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DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

TITLE:

THE IMPORTANCE OF USING LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (LMS) FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS IN ONLINE CLASSES

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FINAL REPORT OF THE SPECIALIZATION COURSE

MANAGEMENT OF VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE DEGREE OF:

BACHELOR OF ARTS IN MODERN LANGUAGES WITH A MAJOR IN FRENCH AND ENGLISH AND BACHELOR OF ARTS IN ENGLISH WITH A MAJOR IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

The current situation with the Coronavirus pandemic has caused a radical change in education all around the world, making schools and universities moving from in-person to remote or distance learning. In the new modality of distance education, teachers need to acquire new competences related to the digital world, so they can create a digital education environment that ensures learning. The research tries to identify the importance of using learning management systems (LMS) for students and teachers in online classes taking into account what the group learned in the specialization course about LMSs. To this end, the research question is the following: Why is Learning Management Important? The topic will focus on defining what LMSs are in the first place, then on how they work, what their core features and benefits are and will describe what LMS are more appropriate to use in online classes. The second part of this work contains a description of all the activities that have taken place throughout the three modules of the specialization course. It also contains some achievements listed by the course participants in terms of the apps, devices, computer programs, websites and resources covered during all of the 3 modules.

Keywords: *learning management system, teacher, virtual education, student,*

I. INTRODUCTION

Many jobs and professions have changed at a very fast pace in the last decades. This is especially true for language teaching and learning. In 2023, for instance, we have seen how not only technology, but also knowledge, teachers and learners have all suffered dramatical transformations in the way they interact with each other. Some people are even having open discussions on how artificial intelligence (AI) is already having an impact on learning environments, for tutors as well as for learners. It is certainly too soon to predict the outcome of this relationship between humans and machines, but one thing is for sure: Teaching will never be the same again. Thus, teachers nowadays face the need for acquiring the pedagogical knowledge and also the need for adapting those to the high demands of modern education in the times of information technologies.

In general, this report focuses on the importance of Learning Management Systems for students and teachers in online classes. Therefore, this report is, in a way, a memory-based narration of what was covered in the specialization course, the difficulties encountered and how they were overcome. It intends to provide some general information for future teachers of our faculty, both during their specialization as well as in everyday life as teachers, so they can profit from modern tools to boost their student's attention, to increase their participation and, consequently, improve their target language comprehension and application either for academic or for professional success.

In the following report, therefore, students include a general portrait of the contents covered and developed throughout the specialization course, which was

made of 3 modules of 8 weeks each. The course was given in both synchronous and asynchronous virtual sessions. In the first module, students learned about Online Language Teaching. synchronous and asynchronous teaching, Learning Management Systems and other educational products. During the follow-up modules, special attention was given to hands-on activities inspired on a constructivist-connectivist approach, that got students to know the technological tools for audio, image and video editing and implement those for educational purposes. Later on, students also had the opportunity to bring theory into practice by composing lesson plans that already involved the apps and programs used in class. Towards the end of the specialization course, a module was created in which students not only saw their knowledge expanded but they were also presented the challenge of designing special content for virtual environments such as podcasts planning, interactive image editing and developing their own Google site simulating the experience of creating a whole course syllabus, which was reduced in size for didactic and time management purposes. This report also includes an achievement list by the students, some recommendations to ease the path for the future specialization participants, as well as some observations that promote the continuity of this specialization program at the faculty.

II.   OBJECTIVES

2.1 GENERAL OBJECTIVE:

To evaluate the experience of the students taking the English Teaching Specialization Course and to emphasize the importance of implementing Learning Management Systems in the context of modern virtual environments in online foreign language classes.

2.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:

- To provide a general description of the Learning Management Systems (LMS) presented during the specializations Course, and to show their main features and functionalities.
- To evaluate from a somewhat subjective perspective, the experience, benefits and difficulties encountered while using those in the context of online teaching and learning.
- To make a few general recommendations to the authorities of the Department of Foreign Languages in order that future specialization students overcome some of the difficulties found during the present course.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The topic that we decided to study is *"The importance of using learning management systems (LMS) for students and teachers in online classes"*

Definition: What is a LMS?

According to Haan (2023), Learning Management Systems or LMS "...are software platforms designed to manage, distribute, and track employee training." They are often used in corporate settings to deliver online courses and track employee progress. However, they can also be used in other ways, such as to provide compliance training or customer education."

Why do people call them that?

The term for Learning Management Systems takes its meaning from the following concepts:

Learning: It is called this way because people use it to deliver educational courses through them.

Management: It is presented in this manner because it helps course creators to organize or administer their courses.

System: It is defined as such because an LMS is a computer system.

History of Learning Managements Systems

Learning management systems (LMS) have become increasingly attractive in the past few years, as technical innovations have redefined the teaching and learning process. The first LMS was developed in 1924 when **Sidney Pressey**

invented the first **'teaching machine'**. This resembled a typewriter with a window that could administer questions. One window was used to show the question and the other one to fill in the answer. As time went by, more inventions came up on the market. From that moment on, one invention after the other invention was born.

What is the purpose of Learning Management Systems (LMS)?

The purpose of Learning Management Systems is to optimize and improve learning processes through making it easier for both teachers and students, enabling them to engage in mobile or self-paced learning, monitoring and reporting on their progress, saving precious resources by eliminating manual work and tasks that are unnecessary.

How does a LMS work?

To ensure that online training courses can be successfully implemented and users are taught at optimal levels, a Learning Management System is applied. It configures users, creates engaging content for online courses and classes filled with eLearning.

The flexibility of the learning experience offered by these systems, which saves costs and time, is one of the advantages of the Learning Management System. In order to deliver a flexible learning experience, it is an excellent tool for providing centralized user experiences through helpful integration and the blended learning environment.

Learning Management System LMS for Education provides the following important benefits:

- They've put together educational content on a single platform.

- They make it easier for students to learn interactively.

- They make it possible for students to have more opportunities to take classes.

- They're providing students with a variety of processing techniques for their course material.

- It allows them to increase the number of students, without hiring more teachers.

- They monitor the progress of students with regard to completion and retention.

What are the Two Major Components of a Learning Management System?

    a) A suite of features which allow course creation, implementation, delivery and management.

    b) A user interface.

What is the Goal of an LMS?

While the general goal of a learning management system is to create, manage and monitor online training, when you collaborate with an online learning solution, the right way to go live is only after aligning your goals to avoid setbacks or create potential LMS disadvantages. Therefore, the aim of the Learning Management System is in line with the objectives of the organization and provides useful and relevant training.

Why are Learning Management Systems so important?

An LMS is an automated online learning solution that takes lengthy tasks that consume a lot of time if done manually, providing ease in designing, implementing, delivering, and managing the whole learning process.

Besides, an LMS enables educators to create new training courses, to easily update existing online courses, to enhance the learning experience by using engaging gamification features and e-learning content, add online exams, quizzes, and assignments to monitor learner progress, and certify users who successfully complete a course. Research has confirmed that LMSs increase the passion for learning and add to the skill set of a team.

Moreover, LMSs enable paperless learning, save time and money, and automate processes preventing the need to go through lengthy and redundant tasks every time a teacher has a new class, giving educators enough reasons to appreciate the importance of learning management.

Benefits of a Learning Management System

Ramakrishnan (2023) points out at least *the following 6 benefits of LMS for school teachers*:

It allows communication between student and teacher:

In a LMS teachers can create spaces for communications such as "chat, forums, blogs, wikis, social communities, the teacher can interact with these students".

Tracking data and progress*:*

The teacher can track the progress of each of his students in the courses in real time. With rich insights such as the ability to track progress in each subject, past records, and other extracurricular activity status, teachers can identify students who are lagging behind and provide them with supplemental resources to improve learning behaviors or performance.

Saving time and money:

It allows instant access to your administrators to update course content or add new materials and resources for students immediately. It can greatly reduce the number of hours that are spent on administrative tasks. You also avoid printing and shipping costs for teaching materials.

It keeps you organized:

It allows you to create different portals with different identities without additional installations and all web accesses working simultaneously. They can even apply different learning methods and techniques such as storytelling, blended learning, gamification, social learning with the help of the software.

Multimedia learning:

You can create multimedia courses with a very complete and practical methodology accompanied by the use of videos, images, audio and text, which serve as an excellent aid for online learning.

In a school, it allows parental access:

Parents can track students' progress in learning by accessing it in a simple way. Communication between students, teachers and parents is a great benefit that LMS provide.

Most Important LMSs in the present time:

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Nowadays, there exist many LMSs. Here are just a few of the best proprietary-free Learning Management Systems for use in online learning. We also mention the most important features to look for in them.

Moodle allows teachers to create content and administer it. Moodle tracks learner progress. Students and teachers interact via forums, wikis, chat functionality and group creation. Students access their learning content from any device at any time.

Edmodo is a safe and secure LMS platform for students to interact with their classmates and teachers. In this platform the teacher provides feedback on assessments. Edmodo allows access to the tool using different devices, with all

browser types, when and where users want. Edmodo allows teachers to create small groups for activities. The instructor can track students' progress. In words of Adams (2017): *"Edmodo is a basic social networking website that contains several features similar to Facebook". Among those, he mentions a "wall" or "timeline" and also the ability to send messages between the individuals.*

Schoology allows you to record audios, videos and share files or documents regardless of whether they are heavy. Schoology allows teachers to create profiles for each subject, organize discussions and work groups, schedule a synchronized calendar with all students. The teacher can save and share materials by saving them to resources. This LMS platform allows instructors to create tasks (tests).

Google Classroom is a set of online tools that allows teachers to create lessons, collect student work, grade, and return graded papers. Google Classroom is a learning management system (LMS) that aims to simplify creating, distributing, and grading assignments and engaging students in learning online or remotely''. (*Google classroom: A teacher's guide* ,2022).

What other research papers say about Learning Management Systems

LMS and their effects on macro skills listening and speaking

In a study conducted by Terzioğlu, Y., & Kurt, M. (2022), 50 participants in the 10th grade were selected as part of the sample of a group taking English as a foreign language (EFL). Most of them considered to have already attained the CEFR B1 level. The sample was divided into an experimental group consisting of 11 boys and 14 girls that would use the Edmodo LMS, while the remaining 25 students would be the control group. The experiment consisted in finding out whether and how LMS impact the scores of the experimental group. In order to do it, the students were given interview forms which were categorized into the following aspects: **1. learning outside the classroom, 2. self-confidence in listening and speaking skills, 3. motivation to learn English as a foreign language, 4. amount of interaction and 5. the challenges of using LMSs.**

This were the interview results:

1. **Learning beyond classroom**

Although the participants affirmed no prior experience on LMS, they ($N = 25$, 19%) thought online activities were interesting in general. They also manifested having been able to access the online materials with ease ($N = 10$, 8%). and they pointed out that submitting their homeworks using Edmodo was faster ($N = 15$, 11%). Other interviewees said that this experiment increased their feeling of independence ($N = 19$, 14%) and that they appreciated immediate feedback by the instructors ($N = 18$, 13%), as quoted by some participants:

P5: "I Received Immediate Feedback on Edmodo"

Participant 5, moreover, said her answers had been graded instantly on **Edmodo,** which uses various types of questions: true or false, multiple-choice, and matching, to name a few. Other participants, like P12, emphasized that being graded timefully allowed her to study next week's contents beforehand. P21 that online activities prepared him for face-to-face lessons at school.

Other participants of the experimental group underlined the importance of the notification systems of **Edmodo** by saying: *"I sometimes forget to do my homework and that makes my teacher upset but the online calendar on Edmodo reminds me of the deadlines for submitting my homework. So, I will never forget to turn in my homework."* A similar response was given by Participant 25: who claims that the **online calendar** kept reminding her homework and that she was happy to please the teacher by submitting her assignment before the due date.

2. **Self-confidence in listening and speaking skills**

31% of the 25 English learners claimed their listening skill experienced improvement due to online activities. Moreover 66% of them responded that they felt more motivated to speak English freely and 26% of the students also were now in the position to understand native speakers, although these usually speak faster or even mumbling. The following are just some of the **textual responses** of the participants:

*P10: "At first, I was a bit shy to record my voice with **Voki** and **Vocaroo** and share it with my teacher and peers. Afterwards, it became an easy task for me because we could practice how to speak fluently on **Google Meet** with the help of our English teacher."*

P6: "I felt that my self-confidence in speaking has increased through a variety of online activities."

Participant 10 confessed that despite sharing his voice recordings with both the teacher and peers worried him, he gained confidence later by speaking freely. Another student (P6) expressed that online activities had positive effects on her speaking skill.

P12: ". . . I listened to a variety of English accents while I was watching the vodcasts on BBC news."

P14: "I can understand what native speakers say in English. I'm proud of myself."

P17: "Thanks to the online sessions on Google Meet and Web 2.0 tools, I can now speak fluently."

Some of the students, like participant number 12, even added that being given the opportunity to listen to different accents in English encouraged him to repeat the listening practices. Similar to that participant, number 14 said that the sole interaction with other accents improved his ability to understand native speakers. Another participant's opinion (P17) was that thanks to working with LMSs, he has also increased his fluency while speaking.

3. Motivation

Regarding the aspect of effects on students' motivation can be seen with the help of Figure 8 of the study. The top four tools that were rated as prominent during the incorporation of blended mode were **Kahoot** ($N = 25$, 14%), **Google Meet** live

interaction ($N = 24$, 13%), **BBC podcasts** ($N = 25$, 13%), and **lyrics training** ($N = 22$, 12%). It can be noted from the students' comments ($N = 25$, 31%) that **Edmodo** encouraged them to complete online listening tasks.
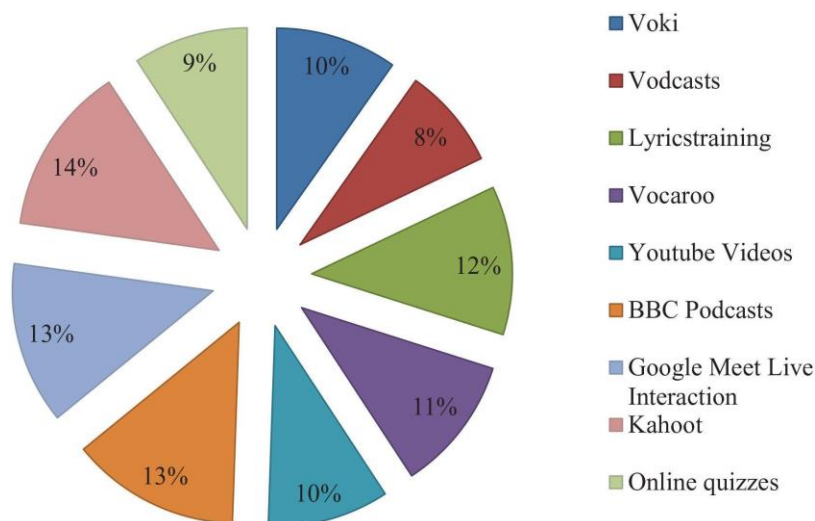

Figure 8: The most motivating online activities

Some of the comments of the participants stand out the fact that Using Kahoot created an atmosphere of competition, since everyone wanted to finish first on the leaderboards. Other students, like P3 appreciated the fact that they were able to do more listening activities online at home.

In P11's opinion, **Kahoot** turned out to be a learning tool that kept her engaged. She recalled that competing with peers online pushed her to study more at home, in order to show off her language skills to gain more points, which supports the theory that Kahoot acts as an incentive to master learning English.

4. **Interaction:**

Participants (8) commented that the usage of LMS helped them to build instructor-learner rapport, since students felt less intimidated to speak in English with

their groups and later with the teacher, what served as sort of a preparation with a more relaxed atmosphere group in which one can make mistakes without the fear of being corrected in front of the whole class. Despite that, the top three frequent answers given show that students (44% of 25) were helping each other, decreasing the workload and collaborating also with the teacher.

These are some of the comments:

P7: "Each student had a responsibility in our group and I enjoyed working with my peers."

P19: "Even though we live in remote cities, I had the chance to discuss the instructions in English online with my classmates without any difficulty."

Some of the participants also cherished the fact of being able to drop the barrier of distance. They also said that they had felt supported by their teacher who answered via Edmodo and also per E-Mail, that was of particular help when not understanding a given task.

Besides that, participant number 23 remarked on students working in online teams to complete the tasks at hand, as they had the teacher for quick consultations and they felt free to communicate their ideas and difficulties.

5. Challenges of blended mode

Despite most of the benefits cited above, it may be concluded from the students' interviews that certain difficulties arose. For example, in the same study, 7% encountered **technical issues**, other received **interrupting notifications** ($N = 6$, 7%), or they reported also limited memory space on their cell phones ($N = 3$, 4%):

P15: "I was distracted at times when the mobile notifications came from other applications so I had to turn off the sound."

6. The need for better conditions to implement e-technologies at universities:

Another important study *by* Yıldız Terzioğlu and Mustafa Kurt (2022) analyzes the question on how to elevate the Speaking Fluency Listening Skill in English Language Learners' using by means of Learning Management Systems and they have drawn conclusions observing that the new educational tools demand transformations of the teacher-student (T-S) interaction, explaining that E-learning makes learners more autonomous and modifies the role of a nowadays educators.

For instance, the teacher becomes indispensable during the phases of planning, implementing and supporting, correcting and adapting or changing the way content is delivered to satisfy the educational needs. The study considers that the role of an instructor becomes more difficult: for he/she now bears the responsibility for the creation, development, incorporation and the coordination of the materials shared with the learners, not to mention their consultation and corrections. The previous presupposes that tutors have or "should have" the capacity and pedagogical know-how to merge new technologies with the traditional ones.

According to the study, teachers are expected to work and to pay closer attention to students' autonomy and independence.

1. The right to have one's own opinion in doing tasks and assignments; 2. counseling, seeking agreement between the teacher and students; 3. pedagogical communication on the basis of parity and tolerance and voluntary participation.

Conditions for success of LMSs according to other studies:

Yıldız Terzioğlu and Mustafa Kurt (2022) believe that the application of the approach will be effective if certain pedagogical conditions are created and maintained: They mention the following:

As a first condition, priority must be given to the motivation of both educators and students to interact and collaborate with each other voluntarily. Without establishing a courteous relationship with the target group and within the group at a micro or informal level, it is unlikely to expect any satisfying results by the teachers. This was also seen during the modules, as some students were reluctant to participate even after being prompted friendly by the teacher.

The study also remarks the importance of treating the group but also paying attention to an individual approach to every participant, to foster the basis of the participative approach. As the last condition, they recommend that the education process be technologized at a macro university level, as this would make teachers incorporate web-based tools in every-day teaching and learning practices.

IV. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

4.1 Module 1 "Online Foreign Languages Teaching"

The first Module of the Specialization Course had a duration of 8 Weeks/ 2 Months. This module was based on the fundamentals of online education and its application on the English Language Teaching; using a LMS (Learning Management System) to set up a virtual classroom and develop asynchronous activities, for instance Moodle; and use platforms like teams or Meet for synchronous activities.

Besides, provide the experience of creating virtual classrooms in Learning Management Systems available on the internet.

First week.

The Professor gave students information about learning theories. The Professor showed a video about learning theories by Tony Bates with the aim of having a small reflection after the video. In this video Tony Bates explains the following: Why is theory important? It explains the different theories of learning: Objectivism, Cognitivism: Constructivism, Connectivism. It also defines methods or modalities of teaching, for instance, campus-focused or online-focused.

The professor showed students another video about the different theories of learning. This time about cognitivism, connectivism, behaviorism and constructivism. Then, she divided students into groups with a different topic to discuss. Finally, students show important aspects of the theory assigned.

Second week

The Teacher showed a presentation about **Synchronous** & **Asynchronous** teaching and explained the topic. She showed a video about Synchronous & Asynchronous learning. After watching the video. The students did collaborative work. The class was divided into groups, assigned some groups the topic Synchronous and others the topic Asynchronous. Finally, students explained what they discussed in groups.

This week students had the first evaluation (Discussion forum). A small discussion about a question that the teacher has formulated for students. Do you

think that the same learning is generated in an online teaching modality as in a face-to-face teaching modality? With the objective: To engage in meaningful and extended discussion with peers, taking into account the learning theories studied in class and their application to Online Foreign Language Learning.

Third week

The instructor showed the class a video about what a **LMS** is, and also about what its most important features are. Later, she held a presentation providing more details about LMSs. The students practiced on **Moodle** (by **milaulas.com**). The teacher showed students how to register for the platform. She created three groups and one person from the group was chosen as the leader. The students thought of a topic, downloaded an image from **Pixabay**, prepared documents on it, obtained a video from YouTube (got the URL), and, finally, they obtained the URL on the site and uploaded it to **Milaulas**.

Fourth week

The learners continued uploading content in **milaulas.com**. At the end, each group showed It to the class.

In this week, the learners elaborated an **infographic** to identify the features of the selected platforms. They researched information about 5 different online platforms. 3 of them were LMS's (Learning Management Systems), whose features the students had to select, to analyze and to present.

Fifth week

The instructor shared a video with information about how to organize a Google Classroom. After that, with the objective to practice in this LMS platform, the class was divided into groups in Google Classroom. Each group created an outline for a class following the guidelines that the teacher said. Students were told to think of a topic, create an online forum, share a video in it, and finally ask students to do a homework assignment and add some students to class. In addition to that, the teacher shared information with students about how to create a quiz in the classroom.

Sixth week

This time, the students had an evaluated activity, in which they had to create a **lesson plan** for a virtual class in Google Classroom. In this evaluation students managed activities and resources from a Classroom, assigned Google Meet for synchronous classes and worked in teams to design virtual learning environments. At the end, students presented their lesson plan and taught their lesson in front of the teacher and the other classmates, as well.

Seventh week

The session of the sixth week was all about platforms for **video conference platforms** such as **Zoom**, **Google Meet** and **Microsoft Teams**. The teacher showed some videos about the main features and advantages of those, with which the students practiced in class, too.

Eighth week

This time, the students used Google Meet and other web-based tools to present their class. They also had their last evaluation, in which they had to plan a short class to be conducted through Google Meet. Besides, the learners used some tools and resources from the Web in order to have a dynamic class, participating actively in a synchronous class. This enriched them with a meaningful learning experience that also allowed them to work collaboratively.

4.2 Module 2: "Educational Applications to learn a Foreign Language"

The second Module of the Specialization Course had a duration of 8 weeks and it was held in a rich and well-combined format of synchronous and asynchronous activities.

The module was intended and devoted to provide the students with the fundamentals of learning theories as well as to get them familiar with the technological tools used in virtual classes environments.

It is important to mention that special attention was given to those programs and applications that are free of charge or, at least, usable in the most elementary features.

These are the **main technological tools** that the students learned how to use during the **second module**:

What are these tools or apps used for? Here is a short description of them.

Edpuzzle is an online technological tool which allows teachers to upload and to edit their own videos to create interactive tests that are embedded into the videos. In this way, students have the opportunity to test their attention, providing them with immediate feedback, and boosting their knowledge. Besides, it is possible to use videos from other video hosts, such as Youtube, Vimeo, and the like.

Another useful feature of this online tool is that teachers can add tables and images that can be completed and answered by the students. Educators can later on view the statistics on how well the students did.

Canva is an online-based graphic design tool used for editing photographs and for creating educational projects, such as collages, infographics, tables and much more.

Besides working with images and pictures, Canva also allows embedding videos to it and decorating those with interactive stickers or other animations. With Canva you can create pages just as you would do in better-known programs, such as PowerPoint.

 Flipgrid (later Flip)

Flip is a modern tool that is related to the concept of **remote learning**. Mainly, Flip is used to foster or to extend classroom discussions by assigning open-ended questions to the students. Students can reply to that question by posting a video response on the assigned topic, as a form of reflection. Many people use it also to summarize or to review movies, games or even tv shows.

Flippity is an online tool with free access which allows educators and learners to turn their Google spreadsheets into fun and interactive quizzes such as flash cards, or deck games. The website itself offers free, customizable spreadsheets that can be downloaded, copied and also edited. This is ideal for trivia

games, contests and so on. The only downside is that, being a free resource, Flippity will not save the progress or the results of the students in a remote activity. However, it still can be programmed to send an alert to the teacher when it's being modified. Otherwise, teachers will have to request screenshots from their students to track their progress.

 One of the most interesting and fun online tools is **Liveworksheets**. This web-based tool offers a platform where teachers can create interactive tests or quizzes that can be graded and recorded automatically. Liveworksheets works mainly with spreadsheets but one can use word files, excel files, and even images. Regarding the type of questions that are supported are: multiple choice, drag and drop, matching, selecting. The commands are very intuitive and even teachers with no prior experience can easily find their way.

Besides, despite offering many subscription plans, you can still use it for free and profit from most of their features.

Nearpod   is another online software for educational purposes allowing teachers to make interactive lessons. With Nearpod, you can create interactive presentations that can be turned into quizzes that contain a wide range of resources, such as polls, videos, trivias, open questions, matching and drawing activities. Another important feature is that students can access the teacher's presentations

using a code, which reinforces the website security and provides teachers with a powerful formative assessment instrument. Nearpod also has different subscription plans, but it can be used for free, too.

Classroomscreen is an online-based software that includes a package of sub-tools or gadgets, being the most important of those the interactive background, which is a sort of blackboard where students can see not only a background image, but also other useful tools like a clock, activity timer, drawing tools, a randomizer that promotes students participation. Besides, Classroomscreen also includes other functions like drawings, group creator, a traffic light that indicates students whose time it is or to control the teacher's activity sequences. It can be used for free. Then only downside is that it does not allow to store students lists for later usage.

Padlet can be described, in simple words, as a bulletin board. However, this program offers other attractive features. For example, students can share their opinions, post a text response, comment on images, animated gifs, and videos, interact with classmates, collaborate with an interesting link, and pretty much anything in digital format. It is also well-known for its high customization palette. Padlet can be accessed using a free account.

 Kahoot: a good example of gamification

Kahoot is a web-based tool that presents questions in the form of an online game in which students can take part individually or as a part of a group. Instructors or teachers create a quiz using multiple-choice questions and project them in front of the class. Any student can access the game with a code provided by the teacher.

In every round of questions, Kahoot shows who is taking the lead, depending not only on the right answer, but also on how fast they respond to the questions. Something fun about Kahoot is that the questions cannot only contain text, but also images, sound and video. Some of the most advanced features, nonetheless, can only be accessed using a premium account, but, in general, the free version will suffice to catch students' attention and will keep them interacting with the learning content.

Powtoon is probably the most powerful software for video animation used in eLearning environments. Powtoon counts on a wide range of subprograms to create video stories, because it lets users with no experience in editing the chance to add characters, images, music and voice overs to every scene. The animations and gadgets it uses provide a very vivid experience. One must say, however, that the free version allows only to create up to 3-minute videos only. Despite that, it is totally worth it.

Module 2: "Educational Applications For Learning a Foreign Language" - (8 weeks)

First Week

During the first week of the second module, students participated in an interactive group activity by drawing a robot and creating a vocabulary list related to the general topic "technology". Afterwards, there was a fun contest to see who had found the most of them. This served as an introduction by the teacher on the significance of computers, internet and their applications in educational technology, providing a short outline of their history in recent years and the most important criteria on how to select the best tools and activities for online teaching based on the learning objectives, for instance to promote interaction or discussion amongst students, to test students' knowledge, or for formal evaluation. This session ended with an introduction to the **TPACK** Model suggested by Mishra & Koehler (2006), which, in short terms, is a model that combines technological knowledge, content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge with the aim for enhancing the learning experience. Students had to create a presentation on that model using Google Slides and present it to their classmates.

Second Week

During the class of week 2 of activities, the students went on to examine a new concept called **"Gamification". They also learnt about the usage of technological tools for education purposes and met some of the same, such as Flipgrid** (nowadays Flip). The teacher taught the students by giving a step-by-step Flipgrid tutorial. Later, learners recorded short videos giving their opinion on the

advantages and disadvantages on the topic "Social Media" and presented those videos to the entire class. By the end of the week, students had an individual research project, which consisted in describing at least 4 educational applications and presenting those in the format of an infographic chart using the software Canva.

Third Week

As part of a follow-up, students were presented with another important technological tool, namely "Liveworksheets". During the class, the teacher guided the students through the most relevant features of "**Liveworksheets**" from creating a quiz in general culture, through creating an answer sheet, converting word files to pdf files and finally creating an account and uploading content to convert it to interactive questions. Later, the students took turns playing themselves with the tool and were able to create their own test and to show it in front of the class.

Fourth Week

At the beginning of the week, the students were introduced to the usage of Edpuzzle by watching a video about learning theories, such as behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism, and the most recent "connectivism". After that, students proceed to take a quiz on **Edpuzzle** on the above-mentioned topic. Later, students watched videos to learn more in depth how to insert images and quizzes into a video themselves using **Edpuzzle.** They also had their classmates take their chances answering other groups' quizzes. As part of the second evaluation, students received the task of developing a questionnaire on Liveworksheets and to record a 3-minute video tutorial using the program "Flip". The combination of those tools gave the

students the opportunity to learn by doing, increasing their confidence and fostering autonomous learning.

Fifth Week

The session started with the teacher presenting a whole new technological tool which was "Powtoon". With this tool the teacher taught the participants how to turn PowerPoint or Google slides into interactive videos, by adding text, images, animation, music, and also voice overs to them. Students were required to collaborate in groups by making some research of what Chat GPT is about, features advantages and disadvantages. At the end of the class, the outcome of the research was a 3-minute **Powtoon** video and also a short reflection on the difficulties encountered by the learners during the making process.

Sixth Week

In this session, the teacher taught the students how to use two different virtual tools: Classroomscreen and Padlet. With the first one, the learners were invited to test Classroomscreen by drawing animals individually and then guessing what other classmates had drawn. Aside from that, participants researched and had a test phase, as they had to work in groups to choose the most important features of **Classroomscreen** and to share those on an interactive pin wall named **Padlet**. Students reflected and later shared their comments in the plenum on what their own favorite feature was using sticky notes on other's art works. At the end of the week, as the 3rd evaluation, students were responsible for the creation of a 3-minute video on the advantages of technological tools in online classes, all of that using **Powtoon**.

Seventh Week

In the first half of the online session, the instructor presented a new online virtual program called "**Flippity**". Students downloaded a free worksheet and, working individually, they modified it to create a trivia game with general culture questions involving educational areas such as geography, literature, sports and so on. Afterwards, students were invited to "play" along and to direct their games. The main goal of the activity rested upon getting to know how the tech skills necessary and to apply those to learning games in virtual environments. In the second part of the session, watching short videos and listening to the in-class instructor's explanations, students learned about another tool called "**Nearpod**". At the end of the class, the students showed their interactive quizzes created with the program mentioned above. Students were also given the final instructions for the **4th evaluated activity** which consisted in the elaboration of a lesson plan. The students had to select a topic in groups and work together to give a 6-minute class and use at least one specific tool of all the ones learned throughout the module. To introduce some variation, students were allowed to use all the tools of their choice. However, they had to use one mandatorily assigned by the teacher using random selection tools. The groups were randomly assigned technological tools, being **Kahoot**, **Edpuzzle**, **Nearpod**, **Kahoot** and **Padlet,** the choices at hand.

Eighth Week

The last Saturday of the second module, was devoted to the implementation of technological tools studied and gone over during the whole module. Students took turns in groups and taught a 6-minute class. All students participated and shared their thoughts on their teaching experience in a virtual classroom environment using the diverse tools and resources.

4.3 Module 3: "Design of Didactic Materials for Virtual Environments"

The **third module** of the specialization course had a duration of 8 weeks/ 2 months. This module was based on the use of four web tools for the design of educational materials. For instance, **Audacity**, **Genially**, **SoundCloud** and **Google presentations**.

The following are some of the tools that were used to create didactic materials for virtual environments. These were studied during **Module III.**

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First week

During the first week in this module, the teacher gave the students information of the activities that were going to be carried out in the module and went over the evaluation system. The teacher also introduced the students to the fundamentals of using multimedia Resources in a virtual Learning Environment. In addition, the teacher showed students some information and videos about types of multimedia resources.

Second week

The teacher held a presentation about current and most common **audio formats**, and then asked the students to record audio using their own smartphones. She defined and provided important criteria on what to consider when recording an audio material, such as audience type, age and social background of listeners, on the purpose, duration and format of the content, among others. The teacher explained the definition of a **podcast** and she shared her experience on how to select background music for the audios. The teacher, in addition, showed some tutorial videos on how to create a podcast using a MP3 online audio converter, the software called **Audacity** and the online streaming platform **SoundCloud**. After watching the videos and putting what the teacher had taught into practice, the students made their own 2 minute podcast using the tools mentioned above.

In that week, the participants started to design teaching materials for their own students. That material consisted in recording a podcast on the basis of the subtopic chosen by the students and approved by the teacher.

Third week

The teacher explained the significance of the use of images in education. Thus, she showed important pieces of advice to create those images. For example, she taught the students the anatomy of a digital Image and other basic concepts of them. Also, the teacher presented other key concepts like what **resolution** is and some common image file formats. She continued to show the classmates how to save an image with transparency and change its size, as well. At the end of the session, she also shared some websites so the students were able to download

stock or common license images and to add visual effects to photos editing them with an online program called "**Pizap**"

The teacher presented a tutorial on how to create an interactive image from scratch or using templates on **Genially**. In order to practice, she asked every student to make an interactive image during the class.

As the second evaluation, participants of the specialization course had to create an interactive image using the tool Genially. The motive for the interactive had to be related to the last podcast, but not to repeat it, rather as a follow-up to the subtopic.

Fourth week

Always related to content design, the teacher introduced the students to colors and remarked the importance of color theory, both as a resource to catch the beholder's attention, as well as the psychological effect on other people's mood. First, the class watched a video about the basics of color theory. Then everyone had a moment to create a slide applying the recently studied concepts, adding text, images and colors to design a formal, well-balanced and impactful presentation.

During this week, the class had their **third evaluation**, it was a written report on the specialization including the 3 Modules (first draft)

Fifth week

The teacher guided the students through the **fundamentals of presentation creation**. As part of the practical training, working in groups, the learners created a presentation including text, images and also a YouTube video related to the topic

that every group had chosen. Each of them added a collage and video on our site. Then, students had to show and comment on their creations in front of the class.

Sixth Week

The teacher taught the students how to create a **Google site**. Afterwards, they had the opportunity to make their own one. Students practiced on the Google site, added information and some images to it, always making sure the resources were related to the subtopic that every member of the working trios had chosen.

Seventh week

This week, we discussed the topic of **making videos**. The teacher provided the learners with the **fundamentals of creating a video**, by means of tutorials. The instructor also went over **video editing programs**. Students were taught how to use our cell phones for video recording. Later, the teacher presented video tutorials to introduce a new video editing tool called *OpenShot*, which served the students for their video creation practice activity. During this week, too, the students had the fourth evaluation, which consisted in the production of an educational video using **OpenShot**.

Eighth week

During this week the participants of the specialization course had their **fifth evaluation**. They had to present the final version of their written report on the specialization course including the 3 Modules.

This week, future teachers had their integrative task, which requires them to create a **Google site** linked to Google Classroom and their **live defense**.

V.   ACHIEVEMENTS

The following are some of the most important achievements experienced during the specialization course:

- The team learned to design virtual classes in **Google Classroom**, how to post forums, share videos, give homework assignments and add some new students to a class.
- The participants of the specialization course also learned to create quizzes assignments in Classroom by completing and submitting a **Google Forms** quiz.
- The students learned how to add people and upload information to M**oodle (milaulas.com) and also how to** upload images and documents, as well as a URL of a video or a web site.
- The team learned to use technological tools to plan and develop synchronous class activities using all of the following technological tools: **Edpuzzle, Flipgrid, Flippity, Liveworksheets, Nearpod, Padlet, Kahoot, Classroomscreen, and Powtoon**.
- The students acquired basic knowledge of image and photo editing using free software like Pizap, Pixabay and Pexels, which are incredible visual resources for learners, as they offer an important impulse for gamification, creativity and collaborative work in class.
- The students learned how to use tools for the design of didactic materials for the teaching-learning of foreign languages in virtual learning environments. such as: podcasts (making use of daily routine devices like computers, tablets or even smartphones to record), online presentations (Using Google Slides,

PowerPoint, Powtoon), interactive images (with Genially), videos (Powtoon, Edpuzzle) and many more.

- The learners learned how to create a Google Site linked to the Google Classroom Platform.

VI.   CONCLUSIONS

During the making of the theoretical framework, we discovered many aspects regarding the learning management systems, their main features, advantages and challenges that they pose in the new information technologies era.   We have seen that E-learning involves a certain amount of difficulties that involve technical issues like poor internet connections, outdated or low-capability devices or even uncertainty in the initial phases experimenting with new technologies, what happens to teachers and students as well. We have also gone through some of the most important challenges that the usage of LMSs represent for teachers, such as being responsible for the creation of didactic materials, their administration, testing and providing timely feedback, and much more. However, in the light of the results, we cannot but notice how students have improved their performance in various areas involving not only their listening and speaking fluency, but also their overall self confidence level as well as building rapport with their teachers.

In preparing this report, we therefore cannot cease to emphasize the importance of usage of LMSs in this type of specialization, but we advocate for the ideal that every teacher, even interdisciplinary wise, should receive schooling in this type of technologies, as they help to have students engaged and informed of the activities needed in their courses. For that reason, the faculty authorities should continue and support these specialization courses involving educational technologies.

Finally, it must be added that students could relate to most of the findings cited in both studies. A big thank you must be given to teacher MEVA Sey Danisia Najarro for her constant support and knowledgeable instruction and supervision throughout the course, which not only serve as testimony of her high quality teacher, but also provide for a role model for future teachers.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Having taken part in this specialization course, our group would like to make the following recommendations:

To the authorities of the Language Department:

1. This specialization course has been a very enriching experience for both the students of the Bachelor of Arts in English with a Major in Language Teaching and also for the Bachelor of Arts in Modern Languages with a Major in French and English as they are directly related to teaching. We recognize that distance learning offers many opportunities for students of the UES across the country and that it has served well during and after the COVID-19 era, but it was seen how classmates of slender means could not use many of the programs or apps due to poor internet connection in their areas at home or due to low-capability equipment, such as phones and tablets, reducing thus their participation and affecting their learning experience. For this reason, it would be advisable to push for the creation of a new (or recovery of the old) language laboratory which was located in the central library facilities, where English teachers used to take their students for special listening and

pronunciation instruction. Online education should never replace but rather be a complement of onsite education.

2. Our group was made out of 3 students, one of which belongs to the Major in French and English. In comparison to the English Teaching students, many students of French only took 2 courses in didactics: General Didactics and one in French Didactics, which results, in our opinion, in a disbalance in both essential theoretical and practical fields. I often felt lacking in some areas, especially during the lesson planning process, not to mention the fact that French graduates cannot access the career ladder as a teacher directly as the number of credit units won't meet the minimum required by MINED. It would be recommendable, therefore, to modify the syllabus in years to come, including (why not?) also a reinforcement subject in statistics, as a follow-up for the Research Seminar course.

To the authorities in charge of the specialization course:

3. Although the teacher made a great effort to keep the participants of the group engaged with various creative and interactive activities during the class, a time lapse of 4 hours is always challenging for students, as attention in a seating position decreases considerably when compared to onsite classes. Therefore, it would be recommendable to divide the number of sessions into, for instance, 2 sessions a week of 2 hour-class, either in the evening or even 2 on Saturdays and the remaining 2 on Sundays, following the principle of "sometimes, less is more".

4. It was observed that while comparing the pace of the 3 modules of the specialization course, module 3 was increasingly rapid and of special difficulty, as the learning material condenses a lot in the second half of the module, given the requirement of the **research project,** which is time-consuming in itself and it, therefore, interferes with the other evaluated activities of the specialization course. On the other hand, we understand the need for research projects, since they promote critical thinking and an inquiring spirit of the future teachers. However, we consider that the written report should be better performed if this were introduced ideally at the very beginning of the course, or if the guidelines for it were given at the beginning of the second module at the latest. Including some appointments for follow-up on the specialization course syllabus would also be of great help.

5. Finally, and despite some technical inconveniences from our part, we would like to recommend the authorities to ensure and encourage the continuity of this specialization in administration of virtual environments, since we are sure that all the participants have not only had a great time learning from a charismatic, always friendly and, above all things, such knowledgeable instructor, but they have also acquired important experiences with technological tools. This will serve —without a doubt— the students in their not-to-far teachers' life. To have the abilities and opportunities to learn to teach virtually is and will continue to be a fundamental part of the skills set to meet the needs of the new generations of both learners and later-on-educators.

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IX.   APPENDIXES

Module 1, week 8, fourth evaluation: Giving a class using Google Classroom

The students Ana María Guardado, David Eliseo Hernández and other 2 classmates created a lesson plan for a 20 minute class, each student 5 minutes making use of different tools like Jamboard, Google Slides, Youtube and Kahoot. Our topic was *"Talking about abilities using can and to be able to".*

ONLINE CLASS PLANNING

1. Description

For this class, we are going to present the topic **"Talking about Abilities"** using the modal verb **"can"** and its periphrasis **"to be able to"** , as well as their patterns to form questions, affirmative and negative sentences.

2. Learning experiences

- Use the structure **"can"** and **"to be able to"** to form questions, affirmative and negative sentences.
- Practice and retention of vocabulary to express abilities

3. General information

Date: Saturday, June the 3rd, 2023, at 8:00 a.m.
Topic: "Talking about abilities with using can and be able to
Level: English I
Duration: 20 Minutes, divided into 4 participations of 5 minutes each for Warm-up, Vocabulary presentation, Grammar point and, finally, some exercises.

*Note: Since the lesson is intended for basic English learners, we decided to provide guidance and instructions in both English and Spanish.

4. Details of the class

Our group will guide the students as follows:

No	Activities	Resources	Tools	Duration (in mins.)
1	Warm-Up (Fernando)	Puzzle	Jamboard	5
2	Short video with vocabulary on abilities and short reading of sentences. (Ana)	Video	Youtube	5
3	Explanation of the modal verb structure with images (Azucena)	Written examples and images	Powerpoint presentation	5
4	Closing activity to assess usage of "can" and "be able to" (Eliseo)	Short game to test topic comprehension	Kahoot	5

5. Questions for participation:

Who wants to participate? → ¿Quién quiere participar?
Who wants to go first? → ¿Quién va primero?
Who likes to play games? → ¿A quiénes les gusta jugar juegos?
Do you guys have any questions?   →   ¿Tienen preguntas
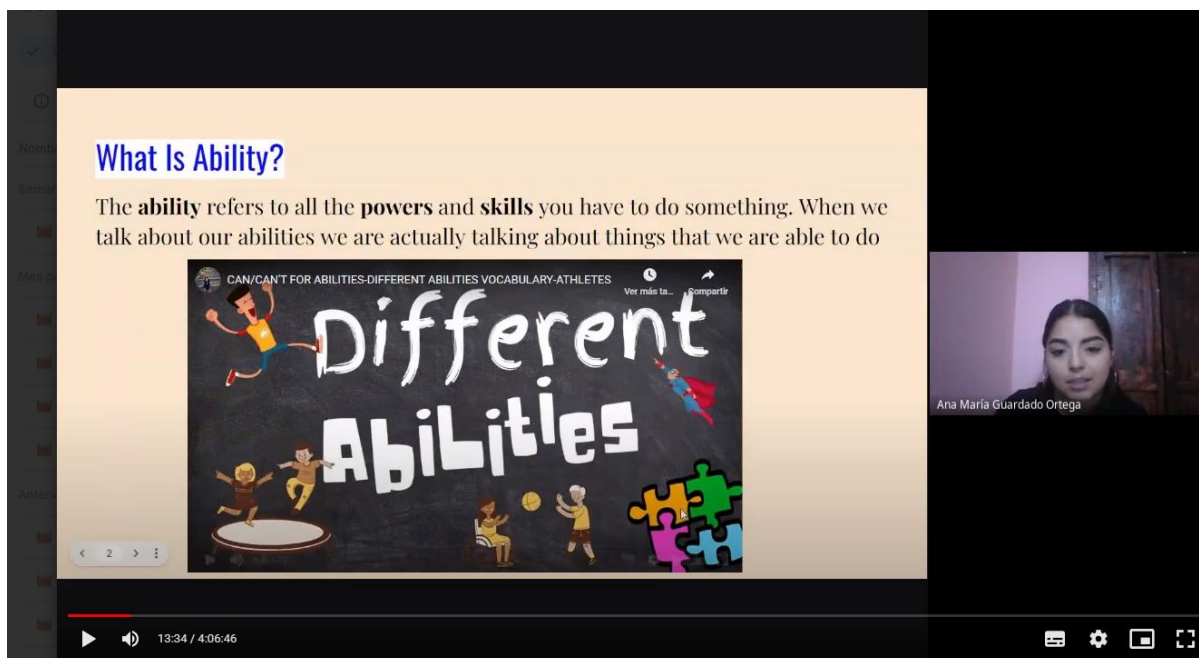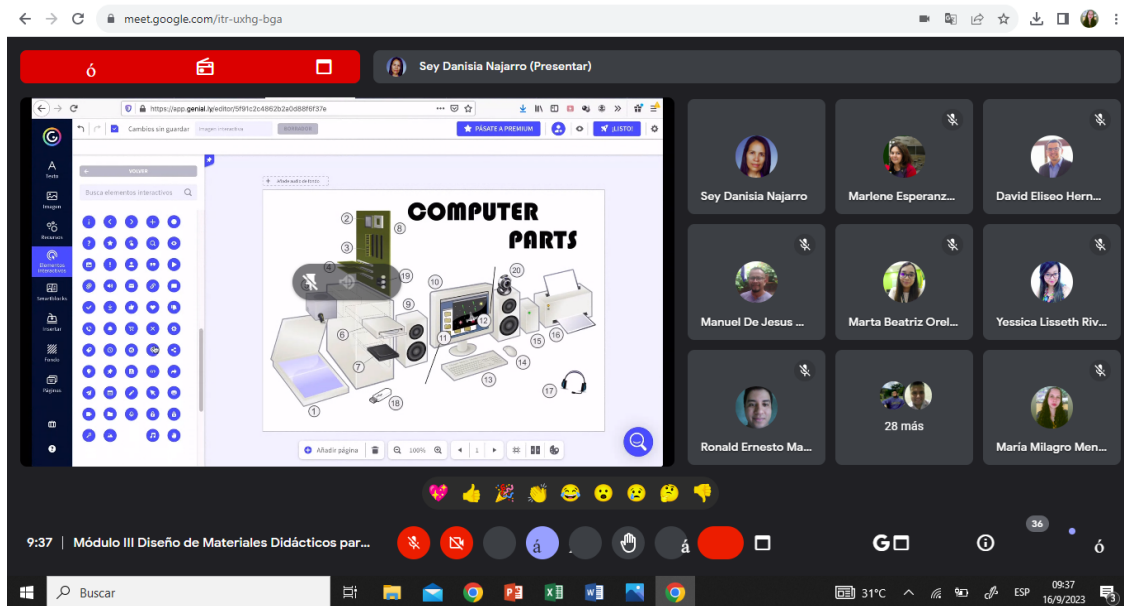
Ana María Guardado Ortega showed her students her creativity in this learning activity. She introduced the vocabulary "Different Abilities" using a **YouTube video embedded in a Google Slides**. This captured students' attention and then she engaged them explaining the grammar point, the verb "can" and its periphrase "to be able to".
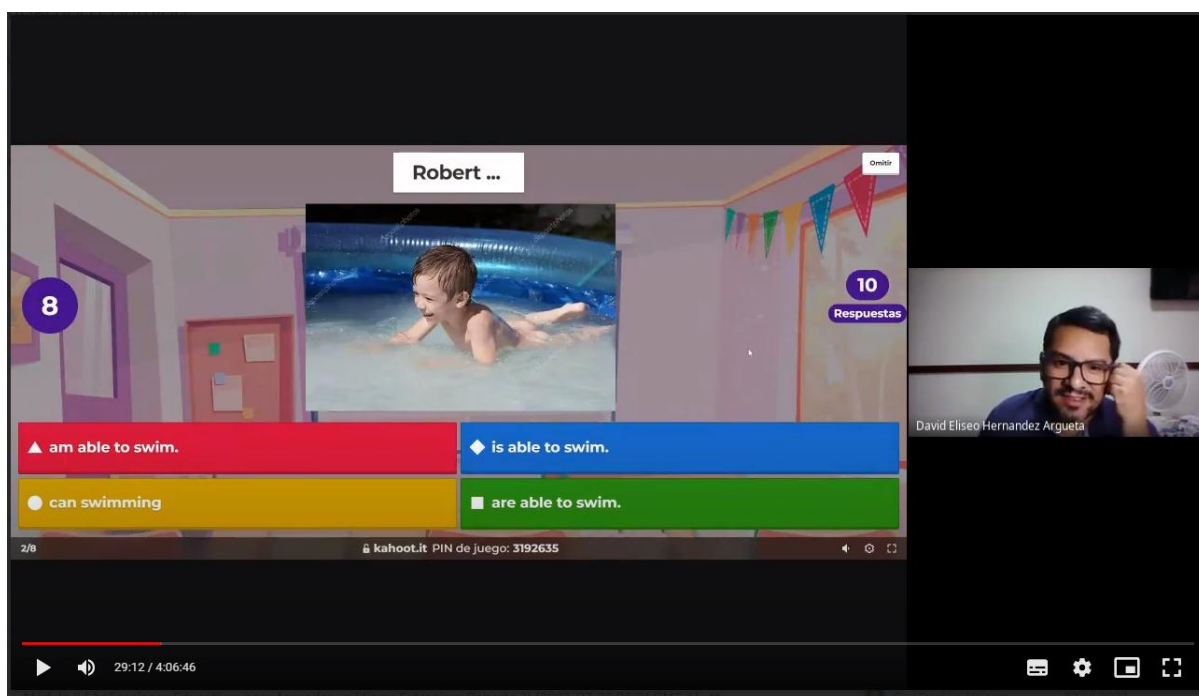
Towards the end of the class David Eliseo Hernández had the class participate in a **Kahoot contest,** to test their knowledge on modals "can" and the verb "to be able to" introduced by Ana María, thus applying the principle of **gamification**.

Classes on Google Meet:
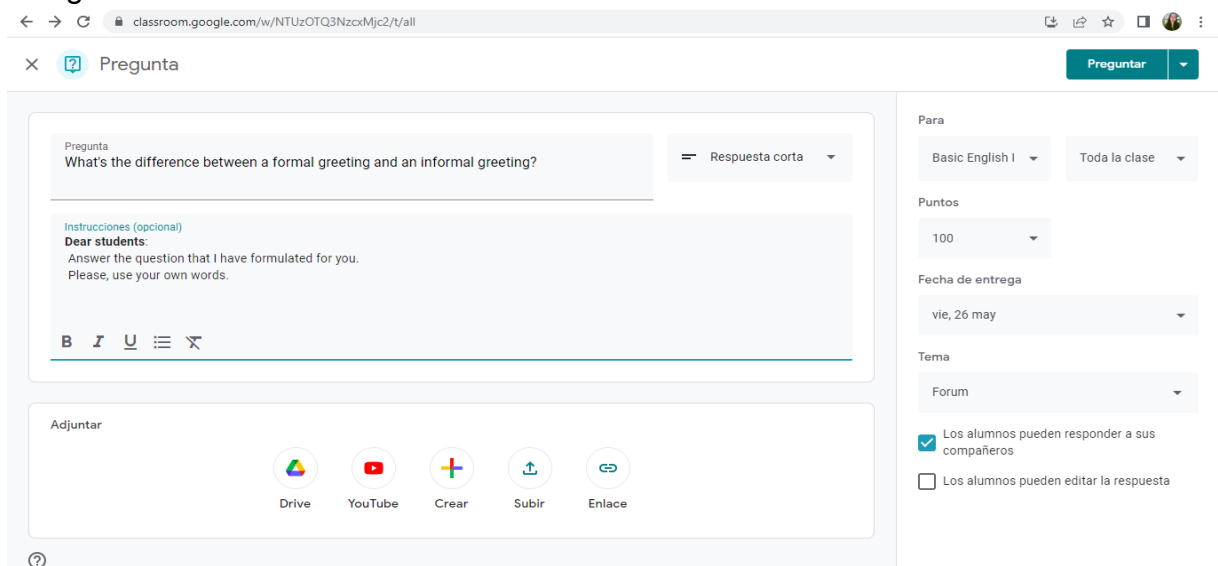
María Milagro was presenting their job during the class. The activity consisted in creating Google Slides and to "**draw**" **collaboratively** a robot, as well as finding as many words as possible for the topic "Technology and subtopic, computer parts"

Further Class activities

María Milagro Menjívar Orellana practices creating a poll on **Google Classroom** using her institutional account.

Another sample image of María Milagro Menjívar Orellana using her institutional.

Module 2: Video creation and edition using Powtoon:

David Eliseo and María Milagro also worked together during the class creating a video on **Powtoon** researching the topic "**Chat GPT**".

54
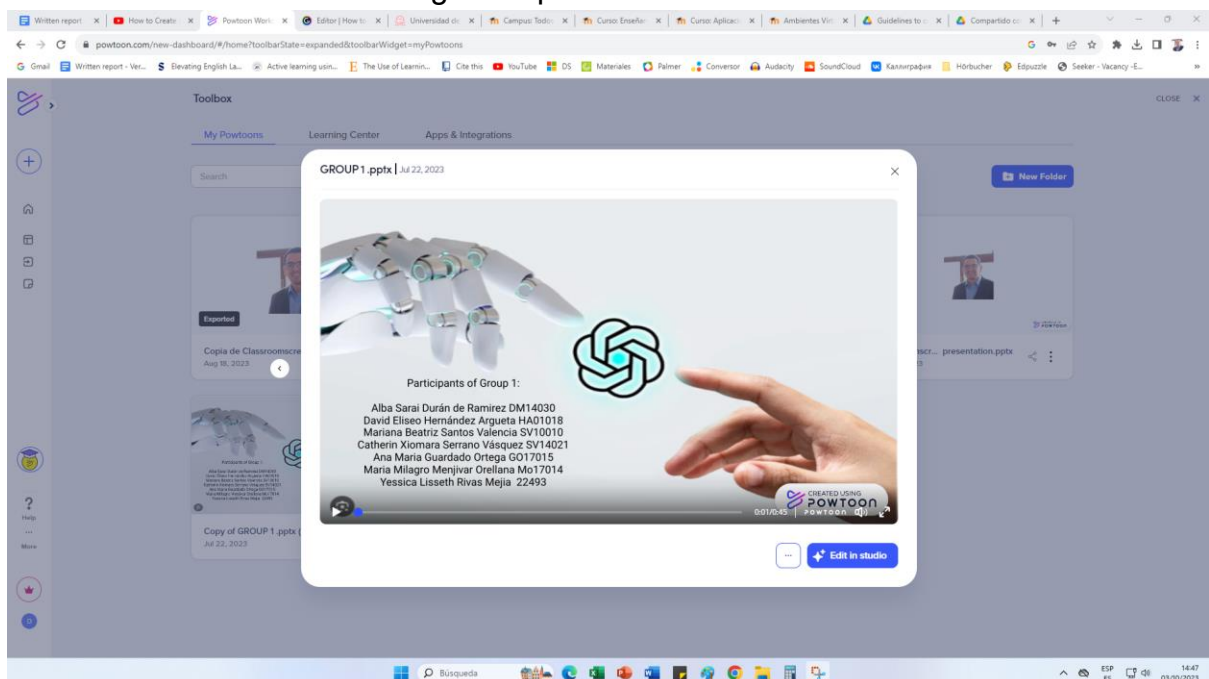
Module 2, week 2: Creation and upload of a video to YouTube.
Students present their videos created as part of the fourth evaluation and upload the video to YouTube. Video can be watched here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lrq97sjHXsw
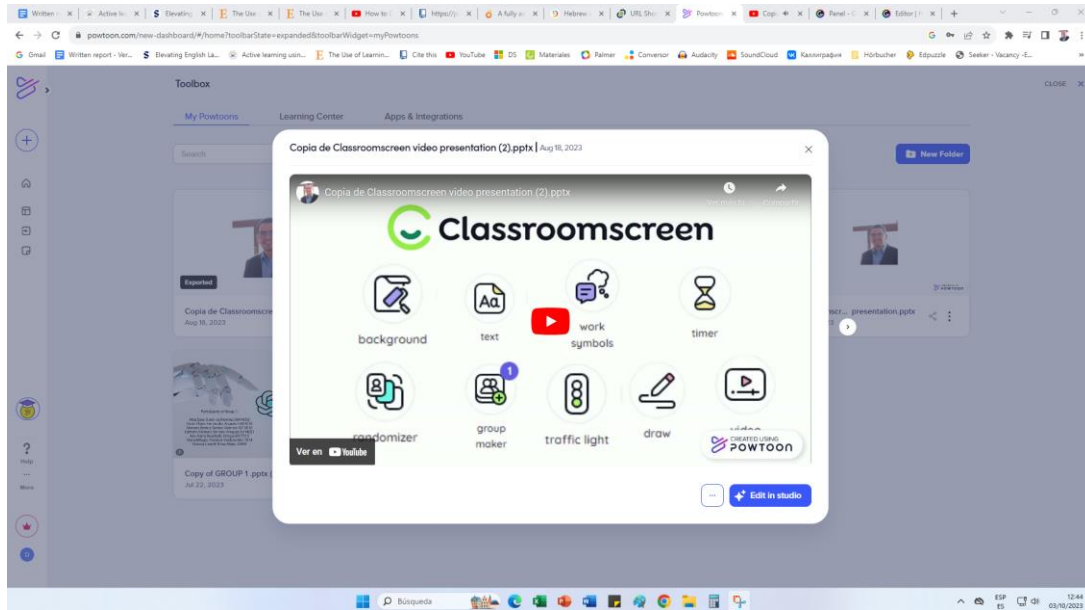
Module 2, week 8: Teaching a class using different technological tools learned on class.
Here is the student Ana María Guardado Ortega showing her lesson plan.

Here is [Ana María Guardado Ortega](#) making use of their creativity and her acquired knowledge using the virtual tool **Edpuzzle**. She created an interactive test embedded in a YouTube video. The class took turns answering her questions.
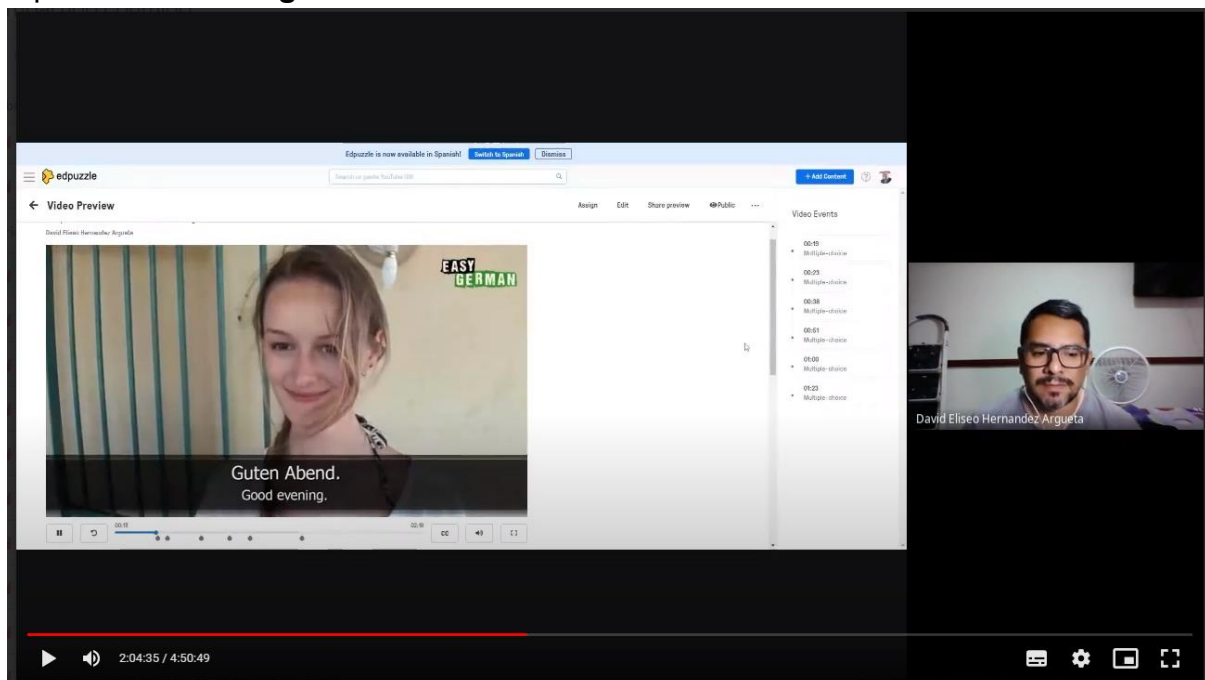
The student **Maria Milagro Menjívar Orellana** presented her work on **Padlet** in front of the class, **Module 3, during week 6.**
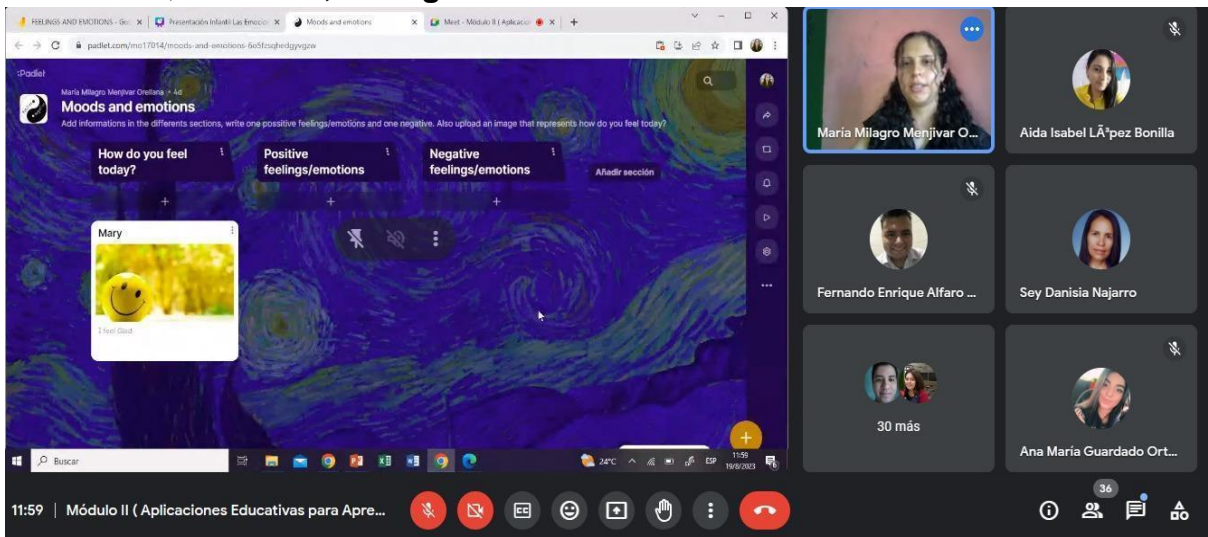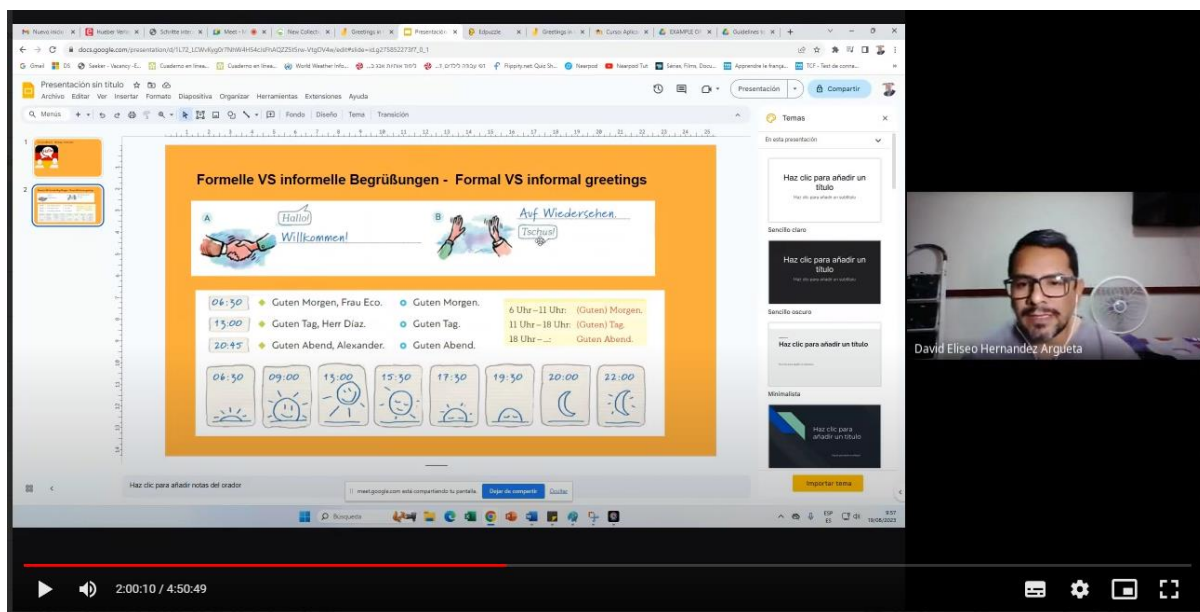
María Milagro topic was "Moods and emotions" and she showed her students how to add images, gifs and and comments on Padlet.
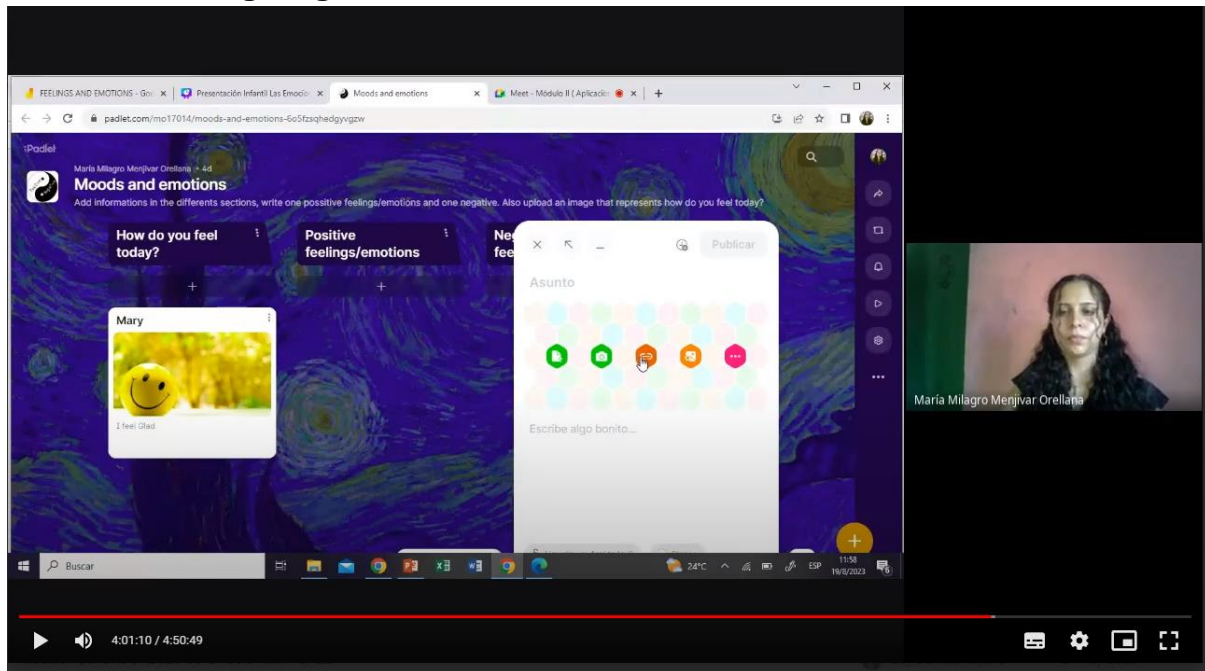
David Eliseo Hernández Argueta teaches his 6 minute class using **Edpuzzle**. The topic was **"Greetings and welfares in German"**
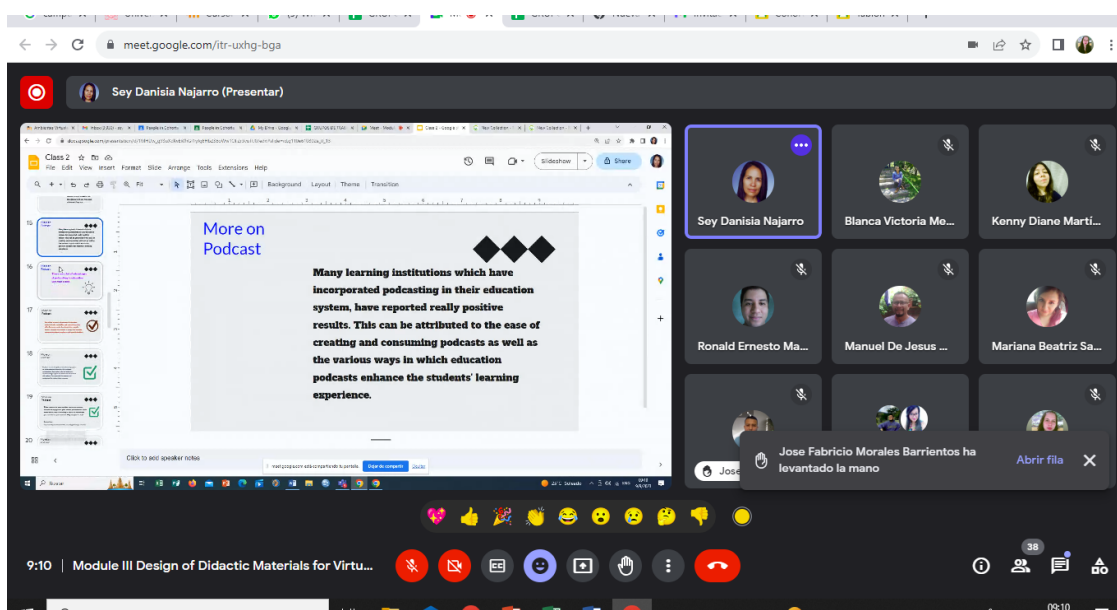
In the same class the student used **Google Slides to provide also pronunciation instruction.**


Module 3, week 1: Teachers provide important criteria on podcast creation:

Maria Milagro Menjívar Orellana made a screenshot of the presentation held by the teacher Sey Najarro on the topic "how to create a podcast" in front of the class.

Module 3, week 2: Creation of the Podcast "The Ghost Writers"
During class, the teacher taught us how to create a podcast. Then as part of the 1st evaluation, David Eliseo Hernández created a script for a podcast, then uploaded the audio to **SoundCloud**. The podcast had to be created on the subtopic. This subtopic was "How to develop a paragraph"
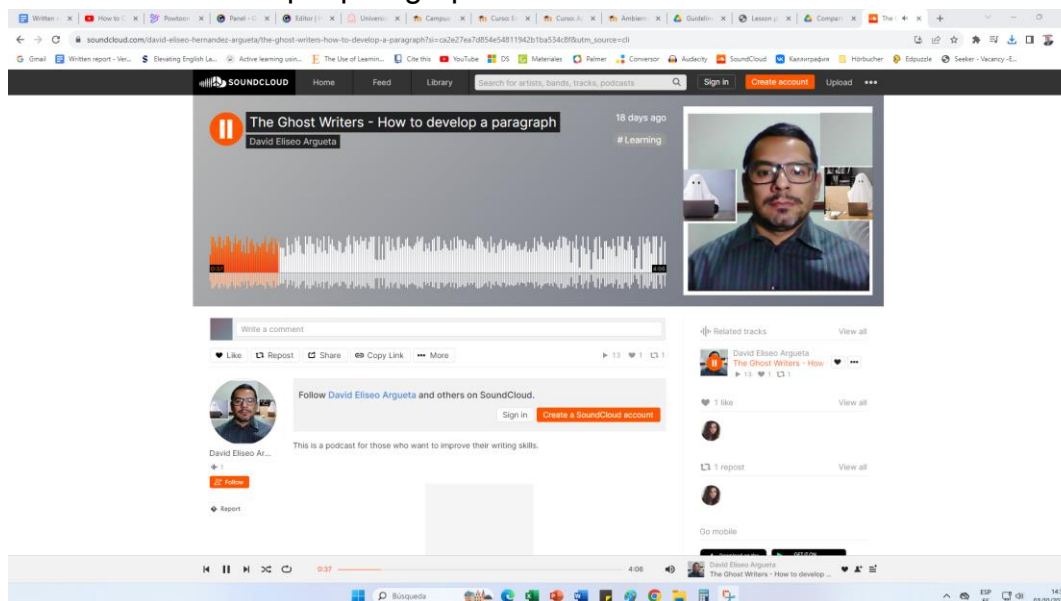
The podcast can be listened to here: https://soundcloud.com/david-eliseo-hernandez-argueta/the-ghost-writers-how-to-develop-a-paragraph?si=ca2e27ea7d854e54811942b1ba534c8f&utm_source=cli

Module 3, week 3: Using their institutional account, students of the specialization courses created interactive learning materials for a virtual class on the assigned subtopic. This shows an image of **Genially** and the subtopic "How to develop a paragraph" by the student David Eliseo Hernández Argueta.

The resource can be seen here:
https://view.genial.ly/6505dc04fa1c6e0011071418/interactive-image-how-to-develop-a-paragraph