The Use of the Flipped Learning Strategy to Boost Students' Motivation in the Virtual

Environment

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Palabras Clave: Motivación, aprendizaje invertido, aprendizaje virtual, entornos virtuales de aprendizaje.

Descripción: Como parte del trabajo de grado, se adoptó la modalidad de Cursos en programas de Especialización, Maestría o Doctorado, el cual es ofrecido por la Escuela de Idiomas de la Universidad Industrial de Santander. A través de esta modalidad se tuvo la posibilidad de formar parte de la Maestría en Didáctica de la Lengua, en la cual se cursaron las materias denominadas Educación y TICs y Teorías del Aprendizaje de la Lengua. Estas materias supusieron una carga de trabajo considerable, dividida entre las partes sincrónicas y asincrónicas de las clases, a través de las cuales fue posible adquirir conocimientos relacionados con los diferentes temas tratados durante las lecciones. Después de cursar ambas materias, se empleó lo aprendido en los cursos mencionados para desarrollar el presente proyecto de grado, dentro del cual se exploró la literatura para encontrar si las aulas de aprendizaje invertidas pueden usarse como una estrategia de aprendizaje para mejorar la motivación de los estudiantes en los entornos virtuales de aprendizaje. Haber podido explorar dos de las materias del programa de maestría representó una oportunidad única para el desarrollo como persona, como estudiante y como docente, motivando la profundización en los diferentes campos del conocimiento y la continuidad del proceso de crecimiento como profesional.

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Abstract

Title: The Use of the Flipped Learning Strategy to Boost Students' Motivation in the Virtual Environment[*]

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Key Words: Motivation, flipped learning, online learning, virtual learning environments.

Description: As part of the degree work, the modality of Courses in Specialization, Master, or Doctorate programs was undertaken, as it is offered by the School of Languages at Industrial University of Santander. Through this modality, it was possible to join the Master's in Language Didactics, in which the subjects known as Education and ICTs and Language Learning Theories were coursed. These subjects encompassed a considerable workload divided between the synchronous and asynchronous parts of the classes, through which it was possible to acquire knowledge related to the many different topics addressed during the lessons. After coursing both of the subjects, what was learned from the mentioned courses was employed in order to develop the present degree project, within which the literature was explored to find if flipped learning classrooms can be used as a learning strategy to improve students' motivation in the virtual learning environments. To had been able to join two of the subjects of the master's program represented a unique opportunity for the development as a person. as a student, and as a teacher, motivating further exploration in the different fields of knowledge and the continuity of the process of growing as a professional.

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Résumé

Titre : L'Utilisation de la Stratégie d'Apprentissage Inversé pour Stimuler la Motivation des Étudiants dans l'Environnement Virtuel[*]

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Mots clés : Motivation, apprentissage inversé, apprentissage en ligne, environnements d'apprentissage virtuels.

La description : Dans le cadre du travail de diplôme, la modalité des cours de spécialisation, des programmes de maîtrise ou de doctorat a été adoptée, qui est proposée par l'École des Langues de l'Université Industrielle de Santander. Grâce à cette modalité, il a été possible de faire partie du Master en Didactique des Langues, dans lequel les matières appelées Éducation et TIC et Théories de l'Apprentissage des Langues ont été étudiées. Ces matières impliquaient une charge de travail considérable, répartie entre les parties synchrones et asynchrones des cours, à travers lesquelles il était possible d'acquérir des connaissances liées aux différents sujets abordés pendant les cours. Après avoir étudié les deux matières, ce qui a été appris dans les cours susmentionnés a été utilisé pour développer le présent projet de diplôme, dans lequel la littérature a été explorée pour déterminer si les salles de classe d'apprentissage inversées peuvent être utilisées comme stratégie d'apprentissage pour améliorer la motivation des étudiants dans environnements d'apprentissage virtuels. Avoir pu explorer deux des matières du programme de maîtrise représentait une opportunité unique de développement en tant que personne, en tant qu'étudiant et en tant qu'enseignant, motivant l'approfondissement dans les différents domaines de connaissances et la continuité du processus de croissance en tant que professionnel.

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Introduction

As a student coursing the 10th semester of the Bachelor program in foreign languages with emphasis in English from Universidad Industrial de Santander, the subject Degree Work was assigned in accordance with the established pensum of the mentioned academic program. As stated by Manual para Trabajos de Grado (Escuela de Idiomas UIS, 2020), the school of languages offers seven different modalities among which the students who are registered to the subject can choose from, namely, research work, teaching practice, research internship, business practice, social practice, business creation, and courses in specialization, master, or doctorate programs. Considering this, the last one of the aforementioned modalities was chosen, more specifically, the course in a master program, for it was believed that this was the path that would provide with the most significant personal and professional development.

After deciding the modality in which the degree work would be developed, it was time to choose the master program that would be coursed. Taking into account the advice given by the degree work director and the availability of master programs currently offered by the school of languages in the university, the Master in Language Didactics was selected. The main reason behind this decision was the possibility to course the subjects that were considered as both highly interesting and beneficial for the personal, academic, and professional development, namely Semiotics, Language and Culture; Education and ICTs; Language Learning Theories; and Linguistics (Escuela de Idiomas, 2021).

Then, as the Manual para Trabajos de Grado (Escuela de Idiomas UIS, 2020) dictates, it was required to decide on the two subjects, from the aforementioned four, that would be coursed within the said master program; in this vein, after discussing the options with the degree work

director and the coordinator of the master program, it was chosen to be part of the Education and ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) and Second Language Acquisition Theories courses. The director suggested that these subjects could be the most relevant and useful for the design of the degree work since they were taught in English while encompassing a wide variety of relevant topics for the development as a teacher; in addition, it was personally considered that these two courses were the most interesting among the four that were offered. It is worth mentioning that due to the global health issue derived by the Covid-19 pandemic, the two courses were conceived to be taught following the standards of the virtual classes and the hybrid modality.

The main objectives of the subjects that were selected are presented in the following section as they are determined by each course's program. On the other hand, a personal objective during the completion of the degree work was that of obtaining a minimum score of 4.0 in both of the selected subjects from the master's course as well as in the final, averaged grade of the whole degree work. Finally, this report document is divided in three main sections: chapter one, coursed subjects, where the two selected subjects and their assessment methods are thoroughly described; chapter two, activities, in which the topics and activities conducted in both courses will be explained and commented week by week; chapter three, focusing on the development of the expansion of knowledge section; and chapter four, conclusions, summarizing the content of the previous chapters, the results of the expansion of knowledge, and the general perspectives drawn from the whole experience in the degree work. It should be noted that taking into account the descriptive nature of chapter two and its encompassed categories, it was decided to portray that section from a first-person perspective.

1. Coursed subjects

1.1. Education and ICTs

The first subject that was undertaken during the master program was Education and ICT. The academic calendar that Escuela de Idiomas UIS (2021) shared with the participants of the master course states that the subject is part of the first level in the Master program in Language Didactics, together with Semiotics, Language, and Culture, Language Learning Theories, and Linguistics. According to the same document, the professor in charge of the lessons was to be Kaithie del Mar Ramirez Correa, who would direct the synchronous lessons during a total period of four weeks, from September 3rd to September 25th. The classes were scheduled for Fridays and Saturdays, with an average duration between five to seven hours, for a total of 48 hours by the end of the course. It is worth noting that those 48 hours of the subject's synchronous work were planned to be complemented with 144 hours of students' individual work, the highest amount among all of the subjects in the first term of the master program.

The document containing the program of the Education and ICT course declares that the general objective of the subject is "to generate a space for critical reflection and the use of ICTs in the processes of mediation of personal and other people's learning, specifically in the field of language education" (Escuela de Idiomas UIS, 2021, p. 1). As part of the process of achieving this goal, the program specifies the topics that would be covered throughout the lessons, namely: a historical look at the use of technology in education; the information society, ICTs and education; the naturalness of ICT in the social life of a globalized society; global culture and socio-educational challenges; invisible learning; virtual environments for learning; ICT, democracy and education; national ICT policies; new ICT-mediated learning environments; videogames and learning; the role of collaborative work and social networks in the new virtual learning spaces; ICT and the new

roles of language teachers; hypertextuality, multimodality and multimediality and their impact on reading and writing processes (Escuela de Idiomas UIS, 2021). Although it was impossible to address each and every last one of these topics due to time constraints, it was possible to study some of the most prominent ones, of which it will be talked about in subsequent chapters.

1.1.2. Assessment

In regard to assessment, the program of the course asserts that "the evaluation is not restricted to tests, but to various scenarios on which convenient records are kept to verify the progress (improvement) of the student throughout the course" (Escuela de Idiomas UIS, 2021, p. 4). In this sense, the professor in charge of the course assigned the students three different assessment activities to be carried out throughout the subject. First, a 33% of the final grade consisted of the development of class forums. These forums were uploaded to a Google Classroom that was created for the use of the class, and they mostly comprised a set of questions that had to be answered taking into account readings and audiovisual materials shared by the professor. After providing their personal responses to those questions, the students then had to comment on at least three of the answers shared by the fellow classmates.

The second of the assessment activities, comprising another 33% of the final grade, was related to the students' development of group activities that were mostly carried out during the synchronous lessons. These activities ranged from group discussions to the creation of mind maps about the topics and materials that were studied in the classes, both in the synchronous and the asynchronous aspects. Lastly, for the final 33% of the total grade of the course, the professor assigned the creation and maintenance of a personal virtual portfolio for the class. In order to do so, each student had the possibility to employ any application or platform considered useful for

the purpose, and at the end of the course, the professor checked if the portfolios evidenced a thorough analysis, divided by each of the classes, of the topics and activities that were conducted.

1.2. Language learning theories

The second of the subjects coursed in the master program was, as mentioned before, Second Language Acquisition Theories. According to the academic calendar provided by Escuela de Idiomas UIS (2021), this subject is the third one from the previously mentioned five that must be coursed during the first term of the master program. The calendar further specified that the lessons were to be delivered by Professor Luz Mary Quintero throughout a period of four weeks, from October 1st to October 23rd, with classes during Fridays and Saturdays lasting between five and seven hours. It is worth mentioning that, since the course belonged to the first term of the master program, it did not pose any requirements further than being accepted as a participant under the correspondent degree work modality.

According to the Language Learning Theories program (Quintero, 2021), the course was conceived taking into consideration two objectives: first, "to foster an understanding of the principles and processes that govern second language learning and use"; second, "to develop the ability to think critically about research findings in the field of second language learning and use" (p. 1). In order to achieve these goals, the program comprised a series of topics to study and discuss throughout both the synchronous and asynchronous lessons, such as: the landscape of English in the world today; the landscape of English teaching in Colombia; individual differences in language learning: age; development or learner language and motivation; individual differences: motivation, learning English as foreign language today; individual differences: affect and others; the sociocultural approach to second language acquisition; an identity and second/foreign language learning approach to SLA; a complexity theory approach to SLA; and translanguaging (Quintero,

2021). All of the aforementioned topics encompassed a number of textual materials around which most of the discussions were conducted during the classes. These class conversations on the topics of study made up for the major part of the lessons as they were led by the professor in charge of the course together with the continuous participation of the students.

1.2.1. Assessment

The document of the program specifies the different methods of assessment that the course comprised. First, a 30% of the total grade of the subject was divided between students' led reading discussions. According to the program, students would be divided in groups with assigned articles related to the topics of the classes that must be read before each of the synchronous sessions; then, the groups would create a graphic organizer through which "each group will offer a descriptive and critical interpretive account of the article" (Quintero, 2021, p.3). Moreover, the program specifies that each groups' presentation of the articles should take an average time of 25 minutes, with 10 extra minutes for interventions and comments; nonetheless, the professor prompted students to deliver thorough explanations and follow-up conversations about the articles, regardless of the time spent by each of the groups.

The second grade of the course, representing another 30% of the total score, consisted of presenting the identification and description of the problem which would be addressed in the research project that the students registered in the master's program must develop throughout the whole program (Quintero, 2021). However, since the nature of my participation in the master's course was that of a degree work student coursing only two of the subjects from the program, this method of assessment was not befitting for my modality. Considering this, the professor turned this assessment into the creation of reflective journals to be delivered after each week of classes. In accordance with the guidelines provided by the professor on the creation of the journals, they

must have had a length between 500 and 600 words, and they should include students' personal opinions on the topics discussed during the classes, supported by personal and professional experiences as language learners and teachers.

The last 40% of the summative assessment was centered in the development of a final paper which would "address a topic presented and discussed during the course" (Quintero, 2021, p. 4) and that could be related to the mentioned research proposal. Again, this method of assessment was not befitted for my specific degree work modality, so the professor decided that, in my case, it should written a paper comprising the sections and topics in resemblance to the final document to be delivered in the degree work course, in other words, a draft of the present document.

2. Activities

2.1. First subject: Education and ICTs

The Education and ICT coursed had a duration of four weeks, with classes on Fridays and Saturdays between 5:00 pm and 9:00 pm and from 8:00 am to 1:00 pm respectively. Although the schedules were considerably extensive compared to the average two-hour classes received in any other subject of the university, the professor in charge of the course granted us 15-minute breaks every two hours, so that we would not feel too tired throughout the lessons. Together with those small breaks, the attitude of the professor and the classmates made me perceive the classes more as a friendly conversation among teachers, discussing and sharing their knowledge, than as an academic responsibility required for the completion of the degree work. I will now continue to describe the topics that were studied, week by week, and the activities that were carried out both in the synchronous classes and the asynchronous, individual work hours. The descriptions of the different activities and topics will be joined by personal reflections on the same aspects.

2.1.1 Week 1

The first week of classes in the Education and ICT course served as the perfect introduction to a subject whose topics were highly interesting, while delivered in a friendly learning environment. First of all, the professor in charge of the course presented herself both in the professional and the personal aspect, followed by the presentation of each of the attendees, me included, and the subsequent introduction to the subject and its contents. It is worth mentioning that, although the rest of the classmates knew each other since the previous course in the master's program, this class was the first time that I got to know them, as it was my first class within the degree work modality.

It came time for us to begin addressing the topics of the class. The professor began this by asking us a simple question: Do you know what cloud storage is? Almost unanimously, my partners and I replied with names such as Google Drive, Dropbox, and One Drive, but these answers fell short when the professor asked us about the way they work. "Where are these clouds?", she wondered. Since we failed to provide a concise answer, she proceeded to explain to us the history of cloud storage, from 1963, when the concept of sending data from one computer to another was developed, to 2011 when Apple launched iCloud, popularizing the use of cloud data storage worldwide. Two of the things that fascinated me the most from this conversation were: first, cloud computing is basically the possibility to access remotely different computers and servers; second, most of the data storage servers around the world are owned by Amazon and Google, being Amazon the first company to ever offer data storage services to the public, back in the 90s.

Then, the professor assigned us the first activity of the lesson. She shared a link with the class that directed towards a video inside Edpuzzle, a webpage designed for the creation of

different pedagogical activities as interactive videos and questionnaires. The interactive video that the professor shared with us was meant to deepen our knowledge on cloud computing, and it was developed in a way in which we had to watch parts of the video followed by quick questions that we needed to solve in order to keep watching. From the video, we were able to understand the concept of cloud computing, conceived as a service through which you are able to acquire computational assets such as access to servers, to storage, to processing power, and so on. After we finished the activity, the professor questioned us about our experience with the Edpuzzle platform and prompted us to employ it regularly during our lessons.

The second topic that was addressed during the first class was that of the ISTE standards. ISTE stands for: International Society for Technology in Education, and as its name implies, this society seeks that both educators and students ensure that technology is accessible to everyone in the best possible way. The professor then explained that there exists ISTE standards for educators and ISTE standards for students, both of them aiming for teachers and students to take the most advantage of their access to technological means. According to International Society for Technology in Education (2022), the ISTE standards for educators are divided on the seven different kinds of teachers: learner educators, leader educators, citizen educators, collaborator educators, designer educators, facilitator educator, and analyst educators. After we were explained what each of the mentioned roles represent, the class discussed what type of teacher each of us is, and whether if it is possible for a teacher to encompass more than one of these characteristics. We all reached the general conclusion that probably every teacher encompasses all of these characteristics, just that each of them in a lesser or greater degree from educator to educator.

Afterwards, we focused our attention on the ISTE standards for students. Once again, the International Society for Technology in Education (2022) lists seven standards that define students

who use technology as part of their learning process. These are: empowered learners, digital citizens, knowledge constructors, innovative designers, computational thinkers, creative communicators, and global collaborators. Once we finished reviewing the meaning of these categories, the professor opened a forum space in our Google Classroom where we had to submit a reflection on the topics addressed during the class. Before closing the Zoom session, the professor gave us the homework for the following class, which consisted of watching two YouTube videos and reading an online document about the SAMR Model.

Previous to the second class, I started watching the videos The Impact of the SAMR Model with Ruben Puentedura (Common Sense Education, 2016) and Modelo SAMR - Dr. Ruben Puentedura _ traducido español (Edwin Soto, 2019); both of which encircled an interview given to Ruben Puentedura, author and creator of the SAMR Model. In the videos, Puentedura explained the idea behind his model, designed as a set of steps for teachers to follow in order to successfully implement the use of technological tools into their classrooms. According to Puentedura (Edwin Soto, 2019), SAMR stands for: Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, and Redefinition; moreover, the benefits of the model include the improvement of students' outcomes, the increase of learners' comprehension, and the development of effective communities of practice (Common Sense Education, 2016).

When I finished with the videos, I proceeded to read the online article titled SAMR, Modelo para Integrar las TIC en Procesos Educativos, by Eduteka (2015), through which it was possible to deepen my knowledge on each of the model's steps. The first level, substitution, refers to the use of the ICTs as tools that only replace the non-technological materials previously employed by the students; the second level, augmentation, follows the use of ICTs as replacement tools while also adding functional improvements to the learning experience; the third level,

modification, employs ICTs to include major redesigns to the learning activities; lastly, redefinition, is the level in which ICTs are bound to the learning environment, so that it is possible to design and conduct new activities through the use of technology (Eduteka, 2015).

During the second synchronous class, the professor provided her own explanation on the SAMR model for technology integration, providing examples for each of the aforementioned steps that the process involves. Parallelly, the students in the class shared comments about the model and its different levels, with some anecdotal examples from their experiences as teachers. From this discussion, one question aroused: how do we implement the SAMR model in the Colombian rural context? To this, the professor sentenced that the SAMR model must necessarily depart from the presupposition that the classroom counts with a certain degree of technological access, so that it is probably impossible to apply the different steps in a rural classroom in Colombia.

Subsequently, the professor introduced us to the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge, a theoretical-methodological model of teaching designed by Koehler and Mishra in 2006. According to Koehler and Mishra (2009), teachers' knowledge is composed by three main parts: content, pedagogy, and technology. Content knowledge is defined as "teachers' knowledge about the subject matter to be learned or taught" (Koehler & Mishra, 2009, p.63); pedagogical knowledge refers to "teachers' deep knowledge about the processes and practices or methods of teaching and learning" (Koehler & Mishra, 2009, p.64); and technology knowledge, in general aspects, means being able to apply technology productively in the working environment while recognizing "when information technology can assist or impede the achievement of a goal, and to continually adapt to changes in information technology" (Koehler & Mishra, 2009, p.64). The authors then proceed to develop the idea that these three components are joined together into Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), Technological Content Knowledge (TCK),

Technological Pedagogical Knowledge (TPK), and Technology, Pedagogy, and Content Knowledge (TPACK), the last one of these being the focus of their model. Koehler and Mishra (2009) declare that:

> TPACK is the basis of effective teaching with technology, requiring an understanding of the representation of concepts using technologies; pedagogical techniques that use technologies in constructive ways to teach content; knowledge of what makes concepts difficult or easy to learn and how technology can help redress some of the problems that students face; knowledge of students' prior knowledge and theories of epistemology; and knowledge of how technologies can be used to build on existing knowledge to develop new epistemologies or strengthen old ones. (p.66)

After discussing the main characteristics of the TPACK model in class, the professor tasked students with the creation of comparative mind maps, where the features of both the SAMR model and the TPACK model could be reviewed and contrasted. Then, the mind maps were shared and discussed upon, with special emphasis on whether we would employ any of the models and under what circumstances would they be beneficial. Before closing the class, the professor shared with us a book called Aprendizaje Invisible: Hacia una Nueva Ecología de la Educación, written by Cobo and Movarec (2011). The professor explained that the book would be an ongoing task during the course, for we would have to read it and develop a mind map with its main aspects to present during the final week of classes. Finally, she clarified doubts about the final grade of the course: a portfolio, created in whichever way we desired, with information of the topics that we would address in each of the lessons.

2.1.2. Week 2

There were two readings assigned for the asynchronous, individual work part of week number two. The first was an articled titled El Modelo Constructivista con las Nuevas Tecnologías: Aplicado en el Proceso de Aprendizaje, written by Requena (2008). The document begins with an overview of the constructivism. The author explains that the theory focuses on generating knowledge through activities based on meaningful activities derived from the context of the instruction (Requena, 2008); similarly, Jonassen (1991) declared that "constructivism proposes that learning environments should support multiple perspectives or interpretations of reality, knowledge construction, context-rich, experience-based activities" (p.28). Parting from this, Requena believes that students working under the constructivist theory have the possibility to employ technological tools in order to enlarge their meaningful learning experiences (2008).

The author then begins to talk about the new technologies of communication, defined as the recent technological developments through which the communities are able to broaden their capacity to acquire and share knowledge (Requena, 2008). ATTES (2003) states that new technologies encompass a set of characteristics that turns them into powerful tools for students' learning process, such as immateriality, interactivity, high quality images and sounds, instantaneity, digitalization, interconnexion, diversity and innovation (as cited in Requena, 2008, p.29). In this sense, Requena declares that new technologies are helpful for constructivist learning since "computers provide an appropriate creative mean for students to express and show that they have acquired new knowledge. Online collaborative projects and web publications are a new and exciting way for teachers to commit students into the learning process" (2008, p.29). Moreover, Becker (1998) asserts that technology provides learners with access to any information they might

require, while also allowing them to present their perspectives and experiences to different groups of people in the outside world, transcending the classroom and the local community.

The author continued to discuss the representative applications of today's technologies, among which three are mentioned: the social media, the wiki, and the blogs. Requena explains that social media is useful in the way that learners are able to share ideas with teachers and classmates, so that they all have the possibility to continue acquiring knowledge both inside and outside the classroom. Through the use of wikis, students can obtain information as well as create it, going from simple consumers of knowledge to its producers, thanks to the possibility of creating articles and editing already existing ones within the wikis' cooperative and collaborative environment. Similar to the wiki, blogs promote students' writing skills through the use of its grammar and orthography tools, working as virtual spaces where learners have the possibility to express ideas and thoughts (2008).

After this reading, I addressed the online article Taxonomía de Bloom para la Era Digital, by Churches (2009). The document starts by presenting Bloom's taxonomy, created by Benjamin Bloom in 1956, with the purpose of deepen our knowledge concerning the learning process. According to Bloom, there are three psychological domains in human's mind: affective domain, psychomotor domain, and cognitive domain; the latter of these being the one that encircles the aspects related to learning. Parting from this point, Bloom developed a taxonomy chart in which the learning process is shown, step by step, from the Low Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) to the High Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) as follows: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. According to Churches (2009), the easiest way to understand the taxonomy is to consider the fact that a concept can not be applied unless it is understood, and a concept cannot be understood unless it is remembered.

The article then focuses on Bloom's Revised Taxonomy, an update for the original taxonomy that was released by Lorin Anderson, Bloom's former student, in 2001. Churches (2009). states that there are two main aspects in the revised taxonomy that set it apart from the original: the use of verbs instead of nouns for each of the categories, and the change in order of the same. It is important to mention that these new categories also encompass a number of key verbs that are associated to each of them. In this vein, the categories in the revised taxonomy and their associated verbs are organized, from low order thinking skills to the high order thinking skills, as follows: remember (recognizing, listing, naming, identifying, …) ; understand (summarizing, inferring, interpreting, comparing, …); apply (using, implementing, …); analyze (organizing, structuring, outlining, integrating, …); evaluate (hypothesizing, judging, checking, …); and create (designing, constructing, inventing, …) (Churches, 2009).

From this point, the text signals the fact that neither Bloom's original taxonomy nor its revised version address the new learning methods and objectives that have arose into the learning process due to the growing integration of the ICTs into the educational environments; therefore, there exists the need to revise again the existing taxonomy in order to apply the current digital panorama into it. It is here when Churches (2009) introduces the concept of Bloom's Taxonomy for the Digital Era, an emergent model that highlights the use of ICTs and the importance of collaborative work as an integral aspect of the learning process. According to the author, there is a vast amount of collaborative learning tools, such as wikis, blogs, shared documents, social media, learning management systems, and so on, that can help teachers and students develop activities that study the contents in a contextualized way. Finally, Churches (2009) claims that, in the new taxonomy for the digital era, a new bundle of technology-related derived verbs are added to the already existing categories and verbs of Bloom's revised taxonomy.

During the synchronous lessons of week two, we began by discussing the readings that were assigned as a homework. The members of the class shared their mind about the topics of the texts and provided answers to the comprehension questions that the professor proposed; from these conversations, the most significant piece of knowledge, in my opinion, was the one that the professor shared about technology being the means to an end, not the end per se. In other words, as teachers we should not introduce technology in our classroom for purposeless activities, as if its implementation was the sole aim of the task, but rather we must prompt the acquisition of knowledge through the use of technological tools, directed by them towards the knowledge. Moreover, the professor claimed that the current global health issue derived by the COVID 19 pandemic has encouraged the use of technology in the educational environment, an aspect that should remain and improve from here on.

Following, the professor introduced to the class the concept of HyperDocs, a technological tool, usually in the form of Google online documents, that follows a determined learning sequence, based on the idea of learning through inquiry. According to the professor, there are seven steps that a hyperdoc must encompass: engage, explore, explain, apply, share, reflect, and extend. As its name implies, the first step, engaging, aims to attract learners' attention to the unit and its activities through the use of a video, an image, a quotation, or else, not necessarily related to the content topic. The second step, exploring, is the part where the teacher will provide different resources such as articles, videos, infographics, and so on, in order to introduce the topic. Then, in the explaining step, students are given a document richer in its presentation and explanation of the contents of the unit. After the explanation, it comes the applying step, in which students are assigned a task involved with creation and collaboration through the use of an online tool. The fifth step, sharing, is when teachers revise students' work and provide feedback after they have

shared it in a means that connects with the real world. Step six, evaluating, aims to make students reflect on their learning process during the activities and self-evaluate their progress. The final step, extending, is the space that teachers have to provide learners further study materials and prompt them to address it after the class.

The professor then gave us advice on web platforms commonly employed to create hyperdocs; some of these were Google Docs, Google Slides, Google Forms, Google Sites, and Genially. Following, the professor recommended us a specific type of activity which, according to her, is highly beneficial for hyperdocs: choice boards. These are graphic organizers that allow students the possibility to choose in which order do they want to complete the activities assigned by the teacher. The last part of the class focused on a class discussion about the use of hyperdocs and choice boards, with the professor assigning as a homework the creation of an example of a hyperdocs.

Most of the time during the next class was centered on the presentation of each of the hyperdocs prepared by the master's course students. The professor, together with the rest of the classmates, spoke their mind and provided feedback for each of the examples made by the class. Subsequently, the professor informed us of the different purposes of integrating technology in class. First, as a tool of instruction and modeling employed to transfer information, explain concepts, and apply strategies through the use of platforms as Screencastmatic, Edpuzzle, and Pear Deck. Second, as a source of discussion about texts, videos, podcasts and topics by employing Google Meet, Zoom, Google Classroom, Schoology, and Flipgrid. Third, as collaborative assignments that help develop students' teamwork when using the GSuite and Office 365. Fourth, as a mean to evaluate learners' acquisition of the topics through the use of Google Forms, Canvas, One Note. Fifth, to provide feedback bay making use of Vocaroo or any other voice recording

service. Finally, as a way to assign students further practice and review activities employing platforms such as Mentimeter, Kahoot!, Quizizz, Quizle, and Poll Everywhere.

2.1.3. Week 3

For the asynchronous part of this week's classes, we were assigned the reading of an article names Framework for 21st Century Learning Definitions, written by Batelle for Kids (2019). According to Batelle For Kids (2019), the Partnership for 21st Century Learning designed a unified idea of learning in order to promote the union of learning skills with the most relevant academic subjects; moreover, the author state that "this Framework describes the skills, knowledge, and expertise students must master to succeed in work and life; it is a blend of content knowledge, specific skills, expertise, and literacies" (Batelle for Kids, 2019, p.2). The author states that, by following the framework, learners will feel more engaged in the process of knowledge acquisition which, in turn, will allow for graduates to be better equipped against the challenges of today's world.

As reported by Batelle for Kids (2019), the 21st century key subjects are: English, reading, or language arts; World languages; Arts; Mathematics; Economics; Science; Geography; History; and Government and Civics. Similarly, the author asserts that the 21st century key themes are: Global Awareness; Financial, Economic, Business, and Entrepreneurial Literacy; Civic Literacy; Health Literacy; and Environmental Literacy (Batelle for Kids, 2019). Furthermore, Batelle for Kids (2019) highlights the learning and innovation skills of the 21st century, defined by: creativity and innovation; critical thinking and problem solving; and communication and collaboration. Finally, the authors claim that all of the aforementioned subjects, themes, and skills are necessary since "effective citizens and workers of the 21st century must be able to exhibit a range of

functional and critical thinking skills related to information, media, and technology" (Batelle for Kids, 2019, p.5).

This week's synchronous lessons were highly marked by the presence of a guest brought by the professor. Professor Juan Carlos Torres is an English teacher, highly knowledgeable in the matters of technology and its use to address the 21st century skills, who shared with us his knowledge and perspectives on the use of ICTs in the English class. One of the most important things that Professor Juan Carlos said was that before thinking about adding technology to one's lessons, one should assess whether if that is fully possible or not; this reminded me of the conversion that we had in the previous weeks with the course's professor about using SAMR model un rural areas in Colombia. Professor Juan Carlos sentenced that being aware of the technological capabilities that both teachers and students have is paramount in order to develop academic assignments and activities through virtual means.

For the final part of the first synchronous class, the professor in charge of the course briefly introduced to us the topic of active methodologies; a terminology that refers to a group of methods, techniques and strategies that place students at the center of learning, while encouraging teamwork and critical thinking. The first of the active methodologies that she addressed was gamification. According to the professor, this one is usually mistaken by the idea of simply adding games into the classroom; in reality, it refers to transforming common classroom activities into ones that encompass the characteristics of a game, so that students must complete a series of objectives, individually or cooperatively, in order to advance to the following level.

Then, the class discussed the second active methodology, known as project-based learning. From these conversations, it was possible for me to understand that this methodology envisions classrooms divided into work groups, each working on a specific project that seeks to solve a

problem based on the real context. The third active methodology was Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), which is a methodology where the acquisition of a foreign language is achieved through content teaching of the other different school subjects. Finally, the flipped learning strategy refers to a personalized learning process in which students tackle the content prior to the class, guided by materials provided by the teacher and their own capability of exploring for information; in this strategy, the synchronous lessons are used as feedback and to solve doubts.

During the second synchronous lesson of the week, we focused on expanding our knowledge about the last of the aforementioned learning strategies: flipped learning. According to the professor, Jon Bergmann and Aaron Sams were the introducers of flipped learning. The professor explained that FLIP stands for: Flexible environment, meaning that students are allowed to choose their learning space and provided with various means of acquiring and assessing the content; Learning culture, considered as learners being the center of the learning process, rather than the teachers; Intentional content, defined by the prioritization of the concepts, so that students have quicker access to them; and Professional educator which, as the name implies, refers to being a teacher opened to answer questions and provide ongoing feedback.

The basic concept of flipped learning means that students receive the lecture of the content while they are at home, through the use of a podcast, YouTube videos, and so on, leaving the class time for classroom individual and collaborative activities to reinforce the acquisition of the topics. After class, students are provided with materials to review the key concepts on their own and carry out additional activities. The professor clarified that flipped learning is not just about online videos replacing teachers, nor it is carrying out online classes with students working in isolation; on the contrary, flipped learning seeks to increase students' responsibility and engaging by blending direct instruction with individual learning supervised by the teacher.

Lastly, the professor discussed about the difference in the type of activities and resources between the individual learning space and the group learning space within the flipped classroom. In the individual learning space, it is commonly found the use of hyperdocs, pre-recorded videos, textbook pages, PDFs, podcasts, slideshows, and tutorials. During the group learning space, there is a focus on student-centeredness, authentic interaction, speaking activities, Socratic seminars, peer-instructions, feedback, cooperative learning strategies, and so on. This week of classes ended with group conversations about the uses, advantages and disadvantages of flipped learning, and with the professor reminding us of the final grades of the course: the mind map of the assigned book, Aprendizaje Invisible: Hacia una Nueva Ecología de la Educación (Cobos & Moravec, 2011), and the hand-in of the course's portfolio.

2.1.4. Week 4

Before the synchronous part of the final week, since the professor did not assign a specific homework for the lessons, I focused my efforts on finishing and polishing the mind map of the assigned book and the course's portfolio (see appendix A). During the first synchronous lesson of the week, we shared our mind maps and our perspectives on the book, which then opened the door for the professor to introduce the last topic of the course: Synchronous Online Flipped Learning Approach (SOFLA). According to the professor, this is a new alternative approach that aims to transform virtual learning by employing some of the features encompassed by flipped learning, such as the aforementioned ideas of the individual learning space and the group learning space. The professor claims that SOFLA takes the best aspects of the flipped classroom and adapts them in order to tackle the immediate learning needs of the online environment, which have been enlarged by the recent global health issue and its effect on virtual education.

The professor explains that there are eight steps to apply SOFLA. The first step, pre-work, is carried out in the individual learning space by providing students with an introduction to the content through the use of PDFs or pre-recorded videos. The second step, sign-in activity, is the first online activity of the synchronous class; the idea here is that, as soon as students log-in to the class, there is an activity waiting for them to complete without the assistance of the teacher. The next step, whole group application, refers to a teacher-lead activity without any sort of direct instruction, encouraging students' responsibility for their learning process. Then, breakouts, is one of the most important steps in the SOFLA, which consists of dividing the class in small groups that have to work cooperatively to create a final product, while the professor provides guidance and advises. As its name implies, during the share-out step students are prompted to show their final products, share experiences, and provide feedback. The sixth step, preview and discovery, aims to engage students into the next topic of the course by assigning them an interesting, previous-knowledge activity. The seventh step, assignment instructions, refers to the part near the end of the class when the teacher assigns and explains the homework, before uploading it to the course's platform. Finally, the last step of a SOFLA class is that of reflection, in which learners are encouraged to think, reflect, and self-assess the knowledge they acquired during the lesson. The final part of the first lesson of this week was a class conversation about the SOFLA methodology, where we discussed which of those steps can we implement in our daily practice as teachers.

The final day of classes of the whole course felt shorter than any other lesson that we had. First, we shared our class portfolios with the rest of our classmates, an activity through which I noticed the remarkable creative capabilities that some of my classmates have. Once we finished sharing our final products and peer-review our classmates', we concluded the class, and the whole course, with reflections and perspectives about the subject, the professor, and the activities that

were conducted during those weeks. Once the class finished, I logged-out of the session feeling happy, having completed one of the required courses for my degree work, and sort of anxious to start with the following subject.

2.2. Second subject: Language learning theories

The Second Language Acquisition Theories course lasted four weeks, and it had its classes divided between Fridays, from 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm, and Saturdays, from 8:00 am to 1:00 pm. During these periods of time, I had the opportunity to study different materials provided by the professor, to work cooperatively with a group of classmates, and to take part in highly interesting classroom conversations, all of which helped me to enlarge my knowledge on different topics related to the course. I will proceed now to provide a description of the lessons, mentioning the topics that were studied and the activities that were carried out during each of the weeks, both in the synchronous and the asynchronous aspect. Moreover, these descriptions comprise personal reflections based on the aforementioned items and the way in which they were addressed throughout the sessions.

2.2.1. Week 1

The first week in the Second Language Acquisition Theories class made me experience a wide degree of mixed feelings regarding the course, my knowledge, and my personal capabilities. Previous to the first synchronous virtual classes, the professor in charge of the course contacted us via email and extended her welcoming to the seminar which she would be teaching. Together with an introductory message, there were added two general readings that all of the participants in the course had to analyze and a table containing individual texts that were assigned to the specific groups of two students in which all of us were divided. Guessing from the tittles of the articles, the topics posed in those readings promised to be highly interesting; however, the reading of the

documents throughout the week and the subsequent classes at the weekend were both challenging and rewarding.

I decided to start my week with the first of the two general readings, named Glocal Languages, Coloniality and Globalization from Below, written by Souza (2019). As its name implies, the article was fundamentally focused on topics related to globalization, defined by Santos (2002) as a process that entails packs of social relations of conflicting nature, where winners are able to define the characteristics of the globalized world while the losers are vanished altogether. From its name, I expected this to be the most interesting and, consequently, enjoyable article out of the three; nonetheless, even though the topics it discussed were indeed appealing, the complexity of the text's vocabulary and the wording of its sentences felt way beyond my reach, in a way that made me question my own capabilities of academic and critical reading. Far from gratifying, this article felt tedious and discouraging as I spent most of the week trying to make sense of its contents through constant re-reading. Although the article was difficult to analyze, the relevance of the topics presented was not disregarded, and it was further and gratifyingly explained during the class by the professor, as I will describe further below.

Once I finished with the first reading, I continued with text number two, Translating Culture in Global Times, by Kramsch and Hua (2019). The title of the article was promising, its topics called my attention, and its writing style was easier to understand, but the time that I had to read it was limited due to different academic and work constrains. In this text, the authors state that the definition of culture that existed twenty years back as 'membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings' (Kramsch, 1998, p. 10), has evolved due to "today's mobility and the proliferation of online and offline contact zones (which) have multiplied the number of discourse communities that an individual

may belong to and share a common social space with" (Kramsch, C. & Hua, Z., 2019, p. 1). Lastly, the article directed towards the idea of intercultural communication as translation, regarded as the transcription of the sociocultural perceptions, values, and ideologies of one community to another.

Finally, I found myself rushing to analyze the document assigned for each individual group which, in my case, was English in public primary schools in Colombia: Achievements and challenges brought about by national language education policies, written by Correa and Gonzáles (2016). Although there was little time for me to go through this reading, this was the text that I could understand the most thanks to its simple writing style and my familiarity with the topics. The first section of the paper discussed some of the most important educational and language learning policies that have been implemented in Colombia throughout the years, from Ley General de Educación, 1994, to Programa nacional de inglés: Colombia Very Well, 2015-2025. The authors comment that although these programs were conceived as a necessary improvement to several different aspects of the educational system in the country, in practice most of them failed to deliver satisfactory results due to several reasons, being the two most prominent and common the lack of teachers' participation in the process of development of the programs, which then entailed major problems regarding teachers' capabilities of achieving the goals, and the employment of international entities to aid into the adoption of first-world countries' educational models, which were not suited for the country as they overlooked the different national contexts of education.

Afterwards, the second part of the research addressed the main challenges that primary school teachers in Colombia have to face, being divided between professional challenges and work-related challenges. Among the professional challenges, it was mentioned the lack of enough teachers prepared to teach English in primary schools, mainly because most educators prefer either to work in universities or in the private sector as these provide better salaries and resources

(Álvarez et al., 2011). The second major professional challenge for teachers is the poor design of PD programs due to their lack of coverage, their disarticulation or discontinuity, their usually inappropriate content, and their lack of homogeneity when addressing teachers' pedagogical needs. On the other hand, the work-related challenges that teachers must confront are diverse, yet considerably frequent. Among these, it is possible to find the scarcity of physical and technological resources, the large number of students per classes, the insufficient time of instruction that students have per week, and, last but definitely not least, the lack of students' motivation to learn the foreign language. It is worth mentioning that, after reading and analyzing the assigned reading, each group had to develop a mind map in order to explain it to the classmates during the lesson.

The day came for the first class of the course. After a short introduction given by the professor, we were assigned with the activity of introducing ourselves through the answers of five questions. After we finished sharing and reflecting on our answers, the professor gave us the program of the course which specified the topics and the activities that we would carry out during the four weeks of classes. The following day, in class number 2, we addressed the topics included in the readings that were assigned before the synchronous lessons. I must admit that I connected to the synchronous classes feeling quite underprepared due to my lack of knowledge on the topics of the first two readings. Gladly, the professor conducted the lessons in a highly encouraging and participative way, for the topics were covered through a series of conversations between the educator and the students.

The discussion throughout the class had a general focus on globalization. The class agreed on the fact that globalization is one of the tools that the countries in the north employ to perpetuate their hegemony while non-hegemonic globalization is the path to follow in order to achieve horizontal interaction between communities; that is, to give each and every community in the

world the place they deserve without placing a particular one on top of the others. Moreover, through these class discussions it was possible to shed light over complex concepts such as glocalization and glocal languages, conceiving the former as the phenomenon that occurs when a globalized product acquires specific characteristics to fit in users at a local level, and the latter as when this same effect happens to a globalized language. There was also a short talk about modernity, from which I learnt that this era started with the discovery of America, and we reached the conclusion that the countries in Europe would not be so strong nowadays if they had not raided the American population in the past.

Finally, for the last part of the class, the professor made use of the breakout rooms tool embedded into the Zoom platform to divide us in groups where each of us had a different reading from the ones assigned, so that we could share and explain the mind map with our classmates. Apart from explaining to my breakout-room partners the ideas behind the document that I read, as portrayed earlier in the present writing, I had the opportunity to listen to a classmate the article named "Teacher, ¿puedo hablar en español?" A reflection on plurilingualism and translanguaging practices in efl, by Ortega (2019). From the mind map presented and its subsequent explanation by the classmate, it was possible to enlarge our knowledge on the topic of plurilingualism, defined as the ability that an individual possesses to use different languages in a communicative and intercultural interaction, a practice that, according to my partner, indigenous communities have adopted since a very long time. Then, the characteristics of translanguaging were also discussed, taking code-switching, the ability to switch between languages during a conversation, as one of the main examples of this phenomenon.

2.2.2. Week 2

The second week of the course entailed new personal and academic challenges, distributed between the different activities and topics which were addressed before and during the synchronous lessons. On the one hand, I had a hard time trying to complete the readings that were assigned during the week, not so much because of their complexity, as it was the case with those from the previous week, but because of their length. The enlarged amount of workload allotted by the end of the academic semester had a direct negative effect over the distribution of my time to complete each of the assignments, so lengthy readings were a constant threat throughout the weekdays. On the other hand, the course's classes during that week were carried out using the hybrid modality, meaning that there was a majority of students in presential class while me and another classmate had to assist virtually due to personal constraints, which represented another series of issues during the synchronous periods.

Similar to the previous week, the professor assigned a group of general readings and a specific reading for each of the groups, which from this week on would be formed by three students each. During the week prior to the lessons, I began with the reading that was assigned to my group, Strengthening Local Identity by Writing Chronicles in the EFL Classroom, written by Flórez (2018) (see appendix B). This was a research study that encompassed the characteristics of Community Based Pedagogies. In general aspects, the researchers made a pedagogical intervention in an English class in order to analyze how the process of acquisition of a second language can be used to foster learners' recognition of their own culture. Through the intervention, students had to learn the language skills needed to interview citizens from their town, as part of the data collection process, as well as the knowledge required to write a chronicle, which was the final product of the project. The results showed that although at the beginning of the intervention the learners did not

know much about their town nor were they interested in learning about it, by the end of the project they encompassed a sense of belonging and appreciation towards their community. I found fascinating the project presented in this article, for it allowed me to conclude that the process of acquisition of a foreign language can also be employed as a mean to help learners understand and develop appreciation for the uniqueness of their own cultures, especially in comparison with the hegemonically globalized world where northern cultures usually take over southern communities in different ways.

The second reading that I addressed during the week, the first of the general readings, was a chapter from the book Understanding Second Language Acquisition, by Ortega (2009). The chapter's name was Development of Learner Language, and it focused on the concept of learners' interlanguage, defining this as a natural language system characterized by being systematic as well as variable that every learner creates at any moment during the language acquisition. Then, the chapter explained the different features that interlanguages have and the general process through which they are created, including topics such as the emerging theories, the emergence of the rules from the learners' experiences, and the fossilization of the language. From this reading, I found the idea of language fossilization highly interesting as I could not believe how, according to Selinker (1972), there was the possibility for a language learning process to be permanently stuck, with no further progress, regardless of continuous input exposure, high motivation, and constant practice.

The third reading was another chapter from the same book written by Ortega (2009), named Motivation. According to the author, "motivation is usually understood to refer to the desire to initiate L2 learning, and the effort employed to sustain it" (Ortega, 2009, p. 189). The author later introduced the concept of integrativeness, defined by Gardner (2001) as 'a genuine interest in

learning the second language in order to come closer to the other language community' (p. 5). The chapter concludes explaining that motivation to acquire the L2 largely depends on the positive perspectives that the learner has regarding the L2 context, community, and culture, as well as the sense of satisfaction with the teachers and the methodology of instruction (Ortega, 2009).

These topics were also discussed during the synchronous lessons; however, limitations encircled in the hybrid modality as internet problems and, more importantly, background noise and echo within the classroom, made it difficult for me to understand the dialogues that my partners in presential class were sharing. Nonetheless, I was able to follow the conversation about the northern and southern roles, both in the global panorama and within each country's community, from which it was possible to highlight the conclusion that the southern perspective is necessary to achieve an ecology of knowledges, where the knowledges of both north and south are joined in ways that help further development of the communities.

Subsequently, I really enjoyed the video that the professor shared with us concerning the topics of northern cultures, globalization, and non-hegemonic pedagogies which were newly addressed during the lesson. The video was a recording of some sort of conference, or seminary, in which professor Carlos Granados shared his knowledge regarding the meaning of decoloniality and how to conduct this process from our English classrooms. According to Professor Granados, decoloniality refers to the identification, problematization, and subversion of the complexes, mostly fictitious and internalized, that are remnants of southern countries' colonial past (Granados-Beltran, 2021). Then, Professor Granados provided examples of decolonizing techniques and activities that teachers can implement in the classrooms, among which it was mentioned the thorough analysis of the content being taught, the incorporation of counter-storytelling, the use of emancipatory practices guided by critical thinking, and the general decentralization of the colonial

episteme. Lastly, similar to other authors, Professor Granados agreed on the fact that decoloniality does not aim to turn hegemony around, placing southern countries on top, but to develop a global community where each culture can be recognized and taken into account globally.

Concerning the group readings from this week, I found very interesting the one based on the article Indigenous Students Learning English in Higher Education: Challenges and Hopes, written by Usma et al. (2018). According to the classmates presenting the reading, it was a report about the perspective that 300 indigenous students from a Colombian university had towards the English language and the language policies adopted by the university. The text explains that 241 indigenous students, the equivalent to the 79% of the total surveyed, considered English as necessary and important for their general learning process and their lives; however, I found myself amazed at the fact that 3% of the participants, around 10 indigenous students, rejected the acquisition of the English language as part of their fight against linguistic imperialism while supporting the revitalization of their native tongues.

2.2.3. Week 3

The workload during the third week in the Second Language Acquisition Theories class felt reduced in comparison to that of the previous week, yet the topics addressed during the sessions were as interesting as always. First of all, the reading that was assigned to my group was inspiring. Its name was Enacting Agency and Valuing Rural Identity by Exploring Local Communities in the English Class, written by Paredes-Mendez, Troncoso-Rodríguez, and Lastra-Ramírez (2021) (see appendix C). The article described an action research study that was carried out with thirty-three ninth grade students from a public school located in a rural area in Colombia. The research aimed to examine how students identified themselves as part of the rural community, more precisely as farmers, and how they took actions in order to improve their community and what

surrounds it. The article was based on the principles of critical pedagogy, community-based pedagogies, agency, and identity.

According to the authors, critical pedagogy is defined as a way of teaching that recognizes the learner as part of a cultural context and as a member of the community from a particular place (Paredes-Mendez et al., 2021). The article puts further stress on the idea that schools should foster students' critical thinking while prompting them to improve their surroundings. In a similar fashion, community-based pedagogies are defined by the authors as teaching practices that encourage learning in the local context, for they conceive the environmental space as the first and foremost resource in the learning process; moreover, Grunewald (2003, p. 3) comments that "place-based pedagogies are needed so that the education of citizens might have some direct bearing on the well-being of the social and ecological places people actually inhabit".

The article then addressed agency, defined as the ways in which a person motivated to act, make choices, and pursue goals which have a real transforming effect over the community (Paredes-Mendez et al., 2021); similarly, Muramatsu (2013, p. 62) states that having "a sense of agency enables individuals to make choices with regard to how they relate themselves with the social world, to take ownership in the pursuit of the enterprises in their lives, and to create opportunities for self-transformation". Lastly, identity was conceived as "the set of meanings that define who one is when one is an occupant of a particular role in society, a member of a particular group, or claims particular characteristics that identify him or her as a unique person" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 3). In this regard, the article puts emphasis on the concept of local rural identity:

> Local rural identity is tied to the activities that farmers and laborers do, their beliefs, their
>
> ways of doing their jobs, their understanding of the world, customs, cultural practices, and
>
> behaviors. (…) The identity of a farmer comes from the person who lives in rurality, works

on a farm and holds responsibilities related to physical work on the land (Paredes-Mendez et al, 2021, p. 128).

I really enjoyed reading how the participants of the study felt proud of their status as farmers and believed themselves to be very lucky to be born in areas surrounded by nature. After the researchers introduced topics related to environmental awareness and care, the students showed high levels of agency by taking part on ecological campaigns aimed to clean the areas of the community, and by helping a classmate to plant new crops in his family's farm after they lost it due to bad weather. The events narrated on the article made me reflect on the importance that critical pedagogy and community-based pedagogies have on the development of students with a strong sense of appreciation towards their society and the agency to improve it.

The synchronous virtual lessons began with the professor sharing pieces of advice regarding aspects to take into consideration when conducting a study, from which I was able to understand that it is necessary to provide enough time for the application of the research project in order for the results to have higher degree of certainty. In other words, short periods of time are not enough to determine if the results, whether positive or negative, are trustworthy. The following topic of discussion during the classes was that of public and rural education in Colombia. During the conversations, we were able to conclude that the media in the country has the custom of romanticizing the work of teachers in rural areas. This is a very negative manage of the information, for it highlights the work of teachers and students who have to endure grueling conditions trying to reach a minimum level of education instead of focusing on the fact that the government does not provide these communities with an appropriate educational system.

Another remarkable aspect of this week's classes was the sharing of my group's assigned reading from the week before. Due to time constrains, my group was impeded of presenting the

mind map during the classes of week number two, so the professor opened a space during week number three for us to deliver the explanation of our document. Similarly, during this week, my classmates presented the project proposals that they were preparing as part of their master's course. Even though I had connection issues during some parts of this section, it was very interesting listening to my partners explaining their ideas for research; moreover, it was a good opportunity for me to pay attention and take notes on the advises that the professor and the rest of the classroom gave them concerning their topics of research.

2.2.4. Week 4

The fourth and final week of classes in the Second Language Acquisition Theories course was, again, characterized by a compendium of mixed feelings. On the one hand, I felt relieved to have finished with the two subjects that were required for me as part of my final degree project; on the other hand, although I am very thankful for the opportunity that I received of joining the Language Didactics master's course, I just wish I had more time to continue learning from the professors and my classmates. I would like to point out that in spite of the fact that the schedules of the classes and their workload were highly demanding, evidenced in the short amount of time that I had to fulfil my personal and academic responsibilities, the gains in terms of knowledge and life perspectives were invaluable for my personal and academic development.

During this week, each of the groups had to look for a reading related to the topics that were studied during the classes. My group and I chose an article named Language Pedagogy and Identity: Learning from Teachers' Narratives in the Colombian ELT, written by Ubaque-Casallas (2021). The text narrates a research project in which two English teachers from two different universities in Bogotá, Colombia, provide their perspectives on the concept of professional identities through a series of interviews. The article first addresses the topic of colonial knowledge,

understood by Grosfoguel (2006) as the translation and centralization of the power and the epistemic knowledge in the western world, and by Walsh (2005) as the undermining and repression of methods and sources of knowledge different from those adopted by the western European scientific community. According to Ubaque-Casallas (2021), "in Colombia, ELT's coloniality has been tailored and made evident by adopting the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) as the national standard" (p. 36).

Then, the text focuses on the idea of pedagogy in language pedagogy, where it is stated that educational practices in Colombia are based in a top-down model (Cárdenas, Gonzáles, & Álvarez, 2010), in which the ministry of education imposes policies that come from international entities without considering the real context of education in Colombia. This model, together with the aforementioned coloniality of the ELT in Colombia, is portrayed in the teachers' preparation workshops that are offered by international entities (Cárdenas et al., 2010), and the excessive bilingual policies issued and imposed by the Ministry of Education (Gómez-Sará, 2017). The author concludes that "language pedagogy, in the Colombian ELT field, needs to (…) become a more personal response to exist in the history, context, and reality where teaching occurs" (Ubaque-Casallas, 2021, p. 37).

Finally, the article talked about the identities of English language teachers, from which it is worth mentioning that the identity of a teacher involves emotions and agency while it enacts practices that derive from personal beliefs regarding teaching, doing, and being (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Moreover, Ubaque-Casallas (2021) claims that "the identity of a teacher enacts many practices that depart from their personal beliefs of teaching, being, and doing" (p. 38). In a similar fashion, Izadinia (2013) concludes that as teachers continue to develop their personal and

professional sense of self-recognition, those changes in their identities are tied to their teaching and learning.

After finishing with my group's reading, I proceeded with the general reading that was assigned for the whole classroom prior to the last week of classes. The text was called An identity approach to second language acquisition, written by Norton and McKinney (2011). As the name implies, the main focus of the article was that of identity, which is a term that Norton (2000, p.5) uses "to reference how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future"; furthermore, Norton determines that there exist three features of identity that are relevant to the acquisition of a second language: "the multiple, non-unitary nature of identity; identity as a site of struggle; and identity as changing over time" (Norton & McKinney, 2011, p.74). Then, the authors explain that identity theorist disprove the idea that learners are either motivated or unmotivated to learn a language, for those affective elements are subjected to the multiple time and space variations of power relationships in their daily lives. Lastly, it was interesting to learn from the reading the two identifiable kinds of motivation: instrumental motivation, in which learners undergo the acquisition of the L2 for material and functional purposes; and integrative motivation, where learners wish to become part of a target community through the acquisition of its respective language.

Identity was a concept highly addressed during this final week of synchronous classes. In order to expand on the topic, the professor showed us a pair of videos where Professor Bonny Norton gave her insights on the topic of identity and its different relations with language. Bonny declared that language is a tool of communication that does not have an embedded type of identity, meaning that it is impossible to declare that all of the speakers of a certain language encompass

the same set of identity characteristics, as if they were derived from the qualities of the referred language. Norton continued to talk about language as a social practice, highlighting the different ways in which language can serve as a tool to show superiority or inferiority depending on its use; in this vein, she mentioned the fact that language learners are social beings with complex identities that vary through time, and those variations depend on their use of the language, their motivation, and their investment. Lastly, Norton declared that every time language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information, but they are also organizing and re-organizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world through identity construction and negotiation.

3. Expansion of knowledge: The use of the flipped learning strategy to boost students' motivation in the virtual environment

The current global health issue derived by the COVID-19 pandemic forced humanity to adapt to a new lifestyle in which face-to-face interaction was highly restricted, if not totally prohibited. Most of the governments around the world, in an attempt to minimize hazards among their populations, issued mandatory lockdowns and curfews in their cities, allowing only essential personal, as health workers, to transit around towns. Since the major part of society was forbidden from leaving their homes during an extended period of time, there were a number of changes in many different aspects of everyday life, the most important being the way in which the labor and educational fields were addressed.

According to Chukwuemeka et al. (2021), in order to maintain the regular access to education and avoid scholar stagnation among the students, most countries turned their attention to virtual learning. The use of video communication platforms like Zoom, Skype, and Google

Meets transformed into the way to access the daily classes, and online learning management tools such as Moodle, Schoology, and Google Classroom swarmed with teachers and students downloading and sharing videos, podcasts, PDF documents, and so on. However, both learners and educators found a new set of challenges when adapting to virtual learning as they discovered that this form of teaching does not completely work when employed with face-to-face class strategies. As Bozkurt and Sharma (2020) state:

> Online distance education involves more than simply uploading educational content, rather, it is a learning process that provides learners agency, responsibility, flexibility, and choice. It is a complex process that requires careful planning, designing and determination of aims to create an effective learning ecology. (p.2)

In the following paragraphs, it will be addressed the issues related to one of the most important factors in students' performance, that is, motivation, and how the use of the flipped learning strategy might prove beneficial to improve this aspect. As stated by Chou et al. (2021), "in the process of producing e-learning teaching materials, flipped learning shows a different technical mean and education method from the traditional ones" (p.2), which is the reason why it is believed that the flipped classroom teaching strategy could be useful to tackle problems associated to learners' motivation in the virtual educational environment.

3.1. Motivation

It is well known that motivation plays a key role in the process of acquiring and mastering any sort of knowledge. Bzuneck (2001) believes that motivation is an internal aspect within each student that, considering their preferences, serves as a beacon towards their objectives. In other words, students' learning process is benefited if learners' desires are aligned with the content they are receiving. The author further comments that teachers should focus their classes on activities

and strategies seeking to enhance students' motivation, for it is a decisive factor when considering scholar success (Bzuneck, 2001).

Beluce and Oliviera (2015) state that promoting students' motivation towards learning is one of the major difficulties that education workers have to face. This is not a mind-blowing statement for those who have experienced the educational environment from both the learner and the educator's perspective. On this matter, Beluce and Oliviera (2015) claim that:

> Educational situations reveal that uninterested or apathetic students, who make the minimum of effort in undertaking academic activities, who present little interest in deepening their level of knowledge or, further, show greater concern with grades and with obtaining certifications than with learning itself are not uncommon. (p.106)

Nonetheless, regardless of how difficult it might prove to be, Filcher and Miller (2000) highlight the fact that promoting learners' motivation is an educational goal that every educator should strive for, whether in the face-to-face environment or throughout the use of ICTs in the virtual learning scenario.

3.1.1. Motivation in the virtual learning environment.

Onrubia et al. (2010), state that, even before the current global health issue, the use of virtual learning environments was rising among educational institutions, transforming online learning into a more common scenario. These virtual spaces equipped teachers with a number of resources that made it possible to plan and conduct new types of strategies and activities, making use of the synchronous and asynchronous spaces given by online learning to provide students with both individual and collaborative activities employing ICTs (Adell et al., 2010; Onrubia et al., 2010). However, authors such as Mauri and Onrubia (2010), Palloff and Pratt (2002), Prado and Almeida (2007) and Reis (2009) assert that the use of these tools in the virtual learning

environments must not be separated from the identification and employment of their appropriate pedagogical input, for teachers should not apply the pedagogies they used in face-to-face classes to online learning. As Cheng and Jang (2010) suggest, teachers and educational institutions who do not take into account the particular features that online learning encompass might encounter students' demotivation as part of the negative outcomes from their practices.

A number of studies have been conducted to analyze how students' motivation in relation to online learning affect their performance within the virtual learning environments. Xiu (2020) claims that, similar to the traditional classrooms, "within online settings, learners' motivation is associated with successful learning" (p.45); similarly, Artino et al. (2010) and Artino and McCoach (2008) state that motivation is a key aspect of influence over students' performance in virtual education. The importance of teachers' attention on students' motivation is further highlighted by Reis (2009), who declares that the physical separation between learners and educators, the versatility of the online learning agendas, and the general characteristic of students' self-managing that online learning encompass, makes it necessary for students to have a higher degree of motivation than that which is required in face-to-face education. In the same fashion, Giesbers et al. (2013) asserts that self-motivation is needed for learners to be involved in online tasks, exalting its relevance in order to obtain positive academic results. Finally, Hartnett et al. (2011) claims that demotivated students are less likely to participate in virtual learning activities.

3.2. Flipped learning

The flipped learning strategy of teaching, also known as flipped classroom teaching, has already been explained in the previous sections of the document, yet it is possible to take advantage of the opportunity and provide further information on this strategy. According to Giannakos, Krogstie and Chrisochoides (2014), flipped learning enables students of using "technology to

access the lecture and other instructional resources outside the classroom to engage them in active learning during the in-class time" (p.23). Additionally, Xiu (2020) states that thanks to introducing the content and the materials during the asynchronous period previous to the lessons, class time can be employed to expand the knowledge through activities; the author then expands on this by explaining that "it requires students to independently learn materials and gain background knowledge before coming to class and allows instructors to arrange interactive activities to further emphasize learning concepts and clear up misunderstandings during class meeting time" (Xiu, 2020, p.44).

As suggested by Chou et al. (2021), flipped learning transforms students into active learners, aware of their own learning process, considering their learning interests to gain knowledge through more effective ways. Different studies conducted by Love et al (2014), Pierce and Fox (2012), Roach (2014), Smith (2013), and Tune et al. (2013), showed that the general perception that students have regarding the flipped classroom strategy is mostly positive; moreover, these authors concluded that there were noticeable improvements in students' learning performance when employing flipped learning rather than the traditional classroom. Nonetheless, Xiu (2020) declares that, although there exists a considerable body of literature focusing on flipped classroom, only a small amount of it "has focused on the relationship between the flipped learning environment and students' motivation" (p.43).

3.2.1. Flipped learning and motivation

In order to analyze whether the use of the flipped learning strategy helps to improve learners' motivation within the virtual learning environments, the existing literature will be reviewed. In general, the body of knowledge found about the relationship of the two mentioned items mostly agreed on the fact that there exists a positive relationship among them. As a starting

point, Bakla (2018) asserts that through the use of the flipped classroom and the many available ICTs that online learning provides, students are allowed to become active learners, responsible for their learning process which, in turn, promotes their motivation and performance.

Chang and Hwang (2018) found that learners' motivation to acquire knowledge was improved through the use of the flipped strategy of learning, for teachers became guides who directed students towards individual and collaborative activities that helped them to enlarge their knowledge. In addition, Karabulut et al. (2018) state that flipped learning not only increases students' performance, but also improves their collaborative skills while transforming their perspectives in regard to learning. Moreover, the research conducted by Chou et al. (2021) determined that the students who were given flipped learning instruction:

> present significantly higher language learning motivation and attitude than those in the control group. It reveals that flipped learning could help low-performance students enhance language learning effectiveness. In other words, flipped learning, compared to traditional teaching, could enhance students' learning motivation and learning attitude. (p.5)

Chen et al. (2017) concluded that flipped instruction had a positive impact over learners' motivation, which could also be evidenced through their improved acquisition of the content. In the same fashion, Chung and Lee (2018) claimed that "flipped learning has a positive effect on learning motivation because the curriculum and interest of the learners are increased due to the new teaching method and the design of the lesson is focused on the student" (p.34). Similarly, Van Vliet et al. (2015) declared that flipped learning prompted students to develop motivational strategies, peer learning, and critical thinking. Lastly, a number of authors have determined that there is a positive relation between flipped learning pedagogies and learners' motivation, perception of the content, engagement, and performance (Shih & Tsai, 2017; Chang & Hwang,

2018; Hsieh et al., 2017; Lucke et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2018; Zainuddin & Perera, 2019; Love et al., 2014; Pierce & Fox, 2012; Roach, 2014; Smith, 2013; Butt, 2012; Baepler et al., 2014; Marlowe, 2012; Strayer, 2012; Traxler & Riordan, 2003).

Although many authors have confirmed the benefits that flipped learning provides to students' motivation, some others have found different results in their studies. Authors such as Blair et al. (2015), Moran and Young (2014), and Yough et al. (2017) concluded that learners had mixed feelings concerning flipped classrooms, together with a lack of evidence over a possible increase in learners' motivation in comparison with traditional learning environments. Awidi and Paynter (2019) assert that the use of flipped learning activities and pre-recorded classes did not encourage students to complete further activities and readings, for this strategy of teaching was only motivating to a minority of students. Other studies have found that flipped learning actually presents a threat to students' motivation towards learning. Tse et al. (2019) and Zhonggen and Wang (2016) determined that some activities carried out in the virtual environment lowered learners' motivation, who then claimed to prefer traditional classrooms. Although a minority, Pierce and Fox (2012) reported that 38% of their participants did not desired to continue with flipped lessons; similarly, Bishop and Verleger (2013) encountered students who developed a high sense of aversion towards the flipped strategy of learning.

As it is evidenced in the previous literature, there are studies who defend the positive influence that flipped learning has over motivation, while some others warn about students disliking this learning strategy. It is believed this is due to the fact that, as Hsieh et al. (2017) declare, "the key to success of the flipped instruction is whether the students actually do the preparation work outside of class. If they do not, the teacher cannot engage them at an advanced level inside the classroom" (p.14). This statement agrees with authors such as Yilmaz (2017), Xiu

(2020), and Schunk and Pajares (2002), who highlight the importance of students' self-efficacy as a factor affecting their general performance and development in the virtual learning environments. Finally, it is important that teachers consider the fact that flipped learning should not follow the same activities and teaching strategies as traditional classrooms, for these might not have the desired effect over students and could backfire with negative results on the classroom.

4. Conclusions

For the development of the degree work in the Bachelor of Foreign Languages with Emphasis in English, it was presented the opportunity to choose between a diverse set of modalities offered by the School of Languages. From those modalities, the course in specialization, master, or doctorate programs was the most attractive one, and to have had the possibility to join it represented an extremely lucky opportunity, for this modality requires the master course to be available in the school and the approval of its director to have one of the very limited quotas. Similarly, having the chance to course the two subjects which were personally considered as the most interesting ones contributed to transform the general experience into something both fructiferous and enjoyable.

The first subject, Education and ICTs, provided extremely useful knowledge and tools to employ in the daily life as a language teacher. The professor in charge of the course was relaxed, yet keeping her professionalism during the classes, which turned them into very pleasant sessions learning about teaching methodologies and the technological tools that work the best with each of them. Together with practical activities where ICTs had to be used to accomplish the goal, these explanations of the topics proved invaluable for the professional development. A lesson that stuck

since the first classes of this course was that of measuring both teachers and students' access to technological tools before trying to implement them into the lessons, meaning that sometimes, in some contexts, the use of technology in class is still a distant reality.

The second subject, Language Learning Theories, encompassed a considerably larger amount of theory and pre-class reading in comparison to its predecessor. However, the professor in charge of the subject excelled at the direction and development of the classes, transforming them into spaces where the use of dialogue and debate was the main route towards the acquisition of the knowledge. The synchronous classes became the place where the students, together with the professor, shared their ideas regarding the previously addressed readings and its embedded topics; these conversations that helped to enlarge personal perspectives about the world while analyzing it with critical thinking. Topics such as decoloniality, colonization from below, horizontal globalization, coloniality in epistemology, and so on, were extremely attractive, possibly paving the way for further exploration in the future.

Lastly, in the section titled Expansion of knowledge: The use of the Flipped Learning Strategy to Boost Students' Motivation in the Virtual Environment, a review of the current literature on the relationship between flipped learning and its effects over learners' motivation was conducted. From this review, it was possible to determine that the majority of studies agreed on the positive influence that the flipped strategy has over students' motivation and general performance; however, a number of authors warned about negative results from implementing this teaching strategy, asserting that some learners might actually see their motivation diminished as part of their apathy towards the characteristics of its involved teaching instructions. It is found a sense of agreement with some authors who conclude that flipped classrooms require a major amount of students' self-efficacy in order to work properly, and add that is it important for teachers

to apply adequate activities and strategies when addressing students through the virtual learning

environments.

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Appendix

Appendix A. Mind map based on the Invisible Learning book.

Appendix B. Mind map based on the article Strengthening Local Identity by Writing Chronicles in the EFL Classroom.

Local identity
- It is the construction that all individuals make of their reality according to the society in which they live (Lin, 2009).
- This construction involves the economic, educational, and social realities of the context.
- It is characterized by a set of shared beliefs, traditions, and cultural practices.

Language and identity
- Language is closely related to the construction of identity.
- The use of a foreign language can help students to reflect on their own practices in order to make comparisons with the target culture.
- The use of local knowledge in English class as expressed by Cakir (2006) connects one's own culture with others in more dynamic scenarios.

Local Identity through English as a Foreign Language
- It is necessary to pay attention to the influence of the L2 culture in the process of construction and maintenance of the L1 cultural identity.
- It is necessary that students take a critical position, knowing and analyzing the target culture but always recognizing the mother culture they are part of.

Globalization
- It has facilitated a clash of cultures which is transforming the way we understand our own reality and identity.
- On one hand, it is considered a strategy from developed countries to establish a global socioeconomic society without considering local diversity.
- On the other hand, it is seen as an opportunity to show local practices in global scenarios.
- Globalization can make individuals more aware of their local identity and create within them the need to protect and preserve the features that make them particular and unique.

Strengthening Local Identity by Writing Chronicles in the EFL Classroom

- Strengthen local cultural identity in high school students.
- Promote students participation in the community.
- Facilitate a meaningful foreign language learning and promotion.

Language and culture
- Language is a strong determinant in the construction of local cultural identity as there is no culture separated from language or a language that does not consider any local culture in its development.
- Language is a way to communicate culture, to share the social features composing identity in order to develop intercultural competence where learners understand that there are several cultures but all of them are valuable and unique.

Writing as a Tool in the Construction of Identity
- Writing is a process in which students can become involved in social events and share those events with people who are not part of the same community.
- The purpose is not to abandon the local identity in favor of that of the target language, but understanding and being identified with one's own system of traditions in order to establish connection with others.

Impact at the students' level
- The students agreed that after the project, they felt that they knew more about the history of the town, and they valued more the things they currently had because they were not easy to obtain.
- The students stated that when they started to know more about aspects of the local identity such as history, politics, and values of the community, the interest to continue learning increased.

Impact at the community level
- Students discovered the values that people in Villanueva had and which were part of the town's local identity.
- The intergenerational dialogue created a sense of union among the people in the town. Young students were able to learn about eh history of the town and elder were able to share their knowledge on the matter.

Impact on the students' L2 competence
- The classwork activities made it possible to establish the impact the research process had on the students' language skills, especially in writing.
- Students had the opportunity to design and apply data collection instruments which helped them practice brainstorming to generate ideas, in addition to asking questions taking into account the interviewee and the style of the instrument, note-taking to obtain relevant information from oral sources in real time, and transcription of information to extract meaningful data to answer the questions posted.

Cross curricular impact
- Meaningful classroom activities are those which, even though linked to a definite subject and developed with specific purposes, became tools students can use in other disciplines and even beyond the boundaries of the classroom.
- Throughout the communication with grandparents and members of the community, students knew more about their history and traditions, and they could later deepen in this during the social studies class.

Appendix C. Mind map based on the article Enacting Agency and Valuing Rural Identity by Exploring Local Communities in the English Class.