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

TOPIC:
USE OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE
TEACHING

TEMA:
USO DE PLATAFORMAS DIGITALES EN LA ENSEÑANZA
DEL IDIOMA INGLÉS

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INFORME FINAL DE CURSO DE ESPECIALIZACIÓN
ADMINISTRACIÓN DE AMBIENTES VIRTUALES PARA LA ENSEÑANZA Y
APRENDIZAJE DE IDIOMAS EXTRANJEROS

IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE DEGREE OF:
BACHELOR OF ARTS IN ENGLISH WITH A MAJOR IN LANGUAGE
TEACHING

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l. Abstract

The Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador introduced a specialization course designed for students of the Bachelor's degree in English with an emphasis in teaching and the Bachelor´s degree in Modern Languages with an emphasis in French and English. They did it to provide the alternatives for undergraduate students to complete their graduation process. The authorities implemented a course to increase the knowledge and abilities of students about online teaching and learning. This report contains details on how the research team carried out activities and created material used during the course. Additionally, it shows the achievements they accomplished during the development of the specialization course and how they put into practice what they learned through online teaching and learning. Finally, the participants provide suggestions to improve teaching and learning quality at the Foreign Language Department of the School of Humanities.

Key words: E-learning, Virtual learning, Asynchronous and Synchronous Learning, Online Teaching, Flipped Learning

ll. Introduction

This report presents the activities carried out by undergraduate students as part of the graduation process. The scope of this document is to tell the activities students did, the achievements they got, the conclusions they drew, and recommendations to improve the implementation of the course for future students of the program. The whole specialization course consisted of three different modules called "Teaching English Online," "Technological Tools to Teach English Online," and "Design of Didactic Material for Virtual Environments." The modules provided a great deal of information about learning theories and learning management systems that allow students to create workgroups in Google Classroom and administer group assignments. In the module Design of Didactic Material for Virtual Environments, the students learned how to use platforms to create content and classes. Also, the work provides details about the activities the students carried out in module two about applications to learn English online. Also, the document gives a list of the achievement students got from taking the course on Administration of Virtual Environments for Teaching a Foreign Language. Finally, the students provide the conclusions they drew and the recommendations to the authorities of the Foreign Language Department.

Ill. Objectives

General Objective

- To analyze the educational experiences that undergraduate students of the English Teaching Major and the Modern Languages Major completed in their specialization to complete their graduation progress.

Specific Objectives

- To highlight the achievements that students developed during the specialization.
- To define the terms and principles associated with technological tools for educational purposes.
- To use technological tools to plan and develop synchronous class activities.
- To integrate tools to present content in a virtual environment.

IV. Theoretical Framework

The increasing use of technology in education is changing the way students learn. Tools of this kind provide a variety of ways to teach and change the traditional view of things. The report gives a clearer idea of changes in learning, learning management, and the benefits students get from learning English with a technological approach during the learning process.

E-learning

Commonly refers to using information technology, especially learning online networks. "E-Learning is learning utilizing electronic technologies to access educational curriculum outside of a traditional classroom. In most cases, it refers to a course, program or degree delivered completely online." (Jabar Al-Atabi & Al-Noori, 2020). E-learning is also known as online learning, virtual learning, distributed learning, network, and web-based learning. However, people can confuse m-learning with e-learning. Chitra & Raj, M. (2018) define m-learning as follows:

M-learning is an abbreviation of mobile learning, which means learning using portable devices that allow the students to learn in different environments and while on the move instead of being restricted to a classroom setting or tied to a desk. Mobile learning is, of course, by its electronic nature, a subset of e-learning, but it refers far more specifically to these handheld devices and portable technology. (p.11)

E-learning is an important term to consider in education. Nonetheless, not the only one to be considered when planning classes online.

Virtual Learning

People regard traditional education as a person in a teacher role giving a class. Likewise, virtual education is considered similar but in an online environment. Dr. Racheva V (2017) defines it as follows "Distance learning is conducted in a virtual learning environment with electronic study content designed for self-paced (asynchronous) or lives web-conferencing (synchronous) online teaching and tutoring." Nonetheless, it is necessary to point out that they are not necessarily the same thing.

Asynchronous and Synchronous Learning

According to Scheidener, Asynchronous learning allows you to learn on your schedule within a specific time frame. You can access and complete lectures, readings, homework, and other learning materials at any time during a one- or two-week period. (Scheidener J, 2021) On the other hand, Scheidener also explains synchronous learning as follows:

Synchronous learning means that although you will be learning from a distance, you will virtually attend a class session each week at the same time as your instructor and classmates. The class is a firm, weekly time commitment that students cannot change. Much like an on-campus class, you will have readings and assignments to complete outside of class time to help prepare you to participate in the discussion. This kind of preparation from students with an agenda set by the instructor ensures each class session is productive (Scheidener J, 2021, p.8)

Online Teaching

Virtual environments and online tools allow the teacher to create many different resources. Also, it permits students to interact with people in different ways than they do in a classroom, sometimes without the pressure of answering in front of classmates. "Virtual learning is designed to extend educational experiences. It does not try to replicate them. In virtual learning environments, students access resources and interact in ways they would not or could not in the physical classroom" (Meyer D, 2020.).

Flipped Learning

Flipped learning is a pedagogical approach in which direct instruction moves from the common learning space to the individual learning space. And the resulting group space is transformed into a dynamic, interactive learning environment where the educator guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter on the report Ph.D. Karim M. Armstrong. It is significant to mention that the methodology known as flipped learning can be considered asynchronous, but it is not online necessarily. "Flipped learning is a methodology that helps teachers prioritize active learning during class time by assigning students lecture materials and presentations to be viewed at home or outside of class." (Arfstrom, 2014). The internet provides us with varied ways to deliver learning; however, it is significant to know the tools teachers and students need to manage the content and how students will interact with teachers and classmates.

Learning Management Systems

Those systems are software or online platforms that allow teachers to create virtual spaces to design courses and provide material and feedback to students. They also give students a way to communicate with teachers and classmates to make learning functional in a virtual environment. Alias & Zainuddin, (2005) define them as follows:

A learning management system (LMS) is a software application or web-based technology used to plan, implement, and assess a specific learning process. Typically, a learning management system provides an instructor with a way to create and deliver content, monitor student participation, and assess student performance online. (p. 27-40)

Broadly, learning management systems can provide ways to deliver content and assign grades virtually, which is easier for teachers. Learners also have a chance to track their progress. Also, the software can motivate students because they allow the teacher to make visually appealing material.

Benefits of Educational Technology in the EFL

Enhancing Motivation in the Classroom

Students can be highly motivated as they can access different platforms with important information. "Because of that, many researchers argue that information technology can influence in-course person motivation to learn and can increase their interest and attention and ensure more involvement and engagement in the classroom" (Azmi, 2017 as cited in Warschauer, 1996; Reksten, 2000; Jay, 2006; Kassim et al, 2007; Ilter, 2009).

Autonomy and Centeredness

Technology in the classroom allows the teacher to be more than just a deliverer of content and also permits students to make decisions about their education as it is easy to find content and interact with others online. "Teachers are unexpected to be the only provider of knowledge in the classroom, in-course students need to play a new role that they need to take ownership of their learning and contribute to its construction and organization." (Azmi, 2017 as cited in Lee, C., 2005).

Interaction Communication

It is needless to say how easy and fascinating it can be to use technology to learn English as students are exposed to the language when they use technology. Also, they can find information online like YouTube video tutorials and chats to talk with a native speaker.

V. Activities

Module I

Academic Forum: in this activity, participants responded to professors´ questions concerning the learning theories in the classroom. The research team members answered questions about teaching learning situations where they had to apply the learning theories studied. Also, the students would give opinions about situations their classmates posted.

I**nfographics:** the students received information to create infographics on platforms like Genially. Learners also gathered information about different language management systems platforms and researched their features. Later on, they chose the most significant characteristics to create an infographic about the language management systems.

Google Classroom Management and Presentation Another crucial activity students carried out was creating a Google Classroom that students personalized according to their course level. Then, students selected a macro skill and a micro skill to create content. The students named the Google Classroom group. Also, they added a description of the course. After designing the group, students created division in the group to add different topics. Among the material students posted in the group are YouTube videos, pdf documents about idioms and phrasal verbs, a link to a website, an image, a podcast about English idioms, and a PowerPoint presentation about the simple present tense. Apart from that, they created two questions for the group: a multiple choice question and an answer question like a forum in the group. Students added assignments in Google Docs and a questionnaire using

Google classroom. Then, they added a message to their students, and subsequently, they added classmates as students and the module teacher. Then, the students would choose a topic in the group to give a class about it.

Module II The team members learned how to design infographics. Specifically, they created an infographic about technological tools in which the students presented the most important characteristics of online teaching platforms.

Flipgrid

The students filmed a video on Flipgrid explaining the use of the platform live worksheets in which they created worksheets to practice content. Also, the team members filmed themselves commenting on the censorship on social media and sharing them on the platform.

PowToon

Students in the team learned to use PowToon and the different tools to create an animated vide

Padlet

English classes are more interesting using platforms like Padlet. Team members used it to create a place in a class for students to give opinions about the course.

Puzzle

The team members learned how to modify videos to expand their knowledge about the topic. Hence, the team learned to embed questionnaires in a YouTube video using Edpuzzle. That way, the teamwork can use the enrollees' knowledge of technology to practice English.
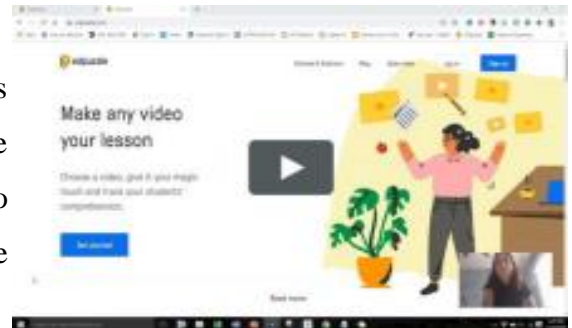
Group Presentation

The team members created a presentation about the idiom and created a lesson plan giving details about the learning experiences and how they would present the information. The team members used Flippity to give an unscramble word exercise to break the ice. Then, students would use Edpuzzle to ask about idioms.

M**odule III**

The team members created a presentation about the idiom and created a lesson plan giving details about the learning experiences and how they would present the information. The team members used Flippity to give an unscramble word exercise to break the ice. Then, students would use Edpuzzle to ask about idioms.

According to the Oxford dictionary, a podcast is a digital audio file that can be taken from the internet and played on a computer or a device that you can carry with you. Podcasts are audio recordings about any topic in the scope of an educational course; they are about specific topics students need to learn. They are helpful since students can listen to them instead of reading. The team created a podcast about the simple present tense to provide students with a way to learn from the material as they can listen to the podcast while they do other activities.

The team members learned how to create video classes with different tools. They developed an activity about the weather with the most significant purpose of learning to create animated videos. The video was about the weather and how to ask about it. They included crucial information and used funny images to catch students' attention. Also, the team members added a narration to explain the topic easily.

The students also learned how to create a presentation with different tools. They also learned how to add narration in presentations to provide a class experience even if they are learning in virtual environments.

Interactive Image

The team members also learned to increase students' interest in the different topics using the Genially to créate interactive images. The interactive pictures consisted of a collage of varied images of festivals. They would embed links that redirected students to other sites with funny and valuable information.

Google Site

It is significant to deliver content in different ways because the team members learned how to create a Google Site, and administer the content on the site by adding sections and pages. The team also learned to personalize the site and publish the site to give students access to more materials. They uploaded a lot of the content in the course and gave presentations about how to use it.

VI. Achievements

Overall, the team learned to use different platforms intended to enhance learning. Such enhancement consisted of displaying content through technology. Also, using varied techniques to get students interested in the material. Those achievements are expressed in a list as follows.

● The team learned how to use learning management systems to create virtual courses, design material, and provide it through sites such as Google Classroom.

● The team members applied theories of learning in the development of virtual courses.

● The team learned how to create infographics in Genially, and PowerPoint, among other platforms. Such infographics were about the use of different platforms to help teach online.

● The team members also learned how to provide students with non-traditional material such as podcasts. The material created by the team members consisted of an explanation of the Simple Present Tense. The audio was recorded with Audacity and delivered to the Soundcloud platform.

● Our teamwork learned how to create material based on the online tools studied in the course. The participants also learned to create interactive images with Genially, which gives us a way to share sites, videos, and notes with students.

● The team learned how to keep in touch with students through video platforms like Flipgrid. In that way, students could upload videos explaining our giving explanations about a topic. Hence, learning could still take place despite the distance.

● The team learned to create video presentations using tools like PowToon. That platform allowed us to give interesting explanations through a video. Also, it gave great chances to edit with different tools.

● Video calls are necessary for distance education. Because of that, the team learned how to

use tools like Google Classroom to give classes and presentations.

● Students also learned how to use Google Drive to store, share, and create documents.

VII. Conclusions

● Education professionals should learn about technological tools (PowToon, Google sites, Google Classroom, Edpuzzle, Genially, PowerPoint, tools to create video conferences and classes) because of their current importance. That way, teachers can provide better teaching and improve in-course people learning even under circumstances when students and teachers cannot share a physical classroom.

● Students can learn even in adverse conditions. However, it is crucial to know how to enhance students' learning. Technology provides a better chance to create content and improve communication. Therefore, it increased the possibilities to learn.

● People enrolled in a distance course can feel motivated by how teachers use technology in education. Therefore, it is significant to use video platforms like Flipgrid to allow students to practice without the pressure of talking in a classroom.

● Teachers can deliver content in different ways. Those ways include the most interesting. Nevertheless, it is also crucial to learn how to create material that students can use with no problems, for example, podcasts. Students can listen to podcasts when they are performing any activity. So, they are valuable material.

● Students are engaged in learning when they feel attracted to the content and how the teacher presents it.

VIII. Recommendations

As part of the graduation process, participants of the specialization course on the Administration of Virtual Environments for the Teaching and Learning of Foreign Languages provide some recommendations to the Foreign Language Department to improve the quality of future courses.

● Authorities of the Foreign Language Department should promote the use of more technological tools in the regular curriculum classes to enhance students' knowledge and abilities. Those tools can improve the quality of teaching and learn dramatically. (For example, add the use of platforms like Genially to promote the use of interactive material and also the creation of visually appealing content. Also, add the use of a learning management system to learn how to create virtual classrooms and solve problems or improve their teaching). The team members suggest UES authorities include in the course the use of technological tools designed for mobile devices like smartphones since most of the students' own devices of that kind. That would make it easier for students to improve their abilities in using technological tools to teach. Also, they could draw on those tools to enhance their abilities in the language they teach. For example, voice recognition tools would help teachers and students to improve pronunciation.

● Foreign Language Department should provide teachers in charge of giving course classes with rubrics that fit problems and situations. The rubric teachers use to evaluate students should suit their limitations. They should exclude from the rubric aspects beyond technological resources when recording the noises in a podcast because the students have no control over that. Resources available also need to be considered since in recording the voice

of participants, the students probably have no studio for a good quality record.

● The teamwork suggests that instructors of the department in charge of the course notify students enrolled in the specialization courses about all things required to graduate from the course. Teachers can include all requirements such as extra work or documents that students need to present in the course syllabus. That way, an in-course person can make decisions about their learning process more efficiently.

● The team members consider that the head of the foreign language department should not give extra work that can interfere with the labor in the specialization courses. Teachers in charge of teaching the courses need technological resources to teach. They also need to be untroubled with extra work when they are still grading because it is more likely to make a mistake, so they are more likely to interfere with the development of the courses and the students' performances.

● Team members suggest including in the scope of the course tools that differ a lot from the other ones included. Sometimes the applications can offer similar features for example PowToon to PowerPoint. PowToon offers similar but paid features that you can use in PowerPoint for free. For instance, you can use toons but are very limited; you can do the same, but for free in PowerPoint. Apart from that, you can record your voice in a presentation, but it is arduous to do it because you have to pay to have options that are for free in PowerPoint.

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X. Appendixes

https://drive.google.com/drive/my-drive

https://app.genial.ly/editor/6218312847f661001a29e538

https://sites.google.com/u/0/d/1SvcPakLH6ITzjGPiU8rUTQOtEIv

e6wM/p/15hMMjOhhtzpOy8LeH4XCyKTA9Ysd7m5j/preview

SYNCHRONOUS LEARNING

Why are LMS useful?

Allow remote access to classes and content in such a way that students can connect from any place (Google classroom, Moodle, teams)

Synchronous and asynchronous session. That allows students to be in class and access to the stored material. (Google classroom, Moodle {asynchronous}, teams)

They allow students and teachers to communicate through chat, which gives more chance to communicate effectively. (Google classroom, Moodle, teams)

Facilitate evaluation, assessment and progress tracking for students. (Google classroom, Moodle, teams)

They allow us to create discussion forums and surveys to enhance participation !(Moodle, teams, Google Classroom)

THEY SHOULD HAVE VOICE RECOGNITION TOOLS TO PRACTICE (GOOGLE CLASSROOM, MOODLE, TEAMS)

SPECIALIZED DICTIONARIES FOR LANGUAGE STUDENTS MUST BE INCLUDED IN THESE PLATFORMS (GOOGLE CLASSROOM, MOODLE, TEAMS)

Rafael Antonio Avilés Menjivar