

Integrating Technology In The Improvement And Motivation Of Learning English As A Foreign Language

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Abstract- This research was done to analyze the impact of technology in learning, and the motivation of the teachers in the learning process of English as a foreign language. It analyzes the pedagogical intervention in 10 elementary school teachers who wanted to improve their competence in the English language, and to achieve that, the researchers organized a variety of sessions in which participants had the possibility to take part in different activities integrating technology. Data was collected through surveys, follow ups, and tests. As a result, it was possible to increase the motivation of the interest of the participants to learn the language, and it should also be noted that the speaking competence of the participating teachers improved highly.

Key words: Competencies, technology, teachers, English, virtual platform.

1 INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most permeated fields by the phenomenon of technology (Gonzalez, 2015). Dillenbourg, Schneider & Synteta (2002) stated that the different technological tools as a form of functional communication and new routes of learning motivate learning in an active way. Valencia, Enriquez, and Agredo (2017) said that the integration of technological tools in academia allows teaching and learning processes to become a meaningful experience for students in any field. The Ministry of National Education in Colombia (MEN) established the National Program of bilingualism (NPB) in the year 2004, in order to establish some standards of learning English in the country. It is expected that by the year 2019 all English teachers in the public sector in Colombia are at least level B2 according to the Common European Framework; however, the real situation is different; level achievement remains a major challenge for educational institutions. According to Sánchez-Jabba (2012) levels of English in Colombia are quite low. Toward the middle of the previous decade the proportion of people with a domain level, high enough, to understand and express themselves in English was less than 1% (MEN, 2006); a percentage that has not changed significantly in recent years, and within the teaching population the picture is no more encouraging. The times and spaces that educators have today can be a great obstacle to achieve significant progress in these processes. That is why being able to define an appropriate value and innovative integration of technology, such as academic tool, useful to achieve an optimal level of English as a foreign language, can be a determining factor in the planning and execution of different programs focused on the population in the region, for achievement reflected, in an easy way, striking and with a high degree of motivation.

The innovative implementation of an exposure to the language in study, through the integration of ICT, with no barriers of time or spaces can be a great opportunity to generate volumes of constant improvement in the region. The quality of the teaching and learning process will always be linked to the transformation (Valencia, Enriquez and Ramos, 2018). In Colombia, the establishment of the National Program of bilingualism (2004) for citizens to have better opportunities to cooperate at a global level, since English is the global language used today, seeks to generate innovative ideas to facilitate the transition from the traditional method of study to the integration of technology, where the final result intended to be a significant increase in the levels of English according to the Common European Framework of Reference. For this purpose, there was a permanent communication plan and meetings between teachers and researchers for the speaking practice online through the virtual classrooms of the Universidad Santiago de Cali, by means of the RUAV (high-speed university network), and also for sending and receiving work via the internet. There was a selection of ten English teachers from different public schools in the region who took an initial test, according to the standards of the Common European Framework, to check their level at the beginning of the research and another test at the end of it. They were asked for a commitment needed in times of virtual meetings which were very flexible given the opportunities offered online. Ausubel (1983) stated that learning is significant when the contents are related hence not arbitrary and substantial with what the student already knows. The same author mentioned "the single most important factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows." Researchers designed a plan of study with three weekly meetings of online communication practice and skills of reading and writing practices. During the research, they were tested to measure improvement in their English level. This contributed to the achievement of the objective of showing how the integration of technology can help increase the levels of language in English teachers in the region, innovating in the processes of improvement, selecting models for the development of the study of English, and applying technological activities. At the end of the investigation respective measurements were made of the levels and sought to show how this innovative process can lead to the participating regions to a positioning in its project

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of bilingualism, with results superior to those achieved up to now, in the eleven years that leads the process of bilingualism, established by the National Government.

1.1 Project Description

The level of English in the continent is quite low, perhaps due to the use of Spanish as a regional language. According to Education First (2012), Colombia has one of the lowest levels of English in the world in terms of the handling of the English language. Given the levels of management of a language proposed by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR, 2011) and the demand by the domination of English as a foreign language in Colombia and the world, the Ministry of Education in Colombia (MEN) established the National Program of bilingualism (NPB) in the year 2004. More recently, the MEN also established the Program "Colombia Very Well", with a lifetime up to 2025. But unfortunately to reach the levels established for English teachers remains a difficult task. According to Sánchez (2012) English levels in Colombia are quite low. At the national level we see how English teachers have very poor results in their English levels. Sanchez (2012) showed a diagnosis made to English teachers in the public sector. 25 % reached level B plus, 35 % level B1, 12.4 % level A2, 12.7 % level A1; and 14.4 % an A minus, data of concern if one takes into account the objective of the MEN to reach a level B2 standard for all English teachers in 2019. On the other hand, by reviewing the regional level, the results remain equally poor. The Ministry of Education of the Department of Valle del Cauca in 2013 performed a diagnostic test to 78 English teachers of the region, giving as a result the following Pre to 21%: A1: 24%, A2: 9%, B1: 29%, and B2 plus: 17%. The previous data show that 54% of English teachers evaluated did not have an intermediate level B1, whereas only 17% reached the desired level for teachers. The Ministry of Education and its regional subsidiaries make a big effort in terms of training for English teachers, but this is still insufficient according to the results of the different measuring tests. Added to all this is the lack of time and space of today's human species. That is why thinking about the good use of the technology as a teaching tool to increase English levels in teachers is a realistic look. Mujica (2013) mentioned that the use of ICT is increasingly important in the teaching and learning processes. Martinez (2007) said that cyberspace has reached a level of maturity that reveals its consistency, complexity, and flexibility. Virtual platforms, web sites, emails, and cell phone messages, offer multiple technology options that can become key points of academic flexibility and offer quality without limits of space or time for teachers to take advantage of all kinds of trainings offered. Given the above, it posed the following research question in order to contribute to all the processes of improvement toward English teachers from public schools in Colombia: "How does the technology improve and motivate learning a foreign language, English?"

1.2 English Teaching and the ICT

Learning a foreign language in Colombia, English, becomes more necessary every day in all environments and with much more weight in the labor and academic fields, that is why teachers assume more responsibility each day with the

challenge of increasing their language level. There are many factors that influence the motivation and the provision in these processes of learning a new language. "The big challenge of technological innovation, is a change in the mentality of the teachers and in their teaching practice; as well as in their continuous training according to the demands of the market" (Cebrian, 1997). In a globalized world, the use of technology is an essential part of the current development (Valencia, Enriquez & Agredo, 2017). Day after day, there are more technological tools employed in all contexts and moments of our daily life, you need to enter a classroom and look at what students are doing, with this picture, it is very easy to detect many of them are using their cell phone, reading messages, entering Facebook, watching videos, or doing many other activities. Education cannot remain indifferent to this situation and, on the other hand, you should be aware of the multiple tools that you can use through which you can optimize the process of teaching a foreign language. Taking into account this scenario, it is necessary to generate other ways of training in which it is possible to acquire the knowledge as well as some methodological alternatives supported by technological tools that will enable students to acquire the English language, but which in turn motivates them to continue with this process on their own, that is to say "autonomously." Hereof, Pavón (2005) said "it is necessary to prepare the student to have autonomy and capacity to handle the technology that is within his reach and it will be by setting-up a culture called technology" (p. 75). On the other hand, it is undeniable that there are many factors that in some cases do not facilitate the learning of a foreign language; therefore, it can be said that neither the guild of teachers escapes this series of aspects that directly affect their learning process of the English language. In the field of education, there are still notorious manifestations of resistance toward the integration and use of technology in the teaching and learning processes, carried out especially within the classroom. In this direction we find that Goodwyn (1997) classified the teachers in the following three categories about the approach and interaction with technology: "The fearful" are those teachers who are usually older and for whom such technology is generally a threat and causes a lot of anxiety. "The undecided" are those teachers who are changing and redefining their concepts. "The optimistic" are those teachers for whom such technology can significantly expand the teaching of English. In spite of these arguments, it is undeniable the effect that technological tools have in the learning processes and in particular their impact on the acquisition of English as a foreign language which has been widely studied by many educators. ICT has played a very important role in the learning processes of the teachers and as a result, we find that many of these technological tools can also be used effectively in the development of their classes, but unfortunately the teachers are not trained to use them, taking into account in particular the existence of a fairly wide gap between teachers who teach today in schools and in the globalized world in which students are currently living. Thus, it is necessary that teachers also learn how to use these tools, and at the same time develop activities within their classes to be able to take advantage of the technology within the school environment and not, on the contrary, be excluded to think they can become

distracting during class time. Marcelo (2002) said: "Changes in teachers cannot be done at the margin on how you understand the learning process of the teachers themselves." That is to say, it is necessary to place within the reach of teachers, multiple technological tools with which they feel that it is possible to learn a language through the implementation and use of these devices. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the use of technology within the spaces of learning a language, which in the case of teachers, allows them to improve their competence and also learn to use this type of devices pedagogically. Brutt-Griffler (2002) determined that, although people can use texts and use many hours in conversation, it is now possible to use some tools "based on computer programs, which is very promising, as they meet the elements of grammar and oral procedures to be pursued for the learning of English" (p. 3). Johnson and Dyer (2006) claimed that it is generating a new way of teaching in which we are integrating advances in technology. That is to say, speaking of the training processes of the teacher, he must be aware of the existence of other ways that students can have access to knowledge, which can be much more effective and useful to those who traditionally have been used. Then, teachers, students, and families must be very aware of the changed situation in which we are involved, especially by the technological advances that society has had but which do not necessarily have been in the scope of the school. However, there are teachers who have the responsibility to lead and put at the disposal of students advances in technology applied in the field of human knowledge, especially by the enormous changes that have occurred in the use of these tools. Professors must keep up with trends in teaching (González, 2015 cited by Valencia, Enriquez and Acosta, 2017). In like manner, it is necessary that the teacher also learn how to use all the technological advances that occur outside of the school, but which, however, it is in the obligation to bring it to the classroom with the purpose of generating other ways of teaching that are much more attractive and make the learning a foreign language more interesting. Enriquez, De Oliveira & Valencia (2017) mentioned the importance of using teaching strategies for easier learning.

2 METHODOLOGY

The general objective is to analyze the impact of technology in learning and teacher motivation in the learning process of English as a foreign language. This project is conceived as part of the type of qualitative descriptive, which seeks to analyze in detail the phenomenon studied, and in this case, it is the incidence motivation in the processes of learning a foreign language by a group of English teachers, and in order to achieve this purpose, ten elementary public school teachers were selected. They sought to improve their level of language and to do so, they had to take an initial written test, and then another test once the process of pedagogical intervention was done. In the development of this research and in the same way in which three researchers who through the use of technological aids available in a virtual platform of the University, the selection of excellent web pages, and with the application of hardware and software, it was possible to select different activities in which the participant teachers had to work on. This assignment was

made on a weekly basis, taking into account a topic for each activity that the participating teacher worked on, and in the same manner, they had three sessions with the professors, which are done through the virtual platform Chamilo. Thus, it can be said that a mixed pedagogy was existent, which facilitated the meeting, mediated by the platform. At these meetings, the teachers had the possibility of attending up to three days a week, according to the needs and interests of each participant, as well as to the motivation that they had manifested by being in contact with the researchers, by practicing the language to resolve doubts, and by having meeting spaces that allowed them to use the language. In the latter sessions, participants had the opportunity to discuss issues in English in order to use the language, to discuss the issues studied during other meetings, as well as to express their views about the session, with the purpose following-up which in hand would raise actions for improvement. It is also necessary to clarify that in each of them, the same theme worked during the week that it was used, through the exercises proposed by each of the researchers. It is important to mention that some of the websites used offered the possibility of using virtual classrooms, through which it was possible to have the necessary oral interaction proposed in this project, and which also offered a variety of exercises and activities that were quite fun and interesting for the participants; as well as multiple exercises online and also many links that provided the opportunity to have a wide range of exercises for the constant reinforcement of the English language. As González, Villota, & Villota (2017) stated, there is a range of strategies used by the teacher, which undoubtedly help the learning process. Enriquez, Valencia and De Oliveira stated that there are tools that teachers have to strengthen the achievement of the objectives set within any activity provided to their students. It is also very important to bear in mind that each of the sessions included many activities in which there was the exposure of actual videos, with which participants could learn how to use the language in a natural and varied way because researchers changed the topics and situations offered in each of the videos weekly. To obtain data a few tables of information gathering were present which established a comparison and contrasting of the information found, at the same time it allowed analyzing the data supplied by the participants. All of this was done in accordance with the parameters established by Hernández, Fernández and Baptista (2006) by its relevance to the management and interpretation of information.

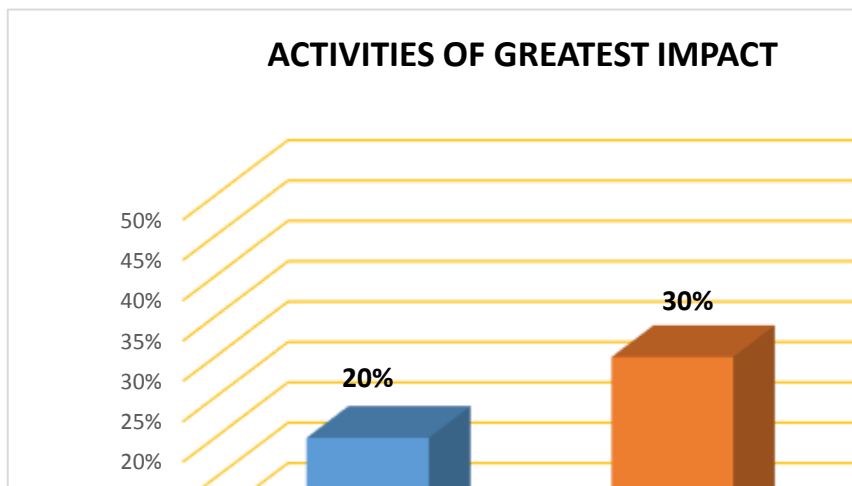
3 RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Below we present the results obtained in this study, which as explained previously, was reflected in tables which reflected the views of the participants.

Now, the first question with their respective views:

Which of the activities proposed in the approach to the foreign language do you like the most?

Graph 1

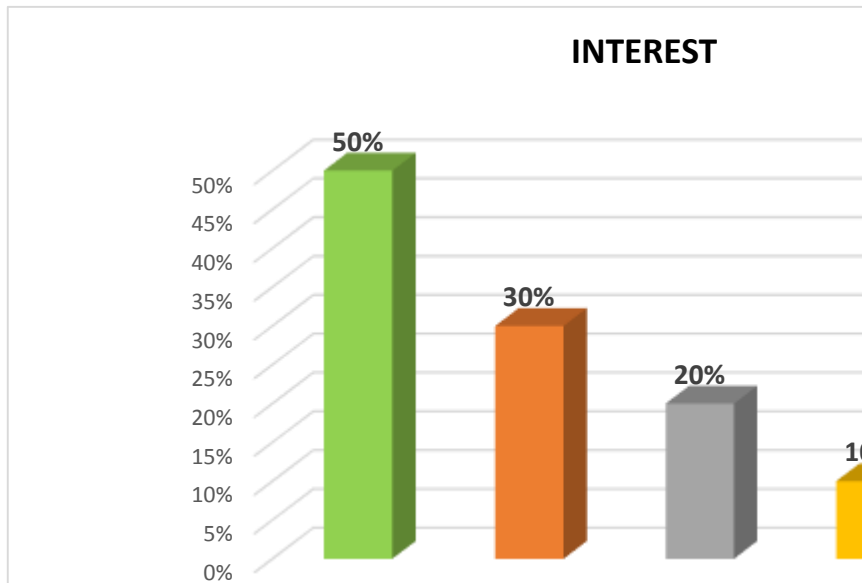


Graph 1: Activities of greatest impact. Source: Own

In the question presented, participants demonstrate that the session they liked the most is the use of videos, the percentage is equivalent to 50% of the total sample; Cakir (2006) determined that videos are tools which provide authentic scenes through which students may have a real contact that allow them to learn about different situations and they can learn to speak and comment using this type of material. On the other hand, their access is easy,

especially because they have the possibility to choose it within the network, and for the multiple samples of video that exists, it is necessary that the teacher chooses accordingly to their interests and also to be developed in class. Participants were asked about the activities done within the session that allowed them to improve their interest in continuing the process.

Graph 2

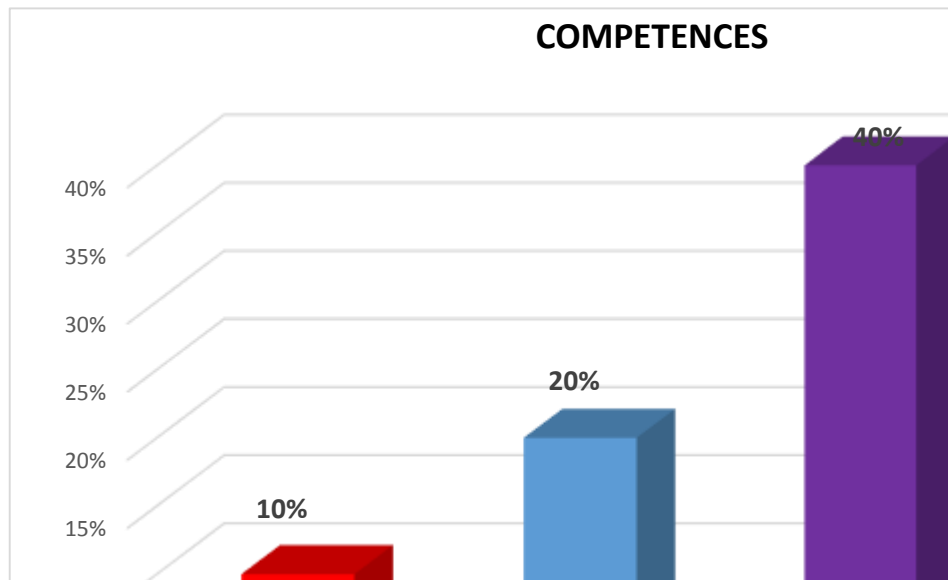


Graph 2: Activities of greatest impact. Source: Own

The markup percentage to be given to the methodology used during the sessions in these responses is notorious. Batista and Salazar (2003) stated that a teacher can adapt the class taking into account the guidelines that the tools delivered. Therefore, in this type of experience the role played by the mentors, who had to define the organization of the sessions taking into account different criteria, with which the participants can feel motivated and interested in the activities proposed by the researchers, is tremendously essential. Consequently, as Derakhshan et al. (2015) stated

“the choice of appropriate tools must be based on the learning objectives and competencies already defined, which are solely the responsibility of the teacher” (p. 50). That is to say, it is very important and determining the role of teachers as mentor researchers, which took into account many factors that made possible for the participants to express a high degree of interest in each of the session proposals. On the other hand, it was inquired about the skills acquired once they participated this experience.

Graph 3



Graph 3: Competences and abilities emphasize in the experience. Source: Own

Graph 3 is evidenced that one of the skills in which the participants have developed greater competition was in the ability to speak, which for many is quite complicated; however, as authors such as Fokkens and others (2013) believed, the most important thing to handle a language is motivation. The importance of establishing the role of the teacher, especially in the selection of those learning situations that are valid and interesting to the student, Johnson and Dyer (2006) explained that there are other ways of imparting knowledge, which will be supported by technology, in this new context that offers different conditions of teaching but that the teacher should organize, select, and apply.

4 CONCLUSIONS

This project demonstrated that the use of technological tools in this program for the improvement of the English level helped optimize the learning of the participants, allowing in a relatively short period of time the increasing in their level of performance. It was also possible to increase the level of understanding, as well as the motivation and interest on the part of the participants in this type of proposal, as stated by González (2013) "The integration of these tools in the academic routines makes students feel more relaxed and excited about learning" (p.65). Garcia, Miranda & Iñesta (2018) mentioned that it should not be forgotten that motivation has been one of the main fields of study in language learning for several decades. In the same way, we were able to show how the aid provided through technology should serve as a point of support for the teaching of a language; however, despite the implementation of a new way of teaching a language, it is necessary to establish spaces that allow the interaction of both the teacher and the student. For this case, we used the blended learning by providing the possibility of establishing regular meetings with teachers, mentors, who through these spaces could have meetings in which the participants said they have improved, especially, their ability to speak. Finally, it is necessary to comment on the usefulness of the videos, as complementary activities within

situations that are proposed to learners, especially because the participants recognized that this type of aid provided them with learning the skills of a foreign language.

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