El uso del teléfono móvil en las clases de inglés en estudiantes de básica superior de la Unidad Educativa Fiscal La Pila: Un desafío o una oportunidad

The use of the mobile phone in English classes in upper basic students at Unidad Educativa Fiscal La Pila: A challenge or an opportunity

O uso do celular nas aulas de inglês em alunos do ensino fundamental da Unidade Educativa Fiscal La Pila: um desafio ou uma oportunidade

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Resumen

Las TIC pueden realizar misiones de apoyo a la reforma de la enseñanza-aprendizaje lenguas extranjeras en Ecuador si se replantea su percepción dentro de un marco global que reconozca esta capacidad y se creen las condiciones para su uso real. Así, las carencias vinculadas a la flagrante falta de manuales para las lecciones de inglés en la educación básica podrían mitigarse mediante un aprovechamiento responsable de las oportunidades que ofrece la aplicación WhatsApp de un móvil. Estos recursos TIC servirían como materiales educativos para complementar el programa oficial. El artículo analiza sus potencialidades y factibilidad y propone también pautas para el profesor.

Palabras Claves: Recursos TIC; escuela primaria; enseñanza-aprendizaje; inglés como lengua extranjera; teléfono celular.

Abstract

ICTs can carry out support missions for the reform of foreign language teaching-learning in Ecuador if their perception is reconsidered within a global framework that recognizes this capacity and conditions are created for their real use. Thus, the deficiencies linked to the flagrant lack of manuals for English lessons in basic education could be mitigated by making responsible use of the opportunities offered by the WhatsApp mobile application. These ICT resources would serve as educational materials to complement the official program. The article analyzes its potential and feasibility and also proposes guidelines for the teacher.

Key Words: ICT resources; primary school; teaching-learning; English as a foreign language; cell phone.

Resumo

As TIC podem realizar missões de apoio à reforma do ensino-aprendizagem de línguas estrangeiras no Equador se a sua percepção for reconsiderada dentro de um quadro global que reconheça esta capacidade e sejam criadas condições para a sua utilização real. Assim, as deficiências ligadas à flagrante falta de manuais para aulas de inglês na educação básica poderiam ser mitigadas com o uso responsável das oportunidades oferecidas pelo aplicativo móvel WhatsApp. Estes recursos de

TIC serviriam como materiais educativos para complementar o programa oficial. O artigo analisa seu potencial e viabilidade e também propõe diretrizes para o professor.

Palavras-chave: Recursos de TIC; Escola primária; ensino-aprendizagem; Inglês como uma língua estrangeira; telefone celular.

Introduction

The massive presence of ICTs on the world market with their flow of information on social networks is a phenomenon that Ecuadorians, like other peoples of developing countries, are gradually discovering. Thus, for example, Jean-Yves Ollivier, in an article in the Huffington Post (Sept 20, 2012) on the rise of digital, estimated that "In Africa, the mobile phone has supplanted emergencies that one would believe to be more vital than the need to telephone". According to a recent survey (ISTEEBU, 2017), the mobile phone is the most popular device for device buyers after the radio. It would be in the process of becoming an almost obligatory acquisition among the young and the educated layers of the population, because of the prestigious status conferred on it, especially when it is equipped with a WhatsApp application.

As a result, the communication space in Ecuador has expanded, opening up unprecedented opportunities for exchanging and sharing information all over the place as we know it on social networks. It is clear, however, that the use of ICTs in the educational context here, as in South America in general, still has a long way to go [1].

An opinion survey conducted locally among teachers on the relevance of integrating ICT resources in the teaching-learning of English reported 100% favorable opinions, adding "if they are used with accountability and efficiency". It is worth noting a distinction made here between ICT as a social medium, and ICT as a tool for regulated learning; and it is from this second angle that the perception of ICT tools by the authors fits.

1. The reform on language teaching in Ecuador

The reform of the education system undertaken since 2016 and which established that for the 2016-2017 school year, in the "Sierra" cycle and, from the 2017-2018 school year, in the "Costa" cycle, the teaching of the English language will be compulsory from the 2nd grade of Basic General Education (BGE) to the 3rd year of Baccalaureate for all institutions public, private, fiscal and municipal [2].

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It provides hours that were destined for clubs for 2nd to 7th grade of BGE for the subject of English. In this case the matter will be evaluated. When the subject of English is implemented as compulsory for 2nd to 7th grade of EGB, that is, in the 2016-2017 school year, in the "Sierra" cycle and from the 2017-2018 school year, in the "Costa" cycle, the institutions must guarantee that the teachers meet the B2 score of the TOEFL and have essential teaching resources.

The institution must send a report detailing the grades that have been incorporated to the District Office. Likewise, the Vice Ministry of Education, in coordination with INEVAL[1], will implement an evaluation of English learning results for the entire education system.

If theoretically the reform has a promising resonance with regard to the scientific, linguistic and cultural acquisitions of the learners, its execution comes up against the major difficulty of the government in meeting the needs for textbooks. It would not be unrealistic to envisage results below expectations, despite the intensity of training and field visits focused on popularizing this reform in schools. Faced with such a situation, it is important to explore other options that can support teachers [and learners] in their efforts to remedy these shortcomings. The aim in this article have relies on ICT resources as teaching materials to complement English programs in use for basic school.

2. Textbook Considerations

2.1 Brief overview of the current situation

The Ministry of Education of Ecuador (MINEDUC), through Ministerial Agreement No. MINEDUC-MINEDUC-2017-00017-A of February 23rd, 2017, made available to the educational system the Bilingual Intercultural National Curricula, prepared in languages of nationalities which correspond to curricular tools that promote the development of interculturality in the teaching-learning processes.

The bilingual intercultural national curricula are framed within the technical, pedagogical, and scientific parameters of the National Curriculum, issued by Ministerial Agreement No. MINEDUC-ME-2016-00020-A of February 17th, 2016, and respond to the cultural and linguistic relevance of indigenous peoples and nationalities of the country, in addition to what is stipulated

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[1] Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa https://www.evaluacion.gob.ec/

in the Bilingual Intercultural Education System Model (MOSEIB), issued by Ministerial Agreement No. 0440-13 of December 5th, 2013. The bilingual intercultural national curricula will be compulsory in the Bilingual Intercultural Education System (SEIB).

The construction of the bilingual intercultural national curricula is based on the organization of integrated learning units from Family Community Early Childhood Education (EIFC) to the Development of Skills and Study Techniques (DDTE) process, and on the organization of learning units by subjects in Investigative Learning Processes (PAI); so that up to this level there are a total of 75 learning units.

Additionally, the Curricular Expansion for the Bilingual Intercultural Unified General Baccalaureate completes education with cultural relevance in these last three years of education prior to higher education.

2.2 Objectives

A critical reading of the objectives to be suggested in this paper suggests at least three important things. First, the holistic nature of them and the concern to provide the learner with knowledge that should be useful to him once he arrives in the real world. This brings us back to the question of the available means to the teacher: Are they adequate? Second, one can note the possibility of collusion between the aspirations of the teacher and those of the learners in relation to the requirements of the moment, know-how... Their non-specification opens up space for the intelligent teacher to integrate non-curricular resources (including ICT). Finally, the programs plan to develop oral and written skills in the 4 languages. This is a very important aspect of the objectives, and is compatible with ICT resources. Apart from the absence of activities dedicated to these 2 aspects in the books of the fundamental, it will be remembered that if textbooks have advantages and qualities which are recognized to them, they certainly also have their restrictions [3]; [4].

2.3 Class practices and content-subjects

New features should be noted here, first, include a deliberate reference to work in alternating groups of independent work, second, themes should go according to the Ecuadorian cultural experience and current topics (such as the environment, HIV/AIDS, cultures and societies, ICT, and so forth.), and third content and parallel methodological processes in the two languages. In view of this last aspect, a certain monotony is to be expected, which could be alleviated through an agreed integration of ICT resources.
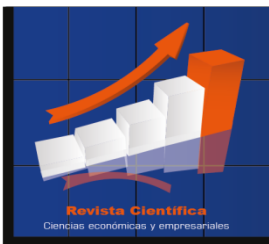
In an education system that has just being created within the perception of "schools of excellence" with comparatively better learning conditions; teachers would not be wrong to see as an option the use of tools whose main discredit lies in their unofficial nature. In this context, we should perhaps understand the particular interest the vital role that plays the workbooks where the teacher can propose equivalent supports more adapted to the level or to the student environment.

As discreet as it is, it deserves attention because it suggests both a desire to break with the prescriptive tendency known from previous programs [5] and an implicit recognition of the limits of Languages programs. It therefore opens up a margin of flexibility in the choice of media.

2.4 Prospects for achieving the objectives

An analysis of the typical sequence (table below) of the lessons offered on a theme of the language program makes it possible to make a projection of the level of achievement of the objectives of the program. The sequence presented here appears in each of the the textbooks used by the teacher.

Table 1. Sequence of lessons by topic

Situation 1 (dialogue)	Situation 2 (text)
Lesson 1. General & detailed comprehension	Lesson 5. General & detailed comprehension
Lesson 2. Increase your word power (Vocabulary)	Lesson 6. Increase your word power (Vocabulary)
Lesson 3. Language patterns (grammar)	Lesson 7. Language patterns (grammar)
Lesson 4. Role-playing	Lesson 8. Reading practice
Lesson 9. Assess your progress	

Essentially, the books provide the following information: during the general and detailed comprehension session, the teacher and then the students read the text aloud. They then go on to explain the difficult words to finish with the answers to the comprehension questions which are in the Student Books. These answers can be discussed in groups or independently. Increase your word power consists in discovering the lexicon associated with the central theme of the lesson. We rarely move on to their use in sentences, especially contextual ones.

Language patterns (grammar) is a lesson focusing on classical grammar learning. Role-playing is a game designed for the practice of oral expression; its expected results are not specified, unlike the other rubrics, role-playing is not a systematic activity. Each lesson sequence concludes with assessment of the progress, a session focused on reviewing lexical and grammatical content.

What conclusions can be drawn from these provisions? While communicative competence is the primary destination of the reform through the language programs, there is a gap between the stated objectives and the approach proposed for their achievement. This contradiction is explained through a number of facts including the neglect or rather the omission of training aimed at listening comprehension; a reference to learning written expression, which remains theoretical; a rather mechanical learning of the lexicon; superficial explanations and activities related to oral skills; and finally, a methodology which, despite the presumed application of the communicative approach, is in fact dominated by a structuralist approach [6].

There is therefore a palpable deficit in terms of meaningful interactions, a critical aspect for both learners and teachers. If it is necessary to allow the learner to acquire strategies and knowledge allowing him to make his contribution to meet the challenges that arise in the entire learning process, it is imperative to help him to encounter and explore this world as he evolves in his schooling. The WhatsApp application can be useful not only to report facts, stories on various situations in the world, but also to do so in real time. This would be the great merit of its introduction into the Ecuadorian education system.

3. ICT as complementary teaching materials

3.1 Background and rationale

The precarious conditions of English in basic education described above are the aspect of a general phenomenon by which the fast expansion of the English language in the world does not manage to evolve towards significant improvements in its teaching under the status of "foreign language" [7], for example, identifies three major challenges common to host environments most of which are in resource-constrained countries: the limit of extensive English practice imposed by the restrictions of linguistic environment itself; difficult access to quality educational materials; and overcrowded classrooms that further complicate access to materials. This is without counting – at least in the case of Ecuador – with the recurring problem of the use of unqualified teachers, even though the quality of the training programs for practicing teachers leaves something to be desired, given their
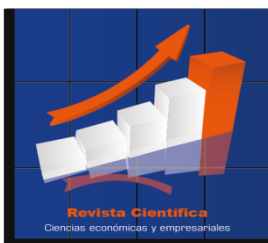
overly general nature. compared to the real needs of teachers [8]; [6]. The result is an impediment to the achievement of the communication objective inherent in most national policies and programs developed to precisely meet this same objective [3].

3.2 The choice of mobile

ICT is such a broad field that UNESCO (2013) has adopted a broad definition that simplifies the semantic intricacies associated with portable devices. It simply recognizes that they are digital, easy to transport, more for individual than institutional use, that they allow access to the internet, are equipped with multimedia applications and can perform a large number of tasks, in particular in communication. This definition, although issued by an organization committed at the highest level in the field of education, seems to associate portable devices with only communication tasks. Could such an observation help to understand in part why their relationship with didactic missions is almost ignored in the Ecuadorian contexts. Would this definition have had an influence on the omission of the educational role of ICT in the texts on the topic ICT in basic school textbooks? These are questions that are not lacking of interest for the issue at the center of discussion. This article focuses specifically on the multifunction mobile, or its equivalent term in English "smartphone".

A principle underlying this study and the related investigation is that students should not use their cell phones (if they have them) on school grounds, because of their disruptive nature. If the mobile phone has a pedagogically disturbing side, it also has advantages that militate in its favor as a teaching aid: it has a data storage and archiving function, which makes possible to select resources. It allows both sending and receiving multimedia messages, and this is beneficial not only for the awakening of the learners' senses [4], but also for the mobilization of all linguistic skills, an idea very valued to the communicative approach applied to the teaching of foreign languages [9].

It is customizable, easy to wear, and always close to its owner. The advantage here is anytime, anywhere virtual lesson planning, which has a positive impact on the teacher's material planning time. At the same time, the learning, just like the practice of the language, becomes almost permanent; they can be done privately or with assistance.

3.3 The WhatsApp app

WhatsApp messaging has the advantage of highlighting certain linguistic and cultural concepts in a more authentic way than the textbook and the teacher: pronunciation, intonation, body language, emotions, humor, posture as well than strategies for acquiring meaning [10]; [7]. the English language effect would be a greater probability of improving communicative competence. WhatsApp enables mutual aid in the network whether on the side of teachers or on the side of students, a useful and necessary step in the empowerment process. Experience has shown a decrease in anxiety among foreign language learners when they are not working under the strict and direct control of the teacher. To conclude, responsible usage of mobile could offset some of the restrictions inherent in the local linguistic environment; 'hostile' to English language practice in Ecuador [10]; [7].

3.4 Understanding of the concept

The reader will bear in mind that the expression ICT resources is used here meaning elements extracted from the exchange of information stored and/or circulating on the WhatsApp network and issued mainly in the English language. Needless to recall that these elements can appear in written, oral, visual, audiovisual form, or their combination, hence their label of multimedia resources. A resource appearing in another language could be specially selected but taught in English according to the professional judgment of the teacher.

3.5 Feasibility in Ecuador: survey results

The survey included a questionnaire with six questions intended for twenty teachers and students, including eight teacher-trainers and twelve practicing students. As the survey is qualitative, the opinions collected are summarized and presented in 2 columns corresponding to the two categories of participants to facilitate the reading of their perceptions. The elements of response presented were all initiated by the respondents themselves. The dash in the data means that the opinion concerned was not expressed by anyone in the corresponding category. The questions were all written down. To accommodate the space limitation, only the key ideas of the questions were presented instead of the full questions. Interpretation comes at the end of the presentation of all the data for the same reason.

Table 2. Teachers' opinions on ICT ressources

Researched element	Teachers	Students
Q 1. Relevance		
Yes	8	12
No	0	0
Q2 a. Benefits for the teacher		
Modernization of methods	7	-
Variety of resources	8	9
General culture	5	11
Easier motivation	5	9
Less fatigue	-	5
Technology integration	2	12
b. Benefits for students		
Extension of practice	8	12
Less hassle	-	10
Enriched knowledge	7	10
Increased interest in English	-	3
Learner's autonomy	6	8
Q3. Difficulties, apart from the ban on telephones at school		
Unpreparedness for ICT	2	9
Non-equipped schools	5	2
High cost of 'Androids'	5	11
Q4 Useful language components		
Writing comprehension	4	12
Pronunciation	8	12
Oral comprehension	8	12
Oral production	1	9
Written production	7	8
All components	4	3

Q5. ICT currently used in your teaching

Computer + PowerPoint

Radio/CD player/USB	7	-
	1	-

Q6. ICT in initial training at School?

Good idea	8	-
Beneficial to research	3	-
Only on-the-job training	1	-

Source: The Authors

Briefly, it can be noted that the respondents are all positive about the relevance of ICT. This is all the more interesting since even teachers, who are less familiar with ICT as a tool to support teaching practice (Q5), are all equally favorable. Another important observation is the association of targeted ICT (Mobile/WhatsApp) has more advantages than challenges. Moreover, the advantages they proposed are eminently pedagogical (unlike the challenges which are mainly material) and reasonably prioritized, which is in the interest of raising awareness of the basis of the problem put forward and the promising nature of ICT/WhatsApp resources as teaching materials of complement. It then becomes possible to formulate the hypothesis that while recognizing the material challenges of the smartphone, the English teachers surveyed have favorable perceptions of its pedagogical use in the teaching-learning of English at school.

3.6 Types of resources and guidance

3.6.1 Principles for accomplishing an introduction of ICT

Previous preparation of minds on the status of ICT resources is essential in the Ecuadorian context to create conditions for their use, which requires the reminder of a few principles. First, ICT resources aim to overcome the monopoly of the book and the predominance of the teacher as sources of material, knowledge and linguistic model. Second, their proposal is based on the idea that despite a certain misunderstanding on the use of media in general (including ICT) in language teaching, this research points out the consensus of teachers on their potential to enhance teaching [10].

The need for basic guidance on the technicality of downloading and saving resources cannot be ruled out either. This need must be understood and managed with the complicity of the school administration through its support staff. It would not be unrealistic to think of the ingenuity of young elementary school students in this matter, given their creative curiosity, which would be an advantage for the teacher [11].

Finally, the empowerment of students is a long-term goal, but the starting point is their preparation in the classroom. It begins with their awareness of the added value of the aforementioned ICT resources. Then you have to sharpen their desire to change the usual look of their phone to its educational abilities. The culmination should be their commitment to partially capitalize on these resources with the integrated help of friends (from the web), teachers, parents and classmates.

3.6.2 Resources from chats and downloads

Since the available resources to each user vary according to several parameters, a prescription of which to use to fill such a gap seems superfluous. Above all, principles for regulating the choice of resources are necessary here, in particular the principle which recognizes the supremacy of the approach methodology on the content-subjects themselves [6]. It would also be necessary that the targeted resources fall within the teaching ethics on one hand, and, with the logic of the components taught in the field of English language education on the other hand. It goes without saying that the more they can be validly adapted and exploited in the context of anguages programs, the more they will be beneficial for the levels concerned.

3.6.3 The functionalities of certain ICT as a resource

These are the instructions on the operation of the devices contained in the user manual which is given to the buyer at the time of the transaction. Their English version could be photocopied or transcribed to constitute an illustrative text or a supplement, for example, to the content offered on the topic of ICT in the language's manual. A resource of this type would have the fourfold advantage of (1) conceptually enhancing the contents; (2) facilitate the understanding and assimilation, and the use of the terminology relating to the parts and functionalities of the targeted ICT (e.g., the smartphone); (3) to practice the skills essential for a more effective reading; and (4) sharpen the knowledge of the multifunction telephone (this could generate changes in the sense of a perception of its educational side.

3.6.4 Theoretical guidelines

The innovative nature of the use of ICT resources in elementary school will require prior discussions with students to help them fully understand their merits for their English training. It goes without saying that the teacher and his students will have to adopt a new attitude towards the elements in English received or sent through chats. A code of understanding and conduct negotiated between the two parties may be necessary. Also, the holistic nature of the objectives described above requires that the teacher plan the time to analyze the resources and define the educational objectives.

During the lesson, the exploitation of the resource will emphasize the marginalized components in the programs, in particular oral comprehension, written production, and to a certain extent oral production. It should be noted that to make the production exercises (written or oral) more profitable, a specification of the language elements will be brought out to help students to better focus their efforts, thus offering objective path to help the teacher [12].

For greater efficiency, the teacher will ensure that all the activities or tasks associated with the resources that he has targeted are accompanied by all the necessary details for the task to be done and, if necessary, write them on the board. Their explanation will specify in particular the form of the expected final result to avoid confusion in their progress or their realization. For group work, clarification will be needed on the size of the groups and the distribution of roles between the members.

3.6.5 Methodological guidelines

The precarious quality of some teachers and the novelty of ICT resources in the Ecuadorian context require methodological guidance for teachers at both levels, written and oral comprehension, as well as language production. Regarding the first level, the teacher should a priori adhere to the principle of silent and attentive reading, involving the students in pre-reading and pre-listening tasks [13].

Association finds its meaning in the driving role it plays in the practice and realization of the principle by the parties concerned. It goes without saying that a good understanding of their advantages would benefit its sustainability outside of lessons (consultation of messages in private), which is conducive to the process of self-training and empowerment, and therefore to the consolidation of the concerned skills [3].
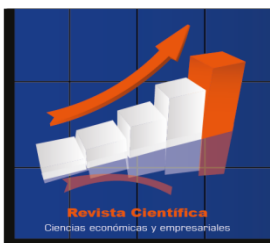
In addition, there should be a move towards stimulating student reflection and expression through less factual questions that require interaction. By way of illustration: what are the new lessons that you draw from this element (text, audio, video, visual, etc.)? What did you learn new through it? Where is your new discovery? What aspects of the item do you find interesting? Which ones do you agree with? Which ones do you disagree with? (And why?) Does the element cause changes in you? Which? Are there similarities and/or differences in cultural content? (What is your assessment?) Etc. Two advantages of such an orientation are the possibility of a lively class, as well as a facilitation of the integrated sequence of language skills, an approach also to be promoted. However, and finally, the possibility of a lively class should not make the teacher lose sight of the need to bring the pupils to concentrate at times on the forms of the language which are neglected in the programs. This would be done through questions such as: Which style elements convey the opinion, the point of view, the attitude of the author?

The management of production-oriented resources, on the other hand, should encourage students to always plan their communications and not to allow themselves to be guided by emotions, since these will be more or less formal contexts in this case (the objective is educational, not social). Also in the latter case, the teacher will make sure to explain to the students the need for objective self-assessment by comparing their own performance to the original model, which will have to be listened to again as many times as necessary.

In order to improve the self-learning capacity of the students, the teacher (and whoever can in the learners' entourage) will help the students to scrutinize the linguistic models that come to them to identify good examples that could inspire them, and bad examples, even errors that we should gradually learn to detect and correct.

Conclusion

The significant increase in the acquisition of multifunction mobile phones in Ecuador is an opportunity that the education system should exploit to include it in the promotion of foreign languages, more specifically in the English language. In a context marked by a severe shortage of textbooks, the resources offered by the WhatsApp network could strengthen the programs as complementary materials. It has been proposed to make students benefit the learning needs of marginalized linguistic skills in the language's programs in use at school. However, a pedagogical

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debate, probably initiated by teachers, would be needed to obtain the necessary consensus around such a perspective.

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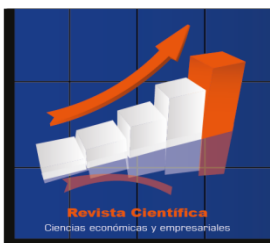
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