

UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT



ESSAY

**REFLECTIONS TO ENHANCE THE ENGLISH TEACHING
CURRICULUM IN THE PRE- SCHOOL LEVEL IN THE CAREER OF
LICENCIATURA EN IDIOMA INGLES.**

**UNDERGRADUATE WORK PRESENTED TO OBTAIN THE
DEGREE OF LICENCIATURA EN IDIOMA INGLES OPCIÓN
ENSEÑANZA**

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Introduction



The following research presents a number of arguments departing from a gather-up of testimonials from teachers of English that have been working with pre-school pupils. Its purpose is to demonstrate all their experiences and declarations of what teaching preschoolers represent. This inquiry is supported by a series of class observations and in-depth interviews with some teachers from different kindergarten and schools from the metropolitan area of San Salvador as well as institutions from other departments such as La Libertad, San Miguel and Usulután. It also pretends to examine through their declarations, the drawbacks at the time of planning and/or delivering the English class.

This study also rounds up an objective criticism regarding English teaching in Pre-School levels from teachers graduated from *Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés, Opción Enseñanza* at the University of El Salvador; whose graduate profile do not encompass an exhaustive inner-look or in-depth revision of contents relating toddler population for the better understanding and proficiency of the issue of pre-school teaching education. Adding to this, the enquiry proposes a set of ideas for contributing to the specialization in Pre-School teaching within the Curriculum Design of subjects embedded in Didactics, English for Special Purposes and Elective courses of the above mentioned career.

Finally, throughout this paper we shall discern about different barriers that teachers face when adapting themselves for befitting into the pupils' reality, and eventually come up with reflections oriented to enhance the English teaching Curriculum in the Pre-school level in the Career of *Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés*.

Based on the exit profile of the graduated teachers in *Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés Opción Enseñanza* from the University of El Salvador, it is inferred that the professionals possess weighty resources to insert themselves in a number of teaching areas that include university positions, Pre, Elementary and High schools, foreign language academies, free-lancing, tutorships, translation services, call centers, etc. However, the centerfold of this argument spotlights an event that arises within the career and deliberately becomes a considerable professional drawback by the fact that the Major does not bear a broaden scope immersed in the field of teaching to kinder-linked-population. As a result, the current *Licenciados in English Teaching* are not fully prepared to cope with the demands that imply engaging with the field of Pre-School English Teaching.

Particularly, a number of teachers who launch themselves into the pre-school domain exhibit a narrowed scope on this area. One example is that Teachers graduated from the University of El Salvador, present a number of drawbacks due to a subtle knowledge about managing and teaching children. Once in this field, the teachers encounter a burden of unexpected situations with which they are not familiar. Among these we find student misbehavior, attention-span management, overcrowded classes, children-fitted games, children-adapted material elaboration, and understanding of child-growth development. Due to this constrained scenario, the teachers are driven to adapt the general knowledge gained in their Major in an attempt for embedding themselves into the new trend of teaching young pupils. This motion seeks to get a child-focus involvement since students bear a particular underlying nature. In the Salvadoran's teaching of English scenario there does not yet exist an educational scheme or approach or pilot program specially prepared for the teaching of English to Pre-School population. Institutions like the Ministry of Education and the University of El Salvador have shown some interest in creating a specialized career oriented to teaching English in pre-school levels.

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Nevertheless, the outcomes of these intentions have not shown a clear and evident progress on this effect. It is worth to mention however that currently some work is being done regarding the issue of teaching English among preschoolers which is being concentrated in a platform that goes along with educational policies promoted by the current government, specifically that of the Plan 2021 which embeds a pattern commissioned to widespread

English-teaching in *primaria* level. As a result, institutions like the University of El Salvador ought to gain terrain in this field, and prepare its professionals to cope with the new educative trends towards teaching English to youngsters. However, it seems that until a new career addressed to Early Childhood becomes available in the English teaching scenario, teachers will continue to rely on personal methodological baggage, common sense and assertiveness to get even with the characteristics of elementary school students.

It is under this concept that becomes relevant to spy on the methodology carried out by the current early childhood educators in the English teaching field to follow up their road into their effort of becoming efficient and assertive in the Pre-School class. The purpose was to survey the manner teachers got the control in the classroom, as well as the obstacles they encountered in their early days of teaching preschoolers and to note down their contributions in the sense of criticisms, assertions, troubleshooting issues, strategies and techniques adapted and carried out by the teachers and the way they applied and adapted the topics.

The intriguing points on this argument rely on the fact that such techniques and procedures in Pre-schoolers are analyzed and studied in a shallow manner by teachers of English and play a secondary role during the stage of didactic training at UES. As a result, teachers of English exhibit a low proficiency in quality service (attaining merely a rather nursery supervision care) and are not capable of surpassing the standards of other teachers who hold literacy in early childhood education. To get to the bottom line of this matter, some educators who work in the preschool area were approached by the inquirers with the purpose of discerning about their remarks regarding the issue of teaching English to preschoolers.

For practical reasons the sample of teachers was labeled as PST, which represented a selection of teachers who work in primary levels (*Pre-School Teachers*) and also constituted a string of professionals who were educated in the career of *Licenciatura en Idioma Ingles* in the University of El Salvador (UES); as well as the population of Pre-school Pupils (PSP) which in turn was labeled as YP standing for *Young Pupils* to prevent

confusion with the former label. Finally the *Licenciatura en Idioma Ingles* offered in the University of El Salvador was labeled as LII.

Primarily, a prominent factor of influence that induces the PST's to decide to teach young learners is an intrinsic gist coinciding with emotional and natural facility of love and affection along with child-care skills as a vital element into agreeing to take the job with youngsters. This is supported by the fact that during the observation period it was very common to sight that most of the educators manifested some affection towards children denoted in actions such as having students seated on their laps, hugging and kissing at the time of arrival and departure, sharing food, lollypops and the provision of feedback full of encouragement.

On another concern, on the teachers' side there exists a tendency that diverges into an emotional posture rather than a scientific and scholastic matter regarding preschoolers. Most of the teachers began working with preschoolers by a glimpse of sympathetic disposition that lead them to carry on with academic burdens meant to teach young infants.

In a second scale, one weighty element that truly prompts the PST to teach young children relies on preferable salary incomes which lead them to resolve to become teachers of English for YPs. This phenomenon is very common for *Licenciados en Idioma Ingles* from LII who despite the fact that they hold a narrowed familiarization with Pre-school education accept the assignation of teaching young learners. This position generates an incongruent equilibrium between the keened, spirited and most suitable teacher for this post rather than an individual with the sole intention of merely earning profit.

The scenario mentioned above assembles a PST constrained to deliver a *run-the-clock class* and not a teacher with the full conviction and willingness to grow up professionally as an educator in the YPs English-teaching field. This pattern provides a PST scarcely prepared for fulfilling the YPs needs and by consequence holds a number of issues that represent a trace-line of weak points detected in the LII curriculum design that also

evidences a lack of promotion among LII students to gain motivation and projection to work with young learners.

Currently, PSTs from the LII do not possess a concrete understanding of child-oriented didactic matters. These shortcomings deploy that the PSTs are not aware of the *know-how* of issues as to how to deal with disruptive behavior, managing large classes, controlling attention span, handiness for creation of child-fitted illustrations, quick-witted faculties for corporal language, sensitiveness towards children's particular susceptibility and certainty in adapting contents and activities usage.

Subsequently, PST faces a scenario in which he has to create his own set of methodologies and techniques depending entirely on crafty skills, within-hand knowledge and resolutions made by merely common sense. The academic universe he departs from relies on a base-line of methods, approaches and techniques that range from Total Physical Response, Audio lingual, Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning and other conceptions such as the Communicative and Natural approach and various techniques *modus* that are encompassed as pair work, group work, songs, chants singing, dancing, repetition and choral drillings, picture recognition, picture drawing, etc.

Despite the fact that the PSTs handle a great percentage of this featured knowledge, the practical side has shown that the educators expose insufficiency for dealing with unexpected *momentus* that affect in a high degree the normal development of the class. Along with these unexpectancies, the PSTs encounter in a first stage the issue of not only executing well-fitted activities but also performing eye-catching actions for counteracting childhood features by the fact that YPs are easily distracted because of the effect of their

short-term attention span which hinders any attempt of developing an isolated-constant activity.

This is also supported by the way teachers proceed on duty which reflects the degree of experience that each teacher has, which certainly denote a consistent difference in classroom performance. For instance, an experienced teacher leads into a productive enhancement for oral skills along with listening interaction among pupils, he also envisions the struggle on the steady and growing proportion of knowledge within the language. However, an inexperienced educator relies in the intention of restringing the class into a fixed chain of activities. One further example on this statement is presented in the activity timings depicted on PSTs during classes where they accumulated as much as 20 to 22 percent (12 to 13 minutes respectively in a 45-minute scale) of class time on activities only devoted on *pasting* and *drawing*. which even though are considered as a great resource for developing psychomotor skills, the activities were enlarged in such a way that the teachers showed that they preferred to keep students focused in time-consuming activities and encompass the class in the attitude “the larger the better”. This situation exhibited a narrowed creativity on the teacher’s side for not involving students in perhaps a more fun-based platform committed to enhance oral skills. Young Pupils are more likely to encompass their world cemented in amusing activities such as jumping, running, hugging, screaming, chanting, graffiti drawing, eating, bothering, running around, etc. which embody a group of sequential activeness distinctive to their developmental phases. “*The teacher must accomplish goals through activities that are appropriate for both the chronological age and the cognitive development of the student*” (Schinke-Llano and Rauff, page 42, 1996).

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Teachers also confront with another quotidian struggle which features a schematical conduct-frame of disruptive behavior in the class, which involves a binding of acts and annoying comportment that in a practical vision encircle circumstances when YP level of stamina goes out of control, the allowed margin of noise permission in class moves out of hands and when a certain activity is no longer productive. This is validated by a number of appreciations from in-field teachers such as Ana J. Choto from Colegio Sagrado Corazón, Guadalupe Medrano from Little Star kindergarten, and Marielos Machado from Colegio

Champagnate who coincide with the statement that students' misbehavior is at a scale of a growing trend adding that today's children present a very extroverted conduct profile with much hyperactivity which represents a great consumption of class-time that sometimes exceeds to 25% over other classroom activities.

These latter aspects that encircle time-loss in the YP's classroom embrace activities like settling down the class, having the pupils seated on their desks, keeping children in silence and gaining their attention. Moreover, she remarks that this time-lost percentage is subjected to the particular mood of the students and external factors that enclose weather conditions, holidays, classroom temperature and class schedule.

On another concern, YPs possess the peculiarity of having proclivity to boredom when exposed to an extended isolated activity. This attribute emerges from YP's selfish attitude due to a natural cognitive phase towards its surrounding which empowers into a normal and furtive desire of performing gamely activities. - *It is well-known that the triggering point around youngsters is their reduced attention to a certain activity.* (Taylor, page 137, 1990).

Adding to this, YPs constitute a domain that also requires a constant grown-up surveillance to cope with troubleshooting elements that affect class rhythms and clearly denote an inherent motion inside YPs classes. In a widely range view, a list of YPs classroom features are encompassed as follows:

Most Common YPs Features

- | | |
|---|---|
| ✚ A crying child | ✚ A child who cries out for food |
| ✚ A child needs bathroom assistance | ✚ A child that wants to hug his/her teacher |
| ✚ A child hits one of his classmates | ✚ A child who wants to sleep |
| ✚ A child cries with no apparent reason | ✚ An accidental situation |
| ✚ A child calls out for mamma | ✚ A child that does not pay attention |
| ✚ A child wants to go outside the classroom | ✚ Children unstoppable chatting |
| | ✚ A child who wants a classmate's toy |

Undoubtedly, these factors belong to the YP's English class, these features are merely part of their natural process of development, "*the challenge is to find ways that help teachers to understand children progress and behavior thereby helping to evaluate their classroom practice and teaching methods*" (Galloway et al. 1998); however, the focal point on this matter is that the PSTs are clearly not ready to confront the elements mentioned above.

In first case, the PSTs do not possess a strengthened ratiocination and well-founded methodologies that encompass the understanding of the cognitive development of children. An example of this is viewed at the way that some newly formed teachers from LII comply in argumentations concerning the manner they proceed given the circumstances of dealing with the features presented above.

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The motion that sparked the query on demand consisted as follows: *How would a current LII graduate manage these circumstances? How would he/she react?*

LII graduates are considered as a sample most likely to control a classroom incident at first choice individually, but if the situation becomes uncontrollable they would seek for support from a nearby teacher or Department Coordinator.

When it comes to teacher's reactions there exist an unlimited variation of responses, but for matter of study such outcomes are narrowed into a negative and positive scope that would emerge depending on each teacher's proficiency and assertiveness. Some examples of *negative* outcomes are highlighted in the list that follows:

- PSTs would experience reluctance and hesitation into handling child assistance
- PSTs would experience reluctance and hesitation into decision-making for the planning of contents and activities
- PSTs would restrain themselves in a foreign language teaching scope without including parallel methodology from the career of *Profesorado en Parvularia*
- PSTs would suffer a lack of motivation on proceeding for further studies on YPs
- Due to the reduced knowledge concerning YPs, PSTs would fall onto a monotonous oscillation of methodologies
- PSTs would encounter a scenario that only creates inconformity in professional goals
- Because of poor knowledge about YPs, PSTs would implement some corrections that they measure as logical but are not assertive in the YP teaching dominion

The criteria shown above denote that LII does not provide an exhaustive literateness for counteracting YPs classroom incidents. PSTs manage a schematical vision proper for conducting themselves in settings such as freelancing, free English courses, teaching and translations/interpretation services, call center, etc that target a community of elementary, middle age and adult population.

However, given the circumstances that the PSTs posses an auspicious character towards teaching YPs -and not because LII enhances this peculiarity, a PST would react in such a congenial manner to assume a *positive* scheme observed in the following decisions:

- Searching for parallel texts containing pedagogical baggage regarding cognitive development of children.
- Embracing literature concerning Jean Piaget and Montessorian theories.
- Self encouragement for pursuing studies on methodologies for Young Pupils.
- Adopting techniques for children management.
- Developing a wider scope in the understanding of proficiency problems derived from poor psychomotor skills, hyper-activity and feebleminded issues such as slow learners, passive and introverted students.
- Setting up briefing and debriefing sessions with YPs classroom teachers (orientator) for the sake of sharing experiences concerning their work with children.
- Searching for innovation and the quest for attaining handiness to create supporting material such as muppets and visual aids.
- Self encouragement in developing innate skills for becoming proficient in techniques that involve body language and kinesthetic skills. Among these faculties it is recounted abilities for reciting, dancing, body language or gestures, manipulating muppets, clapping, chanting, and other classroom activities without depicting shyness or a sense of inhibitiveness.

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The features portrayed above delineate the traces of an eligible profile because they embrace talents and aptitudes liable to pre-schooler teaching domain where teachers are more embedded to acquit in a manner that involves a specific kind of behaviour which at a great extent encircle attitudes such as being festive, jovial, cheerful, jocund, vivacious and animated but not only for the sake of maintaining class rhythms but for encompassing the cognitive factors tattooed on children.

This kind of teachers get to comprehend and account the importance of decision-making during the stage of content planning not underestimating the inherent progression of psychomotor and intellectual skills on young pupils likewise taking into account other YPs classroom-related factors that most PSTs from LII are completely unaware of prior to immersing into YP population. Such factors which are also commonly stated as *stumbling barriers* become a constant struggle in classes which among other aspects are recounted as follows:

- ✚ Management of large classes
- ✚ Adaptation of contents and materials
- ✚ Selection of adequate resources
- ✚ Development of befitting activities
- ✚ Performance of childish games
- ✚ Attendance of disruptive students
- ✚ Design of child-oriented materials
- ✚ In-building creativity
- ✚ Illiterateness on early childhood education programs
- ✚ Authority, presence and dominion to impose discipline in large classes

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- ✚ Administration of papers that follow up academic and behavioral progression on students
- ✚ Unfamiliarity with running administrative duties that among others comprehend the arrangement of appointment with parents for evaluating children's ongoing progress, *Escuela de padres* and workshops entitled to parents

The precedent list of elements makes up a complex whole which comprises a variety of argumentations that confirm that the guiding instruction of teachers from LII follows an academic trend that does not entirely cement theory on early childhood education and does not bear an enhanced visualization on YP's treatment regarding their cognitive and age trajectory development.

Moreover, the Major confers a career profile with insubstantial instruction for fulfilling or conforming to the current standards dispensed among kindergarten classrooms. The Major in discussion does not delineate a product scheme envisioned to explicitly land in a finely manner on YP dominion. This statements are seconded by the fact that roughly 100 percent of PSTs from LII receive a scarcely instruction concerning certain issues encircled in the management of teaching pre-schoolers (YPs).

In an attempt of being more emphatic and as a matter of pointing out academic features that do not receive a compulsory enhancement, but rather occupy a lower standing while years of instruction within LII programs, the following aspects are presented as follows:

- Motivation to teach preschoolers
- Resourcefulness for constructing materials adapted to children and the enhancement of skills specially those fashioned in handicraft such as: cutting, pasting, drawing, muppet construction, creation of visual aids, etc.
- Background knowledge regarding preschooler teaching world
- Tactful resources for dealing with misbehavior

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- Techniques for lessening fear to teaching in large classes
- Guidance to strengthen assertiveness regarding negotiating discipline inside the classroom
- Development of abilities for outdoing attention span, activity switching and activity linking.

Aforementioned it has been stated that these items represent pertinent issues that are not taken into consideration during the five year instruction in LII. One further detail on this respect is that within the Major in discussion there exists only one explicit subject where early childhood education of English can be worked upon, that is the subject of *English Didactics*.

Unfortunately, this latter subject does not take on the issue of YPs dominion as its theory base since it bears methodologies and approaches that cannot be entirely applied on YP's. Furthermore, *English Didactics* presents a theoretical framework that does not promote an intensive programming of workshops and microteaching for the development of skill abilities regarding infants.

It also does not dispense a further reflexion on detailed psychopedagogical laws such as: range of vocabulary, degree of accuracy and flexibility- that learners of a language are able to control at different levels, basic concepts of children pedagogy, cognitive development, social and affective progression, moral outstretch and contextual design on children.

On the contrary, *English Didactics* approaches concerns centered into a vision encompassed in a general theory of grammar-base structures, task-base approaches, lesson planning, evaluation systems, teaching models, proficiency guidelines and a number of methodologies and approaches targeted to a kind of population ranging from primary, secondary, high school and higher studies that do not encircle features inherent to YPs underlying needs.

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Therefore, it is necessary to consider certain reflections for the enhancement of the LII curriculum within the boundaries of *English Didactics* as a first choice but also counting on curricula space from subjects like *English for Special Purposes* and *Elective course* margin; such motions are recounted as follows:

- It is imperative to foster the idea and harden the scope into a more emphatic visualization on the concern of unfolding contents linked-to-children within the already existent structured base of subjects, with the purpose of using the necessary and suitable methodologies and approaches for YPs *needs* and not the sole application of *borrowed* approaches taken from adult learning domain. This is supported by Montessorian theory that rejects on the notion that a child's language is the result of adult-like learning. This means that YP teaching of English dominion could be treated in an isolated platform embedded in a continuous systematization of subjects; for instance, *elective courses* which could be structured in an upwardly disposed scale order (a, b, c or 1, 2, 3).
- The LII responsible staff should exert for a curricular arrangement (which takes on approximately every five years), in such a way that a new array of courses emerge or the present-day subjects become empowered into a child-

linked vision. Such innovations would empower current subjects like *English for specific purposes (ESP)* and *English Didactics I, II, III*. And in further extent the *Elective course* margin, which certainly provides curricular space, could serve as the room for development of a panorama summoned in Elementary education.

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- The effort of undergoing a curricular enhancement in LII would bring beneficial input for conceiving a new and distinctive manner of teaching English. This endeavor would broaden teacher's mental scheme into demystifying the fact that working with children is an abrupt, absurd, intimidating, demotivating and break necking scenario that usually depicts the image of an afflicted, resourceless kindergarden teacher.
- The academic entity in charge of LII should include within its *needs analysis* contents relating to YPs confines. By doing so, LII would widespread its laboral expectations along with the prospect of newly formed teachers characterized in a new base of educators filled with the *know-how* knowledge regarding young pupils. This procedure would counteract instruction of precedent years in LII where there has never been a firm and stable focus targeted on infants' territory.
- A practical scheme derived from the curriculum modification on LII would produce initial steps into teaching the performance of flawless strategies executed throughout elementary schooling. The outcome of this burden will bring out on the proficiency and expertise on subject matters that involve hands-on training, microteaching, workshops for the development of handicraft abilities that include soft psychomotricity (painting, pasting, cutting, coloring, clay modelling, etc). And hard psychomotricity (jumping, running, walking, etc).

- The Foreign Language Department should strive for a new kind of seminars and workshops guided by local colleagues who possess a prominent extent of knowledge concerning state-of-the-art methodologies and approaches befitted for children. Furthermore, and given the resources, the FLD should settle down a strategy committed on the search of tracking down academic sponsors, (local or foreign) for the well-coming of personnel embodied as *Guiding tutors, Early-Childhood education advisors, Kindergarten book consultants, and in-field researchers.*

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- Schedule task-based courses oriented to the development of practical abilities and hidden talents above theoretical matters to create a degree of curiosity and enthusiasm among students by making people witness successful, dynamic, and state-of-the-art classes. The practicum scheme of these kind of courses would rely on enhancing peculiar skills such like: *speech skills, declamation, drawing skills, role play, clay shaping, muppet building, dancing skills, theatrical skills, chanting, handicrafts, tale reciting, microteaching sessions, peer evaluation, etc.*

The reason for empowering the LII curriculum on the subjects mentioned above is for creating a more informed teacher either theoretical as well as practical when dealing with young pupils. For instance, children-bounded contents could be embedded more straightforward in the curriculum design of at least one *English Didactics* out of the three offered in LII career. Another fact that could be attained is to grant, one full-course regarding Yps that could be located within the elective course margin of LII for reinforcing the teacher's attitude towards youngsters for overcoming hardships encircled in the pre-school sphere. The core of these reflections is to promote the specialization of students into teaching Pre-school pupils. It is worth to detail that the Ministry of Education allows curriculum reforms for every five-year period, which under these circumstances the Foreign Language Department could deploy a more emphatic framework centered in Pre-school English Teaching in the current *Didactic—Elective—ESP* courses. And finally, within a long-term compass attempts could be done for designing and eventually establishing a new career focused in the overall management of Pre-scholar population.

