



BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA

Facultad de Lenguas

Maestría en la Enseñanza del Inglés

“English language learners’ perceptions toward the use of apps and social networks in an English class within a Mexican public university”

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Languages for
the Degree of
Maestría en la Enseñanza del Inglés

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January 2016

English language learners' perceptions toward the use of apps and social networks in an English class within a Mexican public university

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Enero 2016

Abstract

These days technological tools are being used in the teaching process more frequently and they create a widely different learning environment which offer web-enhanced instruction via internet based resources and systems. The first aim of this research is to analyze learners' perceptions/attitudes toward the use of technological tools that might help them regarding their skills to communicate more efficiently. Another aspect this study attempts to analyze is the English language learning development through technological materials and learning units.

The study attempts to explore issues related to the investigation's research questions through a qualitative approach in which the participants' expectations and perceptions toward the use of technology within the EFL classroom contrasted with their experiences within it, will be explored through systematic data collection which involves a qualitative survey, self-reports from learners participants.

After the analysis of the study I could realize that the participants' perceptions are mainly positive in the sense that the learners find the use of the technology tools not only fun or easy to use, but they are aware of the implications of using apps, social networks and web platforms that can offer them different benefits to their different needs and to encourage them to practice more often every time they are not inside an English class. The results of this study show that a possible implication could be that by means of implementing apps and social networks among other online tools in the syllabus or even in the curriculum, it might assist learners' performance inside the classroom and their academic progress and results would be higher.

Acknowledgements

First of all I would like to thank God, for giving me his strength and his blessings all the time especially during the moments of weakness.

To the MEI community, for accepting me in their Master's program and also to all the teachers who belong to it for their professionalism, dedication, support and patience they showed during the entire program.

I am especially grateful to my friend Dr. Michael T. Witten for his support and particularly because he believed in me since the very beginning as he encouraged me to be part of this wonderful journey since I became a member of the MEI community. Obviously, I would like to thank to Dra. Tere Castineira Benitez for her excellent way of teaching and her patience and guidance during the time we worked with her. I want to thank at the same time to Dra. Nancy Keranen, who demonstrated her wide knowledge and professionalism in teaching what research implies and guided us with her experience. My especial gratitude to Dra. Elizabeth Flores Salgado and Mtro. Yonatan Puón Castro for accepting to read my thesis and for their helpful comments and suggestions to improve my study.

Special dedications

This thesis is dedicated to my mother who has been always there giving me her example of strength and instilling me the value of perseverance.

To my children who are my internal engine which encourages me to achieve my goals and whose unconditional love, comprehension and support helps me not to hesitate and continue until the end.

And to my lovely boyfriend Jorge whose love and support has been a very important part in this process. Without his support I would not have been able to persevere until the end.

Thank you so much,

You all are my heart and my soul.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Nowadays, technology offers an increased number of applications and tools to provide a different learning environment in order to enhance learning experiences in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' learning process. In order to further enhance these experiences in their communicative skills, more and more English teachers now use these tools to create activities that facilitate the learners' English acquisition processes as they engage in these types of tasks. As a consequence, some studies based in eLearning activities have been widely accepted as a means of providing greater engagement and enhancement of the learning experience (Popescu, 2012). Online or internet tools have helped English language learners to communicate with native speakers of English or language learners of English of other countries to practice their oral or written skills, and it represents a quite significant progress in their language learning process (Staikopoulos, *et al.* 2012).

1.1 Subject of the research

The aim of this study is to analyze how the use of technological tools in the EFL classroom might assist learners in enhancing their communicative skills. The study attempts to explore issues related to the investigation's research questions through a qualitative approach in which the participants' expectations and perceptions toward the use of technology within the EFL classroom contrasted with their experiences within it, will be explored through systematic data collection which involves a qualitative survey, self-reports from learner participants regarding their experiences using a variety of apps, social networks and platforms during their English course. These technology tools can be used in devices

such as: tablets, mobile phones, and/ or laptops. The context in which the study takes place was with two groups of English language learners who take the EFL courses at a public university in Central Mexico as a mandatory subject to fulfill their graduation requirements in a BA program.

1.2 Significance of the study

Taking into consideration that technology offers a wide range of tools such as internet applications and social networks; we might say that the employment of these tools may help students to improve their oral or written communicative competences. As mentioned previously, online or internet tools have helped English language learners to communicate with native speakers of English or language learners of English of other countries to practice their oral or written skills, and it represents a quite significant progress in their language learning process (Staikopoulos, *et al.* 2012). Considering the ubiquity of such tools in modern society, investigating the manner in which learners respond to the inclusion of online resources is an important step in ensuring their optimal use.

1.3 The research Niche

This section situates this research within an academic area that relates to the use of technology within the EFL classroom. This study complements previous research findings in terms of the use of technology in language teaching and also in how to apply these tools in a language learning environment.

According to Göktürk^Sağlam & Sert (2012), integration of technology into teaching has transformed the learning paradigm and, consequently, face-to face learning has started to give way to web-enhanced instruction via internet based resources and systems. Another

consideration that we must have in a teaching environment is the fact that technology is rapidly changing with today's innovations soon becoming outdated; however, it is clear that students and even teachers must begin with current technology and continue to build upon their knowledge as technological advances unfold. This study attempts to focus on a brief review of the historical role that technology has played in ELT until now and the principles and practices of eLearning.

1.4 Background of the researcher

In my own experience as an English teacher through the years, I have realized that learners whom I have worked with are usually familiar with the internet and most of them possess or have access to a computer, a tablet or a smart phone. As a consequence, I believe most of them do not have trouble with the use of these technological devices due to the familiarization of these devices.

They also use the technology not only for personal issues, but for academic purposes; in other words, the presence of technological devices in their academic activities is common and it might be possible that by implementing the use of these technology tools in a systematic and suitable manner, they could successfully develop their language skills. Nevertheless, there exists a concern to know how effective it might be to apply technology tools in the English language classroom to encourage learners to become more interested in learning the language.

In addition, we as teachers must face different challenges in our teaching practices. One of them is to learn how to include the use of the technology in our classes and for this reason

we must be innovative and skillful in this area in order to obtain better results and make our learners' learning process more meaningful.

1.5 Research location

The study was carried out in a public university in Central Mexico, which offers its students a wide number of BA programs in areas such as humanities, sciences, engineering, health and arts. The collection of data was obtained with two groups of students who take English as a mandatory subject to accomplish the program and fulfill with a certain number of credits before they obtain their bachelor's degree. The purpose of performing this research is to analyze the perceptions that learners may have toward the use of technological tools such as apps and social networks in order to improve their communicative skills so that they have the opportunity to practice in an environment outside the classroom while potentially making their language learning process more effective and meaningful.

1.6 Aims

As it is described in the previous section, this study has several aims. The first aim of this research is to analyze learners' perceptions/attitudes toward the use of technological tools that might help them regarding their skills to communicate more efficiently. As such, the aims of the study attempt to analyze the following aspects:

- a) The implementation process of introducing technological materials into ELT learning units.
- b) Attitudes, beliefs and perceptions towards the use of internet tools and social networks in an EFL class, particularly in regards to improving communication skills.

1.7 Objectives

The current investigation has one primary objective. The investigation will create a variety of online activities and materials, which heavily involve the use of technological tools, in order to later elicit data from the student participants which explores their perceptions and attitudes toward the use of technology within the EFL classroom.

1.8 Research questions

This study is expected to answer the following research questions:

RQ1 What do student participants within the investigative context report about their perceptions in regards to the strengths when using technological tools such as apps and social networks as part of the EFL learning process?

RQ2 What do the student participants within the investigative context report about her perceptions in regards to the weaknesses when using technological tools such as apps and social networks as part of the EFL learning process?

1.9 Chapter summary and overview of thesis document

As a conclusion of this Chapter 1, we could say that in these days technological tools are being used in the teaching process more frequently and they create a widely different learning environment which offer web-enhanced instruction via internet based resources and systems (Göktürk[^]Sağlam & Sert, 2012).

The context of this study is located within a group of BA students from a Mexican public university which offers for learners to take the English subject as part of their program. The study is conducted through a qualitative approach which explores learners' perceptions and attitudes toward the use of different technological tools within their English lessons.

In chapter 2, the review of relevant scholarly literature will be presented in order to provide a theoretical framework that supports the methodological processes and procedures that this study employed. Then, in chapter 3 the methodology of the study will be detailed to see the kind of instruments and the participants from which data was gathered. Subsequently, in chapter 4 all the results from the collected data will be analyzed and described. Finally, in chapter 5 the conclusions will be discussed providing the possibility for further research.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

With this study I want to explore what perspectives English language learners have towards the use of apps and social networks as part of the language learning process of communicative skills in their second language. A further objective involves the identification of the weaknesses and strengths when using these tools for the purpose of foreign language learning. This chapter provides information about the review of scholarly literature related to the topic of the current research.

2.1 Mobile learning in the digital age

The use of mobile devices has made people's lives easier today. In the English language classroom, the use of mobile learning is gaining importance due to the emergence of distance learning or eLearning. Mobile-assisted language learning is not simply the transfer of current teaching and learning materials and practices to a mobile device, but a complete reconceptualization of these. Existing mobile applications have yet to catch up with this idea, often transmitting content rather than exploiting opportunities for communication and collaboration (Norris, 2014).

A theory of mobile learning according to Sharples (2005), is that mobile learning must take into account the ubiquitous use of personal and shared technology. The context of learning is an important construct, but the term has many connotations for different theorists. According to Sharples (2005), from a technological perspective there has been debate about whether context can be isolated and modeled in a computational system, or whether it is an emergent and integral property of interaction. Context also embraces the multiple

communities of actors (both people and interactive technology) who interact around a shared objective. Mobile pedagogy in ELT establishes a philosophy and proposes a framework to guide teachers not only to teach but to plan and design learning for their learners in and beyond the classroom. It can be assumed that mobile technologies enable students now to carry with them powerful devices with which they can:

1. Create and share multimodal texts
2. Communicate spontaneously with people anywhere in the world
3. Capture language use outside the classroom
4. Analyze their own language production and learning needs
5. Construct artifacts and share them with others
6. Provide evidence of progress gathered across a range of settings, in a variety of media (Sharples, 2005).
- 7.

2.1.1 ICT in ELT

The integration of technology in ELT has suffered a huge shift in the past two decades, it started with word processing and gap-filling exercises but then with the arrival of mass access to the internet, the development of Web 2.0 tools and platforms and the arrival of the social web and mobile technologies now enable teachers and learners to be globally connected. Dudeney & Hockly (2012) define Web 2.0 as a more creative, consumer-driven space. The advent of Web2.0 tools ensured that online users with no programming or design skills could now produce resources, and this led to more creative approaches from teachers using technology. It means that Web 2.0 has developed teacher resources such as personal blogs and collaborative wiki spaces, and also more creative practice inside and outside the

classroom. In addition, the role of technologies in education has also evolved, and with it, the vocabulary we use to describe it. From the “Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) through “Technology-Enhanced Language Learning” to today’s emphasis on “Information and Communication Technologies” (ICT)

2.1.2 Online activities

When considering the issues that surround distance learning or eLearning, it is necessary to know about the design of a variety of online tasks that engage learners within a distance classroom. These online activities have to be well designed and organized so that learners get involved. A challenge facing online educators is knowing how to help learners become more self-directed and collaborative with peers than they might have had to be in traditional, predominantly lecture-based courses (Conrad & Donaldson, 2004). Conrad & Donaldson (2011) explain that many adults have been educated in a predominantly lecture-based environment, so interaction and collaboration in a virtual environment is not easy for them. Initially, a learner may be more comfortable in a passive student role and will need guidance and the opportunity to become more involved in an online learning environment. Also an online learner has to feel comfortable with technology, text-based communication, and with a higher level of self-direction. As such, instructors who wish to use online environments will need to be patient and tolerant with learners who are inexperienced with this medium of learning. As time goes by, they will need to slowly raise the expectations placed on learners within the course. Likewise, learners who are less experienced with the technology that is necessary to participate will require additional training. A learner cannot be expected to participate actively in innovative learning environments if they are not proficient at using the required tools (Conrad & Donaldson, 2001).

2.1.1.2 Autonomous learning resources in ELT

As it has been mentioned previously in this chapter, although the use of technology should not be the goal in itself and as any technological tool, it requires the knowledge and expertise of the teacher in order to engage the students, it can offer many advantages when effectively combined with sound instructional practices and activities (Arús & Rodríguez, 2014). Moreover, learners can benefit from the integration of face-to-face and online learning and develop autonomy, which is, according to Arús & Rodríguez (2014), “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning [...] to have and to hold the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of learning”.

There is another positive aspect that can result from the use of technology in the ELT classroom, it is the possibility of presenting language in context; for example, a video can show a multitude of aspects that are important for the learner like pronunciation, fluency, intonation, rhythm and pauses as well as the distance the speakers have when interacting. Therefore technology cannot only increase the amount of language input that learners are exposed to; it can also enhance its intake.

2.2 Computer-Mediated communication and SLA

Computer-Mediated communication (CMC) is the type of communication that occurs among humans through the use of any of the electronic devices utilize an internet connection. These can occur via different formats like instant messaging, email, chat rooms and text messaging. Blake (2008) defines first generation tools, which include e-mail, electronic mailing (e-mail) lists, and discussion forums, also known as threaded bulletin boards. Electronic mailing lists (listservs) comprised of a group of e-mail users are another frequently

used tool in both commerce and education. Teachers often use listservs to their advantage as the best medium for posting general class announcements because the ubiquitous medium of e-mail/listserv guarantees that everyone in the class will receive the information.

Discussion forums maintain a record of all messages in a threaded or hierarchical structure. Each topic represents one thread that others in the forum can respond to and the instructor can determine who can begin new threads or topics: only the instructor or everyone in the class. Forums are a pervasive feature of course management systems such as WebCT, Blackboard and Moodle and have been considered a fundamental tool for asynchronous distance learning for a long time.

According to Lin (2014) there are four qualities that were proposed by Smith et al (2003) to describe and distinguish different CMC sub-technologies:

- *Temporality*
- *Degree of anonymity*
- *Modality*
- *Spatiality*

Temporality describes the mode of time in which communication can take place: either simultaneous (synchronous) or delayed (asynchronous) depending on whether or not there is a substantial time gap between the responses or messages received from/sent to the interlocutors. *Anonymity* refers to the degree to which the interlocutors are known to each other in a CMC environment. Some tools such as e-mail are more capable of concealing a user's identity rather than a video conference. *Modality* refers to the way interaction is supported. Some technology tools, such as chats, support both voice and written

communication. *Spatiality* refers to the spatial distance felt by the interlocutors when engaging in online communication.

2.2.1 CALL: Computer Assisted Language Learning

Distinct from Computer-Mediated Communication, Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has been considered in SLA since the 60's as computer programs based on traditional learning. Some researchers see CALL as the search for and study of computer applications for language teaching and learning. Meanwhile a definition from Kern (2006) refers to CALL as learners learning language in any context with and around computer technologies. As such, the definition of CALL has changed rather significantly since its introduction. The current study would fall under the broad category of CALL taking into account the broader definition above. Nevertheless, the current study is not meant to contribute to the state of knowledge about CALL as much as provide insights into how technology in the digital age can be utilized by teachers and how this utilization is interpreted by learners.

2.2.2 Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge is a term used to describe what teachers need to know in order to integrate technology into their teaching practice effectively. English language teachers must know how to integrate technology today in their practices due to the demands of the teaching programs; nevertheless, the use of technology goes beyond that of just using a projector and Power point presentation in their classes. It suggests the application of technology, utilizing different language learning strategies that are focused on the use of different devices together with internet apps or social networks. A framework

that provides a means of developing appropriate activities and introducing them in an effective sequence is based on the instructor's responsibility to make sure that the learners find others in the learning environment with whom they can build a collaborative relationship (Conrad & Donaldson, 2011).

2.3 Language learning strategies

There are various definitions of language learning and teaching strategy in the field of ELT. Altunay (2014) defines learning strategies as "specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques used by students to enhance their own learning". Language Learning Strategies help learners to store and retrieve knowledge. These strategies facilitate their learning processes, making learning easier, faster and more efficient. Altunay (2014) states that language learning strategies contribute to the development of the communicative competence of the learners.

2.3.1 Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative language teaching refers to the functions rather than the structure of a language. It means it focuses on what learners do when they communicate with each other or what learners have to do in order to use language as a means of communication.

2.3.2 Designing tasks for the communicative classroom

Communicative tasks are activities designed to involve learners to communicate and interact in the target language where they need to focus on the meaning. In terms of a pedagogy, Nunan (1989) describes a definition of a task as any structured language learning endeavor which has a particular objective, appropriate content, a specified working procedure, and a range of outcomes for those who undertake the task. Task is therefore

assumed to refer to a range of work plans which have the overall purpose of facilitating language learning – from the simple and brief exercise type, to more complex and lengthy activities such as group problem-solving or simulations and decision making. Nunan (1989) concludes then that tasks are concerned with communicative language use, in other words, they refer to undertakings in which the learners comprehend, produce and interact in the target language in contexts in which they are focused on meaning rather than form. It is clear from the discussion above that these principles of communicative tasks do not necessarily require traditional classroom environments in order to be carried out. Online environments can easily provide the same type of communicative stimulus, and tasks can be designed for virtual environments which meet all of the requirements that Nunan (1989) delineates above. The current study attempts to meet these requirements as it explores student and teacher perceptions toward online language learning tasks.

2.4 Attitudes and motivation in second-language learning

Motivation in second language learning is a concept that explains the amount of encouragement English Language learners receive in a language classroom, which is often correlated with the failure or success of the learners in the development of their skills. Yang, Gamble & Tang (2012) believe that despite the importance of English language learning in non-native English-speaking countries, several systemic and practical barriers hinder efficient foreign language acquisition, particularly in terms of oral proficiency.

The three most important obstacles that constrain the development of oral skills of foreign language learners are: firstly the lack of an authentic foreign language environment, secondly a focus on testing and the third imbalances in classroom participation. The current study attempts to create alternative and innovative learning environments that will facilitate

learners in overcoming these obstacles. In the modern age, virtual environments such as Facebook are often considered just as authentic as face to face communication. These types of environments are used in the real world to accomplish a variety of goals and objectives, which can be usefully simulated in EFL lessons. Furthermore, online environments democratize students' opportunities to participate in these lessons. In fact, students who rarely participate in a traditional classroom are required to participate in online activities, making the current study a relevant contribution to this line of research.

2.4.1 English Language Study and Motivation in Modern Information Technology

Modern Information Technology has been used in ELT in almost every level of the educational system since it represents a fundamental motivation for language learners. It is related to the motivation to use multimedia technology to improve fundamental communicative skills such as speaking and writing or receptive skills such as listening and reading. In recent studies (Chang, 2013; Yang, Gamble & Tang, 2012) it has been proven that motivation in the use of technology in the English language teaching classrooms plays a significant role.

Modern information technology refers not only to the use of multimedia technology, but communication technology such as social networks: blogs, facebook and also up-to-date technologies like mobile phones, especially smartphones and tablets. According to a study performed in China by Guimei (2014), discussions concerning modern information and communication technology use and learners' language motivation mainly revolves around two trunk foci: one is the motivation for foreign language learners to use multimedia

technology to improve their fundamental skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation; the other is the relationship between technology use and trajectory of motivation in the process of foreign language learning. These two foci are sometimes mutually interrelated and overlapped with each other.

2.5 Conclusions

In this chapter I provided the literature review that was related to the use of technological devices which may involve the language learners through the use of apps and social networks. I gave some definitions of concepts like mobile learning, online activities, computer-mediated communication (CMC) and computer assisted language learning (CALL) which are terms used to refer to the use of computer programs to learn a language and how important is for every language teacher to know how to use them. I also talked about the implementation of learning strategies and the important role of motivation that the use of technology within the language classroom plays in ELT practices.

The following chapter will describe the context where the study took place, the methodology approach, as well as the type of instruments applied in the research and the participants involved in the process.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The aim of this study is to understand and analyze L2 language learners' perceptions toward the use of technology tools such as apps and social networks in the English classroom and if they might enhance their L2 language acquisition.

In this chapter, the context, the participants, the approach and the instruments used in this study are described. This includes an explanation of the data collection and the data analysis procedures that were used to conduct the research. Finally, some 183.3of data analysis and a conclusion are provided.

This study is intended to analyze the students' attitudes or perceptions about how effective the use of technological tools, such as apps and social networks, could be in order to enhance their L2 language learning and at the same time to see if it is likely to improve their communicative skills.

Through my experience during the years I have been working with higher education students I have figured out that most of them are not interested in learning English or feel discouraged regards learning the language because they think English is a very difficult language to learn and/or they have been taught through a tedious method.

3.1 The participants.

The participants involved were 24 young adult women and men who are between 18 and 26 years old. The group is formed by 19 women and 9 men. The research was done within two groups of students in two different faculties in a public university located in

central Mexico. These students take English courses as a mandatory subject which is part of the curriculum and to obtain their BA degree they need to pass the four courses offered.

The participants learning context is located in two faculties within a public university in Central Mexico. In one of the faculties, their classrooms are equipped with a computer with internet access, a projector, two speakers and a big screen. The classrooms are spacious enough and the furniture provided are: some tables and chairs which are organized in a semi-circle in front of a big white board and the teacher's desk. It is well illuminated and has wide windows and blinds to cover them from the sun light.

On the other faculty the conditions are opposite. Their classrooms are equipped with a white board and a projector but these classrooms do not have a computer, the internet signal is very weak and is always difficult to have internet access inside the classrooms. The scholar furniture provided are drawing boards and high workbenches and the classrooms are spacious too. The drawing boards and the benches are distributed through all the classroom in straight lines in front of the board. There is not a teacher's desk.

At the moment when I started to apply the survey, some of the participants in this study were studying their third and others the fifth semester of their bachelors' degree. Most of the students' English level was basic but some of them had a pre-intermediate level, some came from public schools and others came from a private school here in the city, but a few came from schools in the countryside but there is no information about what kind of school they studied in their home towns.

However, I have realized along my personal experience that the ones who come from the countryside sometimes do not have any knowledge of the language for different reasons. Some of them are, according to the learners' voice, because in their communities the

language classes are omitted from the education programs or they do not have a real English teacher.

When they were asked if they agreed to participate in this study they were willing to do it. It was explained to the participants that by being part of this study they could explore through different technology tools such as applications, networks and web sites, so they might experience a different form of learning the language. After that, their perceptions towards the use of these technology tools were going to be analyzed. Their anonymity was also discussed at this point as well so they felt confident to participate in this study.

Nevertheless, there was a little ethical issue; this study was applied only with two groups of English students in two different faculties within the university because they were the English groups which were given to me during the period due to the necessity to decrease my workload to eight hours a week, because of the CONACYT scholarship I had already received. Due to that situation I found myself worried regards the limited number of my participants for this study in that moment. However, the instruments did not need to be modified and the application was successful at the end.

3.2 The research methodology

This section explains the description of the instruments used to answer the following research questions:

RQ1 What do student participants within the investigative context report about their perceptions in regards to the strengths when using technological tools such as apps and social networks as part of the EFL learning process?

RQ2 What do the student participants within the investigative context report about her perceptions in regards to the weaknesses when using technological tools such as apps and social networks as part of the EFL learning process?

Within the interpretative perspective adopted, the data was collected by means of a survey and self- reports written by the participants.

3.2.1 The survey

Firstly, inside the methodology in this study, a survey was applied. This type of survey determines diversity of some topic of interest within a given population (Jansen, 2010). This survey was designed in the learners' mother tongue to facilitate they answer comfortably and at the same time to obtain clear and understandable answers from the participants. The survey was made through Google Docs which has an application that offers the possibility to create surveys and formularies to be sent online and ready to be answered.

The survey's design is a pre-structured (deductive) online formulary that was sent to students via e-mail and their answers were received and stored in an electronic file. I used a survey because surveys can also be used in qualitative studies; they are called by some authors as qualitative surveys as Jansen (2010) defines "a qualitative survey establishes meaningful variations (relevant dimensions and values) within a population".

3.2.2 Evidences from the students' production

Other data collection items involves evidences taken from the activities the students worked with during the course, which purpose was to allow the teacher participant to figure out about the learners experiences toward the use of the applications and the social networks

used during the course. These items of evidence were the videos and the recordings the learners did which include uploaded you tube videos and Mp4 recordings, ppt slides where the learners presented a project and /or an assignment as well as a recording made using the application to record messages or videos called Voice thread.

As a matter of fact, all these materials are part of the English course activities I used. I created the activities in order to fulfill the requirements of the program. These activities are part of the assessment within the FGUM English subject program taught in the university and have been assigned to it as “learning evidences”.

3.2.2.1 Screen captures

Another resource to obtain important data, were the screen captures that learners were asked to send in order to prove they were doing the assigned online activities and also to show their progress in the study of the different lessons offered by the web site “Livemocha” which is an online language community that provides instructional materials in 38 languages and is a platform for speakers to interact with and help each other to learn new languages. It is free to join and use, however there is an option to pay for receiving various benefits. I considered to use this platform because it is based on the power of a social network that makes it more attractive among the users and at the same time because it promotes the users’ active participation and exchange in order to hone practical skills and conversational fluency which is one of the important aspects that are pretended to be analyzed in this study.

3.2.2.2 You tube videos

The You Tube videos were created by the participants in order to practice their communicative skills and to apply their knowledge of the vocabulary and phrases learnt

during the English course. These videos were uploaded in You Tube; a video-sharing website which allows users to upload, view, rate, share and comment on videos.

3.2.2.3 Mp4 recordings

The Mp4 recordings' purpose during the course was to stimulate shy and insecure learners, who were not keen on making a video, to feel more confident to record themselves. The intention of using this application was that by learners doing these recordings they could realize how their voice and the others' were heard, then try to lose their fear to hear themselves. After that they could be able to make a video or speak to others through a different application or social network that required the need to communicate to others in real time. In fact, the Mp4 videos were made using the same activity for the You Tube videos but with a different format.

3.2.2.4 Voice thread

Voice Thread is a web-based platform that enables teachers and students to upload images, video or documents, record audio, video, or text comments, and then invite others to record comments as well. Its uniqueness lies in the ease in which audio commentary can be added to images and documents and the ability to add multiple commentaries to a single artifact.

The activity created using Voice Thread was to stimulate the participants the opportunity to self-express. The activity they did using the app Voice Thread, was based in an activity that we worked with Dr. Maria Thomas Ruzic, from the Colorado University; during our stance in the MEI program which I found really interesting and could be meaningful for the learners. It is called: "The cultural puzzle" and it allows the learners feel

free to talk about personal information related to their cultural context and the important aspects like the place where they have lived and grown, their costumes, traditions and other facts.

3.2.3 Learners' self-reports

In addition, I used also self-reports applied to students participants after the activities they accomplished to compare what were the students' perceptions before, when the survey was applied, and after they used the technology tools in the sort of activities within the lessons and moreover to identify and analyze if these tools actually contributed or not to their L2 language learning.

In the self-reports they were asked to write in 1 and ½ page about: a) the perceptions they had toward the use of the different tools they had been using during the course; b) to explain how had been their experiences with them and what their feelings were: glad, enthusiastic, anxious, nervous, desperate, quite, disappointed, frustrated or others and why; c) if they were able to practice the language in a better way than the traditional one or it was not the case; if their language skills had improved and what they thought were the pros and cons of using them to practice and learn a language. Another fact they were told to mention was to include in their reports if they would continue using the technology tools outside the classrooms in following courses as a forward practice.

3.3 Data collection procedure

First I asked the students to answer the survey, it was made as a formulary format and was sent via e-mail; after they answered all the questions their answers were sent and stored in an electronic file, I did not have any trouble with it. The survey was made in the students'

mother tongue (Spanish) because their English level is basic; as it is explained at the beginning of this chapter, and to avoid they were confused or had problems to understand and answer the questions.

3.4 Data analysis procedure

The data analysis procedure was made through the use of charts and figures from the results showed in the survey's answers and a deductive analysis from the open-ended questions from the survey and from the learners' self-reports where was necessary to create a categorization on the different aspects taken from the participants answers in order to be able to do the analysis.

3.4.1 The survey

As it is explained previously in this chapter, to analyze the survey it was necessary to define beforehand the topics, dimensions or categories to see which of the predefined characteristics exist empirically in the population under study (Jansen, 2010). The survey generates charts where some statistics show different results represented with percentages which come from the multiple choice questions. On the other hand, there are some charts that were used to analyze the participants' answers from the open-ended questions included in the same survey where it was necessary to apply a different strategy to analyze the results, like creating categories from the topics mentioned and then to convert the raw data into a kind of evidence that could be qualitatively analyzed.

3.4.2 The learners' self-report

In order to analyze the learners' self-reports, a similar strategy with the analysis of the results taken from the learners' answers about the open-ended questions in the survey was used.

3.5 Chapter conclusion

This chapter presented the information related to the participants, the context of the research and the participants' background. The research methodology and the description of the instruments used in order to obtain the answers to the provided research questions as well as the data collection. It also provided a description of the instruments used in the study, the type of survey and self-reports applied. The following chapter will present the research process for the analysis from the results of the instruments applied in this study.

CHAPTER 4: THE DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis for the information collected through the methodology described in Chapter 3. Also the analysis of the research questions presented in Chapter 1 will be presented here in this chapter. Firstly, the analysis is

represented by charts and discussion. The analysis of the survey applied (**see Appendix 1**) to the learners will be represented by charts while the analyses from the self-reports written by learners will be represented using some discussion.

4.2 Research questions

The analysis of the research questions in Chapter 1 are presented here and their significance will be discussed next in Chapter 5. The two following research questions will be examined through the analysis of the instruments used in this study to see if they allow us to answer them.

The two research questions done in this study are:

1. RQ1 What do student participants within the investigative context report about their perceptions in regards to the strengths when using technological tools such as apps and social networks as part of the EFL learning process?
2. RQ2 What do the student participants within the investigative context report about her perceptions in regards to the weaknesses when using technological tools such as apps and social networks as part of the EFL learning process?

In the following section, the results of the data analysis are shown in tables and graphics.

4.2.1 The survey

The survey was sent to the 28 learners of the group via online to their personal e-mails, 19 women and 9 men answered it. This instrument was designed in the learners' mother tongue (Spanish) to facilitate their answering it and to obtain more trustworthy results. It was made using the application Google Docs to create surveys and formularies. It consisted of 8 multiple choice questions and 3 open-ended questions, in total they were 11 questions.

The analysis starts with figure 4.1 which shows the frequency learners indicated they practice English outside the class where 60% of the learners' sometimes do it, it can be seen that it is the highest frequency learners practice contrasted with the 7% of them who answered they always practice English outside the class which is the lowest frequency.

To know how often they practice English outside the class I asked them the following question: *¿Con que frecuencia practicas el inglés fuera de clase?*

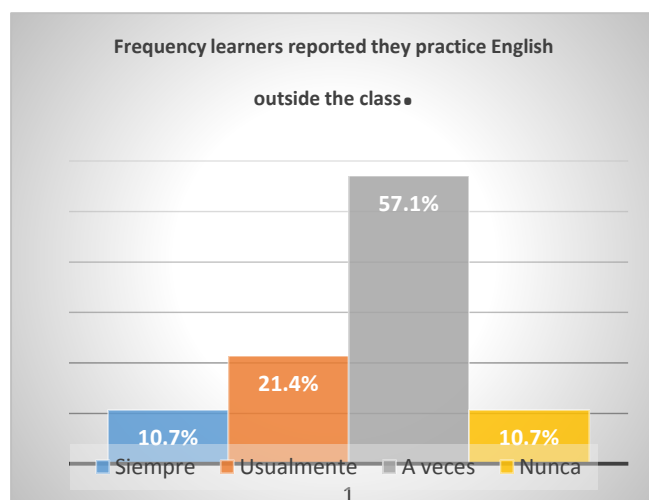


Figure 4.1 Frequency learners reported practicing English outside the class

Figure 4.2 shows the answers learners gave to a question about the importance and necessity to practice English outside the class and the results show that 67% of them totally agree to it; meanwhile the lowest average shows only 6.7% of them partially agree.

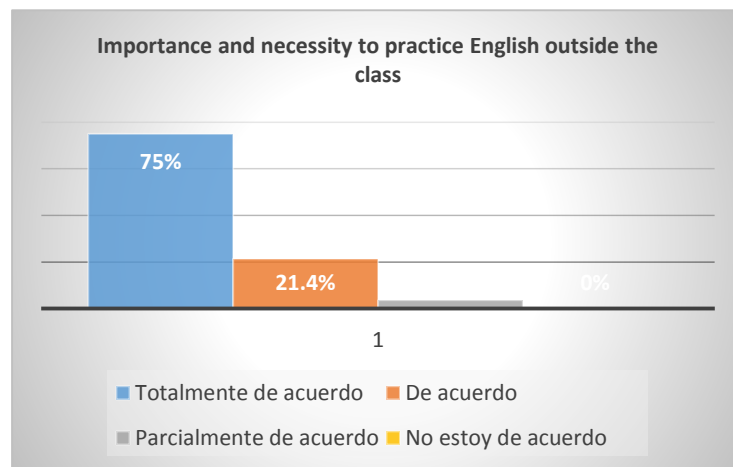


Figure 4.2 Importance and Necessity to Practice English Outside the Class.

The following figure (**Figure 4.3**) shows the results about what materials learners use in order to practice the language when they are not in class. It is interesting to see that music and television are the most used materials the learners prefer to practice English meanwhile they are not in class. The question used asks: De las siguientes opciones cuales son las que regularmente utilizas para practicar el idioma cuando no estas dentro de la clase. Puedes elegir mas de una.

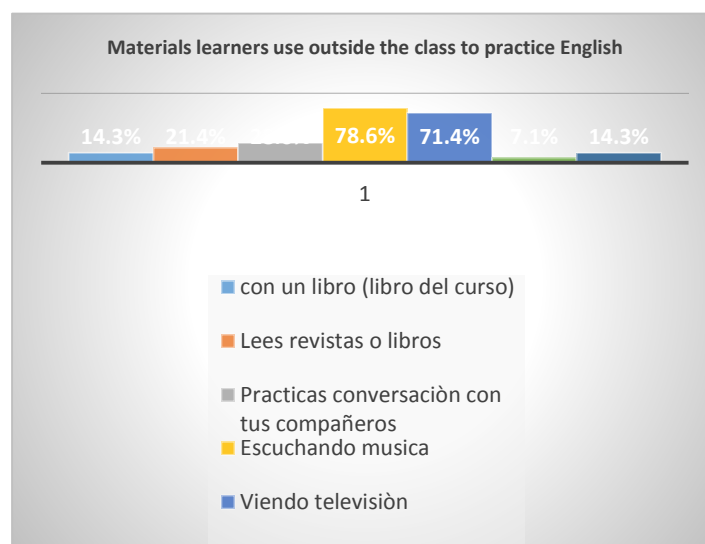


Figure 4.3 Materials learners use outside the class to practice English.

We can infer from these results, that the learners prefer interactive means in order to feel more engaged with the language; but only a few of them prefer printed materials or interacting with another person face to face.

Figure 4.4 illustrates the learners' perceptions about the employment of different technological tools to enhance their communicative skills when they are not in class. In their answers we can realize that they are aware of the significance that technological tools have to enhance their communicative skills represents for them. In order to know the learners' perceptions was necessary to ask them the following question: ¿Crees que el empleo de herramientas tecnologicas pueda ayudarte a practicar para mejorar tus habilidades comunicativas en el idioma cuando no estás en la clase?

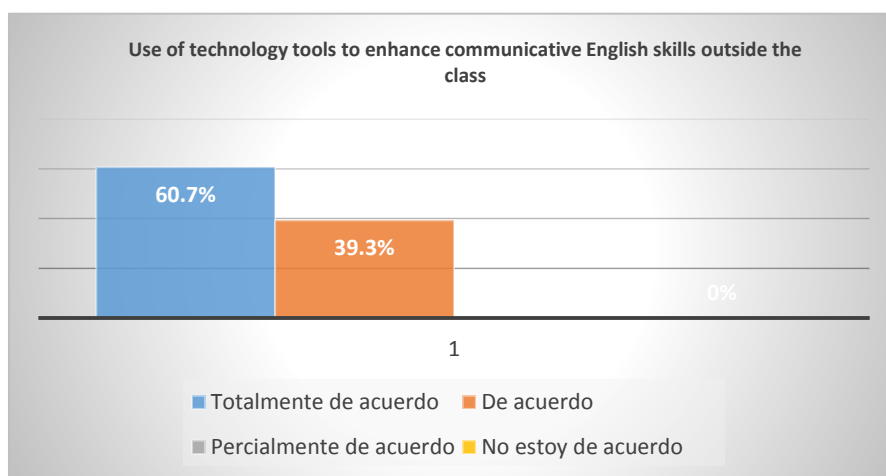


Figure 4.4 Use of technological tools to enhance communicative English skills outside the class

From the prior question, it was asked to the participants to give a further explanation of the previous answer; the results are presented the following chart, after it was necessary to categorize the answers using a color code.

PREGUNTA

5. De la pregunta anterior describe el por qué.

-
- Sí porque tenemos la posibilidad de interactuar con personas que dominan el idioma, además las herramientas tecnológicas hoy en día son muy comunes y cada vez tienen más usos.
 - Para que sea un aprendizaje más completo abarcando cada aspecto de nuestra vida diaria
 - Porque es otro gran apoyo para seguir practicando.
 - El usar herramientas interactivas hacen que el proceso de aprendizaje sea más sencillo para los jóvenes.
 - Porque a través de ello puedo lograr que el idioma se vuelva algo común en mi vida y así podre dominarlo de mejor manera en mi próxima vida laboral
 - Considero que el uso de herramientas tecnológicas cuando no estamos en clase, es de gran ayuda al practicar la lengua extranjera (inglés) porque nos ayuda a recordar las reglas de la gramática así como aumentar nuestro léxico y mejorar la pronunciación.
 - Sí es una buena manera de hacerlo, pero muchos las empleamos mal y su función ya no es la adecuada.
 - Porque es una manera diferente y más divertida y dinámica.
 - Porque los jóvenes de ahora ya están mas apegados a la tecnología y es parte de su vida diaria y estas aplicaciones para el inglés no serían tan pesadas si estuvieran en tu celular
 - pues si nos ayudamos de la tecnología que siempre estamos usando ya sea para redes sociales o para escuchar música entonces vamos a lograr que el inglés se pueda practicar y perfeccionar
 - Porque es una ayuda extra para poder aprender más a diario el ingles
 - Sí, porque a mí parecer tenemos pocas horas de clase y así no perderíamos la secuencia de lo visto en clase. Además sería práctico tener siempre a la mano la información que requerimos. Para practicarla constantemente
 - Por su importancia
 - Lo podría usar cuando este aburrido, en ratos de ocio. Lo podría utilizar para practicar un poco y salir mejor en la materia y aprenderlo de una forma práctica y no aburrida.
 - Porque la tecnología es una herramienta para la fácil adquisición de conocimientos para el ser humano, sin embargo creo que no debe haber abuso de éstos medios.
-

Table 4.5 Learners' perceptions about the use of technological tools such as apps and social networks that might enhance their communicative language skills.

According to the previous results it can be seen the different perceptions learners have towards the importance of using these tools regards the enhancement of their communicative skills are diverse. It can be seen they are aware of what these tools can offer to cover their needs; consequently in order to analyze the data, figure 4.7 represents the results in the following way.

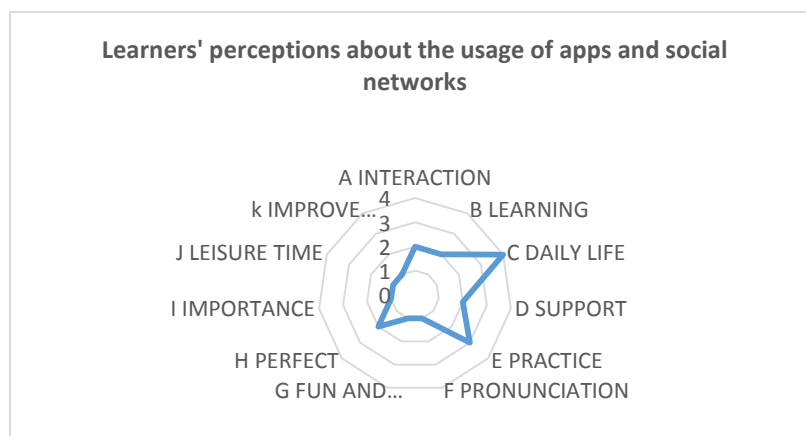


Figure 4.6 Representation of learners' perceptions about the use of technological tools such as apps and social networks that might enhance their communicative language skills.

Figure 4.7 shows the representation of the learners' perceptions regards the use of the technological tools (apps and social networks) that they consider would facilitate them to enhance their communicative language skills. To analyze these results it was necessary to create categories using colors from the literal words from the learners' who describe what their perceptions are regards the exploitation and advantages of using apps and/or social networks to enhance their communicative language skills. The categories are:

- a) Interaction
- b) Learning
- c) Daily life
- d) Support
- e) Practice

- f) Improve pronunciation
- g) Fun and dynamic way
- h) Perfect
- i) Importance
- j) Leisure time

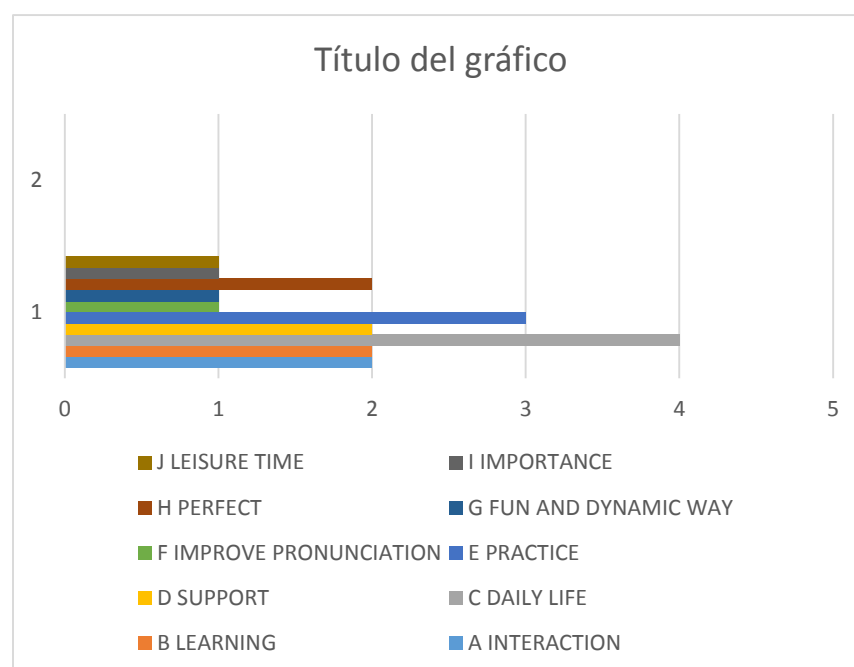


Figure 4.7 Aspects learners believe could benefit when using the technology tools.

On figure 4.7 we can analyze that learners consider these apps and/or social networks are useful in their daily lives and in their academic usage. Their strongest believes are that their use could be meaningful in their future labor life because by using them to practice they might perfect their language knowledge and the benefit they can obtain in order to learn the language as well.

Figure 4.8 shows the general usage of the electronic devices learners give in order to communicate with others.

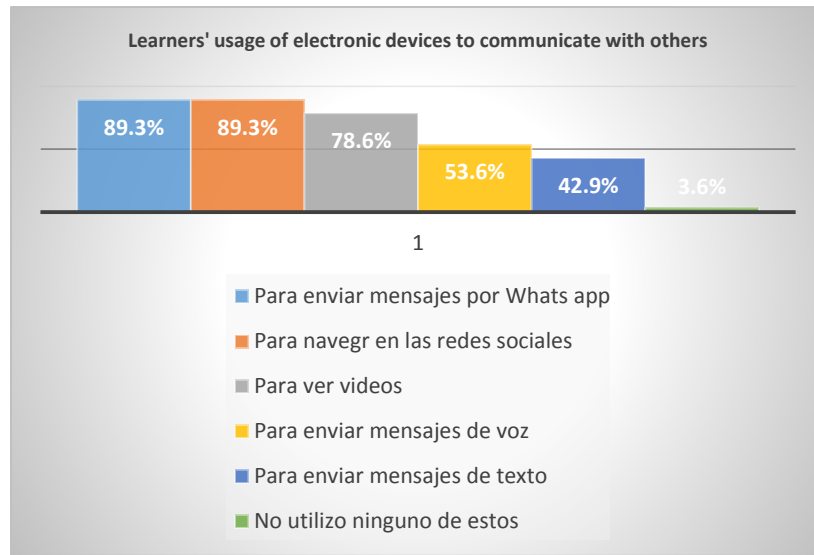


Figure 4.8 Learners' usage of electronic devices to communicate with others.

Table 4.9 illustrates the opinions regarding what apps or social networks might provide help to enhance their English communicative skills; while table 4.8 shows the learners' opinions towards question #7.

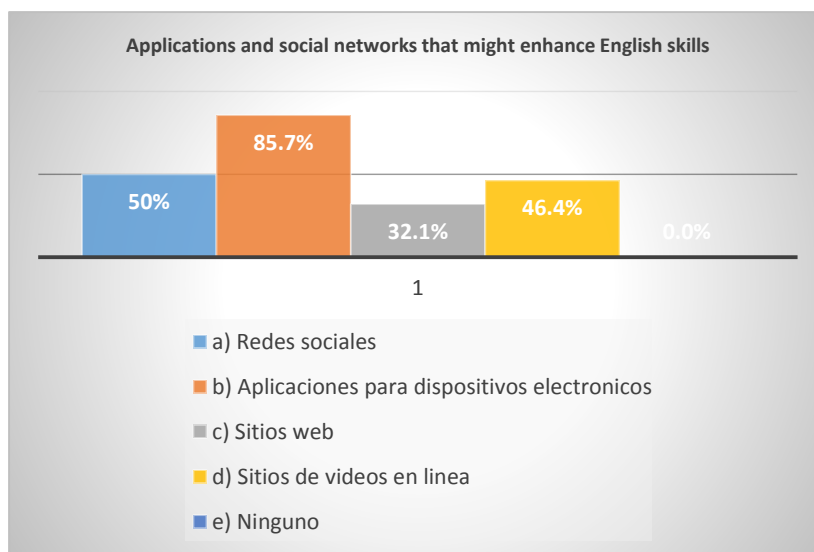


Figure 4.9 Apps and networks that might enhance English skills.

Here we can observe that learners believe that apps, online videos like you tube and social networks could help them with their language skills.

The following table (table 4.10) shows the participants' answers where they explain why of their choices regards the previous question about what apps or web sites could help them to improve their language skills.

PREGUNTA

8. De la pregunta anterior describe por qué.

- Las aplicaciones para cualquier móvil (o la mayoría) pueden ser descargadas en varios dispositivos, además **un sitio web, bien difundido, puede ser una gran herramienta.**
 - Porque son las que más uso y **ayudan a comunicarse con cualquier persona** porque todos las usan.
 - Porque **son aplicaciones con un objetivo específico** además son desarrolladas por personas que realmente tienen conocimiento sobre el idioma y cómo enseñarlo.
 - **Las aplicaciones están diseñadas con diferentes fines y son interactivas, en las redes sociales encuentras a muchas personas con quien chatear y en los videos puedes ver y escuchar** por ejemplo acerca de la cultura de otros pueblos.
 - Por la **facilidad.**
 - Serviría **para practicar**
 - Por que es una manera mas **divertida o entretenida**
 - Son medios de uso cotidiano, que **ayudarían a practicar constantemente**
 - Porque es donde **casi siempre estoy metida**
 - Porque es lo que mas descargo y uso en mi Smart phone, aparte creo que si hubiese **una red social en ingles conocería mas gente** lo cual me podría ayudar al aprendizaje del idioma.
 - **Pues en mi caso creo que utilizando estas aplicaciones es otra forma diferente de aprender y corregir errores.**
 - A la gente le llama la atención y **no se hace tan tedioso**
 - Porque no cuento con dispositivos digitales pero si con computadora, así que para mí **lo ideal serían los videos de YouTube**
 - Porque las apps las puedo tener en mi celular aunque no tenga internet y **las puedo practicar cada vez que yo quiera sin importar en donde este**
 - **Son como un juego** (en el caso de aplicaciones) y así no le pierdes el interés.
 - Porque **son entretenidos** y pueden como las redes sociales volverse un tipo de **adicción pero productiva**
 - porque son **las cosas que más utilizo día a día** y teniéndolas al alcance serás mas fácil hacer uso de ellas
 - Por que las aplicaciones **son interactivas**, así puedes jugar en tus tiempos libres lo que hace que se dese continuar usandola
 - **Usar el idioma inglés en actividades que realizamos cotidianamente hacen que se aprenda de manera espontánea.**
 - Claro porque sería **una forma ms dinámica de practicar el idioma** también podríamos practicar con personas que sea su lengua materna y **aprenderíamos la correcta pronunciación**
 - Para poderlo utilizar en ratos de ocio y de **forma entretenida**. Para completar más el nivel de inglés que tengo.
 - pues siempre **estoy en contacto con otras personas** a través de los medios sociales y por los videos pues creo que si llaman la atención entonces se genera que lo veas y repitas cuantas veces quieras.
 - Porque **ampliamos el campo de uso del idioma** a un rango mucho mayor de lo habitual.
 - Porque para mi y para otras personas son algunas que **nos ayudan** y no nos distraen tanto.
-

-
- Las apps **son muy útiles** pues se puede utilizar sin necesidad de internet y es muy práctico.
 - A la gente hoy en día leer le da flojera, y en inglés supongo que más. Entonces algo **más didáctico o dinámico** ayudará más
-

Table 4.10 Learners' opinions about why to use of apps, networks or online resources to enhance their language skills.

Table 4.10 demonstrates the different necessities the learners have and how they might use the technological tools to cover those necessities in order to practice the English language. It can be seen that most of them agree about the perceptions they have about the utilization of the apps and the social networks in electronic devices, which they assure they use almost all the time. In their answers they use words like: interactive, entertaining, easy, practice, dynamic, learning, didactic, useful, helpful, fun and including a great tool. All in all we can infer by their believes and perceptions toward using these tools to practice the language, they are convinced of the importance to know how to use them to take advantage of what they offer and the convenience of having them at hand.

In figure 4.11 we can observe the results of the participants' answers on question no. 9 which asked them: Si nunca o rara vez has usado alguna herramienta tecnológica para practicar inglés, y tuvieses la necesidad de utilizarlas, ¿Para qué te gustaría usarlas?

The choices given in the question can be observed in figure 4.11 where we can realize that their believes are related to the necessity of using them in first place to improve their listening skills, followed in second place by their necessity to improve their speaking skills and in third place the importance to improve grammar and vocabulary.

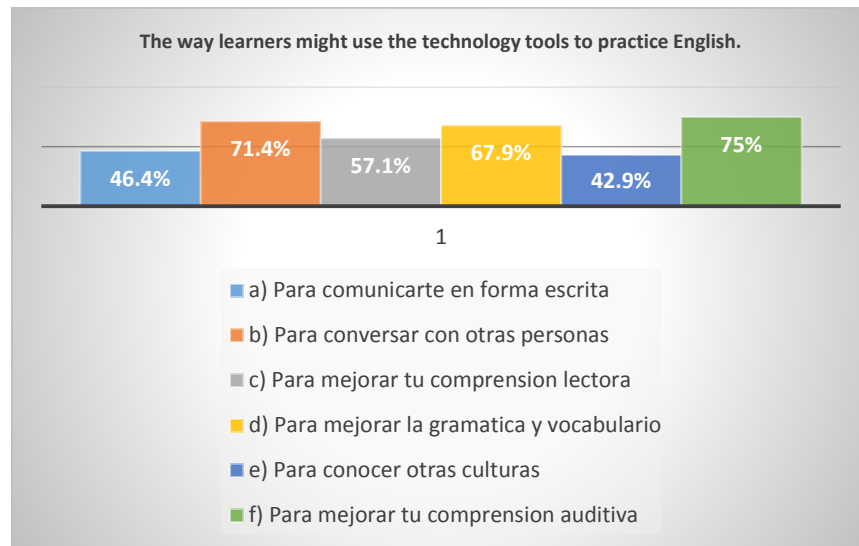


Figure 4.11 The way learners might use the technological tools to practice English.

Here it can be observed that their perceptions are directly related according to their needs and their weaknesses in the language skills. For this reason their answers are varied; meanwhile some believe that technological tools might facilitate to communicate written messages, others believe they might help them through reading texts or to have a conversation with other people.

Table 4.12 presents the opinions the learners have about their weaknesses in the language skills.

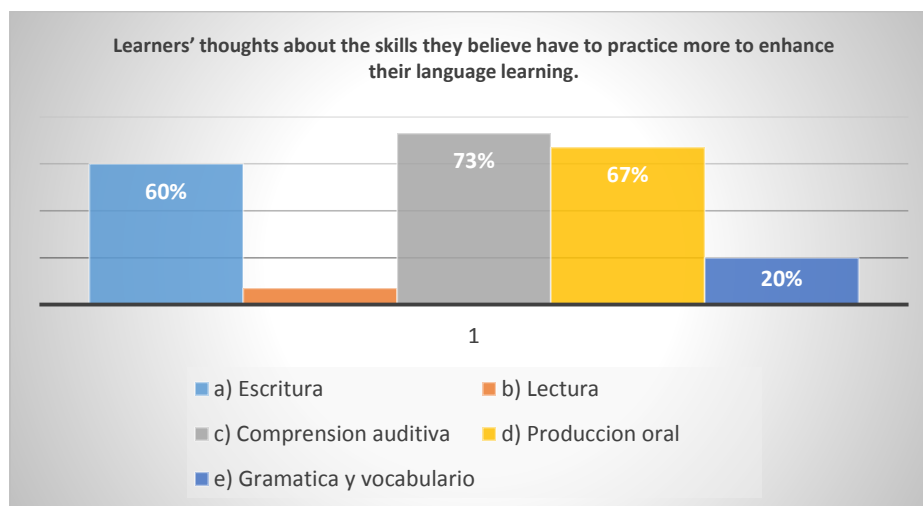


Figure 4.12 Learners' thoughts about the skills they believe have to practice more to enhance their language learning.

In this table we can figure out that the learners are aware of what their weaknesses are in the different skills, and we can appreciate that the 73% of them believe that the skill they have to work harder is listening comprehension; on the other side, the 67% believe it is oral production. 60% believe writing is necessary to practice more.

Finally table 4.11 shows the learners' perceptions about what skills might be benefited by the use of different technological tools to improve their English language skills.

11. De las habilidades mencionadas en la pregunta anterior, ¿Cuáles crees que son las que se verían beneficiadas con el uso de las herramientas tecnológicas para mejorar tu inglés y por qué?

- Pues la **escritura**, la lectura, **comprensión lectora**, **gramática y vocabulario** ya que si son diferentes los tipos de preguntas o de actividades puedes practicarlas todas
 - Mejoraría mi **comprensión auditiva** si uso alguna herramienta tecnológica porque de este modo sería más fácil comprender lo que oigo ante un audio fluido y porque así mi pronunciación sería mucho más acertada.
 - **Todas** porque al desarrollar una consecuentemente mejoras en las demás.
 - Mejoraría mi **comprensión auditiva** si uso alguna herramienta tecnológica porque de este modo sería más fácil comprender lo que oigo ante un audio fluido y porque así mi pronunciación sería mucho más acertada.
 - **Todas** se verían beneficiadas
 - **Escrita y producción oral** porque prácticamente son las que mas utilizo todos los días
 - Si utilizara esas herramientas para mejorar en lo que ando mal, entonces creo que por lógica mejoraría en **todas** ya que al practicar una me beneficiaría en otra y así.
 - **Todas**, ya que generalmente una te lleva a la otra.
 - **Todas** por que al practicar la gramática o cualquier habilidad estaremos reforzando de alguna manera todas las demás.
 - Yo creo que **todas**, ya que si se hace un tipo de plataforma con estas características el aprendizaje de un segundo idioma será mas fácil, mas accesible y *lo mejor de todo sería más cómodo acceder al sistema para poder practicar* y mas que verlo como algo obligatorio sería algo mas común y digerible para el usuario.
 - **Lectura , audio**
 - **Producción oral**
 - **Todas** porque con el uso de estas herramientas nos es mas fácil, comodo, además de que *no tenemos que estar en un lugar específico para practicar ni una hora programada.*
 - **gramática y vocabulario**, **comprensión auditiva** y **lectura**.
 - **Pronunciación oral** y la **comprensión auditiva**, por medio de los videos y la música que vería en las herramientas de tecnologías
 - **Oral** pues... es la que creo más trabajo me cuesta
 - Creo que **todas** son importantes.
-

-
- **Comprensión auditiva**, creo que es necesario aprender a escuchar para aprender a responder y a partir de tener una respuesta en mente viene la **escritura**.
 - Al leerlo lo entiendo al **escucharlo** no muy bien por lo tanto no lo comprendo y al no tener buena **gramática y vocabulario** no tengo buen **producción oral** por lo tanto necesito estudiar mas la pronunciación para poder comprender lo.
 - **Todas** esa es la ventaja de las herramientas tecnológicas, que se pueden utilizar para todo Lo cual sería muy conveniente para mí
 - La **comprensión auditiva** y la **escritura**.
 - **Comprensión auditiva**.
 - La **escritura** pues al ver textos escritos en este idioma podríamos comprender mejor el uso de las reglas ortográficas y el orden. La **auditiva** pues al escuchar música o audios el oído se acostumbra a la velocidad y a la pronunciación.
 - pues creo que la gran mayoría
 - La **escritura**, **gramática y vocabulario** van de la mano, son fáciles de acoplar en actividades para dispositivos electrónicos.
 - Para poder **entender mejor lo que me dicen** Y la otra para **poder expresarme fácilmente**
 - **Comprensión auditiva**, porque el escuchar mediante una reproducción ayudará a habilitar dicho sentido.
 - Principalmente la **auditiva** porque al ver videos practico más y también la parte **escrita** porque con los mensajes escritos se puede mejorar la escritura
-

Table 4.11 Learners' perceptions about what skills might be benefited by the use of different technological tools to improve their English language skills.

The results obtained in table 4.11 are very interesting due to the fact that they help us to know what are the skills the learners know they are weak and this tells us how we can use the technology for sake of their academic progress.

These answers reinforce the learners' opinions towards the importance of practicing the different skills to obtain better results. Most of the participants consider that listening comprehension is one of their weaknesses, meanwhile others believe that the technology tools can benefit to all of the skills as one of them describe in the answers "when you develop one of them consequently improve the others" . Only some of them believe that they can practice their writing and oral and a few think they could improve their reading, grammar and vocabulary skills.

On the other hand there is something interesting in a pair of answers that two participants provided; one of them mentioned that with the creation of platforms designed to learn English it is more comfortable to have direct access to practice and it is user friendly. Another participant finds comfortable the fact that it is not necessary to be in a specific place nor a specific time to access to one of these tools.

4.2.2 The participants self-reports

To fulfill with the analysis of the learners' self-reports it was necessary to take a sample of the texts in order to make the participants' voice clear and understandable. The self-reports written by the participants were done after finishing all the activities programmed throughout the course.

The participants were asked to write in 1 and ½ page about: a) the perceptions they had toward the use of the different tools they had been using during the course; b) to explain how had been their experiences with them and what their feelings were: glad, enthusiastic, anxious, nervous, desperate, quite, disappointed, frustrated or others and why; c) if they were able to practice the language in a better way than the traditional one or if it was not the case; d) if their language skills had improved and what they thought were the pros and cons of using them to practice and learn a language. Another fact they were told to mention was to include in their reports if they would continue using the technology tools outside the classrooms in following courses as a forward practice. They were also asked to send their reports via e-mail to make the delivery easier and faster.

It should be noted that only 6 of the participants sent the self-reports as it was asked them to do it, due to that to do the analysis of the participants' self-reports I chose 3 of the reports and took extractions and ideas where they expressed their positive and negative

believes or perceptions toward the use of the applications, social networks and web sites where they worked during the course.

Another important aspect in this analysis is to know what perceptions they have about the relevance of working with the technology tools during their language learning process in the course; if they were significant and useful and/or if these tools helped them to enhance their language skills; especially their communicative skills, or not.

The 3 chosen reports represent only a sample from all the self-reports made by the participants; thus, the analysis might be more meaningful according to the aims of the study and the research questions presented in first chapter of this research.

Participant 1

Positive comments	Negative comments	Enhanced learning aspect
-“Estas plataformas jamás las había utilizado, y honestamente me parecieron de mucha utilidad.”	-“También realizamos un ejercicio bastante peculiar que fue grabarnos explicando una receta de cocina este fue el ejercicio que más me costó trabajo”.	-Grammar, Writing, listening
-“Comenzando con el caso de livemocha, fue realmente útil para practicar mi inglés de varias maneras por ejemplo: la parte de la gramática, esto mediante los ejercicios escritos o el listening con los audios”.	-Ya que a pesar de saber las palabras en inglés me fue muy difícil darme a entender es decir; dar indicaciones fue lo que más se me dificultó”.	-Interaction with native English speakers
-“Pero lo que me pareció más sorprendente fue la interacción que logre alcanzar con personas que no solo viven en países de habla inglesa”.		-Learning of new vocabulary
-“Voicethread: También me pareció útil ya que mi principal problema es vencer la vergüenza de hablar en inglés, pude practicar mi speaking, con la opción de escuchar lo grabado”		
-“Sin embargo fue el ejercicio en el que más vocabulario en inglés y términos nuevos aprendí”		

Table 4.13 Extracts from Participant 1 self-report.

Table 4.13 shows the extracts from participant 1 (see Appendix 2) self-report; where we can observe positive comments related to the experiences they obtained through the utilization of the platforms like “Livemocha”, apps like “Voice thread” and the recordings they had to do to practice the speaking skills. The negative comments refer to the fact that for this participant is difficult to give instructions in English. The aspects of the language learning that this participant found benefitted were: grammar and vocabulary, writing and listening and the opportunity to interact with native English speakers.

Table 4.14 presents the comments from participant 2 (see Appendix 3) who shows as well more positive than negative perceptions in the interaction with the technology tools used during the English course.

Participant 2		
Positive comments	Negative comments	Enhanced learning aspect
...”no únicamente aprendes multimedia, o ejercicios básicos , ya que van de lo sencillo a lo complejo , de la misma forma se utiliza para practicar conversaciones con personas nativas de EEUU u otro país de habla inglesa, es decir , se practica el léxico, el vocabulario , la comprensión tanto lectora como de audio” -“fue una experiencia divertida que iba de la mano con la enseñanza...” - “amplio mas mi conocimiento de la lengua de una forma didáctica y no muy pesada”. - “Me agradaría mucho que se siguiera utilizando este tipo de didácticas en los cursos siguientes, y estaría bien que	-“Lo único complicado o feo de ello es que no hay para todas las paginas una aplicación para el celular...” -“ya que únicamente puedo entrar desde la computadora y con internet”. -“únicamente me sentí desesperado cuando no me salían las cosas , cuando no decía correctamente las palabras o frases” -“ no todos contamos en todo momento a este acceso y es algo que nos limita y por limitarnos nos olvidamos de ello.	-Practice conversation with native English speakers, vocabulary, reading comprehension and listening comprehension. -fun and didactic learning -Practice out of the class

pudiera practicar fuera de la clase pero cada vez que quisiéramos”.

-“ estaría perfecto que se creara una aplicación para la utilización del ingles , especialmente en los móviles y sin utilización del internet”

Table 4.14 Extracts from Participant 2 self-report.

The positive comments mention that the interaction with foreign people made possible to practice the vocabulary and the listening skills. The way the language was exposed was didactically good. In the comments we can see the desire of the continuation of the same type of didactic tools in the following courses and proposes the creation of a specific application to learn English without the necessity to have access to internet.

On the other hand, there are the negative comments where we can observe this participant concerns about the lack of applications for a mobile device or smart phone for every of the web sites which can only be used in a computer with internet access. The enhanced learning aspects in these comments were the enrichment of vocabulary, reading comprehension and listening too; the opportunity to practice conversation with foreign language speakers was another good experience and also it was fun and didactic learning and to practice outside the English class.

Table 4.15 shows the extracts taken from the participant 3 (see Appendix 4) where mainly positive commentaries are shown below.

Participant 3

Positive comments	Negative comments	Enhanced learning aspect
-“ es muy bueno que implementen algunas de estas herramientas para aprender este idioma”	-“muchas veces se tuvieron problemas con estas redes o herramientas”.	-Learning of the language
-“ Creo que es más llamativo emplear más el Facebook, porque es en dónde nos pasamos la mayoría de tiempo conectado”	-“ a veces estresarme al no entender muy bien o que se me trabara la página, el no poder subir mi video fue estresante hasta que decidí emplear mi correo”	-Good and fun experience
-“ Me queda una buena experiencia, ya que si me hizo divertirme”		-Good results in academic progress and results
-“ aprendí mucho más en este cuatrimestre que en el otro, me quedan gratas expectativas y buenos resultados de mi desempeño,”		
-“livemocha, es la que más me gusto”.		
-“ Muchas felicidades por implementar estas técnicas que si nos ayudan y sirven, en mi punto de vista si son buenas” 😊		

Table 4.15 Extracts from Participant 3 self-report.

Among the positive comments we can see this participant agrees with the idea to implement the technology tools in order to make easy the language learning. Also the participant expresses that it was a good experience because it was fun, the learning expectations were higher during this course rather than the previous one. The social network “Facebook” and the didactic platform “Livemocha” were significant in the learning process. The aspects benefitted were related to the language learning process, there was as well academic progress and good results in the within the course.

On the opposite site, the negative comments show the issues faced with the use of these tools, specifically related with technical problems where the stress and frustration appeared taking to the participant to think of a different tool, the e-mail.

4.3 Conclusions

This chapter presented the results of the study. To summarize, we can realize the participants' perceptions are mainly positive in the sense that the learners find the use of the technology tools not only fun or easy to use, but they are aware of the implications of using apps, social networks and web platforms that can offer them different benefits to their different needs and to encourage them to practice more often every time they are not inside an English class. Consequently, these tools promote at the same time, the autonomous learning of the language. Nevertheless, there is still some concern about the use of these tools, the access to the electronic devices and the opportunity to have internet access too is not easy for many students in the context where the research took part. In some cases I could observe that the lack of economic resources was the reason why a few students could not fulfill with the assignments. In some very few learners was the lack of interest to be involved in the activities.

As a result taking into account the analysis of the survey and the analysis of the self-reports we can infer that the learners' perceptions toward the use of apps and social networks, are mainly positive. It means that if we as English language teachers continue implementing the utilization of these tools as part of the syllabus we can motivate our learners to be more interested and meanwhile productive so that their confidence grow and their academic progress might improve.

In the following chapter the conclusions of the study will be discussed, also the significance, the implications and the limitations found in the analysis of the collected data. Also the possibilities for carrying out further research.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS

5.0 Chapter overview

After having presented the findings of the research, in this chapter I am going to present some important conclusions and the significance of those findings. In addition to that, I am going to provide a description of the implications and limitations of the research and the possibilities for further research.

5.1 Findings and their significance

The present research is an analysis of the experiences and perceptions that English language learners have towards the implementation of technology within an English language course. These learners take English courses that belong to the BA program they study in a university in central Mexico. The analysis of these experiences and perceptions are regarding to the specific use of apps and social networks to practice English outside the classroom and to see if this analysis guide us to understand if these apps and social networks might enhance their language skills.

The obtained data in this study shows that learners are eager to use apps and social networks in order to practice the language in an online environment. Moreover, the learners' attitudes towards these tools are mainly positive because they consider necessary and important to practice the language skills through these tools and also they find them useful to have the opportunity to practice the language every time they want or they can without following a rigorous schedule or being in a specific place as soon as they have internet access in their mobile devices.

5.2 Answers to the research questions

This study is expected to answer the following research questions:

RQ1 What do student participants within the investigative context report about their perceptions in regards to the strengths when using technological tools such as apps and social networks as part of the EFL learning process?

RQ2 What do student participants within the investigative context report about their perceptions in regards to the weaknesses when using technological tools such as apps and social networks as part of the EFL learning process?

As seen in chapter 4, the student participants were asked to answer a survey with a variety of multiple choice and open-ended questions as well as the self-reports they wrote related to the use of technological tools (apps and social networks) and mobile devices they use to practice the English language every time they are not in the English class and their responses were very positive.

Among the answers they provided the majority of the learners coincide that it is necessary and important to practice the language outside the classroom but contradictorily, most of them answered that they sometimes practice the language outside the class. It means that they do not practice very often outside the classroom. The learners agreed about the importance and necessity to practice the language outside the classroom as well as if the technological tools might help them to enhance their communicative language skills.

Most of the student participants' perceptions about the enhancement of language skills through the use of technological tools mainly coincide in the fact that these help them to learn effectively, to interact with others. The learners use them in their daily activities, so

they are easy to use. Most of them believe that they can help them to practice more grammar and learn more vocabulary.

The majority of the student participants believe that among a different number of technological tools such as apps and social networks might mainly facilitate them to improve their language skills. Referring to their expectations about the benefits they can receive from using the apps and social networks to enhance their skills, the majority believe that these tools will probably help them to improve listening comprehension, writing and oral expression.

Consequently, these tools promote at the same time, the autonomous learning of the language. Nevertheless, there is still some concern about the use of these tools, the access to the electronic devices and the opportunity to have internet access too is not easy for many students in the context where the research took part. In some cases I could observe that the lack of economic resources was the reason why a few students could not fulfill with the assignments. In some very few learners was the lack of interest to be involved in the activities.

As a result taking into account the analysis of the survey and the analysis of the self-reports we can infer that the learners' perceptions toward the use of apps and social networks, are mainly positive. It means that if we as English language teachers continue implementing the utilization of these tools as part of the syllabus we can motivate our learners to be more interested and meanwhile productive so that their confidence grow and their academic progress might improve.

5.3 Research aims

As it is described in chapter 1, this study has two principal aims. The first aim of this research is to analyze learners' perceptions/attitudes toward the use of technological tools that might help them regarding their skills enhancement to communicate more efficiently. Another aspect this study attempts to analyze is the English language learning development through technological materials and learning units.

5.3.1 Accomplished aims

One of the aims of this research study was to analyze the expectations/beliefs learners have toward the use of technological tools to improve their communicative skills outside the classroom environment. This aim was accomplished through the analysis of the results obtained through a survey designed for this project and the self-reports the learners participants generated (see Chapter 3). It has been found that the student participants in general believe that technological tools may benefit their communicative skills to improve.

According to the self-reports the student participants wrote they recognized that the apps and web platforms they used in the different learning units contained in these tools they could raise their language skills development especially the communicative ones.

5.4 Pedagogical implications

The results of this study show that a possible implication could be that by means of implementing apps and social networks among other online tools in the syllabus or even in

the curriculum, it might assist learners' performance inside the classroom and their academic progress and results would be higher.

5.5 Limitations of the research

The present study has some limitations. First of all, since the study is based only in a few cases, the results can not be generalized. Despite this, the study can serve as a point of departure to further research in the implementation of technology in English language teaching environments. Secondly, the instruments used in this research provided student participants expectations and believes, so it is unknown to what extent the results are consistent with the facts.

5.6 Possibilities or suggestions for further research

Firstly, more studies can be conducted using similar research procedures to obtain deeper findings to compare the ones of the present study. Secondly, other pieces of research in the area can be carried out following different procedures either to complement this study or explore other areas such as the creation of new apps or learning units which could be based on the specific learners' needs.

5.7 Final thoughts

In this final section of my research, I would like to conclude with a brief reflection derived from this study. It was a hard and significant challenge as well as a rewarding process for my professional development not only as a language teacher but as a researcher.

Taking the decision about what to research was quite difficult for me because during the MA program you explore through different areas and find many interesting topics that

result difficult to decide which could be the best or the most significant to do your research. I decided to focus my research on technology.

At the beginning, I was interested in doing my research about professional development as a language teacher focusing on the development of the competences an English teacher must have to be accepted in a MA program and what the process implies. But finally I decided to change radically the topic and the area of study. Firstly because I am familiar with it, I usually use it for my teaching practices. Second, because nowadays technology is part of the teaching and learning process, and in the English language teaching is not an exception. Another fact that pushed me to choose doing this research in the technology area, was the fact that there are very few studies done in this area in my teaching context.

Honestly, the process to look up information to construct the literature review was very hard for me because as my topic talks about technology, I expected to find information that could be “hot off the press” but I could not find updated books. Nevertheless, I could find a lot of online recent articles, which surprisingly; were mainly done in Asian countries.

On the other hand, designing the instruments was not difficult at all, but trying to find the appropriate questions according to the objectives was not an easy task. I had to do a reflection about how to ask the questions and how many questions would be suitable for the instrument.

To conclude, this research has represented for me an interesting and rewarding challenge due to the positive impact it has represented to the learners involved in this study, the results were satisfactory and the information obtained has encouraging me to maintain

the way I have worked with the learners to help them achieve their language learning goals and to continue doing research within my teaching context.

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Appendix A

Encuesta sobre el uso de herramientas tecnológicas para el aprendizaje del Inglés.

*Obligatorio

Edad: *

Sexo *

1. ¿Con que frecuencia practicas el inglés fuera de la clase? *

- ☐ a) Siempre
- ☐ b) Usualmente
- ☐ c) A veces
- ☐ d) Nunca

2. ¿Crees que es importante y necesario el poder practicar inglés fuera de clase? *

- ☐ a) Totalmente de acuerdo
- ☐ b) De acuerdo
- ☐ c) Parcialmente de acuerdo
- ☐ d) No estoy de acuerdo

3. De las siguientes opciones cuales son las que regularmente utilizas para practicar el idioma cuando no estas dentro de la clase. Puedes elegir más de una. *

- ☐ a) Con un libro (libro del curso)
- ☐ b) Lees revistas o libros
- ☐ c) Practicas conversación con tus compañeros
- ☐ d) Escuchando música
- ☐ e) Viendo televisión
- ☐ g) Nunca utilizo ninguno de estos
- ☐ Otro:

4. ¿Crees que el empleo de herramientas tecnológicas pueda ayudarte a practicar para mejorar tus habilidades comunicativas en el idioma cuando no estés en la clase? *

- ☐ ☐ a) Totalmente de acuerdo
- ☐ ☐ b) De acuerdo
- ☐ ☐ c) Parcialmente de acuerdo
- ☐ ☐ d) No estoy de acuerdo

5. De la pregunta anterior describe el por qué. *

A vertical rectangular box with a light gray background and a thin black border. It contains a small upward-pointing arrow icon at the top and a small downward-pointing arrow icon at the bottom, indicating a scrollable area for text input.

6. Tu dispositivo electrónico (Smart phone, tablet, etc...) generalmente lo utilizas para, puedes elegir más de una. *

- ☐ ☐ a) Para enviar mensajes de texto
- ☐ ☐ b) Para enviar mensajes por whats app
- ☐ ☐ c) Para ver videos
- ☐ ☐ d) Para navegar en las redes sociales
- ☐ ☐ e) Para enviar mensajes de voz
- ☐ ☐ f) No utilizo ninguno de estos

7. ¿Cuál o cuáles de las siguientes opciones crees que te puedan ayudar a mejorar tus habilidades en el idioma? *

- ☐ ☐ a) Redes sociales
- ☐ ☐ b) Aplicaciones para dispositivos electrónicos (Smart phones o tablets)
- ☐ ☐ c) Sitios web
- ☐ ☐ d) Sitios de videos en línea (You tube)
- ☐ ☐ e) Ninguna

8. De la pregunta anterior describe el por qué. *

A vertical rectangular box with a light gray background and a thin black border. It contains a small upward-pointing arrow icon at the top and a small downward-pointing arrow icon at the bottom, indicating a scrollable area for text input.

9. Si nunca o rara vez has usado alguna herramienta tecnológica para practicar inglés, y tuvieses la necesidad de utilizarlas, ¿Para qué te gustaría usarlas? *

- ☐ ☐ a) Para poder comunicarte en forma escrita
- ☐ ☐ b) Para poder conversar con otra u otras personas
- ☐ ☐ c) Para mejorar tu comprensión lectora
- ☐ ☐ d) Para mejorar la gramática y vocabulario
- ☐ ☐ e) Para conocer o aprender acerca de otras culturas
- ☐ ☐ f) Para mejorar tu comprensión auditiva.

10. De las siguientes habilidades, elige cual o cuales son en las que necesitas practicar más para mejorar el inglés y explica por qué. *

- ☐ ☐ 1) Escritura
- ☐ ☐ 2) Lectura
- ☐ ☐ 3) Comprensión auditiva
- ☐ ☐ 4) Producción oral
- ☐ ☐ 5) Gramática y vocabulario

11. De las habilidades mencionadas en la pregunta anterior, ¿Cuáles crees que son las que se verían beneficiadas con el uso de las herramientas tecnológicas para mejorar tu inglés y por qué? *

Enviar

Nunca envíes contraseñas a través de Formularios de Google.

100%: has terminado

Appendix 2

Participant 1

El uso de nuevas tecnologías, no solo se ha vuelto indispensable en diversas áreas de la educación y la enseñanza, sino que se ha vuelto una necesidad estar a la vanguardia tecnológica. Situación semejante a la de aprender otro idioma, en este caso el idioma inglés, ya que en tiempos recientes es obligatorio aprenderlo.

Es por este motivo separarlos sería imposible.

Durante el cuatrimestre realizamos diversas actividades por medio de herramientas tecnológicas completamente desconocidas para mí.

Como por ejemplo livemocha y voicethread.

Estas plataformas jamás las había utilizado, y honestamente me parecieron de mucha utilidad.

Comenzando con el caso de livemocha, fue realmente útil para practicar mi inglés de varias maneras por ejemplo: la parte de la gramática, esto mediante los ejercicios escritos o el listening con los audios.

Pero lo que me pareció más sorprendente fue la interacción que logre alcanzar con personas que no solo viven en países de habla inglesa sino interactuar con personas que viven en países realmente lejanos a México, pero a pesar de estar tan lejos todos seguimos la misma meta que es aprender otro idioma.

Y si bien la interacción a distancia fue sorprendente, también poder ayudar a estas personas mediante la retroalimentación fue maravilloso.

Otro aspecto que me pareció interesante es que el inglés que se utiliza en livemocha no es un inglés rígido ni estricto al contrario el inglés que se utiliza en esta plataforma es relajado y coloquial, eso me gusto.

Algunos de mis compañeros, mencionaban que tuvieron problemas para ingresar esta plataforma, sin embargo en mi caso no fue así, ya que al primer intento logré registrarme en dicha plataforma y realizar las actividades sin ningún tipo de problema.

Voicethread: También me pareció útil ya que mi principal problema es vencer la vergüenza de hablar en inglés, así que mediante voicethread pude practicar mi speaking, con la opción de escuchar lo grabado y si no me gustaba simplemente borrarlo hasta sentirme segura en cuanto a la pronunciación.

En esta plataforma tampoco tuve ningún tipo de problema al ingresar o al utilizarla.

También realizamos un ejercicio bastante peculiar que fue grabarnos explicando una receta de cocina este fue el ejercicio que más me costó trabajo.

Ya que a pesar de saber las palabras en inglés me fue muy difícil darme a entender es decir; dar indicaciones fue lo que más se me dificultó.

Sin embargo fue el ejercicio en el que más vocabulario en inglés y términos nuevos aprendí ya que comúnmente no se hace eso en las clases regulares de inglés, es decir jamás realizado una receta en inglés. Eso me gustó mucho y fue realmente útil.

Lo más normal que utilice fue Facebook, sin embargo también fue muy útil para mantenerme en contacto con mi profesora y mis compañeros, para estar en contacto y recibir respuestas de manera inmediata y así resolver dudas en tiempo breve.

Recapitulando fue un cuatrimestre en el que aprendí mucho, en cuanto a gramática y listening , pero sobre todo en cuanto al speaking definitivamente este fue el aspecto en el que mejore de manera sorprendente y esto no habría sido posible de no ser por las herramientas tecnológica que he mencionado.

Así que si me preguntan si dichas herramientas son utiles? La respuesta es definitivamente sí.

Appendix 3

Participant 2

Las percepciones que tuve acerca de utilizar las herramientas tecnológicas para el uso del idioma del inglés fueron bastante satisfactorias , ya que me sirvieron demasiado a la hora de practicar algún tema, ya sea que no se haya visto en clase, ya sea un tema que se me dificultaba , ya sea solo para aprender voluntariamente , me parece que es algo muy útil en todas las perspectivas puesto que no únicamente aprendes multimedia, o ejercicios básicos , ya que van de lo sencillo a lo complejo , de la misma forma se utiliza para practicar conversaciones con personas nativas de EEUU u otro país de habla inglesa, es decir , se practica el léxico, el vocabulario , la comprensión tanto lectora como de audio y esto con respecto a las paginas de voicethread y livemocha , paginas que no sabia de su existencia el cual gracias a la ayuda de la maestra pude conocer y practicarlo , ya sea con tareas o por voluntad propia , pues a veces entro pero mas que nada entro cuando me encuentro aburrido , lo único complicado o feo de ello es que no hay una aplicación para el celular y cuando uno requiere entrar a estas paginas no se puede por el mismo motivo , ya que únicamente puedo entrar desde la computadora y con internet .

Al realizar un video con base a la estructura de una receta , fue algo muy practico , ya que no solamente utilizamos el vocabulario que nos enseñó , pues investigamos mas palabras o frases y a la vez practicamos nuestro lenguaje , y esto se hacia una y otra vez , hasta lograrlo y decirlo de la manera mas adecuada y correcta , por lo tanto fue una actividad algo tediosa pero agradable , pues como ya menciona también se utilizó la estructura al escribir la receta .

En Facebook no se promovió mucho el practicar el inglés puesto que únicamente se veían ejercicios que la maestra indicaba , o se realizaban avisos o acotamientos de la clase, y obviamente todo era escrito en inglés , así que , solo se utilizaba para responder de la misma manera y para comprender lo que se publicaba . Al igual que podíamos ver y observar las imágenes o videos que la maestra nos indicaba ver e interactuar y cuando estábamos viendo un tema en clase nos apoyaba al subirnos imágenes al grupo de Facebook con el respectivo tema.

Cabe mencionar que mi experiencia al utilizar todo lo ya mencionado fue muy satisfactoria pues pude aprender mas de lo que ya tenia en mente y en practica , y se me mejor esta forma de aprender , pues en lo que cabe fue una experiencia divertida que iba de la mano con la enseñanza , por la misma razón que ya se explico , amplio mas mi conocimiento de la lengua de una forma didáctica y no muy pesada , ya que admito que si era algo tediosa , únicamente me sentí desesperado cuando no me salían las cosas , cuando no decía correctamente las palabras o frases , pero nada que no se pueda solucionar .

Con todo lo que ya se menciona queda mas que claro que el uso de la tecnologías favorecieron demasiado en el desempeño de mi materia de ingles pues de una u otra manera aprendí mas de lo que pensé aprender y como ya dije de una manera didáctica.

Me agradaría mucho que se siguiera utilizando este tipo de didácticas en los cursos siguientes ,pues las herramientas tecnológicas nos favorecen muchísimo a la hora de aprender , sea lo que sea , y estaría bien que pudiera practicar fuera de la clase pero cada vez que quisiéramos , ya que una cosa es que nos digan que hacer , que temas utilizar y cuando entregar ese tipo de ejercicios y otra muy distinta el utilizarla de la manera que nosotros queramos y en el tiempo que podamos , puesto que es algo abrumador que se nos deje de tarea entrar y hacer "x" ejercicio y mas cuando es algo largo , me parece que en lugar de ayudar seria lo contrario pues se convertiría un hastío tener que realizar dichas actividades en tiempo y forma.

Eso es a mi parecer , obviamente no todos piensan de la misma manera, pero creo que seria muy importante la opiniones de todos , claro esta que para que sirva todo ello , pues tenemos que aportar un poco y apoyar en algunas actividades , pero si estaría perfecto que se creara una aplicación para la utilización del ingles , especialmente en los móviles y sin utilización del internet , ya que no todos contamos en todo momento a este acceso y es algo que nos limita y por limitarnos nos olvidamos de ello.

Appendix 4

Participant 3

Primero quiero empezar diciendo que es muy bueno que implementen algunas de estas herramientas para aprender este idioma, que aparte de eso, me agradaron mucho las actividades y que si es posible que todos los niveles de inglés se puedan implementar, serían un gran apoyo a nosotros como estudiantes, si deberían revisar cuales son las mejores para emplearlas, ya que muchas veces se tuvieron problemas con estas redes o herramientas.

Creo que es más llamativo emplear más el Facebook, porque es en dónde nos pasamos la mayoría de tiempo conectado, y así pues ensayaríamos mucho más el idioma.

Me queda una buena experiencia, ya que si me hizo divertirme, a veces estresarme al no entender muy bien o que se me trabara la página, el no poder subir mi video fue estresante hasta que decidí emplear mi correo, pero la mayoría de veces no hubieron problemas y me agrado mucho, las actividades son fáciles y emplearlas las herramientas también, creo que fue muy divertido hasta las mismas actividades que hacíamos en clase, como los crucigramas, o las oraciones que aunque nos equivocábamos lo intentábamos.

Este curso de inglés me gustó mucho, creo que aprendí mucho más en este cuatrimestre que en el otro, me quedan gratas expectativas y buenos resultados de mi desempeño, estas herramientas de verdad que me ayudaron, las ocupe para estudiar y recordé varias cosas que habíamos visto en clase, yo creo que esto es lo que nos deberían dejar de tarea, cada que se tengan clase, dejen una actividad de livemocha, es la que más me gusto.

Estas herramientas me gustaron, lo único que pienso, es que se debería implementar desde años anteriores, para que no solo sean en los años de universidad, sino que con tanta revolución digital serían muy llamativos a los niños y los ayudaría mucho en este aspecto.

Muchas felicidades por implementar estas técnicas que si nos ayudan y sirven, en mi punto de vista si son buenas 😊