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Using ICTs to boost students' motivation in the EFL classroom

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Abstract

At present, new technologies are very popular especially among young people and tools such as mobile phones and computers are a big influence in their everyday lives. Therefore, language teachers have begun to use Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) during their lessons in order to motivate students and get them involved actively in the classroom.

The aim of this project is to find out if ITCs boost secondary school students' motivation in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. With that purpose, (1) learners will use their mobile phones, laptops, and/or tablets in order to complete two online tasks (i.e. 'WebQuest' and 'Kahoot'); and (2) students will also complete a 'Self-Assessment Questionnaire'. Expected results show that students involve actively during the sessions and learn faster with the use of these online resources.

Finally, these expected results may make evident that the students who participated in this study might become more motivated because they enjoy working in a digital context with the aim of learning English.

Keywords: motivation, language learning, EFL classroom, online resources, ICTs, Kahoot, WebQuest

1. Introduction

In the last century, ICTs have become part of people's everyday life and in the recent years teachers have begun to use them with educational purposes. In today's society, students are interested in technology and working with computers and tablets to search for information is now replacing using books and encyclopedias. Therefore, teachers have to adapt their lessons to the current times by introducing ICTs in the classroom with educational purposes to make their lessons more appealing to the learners.

Kreutz and Rhodin (2016) claim that educational practices must be adapted to the cultural demands of the learners and, for that reason, ICTs should be introduced in the EFL classroom to increase the students' motivation. Although there are still teachers who think that ICTs should not be introduced in the EFL classroom because students may get distracted, previous studies have shown that there is a relationship between ICTs and students' motivation.

Lightbown and Spada (2013) state that those students who are motivated during the lessons are also more active and involved in the process of learning a language since they show interest in the subject matter.

The aim of this study is to find out if using ICTs in the classroom boosts students' motivation in the EFL classroom and, as a result, improves the students' language learning. In order to carry out this investigation, students had to work with their mobile phones or tablets and two computers provided by the teacher since those were the only resources available in the classroom. The focus of this study is on students and the connection between motivation, the use of ICTs and successful language learning.

In order to carry out this study two online resources have been designed: a 'WebQuest' and a 'Kahoot' activity. Also, a self-assessment questionnaire will be given to the students at the end of the study to gather some data about their opinion on working with ICTs in the EFL classroom.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Language Learning Autonomy

The process of learning a foreign language is different and also more difficult than acquiring a first language. First, there are many factors which may interfere with the process of learning such as the learners' characteristics or the environment in which the language acquisition takes place.

In the past, teachers were seen as the leaders or educators of the students and they played an active role in the classroom while students were supposed to follow the teacher's commands, playing a passive role.

Nevertheless, at present teachers are no longer educators but the students' facilitators and counsellors. That is, teachers have to encourage students to learn for themselves by providing them with the materials and giving feedback and advice when it is necessary. Therefore, agreeing with Girón-García (2013) the emphasis is no longer on the teacher but on the learner, who is more independent and autonomous. Thus, students are responsible of their own learning: they establish their own objective and try to achieve their goal by following their own strategies. This type of learning has been coined as "autonomous learning" or "learning autonomy" and it is used in several high schools and language centers. Overall, as Little (1995) states, "the basis of learner autonomy is that the learner accepts responsibility for his or her learning".

Hoffman (1991) states that even though the role of the teacher has changed, he/she remains the one who is the facilitator of learning and the person who gives the resources needed to promote the students' autonomous language learning (as cited in Girón-García, 2013:54), Therefore, if teachers want students to learn a language autonomously they have to make them feel motivated and interested on the subject matter.

2.2. Motivation and Attitudes in the EFL Classroom

As it has been said in the previous section, autonomous learners need to be motivated during the process of learning a foreign language. But, what is exactly motivation?

According to Klimova and Poulova (2014) "motivation is an important factor in the learning of foreign languages". Madrid et al. (1993) state that the process of learning a foreign language depends on the context and the conditions the learners are exposed to. Thus, motivation is an important factor to take into account when learning a language since those students who are interested in the subject matter also participate more during the lessons (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). In addition, Dörnyei (2001) states that motivation is closely related to success and, as a consequence, those learners who are actively involved in the lessons have a higher chance of succeeding learning a language.

Teachers play an important role in helping students to feel motivated since students will only show interest if the content of their lessons is relevant and easy for them to understand (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Agreeing with Girón-García (2013), learners will become motivated if the tasks are meaningful and they succeed doing them. Also, teachers must feel motivated themselves because that will create a good working atmosphere in the classroom and a positive attitude from students towards learning.

Deci and Ryan (2000) proposed a theory named "intrinsic-extrinsic", which differentiates two different types of motivation students feel during the process of learning a language. On the one hand, intrinsic motivation refers to the students' willing to learn a language just because they enjoy doing that. Therefore, intrinsic motivation may be closely related to the use of ICTs in the classroom since learning a language becomes more appealing and pleasant for students.

On the other hand, extrinsic motivation appears when a person carries out an activity in order to get a reward (Deci & Ryan, 2000). That is, learners are motivated to learn just because they do not want to fail or want something in exchange.

However, motivation is not only the only factor which affects language learning; the students' attitude in the classroom is also very important. According to Lightbown and Spada (2013), a positive attitude is closely related to the willing to continue learning and success. In addition, Girón-García (2013) states that positive attitudes are related to

successful language learning and those students whose attitude is positive are more likely to interact with speakers of the language. Dörnyei (2001) explains that there are some factors related to motivation that we have to take into account such as confidence, self-esteem and anxiety. According to him, these aspects are sometimes forgotten but they are connected to motivation since students need to feel confident and relaxed to complete a task successfully. For example, those students who are more confident or just enjoy learning languages will be eager to participate in the classroom while those who are insecure will probably feel anxious and avoid interaction.

2.3. New Literacies ICTs: Using WebQuest and Kahoot as Digital Resources for Language Learning

According to the Cambridge English Dictionary (2018), the concept 'literacy' can be described as "the ability to read and write" or "knowledge of a particular subject". Also, Kress (2003) states that the term 'literacy' has two different dimensions: linguistic (how people use language structures) and cognitive (cognitive understanding of the learner) (as cited in Girón-García, 2013:139).

Girón-García (2013) argues that the increasing use of the computers and the Internet in people's everyday lives has caused some changes in the term 'literacy'. Recently, "to be literate" means to be able to work and write through a screen and recently people are used to work with technology since their early childhood.

As a result, a new term called 'New Literacy' appeared and Girón-García (2013) defines it as "a new way of reading on the Web". That is, teachers and students are replacing the traditional paper format for screens and digital resources. In order to use new literacies, students must learn how to surf the Web correctly and use online tools such as the e-mail. Also, students have to know how to look for truthful information and evaluate if that data is valuable for the subject matter or not.

In this study, students have to surf different web pages to complete a series of activities and they have to evaluate which information is useful and which is irrelevant. The ICTs used to carry out this study are a 'WebQuest' and a 'Kahoot' since students were already familiar with them.

Adell (2004) defines 'WebQuest' as an interactive activity in which students have to use a variety of internet resources to complete some exercises in which they have to read, evaluate the information, use online tools, produce texts… etc. These online resources can be finished in one or three lessons and the teacher is the person in charge of guiding students through the process of completing the 'WebQuest'. In addition, he states that this online resource can be divided into five main sections: introduction, description of the task, the process of how to do the task, the evaluation method and a short conclusion. According to March (1998) one of the reasons why teachers use 'WebQuests' to complement their lessons is that students feel more motivated and interested in the subject matter since they have to carry out a meaningful task and use real resources from the Internet to work on the activities (as cited in Adell, 2004:6-7).

The second online resource used in this study is called 'Kahoot' and it is an online game similar to a trivia quiz which is very popular in the field of education. According to Icard (2014) this game engages students and makes them feel motivated during the lessons and that is essential for learning a language (as cited in Dellos, 2015:49). Creating a quiz is very easy: the teacher only has to write the questions, write the options students have to choose from (up to four) and select the one which is the correct answer. Also, there is also the possibility of uploading photos, videos or music in order to make it catchy and funnier. In addition, when students complete a 'Kahoot' the data of the correct and incorrect answers can be sent to the teacher's account and he/she is able to see the students' knowledge. According to Dellos (2015) "Kahoot creates a fun and competitive environment that promotes learning". He also states that this type of game-based learning is contributing in a positive way to the field of education since students' willing to learn is boosted when they are having fun.

3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

There are two different types of case studies that can be carried out: qualitative and quantitative. However, Stukát (2005) argues that a study cannot be purely quantitative

or qualitative but a mixture of both and it is common to use those two approaches since they complement each other (as cited in Kreutz & Rhodin, 2016: 12).

The research method used for this study is a qualitative case study. Bryman (1995) states that qualitative researches are related to participant observation and the analysis of the opinions of the subjects (as cited in Shareia, 2016:1).

This dissertation is based on the pedagogical results obtained from 53 students aging from 14 to 15 years old. During the lessons, students will be allowed to use their mobile phones and two computers to carry out the tasks asked by the teacher but always with educational purposes.

The main goal of this study consists of finding out if ICTs improve students' motivation and consequently language learning in the EFL classroom by analyzing the data taken from two different online activities ('WebQuest' and 'Kahoot') and a self-assessment questionnaire.

3.2. Context and Participants

Two 3rd ESO classes of the secondary school called I.E.S. Miquel Peris i Segarra were selected to carry out this study. The classes were composed by 26 and 27 students respectively (53 in total) and there were 30 girls and 23 boys aging from 14 to 15 years old. Both groups were composed by students from different nationalities: Spanish, Rumanian and Moroccan. There were no students who needed curricular adaptations since there were no students with special needs in these two groups.

3.3. Procedures and Data Collection

The research took place out during the students' regular English class time during the third trimester (April-June) of the 2017-2018 academic years. The study was carried out in four sessions of 55 minutes each and the English lessons took place on different days for each group. Although the students were not obliged to take part in the activities, they could add 15 extra points to their final marks if they agreed to participate in this study.

When the students finished the tasks on the 'WebQuest', the 'Kahoot' game and the self-assessment questionnaire, they handed these activities to the teacher in class or sent

them to her by email The activities were corrected by the trainee teacher and the tutor in order to draw conclusions and reach an agreement on the results.

3.4. Instruments for Data Collection

The main instrument for data collection in this study has been the 'WebQuest: Supernatural World' (see Annex I). Furthermore, others activities were designed to collect data from the students:

1. Kahoot: reviewing the Present Perfect and the Past Simple (see Annex II)

2. Self-Assessment Questionnaire (see Annex III)

3.4.1. WebQuest

This online resource was used in order to foster motivation towards learning a language since students worked in an innovative way using their mobile phones, tablets or laptops available in the classroom. For that reason, three different tasks were designed on the WebQuest: (1) watch three different videos and answer some questions related to them; (2) write an essay following the rules written on the WebQuest. Use the links provided by the teacher to find suitable information to write the compositions; (3) choose a film or a TV series related to the supernatural world and prepare an oral presentation (use a Power Point or Prezi).

 In this line, students could work on these activities either in class or at home. Also, they could ask questions to the teacher by writing posts on the WebQuest, so they were able to use this online resource to get immediate feedback. In addition, they were also allowed to deliver their homework either in class or via email.

3.4.2. Kahoot

In the past, teachers used written exams to evaluate the students' knowledge on a subject matter. However, at present there are other resources which can be used to grade students and are more appealing to them. In this study, Kahoot was used to replace the traditional written exam and see if the results would have been better due to a higher level of motivation.

Since students had to study the present perfect vs. the past simple verb tenses, the answers included in Kahoot were related to the verb tenses mentioned above. The students were asked to form groups of three or four people and give a name to their team. After that, they chose the answer the perceived correct answer and the data was stored in the teacher's account. In this line, the results could be seen and analyzed to study if online resources actually boost students' foreign language learning.

3.4.3. Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Moreover, a self- assessment questionnaire (see Annex III) was created in order to find out the students' opinion about working with the 'WebQuest' and 'Kahoot' activity since it was their first time working with ICTs in the EFL classroom. It was totally anonymous and they were asked some questions about their motivation during the process and if they learned faster working with ICTs in class rather than working with books and the blackboard. Also, there was a blank space at the end of the questionnaire so the students could write any comments on the lessons such as things they liked or things that could have been improved.

The questionnaires were handed to the teacher to gather all the data and later on analyze the results obtained.

4. Didactic Proposal

4.1. Introduction

In this new technological environment, teenagers are considered everyday users of different types of electronic devices such as computers, laptops, smartphones, tablets, game consoles… etc. Also, technology has changed the way of teaching because now teachers are able to make their classes more dynamic and motivational for their students.

Therefore, teachers have to adapt their lessons by introducing ICTs in the classroom to boost students' motivation. Hence, two activities were designed: a 'WebQuest' (see Annex I) and a 'Kahoot' game (see Annex II). After talking with the supervisor about

the idea, she said that students would enjoy these activities since they had not worked with ICTs in the EFL classroom before.

The didactic proposal was based on 'Unit 4: Communication' from the Students' Book 'Spectrum'. The contents included in the unit were: present perfect vs. past simple, adjectives ending with –ed or –ing and some adverbs of time used with the present perfect (already, just, yet).

4.2. Objectives and Basic Competences

The students' learning objectives of this didactic proposal were:

> ➢ To know the difference between the Present Perfect and the Past Simple.
> ➢ To learn some time expressions which come together with each verb tense.
> ➢ To use correctly the adjectives ending in –ing and –ed.
> ➢ To be able to produce a short written text using the grammar points mentioned above.
> ➢ To be able to make an oral presentation using the contents of unit 4.
> ➢ To be familiar with some new vocabulary about the supernatural world.
> ➢ To improve some of the main skills such as writing, reading and speaking.
> ➢ To use ICTs with educational purposes.

The teacher's objectives were:

> ➢ To make students use ICTs tools for learning purposes.
> ➢ To work on different skills such as writing, reading and speaking.
> ➢ To foster students' motivation by making the lessons interactive and dynamic using ICTs.
> ➢ To analyze the difference between the two groups (3ºA and 3ºB).

On the other hand, the basic competences that we worked with were:

> ➢ Competence in Linguistic Communication (CLC)
> ➢ Treatment of Information and Digital Competence (TIDC)
> ➢ Social and Civic Competence (SCC)
> ➢ Cultural and Artistic Competence (CAC)
> ➢ Competence in Self-sufficiency and Personal Initiative (CSPI)

4.3. Contents and Timing

This DU, named Supernatural World, was carried out in three sessions of 55 minutes each. Through these three sessions, students worked on activities which reinforced their writing skills, oral skills and reading skills. As it has been said before, the grammar points which they dealt with were the present perfect vs. the past simple and the adjectives ending in –ing and –ed. Finally, in the last session they were asked to perform an oral presentation using the grammar and the vocabulary seen in class during the two first sessions. Also, there was extra session in which the students played a Kahoot game and completed a self-assessment questionnaire.

4.4. Activities

→ **Sequence of activities (3 sessions)**

SESSION 1: PRESENT PERFECT VS. PAST SIMPLE

Specific objectives
- To know the difference between the Present Perfect and the Past Simple.   - To be familiar with time expressions used with the Present Perfect: already, yet, just, ago, since, ever and never.   - To be familiar with time expressions used with the Past Simple: ago, last year, yesterday, in the past, when I was young…etc.   - To be able to answer some questions using the verb tenses seen in class.   - To use the WebQuest.
Basic competences
- TIDC: Treatment of Information and Digital Competence   - CLC: Competence in Linguistic Communication
Materials and curricular resources
- <u>Human resources</u>: the students and the teacher.   - <u>Material resources</u>: computer, internet connection, projector, blackboard, chalk, paper and pen.

| | • Facilities: the language classroom. |
| | |

- Facilities: the language classroom.
- Organizational Resources: the teacher will ask students to sit in pairs.

Timing

- Explanation of the WebQuest (6 min)
- Grammar explanation: Present Perfect vs. Past Simple (10 min)
- Explanation of time expressions (10 min)
- Time for students to answer the questions (20 min)
- Correction of the questions (9 min)

Activity Development

First of all, the teacher explains what a WebQuest is and shows the students the WebQuest they will work with during the sessions. Also, he/she introduces the topic of the supernatural world.

After that, the teacher begins the lesson with the explanation of the differences between the Present Perfect and the Past Simple, writing in the blackboard some sentences and drawing some pictures to illustrate the examples. Then, he/she adds the time expressions used with both verb tenses and writes some examples on the blackboard to make sure that the students have understood the explanation.

Finally the teacher gives them time to read and answer the questions written on the WebQuest and corrects them at the end of the lesson. If they can't finish all the questions in class, they will have to answer them at home and bring them the following day.

Evaluation

The teacher evaluates the student's positive attitude during the class and their participation when correcting the questions.

SESSION 2: ADJECTIVES ENDING IN –ING AND –ED

Specific objectives

- To know the difference between the adjectives ending in –ing and –ed.
- To use correctly those adjectives in a sentence.

• To be able to produce a short text using the grammar points seen in this sessions and the previous one.
• To learn some new vocabulary about the supernatural world and supernatural creatures.
• To use the WebQuest.

Basic competences

• TIDC: Treatment of Information and Digital Competence.
• CLC: Competence in Linguistic Communication.
• CAC: Cultural and Artistic Competence.

Materials and curricular resources

• <u>Human resources</u>: the students and the teacher.
• <u>Material resources</u>: computer, internet connection, projector, blackboard, chalk, paper and pen.
• <u>Facilities:</u> the language classroom.

Timing

• Correction of the questions from session 1 (5 min).
• Explanation of the difference between the adjectives ending in –ing and –ed (20 min).
• Explanation of the second task: create your own creature (5 min).
• Explanation of some useful vocabulary about supernatural creatures (5 min).
• Time for students to ask questions about the second task (5 min).
• Explanation of the third task: oral presentation in groups (15 min).

Activity Development

First of all, the teacher begins the lesson correcting the questions that weren't done the day before.

After that, he/she explains the difference between the adjectives ending in –ing and –ed and writes some examples in the blackboard. Then, the teacher draws some pictures on the blackboard to make the explanation more visual.

In the second part of the class, the second task of the WebQues is explained: students have to write in a piece of paper a brief description of a monster using the grammar seen in class during the last two sessions. Also, they have to draw a picture of their monster and give it a name. They are asked to finish their creature at home and hand it to the teacher the following week or send it to him/her by email.

Finally, the teacher explains the third activity: they have to make groups of 3 or 4 people and prepare an oral presentation. They must choose any film or TV series that deals with supernatural creatures and explain it briefly in front of the class.

If they have any doubt, they have all the information written in the WebQuest, so they can go there and see the steps they have to follow.

Evaluation

The teacher evaluates the students' essays by hand and grades them depending on the severity of the errors. The grades will range from A+ (up to 3 errors) to C+ (more than 13 errors).

SESSION 3: ORAL PRESENTATION

Specific objectives

- To be able to speak in front of the rest of the class.
- To be able to use the grammatical points learnt in the previous sessions.
- To foster group work.
- To foster motivation using ICTs.

Basic competences

- TIDC: Treatment of Information and Digital Competence.
- CLC: Competence in Linguistic Communication.
- CAC: Cultural and Artistic Competence.
- SCC: Social and Civic Competence.
- CSPI: Competence in Self-sufficiency and Personal Initiative.

Materials and curricular resources
• <u>Human resources</u>: the students and the teacher.   • <u>Material resources</u>: computer, internet connection, projector.   • <u>Facilities:</u> the language classroom.
Timing
• Oral Presentations (55 min).
Activity Development
This whole class will be devoted to the oral presentations. The students will have to talk 4 minutes each group, they will have to plug their pen drives in the computer or access their emails to open their Power Points.
Evaluation
The teacher evaluates the students using an assessment rubric.

EXTRA SESSION: KAHOOT AND QUESTIONNAIRE

Specific objectives
• To express their opinion about the didactic unit and the teacher's explanations.   • To review the grammar points of unit 4.   • To foster motivation using ICTs.   • To foster group work
Basic competences
• TIDC: Treatment of Information and Digital Competence.   • CLC: Competence in Linguistic Communication.   • SCC: Social and Civic Competence.   • CSPI: Competence in Self-sufficiency and Personal Initiative.

Materials and curricular resources
- <u>Human resources</u>: the students and the teacher.   - <u>Material resources</u>: computer, internet connection, projector, paper, pen and mobile phone.   - <u>Facilities:</u> the language classroom.
Timing
- Explanation of the questionnaire (5 min).   - Time for students to complete the questionnaire (10 min).   - Play kahoot (20 min)
Activity Development
The students fill a self-assessment questionnaire (see Annex III). They have to answer sincerely if they have enjoyed the last three sessions or not and evaluate the activities. After that, they play an online game called 'Kahoot' (see Annex II) designed by the teacher to review all the contents of unit 4.
Evaluation
The teacher evaluates the students' motivation while playing the 'Kahoot'.

4.5. Conclusions

In general terms, most students were interested in the activities included in the Didactic Proposal. They were actively involved in the lessons and most of them wanted to continue working with ICTs in the future.

Regarding the WebQuest, they enjoyed doing the third activity, which was the oral presentation. They had to design their own Power Point and present a topic they liked in front of their classmates, so they were motivated and happy while working on it. Although some of them were really nervous, the final results were successful and most of them were graded with high marks.

In addition, another activity which students really enjoyed was 'Kahoot'. They were motivated while doing it since they had to answer the questions using their mobile phones. This was a perfect online activity to review the contents of the unit.

To sum up, the students agreed that both the WebQuest and Kahoot game were interesting and interactive activities which they would like to do again. Overall, most of them were involved during the lessons and using ICTs such as their tablets and mobile phones promoted their motivation towards learning English.

5. General Conclusions and Further Research

The aim of this study was to find out if working with ICTs in the classroom boost students' motivation towards learning a foreign language. In order to carry out the study, two online activities were designed: (1) a WebQuest, (2) and a Kahoot activity. They had never worked with ICTs in the classroom before, so this study tried to determine if those kind of activities were appealing to them or not. Finally, they completed a self-assessment questionnaire which helped me to know the amount of students who enjoyed the lessons.

During the implementation of the didactic proposal in the classroom, the students were actively involved in the lessons, therefore it could be seen that ICTs had a positive and motivating effect on students' foreign language learning. The students' opinion was positive and they said they were happier using ICTs rather than the book. Hence,

teachers should take advantage of that and introduce ICTs in the classroom to make learning English more appealing to students.

Given that the data gathered from the activities has not been fully analyzed, there are no scientifically proven results. However, expected results may show that there might be a close relationship between working with ICTs in the EFL classroom and the students' motivation towards learning the language.

When conducting this study, the focus was on the relationship between motivation and working with ICTs in the EFL classroom. Nevertheless, future research could be done on finding out if there is a connection between ICTs and students' motivation in other subjects, such as Science or History. Finally, suggested further research would be studying the existence of a possible relation between designing and implementing tasks in a digital context that help students learn any subject successfully.

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