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Alternative for teaching English and preparing students for certification.

Alternativa para la enseñanza del inglés y la preparación de los estudiantes para la certificación.

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Abstract

The development of the teaching- learning process of Cuban Higher Education considers the use of English Language of great importance for professionals, starting from the concept that their complete integral formation implies not only the awareness of the professional profile, but the skill of using English efficiently and the most advanced technological tools. English language teaching has gone through many stages, and we have worked with many syllabuses, today a new one is implemented in all Cuban Universities, which is Face2Face; it is very well designed but it needs motivated and creative activities to develop a positive teaching learning process. The present work pretends to present a Didactic Alternative to reinforce the English Language, therefore the quality of the English teaching is improved and it will support the discipline methodological activity for both, professors and students will have an useful tool (Complementary Workbook) for the learning process preparation and it will be more motivated.



This work gives the students the possibility of evaluating their progress because the exercises are very well organized, with different sections.

Keywords: didactic alternative; teaching learning process; complementary workbook; english.

Resumen

El desarrollo del proceso de enseñanza –aprendizaje en la Educación Superior Cubana considera el uso de la lengua Inglesa de vital importancia para todo profesional, partiendo del concepto de que su formación integral implica no sólo el dominio del perfil profesional sino también, la habilidad de utilizar con eficacia el inglés y las herramientas tecnológicas más avanzadas. La enseñanza del idioma inglés ha transitado por varias etapas y se ha trabajado con varios programas hasta el día de hoy que se implementa en todas las Universidades Cubanas la Serie Face2face, muy bien diseñada, pero necesita actividades creativas y motivadoras para que se realice un proceso de enseñanza- aprendizaje desarrollador. Es por ello, que el presente trabajo tiene como objetivo presentar una alternativa didáctica para reforzar la enseñanza del idioma inglés. Por lo tanto se mejora la calidad de la enseñanza del idioma y apoyaría la actividad docente-metodológica de la disciplina, tanto los profesores como los estudiantes contarán con una herramienta útil (Cuaderno complementario) para la preparación del proceso docente y podrán realizar una auto preparación más motivadora. Este trabajo les brinda a los estudiantes varias vías para evaluar su progreso ya que los ejercicios están muy bien gradados con varias sesiones.

Palabras claves: alternativa didáctica, proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, cuaderno complementario, inglés.



Introduction

In recent years, the essential priority of educational policy has been aimed at forming citizens with a comprehensive general culture and with a humanistic, scientific and creative thinking, which allows them to adapt to changes in context and solve problems of social interest with a ethics and a critical and responsible attitude, in tune with the needs of a society that struggles to develop and maintain its ideas and principles in the midst of enormous difficulties and challenges. (V National Seminar, 2004)

What was raised by university students at the FEU congress (2018) about the insufficient English learned by them from primary to twelfth grade, makes us reflect on the need to continue the search for ways that promote a better development in the formation of the linguistic skills necessary in learning English as a foreign language. On the other hand, the inclusion of English as a priority subject since 2016 poses new challenges those teachers of this subject can implement when teaching classes.

The use of foreign languages in the process of training specialists has become an indispensable condition for the preparation of contemporary professionals. At present, the teaching of English is part of the study plans that govern the Higher Education Centers of Cuba.

It is an urgent need of our country to have comprehensive professionals who not only develop successfully in their specialty, but who are able to communicate in more than one language, especially in the English language. That is why the Ministry of Higher Education of the Republic of Cuba (MES) adopts the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2002) as the common basis that guides the national policy on the design of standards, courses of foreign language, assessment instruments, teaching methodologies and teaching materials.



That is why, university students must obtain and demonstrate the communicative competencies that express their abilities to understand and express themselves orally and in writing in English with efficiency at an A2 level and use English as an instrument of academic, work and research training in their respective careers that allow them to expand their knowledge and general culture, relate to the world, and express their national identity.

Any language is difficult and easy. Language serves many purposes. Absence of language is mere dearth of communication. The role that language plays is immense, since time embarked. Identified as the need of the hour, the four necessities in language or commonly known as the four skills- Reading, writing, listening and speaking plays a vital role in any language learning quest... The four skills are the pinnacles of language which will take you to greater heights. They are separate yet bound together with an inseparable bond.

Teachers should set high standards for an ESL classroom. They should work to create the necessary condition for students to learn effectively and reach the desired outcome. For the teaching of English to be successful, the four skills, reading, listening, speaking and writing, should be integrated in an effective way. These skills should be addressed in a way that helps students meet the standards you set for them and develop their communicative competence gradually. This encompasses: **Listening and speaking**: these two skills are highly interrelated and work simultaneously in real life situations. So, the integration of the two aims at fostering effective oral communication. This integration will assure real-life and purposeful communication. **Reading and writing**: they form a strong relationship with each other as skills. They are tools for achieving an effective written communication. Students need opportunities to develop their reading and writing skills. Developing students' competencies in reading and



writing requires exposing students to gradually challenging reading materials and writing tasks. The aim is making students read and write effectively.

In fact, the integration of listening and speaking with reading and writing will make learners good listeners, speakers, readers and writers so as to be able to communicate effectively. The mastery of these skills is a gradual process. Teachers, for instance, should expose learners to gradually challenging tasks and material.

When a teacher makes use of activities that have been specially designed to incorporate several language skills simultaneously (such as reading, writing, listening, and writing), they provide their students with situations that allow for well-rounded development and progress in all areas of language learning. In this section we will discuss the 'four skills' as well some activities that can be used in the classroom to promote all four. Through daily activities, teachers provide learners with opportunities to develop each skill: students listen (to the teacher use the target language, to a song, to one another in a pair activity), speak (pronunciation practice, greetings, dialogue creation or recitation, songs, substitution drills, oral speed reading, role play), read (instructions, written grammar drills, cards for playing games, flashcards) and write (fill-in-the-blank sheets, sentences that describe a feeling, sight or experience, a dialogue script, a journal entry).

This approach, however, does not combine the four skills so that they can be used together to reach the same end (i. e. language development that is well-rounded).

At present, adapting to the contents of the study plans and developing excellent didactic material to meet the objectives of the teaching-learning process set out by class and by unit seems simple. However, it is necessary to consider the purpose that academic work contemplates in front of the classroom, and for those who do not know it they could at a given moment,



instead of approaching the purposes, move away and destroy the pedagogical relationship so essential in the teaching process learning.

In this sense, given the inadequacies in the knowledge of the four skills in the students in the placement and certification exam in English, which is applied every semester at the University of Matanzas, expressed through: inaccuracies to select the information relevant specific of written texts; many difficulties with listening comprehension, inadequacies when writing texts with different characteristics, as well as expressing oneself orally about different topics of daily life, based on the demands of the specific training processes, it is declared as a scientific problem of In this research, the insufficiencies in the work and exercise of the four skills for the development of English in students for a level A2, which limit the contextualized domain of the language.

That is why, the present work aims to design a teaching medium, based on a complementary exercise book in English for an A2 where all the skills of the language are integrated. It consists of 12 units, all related to the book of the Face2face series that is being worked on, presenting creative and motivating exercises that inspire students to have another reaction to learning the English language.

Population and Sample

A diagnosis was carried out to 26 students, which gave the possibility to observe the mode of performance, that is to say, to know about the behavior of the students that were taken as a sample. In this way, this diagnosis was taken as one of the first steps for a strategic project carried out in the research field.

This proposal was implemented in the group 11 of Tourism from Matanzas University, where an initial diagnosis was applied; it consisted in an oral and written evaluation that



confirmed the existing insufficiencies in communicative exercises using the four skills in the teaching learning process of English. (It includes educational games, work in pairs, dramatizations, dialogues in chains, role plays, work with songs among others, with the aim of encouraging students, who are not of the English language career, to communicate with greater ease, security, without fear, and turn language classes into a developer environment, pleasant for teaching-learning, using multiple intelligence, because it allows the student to interact with their peers and be really they, each person is intelligent in different spheres so they can demonstrate that intelligence in different ways and also self-evaluate their own learning in an enjoyable way).

The dialectic-materialistic method has been the general method used to guide this research although the following theoretical and empirical methods have been also used:

Theoretical methods

The historical-logical: It was used to determine the trajectory and characteristics of the teaching-learning process of the English Language.

The inductive-deductive is used to establish regularities and particularities of the object and the action field of this research to generalize them.

The analytic-synthetic: It is applied for the study of documents, to go deeply into the essence of the elements that characterize the use of creative activities in the teaching learning process of the English Language and the investigations that have been developed by different authors about the theme of this research.

Empirical methods

The application of the empirical method made possible the diagnosis of the use of creative activities to motivate students in the teaching-learning process in order to obtain the needed data for its comprehension:



The observation was carried out to check if the activities are used in the teaching-learning process of the English Language on lesson in the Languages Department before the application of the alternative.

The survey was used to obtain information about the students and professors 'opinions.

Percentage Analysis was used to make the percentage analysis of the data obtained.

The Statistics v.8, software was used for the statistical analysis, which showed the possibility of applying the proposal, therefore, the growth of the levels for teaching English and the preparation of the students who participated in the research.

Analysis of the results

By nature, the teaching of languages at an early age is often seen by the teacher as the center of the process, because this is the model to correct the use of language as a goal. At the same time, we know that vocabulary and syntax require a lot of practice in the classroom, where time may be limited by various external factors. When the teacher ceases to be a center and becomes a guide-facilitator, the student's disposition flourishes, the student is more active and communication develops spontaneously, performing role plays, work in pairs, groups, etc., and they feel safer to experiment and motivated to participate more freely.

As Chaney (1998) refers, speech is a process of construction and exchange of use of verbal and non-verbal symbols in a varied context. Speech is a crucial part of teaching - second language learning. English teachers have continued to teach the ability to speak only as repetition or memorization of dialogues. Therefore, today's world requires improving the communication skills of students, because only in this way, students can express themselves and learn how to follow cultural and social rules in each communicative circumstance.



As a general rule, learning a foreign language occurs optimally when the student likes the language they are learning, as well as the people who speak it as their mother tongue, likes the culture of the new language and wishes to become familiar with and / or integrate into the society in which the language is used.

On the other hand, according to Da Silva (2005), when developing a second foreign language you need something more than a good ear, a good experience, a verbal intelligence, you also need to have a positive socio-affective motivational variable, then, the aptitude favors the social context, the attitudes, the motivation and the academic performance of the student influence in their development of a foreign language.

The brain has been shown to be much more active when it learns by interacting with others. Therefore, it can be said that putting into practice different creative exercises and interactive activities is an effective way to give the student the possibility of using the language in a meaningful and communicative way.

As facilitators of the teaching-learning process we need to determine which objective is most relevant to our students. Our goals should include:

- Understand the skills students need to develop communication.
- Create clear learning objectives that aid skill development.
- Motivate students with dynamic, creative, content, contextualized activities linked to the learning objective.

The proposed alternative presents a complementary notebook with several exercises related to the units of the textbook with which it works (Face2face).

It has 12 units, each one has different exercises integrating the four skills used in the English teaching learning process.



This is an example of one unit:

Unit 10 (Second edition.) Semester 2 6 hrs.

Topics:

Stay fit and healthy

What's she like?

I feel ill.

Winter blues.

Objectives: Students should be able to:

- get familiar with the phrases used for health and fitness
(Tips on how to stay fit and healthy)
- ask and give information about frequency
- talk about people appearance and character.
- talk about health (health problems and treatment)
- describe weather and seasons.

Approaches and Methods:

- Presentation, practice,
- Communicative approach
- ESA: Engage-Study-Activate

Means:

- Pictures and exercises from student's textbook.
- Recording material from de CD-ROOM

Values to be developed:

- Respect, habits of living together and good manners. Healthy habits.



Content

Review: Asking people and saying what they want to do.

Real world: Talking about health

Vocabulary:

- Verbs phrase; frequency expressions
- Appearance and character (Adjectives- their connotation)
- Health problems and treatment.
- Seasons: weather, word building

Grammar:

- Imperative. Should/ shouldn't.
- Questions with like. (What does she/he look like? / What is she/he like?)

Listening:

- Sentence Stress (3)
- The letters /æ/ /ɑ:/ /e/ /ð/

UNIT 10

Enter a “question of the day.

During each school day’s opening activities, ask a question to encourage talk. (You can even write one on the board so your students can read it and start thinking about their answer as soon as they come in.) Start with simple one-part questions like “What is your favorite subject?” If a student doesn’t answer in a complete sentence, model a complete sentence and ask the student to repeat your model. Once your students are successfully answering these simple questions in complete sentences, move to two-part questions that require more complex answers: “What is your favorite subject? Why?”



1. Ask the corresponding questions to the following sentences.

a. _____?

Sandra is slim, young, of average height and red hair.

b. _____?

Jack is friendly and talkative.

c. _____?

Mary's eyes? They are blue.

d. _____?

Samuel is short, plump and has dark eyes.

e. _____?

George and Rose are easygoing and nice.

f. _____?

No, not black. She has light brown hair.

2. Complete the sentences use the correct forms of the words from the box.

Call	see	go not	not drink	listen
Take	not worry	not eat		

a. Call a dentist.

e. _____ to relaxing music.

b. _____ too much.

f. _____ a doctor.

c. _____ two aspirine.

g. _____ coffee.

d. _____ to school

h. _____ any candy



3. Match the correct words to complete the sentences.

1. Angelina volunteers at the hospital. She`s very _____
2. Stan drives too fast and stays out late. He`s _____
3. Anna never gets angry. She`s always _____
4. Don hates a messy room. He likes being _____
5. Tad avoids speaking out in class. He`s _____
6. City life is crazy, I feel more _____
7. Lina insists on doing things her way. She`s _____
8. Barry never hides his true feelings. He`s always _____

- a. wild and crazy
- b. kind and generous
- c. shy and reversed
- d. friendly and outgoing
- e. calm and cool
- f. neat and tidy
- g. honest and sincere
- h. laid-back and relaxed
- i. strong and independent

4. Use the vocabulary you know to write sentences about people you know very well.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____



5. Work in groups

Write a problem on a piece of paper. Then write an advice for the problem on a different piece of paper. Exchange the papers and select the problem with the correct advice

Ex I'm homesick call your family

6. Group work

Do you eat anything special on new year`s day for good luck? Do you do anything special? Tell your partners.

7. Read the following article on getting fit and mark sentences 1 to 7 T (True) or F (False).

My first piece of advice to people who want to start getting fit is: *don't* buy an exercise bike. Typically, people who buy them use them for a week or so and then forget about them. They are effective if they are used regularly but you need to be determined. Most people will find it much easier to go for a gentle jog around the park. As well as being easy to do, jogging is also relatively cheap compared to most other sports. You don't need to buy expensive clothes if you're just going running around the park or on the beach.

The main thing is that they're comfortable, and that they keep you warm in the winter and cool in the summer. There is one piece of equipment, however, that you will have to spend time and money on, and that's your running shoes. Remember that you are not looking for a fashion item, but for something that will support your feet and protect you from injury. They can be expensive, but if they are good quality they will last you a long time. It's always best to get expert advice, and the best place for that is a sports shop.



As for the actual jogging, the secret is to start gently, and not to do too much at the beginning –especially if you haven’t had any exercise for a long time. Try a mixture of walking and running fourteen minutes about three times a week at first. Once you are happy doing that you can then start to increase the amount you do gradually. After a few months you should hope to be able to run at a reasonable speed for twenty minutes three or four times a week. It’s important that you feel comfortable with whatever you do. If you do, you’ll start to enjoy it and will probably keep doing it. If it makes you feel uncomfortable, you’ll probably stop after a short time and return to your bad habits. In any case, training too hard is not very effective. Research has shown that somebody who exercises for twice as long or twice as hard as another person doesn’t automatically become twice as fit.

- a. Most people don’t use exercise bikes for very long.
 - b. Exercise bikes don’t get you fit.
 - c. You should keep warm at all times when you are jogging.
 - d. Running shoes don’t have to be fashionable.
 - e. You should start jogging by walking for ten minutes.
 - f. You should expect to feel uncomfortable when jogging.
 - g. You won’t necessarily be a lot fitter by running twice as fast.
8. Choose a place you know and make your own mind map. Be sure the main idea is general and the map contains several supporting ideas.
- a. Write a paragraph based on the ideas in your mind map.



9. Your friend, Chris, has invited you to a special party which he is organizing for your college teacher. Write an email to Chris (no less than 80 words). In your email, you should

- accept the invitation
- suggest how you could help Chris prepare for the party
- ask Chris for some ideas for a present for your teacher.

All units begin with a motivating activity, be it a warm up (motivating activity), a song, a didactic game, among other activities that were taken into account to motivate the student; Then it continues with a series of creative exercises managing to integrate the four skills such as dialogues, group work, partner work, text comprehension, letter writing, emails, texts, making these exercises prepare the student for their future certification.

The following work proposes a series of creative and motivational activities that include educational games, work in pairs, dramatizations, dialogues in chains, role plays, work with songs among others, with the aim of encouraging students, who are not of the English language career, to communicate with greater ease, security, without fear, and turn language classes into a developer environment, pleasant for teaching-learning, using multiple intelligence, because it allows the student to interact with their peers and be really they, each person is intelligent in different spheres so they can demonstrate that intelligence in different ways and also self-evaluate their own learning in an enjoyable way.

Teaching and learning are two basic processes underlying the activity of students and teachers nowadays. Learning process puts both parties toward each other, what it teaches, and what it takes, the teacher and the student. Today takes great importance to the training of students to teach themselves, their education, equipping them with the skills of independent work



with the most advanced methods of learning conscious, sustainable, active and creative. The teacher is free to use a variety of methods and strategies of teaching / learning to suit the needs of students in different classes. To facilitate the teaching / learning, the teacher finds efficient ways to organize communication activities provides and suggests source materials for students to prepare them for the certification test, thus, these workbook will be a great support to be prepared for this goal. This work gives the students the possibility of evaluating their progress because the exercises are very well organized, with different sections. Taking into account that they will have four tests (listening, speaking, reading and writing).

The practical significance of the investigation consists on the structuring of an alternative that contributes to increase the teaching-learning process of English Language at the Face2Face (Elementary) syllabus without neglecting the use of the quick review already planned belonging to A2 level in the Faculty of Languages, its structure and implementation.

As the result of the alternative implementation and the application of the final pedagogical test, it is tangible that the students get higher levels of independence in the development of the exercises, being a competent communicator and able to understand what others say in a creative way promoting their independence.

Conclusions

1. This work provides a didactic alternative based on a complementary notebook with a series of creative and motivating exercises to implement the new strategy for English as a second language in Cuban universities.
2. It facilitates the methodological preparation of the professors of the discipline to face the new task. Students exercise the content studied and have another tool for their preparation and future certification.



3. The transformations achieved in students and teachers, derived from the application of the alternative, allow sustaining that it contributes to the improvement of the teaching-learning process of the four skills in English at an A2 level.

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