Revisión

THE COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR LANGUAGES AND ICT: A NEW CHALLENGE

El Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas y las TIC: un nuevo desafío

M. Sc. Leopoldina del Carmen López-Mendoza, Master in Higher Education. Languages Center. University of Granma, Cuba llopezm@udg.co.cu

M. Sc. Shirley Rosario Ponce-Merino, Master in English Language. State University of South Manabí (UNESUM), Ecuador. shaley_88@hotmail.com

Dra. C. Ana Velia Domínguez-León. Ph. D. Languages Center. University of Granma, Cuba adominguezl@udg.co.cu

ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to design English Language Virtual Courses that allow students to build knowledge and develop communication skills, to achieve a B1+ level, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This responds to the problem of research detected, given the inadequacies of the students in the development of communicative skills in English, through the use of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT), which limit the management and self-management of knowledge. The proposal offers the application of tools that contribute to search of variety, dynamism, active participation and student-student and student-professor interchange, making use of appropriate teaching strategies and means. The intention is that they can take advantage of the "Moodle" Virtual Educational Platform benefits. The results of the Virtual Courses teaching in order to reach the B1+, will allow contributing to the improvement of the teaching and learning process, facilitating the knowledge and skills, through the ICT.

Key words: CEFR – ICT - Moodle

RESUMEN

El presente trabajo tiene como objetivo el diseño de Cursos Virtuales de Idioma Inglés que permitan a los estudiantes la construcción de conocimientos y desarrollo de competencias comunicativas, para alcanzar un nivel B1+, según el Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas (MCERL). Esto responde al problema de investigación detectado, dado en

insuficiencias por parte de los estudiantes en el desarrollo de competencias comunicativas en idioma inglés, a través del uso de las TIC, que limitan la gestión y autogestión del conocimiento. La propuesta ofrece la aplicación de herramientas que contribuyan a la búsqueda de variedad, dinamismo, participación activa e intercambio estudiante-estudiante y estudiante-profesor, haciendo uso de medios y estrategias de enseñanza apropiados. La intención es que puedan aprovechar las bondades de la Plataforma Educativa Virtual "Moodle". Los resultados de la impartición de los Cursos Virtuales para alcanzar el B1+, permitirán contribuir al perfeccionamiento del proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje, facilitando los conocimientos y habilidades, a través de las TIC.

PALABRAS CLAVE: MCERL – TIC - Moodle

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of foreign languages has been going through different stages of improvement to ensure a solid knowledge in the training of the future professional, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as technological tools, provide the possibility that the teaching and learning of foreign languages are not problems that no longer exists to their use.

Many researchers Romero, (2011); Castañeda and Cabero, (2010); Fernández, (2010); Chrobak et al., (2007); Chomsky, (2006) and Carretero, (2005) have been dealt with the teaching and learning of the English language through ICT.

The National Education System of the Republic of Cuba is immersing in a continuous process of improvement and validation in the training practice that focuses on excellence. That is why the Ministry of Higher Education (*MES*) establishes as a graduation requirement for all students, English proficiency at a B1+ level (independent user) according to the descriptors defined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

The authors of this research agree with what is expressed in the Project of the Base Document on the English Teaching Improvement of the Ministry of Higher Education when referring that:

 "... it is essential to train professionals who are characterized by having a deep knowledge of their activity and are able to solve the most general and frequent problems that arise in the exercise of their profession in the work link; what presupposes a permanent search for updated information, both in the mother tongue and in foreign languages, especially English, as well as the continuous improvement and exchange of professional experiences at national and

international levels, if we aspire to be participants in the development socio-economic of our country in an active, independent and creative way ". (*Ministerio de Educación Superior, 2017*)

The knowledge system established for (independent user) develops through the 4 skills of verbal activity: forms of communication, types of texts, functions and notions, themes, structures, as well as simple and descriptive vocabulary where students mainly negotiate meanings in group interactions, (large and small groups and pairs) and are involved in contextualized situations through role plays, simulations and dramatizations, where the materials and activities are generally authentic and reflect real life situations, but first of all the student he needs to be motivated, this condition leads him to contribute his linguistic potential including knowledge of the lexicon and syntax.

The CEFR is related to an overview of the use of English language learning and focuses on the learning of a language mainly as social agents to carry out a certain set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a specific field of action However, their new programs include software that is not always used with the intention that motivated them to create them for learning.

On the other hand, the *MES* adopts the CEFR as the common theoretical-methodological base that guides the national policy regarding the design of standards, English language courses as a foreign language with general and specific aims (face-to-face and/or virtual courses), teaching methodologies and didactic materials, as well as of evaluation instruments.

The Blended Learning or B-Learning is the facilitated learning through the efficient combination of different delivery methods, teaching models and learning styles, and based on transparent communication of all areas involved in the course. (Navarro et al., 2013)

Baelo, (2009), defines E-learning as an electronic type of learning: "A learning process based on electronic means for its realization, regardless of the distance or classroom modality in which it is contextualized. Generally, it is learning based on or supported by network technologies as a complement to face-to-face learning or with various means in the formal classroom or in non-formal learning groups, where it is possible to include simulation exercises, participate in group discussions, links to web sites. Internet, collaborative works, etc."

The combination between both modalities is guided to make new learning possible, according to García, (2001), blended learning would lead us to a similar idea of an integrated teaching and learning model.

When making an assessment of the main tendencies of blended learning, the following opinions of Heinze y Procter, (2004) are appreciated:

• It can be achieved through the use of virtual and physical resources, alternating in a balanced way. An example of this could be the combination of technology-based materials and face-to-face sessions together to achieve effective teaching.

• Involves face-to-face and virtual activities. The great challenge is to find the right balance between the activities delivered in a virtual and presence ways.

• Use active learning techniques in the physical classroom, adding a virtual presence in a social web. Blended Learning is a term that represents a great change in the teaching strategy.

On the other hand, the authors of this research agree with Valdés, 2005 when he states that it is necessary to specify, that access to information will not automatically expand the student's knowledge, nor the mere availability of amounts of information will intrinsically create an internal framework of ideas, knowledge and skills, that students can apply in their academic or work environment.

An important aspect to achieve in learning is motivation. The professor should emphasize the importance of the new content so that the student can solve problems, highlighting where they can apply it, motivate it, that is, explain the students the reasons why they should assimilate the content.

The architecture and tools of the "Moodle" are appropriate to teach online classes, as well as to complement face-to-face learning. It has a browser interface of simple, lightweight, and compatible technology. "It is a system designed to use open source platforms and applications, but it is also compatible with any other platform on the market" (García y Juárez, 2009).

Therefore, language professors are called to find new ways and ways for our students to build their knowledge. With this purpose, methods and techniques were applied, such as observations to classes, surveys and interviews with professors, through which the following difficulties were detected:

• Insufficiencies in the management and self-management of learning through ICT.

• Lack of motivation on the part of students towards English language classes.

• Insufficient methodological preparation of professors towards the ways and rhythms of student learning, according to the CEFR.

• Lack of Virtual English Language Courses distributed through the Intranet.

Education cannot remain outside the social reality, Romero, (2011) refers that "... these platforms open us a world full of possibilities where the interaction between professor and student is possible almost immediately."

DEVELOPMENT

The improvement of the teaching of English - CEFR

For English courses, the most pertinent learning approach is the constructivist paradigm, as it is, as Coll César, (1992) points out, one of the most expectations generated in the field of education and at the same time, of those that have caused the most impact.

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a focus on language teaching in which maximum importance is given to interaction as a means and as a final goal in language learning. As this approach is the most effective, not all professors take advantage of ICT and its potentialities/benefits.

The English language learning is not a problem that no longer exists to the advantages offered by ICT or the communication opportunities it provides. The English language teaching online will give to the educational centers the opportunity to design environments of great educational value for ICT and will increase the quality of the English Language Virtual Courses.

To achieve good virtual interaction, English professors must consider changes in educational practices and the use of ICT. At the same time the ICT advances, the need to learn English is also increasing because it is quite widespread.

The preparation of a course requires the organization of the entire structure and work material based on modules and teaching units that facilitate the participant's learning process. (*Bianchini A., 2007*)

The mastery of the English language as a component for future professional, both academic and labor, research and social integral formation, has a great formative value for the management and self-management of knowledge.

As described in the Base Document on the Improvement of the English Teaching (Project), in 2003, following the design of the "D" Curriculum, a group of experts from all over the country worked on the methodological preparation for the English language teaching and texts, with the purpose of promoting the independent study of the language, so that classroom time could be devoted to the oral communication skills development, which at this time, it stated as a priority. However, despite these strategies, first of all the levels of reading skills development for

academic/professional purposes or for oral communication to those who have aspired afterwards, are still not achieved. *(Ministerio de Educación Superior, 2017)*

The methodological work that we propose is directed towards the students' needs, through different independent activities that prepare them in this language; as well as professors, through the overcoming and continuous updating of the language and TIC, to implement with quality the English Teaching Improvement Policy.

The CEFR establishes a scale of 6 common reference levels for the language learning organization and homologation of different degrees issued by the certified entities, our work is focused on the first 3 levels and the capacities defined by the CEFR are assumed. (*Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte. Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas: Aprendizaje, Enseñanza, Evaluación., 2002*)

Fig. 1 - establish Granma CERF

Levels in the University of according to

It is put into based tasks intent to practice teaching on processes, and integrated learning approaches, where the student will be responsible for their learning assuming self-management of knowledge. At the same time, other alternatives are intended to improve the teaching and learning process with the use of educational technologies in an all-round education to future professionals as independent users.

The use of ICT

At the same time that telecommunications are advancing, there is also an increasing need to learn foreign languages to carry out communication, the need to preserve and disseminate languages as distinctive expressions of each culture, as the identity of each people and to benefit the regional interaction. (Trabaldo Susana, 2004)

The "Moodle" Virtual Educational Platform is assumed because it is enough flexible to allow a great variety of ways of teaching and can be used for organizing the content in a basic,
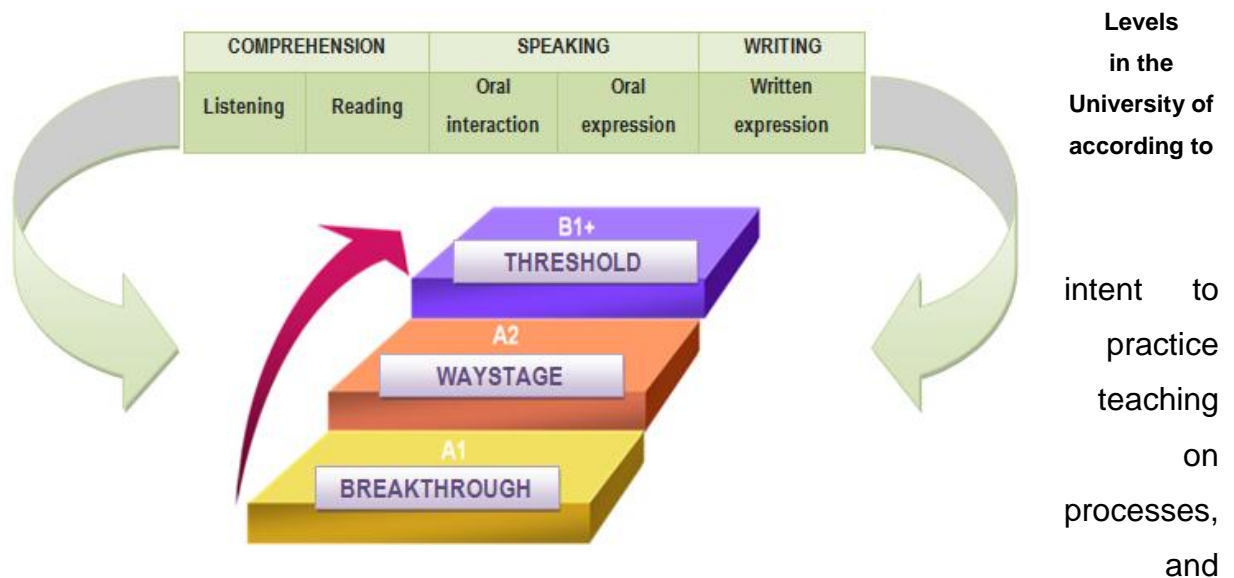
intermediate or advanced ways. The philosophy stated by "Moodle" includes an approach to the social constructivism of education, since students can contribute to the educational experience through its usefulness in English classes due to its flexibility.

The use of active methods, focused on the activity and the students interest, promotes better contents assimilation, at the same time as it increases the motivation and a significant learning is achieved.

The main modules of "Moodle" are assumed for the preparation of the English Language Virtual Courses. ("JumpBox for the Moodle Course Management System | JumpBox Virtual Appliances and Applications for Cloud Computing", 2016).

Tasks module: To upload tasks in any file format to the server. The date in which they have been uploaded is registered, it is allowed to send tasks out of time, but the professor can clearly see the delay time, for each particular task, the whole class (marks and comments) can be evaluated on a unique page with a unique form. The professor's considerations are attached to the homework page of each student and a notification message is sent, and the professor has the possibility to allow the sending back of a task after its evaluation.

Consultation module: To send and receive question/answer of each student. The professor can see a table that intuitively presents information about who has chosen what and can allow students to see an updated graph of the results.

Forum module: For and different types of available forums: they are exclusive for professors, news of the course and open to all, the professor can force the subscription of all to a forum or allow each student to choose which forums to subscribe to send the student a copy of the messages by email; the student can choose not to allow answers in a forum (for example, to create a forum dedicated to advertisements); and the student can easily move the discussion topics between different forums.

Daily module: For private information between the student and the professor. Each entry in the journal can be motivated by an open question, the entire class can be evaluated on a page with a unique form, for each particular journal entry, the professor's comments are attached to the journal entry page and sent by email the notification.

Questionnaire module: So that professors can define a database of questions that can be reused in different questionnaires, the questions can be stored in easily accessible categories, and these categories can be "published" to make them accessible from any course of the site. The questionnaires are automatically graded, and can be re-evaluated if questions are modified,

the questionnaires may have a time limit from which they will not be available. The professor can determine if the questionnaires can be solved several times and if the correct answers and comments will be shown, the questions and answers of the questionnaires can be mixed (randomly) to reduce the copies among the students. The questions can be created in HTML and with images. Questions can be imported from external text files.

Resource module: For the presentation of an important number of digital content, Word, Power Point, Excel, Flash, video, sounds, etc. Files can be uploaded and managed on the server, or they can be created very fast using web forms (text or HTLM), web applications can be linked to transfer data.

Survey module: Provides ready-made surveys (COLLES, ATTLS) and contrasted as tools for the analysis of online classes. It can generate reports of the surveys which include graphics. The data can be downloaded in Excel spreadsheet format or as a CSV text file.

Wiki module: For students to work in groups in the same document. All students will be able to modify the content included by the rest of their classmates. In this way each student can modify the wiki of the group to which he belongs, but he will be able to consult all the wikis. The wiki serves as a basis to maintain constant communication with the members of a study group.

Workshop module: To add an activity for peer evaluation. The functionality is similar to the task module where students can send their work in an attachment or with the online text tool, with the advantage that the classmates can access those tasks evaluating them using different strategies that are predefined.

Some of the advantages of "Moodle" that facilitate the construction of knowledge and the development of English language skills are the following:

1. It creates a favorable study and work environment.
2. It establishes formal and informal communication.
3. It facilitates the grouping into small, medium and large study and work teams.
4. It facilitates student-student (s), professor-student (s) and student (s)-professor communication.
5. It strengths the teaching and learning process.
6. It gives the students the possibility to participate in the creation of glossaries, since all the lessons automatically generate links to the words included in them.
7. It allows the creation of platforms for specific courses at the same university.

We must take into account some disadvantages:

1. To obtain better performance, the configuration of the server to be based on PHP technology (Personal Home Page / Hypertext Preprocessor) with many users must be taken into account.

2. The platform may not be relatively easy for many users.

3. A failure in the servers or a crash in Internet service may leave the user disabled to perform their activities.

Challenges of Higher Education

Today, ICT have become pedagogical tools at the service of the professor whose main role is to act as a facilitator and a significant learning tool through network, where it requires operating these technologies with a different skill from the one he required to manage, for example, the reprojector, the recorder and the video.

Let's be aware that we are talking about a drastic change and, therefore, really complicated. We are asking the professor to give up his role, renounce his authority and play a role for which no one has prepared him, including at the same time a painful technological revolution. (Martínez, 2004)

We must bear in mind that it is not to take advantage of the same principles applied in face-to-face teaching, but to create new training environments to increase motivation and enhance self-management of knowledge.

 The effort will be even greater when the professor participates in a distance language teaching project because in that case, in addition to becoming familiar with technology, he must learn to manage himself as a tutor or as a professor of his subject using these technologies without possible excuse. (Trabaldo, 2004)

Professors must be prepared, together with the consistent mastery of traditional teaching methods, in the use of advanced computer techniques, multimedia, video and all the possibilities that modern technology places on the teaching process, always thinking that it is not the mean itself or its relevance or complexity that decides the quality of the teaching process, but the proper use the professor makes of it. (Valdés, 2005)

"Professors and institutions have a responsibility to make their students aware of their role as virtual students, and what each competence dimension of this role entails." (Gros, 2015)

The authors of this research wish to corroborate some aspects to reflect that are related in the aforementioned Base Document, and that we must attend with priority on the part of professors and directors, they are: the insufficient updating of the approaches and teaching methods, the

lack of opportunities for continuous training and professor training as well as possibilities for accessing and using materials, learning resources and technical means; the levels of English language proficiency of students get into higher education are low and very heterogeneous; insufficient proficiency in this language in professors of other disciplines and their tendencies not to use English or materials in English, or translate them into Spanish; low levels of communicative competence and low levels of motivation towards language learning; the current organization of the language staff in the teaching departments does not allow to respond to the demands of the new English Teaching Improvement Policy related to the teaching organization, the rationalization in the use of the professor force, the types and levels of courses variety, the problems of methodological approaches and the lack of updating of the language staff, as well as the integration of postgrade studies, among others.

CONCLUSIONS

The "Moodle" Virtual Educational Platform can be effective to achieve a level of communicative competence B1+, according to the CEFR and contribute to the improvement of the teaching and learning process, facilitating the construction of knowledge and development of communicative competences in the students' academic and social context, through ICT.

REFERENCE SOURCES

Baelo Álvarez, R. (2009). El e-Learning, una respuesta educativa a las demandas de las sociedades del siglo XXI. *Revista de Medios y Educación*. Recuperado a partir de zim://A/Aprendizaje_electr%C3%B3nico.html#cite_ref-4

Bianchini, A. (2007). *Conceptos sobre E-learning - Parte II* (Departamento de Computación y Tecnología). USB-Caracas, Venezuela.

Carretero Ramos, A. (2005). Las TICs en el aula de inglés: un proyecto de trabajo. Recuperado a partir de http://quadernsdigitals.net/index.php?accionMenu=hemeroteca. VisualizaArticuloIU.visualiza&articulo_id=8656

Castañeda Quintero, L. y Cabero Almenara, J. (2010). Aprendizaje con Redes Sociales. Tejidos educativos para los nuevos entornos.

Chomsky, N. (2006). *Language and mind. 3rd. Ed. Cambridge University Press.* (3rd. ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Chrobak, E.; Mamondez, I. y Cocci, M. (2007). Planting the seed of passion for the English Language: Teaching English to very young learners. Terceras Jornadas: Un espacio de encuentro: el estado del conocimiento en la ESI.

Coll, C. (1992). Acción, interacción y construcción del conocimiento en situaciones educativas. En *Antología de Lecturas: Proyecto Argos,* Ciudad de La Habana. pp. 90-100.

Fernández Canelo, B. (2010). Las Redes Sociales: lo que hacen sus hijos en internet.

García Aretio, L. (2001). La Educación a distancia.

García Juárez, I. y Juárez Briones, A. (2009). Experiencias en el uso de entornos virtuales de aprendizaje ("MOODLE") para la enseñanza de matemáticas empresariales.

Gros Salvat, B. (2015). Evolución y retos de la educación virtual. Construyendo el e-learning del siglo XXI.

Heinze, A. y C. Procter. (2004). Reflections on the Use of Blended Learning. *Education in a Changing Environment conference proceedings*. Recuperado a partir de http://www.ece.salford.ac.uk/proceedings/papers/ah_04.rtf

JumpBox for the Moodle Course Management System | JumpBox Virtual Appliances and Applications for Cloud Computing. (2016). Recuperado a partir de www.jumpbox.com

Martínez, J. (2004). El papel del tutor en el aprendizaje virtual.

Ministerio de Educación Superior. (2017). Documento Base sobre el Perfeccionamiento de la Enseñanza del Inglés (Proyecto).

Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte. Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas: Aprendizaje, Enseñanza, Evaluación. (2002). Subdirección General de Cooperación Internacional, Madrid.

Navarro et al. (2013). Uso intensivo de herramientas de colaboración en línea en Educación Superior. *Revista Electrónica de Didáctica en Educación Superior*, (6).

Romero Lacal, J. L. (2011). Las Redes Sociales en Educación. *Innovación y Experiencias Educativas*, *44*. Recuperado a partir de csifrevista@gmail.com

Trabaldo, S. (2004). Panorama. Enseñanza y Aprendizaje de Idiomas a Distancia por Internet. *LatinEduca2004.com*, (Primer Congreso Virtual Latinoamericano De Educación a Distancia), 17.

Valdés Francisco, J. L. (2005). Infotecnología para la Investigación y la Docencia.