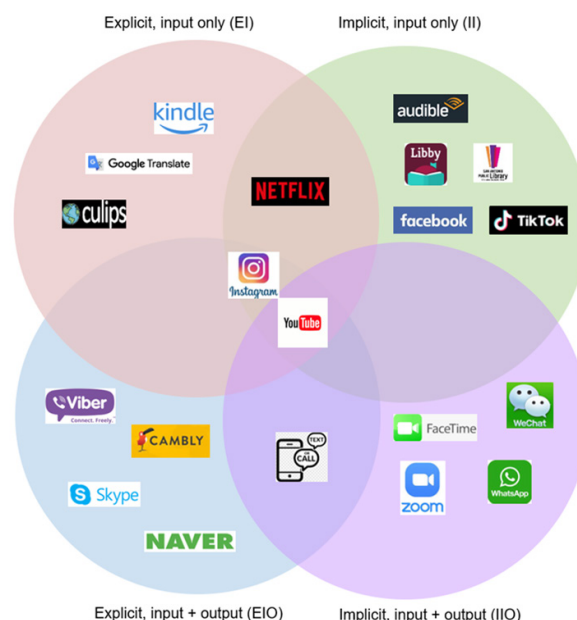
Figure 1
Sequence of Activity Categorization



FINDINGS/DISCUSSION

Based on the data that emerged from analysis during the initial study, three findings were noted concerning the efficacy of YouTube as a language learning tool. Firstly, of the numerous activities used by participants during the period of study, YouTube was the only platform through which activities in all four coding categories took place. Figure 2 illustrates each activity’s position within their respective coding categories based on the activities conducted through them, with YouTube falling in the center at the cross-section of all four.

Figure 2
Venn Diagram of Activities by Code



Based on this figure, it can be seen that participants engaged in both explicit and implicit learning with practice of receptive and productive skills within each category. This finding is significant as it allowed multilingual learners to replace (at least in part) their two primary methods of language acquisition that were compromised by the need to quarantine; formal classroom instruction (explicit) and engagement with the target language culture (implicit). For example, participants used videos posted by English teachers to replicate formal classroom instruction. One participant, Holly, cited several YouTube channels that she subscribes to such as Oliver Ssam, who creates content in both English and Korean with subtitles in both languages. The videos focus on various topics from Ssam's personal life to cultural and historical subjects. Another account that Holly frequents, Cake English, releases monthly videos featuring four common English expressions/idioms with explanations and pronunciation practice specifically intended for L1 Korean speakers. Holly reported sometimes taking notes independently in addition to leaving comments on videos to engage in discussion with other users, combining receptive and productive learning within the explicit category. She states, "So sometimes I write the whole sentence and...I try to memorize." When asked if she ever left comments on videos for other viewers to reply to, she answered, "I say 'very helpful' and sometimes I ask how to use more expressions." Klara also reported leaving her opinion on videos through comments. Implicit learning activities are exemplified by participants viewing videos in English for entertainment purposes. Michelle, Klara, and Hannah all report watching YouTube as a source of news, music, entertainment, and learning of other topics besides English (but still taught in English).

The second finding is that YouTube enabled participants to be exposed to and engage with authentic language similar to what would naturally be encountered in their target language culture had they not been in quarantine due to the pandemic. Holly stated her preference for specifically seeking explicit instruction of idioms and expressions that multilingual learners may struggle with because of their non-literal meaning. The YouTuber Teacher Oliver presented these terms within skits simulating the realistic context within which they would typically be used in an English conversation; Holly describes his lessons style and format as "action life, real life...vlog [about] his lifetime, real lifetime... and then a short word and how to express in English." Implicit YouTube-based activities—such as watching the news in English for updates on the pandemic or watching English videos for entertainment purposes—allowed for even more authentic language input as they contextualized the previously mentioned idioms and expressions in authentic communicative use. These activities also allowed for exposure to American sociopolitical and popular culture topics conveyed through natural tones and rates of speech similar to what participants would encounter through socialization within the public community. Participants Michelle and Klara cited their alignments with different American political parties; Michelle mentioned a preference for left-wing news sources such as CNN, stating that "For awhile they just talk about vaccines all whole years but when you go to FOX, it's not..." Conversely, Klara mentioned watching YouTube videos from former Republican presidential candidate Ben Carson. These findings corroborate Adisti's (2022) findings on the ability of video-based learning improving comprehension of idioms and expressions through the use of authentic context, and Wang & Chen's (2020) speculation into the possibility of gaining cultural knowledge through the wide variety of resources available through video platforms. Participants' communications with other English speakers through YouTube's comment feature further corroborate the findings of Benson & Chan (2010) and Benson (2015) on the usefulness of comments on video platforms to elicit

global exchanges of language and culture. Based on these examples, it is clear that YouTube not only enables self-directed learning but can provide realistic exchanges and contexts that may be limited in a traditional classroom setting.

The third benefit of YouTube-based self-directed language learning is the increased reported engagement with which learners acquire English through videos on topics of personal interest, especially those watched for entertainment and leisure learning purposes. As opposed to the previously mentioned explicit learning videos, of which only two examples were given by participants, a plethora of examples were given regarding videos that participants watched for entertainment or non-English learning purposes. Michelle stated "I watch YouTube a lot...through that I also watch news." She also took an interest in comedy and variety shows such as Jimmy Kimmel and Inside Edition, stating "I watch Inside Edition a lot because it's short clips." Music was also a point of interest, with both Klara and Gloria stating that their English musical tastes were influenced by the ease with which they could comprehend the slow rate and enunciated lyrics. In a discussion of Frank Sinatra's music, Klara stated, "It's so clear English, you can understand all, it's wonderful." Holly, Hannah, and Klara each mentioned using instructional videos to supplement hobbies and/or to replace learning opportunities no longer available during the quarantine period. For example, Holly viewed painting tutorials that "... teach technique and drawing and how to mix the color, it's very helpful to me." Hannah supplemented Zoom piano lessons with an instructor with YouTube instructional videos based on the songs in her study book, in addition to cooking instructional videos. Klara, who also viewed piano instructional videos, watched yoga and exercise videos as well. The findings of the present study regarding viewers' choices based on personal interest fit into Nofrika's (2019) three main categories of videos: arts and humanities (music videos, films, talk shows, etc), vlogs, and social sciences ("simulations and educational videos"). Additionally, participants' increased engagement in commenting on videos pertaining to personal interest corroborates Brook's (2011) study which found decreased levels of anxiety among students commenting on videos they were interested in. Klara presents the most relevant example in her comments on psychology videos which likely included higher level and content-specific vocabulary because of her professional background in the subject. These examples provide evidence of how YouTube-based activities conducted for leisure or for the purpose of learning subjects other than English can result in language practice enhanced by the learner's interest in the topic of the video.

It is important to note an interesting trend regarding implicit learning noted in the data, combining comprehension of input with performance of a task that was impacted by the level of comprehension, which I refer to as task-based input. This was taken from the aforementioned discussion of participant's use of YouTube to supplement instruction of hobbies. This type of activity occurred through participants' watching a YouTube instructional video in English and following along with the instructions to perform an action or create a product. The examples of task-based input given were based on participants' hobbies and supplemented/replaced Zoom lessons or in-person classes they had participated in prior to the beginning of the pandemic. Hannah, for example, supplemented Zoom piano classes with piano instructional YouTube videos, as well as cooking instruction videos. Klara also stated that she practiced piano with YouTube video lessons and adds, "Sometimes I see the videos with yoga exercises or home exercises and try to do [the] exercises too." Holly stated, "I watched the YouTube to learn painting....They teach technique and drawing and how to mix the color, it's very helpful to me." Because

participants were following along with the instruction of the video while performing the task being taught, a certain level of comprehension was required to achieve the desired result. Unlike teacher-centered learning, task-based input cannot provide immediate differentiated feedback based on the learner's individual performance; however, visual demonstrations aided in the acquisition of new or incomprehensible input and learners had the opportunity to progress at their own pace and rewind/review instructions to ensure optimal comprehension.

MAIN LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although the evidence of the present study strongly suggests the utility of YouTube in self-directed learning and learners' willingness to engage with the application, these findings are limited by the study's institutional context, sample size, and the lack of male participants. These findings could be strengthened by replicating the study across numerous institutions with learners from multiple proficiency levels and more varied demographics. Further research could also investigate the effectiveness of acquiring language as a result of learners' self-directed practice.

MAIN APPLICATIONS AND IMPACT

Although this study focused on self-directed learning outside of the formal classroom, several pedagogical implications can be drawn from these observations. Participants' willingness to engage more with culturally and personally relevant material highlights the necessity of incorporating culturally responsive materials in the classroom. Corroborating the findings of Brook (2011), participants also exhibited more willingness to communicate in the comments section when discussing topics of personal interest. Additionally, the multimodality of YouTube and the various receptive and expressive activities that participants engaged in provide demonstrate the potential for classroom implementation. YouTube can be used as a formal learning tool to present full or partial lesson components that combine audio and visual support. Assignments involving posting and watching and communicating through comments allow practice of all four language skills while building students' technological literacy as well. Based on these findings, YouTube is no longer a video platform for leisure or passive learning but can be augmented to contribute to students' formal education and greatly enhance comprehension.

CONCLUSION

The study from which this data was drawn aimed to investigate how adult multilingual learners self-directed learning through explicit and implicit digital learning activities. Participants were interviewed about the online activities they engaged in during the mandatory quarantine period of March 2020 when all learning institutions were closed and had not yet made the switch to online learning. Among their responses, YouTube was mentioned most frequently and was the only application relevant to all four coding categories, including examples of both receptive and productive language practice. Participants used YouTube both as a way to replace their formal education—through videos created by instructors and aimed at teaching specific language features—and socialization within their target language culture through interactions in the comments section.

A closer examination of the benefits of YouTube as a learning resource adds to the current body of research concerning its effectiveness in providing a wider range of topics to learn from than would be available in a traditional low-tech classroom, including the potential to learn from authentic language sources as opposed to those artificially designed for the sole purpose of language instruction. During the quarantine period when students had access to neither their formal classroom instruction nor direct socialization in English within a broader social context, learners demonstrated motivation to replace these learning avenues with YouTube-based activities. Even in activities conducted for leisure or studying subjects other than English, students were able to familiarize themselves with authentic contextualized speech (such as idioms and expressions) and political and popular culture elements of their target language culture. Participants demonstrated a willingness to take their video-watching a step further by demonstrating comprehension through the performance of tasks based on input.

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Pre-service Teachers Perspectives on Game-Based Activities for Enhancing EFL Learning

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ABSTRACT

The present research explores the impact of game-based activities on pre-service EFL teachers' perspectives during their English language learning journey. It employed a qualitative approach to research and was based on the case of seven pre-service EFL teachers who attained an interest in learning English and reached an upper-intermediate language level before finishing their university studies. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data from the participants. Subsequently, the method used to analyze the data was Grounded Theory to interpret, compare, and report the findings. Results revealed that the implementation of game-based activities could help pre-service EFL teachers improve their language skills as it could allow them to develop more interactions with others.

KEY WORDS:

Game-based activities, games implementation, language learning games, language skills.

RESUMEN

La presente investigación tiene como objetivo explorar, desde las perspectivas de profesores en formación de inglés como lengua extranjera, el impacto que tuvieron las actividades basadas en juegos durante su trayecto de aprendizaje de este idioma. Se empleó un enfoque cualitativo de la investigación y se basó en el caso de siete profesores de EFL en formación quienes mostraron interés por el aprendizaje del inglés y alcanzaron el nivel intermedio-alto antes de finalizar sus estudios universitarios. Se utilizaron entrevistas semiestructuradas para recoger los datos de los participantes. Posteriormente, el método utilizado para analizar los datos fue la Teoría Fundamentada para interpretar, comparar e informar los resultados. Los resultados revelaron que la implementación de actividades basadas en juegos podría ayudar a los profesores de inglés en formación a mejorar sus destrezas lingüísticas al interactuar oralmente con otros interlocutores.

PALABRAS CLAVE:

Actividades basadas en juegos, aplicación de juegos, habilidades lingüísticas, juegos de aprendizaje de idiomas.

Introduction

Game-based activities can enhance motivation and attitude towards learning a language. It is particularly transcendental to explore pre-service EFL teachers' perspectives on using game-based activities to develop English language skills inside the classroom. Their perspectives are based on their self-language learning experiences as former EFL students. The relevance of exploring pre-service EFL teachers' perspectives relies on the fact that they could constitute the basis for their professional teaching practice.

Studies have established a relationship between motivation and language achievement, especially on English tests (Lukmani, 1972; Olshtain et al., 1990; Setiyadi, 2020). One of the most recognizable is Gardner and Lambert's (1972) study, which classified motivation into two branches: integrative and instrumental motivation. The first relates to students' reasons to be part of another culture. In contrast, the second one includes motives to acquire a language to attain instrumental goals. Another perspective regarding motivation is based on self-determination theory (SDT). This theory explores how social contexts and individual differences allow different types of motivation to emerge and predict learning, performance, experience, and psychological health (Decy & Ryan, 2015). As a result, this theory allows motivation to be categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic (Dörnyei, 1994). This perspective was chosen because it matches the research objective: explore each student's perspectives towards game-based activities, specifically how they may influence English learning outside and inside the classroom.

Literature review

Attitudes towards learning a language are associated with students' actions in the classroom. That action may derive from how students develop their language skills. There are two levels of self-confidence that especially influence a student's communication ability. The first level is situational self-esteem, or "state of communicative self-confidence," and the second is a global level called "L2 self-confidence". "Both factors of self-confidence take on important roles in determining one's willingness to communicate" (Brown, 2000, p.146). This exemplifies the relevance of creating adequate learning environments and the selection of learning activities that match students' needs and attitudes toward learning English.

Regarding learning activities, the attention is focused on game-based activities. They are defined as a set of activities that expand the symbolic and imaginative aspects in which there is play, leisure, and pleasure (Calderón et al., 2014). These activities promote a sense of freedom and relaxation time (Sivan, 2014). That is why it is considered that these activities enhance students' sense of motivation. Consequently, a motivated learner expends effort, is persistent and attentive to the task, has goals, desires, and aspirations, enjoys the activity, makes attributions concerning success and failure, and uses strategies to achieve goals (Liu, 2015).

Game-based activities are characterized by being developed at a specific moment of the class. Additionally, these activities provide people with physical, spiritual, and creative power by relieving physical and mental fatigue (Sağcan, 1986). Furthermore, these activities are not utilitarian activities, i.e., they do not provide any material reward. Also, they can be classified as

individual or group-based; the latter can be competitive or collaborative. In this regard, they can be classified as sport-recreational, outdoor, artistic and manual creation, cultural consumption, socio-family, relaxation, and hobbies or pastimes (Özbey & Çelebi, 2011; Stebbins, 2012; Tekin et al., 2009).

Finally, research done regarding the use of game-based activities has revealed that electronic games such as Kahoot! have been a positive influence on higher education students learning different scientific fields (Ares et al., 2018; Tan et al., 2018; Wang & Tahir 2020). However, studies have yet to be conducted about what game-based activities mean for the individual and what they gain from them. Therefore, one of the reasons for developing the present study was to explore the aspects that can shape game-based activities in language acquisition.

Methodology

Research design

The present study adopted a qualitative approach. This approach involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences and data about lived experiences, emotions, or behaviors and the meanings that people attribute to them. This research sought to analyze words, their meanings, concepts, and opinions. Especial attention was paid to what an audience thinks and why they have a certain opinion (Creswell, 1998).

Furthermore, the research design adopted was a descriptive case study. This design is considered to facilitate "the investigation and understanding of complex phenomena in their real-world settings" (Bibri, 2020, case study research section, para.1). Since the objective of this research was to describe each of the attitudes and methods applied in the use of English learning, this design was selected. Additionally, the research had a cross-sectional scope. This scope is characterized by observing and describing data at a specific time. Furthermore, participants were chosen from an available population of interest for the study question (Setia, 2016; Wang & Cheng, 2020; Zuleika & Legiran, 2022).

Data collection and analysis methods

Regarding the data collection methods, it was selected a semi-structured interview. It is a common type of interview whose objective is to turn the interview into a more natural conversation with the interviewee (Gillham, 2000). Through a semi-structured interview, people share their feelings, ideas, opinions, beliefs, and experiences and the meaning they give to that experience (Seidman, 2006). The instrument associated with this method was an interview guide. It contained 6 subsections related to personal information, learning context, game-based activities, language skills, motivation and attitude, and the role of the English teacher.

The data gathered was analyzed based on grounded theory (GT). This is a general methodology for developing a theory grounded in systematically collected and analyzed data. Therefore, it is viewed as both a process and product of social research (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 2009). Using the basis of Grounded Theory, the data collected were interpreted systematically, and then classified into categories. The categories were formed from the researchers' interpretation of interviews. Subsequently, they were compared and supported by interweaving their interpretation and what the literature states on the identified topic. That is how the comparative analysis between the information interpreted from theory and interviews was developed.

Context, participants, and procedure

The context where this research was developed is a university in Mexico, located in the southeast of the country, in the town of Xalapa, Veracruz. The institution has a large area where there are several faculties. The selected setting was the language school, which has a bachelor's degree program in English language. The degree covers several courses, the focus of which is on English language proficiency, as well as on translation, teaching, and English literature. The language school is integrated by coordination, administrative area, and the teaching staff working in groups. It has approximately 54 classrooms organized to support a population between 2000 and 2,200 students. The staff consists of approximately 37 professors dedicated to teaching English levels from A1 to C1, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Foreign Languages (CEFR), as well as teaching subjects related to translation, teaching, and English literature.

The participants of this study were seven students (four female and three male) aged between 19 to 42 who willingly accepted to participate. All of them are studying the English language major at the Universidad Veracruzana. They possessed an intermediate to an upper-intermediate English language level, according to the CEFR. Four out of the seven participants held a language certification; one had a TOELF certification with a score of 92 points; another had an Exaver 3 certification with a B result; and two of them had an Exaver 1 certificate with an A and B result, respectively.

Finally, all the interviews were voice-recorded with a smartphone. This tool was important for the researchers because it provided the advantage of preserving the information to listen to, transcribe, and analyze as many times as they wanted. It is also important to mention that the real names of the interviewed students were kept anonymous, so they are named Participant 1 (P1), and so forth. This coding was adopted due to ethical considerations, especially regarding privacy and confidentiality (Cacciattolo,2015).

Results and discussion

This study was conducted with the intention of obtaining data on the different perspectives that each student has regarding their English learning process. Once data was gathered, an interpretation process was developed based on what people said and what was found by the researcher. As a result, four categories emerged under which the information was classified. These are the four emerging categories: the focus of game-based activities towards English language learning at an early age, improving language skills in the performance of game-based activities, building trust and bonding among students through game-based activities, and previous and current perspectives about learning English after the implementation of game-based activities.

The focus of game-based activities towards English language learning at an early age

This research has collected data on how the seven participants have developed their approach to the English language through game-based activities and games throughout their lives. All seven participants shared one aspect in common: they all started with English with some activity or game that familiarized them with learning English.

Pues bueno, en mi caso, sí me gustaba desde la secundaria por la forma en que me enseñó una maestra de ahí, interactuábamos entre nosotros, pero ya cuando terminé mi primera carrera, yo quise ir a estudiar extranjero y esa fue mi motivación. O sea, como que dije que era el idioma que ya más manejaba,

más que francés, y eso fue lo que me motivó a buscar clases particulares y ya después estudiar por mi propia cuenta.

(Participant 1)

Participant 1's first contact with English was through an activity carried out in high school; the activity demanded him to interact with his classmates. This is an important point since he emphasizes that it helped him get closer to the language; he was motivated to seek and learn more about it.

In some of their answers, the participants said that they mixed their desire to learn English with playing games and participating in game-based activities. The following three excerpts give an account of how a game-based activity motivated three participants to learn English.

Sí, uno de mis mejores amigos se llama Andrés, él mayormente me metió a este mundo del idioma, me motivó a estudiar inglés y más que nada también los videojuegos, eso ha sido lo más importante en realidad. Cuando tenía cinco años, me regalaron la Nintendo sesenta y cuatro con un casete del Zelda La ocarina del tiempo, y todo bien, el juego estaba en inglés, y literalmente solo era lo que dios me da a entender, y llegué hasta la ciudad de Hyrule y ya hasta ahí me quedé en el juego, pero continué estudiando el idioma porque realmente no me gusta dejar todo a medias, así qué hasta que tuviera el nivel suficiente volvería a pasarme el juego.

(Participant 5)

Pues bueno, entré en contacto con el inglés por mis padres durante un viaje a Oaxaca porque como sabes que voy cada fin de año a ese lugar, bueno pues hubo un año en específico donde encontré a extranjeros y me llamó mucho la atención entender lo que decían, entonces cuando regresé empecé poco a poco estudiar por mi cuenta el idioma empezando a poner mis videojuegos en inglés fue muy difícil, pero con mi mamá que ella es maestra, pude aprenderlo mediante juegos y actividades que ella adaptaba.

(Participant 6)

Bueno en mi caso, el primer contacto que tuve con el inglés fue en secundaria, al principio era algo que no entendía y ese tipo de cosas me desagradaba y no les doy ya más importancia, pero cuando entré a la preparatoria encontré mucho más complicado el inglés, pero por suerte conocí a un compañero ahí que pudo enseñarme bien y de una forma divertida y que no sabía que se podía aprender.

(Participant 7)

Participant 5 mentioned some aspects of his life that involve video games and how, through games, he discovered the English language. As a result of his curiosity about the language, he has immersed himself in learning it. In fact, according to Gee (2004), video games are like a learning identity itself: «Learning involves assuming and playing with identities so that the learner has real alternatives and ample opportunity to mediate the relationship between new and old identities» (p. 83).

Furthermore, participants 6 and 7 mentioned that these game-based activities have helped them to raise their spontaneous interest in learning English at various points in their lives. What is more, game-based activities «motivate, entertain and teach [students] to discover and value the beauty of language as a means of communication» (Uberman, 1998, p.20). In this sense,

participants 6 and 7 may have unconsciously learned that through games, they are developing social, emotional, and intrapersonal abilities (Veraksa et al., 2022).

Improving language skills in the performance of game-based activities

In this category, the students' answers about how they increased their English level by applying game-based activities in their daily and school lives are reported. A series of excerpts gives an account of how participants have improved their language skills. For instance, participant 1 said that he has improved his vocabulary in English owing to his participation in game-based activities.

Sí. Bueno, más que recreativa, ha habido varias dinámicas aquí en la escuela, ya han sido aquí en la facultad de idiomas. Y sí, algunas, por ejemplo, para vocabulario, algunas de las actividades, como ejemplo, adivinar o la palabra, pero ya eran parejas y ya la pareja te tenía que decir escribir o una actividad así por medio de dibujos. Y ya uno tenía que adivinarlo, es la palabra. El vocabulario ha sido lo que más me ha ayudado. ¿Por qué? Y bueno, vocabulario porque son lo mismo. Son palabras que a veces yo no recuerdo o pienso que sí, pero a la mejor ahora no.

(Participant 1)

In addition to the first comment, there were different responses where participants shared their experiences about how their English-speaking skills have greatly improved. In the following excerpts, the importance they place on this when learning a language is made evident:

Yo creo que el speaking, más que nada, el speaking, porque lo practicas y como son juegos o así, este, con otras personas eso lo pones en práctica en tu entorno, la interacción, aprendes nuevo vocabulario

(Participant 2)

Yo creo que sí, más bien speaking. Speaking. Porque la mayoría de las veces son actividades te te empujan a hablar a nuestra actividad.

(Participant 6)

Pues, ayuda mucho porque, de ese modo, practicas el inglés y a la vez te diviertes y también interactúas con tus compañeros, así que, de cierto modo, practicas tanto speaking como Grammar y vocabulario.

(Participant 7)

The three participants seemed aware of the value a learning game has for them. They commented that their speaking and reading skills, vocabulary, and grammar have especially improved. These aspects resonate with what some authors have expressed about the benefits of using communication games in the language classroom. These kinds of games employed as a pedagogical strategy provide dynamic, playful, and fun environments in which students will progressively enjoy and participate in a more autonomous and spontaneous way (Salazar & Villamil, 2012; Talak-Kiryk, 2010).

Game-based activities can also be used to develop reading skills. This skill allows students to expand their horizons by gathering written information, processing it, and then comprehending their surrounding environment (Hornery et al., 2014). Game-based activities can also promote

this aspect. In the following excerpt, Participant 4 seemed to be conscious of their value for his reading skill development and game use.

Yo creo que todas son importantes porque cada una se necesita con la otra, pero las habilidades que más listening, porque siento que es de lo más importante cuando tienes interacción con algún hablante nativo, tratas de entender, comunicarte con ellos y pues por eso me he enfocado más en mejorar esa habilidad que las, que también son muy importantes claro.

(Participant 4)

The use of games during the teaching and learning process allows teachers to enhance students' talents and affective domains (Mortini, 2017). Furthermore, games help students improve their emission (production) and comprehension of language utterances. As a result, learners become more fluent speakers and readers in English (Mortini, 2017; Wiesendanger et al., 2009).

Building trust and bonding among students through game-based activities

In this category, the interviewees' opinions on how they created motivation and attitudes toward learning English are reported. It often happens that during the learning process, there are moments when learners get stuck due to a lack of motivation or incentive. Therefore, teachers must find alternatives to enhance students' confidence in their learning process. A viable alternative is the use of game-based activities that are executed in pairs or teams. These two excerpts show how important it is for students to work on team or pair-based game-based activities.

Sí, yo siento que sí, porque fomenta mucho el que uno sepa o haga equipo en estas actividades y también que te ayuden, si es que tú no entiendes la actividad o tú ayudar a tu pareja o a los miembros del equipo a que puedan realizarla.

(Participant 3)

Yo me siento que dentro te ayuda mucho la interacción con los compañeros y también aprender, porque muchas veces no sabes exactamente o no eres experto en el tema y tus compañeros te ayudan mucho a ver tus errores. Y fuera, yo siento que es más como introspección, o sea, ¿qué necesito yo reforzar y buscas el material? Entonces, siento que eso te ayuda mucho también a que tú sepas tus debilidades y atacarlas.

(Participant 1)

Participants 3 and 1 revealed that participating in games motivated them to learn English. These findings reinforce theoretical assumptions regarding the use of team-based game-based activities. It is said that those activities enhance students' learning motivation. Additionally, they provide students with opportunities to employ language in real-life scenarios (Wang, 2010). For game-based activities to offer such insightful achievements, it is necessary that the teacher consider "students' learning styles, their willingness to cooperate, and their current state of mind" (Klimova, 2015, p.1159).

Another aspect to which game-based activities have contributed is creating a sense of external motivation. Participants 5 and 6 revealed that extrinsic motivation could be an important factor that may have had a fundamental effect on their development of communicative competence.

Este, por ejemplo, no sé, puedo a la, más que nada, en un No, no en el mero Aula,

pero sí hablando en cuestión de para temas de conversación o por el estilo, o también es, este, gente que tienen mis mismos intereses, podemos hablar de lo mismo y ahí se abre una conversación interesante y eso me permite ser más interactivo en el entorno, me da la confianza.

(Participant 5)

Pues sí, he notado realmente una mejora en mis habilidades que gracias a eso tengo más confianza a la hora de hablar, a decir verdad, las veces que empecé a jugar varios videojuegos en inglés, eso hizo que tomara las iniciativas en varios momentos de mi vida.

(Participant 6)

According to Harmer (2007), “[extrinsic] motivation is essential for success” (p.98). Consistent with Harmer’s idea, Participants 5 and 6 mentioned that, at some point in their childhood, playing or interacting with these activities in English was why they were interested in learning the language. This type of motivation influences students to seek a reward, such as recognition for progressing in English language learning. For this reason, extrinsic motivation is configured from external situations that generate interest in people participating in the activities without being a priority. The same situation happens with English language learning: the student participates in class activities only because there is a need that forces him to do so; otherwise, he is not interested in participating (Álvarez, 2020).

Previous and current perspectives about learning English after the implementation of game-based activities

In this last category, the interviewees gave their opinion on how game-based activities have changed their perspectives. The 7 participants shared similar impressions on how game-based activities have helped them pursue learning English at subsequent learning levels. For instance, Participants 3 and 6 highlight self-reflection on areas of improvement based on the use of games and how Participant 7 changed her mind about learning English due to the use of game-based activities. In other words, this kind of activity has fostered students’ motivation to acquire the English language.

Sí, yo siento que sí, porque fomenta mucho el que uno sepa o haga equipo en estas actividades y también que te ayuden, si es que tú no entiendes la actividad o tú ayudar a tu pareja o a los miembros del equipo a que puedan realizarla. Yo me siento que dentro te ayuda mucho la interacción con los compañeros y también aprender, porque muchas veces no sabes exactamente o no eres experto en el tema y tus compañeros te ayudan mucho a ver tus errores.

(Participant 3)

Con todo esto, realmente me han sido útiles todas las actividades y también lo de aplicar los juegos como enseñanza que adaptaba mi mamá y me ha dado ese cambio de perspectiva en cuanto aprender un idioma, como sabemos estudiar uno te cambia, te involucra más, tienes más interés por las cosas y eso te crea unas facilidades para tu entorno social.

(Participant 6)

La verdad si no hubiera sido por mi amigo no hubiera encontrado esta forma de ver el inglés, me ayudó muchísimo a ver otras formas de estudiar con otras

materias, no solo con el inglés, las actividades recreativas que mencionas me han ayudado a crear en mi mente muchas actividades en mente que me gustaría enseñar cuando ejerza la profesión de docente, sí, eso.

(Participant 7)

In the field of languages, motivation positively influences the learner and the success of their learning. In this regard, Brown (2000) claims that each person's reasons for learning or studying a language are divided into intrinsic and extrinsic motives. Those who learn for their own self-perceived needs and goals are intrinsically motivated; those who pursue a goal only to receive an external reward from another person are extrinsically motivated. That is why a motivated learner expends their effort, are persistent and attentive to the task at hand, have goals, desires, and aspirations, enjoy the activity, and make attributions concerning success and failure (Liu, 2015).

Conclusion

After reporting and discussing the emerging data, it was found that, according to interviewees, game-based activities have helped them improve their English learning process. These kinds of activities have allowed them to express what they thought about the topic of the activity. The participants of this study also gave an account of how game-based activities have helped them perform not only at school but also in their daily life decisions.

Students' participation in games and game-based activities has supported their English vocabulary acquisition process. Such vocabulary acquisition is why they perceive themselves as more fluent in language use. It was also shown that, in the context of the participants of this study, the use of game-based activities has positively impacted their language acquisition progression. They reported acquiring vocabulary and phrases more naturally due to their early exposure to the language. Such exposure has allowed them to be introduced to new cultures and languages by searching for series, listening to music, and watching cartoons online.

However, this language development did not seem academically relevant for the participants; they adopted it and made it part of their lives. The seven participants mentioned acquiring English by watching cartoons, listening to music, interacting with video games and people from abroad, or performing some activities in their early school years. Therefore, they seemed to have developed their vocabulary repertoire unconsciously; as a result, they were only able to successfully develop one of the language skills of the language and not all of the aspects required for being communicative competent.

Finally, some pedagogical alternatives could be suggested to improve the English learning process in Mexico. Implementing audiovisual material, such as using game-based activities combined with videos, cartoons, music, and even the interaction of some game/video games, could help students improve their academic English learning. Such activities could allow students to develop the ability to speak through interaction with more real English and extend beyond educational materials.

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AI and Play-Based Learning in Early English Education

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and play-based learning to enhance the motivation and vocabulary retention of young children learning English as a second language. Conducted under the Delfin program across early childhood education centers in Colima, Mexico, and Villavicencio, Colombia, this research aims to identify effective AI techniques and game elements that foster language acquisition among three- and four-year-old children. The study uses Buddy.ai, an AI-powered educational tool, to provide personalized lessons and interactive activities designed to engage and support young learners. This report presents findings from the Colima case, as the study of Villavicencio will occur once the researcher returns to Colombia. The research highlights the potential of AI and game-based learning to transform early childhood education. The findings underscore the importance of innovative educational technologies in creating engaging, adaptive, and effective learning environments, paving the way for future advancements in language education for young children.

KEY WORDS:

Artificial Intelligence, Play-Based Learning, Early Childhood Education, English Language Learning, Educational Technology

RESUMEN

Este estudio explora la integración de la inteligencia artificial (IA) y el aprendizaje basado en el juego para mejorar la motivación y la retención de vocabulario de niños pequeños que aprenden inglés como segunda lengua. Realizado bajo el programa Delfin en centros de educación infantil en Colima, México, y Villavicencio, Colombia, esta investigación tiene como objetivo identificar técnicas efectivas de IA y elementos de juego que fomenten la adquisición del lenguaje en niños de tres y cuatro años. Utilizando Buddy.ai, una herramienta educativa impulsada por IA, el estudio proporciona lecciones personalizadas y actividades interactivas diseñadas para involucrar y apoyar a los jóvenes estudiantes. Para este informe, presentamos los hallazgos

del caso Colima, ya que el caso Villavicencio será explorado cuando el investigador regrese a Colombia. La investigación destaca el potencial de la IA y el aprendizaje basado en el juego para transformar la educación infantil. Los hallazgos subrayan la importancia de las tecnologías educativas innovadoras para crear entornos de aprendizaje atractivos, adaptativos y efectivos, allanando el camino para futuros avances en la enseñanza de idiomas para niños pequeños.

PALABRAS CLAVE:

Inteligencia Artificial, Aprendizaje Basado en el Juego, Educación Infantil, Aprendizaje del Idioma Inglés, Tecnología Educativa

Introduction

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies and integration into educational settings has opened new avenues for enhancing the learning processes (Ng et al., 2021; Kewalramani et al., 2021). This study occurred in a daycare center in Colima, Mexico, and will take place in Villavicencio, Colombia, under the same circumstances. AI and play-based learning approaches are the axes of the research used to analyze the characteristics of teaching English vocabulary among three- and four-year-old children. The motivation behind this research stems from the unique challenges faced in early language education, particularly in maintaining engagement and ensuring vocabulary retention among young learners. By leveraging AI and interactive play, this study aims to explore innovative methods to address these challenges.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to revolutionize early childhood education through the integration of AI and play-based learning. With a growing body of evidence supporting the effectiveness of personalized and adaptive learning technologies, this study seeks to contribute to understanding how these technologies can be applied to enhance language learning outcomes for young children. A coherent expectation of the study is that the findings provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and technology developers, paving the way for more effective and engaging educational practices.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate how artificial intelligence (AI) and play-based learning can enhance the motivation and vocabulary retention of three- and four-year-old children learning English as a second language. The research aims to identify specific AI techniques and play elements that most effectively promote language acquisition in this age group. The study also seeks to compare the outcomes of these interventions across different educational settings in Mexico and Colombia, providing a comprehensive understanding of their impact and adaptability.

Literature Review

From the perspective of Artificial Intelligence in education, AI is recognized for its potential to emulate human cognitive functions such as perception, learning, and prediction (Solanki et al., 2020; and Ayuso & Gutiérrez, 2022). Besides, the evolution of AI since its recognition as an academic discipline in 1956 has seen significant advancements, especially in the educational sector (Russell & Norvig, 2016), and its implications in education can revolutionize early childhood learning by providing personalized and adaptive learning experiences (Su & Yang, 2022 and Zhang, & Aslan, 2021).

Some authors affirm that, when considering Play-Based Learning, playing is essential in early

childhood education. It promotes engagement, motivation, and cognitive development (Piaget, 1951) because it integrates educational content with playful activities, making learning enjoyable and effective for young children (Zhao, 2023). Combining AI and PBL, or integrating both, offers a unique approach to early childhood education (Su & Chu, 2023). AI can provide real-time feedback and personalized learning paths, while PBL ensures that learning remains engaging and motivating for children. Additionally, studies have shown that AI-powered educational tools, such as Buddy.ai, can significantly enhance vocabulary retention and motivation among young learners by using interactive and playful activities (Buddy.ai 2024., Vartiainen et al., 2020 and Baidoo-Anu & Ansah, 2023).

It is essential to consider the implied challenges; while AI can transform education, data quality, teacher training, and data privacy must be addressed (Zdravkova, 2022). The ethical implications of using AI in education must also ensure responsible and practical implementation (Su & Yang, 2022 and; Su et al., 2023).

Relevance to the Research Problem:

The primary research problem addressed in this study is *the need for more knowledge and deepening our understanding of maintaining engagement and ensuring vocabulary retention among three- and four-year-old children learning English as a second language* (Lin et al., 2020 y; Chen et al., 2020). The authors affirm that traditional teaching methods often struggle to keep young learners motivated and actively participating in their language-learning process. This study investigates whether integrating AI and play-based learning can address these issues by providing personalized, engaging, and interactive educational experiences.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, utilizing a multiple case study design to explore the implementation and effects of AI and play-based learning in early childhood education (Stake, 1998; and Yin, 2024). The qualitative approach allows an in-depth understanding of these educational interventions' interactions, experiences, and outcomes (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2017).

This report covers part of the research conducted in an early childhood education center in Colima, Mexico, which is case one or the Colima Case. Participants included three- and four-year-old children enrolled in English language programs at these centers. These sites were selected based on their diverse educational contexts and willingness to integrate AI and play-based learning into their curricula.

Following ethical guidelines for research involving human participants, ethics approval was obtained from the daycare [Estancia Infantil]. Informed consent was also collected from the caregivers or persons responsible for the children involved in the study. The participants' anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the research process, ensuring that all data were handled with strict adherence to ethical standards.

Research Questions

The main question was: *How does using AI-powered educational tools influence vocabulary retention in three- and four-year-old children learning English?* In addition, there were two subsidiary questions: What is the impact of play-based learning activities on the motivation and

engagement of young English learners? How do the educational outcomes of AI and play-based interventions differ between early childhood education settings in Mexico and Colombia?

Research Objectives

For better coherence with the questions, the main objective was *to analyze the effectiveness of AI-powered educational tools in enhancing vocabulary retention among young learners. The specific objectives were to describe the impact of play-based learning activities on children's motivation and engagement in language learning. A third specific objective is to compare the educational outcomes of AI and play-based interventions in early childhood education centers in Colima, Mexico, and Villavicencio, Colombia, once the second part of the research concludes.*

Data collection was through participant observations and analysis of educational tools and materials. The AI-powered educational tool Buddy.ai delivered the children with personalized lessons and interactive activities. The AI-powered educational tool Buddy.ai was selected for this study due to its specialized design for early language learners. Unlike other AI tools, Buddy.ai focuses on gamified, interactive lessons tailored specifically to young children, offering age-appropriate language activities that are engaging and effective. Its ability to personalize lessons and adapt to each child's pace of learning made it a suitable choice for the objectives of this research. This tool delivered personalized lessons and interactive activities to the children (Buddy.ai et al., 2024).

Observations focused on children's interactions with the tool, their engagement in play-based activities, and their vocabulary retention. The non-participative notes in the field note instrument provided additional insights into the implementation process and the perceived impact of the interventions. Data were analyzed using ChatGPT under the principles of the Grounded Theory analysis of Charmaz (2014) to identify critical patterns and themes related to the research objectives (Saldana, 2015).

Main Findings

The study explores the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Play-Based Learning (PBL) on the motivation and vocabulary retention of young children learning English as a second language. The research focuses on early childhood education centers in Colima, Mexico, under the framework of the Delfin program. Here are the synthesized findings:

Enhanced Vocabulary Retention: Buddy.ai, an AI-powered educational tool, significantly improved children's vocabulary retention compared to traditional learning methods. The tool's interactive and personalized approach kept children engaged and facilitated better learning outcomes, especially when there was close and friendly teacher support (Bronfenbrenner, 1987).

IS1: Demonstrated good interaction with the technology, managing the iPad provided for the activity very well - Worked in a very receptive manner and showed a good understanding of English by comprehending the dialogues given by the AI. - At the end of the trial period with the AI, they did not want to stop and wished to continue the activity. | Good interaction with technology, Receptivity, and comprehension of English, High motivation to continue (Filed Notes; Subject 1, Day One)

Increased Motivation and Engagement: Play-based activities, integrated with AI, boosted children's motivation and sustained their interest in learning English. The engaging nature of the

activities and the interactive feedback provided by the AI tool contributed to higher levels of participation and enjoyment. A key point to increase motivation and interest is the role of the teacher as a facilitator (Ge et al., 2021).

ISI: Presented with a positive attitude, though a bit shy. – Understood the AI's operation and followed the instructions for the activity. – Was willing to collaborate and maintained a good attitude. – Received help from the classroom monitor, who assisted in answering questions that were not understood. – Despite not having a good level of English, showed interest in learning and understanding what was presented (Filed Notes; Subject 4, Day One)

Comparison of Educational Settings: Although the findings from Villavicencio, Colombia, will be explored later, the initial results from Colima suggest that AI and PBL (Play-Based Learning) have the potential to work effectively in different educational contexts. The flexible nature of the AI tool allows for its use in various settings, accommodating diverse learning needs and preferences. While promising, these preliminary findings require further research to confirm how well these tools function across diverse educational environments. Fomichov and Fomichova (1995) reinforce this potential by grounding it in the principles of artificial intelligence theory.

Challenges and Considerations: Despite the positive outcomes, the study also highlights challenges in implementing AI in education. These include the need for high-quality data, adequate teacher training, and addressing data privacy concerns. The study emphasizes the importance of fully addressing these challenges to leverage the benefits of AI in early childhood education. Vartiainen et al. (2020) affirm that training is essential in early learning scenarios, especially when using AI.

Based on the findings, the study proposes the following: firstly, an integration of AI and PBL in Curricula. Schools and early childhood education centers should consider integrating AI and play-based learning activities into their curricula. These tools can provide personalized learning experiences that cater to the individual needs of young learners, making education more engaging and effective, according to Sweller (1988) and Paas and Sweller (2010). Secondly, Teacher Training and Support implies that teachers should receive adequate training on using AI tools and integrating them with play-based learning strategies to ensure successful implementation. Ongoing support and professional development are crucial to help educators adapt to new technologies and methodologies.

Conclusions.

The study's main findings indicate that integrating AI and play-based learning significantly enhanced vocabulary retention and motivation among young learners. Children who participated in the AI-powered lessons showed marked improvements in vocabulary acquisition compared to those who engaged in traditional learning methods. Play-based activities boosted engagement and sustained interest in language learning, making the educational experience more enjoyable and effective. The comparative analysis revealed that while both educational settings benefited from the interventions, certain contextual factors influenced the extent of their impact.

The study concludes that AI and play-based learning holds great promise for enhancing early childhood education, particularly in the context of English language learning. The findings underscore the importance of incorporating personalized and interactive educational technologies to cater to young learners' unique needs and preferences.

Importance of Findings

These findings contribute to the growing knowledge of applying AI and play-based learning in early education. They highlight the potential of these approaches to transform traditional teaching methods, offering more engaging and effective ways to support language acquisition in young children. These findings are coherent with the sociocultural and constructivist approaches as well as with the theories of language learning and the learning process mediated with technology (García, 2020; John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Jonassen, 1999; Lantolf & Thorne, 2009; Mohamed, 2024).

Practical Uses and Further Research

The practical implications of this research suggest that educators and policymakers should consider integrating AI and play-based learning into early childhood education curricula. Future research could explore the long-term effects of these interventions and their applicability to other subject areas and age groups. Additionally, further studies could investigate the features of AI tools and play activities that contribute most significantly to learning outcomes, providing a more detailed framework for their effective implementation.

Main Limitations

The study acknowledges several limitations related to the geographical and institutional contexts and the research process. For instance, the geographical and institutional contexts, due to the research, were conducted in specific educational settings in Colima, Mexico, which may be different from other regions or countries. The findings could influence the local educational practices and cultural factors unique to this area. Another area for improvement is the knowledge area and research process since the study focuses on early childhood education and the specific use of AI and PBL for language learning. The scope of the research is limited to this context, and the findings may not be directly applicable to other age groups or subject areas. A final limitation is the duration of the study, considering that the application of the research was under the framework of the Delfin program, which provided seven weeks for data collection. This relatively short duration may limit the ability to observe the long-term effects and sustainability of the interventions.

Main Implications and Impact

The findings of this study have significant implications for early childhood education and the integration of innovative educational technologies, for instance: 1. *Educational Benefits*. The study highlights the potential of AI and PBL to enhance vocabulary retention and motivation among young learners. These findings suggest that incorporating these technologies into early childhood education curricula can provide personalized and engaging learning experiences. 2. *Policy and Practice*. Educators and policymakers should consider the benefits of AI and PBL in creating adaptive and effective learning environments. The research supports adopting these tools to address the unique challenges of early language education. 3. *Future Applications*. The study proposes the integration of AI and PBL into educational curricula, along with adequate teacher training and support. This approach can help create more effective and enjoyable learning experiences for young children, paving the way for future advancements in language education.

Further Research. Future studies should explore the long-term effects of these interventions and their applicability to other subject areas and age groups. Additionally, research should address

the specific features of AI tools and play activities that most significantly contribute to learning outcomes, providing a detailed framework for their effective implementation.

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Uso de organizadores gráficos para desarrollar la competencia oral en ambientes virtuales

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ABSTRACT

In the Mexican context, oral production in English shows low proficiency levels, and the context of this research is no exception. Therefore, it is crucial to make innovations for its development. In this sense, graphic organizers are presented as fundamental tools for integrating communication skills. The research objective is to describe students' perceptions of mental and conceptual maps to develop oral competence. The methodology was quantitative descriptive cross-sectional, using a questionnaire to collect data from a sample of 60 students from a public university in Puebla. The results indicate that graphic organizers promote fluent oral competence, characterizing them to collect information through sequential semantic relationships based on key concepts, enabling metacognition and self-assessment of understanding. Overall, these tools must be integrated into communicative competencies to promote desirable learning.

KEY WORDS:

Applied linguistics, teaching English, oral competence, graphic organizers, mind-mapping

RESUMEN

En el contexto mexicano, la producción oral en inglés evidencia niveles bajos de competencia y el contexto de esta investigación no es la excepción. Por ello, es importante realizar innovaciones para su desarrollo. En este sentido, los organizadores gráficos se presentan como herramientas clave para la integración de habilidades de comunicación oral. El objetivo de esta investigación es describir las percepciones de los alumnos sobre los mapas mentales y conceptuales para desarrollar la competencia oral. La metodología fue cuantitativa descriptiva transversal, utilizando un cuestionario para recolectar los datos en una muestra de 60 estudiantes de una universidad pública de Puebla. Los resultados indican que los organizadores gráficos promueven la competencia oral fluida, caracterizándolos como medios para recopilar información mediante relaciones semánticas secuenciales a partir de conceptos clave, posibilitando la metacognición y autoevaluación de la comprensión. Se concluyó que se debe integrar estas herramientas en

las competencias comunicativas para promover un aprendizaje deseable.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Lingüística aplicada, enseñanza del inglés, competencia oral, organizadores gráficos, mapas mentales

1. Introducción

La competencia oral es uno de los objetos de estudio de mayor interés para los investigadores y docentes del área de lenguas extranjeras, quienes están inmersos en el ámbito educativo del proceso enseñanza-aprendizaje de idiomas, y esperan sin duda alguna capacitar, habilitar, estimular y potenciar las competencias necesarias y útiles para una comunicación fluida. Bajo esta perspectiva, en la Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés (LEI), los estudiantes reciben una formación académica interdisciplinaria necesaria para el contexto global actual. Sin embargo, en el curso de Evolución Histórica de la Lengua Inglesa (EHLI) modalidad virtual, se detectó una escasa competencia oral sólida, derivada de la falta de léxico, estrategias comunicativas y discursivas. Es en este contexto donde surge la presente investigación al proponer el empleo de Organizadores gráficos (OG) como los Mapas Mentales y Conceptuales (MMyC) en el contexto digital. Así, desde un alcance descriptivo, el estudio tiene como objetivo caracterizar las percepciones subyacentes en los estudiantes de la LEI respecto al uso de los MMyC para el desarrollo de la competencia oral. Las preguntas de investigación que orientan el presente estudio son las siguientes: ¿Los organizadores gráficos desarrollan la competencia oral en ambientes virtuales? y ¿Cómo perciben los alumnos de la Licenciatura en Enseñanza del Inglés los MMyC como herramienta para desarrollar la competencia oral en el idioma inglés en ambientes virtuales?

La relevancia de la investigación radica en su potencial para mejorar la organización y estructuración de ideas, aspectos fundamentales para la comunicación efectiva, ya que los MMyC permiten a los estudiantes visualizar y conectar conceptos clave, lo que facilita la comprensión y retención de la información. Dicha organización estructurada del conocimiento es crucial para la competencia oral, coadyuvando a los estudiantes a expresar sus ideas de manera clara y coherente al argumentar y debatir en público.

Con respecto a la pertinencia del estudio, las habilidades de comunicación son cada vez más valoradas porque promueven la capacidad de expresar ideas de manera persuasiva en el ámbito académico-profesional en el entorno globalizado-digital. En este tenor, los MMyC se adaptan a diversas disciplinas, proporcionando una estrategia variada y accesible para fortalecer la competencia oral en contextos auténticos. Por tanto, el estudio se justifica al ofrecer perspectivas sobre metodologías plausibles para la enseñanza de habilidades comunicativas, contribuyendo al desarrollo integral de los estudiantes, ampliando el conocimiento sobre los beneficios de los MMyC en la competencia oral del inglés y como base sólida para futuras prácticas educativas.

2. Revisión teórica

La conceptualización pedagógica contemporánea para la enseñanza del inglés lengua extranjera (ILE) se caracteriza por la implementación del enfoque comunicativo. Este enfoque tiene como objetivo principal desarrollar en el estudiante la competencia oral en inglés segunda lengua (ISL), para comunicarse con naturalidad en situaciones conversacionales (Buendía, 2021).

Dentro de las características de la expresión oral se encuentran las marcaciones lingüísticas, decodificación no verbal, inmediatez de respuesta, turnos de interacción, fragmentación del discurso, registro del lenguaje y significado de palabras (Almeida, 2019), hecho que demanda al aprendiz técnicas de construcción, reflexión y asimilación de lo aprendido, así como medios para ordenar, organizar y esquematizar las ideas. Por ello, los fundamentos teóricos de la competencia oral se basan esencialmente en el uso de estrategias y herramientas bajo principios para la comunicación, tareas y significados (Pompilla *et al.*, 2019). De esta manera, el principio de la comunicación sugiere que las actividades promuevan una interacción auténtica dentro del aula. Desde otra perspectiva, el principio de tareas se refiere al empleo de estrategias y actividades significativas que involucren activamente al aprendiz, y el principio de significados, indica que el aprendizaje del idioma es relevante si el estudiante negocia términos y conceptos (Álvarez, 2019; Cubas, 2020). En general, la mejora de la práctica del idioma requiere de soportes, herramientas, técnicas y estrategias que favorezcan la construcción de aprendizajes.

Estrategias de expresión oral

Toda actividad didáctica requiere de recursos, medios o técnicas que apoyen el proceso de construcción de conocimiento. En el caso específico de las lenguas extranjeras, el enfoque comunicativo sugiere el empleo de estrategias didácticas que permitan la exposición del estudiante al idioma y al mismo tiempo promuevan la mejora de la competencia oral.

En este orden de ideas, las estrategias en ILE son métodos y técnicas que el docente emplea para facilitar el aprendizaje y estimular las competencias. Estas estrategias se diseñan y utilizan con el objetivo de mejorar el proceso educativo y alcanzar los objetivos de aprendizaje planeados (Reyes, 2020). Algunas estrategias fundamentales para la organización de ideas y desarrollo de competencia oral en el aula son 1) Ilustraciones: representación visual de los objetos, situaciones y conceptos de un tema en particular. 2) Organizadores gráficos (mapas mentales y conceptuales): recurso compuesto por una serie de conceptos y proposiciones de manera jerárquica apoyados de elementos visuales y organizativos. 3) Debate: metodología activa para interactuar de manera verbal y generar interacciones dinámicas. 4) Discusión dirigida: debatir un tema bajo la coordinación del docente para desarrollar la colaboración intelectual. 5) Resolución de problemas: ejercita los conocimientos previos al buscar la solución a diversas situaciones. 6) Aprendizaje cooperativo: busca la interdependencia positiva grupal. 7) Aprendizaje basado en proyectos: se adquiere conocimiento al estimular el pensamiento crítico, reflexivo y creativo al dar respuestas a problemas de la vida real. 8) Aula invertida: el rol del docente y alumno se cambian para optimizar tiempo, necesidades y metodología didáctica y 9) Lluvia de ideas: genera conceptos a partir de los aportes del grupo en un ambiente dinámico (Chén, 2018; Curvelo, 2019).

Adicionalmente, la utilización de las herramientas digitales y de las Tecnologías de la Información y Comunicación (TIC) se presentan como soportes que coadyuvan en los entornos virtuales de una manera lúdica, dinámica e innovadora. Da ahí que las pizarras digitales, aplicaciones y plataformas permiten el empleo de estrategias como el debate virtual, salas de chat, foros en línea, simulaciones y videoconferencias (Reyes, 2020), ofreciendo una gama de posibilidades para la práctica oral (Castillo *et al.*, 2020; Abud, 2024). De esta manera, el aula virtual posibilita el uso de recursos multimedia como podcast, videos y audiolibros que se adaptan a las necesidades y estilos de aprendizaje posibilitando situaciones de reflexión, análisis y construcción del conocimiento para mejorar la calidad de la competencia oral.

Uso de MMyC para promover la competencia oral

El aula virtual por sus características propias requiere de elementos didácticos específicos para alcanzar los objetivos educativos planteados. Una de las herramientas que da respuesta al cómo trabajar en el aula de acuerdo con el enfoque comunicativo de construcción de aprendizaje son los OG como MMyC, los cuales facilitan el desarrollo de la capacidad de reflexión, asimilación y toma de decisiones (Tapia, 2017).

De acuerdo con diversos estudios, los OG tienen un efecto positivo en la construcción de significados (Tayo, 2018; Pérez y Loyaga, 2017), dado que su realización visual respeta las características cognitivas, capacidades, habilidades y percepciones particulares. Como herramientas de aprendizaje, los MMyC se despliegan a partir de un esquema de visualización de conceptos y relaciones integrados. Es decir, el estudiante aprende cuando reconoce nuevos vínculos y relaciones conceptuales entre los conjuntos relacionados (Ontoria *et al.*, 2018).

Dentro del ámbito de las lenguas extranjeras, los estudios realizados por Vargas (2017) demuestran que el empleo de los MMyC permeó significativamente en la competencia oral de los participantes en sus puntajes iniciales tras hacer uso de los mencionados OG. A su vez Arzola (2017) demostró que el empleo constante de los OG es integrador, ya que el estudiante mejora sus habilidades para extraer conceptos principales y aplicarlos posteriormente en su expresión oral. Asimismo, en un estudio realizado por Reyes (2020) se comprobó que los MMyC promueven la construcción de nuevas ideas, recuperación del vocabulario visto y mejora en la habilidad oral. Este estudio demuestra cómo una herramienta organizacional y estructural contribuye a las habilidades del pensamiento de orden superior. Por su parte Rocha (2017) afirma que el uso de MMyC en los estudiantes coadyuvan a la expansión de conectores discursivos, adquiriendo un sin fin de palabras de enlace para una comunicación espontánea. Finalmente, los OG se establecen como una herramienta de mejora en el desarrollo de competencia oral del idioma inglés, con tendencia a construir el aprendizaje en torno a la actividad de reflexión, análisis y participación del estudiante en la comunicación.

3. Metodología

Para caracterizar la variable percepción de los estudiantes con respecto al uso de los organizadores gráficos como los MMyC, se utilizó el siguiente encuadre metodológico.

Diseño de investigación

Se optó por un diseño cuantitativo con alcance descriptivo para medir e interpretar las características o atributos del fenómeno sujeto de estudio mediante sus constructos específicos (Hernández-Sampieri *et al.*, 2014), dado que el objetivo es describir cómo los Mapas Mentales y Conceptuales (MMyC) promueven la competencia oral en inglés a partir de las percepciones de los estudiantes. Durante la primavera de 2024, se seleccionó un diseño de corte transversal, recolectando la información con un muestreo único (Creswell, 2014) para operacionalizar las variables de estudio y caracterizar dichas percepciones.

Muestra

El estudio se llevó a cabo en una Licenciatura en Enseñanza del Inglés de una universidad pública del estado de Puebla. Este programa está diseñado para preparar a futuros docentes en la enseñanza del idioma inglés. A lo largo de cuatro años, los estudiantes aprenden fundamentos

lingüísticos, psicopedagógicos y metodológicos para enseñar el idioma en diferentes niveles y modalidades educativas. El plan de estudios integra teoría y práctica, proporcionando una formación integral que permite a los egresados enfrentar los desafíos del campo educativo con habilidades y conocimientos sólidos en el área. La licenciatura también fomenta el uso de tecnologías educativas y promueve la investigación, asegurando que los egresados estén preparados para contribuir al avance de la educación en lenguas extranjeras. Durante la carrera, los discentes se familiarizan con diversos enfoques pedagógicos y desarrollan competencias necesarias para diseñar y aplicar estrategias didácticas efectivas. Así, el programa incluye la práctica docente, donde los estudiantes tienen la oportunidad de aplicar lo aprendido en contextos reales de enseñanza.

Con relación a la muestra, esta se compone de 60 estudiantes (población total) pertenecientes a grupos de Evolución Histórica de la Lengua Inglesa, de los cuales 45 son mujeres y 15 hombres y sus edades oscilan entre 19 y 24 años. Se seleccionó este grupo homogéneo debido a sus características compartidas, entre las cuales se destacan las deficiencias en la habilidad oral en inglés. En su diagnóstico de inicio de curso, todos los participantes mostraron una falta significativa de bagaje lexical necesario para expresar sus ideas con claridad y precisión. Además de la escasez de vocabulario, hay una carencia notable de estrategias efectivas para mejorar dicha competencia. Esta falta de habilidades comunicativas dificulta su capacidad para interactuar fluidamente en el idioma, afectando su desempeño académico y su confianza en situaciones sociales y profesionales donde el inglés es el medio de comunicación.

Instrumento

El instrumento es un cuestionario con escala de Likert con grado de conformidad compuesto de 40 ítems donde 20 reactivos corresponden a la variable uso de organizadores gráficos y los 20 restantes a la variable competencia oral. La validación y confiabilidad del instrumento fue obtenida con ayuda del software SPSS, obteniendo una bilateralidad de 0.001, lo cual indica que tiene una confiabilidad alta.

Recolección de datos

Tomando en cuenta que se trata de una investigación cuantitativa, la recolección de datos se realizó en un momento único (al término del semestre de primavera 2024), solicitando a los estudiantes su colaboración en el estudio. Posteriormente, se procedió a aplicar el formato de consentimiento informado y a contestar dicho instrumento. Cabe resaltar que en esta etapa el investigador no tuvo injerencia en las respuestas de los estudiantes con el fin de recabar información objetiva.

Análisis de los datos

La tabla 1 muestra el modelo de análisis:

Tabla 1

Modelo de análisis

Variables	Dimensiones	Reactivos	Propósito
Uso de organizadores gráficos PI 1. ¿Los organizadores gráficos desarrollan la competencia oral en ambientes virtuales?	1. Los MMyC como medio para representar el conocimiento en un entorno virtual	10	Medir y caracterizar los organizadores gráficos para el desarrollo de la competencia oral
	2. Los MMyC como formato para evidenciar relaciones semánticas y secuenciales	10	
Competencia oral PI 2. ¿Cómo perciben los alumnos de la Licenciatura en Enseñanza el Inglés los MMyC como herramienta para desarrollar la competencia oral en el idioma inglés en ambientes virtuales?	3. Los MMyC como ayuda visual para desarrollar la competencia oral	10	
	4. Los MMyC como estrategia para promover la competencia oral	10	

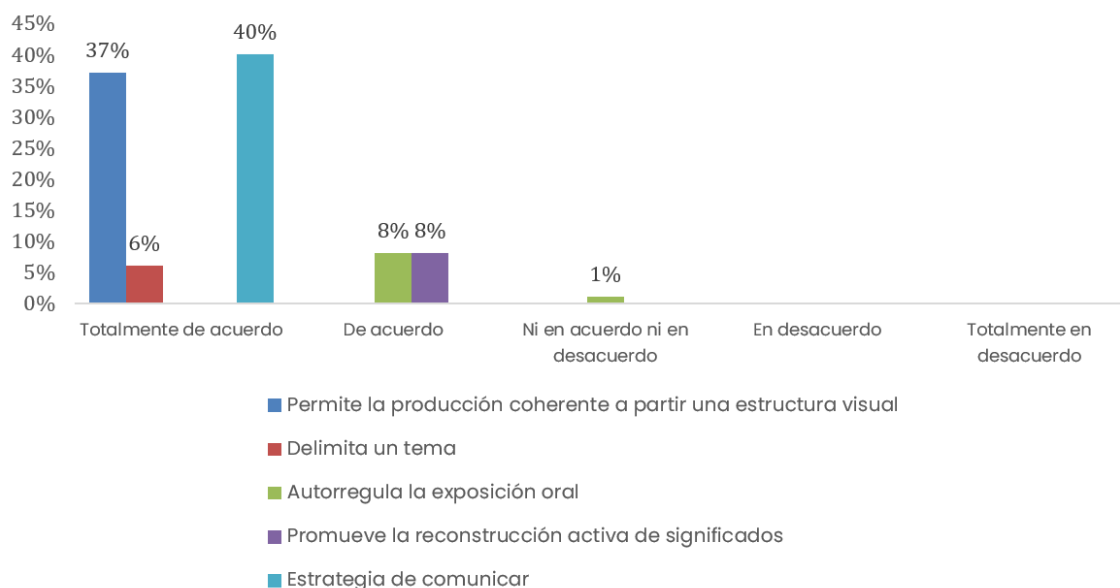
4. Resultados

Para analizar la información recolectada, se examinaron cada uno de los ítems del instrumento y se agruparon en las dos variables de estudio. De esta manera, se presentan tres vertientes principales: la variable 1 correspondiente al uso de los OG, la variable 2 enfocada a la competencia oral, y la caracterización de las percepciones de los estudiantes.

Variable 1. Uso de OG

Figura 1

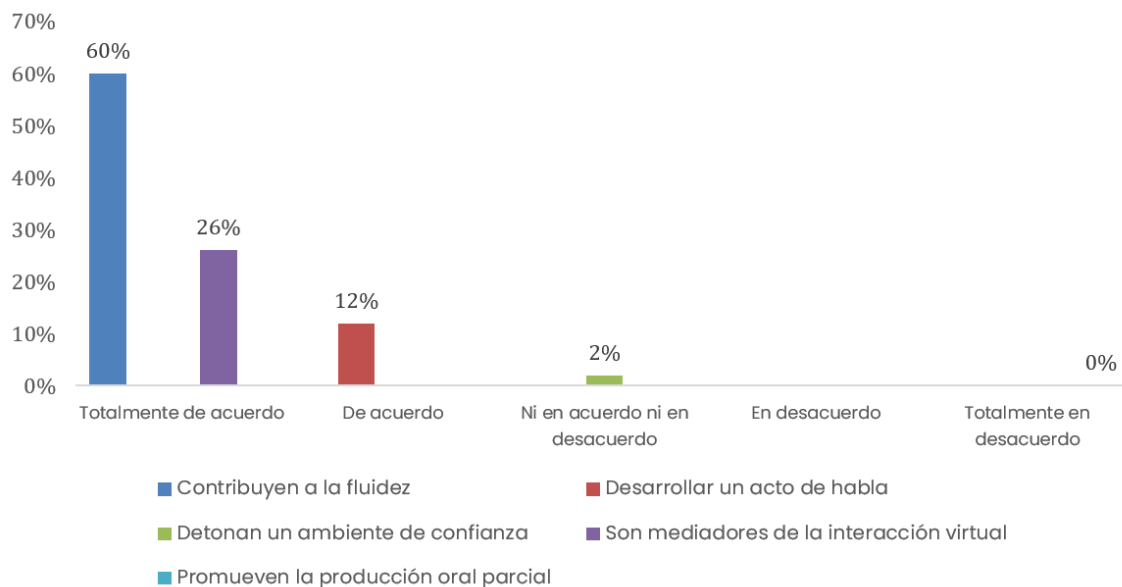
Los MMyC como ayuda visual para desarrollar la competencia oral en interacciones virtuales



La figura 1 muestra una caracterización positiva por parte de los estudiantes con respecto al uso de OG como ayuda visual para desarrollar la producción oral en ambientes virtuales. De hecho, el 37% los describe como un formato digital que les permite la producción coherente a partir de una estructura visual (37%) para delimitar un tema (6%) en la reconstrucción activa de significados (Silva y Maturana, 2017), que favorecen el aprendizaje (8%). Por otra parte, el 8 % señala la autorregulación, elemento esencial en exposiciones orales, como estrategia para una mejor actuación del hablante cuando tiene control sobre su propio discurso, adecuándose a sus estilos de aprendizaje (Jiménez *et al.*, 2019). Por último, el 40% percibe a los MMyC como una estrategia para comunicar en un contexto mediado por tecnología donde la comunicación interactiva y las representaciones gráficas contribuyen a la relevancia del discurso (Gutiérrez *et al.*, 2018; Conde y Boza, 2019; Espinoza-Poves *et al.*, 2019; Flores-González, 2020).

Cabe resaltar que el 99% está de acuerdo que la competencia oral se logra sólo si se poseen estrategias o medios para representar y estructurar el conocimiento (Pontalti, 2018), pues estos contribuyen a hablar de manera más fluida y coherente a partir del discurso estructurado (Wong, 2019).

Figura 2
Los MMyC como estrategia para promover la competencia oral en entornos virtuales



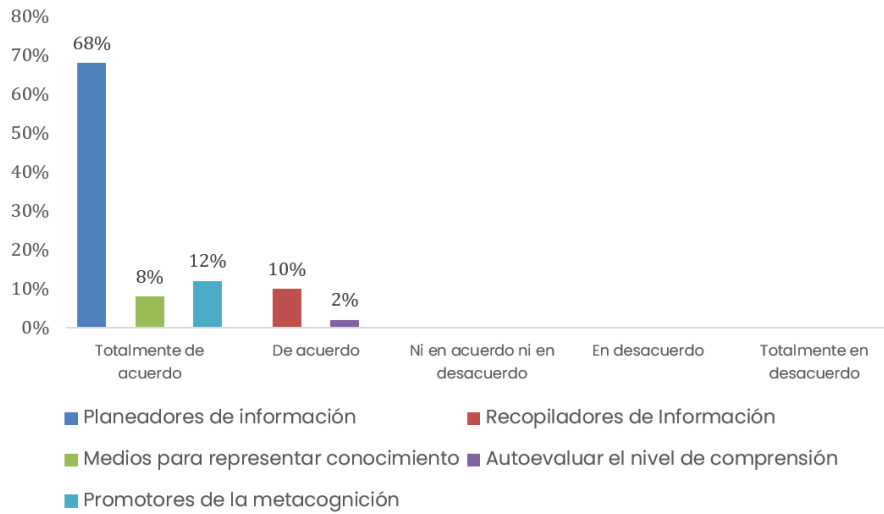
En la figura 2, el 98% de los estudiantes afirman que la competencia oral se ve favorecida con el uso de MMyC al funcionar como estrategias que contribuyen a la fluidez conversacional mediante su estructura visual (60%) para expresar o exponer un tema, reduciendo el miedo al comunicarse al ser una actividad autorregulada a su propio ritmo.

También se perfilan como estrategias mediadoras en la interacción virtual (26%) proporcionando información básica para desarrollar un acto de habla (12%). Esto coincide con los hallazgos de Angelini *et al.* (2015) donde el hablante sólo puede explicar, hablar o representar gráficamente algo que ha comprendido, formando parte de su esquema de conocimiento a través del proceso de acomodación y asimilación. No obstante, el 2% considera a estas herramientas promotoras de un ambiente de confianza puesto que sirven como diseños o materiales de instrucción oral basados en representaciones gráficas, es decir, como lenguaje visual (Moreno *et al.*, 2018). Un aspecto notable y positivo es que ningún estudiante percibe a los MMyC como herramientas que no promuevan la producción oral parcial, lo cual indica que están conscientes de su potencial.

Variable 2. Competencia oral

Figura 3

Los MMyC (OG) como medio para representar el conocimiento en un entorno virtual



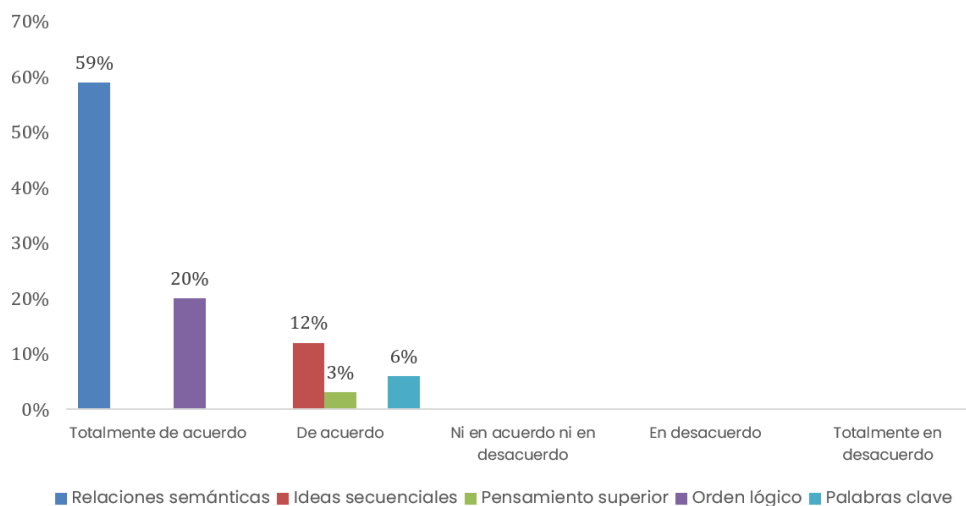
La percepción de los estudiantes es alta y positiva como lo muestra la figura 3. El 68% caracteriza a los MMyC como planificadores de la información y el 12% considera que permiten recordar información durante la competencia comunicativa para organizar su discurso oral, posibilitando la metacognición (Kurniaman *et al.*, 2019). Estos resultados coinciden con Buzan (2017) donde se evidencian los MMyC como medios para establecer relaciones entre ideas principales y secundarias, asociando conocimientos y habilidades en la construcción de nuevo conocimiento.

Por otra parte, el 8% conceptualiza los MMyC como representaciones mentales que demandan la comprensión de un tema a través de enlaces semánticos, dejando al descubierto lo que aún no han comprendido mediante conexiones erradas.

Asimismo, el 10% los caracteriza como recopiladores de información con el empleo de palabras clave, conceptos o ideas principales que invitan al estudiante a involucrarse activamente en el proceso de aprendizaje. Por último, para el 2% son una forma de autoevaluar su nivel de comprensión sobre un tópico, estimando su proceso de aprendizaje a partir de los conocimientos previos y nuevos.

Figura 4

Los MMyC como formato para evidenciar relaciones semánticas y secuenciales



En la figura 4, el 100% de la muestra estima que los MMyC son formatos digitales *ad hoc* para desarrollar un discurso oral dado que, en dicha representación gráfica, las palabras clave o frases (6%) son puntos fundamentales que guardan relaciones semánticas (59%) como sinonimia, antonimia, hiponimia, hiperonimia, paronimia, homonimia o polisemia, permitiendo emitir un discurso coherente y cohesivo en orden secuencial (12%). Por supuesto que, al realizar este ejercicio, el hablante debe desarrollar pensamiento superior (3%) que le permita comprender, comparar, relacionar, clasificar, ordenar, sintetizar o conceptualizar relaciones y plasmarlas con un orden lógico (20%) en su discurso oral.

A partir de los anterior, los resultados demuestran que los MMyC promueven el pensamiento superior en tres niveles de complejidad. El primero les permite definir, describir, enlistar, nombrar, recordar y ordenar la información. El segundo los conduce al procesamiento de esa información a través de la comparación clasificación, explicación, etc.; y el tercero, los lleva a establecer relaciones a través de la evaluación, predicción e hipótesis (Buzan, 2013).

Caracterización de las percepciones de los estudiantes

En primer lugar, los hallazgos confirman que los MMyC promueven la competencia oral debido a la representación visual del conocimiento donde se privilegia el pensamiento crítico, estrategias discursivas y relaciones entre conceptos e ideas que posibilitan una comunicación fluida sin tomar mucho tiempo para pensar (Ahmadi y Leong, 2017). De hecho, el 40% de los participantes afirman que los MMyC sirven como una estrategia para implementar la comunicación oral, lo que indica que el aprendizaje basado en el enfoque comunicativo y materiales visuales como los MMyC representan una amplia comprensión de un tema. No obstante, algunos expertos opinan que la competencia comunicativa sólo se desarrollará en la medida en que el estudiante comprenda un tema (Kees de Bot, 1980 y Michael *et al.*, 1980 en Yufrizal, 2017) a tal grado que lo pueda representar en sus propias palabras y desarrolle la habilidad de qué, cómo y cuándo decir.

Otra razón que permite considerar a los MMyC como plausibles para el fomento de la competencia oral son sus ventajas para desarrollar una producción oral coherente a partir de una estructura visual (37%) al ser estrategias de conexión vista-conocimiento mediadas por tecnología como herramienta pedagógica (SEP, 2017). De hecho, los MMyC con TICs integran los saberes previos con los nuevos con creatividad, enriqueciendo la práctica de la habilidad oral con fluidez del tema e idioma que se quiere aprender, en este caso, la materia de EHLI. La fluidez de enunciado es otro aspecto que privilegia los MMyC, dado que son instrumentos de apoyo que permiten identificar las propiedades de producción oral en el discurso como velocidad, pausas, vacilaciones, repeticiones, y reformulación (Muñoz-Mallén & Pavón-Vázquez, 2019). En particular, el resultado obtenido en esta vertiente señala de forma implícita que los MMyC son OG que integran color, imagen y organización espacial en la distinción de palabras clave y relaciones intertextuales en un discurso. En este punto, los resultados de Giani (2024) sustentan el argumento previo señalando a los MMyC útiles para extraer y organizar la información de manera versátil.

En segundo lugar, se tienen los siguientes atributos de los MMyC para desarrollar la competencia oral en el idioma inglés en ambientes virtuales a partir de las percepciones de los usuarios: Son formatos digitales que ayudan a desarrollar un discurso oral. Esto es porque en dicha representación gráfica se encuentran puntos fundamentales que guardan relaciones semánticas (59%). Al respecto, Uba *et al.* (2017) señalan a los OG como herramientas educativas para el entendimiento cualitativo de cualquier tema en lengua extranjera. Esto quiere decir, que son herramientas visuales plausibles para contribuir de diferentes formas al proceso de enseñanza-

aprendizaje (significado semántico de palabras, conceptos y/o imágenes).

Son planeadores de información (68%). De acuerdo con Kurniaman (2019), los OG ayudan a representar conceptos a través de esquemas visuales fundamentales para el refuerzo de conocimiento y aprendizaje de ideas, léxico e información. De forma particular, en este estudio los MMyC permitieron potenciar los procesos de la inteligencia, aprendizaje, creatividad y memoria.

5. Limitaciones del estudio

Los OG como los MMyC definitivamente ayudan a desarrollar la competencia oral en ambientes virtuales al ser referentes de una estrategia eficaz para implementar la comunicación oral en el contexto mexicano. Los datos muestran la producción oral coherente y fluida en los participantes mexicanos en el nivel superior; sin embargo, existen limitantes de estudio. Una de ellas radica en no haber indagado sobre las preferencias y percepciones de los participantes respecto a otro tipo de OG. La otra limitante radica en la muestra, dado que estudios con muestras más grandes pueden contribuir a confirmar, enriquecer o refutar los resultados. Por último, este estudio solo se enfoca en un contexto particular por lo que realizar réplicas en otros contextos podría determinar cambios en los resultados obtenidos.

6. Principales implicaciones e impacto de la investigación

De acuerdo con Boonkit (2010), la habilidad oral en el idioma inglés es con frecuencia la más efectiva para comunicarse; sin embargo, esta habilidad es desplazada en múltiples ocasiones (Herbein *et al.*, 2018) por las clases tradicionales de gramática. En el contexto educativo mexicano, el papel del idioma inglés incluye una creciente necesidad de desarrollar las habilidades comunicativas, evitando conocimiento exclusivo de la gramática y el vocabulario de forma separada. No obstante, las principales implicaciones de este estudio sugieren nuevas maneras de enseñar y aprender la competencia oral en un idioma, señalando la inclusión de TIC (Camargo- Pongutá, 2018) donde los diseños visuales representen la comprensión de un tema con un cambio sustancial (Flores-González, 2022), una organización creativa de elementos extraídos de un texto y que responden a la verdadera necesidad de comunicarse.

Por otra parte, es imprescindible retomar dos puntos significativos para reconocer el impacto y los beneficios de la investigación. En primer lugar, el aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera, en este caso del idioma inglés, es un acto social que puede ser auxiliado de OG para desarrollar un aprendizaje viable y reforzar el conocimiento. En esta investigación, particularmente se pudo identificar que los MMyC sirven para desarrollar la competencia oral en ambientes virtuales al ser una estrategia eficaz para implementar la comunicación oral coherente y fluida.

Como segunda implicación y beneficio, los OG en general promueven el desarrollo conceptual apoyándose en criterios de selección y jerarquización ayudando a los usuarios a aprender a pensar y estructurar la información. Al respecto, los MMyC promueven una sistematización y clasificación de conocimiento que coadyuva al aprendizaje de manera factible.

7. Conclusiones

Se concluye que los alumnos se benefician de manera positiva de los MMyC al percibirlos como medio para detonar la competencia oral y considerarlos como estrategia potencial para la comprensión del conocimiento y herramienta de apoyo para la práctica docente. Estas conclusiones contribuyen a la valoración de las estrategias de enseñanza empleadas por los

docentes, dado que son la clave para hacer un cambio fundamental en el proceso de aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera.

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Researching University Students' Perceptions about How Digital Tools Help Them Achieve Holistic Comprehension of English Academic Texts

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ABSTRACT

Reading is a relevant and complex skill used by students to achieve their academic, research, and professional goals. The main research objective of this study is to explore the perceptions of university students using digital tools (DT) to comprehend English texts, overall, when they take online classes. The participants study in different BA programs and hold basic or intermediate English level. They are 15 students; some of them are in the process of graduating. Some studies claim that university students prefer to read more on their devices, such as laptops, tablets or mobile phones and it will make them more autonomous. This research uses the observation method; therefore, it is grounded on observed experiences during face-to-face or online classes, which allows one to have some perceptions about the phenomenon. The results reveal that education is going towards a digitalized environment where both students and teachers need to improve online teaching and learning every day to facilitate the use of didactic tools to get the expected success.

KEY WORDS:

University students, perceptions, digital tools, holistic comprehension, English academic texts.

RESUMEN

La lectura es una habilidad relevante y compleja utilizada por los estudiantes para alcanzar sus objetivos académicos, de investigación y profesionales. El objetivo principal de este estudio es explorar las percepciones de los estudiantes universitarios que utilizan herramientas digitales (DT) para comprender textos en inglés en general, cuando toman clases en línea. Los participantes estudian en diferentes programas de licenciatura y tienen un nivel de inglés básico o intermedio. Son 15 estudiantes; algunos están en proceso de graduarse. Algunos estudios afirman que los estudiantes universitarios prefieren leer más en sus dispositivos, como computadoras portátiles, tabletas o teléfonos móviles, lo que los hace más autónomos. Esta investigación utiliza el método de observación; por lo tanto, se fundamenta en experiencias observadas durante

clases presenciales o en línea, lo que permite tener algunas percepciones sobre el fenómeno. Los resultados revelan que la educación avanza hacia un entorno digitalizado donde tanto estudiantes como profesores necesitan mejorar la enseñanza y el aprendizaje en línea día a día para facilitar el uso de herramientas didácticas y así conseguir el éxito esperado.

PALABRAS CLAVE:

Estudiantes universitarios, percepciones, herramientas digitales, comprensión holística, textos académicos en inglés.

Introduction

Reading is a fundamental ability for students to achieve their academic goals. Reading within the English language is often complex, especially when the students do not know this, as it can cause success or failure in their professional development. Nowadays, to get a degree, university students need knowledge of languages to make the process easier; hence occasionally taking online, blended, or face-to-face English reading comprehension courses. Thus, they require outstanding reading practice to advance in understanding the academic texts in English. Because of this and the new changes within education, they must improve their developing learning through electronic tools since it makes it easier to search for words when they read. Technology has transformed the way of life in the world; people have faster communication using digital devices. Reading is no exception to it, as mentioned by Benny (2019), "Technology makes information easy to access, especially in digital sources" (p.191). Therefore, the main aim of this study is to explore the perceptions of university students using digital tools (DT) to understand English texts comprehensively, overall, when they take online classes. For this reason, it is pretended to know what the challenges are, which they had to face during an online reading comprehension English course (ORCEC).

Research Problem

The online reading comprehension English courses (ORCEC) are offered to university students in person or in blended way. During the COVID-19 pandemic, students had to face new challenges when they certainly had to take classes online. So, in an ORCEC, the need to learn management or improve skills when using new digital tools was observed. Despite not being familiar with the use digital tools (DT), or having some electronic deficiencies, students began to show more interest during the course, due to the dynamics that could be performed with the different digital resources that were used, when they took the course in person, they only read, underlining words in printed texts, which demonstrated boredom in them. This observation allows us to research what university students perceived when using digital tools and how they helped them improve their knowledge during an ORCEC. In response to the problem identified, the following research questions have been designed.

Research Questions

To obtain the most focused answers to the present analysis, the following questions are addressed:

- What are university students' perceptions about how digital tools help them achieve holistic comprehension of academic texts in English?
- How do digital tools help enhance the comprehension of English texts?
- What is the significance of reading comprehension in university language classrooms?
- What skills do university students need for comprehending texts in English?

Significance of the Study

This study aims to analyze the perceptions of university students when reading with digital tools to achieve a holistic understanding of the texts during the process of online English reading comprehension courses; hence, one of the primary aspects to consider for university students is the importance of learning reading in an L2. Therefore, interacting with digital texts makes students perceive reading more interestingly because of the immediate feedback they can get, as cited by Imtiaz, et al. (2017). Thus, reading practice with digital tools shows how the current world is based on immersion and technological normalization, which makes the students involuntarily improve their skills when using digital tools DT in an ORCEC.

Participants

The participants came from different BA programs and possessed basic or intermediate English level. They are 15 students; some of them are in the process of graduating. Others have a degree, and the majority work and study. Their ages range from 18 to 50 years and study in a public university.

Research Context

This research analyzes students in a virtual environment in a public university in the center of Mexico. These are online classes, five hours one day a week. The purpose of these courses is to help students improve their skills in comprehension of texts in English and know the digital strategies that students put into practice to develop their reading competence using different technological tools. Some applications used were Google Meet, Zoom, Padlet, Vocaroo, Google Blogs, and Canva among others, as support during their training in an ORCEC.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to know and analyze information about the opinions of university students who, during the COVID-19 pandemic, saw the need to take definitive classes online. This document also aims to show what the needs and skills that students had to implement or renew in the use of digital tools, as well as the preference for different forms of reading, to be able to improve the comprehension of digital texts in English in a holistic way, and at the same time accept the global changes that began to emerge with distance learning.

Justification of the Study

The study focuses on the importance of digital tools in an ORCEC. These digital resources have made users more interested in learning a second language due to the ease with which they can obtain quick and effective information for understanding English texts through hyperlinks or different applications. Hifzhan (2022) has also contributed to this research. "Thus, the integration of ICT instruments such as laptops, LCD projectors, smart whiteboards, internet services and applications in education that act as a strong support will aid learners to use English in a fun and stress-free language learning environment" (p, 730).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding the Concept of "Reading"

In referring to the meaning of the word reading, we understand the importance of this ability

to acquire and enhance knowledge in different fields of teaching and learning. Hence, several studies show interest in the definition of reading in different contexts. In the '70s and '80s, it was considered that reading confirms and forms hypotheses through texts and a "process through which we combine information from the text with the reader's knowledge of the world; it is a dialogue between the reader and the text" (Bustos & Loreto 2007, as cited in Carrel, et. al, 1990, p. 245). Nevertheless, currently reading is changing and at the same time its concept, since over the years, ideas and vocabulary have a different development because there are new words and others disappear, in the most recent research the definition of reading focuses more on vocabulary and on the extinction that university students can achieve with reading skills. Blanka & Katarina (2020) defined "Reading is a fundamental skill for academic success because university students need to comprehend an extensive amount of information in a short time to achieve their academic goals" (p.1).

Reading in a Foreign Language

Bernal (2020) argues, "Many EFL and ESL researchers have agreed that reading is an essential academic skill to develop as a tool to learn ESL or EFL" (p.19). In addition, it is argued that reading skills are fundamental to learning a foreign language and paramount to teaching ESL/EFL courses. Reading comprehension in an L2 gives the university a critical thinking reflexive for its insertion in sociocultural processes as one of the aims of university education and its formative strategies (González, et al., 2019).

Reading Comprehension Definition

By understanding the concepts of reading and the importance of reading for learning a second language, it is understood that reading comprehension will be the next step in improving any particular study. According to Bojovic (2010), "The reader has a purpose for reading, whether it is for entertainment, information, or research" (p.1). Finally, reading comprehension can be defined as "the correlation between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension" (Laufer, 1992 & Quian 2002, as mentioned in Ruiz, 2019, p. 203). Although it has been understood that for some authors to understand reading or texts sometimes becomes complicated, others propose different strategies to facilitate or develop this skill better.

Teaching Reading Strategies

Some students find it difficult to comprehend readings in their native language, and it becomes even more challenging in a second language. The strategies implemented for reading comprehension of printed texts focus on following certain patterns. Some authors focus on the following points for printed reading: 1. *Predicting*. Students talk about their knowledge or experiences to make predictions about the text. 2. *Visualizing*. This strategy requires students to imagine or create an image of what is read and then interpret it by drawing or writing something about it. 3. *Making connections*. Apprentices put their knowledge into practice and connect them with the ideas of the text. "Text-to-Text, Text-to-Self, Text-to-World". 4. *Summarizing*. This strategy allows the student to order ideas, which will help the student better distinguish and relate the interpretation of the text. 5. *Questioning*. At this point, students ask questions about the text, so the students have to read the text to find the answers. 6. *Inferring*. It refers to reading between the lines; students can obtain conclusions and build meanings from information or drawings in this strategy (Ana, 2020, p. 3-4).

Regarding digital reading, some authors' strategies for understanding may focus on 1. *Identifying*

the topic and search terms. Students should have a more explicit purpose than they intend to investigate and create their topic, questions, answers, and the facts they need to check. 2. *Evaluating the usefulness of a text based on the reading purpose.* Students should evaluate the search sites, remember the purpose or response of what they are looking for, have an information organization, and check whether the information is a fact or an opinion. 3. *Remain focused on one text and avoid distractions.* At this point, students should focus on reading and develop more rapid reading skills, avoid ads unrelated to texts, and organize information if a hyperlink related to the text appears. (Nicol, 2019, p. 5-7). To know some strategies for understanding printed and digital texts allows us to analyze conflicting opinions of printed and digital texts, so below is a brief approach to both texts.

Reading Print-Based Texts vs Digital Texts

The way of acquiring information or knowledge through reading has changed considerably since digital media have had more boom to develop this ability so that printing texts constantly remain a second resource. According to Bella et al. (2017), "in the context of the apparent dichotomy of print-based texts versus e-texts, an overwhelming number of studies reviewed suggested that print-based texts contributed more to increased comprehension and recall than e-texts" (p.3). Meanwhile, the negative things that can be noticed when someone is in front of a screen are that there are distractors when reading or feel sleepy eyes, so some people prefer to read the print text (PTX) because it could be friendly. Nevertheless, the reality is that the new generations of students constantly use different devices to get relevant information since when they need a specific book or relevant lowdown, they can surf the net and obtain it, and save time and money; although, some of them agree with the printing texts (PTX); also they use the digital reading to look for or read crucial scientific information, so the actual reason is that the digital texts make more accessible the performance of their works in which have to use reading comprehension texts. To better understand the differences between both forms of reading, the context of print-based texts and digital texts is shown in more detail.

Print-Based Texts

The printed paper became one of how people learned about what was happening around the world, and this encouraged the reader to write in a meaningful way, but it is also considered that this form of communication tends to end, as stated by Benny (2019) in the definition of Pred, "Printed texts are tangible objects having a beginning and an end" (p.194) Alternatively, there is a definition of the reading text and reading in Multimodal Texts (MT) since the print texts is required but is not enough to give sense to the text with some visible pictures, graphics, or effects of sounds as electronic texts. So, printed reading every day is replaced more with digital reading because this has reduced the use of paper to an extreme measure and, at the same time, allows ease and speed in the search for information so that the reader can acquire and improve their knowledge on several topics at once. Now, the term Digital Texts (DTX) is discussed to understand with more clarity or detail.

Digital Texts

Digital reading is reading texts from technological apparatus such as the screen of smartphones, tablets, or computers, either online or offline. Digital reading helps literature comprehension because of the vast exposure to interesting readings (Kirin et al., 2012). According to Ariel G. (2006) "The enormous utilization of computers and the new resources on the web have created a new and uprising form of reading that is beginning to have an essential impact on the development

of knowledge: electronic reading, also known as e-reading, cyber-reading, or digital reading.” (pp. 3-8) This innovative way of reading based on digital texts DTX, allows the new generations the facility to create and exercise actions in one or more digital texts at a time. They can change annotations of fonts, Index, copy, edit, replace, improve, expand, or insert images, probes, etc., becoming cyber-co-authors. Furthermore, in this kind of electronic reading, hypertexts are very common, and the readers can research information because they can surf different sites simultaneously. Accordingly, as mentioned by Min-Hsun (2016) “The dynamic nature of the hypertext environment gives it an ability to connect with the net-generation readers” (p. 234). However, teachers and students must improve their learning abilities or find concentration methods to facilitate learning through digital texts DTX since digital reading will grow for a long time. After clarifying the terms of print and digital texts, it is essential to know some of the electronic materials or resources that exist to implement reading comprehension or to obtain and share rapid information through digital reading.

E-books and Reading through Devices

The change in reading through digital books was in the 1990s; in these years, *E-books* became a library source (Dorner 2003, mentioned in Yuening & Roger, 2011). The new forms of reading started to change considerably; the digital books were on some platforms: Ebrary, NetLibrary, and Books 24X7 (Sprague & Hunter 2009, mentioned in Yuening & Roger, 2011, p. 5). When the e-book revolution appeared, several studies were practiced at different levels of education to know better the use of these new materials; some of the studies were at the University of Wales in the United Kingdom in the students of engineering, business and management, and medicine (Armstrong & Aucoin,2005). So, in this research, the students agree with these kinds of books, and engineering and health suggested that the monographs, research, or professional reports should be in electronic books. Through some studies, the concept of e-reading change dramatically changed the print reading structure, and reading in this new form to acquire knowledge demonstrated that a recent material could help to improve and facilitate the learning process in university students, thus beginning to come out some definitions for this electronic stuff that is considered as: “an electronic version of a printed book which can be read on a personal computer or a handheld device designed specifically for the purpose” (Anuradha & Usha, 2006, p.49). Therefore, university students use different digital tools in their research daily, improving their skills to obtain more knowledge from e-books. Furthermore, these studies have demonstrated that when university students implement digital tools to understand English texts, they improve their reading comprehension skills.

Enhancing Reading Comprehension in Texts of English through Digital Tools

English texts have always been a necessary resource for university students, and understanding reading in an L2 becomes challenging. When they can understand English reading holistically, they enhance their ability to learn and comprehend this language better. Therefore, it is considered that today’s students feel more motivated when reading on digital devices and reading comprehension in English is usually more enjoyable for them.

Shirin (2016) mentions three ways to improve reading comprehension through the computers “1. Controlling what and how long readers saw something digitally to develop reading strategies, 2. Providing comprehension exercises, and 3. Offering comprehension aids” (p, 112). So, “Digital reading helps reading comprehension of literature because of the vast exposure to interesting readings” (Shirin, 2016, mentioned in Kirin et al., 2012, p. 112). Hence, the electronic reading platform or e-books are effective for literacy language and literacy teaching learning in an L2. According to

Gyoomi & Jiyoung (2002), "The use of digital devices in language learning can enhance learners' learning motivation and attitudes" (p. 22). University students prefer to read more on their devices, and it will make them more autonomous. Therefore, it can be deduced that some reasons why students may prefer to use their cell phones for reading comprehension in English are:

- **Accessibility:** Cell phones are portable devices that allow access to many digital resources anytime, anywhere, and make it easier for students to read English texts from their mobile devices without carrying books or computers.
- **Inter-activity:** Digital applications and resources in cell phones often incorporate interactive elements, such as multiple-choice testing, drag-and-drop exercises, and listening and pronunciation activities.
- **Convenience and flexibility:** Cell phones are personal devices that many people carry. Students can take advantage of waiting times, such as on public transport or during breaks between classes, to read English texts from their phones.

After knowing the opinion of some EFL students when using digital resources, we give steps to understand better the concept and utility of an ORCEC.

Online Reading Comprehension English Class (ORCEC)

The English reading comprehension courses were created to assist university students in obtaining a degree. Initially, the classes were offered in a face-to-face or blended format. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the courses were moved strictly online. As a result, several digital concepts became necessary resources for these courses, becoming Online Reading Comprehension Courses (ORCEC). The course was conducted in both synchronous and asynchronous environments. The digital tools DT played a critical role in teaching the topic in class and improving the student's understanding throughout the course. Electronic resources also made the ORCEC more exciting and enabled the students to receive immediate feedback. The digital tools sparked more interest in the ORCEC since the course's idea was for the student to complete tasks during the class using various applications and upload them automatically to the classroom platform. The teacher and students gained new skills in navigating various applications and websites thanks to using hypertexts. They helped the students become more independent in their learning for the course. During the ORCEC, the students could improve their vocabulary and understanding of literary devices or analyze complex texts. Various pedagogical approaches, such as collaborative, inquiry-based, or project-based, were considered to engage and motivate students and know their perceptions in a virtual environment.

Students in an ORCEC

The enormous use of new technologies unexpectedly led the population, especially educational institutions, to perceive the greatness and strength that can be given in online learning when it is well-founded. The impression generated by the constant use of technology for digital reading and the discovery of existing electronic resources that facilitate the comprehension of texts in English caused them to resurface, and new ones were created for the educational concept. Recognizing that some university students showed great attention to using different digital tools caused interest in knowing their perception of the ORCEC. The characteristic of perception, according to Reuchilin, (1980), in Añaños, (1999, as cited in Pilar, 2006), shows that:

- It is selective because not all stimuli will be considered in the perceptual construction process. This section deals with the adaptive activity of the subject, allowing it to capture as much helpful information as possible.
- Its appreciation of size, shape, color, and movement is constant.

- The individual and social context influence it.
- It usually works unconsciously very quickly.
- Perceptual organization is essential for perceiving both isolated objects and sets of objects.
- It is not done randomly but is governed by some principles (p.92).

Therefore, if one of the characteristics of perception is to function unconsciously quickly, then as mentioned before, “the immersion and technological normalization, make the students involuntarily improve their skills in the use of the digital tools” (Garcia, 1986, as cited in Pilar, 2006, p. 189). Therefore, these skills create advantages of digital reading.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Teaching

The advantage of finding information through technology is having fast multi-access to different sites in that reading is more normalized every day in a digital way. Printed reading preferences are changing considerably. Some prefer to continue reading printed texts because their concentration is better since there are no distractions as there can be in digital reading. A better understanding of reading through printed texts is one of the advantages that can stand out in printed reading. Furthermore, “they do not need to be plugged in or connected to the internet, making them a more accessible option for those who do not have access to these resources”, mentioned Quibell (2023, p. 2-3). Nowadays, printed books are created using advanced technology that allows for easy correction of words and phrases and duplication of texts. Moreover, technology allows for the designing and creating images that enhance the reader’s understanding of the ideas presented in the text. The use of digital resources for printing not only results in better quality but also helps develop skills for effectively communicating one’s ideas.

METHODOLOGY

Research Instance

This study follows the Observation Method; therefore, it is based on observed experiences during face-to-face or online classes, which allows one to have an opinion about the phenomenon. “Observation Method is described as a method to observe and describe the behavior of a subject, and it involves the basic technique of simply watching the phenomena until some hunch or insight is gained” (Kumar, 2022, p.1). The quantitative method helps recognize the population model to specify research planning, data collection, and analysis to interpret applied research correctly (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative methodology is also part of this research, considering that it is characterized by what people think about the phenomenon studied, with an *ethnographic* approach focused on the experience of the daily life of the individual, which allows understanding the social practice to analyze the data of opinions and experience, which can be expressed in words. “Ethnography focuses on culture of group of people, which includes share attributes, language, practices, structure, value, norms, and material things, evaluate human lifestyle” (Pawar, 2020, p. 47). This study considered the participation of fifteen students at a public university in central Mexico who study English and other language skills. These courses can be blended or online for 5 hours a week. The participants were eight females and seven males, ages 18 to 30, and came from different university careers; some had already finished these, and others were in process. Most study English through extracurricular courses focused on reading comprehension in English and has an A1 level or lower, and the aim of practicing the English language through this approach is for students to obtain their degrees and simultaneously understand information that helps them in their professional development. These results allowed the researchers to describe the context of this research in a more complete form.

Research Context

This study was carried out at a university in central Mexico City. This institution offers extracurricular courses in the English language, and some of these courses are more focused on the practice of reading comprehension. During the online classes, Meet and Zoom were used as digital platforms. The primary tool for teaching was an e-book or a PDF book, which helped students improve their English reading comprehension by covering related topics. Exercises were shared through PDF documents and WhatsApp and displayed on the screen to aid learning. To engage with students, various applications and links were suggested to access multimodal texts. Additionally, students were encouraged to use an audio reading application and record their voices in another app while reading, making the learning process more interactive, practical, valuable, and exciting. Finally, tasks were assigned on the "Classroom" platform to improve the learning and teaching process. Good feedback is provided to help students enhance their skills in understanding English texts. The following instruments were created to achieve the desired objective of the study more holistically.

Instruments

To collect the most accurate information as possible, resources were taken from a survey, which was done utilizing a questionnaire in Google Forms format, as well as a semi-structured interview, which was applied to four participants. Questionnaires are "a series of questions asked to individuals to obtain statistically useful information about a given topic. They are a valuable method of collecting a wide range of information from many individuals, often referred to as respondents. Adequate questionnaire construction is critical to the success of a survey" (Roopa & Rani, 2017, p. 273). The survey was conducted in Spanish to avoid confusion and ensure all participants could complete it without problems. The questionnaire comprises five sections, shown in Figure 3.4 below. As well as a semi-structured interview, which was applied to four participants.

For the interview, four participants were chosen and were interviewed through the Zoom platform. This interview investigates "students' perceptions of how digital tools help them achieve a holistic understanding of academic texts in English."

In this process, they were asked five questions derived from the research questions. The themes for the questions are as follows:

1. Opinion when performing exercises with English texts through digital tools
2. Opinion when reading an English text on a digital device and a printed text
3. Perception to investigate information in English through digital tools
4. Recommendation for reading digital texts in English

The information collected provides a deeper and more detailed understanding of the subject, contributing to generating knowledge and fortifying the academic and professional field in an ORCEC or virtual educational field.

Data Gathering

This study was conducted for a period of two months, during which data was collected for eight weeks. The class sessions lasted for a total of 40 hours and focused on various study techniques for data collection. The techniques included conducting a survey using a questionnaire, developing an appropriate approach to conduct a group interview, and analyzing opinions based on

developing multimodal or multi-semiotic skills.

After the course, participants were requested to collaborate by completing a questionnaire sent via WhatsApp. The answers were ordered from higher to lower according to the corresponding number and were written in both Spanish and English, highlighting the most relevant of the answers to conclude later in the data analysis of the same.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed based on the points of the Google Forms questionnaire sent to the participants. The questionnaire had five sections. The first was about the digital devices used to read English texts. The second part focused on the frequency of use of digital devices to improve the understanding of English texts and academic knowledge. In section 3, the analysis was conducted in two sections: the first is about the forms of reading, and the second is focused on the utility of understanding texts in English. The fourth section of the questionnaire was designed with 9 questions focused on how often they develop the skills needed for English comprehension texts. In the last section of the questionnaire, section 5, we wanted to know 4 questions that so often agree on specific preferences for understanding texts during the process of an English course. The most relevant information was then compared in each questionnaire focused on the research questions. Finally, the graphs are shown with the results that describe the opinions of the participants and the analysis to provide the corresponding literature.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Report Data Analysis Group

Section 1 of the questionnaire analyses personal information gathered from 15 student participants. This section investigates demographic information, which is not directly relevant to the research questions but is still essential.

N° Participant	Gender	Age range 18-50	Career belonging	Semester	Activity	Language level
S1	Female	21-30	Pharmaceutical chemical	9º completed	Job only	C1 Advance
S2	Male	36-40	Information technology	10º completed	Work and study	A2 Elementary
S3	Male	31-35	Communication and journalism	8º	Job only	A2-B1 Intermediate
S4	Female	21-30	Dental surgeon	10º	Job only	A2 Elementary
S5	Female	21-30	Pedagogy	8º	Job only	A1 Beginner
S6	Male	18-20	International relations	1º	Work and study	A1 Beginner
S7	Female	18-20	International relations	1º	Studio only	B2 Upper intermediate
S8	Male	18-20	International relations	1º	Work and study	A2-B1 Intermediate
S9	Female	21-30	Administration	8º	Work and study	A2-B1 Intermediate
S10	Male	21-30	Bachelor of Nursing	8º	Job only	A2-B1 Intermediate
S11	Female	41-45	Economics	9º	Work and study	A1 Beginner
S12	Male	21-30	Industrial design	6º	Studio only	A2-B1 Intermediate
S13	Male	21-30	Industrial design	6º	Studio only	B2 Upper intermediate
S14	Male	21-30	Pedagogy	8º not completed	Studio only	A2 Pre-intermediate
S15	Female	21-30	Pedagogy	8º not completed	Studio only	A2 Pre-intermediate

Figure 1 Personal information of the participants (total number of respondents 15)

The second section of the questionnaire consists of four items that focus on the “digital devices used for reading English texts”. The results presented in Figure 2 indicate that most participants rely on their mobile phones for the activities mentioned. Specifically, 80% of the 15 participants used their cell phones for the online English course and read various online materials.

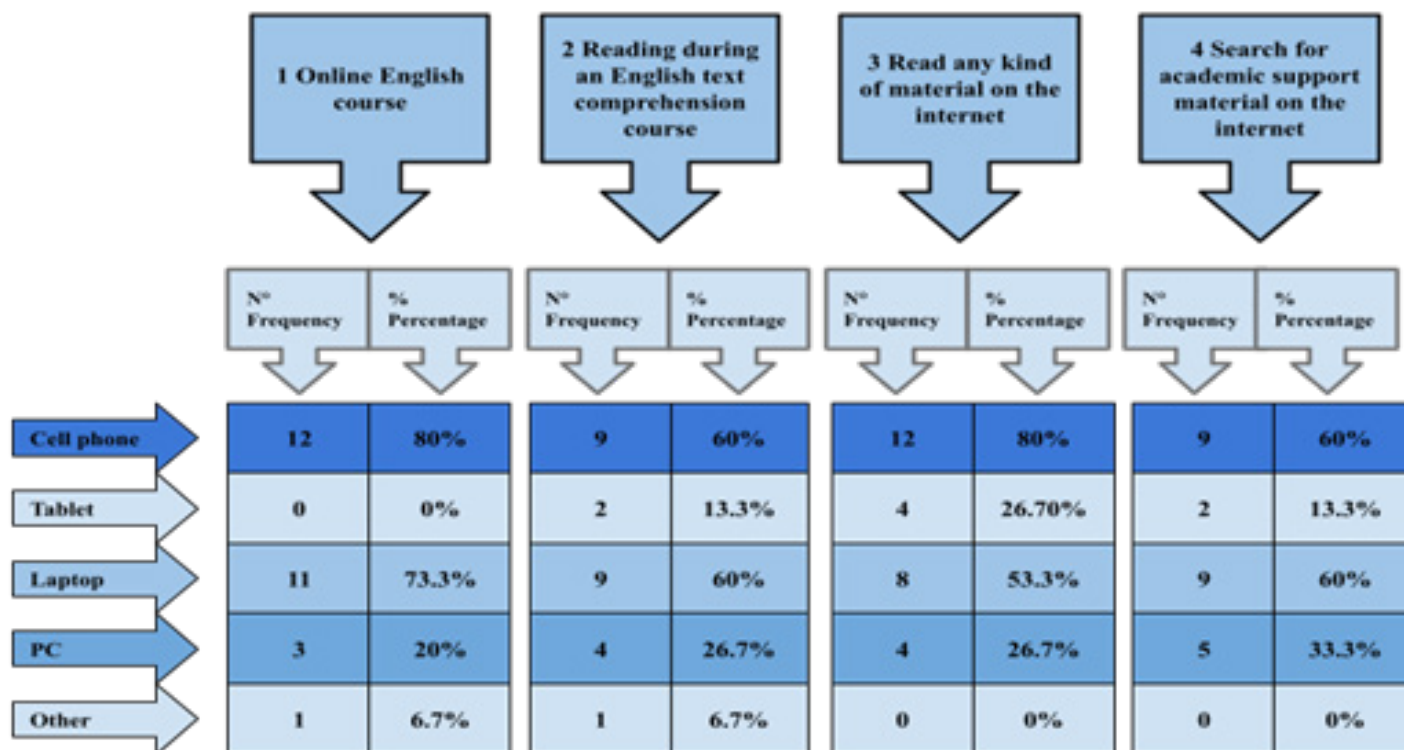


Figure 2 Section 2 Digital devices used for reading English texts

The second most popular device was a laptop, with 73.3% to 53.3% of the participants performing the two activities mentioned before. Moreover, they use it to read English text during a comprehension course and search for academic materials online. The use of tablets and PCs was lower than that of mobile phones and laptops for the mentioned activities in the survey, leaving 33% of participants below the surveyed average. According to Ogata and Yano (2005), as cited in Abduljalil & Ali, 2016), mobile learning is mainly characterized by permanency, accessibility, immediacy, interactivity, and situating of instructional activities. As a result, cell phones have become the most used digital device due to their convenience and speed. However, it is essential to mention that nowadays, the general population reads more through electronic devices. In addition, as has been said in this investigation, the pandemic COVID -19 was an impact that made all fields of education use more new digital devices to give classes. At the same time, the student population was forced to get better electronic devices. Although this kind of reading comprehension course has been given in face-to-face and blended format, the students used different electronic resources for it. Still, they had to improve the devices to obtain better results during the ORCEC training.

Section 2.1 Frequency to Improve the Understanding of Texts in English and Academic Knowledge through Different Forms of Reading

Based on the results presented in Figure 3, this indicates that most participants frequently use digital reading to enhance their understanding of academic texts, printed materials, and digital content, as well as to search for information from specialized sites and digital libraries.

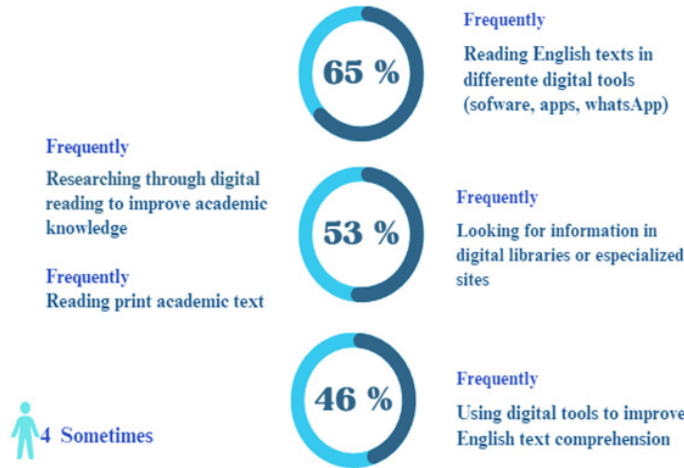


Figure 3 Frequency scale graphs to find out digital reading can improve the understanding of English texts

This shows that the percentages obtained outstanding to carry out the above activities are 65% to 46% in the 15 students surveyed. The results indicate that digital reading has improved university students' understanding of English texts and academic knowledge. Then, this allows to accept that university students surf more on their electronic devices to read using digital tools, making their use more common daily. As a result, English language teaching institutions are encouraged to incorporate technology into their teaching methods and provide students with the necessary resources to enhance their learning experience. Furthermore, knowing what forms of reading university students prefer is essential to obtain more attention from the students.

Section 3 of the Questionnaire: Forms of Reading

The following analysis presents section 3 of the questionnaire. Three questions belong to this section, which shows three forms of reading in Figure 4, and these belong to each question. The first question is about of the preferred reading genre. The second question is related to the printed reading genre, while question three, shows the digital reading genre.

In this section, the analysis focused on ten different reading genres preferred by 15 participants. The genres are comedy, culture, romance, politics, adventure, poetry, blogs, social networks, news, and others, which were chosen based on the preferences and forms of each participant.

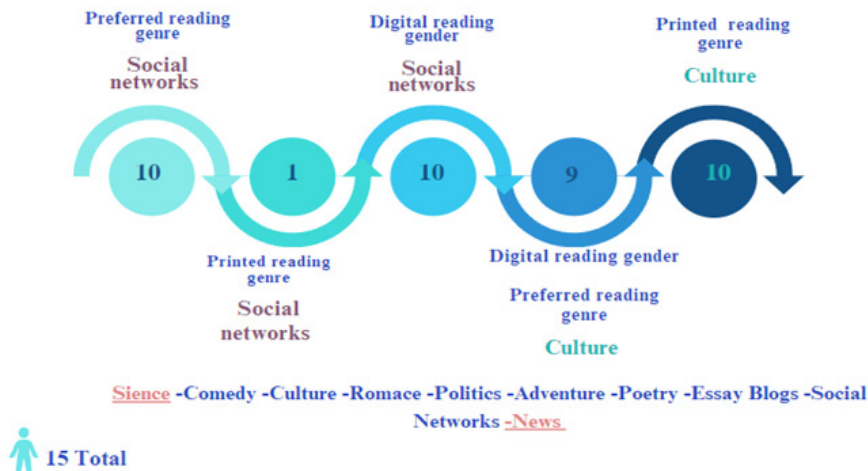


Figure 4 Forms of Reading

The results from Figure 4 indicate that social networks were the participants' most preferred **genre** to read. Nine also indicated that their second most preferred genres were culture and adventure. In the second question, **printed reading genre**, the data results show that 66% (ten participants) of the participants prefer to read the cultural genre on paper. These results are like the preference of preferred literary genre, so they could be subjects of interest to university students due to the concept of their studies or career perform or have performed. By showing the cultural diversity naturally shown in the human being. This third question shows the data analysis corresponding to the **preferred reading genre in digital form**, reveals a similarity in the outstanding results in the two previous forms participants preferred to read social networks and culture for the remaining genres in this form of digital reading, no 0% result is shown, which allows us to deduce that university students prefer electronic reading to reading any gender. However, some may need to catch up to the preference to read in print. Finally, as Elche and Yubero (2019) mention, digital reading maintains the essence of traditional reading; therefore, the uses of digital reading of reading habits cannot be separated" (p. 54). Therefore, as Martos and Martos (2018) points out, "reading education can no longer be separated from media and digital culture (p. 21).

Digital reading has perhaps transformed reading gender preferences. Digital technology has also influenced how students access and consume training, which can affect their reading preferences. It is essential to note that such preferences are individual and may vary significantly among university students who took an ORCEC. Some may prefer literary fiction, others may be more interested in academic or non-fiction texts, and others may have specific preferences according to their study area. However, according to the results of the Figure 4 that belong to the questions in section 3, it can be shown that although there is a printed reading generosity that the reader may prefer, a greater variety of charities is selected to read digitally, which is of usefulness to reading and understanding texts in English.

Section 3.1 of the Questionnaire: Utility of Understanding Texts in English

After studying the reading preferences of participants, this section examines whether the participants agree or disagree with the usefulness of understanding English texts. Figure 5 shows that out of 15 participants, nine of them are outstanding in Totally Agree (TA), in that understanding English texts helps in learning a language including vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

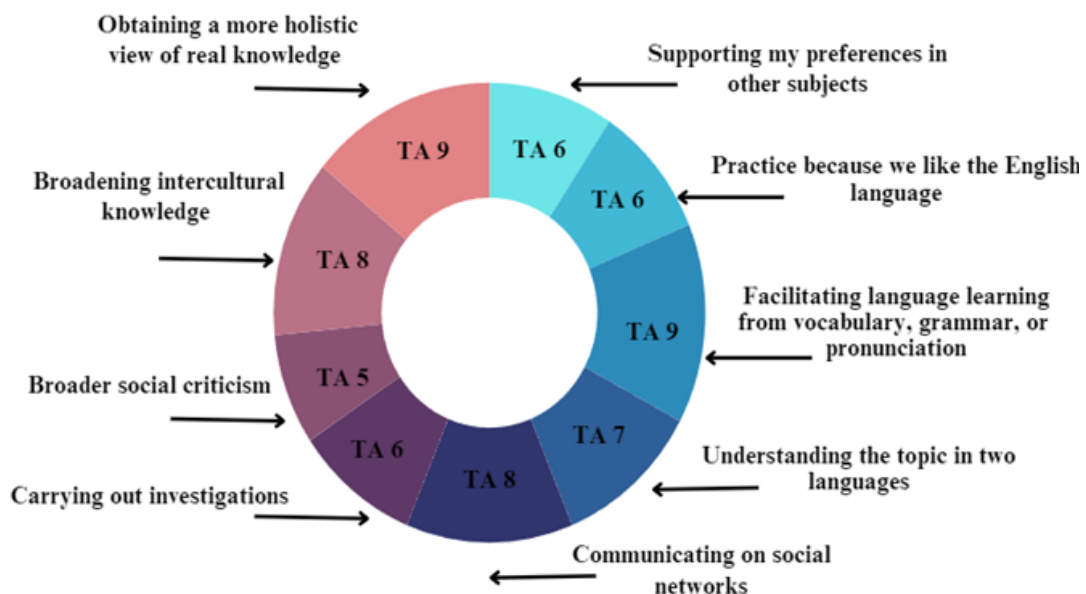


Figure 5 Utility of understanding texts in English

Nine questions were measured on a Likert scale to determine the level of agreement and disagreement. The research found that the participants strongly agreed on the benefits of reading English texts for improving their multicultural and general knowledge. Understanding English texts can enhance academic performance and aid in learning a second language until a more comprehensive understanding is achieved. The study also aimed to identify the skills that university students require to comprehend texts effectively.

Section 4 of the Questionnaire: Skills Needed for English Comprehension Texts

This section discusses the skills required for an English comprehension course. According to Figure 6, the questions in this section were rated on a frequency scale from always to never, shown below to facilitate analysis. Nine participants excelled in translating English texts into their native language for better understanding. As it shows the question 4, this is the most relevant skill for participants and indicates that 60 % of the students always develop this ability to enhance their understanding of English.

	<i>When you read a text in English how often...?</i>	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	Consult supporting material or tools (e.g. the dictionary) to try to understand reading	5	4	6		
2	Analyze the drawings and graphs appearing in the text for a better understanding	6	7	2		
3	Try to guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases, taking into account the content of the text	8	6	2		
4	Translate words and phrases from English into your native language to better understand the text	9	5	1		
5	Previously read a printed text for comprehension	4	5	2	5	
6	Read hypertexts and access at the same time different related links to facilitate and accelerate the exploration and understanding of research	4	5	2	3	1
7	Linking and conceptualizing information	6	6	3		
8	Quickly search for required information in different digital tools (serendipity)	3	8	2	1	1
9	Rely on the use of digital tools to be more creative, participatory, autonomous, and share ideas	8	5	1		1

Figure 6 Skills needed for English comprehension texts

Another outstanding ability was found in questions three and nine, which had a high frequency of “always,” which showed that the students could guess the meaning of unknown words based on the context’ content and be more creative and autonomous when using digital tools. Questions 8 and 4 also demonstrate that university students frequently quickly search for required information in different digital tools, analyzing drawings and graphics in texts for better understanding.

Section 5 of the Questionnaire: Preferences English course for Texts Comprehension

The following report analyzes section five of the questionnaire. This section focused on obtaining material resources for text comprehension through the participants' preferences. On a scale of agree and disagree, four questions are shown in Figure 7. It shows that the participants "totally agree" with 66.7% (ten participants) that "the teacher will provide the material that will be used (PDF, web pages, photos, e-books, photocopies, etc.)" In this result, the participants show that they prefer the ease of material resources for the English reading classes, so digital devices and hardware can give this practicality.

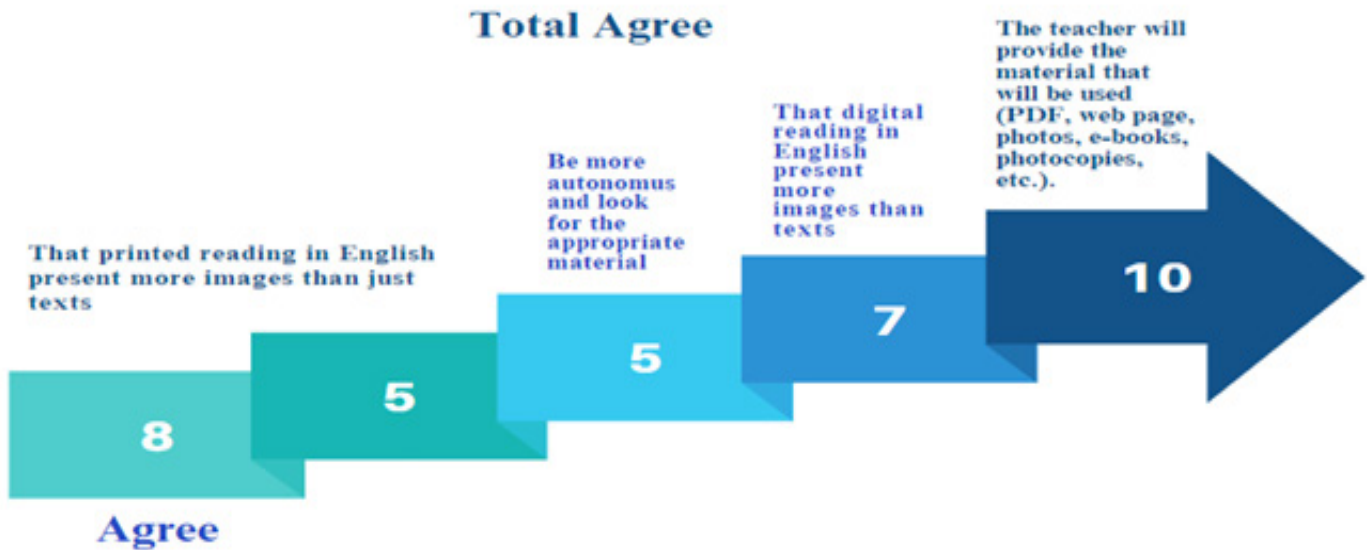


Figure 7 Obtaining material resources for text comprehension

Furthermore, 46.7% (seven participants) "totally agree" that the resources in "digital readings in English present more images than texts (iconography/semiotic)." Also, they had a similarity of 53.3% (eight participants) and 40% (five participants) "agree" with "That printed readings in English present more images than just texts (iconography/ semiotic)" This is because students are more immersed in the use of tools, which can show more color and images that call their attention to a better understanding of the texts. The participants showed to be more autonomous and look for the appropriate material. Finally, by analyzing the four questions, it can be shown that the preferences to acquire the material resources during the process of the reading comprehension courses in English are attached to the materials that can be purchased on the internet. Therefore, it will facilitate both the student and the teacher to get the resource faster and more updated. Having analyzed the questionnaire to learn more deeply the opinions of university students on how digital tools help them to holistically improve their understanding of English texts, the interview data of the participants focused on the research questions and the questionnaire are examined.

Interview

The interview was structured and took place with four participants in 2 sessions via Zoom. One participant was interviewed in the first session and the remaining three in the second session. The first question was "Opinion when performing exercises with English texts through digital tools". The second question was "Opinion when reading an English text on a digital device and a printed text". While the third focused on "Perception to investigate information in English through digital tools", finally question 4 was addressed to "Recommendation for reading digital texts in English". Therefore, the analysis of the interview is shown below to know about the most relevant opinions of the participants when using digital tools for understanding texts in English.

Questions	Answers
<p><i>Question 1:</i> Opinion when performing exercise with English texts through digital tools</p>	<p>I consider that the formats are more diverse in digital platforms, and that allows us to have, be able to rehearse or have exercises under different schemes that facilitate a great diversity of understanding the same subject.</p>
<p><i>Question 2:</i> Opinion when reading an English text on a digital device and a printed text</p>	<p>The way I see it is much better. I don't know if it's because of my generation but having the text physically because it allows me to make drafts to make annotations for myself. It is much better to handle English documents by reading English documents in physical format.</p>
<p><i>Question 3:</i> Perception to investigate information in English digital tools</p>	<p>I think it is much more convenient and beneficial to use digital media for research. With just a few clicks, you can access a vast amount of information that you wouldn't find by physically searching through libraries. Even in English-speaking institutions, the libraries may not have a diverse range of titles available. In contrast, digital platforms provide much better management and accessibility of information for research purposes.</p>
<p><i>Question 4:</i> Recommendation for reading digital texts in English</p>	<p>Well, I, in particular, what I do is to have applications that support me and so, to have a dictionary, synonyms, a tool of conjugations, to have, can, and/ or use markers within the digital part, have the facility to highlight the text to put some as in a PDF, put some text that gives me the meaning of some word, go the whole part of the digital format as a word processor that allows me to do what you do manually and that you cannot so easily as copy and paste for example not edit the text go.</p>

Conclusion

The findings discussed and presented above provided us with several significant explanations of the opinions of a group of university students when using digital tools to improve the comprehension of English texts. The first section of the instrument allowed the analysis of the personal information of the participants, which shows that despite the age, profession, and level of English, technology plays a vital role in learning another language. In section 2, the digital devices used by university students for an ORCEC and for reading text comprehension in English were analyzed, allowing us to see that cell phones are the most common electronic devices for these and other activities. At the same time, it was shown how often participants perform certain activities to improve their understanding and knowledge of academic texts in English. This showed that they perform digital reading more frequently for that activity. According to Section 3, the type of reading preferred both on paper and in digital form was shown, with electronic reading standing out considerably. At the same point, the usefulness of reading texts in English was analyzed, highlighting that this facilitates the learning of a language in different contexts, such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, in addition to showing that students fully agreed that understanding English texts are helpful for them to communicate on social networks. Finally, sections 4 and 5 showed the material skills and resources that students need to understand reading in English, making clear that this ability is to translate words or phrases and rely more on using digital tools to be

more creative and participatory. Besides that, they prefer that the teacher provide them with the material in any digital or printed format but that more images are present as iconographies or semiotics for understanding academic texts in English. We can infer that electronic tools are crucial in today's ORCEC operations.

On the other hand, the interview responses again showed the participants' preference to use digital tools in an EL in a virtual environment. This allowed us to conclude that most university students constantly take digital resources for their learning development, both in a second language, in an academic environment and in daily life. The results of both instruments show that education is going towards a digitalized environment where both students and teachers need to improve online teaching and learning to facilitate the use of the tools every day and get the expected success.

Summary of Key Findings

This study was concluded to describe the perception of the use of digital tools during an ORCEC. Another important factor was knowing the skills that participants have developed to have a better understanding of texts. The strategies used allowed students in a virtual context to have preferences to obtain the materials in the course. However, it is essential to mention that this research demonstrated that the general population reads more through electronic devices. Also, as has been said in this investigation, the pandemic COVID -19 was an impact that made all fields of education use more new digital devices. At the same time, the student population was forced to get better electronic devices. Although this kind of reading comprehension course has been given in face-to-face and blended format, the students used different electronic resources for it. Still, they had to improve the devices to obtain better results during the ORCEC training. Throughout the course, students demonstrated progress in managing their devices. They could easily share their screens to display their work, quickly locate relevant vocabulary during class, and actively participate more in discussions.

Implications and Contributions

This study was able to conclude according to the perceptions of university students. The positive contribution of them helped to carry out the analysis of this research. According to their experiences and perceptions during a virtual course of reading comprehension. Using digital tools contributed favorably to making the class more dynamic and students more participatory. Although this research was carried out virtually in the course context, participants could respond satisfactorily to research instruments. At the same time, they were demonstrating the rapidity of collecting information digitally. The implications that could be observed during the course were to have a more obsolete digital device or a low reception of the internet.

Directions for Further Research

This research was analyzed under an online concept. It was possible to identify that students use their digital devices to read. Learning the English language may be easy after having a cell phone, and these devices allow the student to navigate and investigate new theories and ways of learning. Both students and teachers constantly need to learn new forms of teaching-learning. Although it can be observed that some participants still read printed texts, they continue relying on digital tools to have better results. It is visible that the digital age is making extraordinary changes, constantly facilitating the renewal of information. However, it worries how fast past generations must improve their technological skills. Being at the forefront of the new generation will allow us to compare printed and digital information and improve in the field of research.

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Values and Culture



Valores y Cultura

La Evolución de la Enseñanza de Idiomas a través de la Integración Tecnológica

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RESUMEN

La integración de la tecnología en la enseñanza de idiomas ha transformado el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, ofreciendo a docentes y estudiantes herramientas que mejoran y personalizan este proceso. Este ensayo analiza cómo la tecnología ha optimizado la enseñanza, destacando los beneficios de plataformas interactivas y recursos digitales, como redes sociales y videojuegos, que favorecen la autonomía y el aprendizaje activo. Sin embargo, se resalta que el rol del docente sigue siendo esencial, ya que la tecnología debe estar respaldada por enfoques metodológicos adecuados. También se abordan los desafíos, como la brecha digital, que limita el acceso equitativo a estos recursos. En conclusión, la tecnología en la enseñanza de idiomas ofrece grandes oportunidades para el futuro, siempre que se utilice de manera equilibrada y consciente.

ABSTRACT

The integration of technology in language teaching has transformed the teaching-learning process, providing teachers and students with tools that enhance and personalize this process. This essay analyzes how technology has optimized language instruction, highlighting the benefits of interactive platforms and digital resources, such as social networks and video games, which promote autonomy and active learning. However, it emphasizes that the teacher's role remains essential, as technology must be supported by appropriate methodological approaches. Challenges, such as the digital divide, which limits equitable access to these resources, are also discussed. In conclusion, technology in language teaching offers great opportunities for the future, as long as it is used in a balanced and conscious manner.

La enseñanza de idiomas ha experimentado una notable evolución gracias a la integración de la tecnología, la cual ha facilitado y enriquecido el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje. La implementación de herramientas tecnológicas ha proporcionado tanto a maestros como a estudiantes una variedad de recursos que permiten personalizar y mejorar dicho proceso. En

este ensayo se analiza cómo la tecnología ha optimizado la enseñanza de idiomas, los beneficios que ofrece a docentes y alumnos, así como los desafíos que enfrenta.

La tecnología ha permitido una mejora significativa en la enseñanza de idiomas mediante el uso de diversas plataformas al alcance de los estudiantes. Como señala Pascual (2024), “La tecnología fomenta la interactividad y la participación de los estudiantes en el proceso de aprendizaje de idiomas” (Pascual,2024). El acceso a programas de aprendizaje en línea, tales como tutoriales y ejercicios interactivos, ha proporcionado a los estudiantes una amplia variedad de contenidos que favorecen su autonomía en el aprendizaje.

Asimismo, la inmersión tecnológica en la enseñanza de idiomas se refleja en el uso de plataformas como las redes sociales y los videojuegos, los cuales crean un entorno dinámico y participativo. Según Stockwell (2021), “Los dispositivos móviles tienen el potencial de transformar la experiencia de aprendizaje en algo interactivo y versátil, permitiendo la activación de múltiples sentidos y proporcionando un entorno mejorado para el aprendizaje” (p.3).

Es importante destacar que la tecnología no sustituye al maestro, sino que lo convierte en un facilitador del proceso de enseñanza. Aunque las herramientas digitales ofrecen oportunidades sin precedentes, la guía y el apoyo de un docente capacitado potencian y enriquecen la experiencia educativa. Como afirma Vital Carrillo (s.f.), “La tecnología por sí misma no puede influir en el aprendizaje si no cuenta con un enfoque metodológico y teórico que respalde el proceso de enseñanza” (Vital Carrillo,s.f).

La efectividad del aprendizaje mediado por la tecnología está directamente relacionada con el diseño y la implementación de recursos didácticos adecuados. Como menciona Trujillo (2019), “Necesitamos hoy más que nunca buen criterio ante la amplia y creciente oferta tecnológica en relación con la enseñanza y aprendizaje de lenguas” (p.10). Además, es fundamental garantizar el acceso equitativo a los recursos tecnológicos. Según Bañez (2023), “La brecha digital puede ser un obstáculo para algunos estudiantes y maestros, generando desigualdad en el acceso a la tecnología y a los recursos educativos en línea” (Bañez, 2023).

En conclusión, la tecnología educativa promueve la interacción entre recursos tecnológicos, estudiantes y docentes, facilitando y apoyando tanto el trabajo del profesor como el aprendizaje de los alumnos. Con un uso equilibrado y consciente, el futuro de la tecnología aplicada a la enseñanza de idiomas es prometedor, ya que, a medida que continúe avanzando, el campo de la enseñanza-aprendizaje de idiomas seguirá expandiéndose y evolucionando.

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Summaries



Resúmenes de

Simposio CIEX

Beyond Grammar: Integrating Tasks for Meaningful Communication

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ABSTRACT:

Communicating meaning doesn't flow naturally from practicing grammar and doing drills in a lesson. Developing the ability to communicate meaning flows naturally from practice with having a need or reason to produce language in a meaningful context. In this session, we will look at the four key ingredients to second language acquisition and show how and why tasks should be at the core of our teaching.

Inteligencia Artificial en el Aula: Transformando la Enseñanza de Lenguas

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ABSTRACT:

La presente investigación explora el uso de la inteligencia artificial (IA) para el aprendizaje y enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras. Se basa en un estudio realizado a estudiantes de lenguas, donde se analizó la frecuencia de uso de la IA en su vida cotidiana y académica, las lenguas que estudian y los beneficios que perciben en su uso para el aprendizaje de lenguas. Del análisis de datos se realizó una lista de beneficios y retos al utilizar la IA en el área. También se brinda una lista de inteligencias artificiales que pueden ser utilizadas dentro y fuera del aula.

La integración de la inteligencia artificial (IA) en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras es un tema emergente con gran potencial. Esta ponencia explora su uso en el contexto mexicano, basado en un estudio con 174 estudiantes de nivel superior y medio superior.

Metodología:

Esta investigación analiza la aplicación de la IA, considerándola de corte exploratoria debido a su fase inicial de desarrollo y los desafíos por abordar. Se aplicó un cuestionario para analizar la frecuencia de uso de la IA en la vida diaria y académica de los estudiantes, las lenguas que estudian y las ventajas que perciben en su uso para el aprendizaje de lenguas.

Resultados:

La mayoría de los estudiantes (75.3%) utiliza la IA en su vida diaria, principalmente con fines académicos. El inglés es la lengua más estudiada (89.1%). El 37.4% de los estudiantes ha utilizado la IA para tareas relacionadas con sus clases de lenguas.

Los beneficios percibidos incluyen: Practicar gramática y vocabulario; revisar textos en busca de errores; realizar prácticas de conversación y mejorar la pronunciación.

Conclusiones:

La IA ofrece un amplio campo de posibilidades para la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras. Del análisis de datos se realizó una lista de beneficios y retos. Sobre los datos también se realizó una investigación para brindar una lista de herramientas de inteligencia artificial que pueden ser utilizadas dentro y fuera del aula. La lista incluye aquellas accesibles a través de varios dispositivos, así como las extensiones o aplicaciones para desarrollar habilidades lingüísticas.

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Promoting Cultural Imperialism or a Valuable Resource? Textbook use in ELT

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BIOGRAPHY:

Patrick Coleman is the academic program partner at Te Huka Kouka | Academic Quality at Lincoln University. He coordinates and collaborates with staff across the University to create and develop new programs and courses. This ensures that the university's teaching, learning, and assessment activities align with academic policy. In previous roles, He focused on teaching, assessment, curriculum development, and pastoral care. He has worked in the education sector for almost 30 years. His research interests have a multidisciplinary focus, having been published and presented in education, ELT, and history.

ABSTRACT:

English as a global language has produced diverse materials to meet English language learner needs. In particular, textbooks have often been central to this learning process. Research on ELT textbook use has focused on the teacher's role in textbook selection, neoliberal content, and the broader issues of cultural and linguistic imperialism in their production. This presentation aims to present and critique these issues within a global context. Some suggestions will be offered to mitigate these issues and provide a coherent curriculum that respects ELLs' cultural and linguistic needs in a localized context.

The spread of English as a global language has spawned numerous associated industries to assist English language learners (ELL). In terms of curriculum design and materials development, the English language textbook has been a staple for ELLs and teachers alike. Research on the use of textbooks has focused on the role of teachers in textbook selection (McGrath, 2013), neoliberalism in the content of ELT textbooks (Babaii & Sheikhi 2017; Copley 2018; Gray & Block 2014), and cultural and linguistic imperialism through the use and production of textbooks (Fang, et al., 2022; Khodadady & Shayesteh, 2016; Soto-Molina, & Méndez, 2020). Some studies even take a global approach to language textbooks in general as a 'window to the world' (Risager, 2020). The focus of this presentation is to outline some of the issues relating to textbook focus and use in a global context. A further consideration are the new ways of delivering content have transformed English language classroom practice across the globe. Covid19 accelerated the process of digitised content, and the spread of generative artificial intelligence (AI) has created

further challenges and opportunities for classroom instructors. These issues will be evaluated with some suggestions for classroom practice. Seeking to mitigate these issues, the emphasis is on providing a coherent curriculum that assists ELLs language learning in a localised context that is respectful of their cultural and linguistic needs.

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The Integration of EdTech Apps for Language Teaching

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BIOGRAPHY:

Miguel Ángel Parra is an enthusiastic and hardworking person who graduated from the CIEX BA with the thesis project: "The use of technology with activities that promote English learning in elementary school students." Additionally, he is studying in the last year of his Architecture and Urbanism Bachelor, developing the thesis project entitled: "Educational Center for Teaching Languages with ICTs and Artificial Intelligence." Vice-president of the National Council of Architecture Students CONEA México. His passion for public speaking, learning different languages, teaching the English language to young learners, and designing playful and innovative learning spaces for creative and critical

ABSTRACT:

The rapid evolution of technologies shows us the importance of being aligned with them to be updated and be involved in the practical digital tools that technology offers us, where, in most cases, technology is used in every language class. Furthermore, teachers can implement classroom activities using educational technology apps as a complementary tool, which improves language learning.

This workshop will explore how educational technology applications can enrich language teaching by allowing students to explore new ways of learning entertainingly through gamification, online assignments rich in multimedia, and live interactive tasks. These consequently attract their attention and improve their language performance in developing reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills.

In today's world, the use of technology plays a critical position in education because it offers a variety of technological tools that can help the teaching-learning process become more efficient. The new era assigns new challenges and duties to the modern teacher. The tradition of English teaching has been drastically changed with the remarkable entry of technology. For that reason, English teachers should adapt to this new lifestyle and must find methods of incorporation and use of this new form of technology in their classes. Teachers should think about including technology as part of an integrated learning experience for students (Eady & Lockyer, 2013).

The integration of Edtech tools and digital resources can serve as a catapult to enhance students' learning with technology. Burns (2021) mentions the importance of including edtech skills and strategies as indispensable tools for creating learning experiences to lead students on their path with technology; also, she points out the teacher's role as a guide and helper to support student's needs while working on tech-friendly tasks to collaborate and interact in digital spaces through mind mapping, podcast and video platforms, virtual and augmented reality, audio recording, movie making, polling, interactive presentations, quizzing, and LMS, among others. Additionally, she claims, "Our goal on the journey of thoughtful technology integration is to take the best practices of the past to the next level with digital tools..." (p. 43).

The growing use of edtech as a learning tool has changed the paradigm for teachers, forcing them to rethink how students can learn more enjoyably and efficiently by using educational technology. According to Atherton (2018), some digitally available resources can be helpful to develop technology-enhanced learning (TEL) through emerging tech: AI and VR in education; assessment tools: GoFormative, Nearpod, VoiceThread; videos and audio tools: Edpuzzle, Podcasting; collaborative working: Padlet, Popplet, Notability; and games, polls, and student response system; Slido, Plickers, Quizlet, and ClassDojo. Thus, the selection of each digital technology will depend on the teacher's lesson and content to create learning scenarios with the implementation of technology and it would help learners personalize their learning according to their learning styles and improve their skills while they are using them.

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Diálogos con “El Buen Lobito” una Manera Alternativa de Promover Valores

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BIOGRAPHY:

Lillian Ruiz is an experienced educator with a career spanning 33 years across various educational levels, from high school to master’s degree programs. She excels in teacher training, curriculum design, and program development. Lillian has demonstrated her commitment to academic excellence by supervising 22 undergraduate and master’s theses. Her passion for teaching and learning and her leadership skills make her an invaluable asset to any educational institution.

ABSTRACT:

Los diálogos con “El Buen Lobito” una estrategia alternativa para la promoción de los valores en el aula.

Se parte de la información del personaje que es un pequeño lobo que vive cerca de los humanos y no entiende las frases o sentencias que usan para ejemplificar la moral o la ética. La actividad consiste en proponer una frase, por el instructor o un estudiante, cada participante realizará una interpretación y la expone al grupo, asimismo se ilustra al Lobito y se presenta.

Es una forma de reflexionar sobre los valores de manera individual y grupal para internalizarlos. Asimismo se puede evaluar la forma de argumentar, la redacción y la ortografía.

Un importante reto en la educación es la promoción de los valores, sobre todo cuando se considera la internalización de los mismos. Por lo que hay que buscar estrategias reflexivas, motivadoras e interesantes para los estudiantes que los conduzcan a la comprensión de los valores que promueven las diferentes instituciones y se apropien de ellos.

Diálogos con El Buen Lobito, surge de varios años de experiencia en la educación y es una propuesta que contribuirá a la formación integral. Se ha aplicado desde el nivel primaria, licenciatura y capacitación para instructores

Esta estrategia consiste en dar a conocer quién es el personaje, conceptualizar claramente que es un valor, determinar con el que se trabajará, investigar su definición y fijar una frase, dar un

espacio para reflexionar y explicar la frase, ilustrar al Lobito, se presenta al grupo, de manera oral o con exposición de los trabajos.

Los resultados han sido buenos en edades desde los 10 a 53 años, han estado receptivos, motivados y emocionados por presentar sus actividades. incluyendo dos grupos en línea. Solamente dos estudiantes han tenido actitudes contrarias: uno de rechazo que realizó todas las actividades y otro de desinterés realizando pocas tareas.

Se conforma con todo lo trabajado un portafolio de evidencias, para finalizar se revisa y se escribe una carta de despedida, se leen en el grupo.

Esta estrategia puede realizarse en español y en inglés y también es útil para evaluar, el manejo del lenguaje, la redacción la argumentación, la reflexión y la ortografía.

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This call is addressed to: Professors – Researchers, graduate students from any Bachelor of Arts in English Letters and Masters in Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics programs, and any researchers and scholars who wish to publish research articles, research essays, or thesis results, all related to topics of the Journal: Language Teaching and Learning, Applied Linguistics, Values, and Culture.

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- a) Research Papers: Graduates' & teachers' voices – National and international research articles.
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- c) Personal Development and Growth: Moral Values and Culture Essays.

The guidelines for writing and presenting the proposals are described below:

1. Title: in English and in Spanish.

2. Summary (in English and Spanish, 150 words), containing the following aspects:

- a) Introduction:** This section describes the context where the research was carried out, the reason why the research was carried out, and the importance of the study.
- b) Purpose:** Here the writer states and explains the research objectives, intentions, questions, or hypothesis.
- c) Research method:** In this part, the author mentions and justifies the research approach and method that were selected, briefly describes the subjects, the context, and the research procedures, as well as the instruments that were used for the data collection.
- d) Results:** Here, the writer presents the main findings, the degree to which the research objectives were reached, and the answers to the research questions.
- e) Conclusion:** This section presents the main conclusions, the importance of the findings, considering the contribution to the theory, the research area, or professional practice, and suggesting practical uses of the results, as well as possible applications for further research.

3. Body of the article:

- a) Key words.** Five, in English and Spanish.
- b) Introduction:** It presents the research topic area, and the research topic, mentioning if it is descriptive, explanatory, evaluative, correlational, interpretative, etc. Also, it emphasizes the research problem.
- c) Literature review:** It presents the main terms, concepts, theoretical claims or principles, models, etc. analyzing and discussing the ideas presented by the main authors who have studied the topics related to the research or study presented. The references should not be more than 10 years after their publication, except from those classical research works.
- d) Research methodology:** It describes the research approach: qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods.
- e) Describe the research method:** case study, phenomenology, action-research, classroom research, longitudinal research, transversal research, experimental research, cause-experimental research, etc.
 - Describe the **data type** (describe and justify the data base, universe, or sample, etc.)
 - Characterize the **subjects** (describe the participants in the research).
 - **Context** (describe the geographic and institutional context where the research was carried out).
 - **Instruments** (describe the research instruments used to collect information and data).
 - **Data analysis** (explain the way the data was systematized and analyzed).
- f) Main findings.** Synthesize, present, interpret, and argue the most significant results found and the proposal, if the case of developing one.

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- g) Conclusions.** Describe the main conclusions generated from the answers to the research questions.
- h) Main limitations of the study** (related to the geographical or institutional context, or knowledge area and the research process).
- i) Main implications and impact of the research.** Describe the main benefits of the research and the possible applications of the proposal.

Topics for the articles:

Topics of the articles should be recent and relevant for the academic community and should address one of the following research lines.

1. Language learning and teaching theories
2. Language professional competencies
3. Language teaching approaches and methods
4. Alternative language learning and teaching theories
5. Curriculum design: design of language programs
6. Design, selection, and adaptation of language teaching materials and activities
7. Language learning evaluation
8. Language and culture
9. Human values in language teaching
10. Personal development and growth in language professionals
11. Research and professional development
12. Educational technology in languages

Format:

- Title using Arial font, size 14
- Text using Arial font, size 12
- Margins: top 2.5, bottom 2.5, left 2.5, right 2.5.
- Spaces: 1.5
- No indented paragraphs

Length of the articles:

- 8 to 15 pages containing text (from 3000 to 5000 words approximately)
- Containing 20 to 40 references (using the American Psychological Association APA format)

Languages: The articles can be written in English or Spanish.

The editorial process includes a review by a strict pair of “blind” reviewers and using **Plagius software** to verify that ethical standards are respected and that there is no plagiarism in any of the documents. Then, authors are advised to verify the submissions including the call elements and format in advance.

The evaluation of submissions starts in the editorial process, which may end in declining submissions if they do not match the call and format requirements. When the editorial board accepts a submission, it continues to the double-blind peer review process as the final evaluation with the following results:

- A. Accept Submission or Accept Submission with Modifications
- B. Revisions Required or Resubmit for Review
- C. Decline Submission

It is important to mention that if a blind reviewer declines the article or essay it will not be accepted.

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