

ICT for Language Learning: A modern Strategy in Education

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Abstract

The integration of technology in education has spread worldwide and it is one of the best options to improve academic processes day by day. In order to analyze integration of technology and the motivation of English teachers from public schools in Colombia in the improvement of their English level, a quantitative approach was used, having the participation of 10 elementary school teachers who wanted to improve their competence in the English language, 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, observation and a pre-test and a post-test. As a result, the oral production level of the participating teachers was improved.

Keywords: Technology, Education, teacher's Training.

Resumen

La integración de la tecnología en la educación se ha extendido por todo el mundo y es una de las mejores opciones para mejorar los procesos académicos día a día. Para analizar la integración de la tecnología y la motivación de los profesores de inglés de las escuelas públicas de Colombia en la mejora de su nivel de inglés, se utilizó un enfoque cuantitativo, con la participación de 10 maestros de primaria que querían mejorar su competencia en el idioma inglés. Para lograrlo, los investigadores organizaron una variedad de sesiones en las que los participantes tuvieron la posibilidad de participar en diferentes actividades integrando tecnología. Los datos fueron recolectados a través de encuestas, observación y una prueba previa y una prueba posterior. Como resultado, se mejoró el nivel de producción oral de los maestros participantes.

Palabras clave: Tecnología, Educación, Entrenamiento a profesores

Introduction

Modern education requires updated ideas, Gonzalez (2015) said, "teachers must keep up with trends in teaching". And according to Valencia, Enriquez, & Agredo, (2017), the challenge of education is becoming more and more challenging, spaces and times have changed. Gonzalez (2016) mentioned that the integration of technology in the English classroom has expanded very quickly effectively throughout the world, and there are a wide variety of activities to choose from.

Through the ages many approaches and methods have been implemented with the idea of improving the teaching and learning processes (Valencia, 2018). It is important to understand the integration of technology in education, not only as using different technology tools, but to know about definition, history, use, strategies among others; that is why, professors should be trained in technology with a wide range of possibilities. Enriquez, De Oliveira, and Valencia (2017) argued that it is important that teachers think deeply about on the teaching activities implemented in the classrooms, to streamline the academic processes.

ICT for Language Learning- A modern strategy in Education, keep us updated about the reality of knowledge in technology integration, definitions, uses, and history of technology to make processes more significant in education. As Valencia, Enriquez, and Acosta (2018) said, it is an imminent necessity to improve the pedagogical training of the teachers, to offer a better preparation to students.

Technology has always been a challenge in our current society; therefore, this field of knowledge has been converted in a permanent intention of improving for all sciences that is why the evolution of technology through different times in life has been so important. Lemon and Medina (2014) stated that in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Gabriel Garcia Marquez used technology to tell the history of a fictional Latin American town named Macondo. These authors also mentioned that Garcia Marquez used technology as a trope to explore solitude and connection, changing social and economic relationships, ideas of modernity, the legacy of colonialism (Lemon and Medina, 2014).

Technology in education has had important changes and it is always evolving to offer better results in the academic processes. Education started integrating technology many years ago, but since the late nineties the integration of ICT in education has become a focus of attention in the educational field (Puga, 2006). All this had a positive and important impact in all teaching and learning processes. Valencia, Enriquez and Tigreros (2018) said that, currently, we are immersed in different changes produced by the speed in which technology advances within society.

Many professors started integrating different strategies to mix the traditional teaching and the new teaching back in that year, education started a process of great changes in all kinds of processes. Nowadays, technology is not only part of education, but it is part of students' lives, teachers' work, institutions' policies and governors' educational rules.

It is important for teachers to know about the process technology has had over the years and how it has increased the possibilities of better academic processes.

Digital natives

Are students digital natives? Well, it depends on the definition you have in mind. One could think about two broad definitions. The first one in which students have been born in the years where technology has been part of their daily lives. The second one, in which people think students are born with technological knowledge.

In this article, digital natives are recognized as those students who were born in the technological era, but additionally to that, they have had a lot of interaction with different kinds of technology tools. Professors must realize that not all students, who were born in the technological era, manage technology, it depends on the social, cultural and personal background and context.

The teachers' guide in a significant integration of technology where all participants can take advantages of the teaching and learning processes becomes important.

Technology strategies in education as Valencia, Enriquez and Agredo (2017) are those orientations that the teacher gives to students in order to promote learning opportunities. Implementing different technology strategies in education will lead to a learning motivation among students. Students want to have

innovative learning ways, and the integration of different daily tools in their academic processes can help them to achieve that goal.

Technology in Education

Thinking about the English teacher training leads us to think about the new scenarios within which this teacher should develop his/her job, which day by day moves further away from traditional teaching models characterized by the presence of individuals, in the physical context of the school. As Gonzalez, Ramirez and Salazar (2018) stated, changes that education has had reflect the impact of technology on everything related to education. The quality of the teaching process will always be linked to transformation, (Valencia, Enriquez, & Acosta, 2018).

Therefore, as proposed by Aguilar (2012), we are currently being forced to live in an era where the accumulation of information produces an acceleration of convulsive social interactions and dynamics characterized by multiple changes, which occur in an extraordinarily fast way.

In other words, the use of technology has generated new modes of communication and relationships between the members of the different communities. A good example, is evidence with the use of emoticons which have transformed their interpretative representation, generating other way of language use.

On the other hand, this type of situation has also promoted a change in the role of the English teachers, whose work is based on the pedagogical integration of ICT, bringing as a consequence the need to have new skills and knowledge that allow them to use this type of tools within the classroom, especially by identifying what students need to learn. In this way, it is making an emphasis on the apprentices' interest because ultimately if you want to have the student's attention and interest, it is essential to keep in mind this type of considerations.

As a consequence, teachers will have to break the traditional ways of teaching, to be linked to the new dynamics imposed by the use of technologies within the school context, in this regard, Granados (2015) stated that "the use of ICT means breaking with the traditional media, blackboards, pens, etc; and gives way to the teaching function, based on the need to train and update methods according to current requirements" (pag. 143).

This is especially true because today students have different needs and interests than before, where access to information was limited, as well as the means of interaction, where it is presented a completely different situation today, because students have a direct access to all kinds of information. This process is facilitated by multiple modes of interaction, that do not ask for a great quantity of money because the only requirement needed it to be connected to a network, in which it can be possible to access to all this type of resources.

As a result of this new panorama, the teachers' work has had to take a different view in this type of phenomena which main implication is the need to train teachers willing to promote a society in transformation, whose pedagogical act is based on the integration of ICT in the classroom, which has some students who do

not require the transmission of information, because access to networks will facilitate this knowledge, but on the contrary, it needs teachers to guide and to allow other ways to access information.

Mestres (2008) determines that the teachers need to structure their function, having defined the way in which students develop competences with cognitive skills, and the way in which they are able to identify their function within the contexts in which the student use the language, so that technology allows students to access knowledge practically, generating other ways of thinking and understanding the world around them.

Díaz-Barriga (sf) stated that in modern times, it is impossible to avoid the use of technology within the educational context, especially because the support provided by the use of ICT, which has become a facilitating element of the teaching process, brings with it at the same time, innovative elements in the teacher's pedagogical exercise, which also leads them to supply other types of demands, such as the need to be permanently updated, the obligation to make an adequate and pedagogical use of ICT, taking into account some didactic and methodological considerations when selecting, or adopting the tools, and the activities to be used by the teachers, this implies too, to think about different ways of teaching, in the same way, it can be possible to have new perspectives, at the moment of making these kind of decisions.

Method

This research used a qualitative descriptive approach, which seeks to analyze the motivation in the processes of improving a foreign language by a group of English teachers in public schools, and to achieve this purpose, ten elementary public-school teachers were selected. They had to take an initial written test, and then another test after the research process was done. Every week, many options online were offered to practice the different English skills, and there were two synchronic meetings to practice the oral production.

The researchers integrated technological tools available in the university's virtual platform; there was a selection of excellent web sites and the application of hardware and software, where different activities were proposed, in which the participants had to work on.

Websites implemented 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 fun and interesting for the participants. As González, Villota, & Villota (2017) stated, there is a range of strategies used by the teacher, which undoubtedly help the learning process.

All sessions included many activities in which they were exposed to 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.

There was some emphasis in the knowledge of history of technology, which helped teachers understand the importance of all different changes education has had, and also the importance of recognizing what kind of students we have in classes now.

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.

Results

The results showed a significant improvement in the participants' English level and it also gave them a different view of several teaching tools in their own classes. They answered a final survey which was analyzed to understand results better.

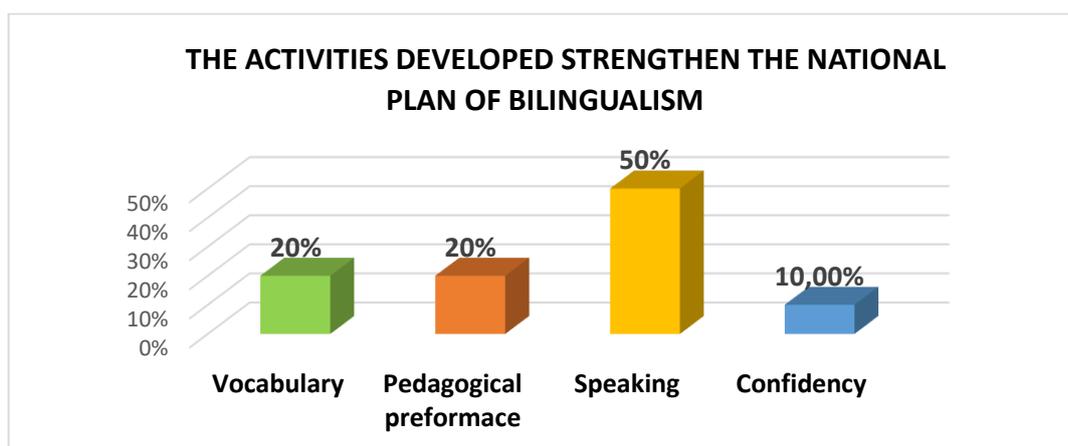


Figure 1. Activities developed

Source: Authors (2018)

In figure 1, teachers mentioned the activities done through the process and the ones they think helped them improved their English.

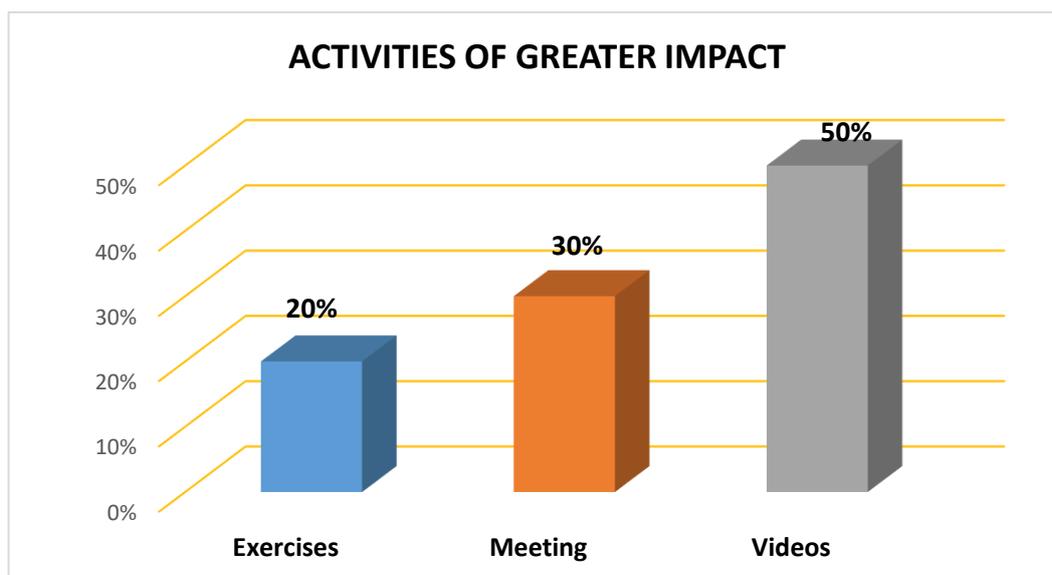


Figure 2. Activities of greater impact

Source: Authors (2018)

Figure 2 shows videos as one of the most important ways for teachers to get involved in the process, taking advantages of the flexibility, they also mentioned the intention of integrating this way of teaching in their own classes.

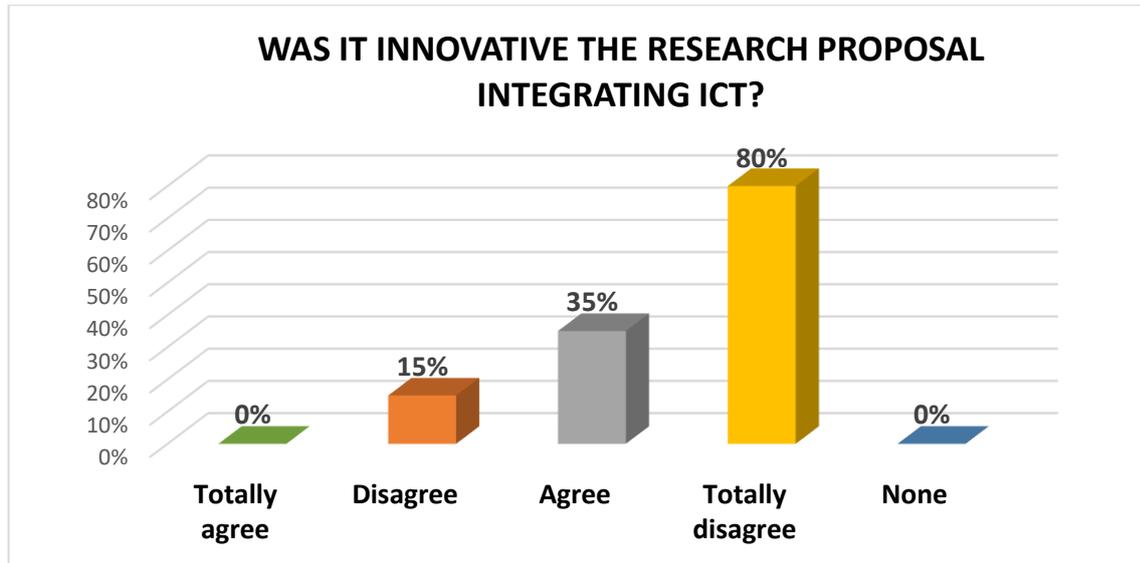


Figure 3. Was the proposal innovative?

Source: Authors (2018)

Figure 3 shows a great impact in the integration of technology in the process, and it evidenced an acceptance as a pedagogical academic tool.

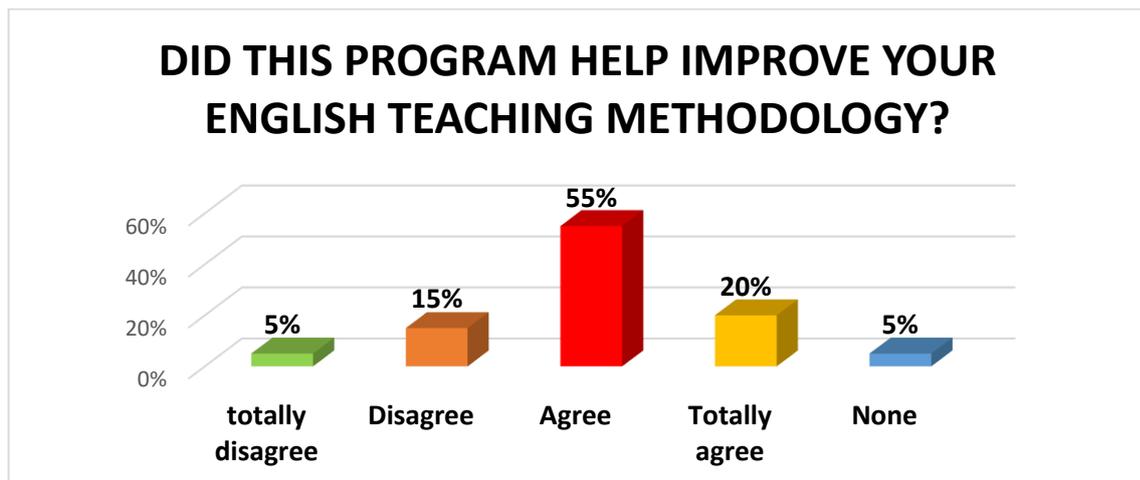


Figure 4. Improvement

In figure 4, teachers mentioned their intention of integrating many of the activities and teaching tools used in the research project, in their own teaching.

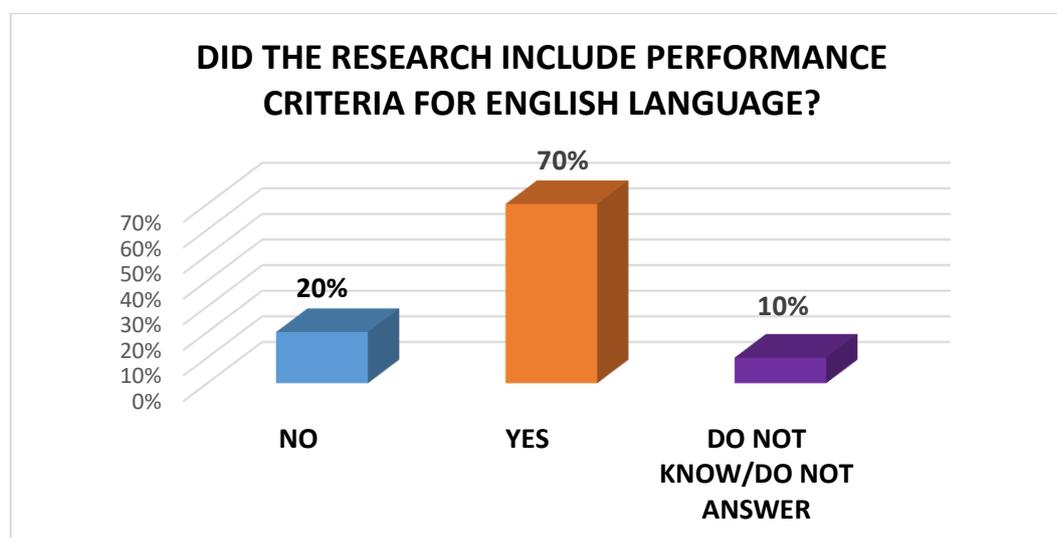


Figure 5. Performance criteria

Source: Authors (2018)

Figure 5 shows that during the process, there were different activities to keep measuring the English language level.

Conclusions

This project showed that the integration of technology as a significant academic tool in this program for the improvement of the English level of public-school teachers helped optimize the learning of the participants, showing in a short period of time the improvement in their level of performance.

It increased the level of understanding, as well as the motivation and interest on the part of the participants. As stated by González (2013) the integration of these tools in the academic routines makes students feel more relaxed and excited about learning. Garcia, Miranda and 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.

The researchers 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 students.

Blended learning was used to establish regular meetings between teachers and researchers, who could have meetings in which the participants said they have improved, especially, their ability to listen and speak.

Teachers also expressed their interest in learning more about history of technology and their students' knowledge about the use of technology in classes, because they said that it helps improving the learning processes.

Finally, it can be stated that the whole process helped improving the public-school teachers' English level in all aspects, and the research was an important process which is planned to have a second stage.

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