



Book of Abstracts

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Theoretical Academic Sessions

Evidence of Validity and Reliability in the English Proficiency Test for MEP Students: The 2021 Cohort

Abstract

Statistical techniques for measurement support collecting evidence of a test's validity and reliability. Using statistical methods, test designers develop sound instruments to assure test takers of the interpretation of test results. High-stakes testing requires a rigorous process of validity and reliability. The English Proficiency Test for the Costa Rican Ministry of Public Education (MEP) students in 2021 demonstrated the validity and reliability of its measurement instruments. The results of the factorial analyses performed support the unidimensionality of these instruments. Also, most instruments show solid internal consistency indices in which Cronbach's alphas range from 0.79 to 0.86. These results endorse the interpretation of the test results for test takers, teachers, and educational authorities.

B.A. José Alejandro Fallas Godínez, Foreign Language Evaluation Program, School of Modern Languages, University of Costa Rica, Costa Rica.



Biography

Alejandro holds a Bachelor's Degree in English and is currently finishing a bachelor's program in Statistics. He has studied both programs at the University of Costa Rica (UCR). Alejandro is an advanced student in the master's program in Applied Linguistics with a focus on ESP at the *Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica*. His research interest focuses on quantitative research, especially measurement techniques. In the last two years, Alejandro has done research on standardized language testing. Currently, Alejandro works as a statistician at the PELEx program, UCR. He applies statistical analyses and models to analyze evidence of validity and reliability in standardized language tests.

The Results of PDL and the Delivery of the Digital Language Test in Our Context

Abstract

The Test of Linguistic Mastery (*Prueba de Dominio Lingüístico*, PDL) of English for high school students is an assessment test of language competence aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and created by the Modern Languages School of the University of Costa Rica. The target population of this instrument is Ministry of Public Education high school students. The objective of this document is to present a description of the test development and its results.

Dr. Allen Quesada Pacheco, School of Modern Languages, University of Costa Rica, Costa Rica.



Biography

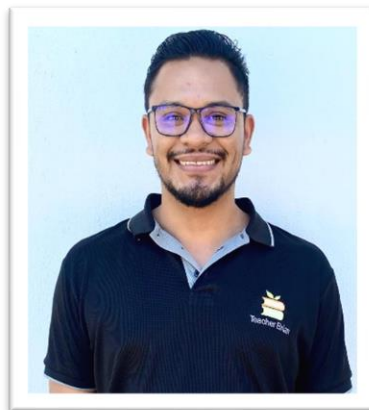
Allen Quesada Pacheco is a researcher and full-time professor at the UCR. Dr. Quesada is the Chair of the School of Modern Languages. He obtained a Doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction (TESOL), a Master of Science in Educational Technology from the University of Kansas, a Master of Arts in TESOL from New York University and a Bachelor of Arts in TESOL. Allen has taught courses in the bachelor's, licentiate and master's TEFL programs and has done research in the areas of technology-enhanced learning, bilingualism, telecollaboration, and language testing. He is the creator and developer of the software Cyberlab for the MEP. He has published articles in academic journals in various countries.

The Effectiveness of Using Mobile Apps for Vocabulary Learning in the EFL Classroom: A Literature Review

Abstract

As a response to the increasing demand for English teachers to incorporate more technological resources in language instruction, recently boosted further by the COVID-19 pandemic, this study aims to review the available literature on the effectiveness of using technological applications to teach vocabulary in English as a Foreign Language classes. Peer reviewed primary research papers published in online journals between 2011 and 2021 were consulted in the databases ERIC, JStor, EBSCOhost, and Google Scholar. Each researcher independently conducted searches in these databases with search results co-reviewed and synthesized in a two-step process. The data analysis from eight studies on the topic revealed that applications such as SMS Text, WhatsApp, and Online vocabulary games are used to teach vocabulary to EFL learners. These apps have proved to be effective when teaching vocabulary. Additionally, the review found implications that educators should consider when incorporating technology into English vocabulary instruction.

Lic. Brian Paz Chavarría, Ministry of Public Education, Costa Rica.



Biography

Brian Paz holds a Licentiate Degree in Teaching English from the University of Costa Rica. He has taught English for eight years to economically and socially vulnerable teenagers and adult students for the Costa Rican Ministry of Public Education and the ACCESS and Skills for Life programs. Currently, he is enrolled in the TEFL master's program at the UCR. Among his interests are using English as a tool to empower people, community service through language learning, and TESOL.

M.Sc. Daniela Arroyo Sánchez, Ministry of Public Education, Universidad Nacional Estatal a Distancia, Costa Rica.



Biography

Daniela Arroyo Sánchez holds a Bachelor's and a Licentiate Degree in Teaching English, and a Master's Degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, all from the University of Costa Rica. She has been teaching for seven years and has also worked designing tailor-made ESP and EGP courses for private universities and institutes. Ms. Arroyo currently teaches at Liceo Ing. Samuel Sáenz Flores and at the Language Center in the *Universidad Estatal a Distancia*. Her research interests include curriculum development, ESP, and technology use for teaching purposes.

Distance and Combined Education During Times of Pandemic: Voices of English Teachers from the Huetar Northern Region

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the Costa Rican education system. This caused changes in the teaching modality from the in-person model to distance education in 2020 and combined education in 2021. During this scenario, two qualitative research projects were carried out to describe the experiences and voices of ten primary school English teachers from the San Carlos Regional Directorate of Education and the Norte-Norte Regional Directorate of Education. The studies were qualitative in nature, with data collected through in-depth interviews, document gathering (*Guías de Trabajo Autónomo*, Self-Study Workbooks), recorded videos, and photo-elicitation. Findings highlighted that pedagogical, administrative, and emotional challenges were encountered by these teachers. This presentation seeks to create a reflective space to share their voices regarding their experiences and the lessons they learned.

Dr. Patricia López-Estrada, Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica, Costa Rica.



Biography

Patricia López Estrada holds a Doctorate in Education from the University of Florida. She is an advocate for promoting high-quality education and making this accessible for all students. She firmly believes in professional development as a fundamental mechanism for academic growth. She is passionate about teaching with a purpose and believes in teaching philosophies that are both warm and demanding so as to promote meaningful learning in the students. She is a qualitative researcher and an extensionist. She currently works as an Associate Professor in the School of Languages and Social Sciences at the *Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica*, San Carlos Campus.

M.A. Jonathan Elizondo-Mejías, Universidad Estatal a Distancia de Costa Rica, Costa Rica.



Biography

Jonathan Elizondo holds a Master’s in Teaching English as a Foreign Language and a Bachelor’s in Primary Education with an emphasis in English Teaching, both degrees from the University of Costa Rica. He also holds Licentiate and Bachelor’s Degrees in English Teaching from *Universidad Americana* and TESOL certification from the SIT Graduate Institute in Vermont. He has been a presenter in conferences and congresses in Costa Rica, Peru, Panama, Venezuela, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic. He currently works for the Ministry of Public Education, at CECED in *Universidad Estatal a Distancia*, and as an international speaking examiner for Cambridge Assessment English.

STU. Estefanía Pérez-Hidalgo, Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica, Costa Rica.



Biography

Estefanía Pérez-Hidalgo is an advanced student in Business Administration, also currently majoring in Computer Engineering at *Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica*. She has been an assistant in two extension projects on diagnosing and enhancing the linguistic competences of a rural community in the Northern Region of Costa Rica, also assisting in three qualitative research studies regarding perceptions of primary school English teachers with respect to distance and combined education during the pandemic, and on the perceptions of empowerment of women in

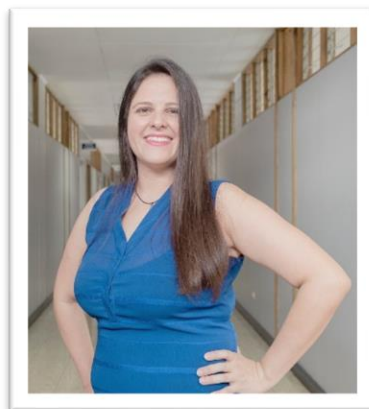
a rural community in Sarapiquí, Costa Rica. She has grown as a professional through providing assistance to academic projects.

Test of English for Young Learners (TEYL): Instrument Design and Lessons Learned

Abstract

The Test of English for Young Learners (TEYL) is an assessment test of language competence that is aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL) and created by the Modern Languages School of the University of Costa Rica. The target population of this instrument is the children of the Costa Rican education system aged between 10 and 12. During this presentation, aspects related to the design process of the test together with its implications and expected impact will be covered. Additionally, based on the experience of the application and analysis of the instrument, recommendations on the English language for elementary school item design will be provided.

M.A. Ana Yeraldín Acosta Salazar, University of Costa Rica, Costa Rica.



Biography

Yeraldín Acosta graduated from the Professional Master's in Teaching English as a Foreign Language at the University of Costa Rica. Over the years, she has worked at UCR teaching different courses and collaborating in programs such as ED2203, *Programa de Evaluación de Lenguas Extranjeras (PELEx)*, and the *Programa Institucional para la Persona Adulta y Adulta Mayor*. Additionally, she taught some courses for future English teachers at UNA. She is part of Proyecto Citrino and has published the short story *Lagrimas de Angel*, the article *Evaluating an English for Specific Purposes Course for Law Students* and two volumes of her novel *Himitsu no Mori*.

Using Podcasts in Online Classes to Acquire the Final -ed Pronunciation of Past Regular Verbs

Abstract

In recent years, virtual education has become the main teaching and learning method for English as a Second Language learners, leading to several difficulties for teachers and students. The objective of this study is to evaluate the impact of professional podcasts as sources of input to virtual classes with respect to the acquisition of the final -ed morpheme of the simple past tense form of regular verbs by a group of students. This will be proved by contrasting the collected data from a control and an experimental group using rubrics to evaluate the outcome generated during production stages. Consequently, this paper suggests that using podcasts with a context that fits the reality of the students as a source of input would be beneficial to their acquisition of the correct pronunciation of words that generally present a challenge to the teaching and learning process.

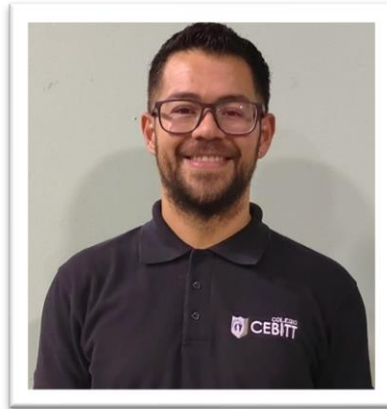
B.A. Adrián Fonseca Víquez, Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica, Fundación Tecnológica de Costa Rica, Costa Rica.



Biography

Adrián Fonseca has worked for the English programs in CONARE and InglesTec for six years. He has experience teaching conversational workshops, English courses at FUNDATEC, and CONARE university groups. Moreover, he has attended different workshops on the use of technological tools in the classroom. His research interests extend to the areas of technology and the application of oral strategies to foster the participation and engagement of students in virtual classes, which have formed the basis of his graduation project for his Licentiate Degree at the University of Costa Rica.

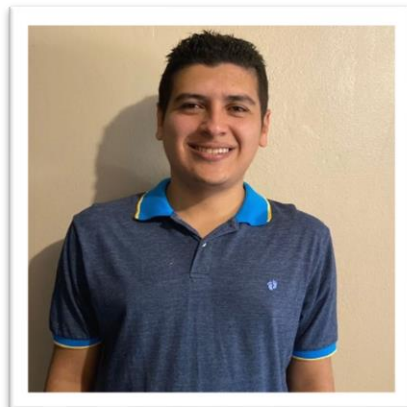
B.A. David Coto Quesada, University of Costa Rica, Costa Rica.



Biography

A collaborative professional with eight years of experience in teaching English as a Second Language to non-native students in two different institutions. The first of these is CEBITT High School, an educational institution focused on curricular accommodations. David also works for the Ministry of Public Education on three different projects focusing on young adults and adult learners. He always seeks to obtain the best results from his students. An encouraging and energetic educator with an ability to have fun with all students, David always strives to create a joyful environment in his classes. He is able to provide engaging group activities, preparing teaching plans that facilitate classroom participation.

B.A. Rafael Ignacio Meza Leandro, University of Costa Rica, Costa Rica.



Biography

Rafael Ignacio Meza graduated from the University of Costa Rica with a major in English teaching. He has always been interested in opportunities for growth and helping people whenever possible. This led him to follow his path in the teaching field. With experience teaching English in high school and to adults, he loves what he does. Rafael Ignacio Meza is currently working as a learning specialist at Sitel, where his focus is on providing knowledge and tools to the company's new hires in a way that empowers them to accomplish their goals.

Principles of Meaningful Writing: Rethinking Writing in the Online Classroom from Students' Experiences

Abstract

The evolution of the writing skill is closely linked to ICTs, increasing the need to make its teaching a meaningful experience in the digital age. The aim of this study was to analyze students' experiences in a writing task developed on Edublogs to identify elements of task design contributing to a meaningful experience online. The participants were 27 English Teaching students in a first-year composition course at the University of Costa Rica during the first semester of 2021. The study followed a Classroom Action Research design. The students wrote five blog entries. However, only the last entry, a reflection, was analyzed for the study. An open coding method was implemented, through which four categories that impact the instructional design of writing tasks were identified: personal connection, engagement, ICTs, and applicability. The study concludes with a series of recommendations that can positively impact students' performance in writing courses supported by ICTs.

M.A. José Miguel Vargas Vásquez, University of Costa Rica, Costa Rica.



Biography

José Miguel Vargas Vásquez holds a Bachelor's Degree and a Master's Degree in English Teaching from the University of Costa Rica, where he works as an English instructor and researcher. With over ten years of experience in higher education, he has authored and co-authored journal articles and chapters in the fields of language teaching methodology, reading and writing pedagogy in second language learning, academic writing, and needs assessment for the implementation of ICTs. He is currently interested in the way ICTs can help to support writing and contribute to making writing a meaningful experience. He is the current coordinator of the Modern Languages Department at UCR, Western Campus.

Teaching, Learning and Evaluating by Competencies: A Challenge to Higher Education or an Unrealistic Goal?

Abstract

Society today demands new competencies of its professionals and citizens in general, who are required to have specific skills and abilities. Many universities in different countries are redesigning their degree programs based on new academic and professional profiles incorporating several competencies. These competencies are individual and group benchmarks calling for the development of personal resources, which then have to be integrated into the possibilities of the environment to obtain complementarity or the greatest mutual benefit. At the personal level, competencies are effective insofar as each one establishes the basis and reference for achievement. That is, we are competent insofar as our achievement is effective. The origin of such achievements lies in perfecting our personal (individual and social) qualities. It is concluded that the factors inherent to the training process by competence (being-knowing and doing) lead to the success of educational institutions in addition to establishing multiple dimensions in the field of human training, highlighting the ideal performance in the work context.

M.Ed. Aaron Torres Rojas, Universidad Técnica Nacional, Costa Rica.



Biography

Aaron Torres Rojas is an English professor who has been teaching in the English as a Foreign Language major for the last 13 years. He graduated from the *Universidad Americana* in 2021 with a Master's Degree in Teaching and Licentiate and Bachelor's Degrees in English Teaching from the University of Costa Rica. From there, he has been a presenter at the University of Costa Rica's *Congreso Internacional de Lenguas Modernas*, and the author of a digital article "Digital Content Curation for the Implementation of Innovative Writing Projects" in the *Revista de Innovación Académica* - UTN. Many universities in different countries are redesigning their degree programs based on new academic and professional profiles incorporating several competencies. Therefore, it is concluded in this research that the factors inherent to the training process by competence (being-knowing and doing) lead to educational institutions' success.

Experiential Learning: A New Teaching Trend Exemplified by the Grounded Project

Abstract

The Grounded project is an experiential learning activity promoted by York University in Toronto, Canada. It involves collaboration between students from Global Health courses in Canada with Costa Rican university students. The purpose of this study is to identify the positive outcomes of this experiential learning project in terms of language-related improvements in university students. Likewise, the study aims to understand the extension and increased comprehension achieved in terms of critical thinking by the students from Universidad Técnica Nacional with regards to the communities and populations at risk, which were part of the project. To collect the data, focus groups were done and two evaluations were made by the coordinators of both groups. As part of the results, it is concluded that the descriptors improved, and the perceptions of the participants indicated the increased comprehension of the communities involved in the activity. This resulted in a win-win situation in terms of language and critical thinking for the participants.

M.Ed. Gerardo Matamoros Arce, Universidad Técnica Nacional, Costa Rica.



Biography

Gerardo Matamoros Arce obtained a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Costa Rica. He graduated from *Universidad Estatal a Distancia* in 2007 in Education and achieved a Master's Degree in English Teaching from *Universidad Latina de Costa Rica* in 2017. He worked for the Ministry of Education for 10 years, and since 2009 has worked in higher education in several universities in San Carlos. His interests include topics such as feedback, projects related to experiential learning and study abroad programs. He is currently a full-time professor at *Universidad Técnica Nacional* for the English as a Second Language major. He teaches English-related courses and works on different projects with universities in the United States and Canada.

Assessing Young EFL Learner Writing During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Latin America

Abstract

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a world pandemic. As occurred elsewhere, in Mexico teachers and students had to radically change their teaching and learning procedures to adapt to the imposed confinement. Although language teaching has a long history of using computer-assisted tools to enhance learning (Warshauer & Healy, 1998; Chapelle, 2009), students were suddenly obliged to adapt to communication and information technology to learn language skills. Online social media, mobile device applications, and education platforms are now a requirement of many English lessons around the country. Research has found that students faced many challenges during this pandemic while learning a language, including physical, mental, linguistic, and sociocultural issues (Wang et al., 2020). While in countries such as India the transition to digital content was well accepted (Younesi & Khan, 2020), research has yet to explore how the global pandemic has impacted the assessment processes of Latin American teachers working with young learners. This presentation aims to describe the experiences of Mexican and Colombian EFL teachers and their assessment of young learners' writing skills during the COVID-19 pandemic. Semi-structured interview data suggested that participants used a variety of tools during their assessment of reading and writing. It also found that not all the participants considered assessing language through this mode useful. The presentation finalizes by discussing some important implications.

Dr. Elsa Fernanda González, Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas, Mexico.



Biography

Elsa Fernanda Gonzalez holds a Doctorate in Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching from the University of Southampton. Since 2009, she has worked at the Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas as a lecturer in the Bachelor of Applied Linguistics program at the *Unidad Académica Multidisciplinaria de Ciencias Educación y Humanidades*, of which she currently is the director. She is the social media manager of the Latin American Association for Language Testing and Assessment. She was a recipient of the British Council 2015 Research Assessment Award and

the 2019 Latin American Research Grant awarded by Michigan Language Assessment. She was part of the 2019-2021 Foreign Language Expert Group at the PISA OECD.

Virtual Learning Environments: A New Mode to Foster English Teaching and Learning

Abstract

Virtual learning environments are considered one of the most relevant issues when we talk about how people learn nowadays. Thanks to educational technology, many institutions offer different learning frameworks. This is especially the case in higher distance education, where traditional and modern paradigms (blended learning) are combined in the same teaching and learning process, going beyond the limits of space and time to provide an updated learning process based on autonomy and the facilitation of access to educational services, including in the language areas. English is one of the most spoken languages that are being learnt through the virtual learning environment around the world.

M.A. Mohamed El Fakhkhari, Open University for Adults, Dominican Republic.



Biography

Mohamed holds a Master's Degree in Art, Language and Civilization, with a minor in French as a Second Language and Foreign Language Didactics from the University of the Antilles, France. He has been teaching English, French, Arabic, and their didactics for more than 18 years. He believes in self learning and the capacity of mastering languages by focusing on permanent practice, interaction, and the use of correct learning methods. He also believes that learner autonomy can be developed through motivation and assessment, which are the main requirements of success in any learning process. Mohamed is currently the director of the Language Department in UAPA university, professor of languages and the didactics of foreign languages, and an expert in Arabic culture and the policies of Arab countries.

Practical Academic Sessions

Let's Reassess Assessment

Abstract

This workshop is aimed at in-service and future language teachers who want to broaden their knowledge of alternative and traditional assessment methods. During this workshop, basic concepts on assessment, approaches to and current issues in classroom testing, principles of language assessment, the design of classroom language tests, the assessment of language micro and macro skills, and alternative assessment will be covered in light of the country's reality. As a result, at the end of the workshop, the participants will not only be introduced to general and basic theoretical knowledge on the area of assessment, but also will be able to recognize the traditional assessment methods used to evaluate the teaching-learning process of foreign languages for general purposes.

M.A. Walter Araya Garita, University of Costa Rica, Costa Rica.



Biography

Walter Araya Garita is an English teacher with a Master's Degree in TEFL and a Master's Degree in University Administration, both from the University of Costa Rica, where he graduated with honors. He also holds a specialization in Educational Planning and Administration from the National University of Educational Planning in India. He has worked for the School of Modern Languages at the University of Costa Rica for over 14 years, where he has taught English courses for the bachelor program in English and for the graduate TEFL program. Currently, he is responsible for the Standardized Evaluation and Language Training Social Extension Program. He has published different articles in national and international journals and has also given talks in Colombia, Mexico, Cuba, and Chile, among others.

The Importance of Teamwork Competency in the Language Classroom to Promote Interaction and Develop Speaking Skills

Abstract

Working as a team is an effective strategy that improves communication skills in students of all levels and ages, making them solve problems and complete tasks to present a result, while focusing on the process. Teachers also have an important role to propose and monitor the development of the activities. The classroom environment and the characteristics of the class (level, age, likes) are part of the variables the teacher should consider when designing or choosing the activities. In brief, teamwork provides opportunities to use English in an inductive way, so that students feel challenged and comfortable at the same time as they are improving their language and communication skills.

Lic. Edith María Pérez Méndez, Fundación Tecnológica de Costa Rica, Costa Rica.



Biography

Edith holds a Bachelor's Degree in English Teaching. She began her studies at Fidélitas University and went on to obtain her degree at the *Universidad Latina de Costa Rica*. She started her career in 2008 teaching in an institute. She later worked as an elementary and high school teacher and for CONARE and InglésTec programs. Her personal interests include writing, reading, and arts, which have enriched her professional practice, especially when teaching literature, one of her passions. Currently, she is a teacher's mentor in the InglesTEC Program while also working as a high school teacher.

Academic Writing: Activities to Bring Writing Outside the Classroom

Abstract

Writing is a key skill that has been left behind in English learning classrooms. Its development can lead to successful English communicators in the future. People tend to associate writing with texts they have to write, or essays they probably find boring. However, there is much more to writing than that. Integrating a variety of writing skills in a language classroom will boost the students' progress exponentially and will encourage them to develop all of the other skills in a more complete way. Using activities that bring the writing process outside the classroom and include it into the context of students' daily lives is an amazing way of helping them become great learners and future users of the English language. This proposal aims to provide teachers with five main activities that can be used in an English lesson to bring the writing tasks from the classroom into the students' world.

M.Sc. Liseth María González Alfaro, Colegio Técnico Profesional Calle Zamora, Costa Rica.



Biography

Liseth González is an English teacher at *Colegio Técnico Profesional Calle Zamora*, where she has been in charge of conversational English and technical English classes for 8 years. She began her English teaching career at the University of Costa Rica. After obtaining this first degree, she procured a second degree in Science for Primary Education with a focus on English. Later, she obtained a Licentiate in English Teaching and recently finished her Master's in Education Administration. Her personal development interests are related to teaching English using different approaches and activities, such as the task-based approach and writing activities for the classroom.

The Academic Contribution of the Project Team-UNA to the Professional Growth of the Participant Tutors at Universidad Nacional, Coto Campus

Abstract

The English Teaching Major at Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica is committed to graduating ethical professionals linguistically and pedagogically engaged in developing their future second language learners' social and cognitive skills. The transition through their developmental sequence enables students to acquire intellectual and pedagogical proficiency over four or more years. The study plan prepares them to successfully embrace their teaching context once they get immersed into the country's labor force, whose main scenario is the MEP. The project Team-UNA Coto Campus, registered at the System of Academic Information (SIA) as 0007-19, is a service-learning community project implemented at Universidad Nacional, Coto Campus since 2019. It offers high school students tutoring to reinforce their four language skills (reading, speaking, listening, and writing). The university instructors in charge of teaching high school participants have been third- and fourth-level students in the English Teaching major. This research investigates the professional contribution of the project to the tutors in terms of personal, academic, and pedagogical growth.

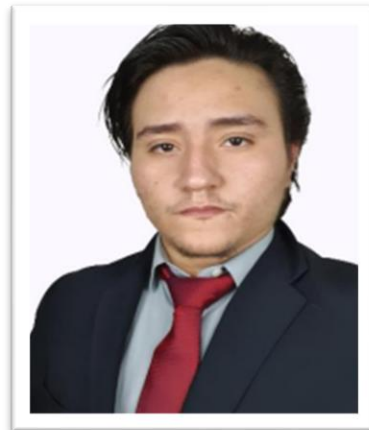
M.Ed. Cecilia López Morales, Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica, Costa Rica.



Biography

Cecilia López Morales holds a Master's Degree in Education with a minor in University Teaching from *Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica*. Her teaching experience started in 1994 at MEP including institutions such as public high schools, *Colegio Humanístico Costarricense* and CONED. She has also worked at private universities (*Universidad Latina de Costa Rica* and *Universidad Católica*). From 2001 to 2008, she worked at UCEDA Institute as a second language teacher for specific purposes. She has currently been working at *Universidad Nacional, Coto Campus* for over 10 years. She is the coordinator of the project Team-UNA, whose aim is to foster social engagement with the community and public high schools in the region. Her research interests are EFL, teaching, assessment, higher education and its impact on society, technology, blended learning and teachers' identity.

B.A. Jeff Betuel Blanco Caballero, Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica, Costa Rica.



Biography

Jeff Betuel Blanco Caballero holds a Bachelor's Degree in English Teaching from the *Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica* (UNA). He is currently studying for a Licentiate Degree in Pedagogy with an Emphasis on Didactic Resources at UNA. As part of his experience in the extension programs, he has worked as a tutor at Team-UNA 007-19, Coto Campus, *Universidad Nacional*, for over 2 years, teaching English to high school students. He has also participated in leadership programs implemented in the regional branches of the UNA. Additionally, he has served as president of the Coto Campus student association and as representative on the commission on regional matters of the *Universidad Nacional* student federation. His research interests include matters such as language teaching, language learning, assessment, technology, language acquisition, evaluation, and language education.

The Influence of Teacher-Implemented Strategies to Elicit Participation During EFL Virtual Lessons

Abstract

After the worldwide reaction to the global pandemic, thousands of institutions were forced to transform traditional programs to virtuality, implementing changes that have been insufficient to achieving the correct process of learning English through participation. Given the recent implications of these unexpected circumstances, there is an evident lack of studies to address this problem, especially in the Costa Rican education system. Therefore, this research aims to identify some teacher-implemented strategies to foster participation during virtual English lessons and to determine the effectiveness of these based on teachers' and students' perceptions. The participants were part of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses. The main findings revealed that strategies such as gamification and the question-answer method are some of the most recurrent in virtual English-teaching environments. The more such strategies are implemented, the more students respond.

Lic. Ardui Zur Flores Calderón, Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica, Costa Rica.



Biography

Ardui Zur Flores Calderón obtained his Bachelor's Degree in English Teaching at the University of Costa Rica, and a Licentiate Degree in the same field at *Universidad Americana*. He is also certified in I and II Cycle Primary School. He is currently taking the English Teaching Master's Program at the University of Costa Rica. He has 13 years' experience as an English teacher for the MEP, including secondary and adult teaching programs. He worked as instructor in English for Customer Service Training at *INA (Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje)*. He considers that humanism and cooperation are relevant to meaningful classrooms. His work contemplates tailored output through contextualized situations and effective feedback, taught in a friendly class atmosphere. He has been working with virtual tools in order to improve the teaching-learning process. Currently, he works for *ITCR (Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica)* in ESP courses for Engineering Programs.

B.A. Christian Josué Vega Moreira, University of Costa Rica, Costa Rica.



Biography

Christian is a self-motivated and progress-driven EFL instructor with an extensive background in this industry. He has developed and executed strategies that bring value to all sorts of companies. His work experience has allowed him to strengthen abilities in problem-solving, critical thinking, and group management. Organized, detail-oriented, and a capable manager of time, Christian is currently working as an instructional designer for a transnational company.

Lic. Jazmín Vindas Carmona, Fundación Tecnológica de Costa Rica, Costa Rica.



Biography

Jazmin is an English professor with seven years of practical experience teaching young people and adults. She is interested in educational research in pursuit of better conditions and opportunities for the teaching and learning process. She is currently working as an English as a second language teacher, performing functions such as planning lessons and creating didactic materials, as well as preparing and applying tests and other evaluations.

Lic. Mayra Liseth Soza García, Ministry of Public Education, Costa Rica.



Biography

Mayra Soza is an English teacher with eight years of experience in English Teaching. She has done research on speaking activities and appropriate materials to foster oral participation during virtual EFL lessons. She believes that technology is an essential tool to help teachers facilitate language learning. Mrs. Soza currently teaches literature to seventh grade students at a public high school.

Lic. Shirley Segura González, Ministry of Public Education, Costa Rica.



Biography

An English professor with twenty-five years of experience teaching primary school children for the MEP, Shirley has also worked as a language teacher for FUNDATEC for three years and a university professor at a private institution for seven years. She is interested in further studies in a master's program at the UCR and being up to date with the most recent approaches to language teaching. As a primary school teacher, she is part of the English as a Second Language program developed by the English advisor in Costa Rica's Western Region, developing strategies and providing educational opportunities for the school population.

Beyond Fill-in-the-Blank: Meaningful Grammar Activities to Support Acquisition and Promote Collaborative Learning

Abstract

Despite the importance of grammar instruction in language teaching, there is a considerable lack of variation in the practice exercises offered by most commercial textbooks and online teaching resources. An overreliance on structure focused fill-in-the-blank and transformation items that are easy to write and simple to check does not offer sufficient quality input to support acquisition. Therefore, teachers must develop the ability to design their own grammar practice activities that are more likely to support the students' noticing of the relationship between form and meaning and help them view grammar as a communicative resource. In this session, the participants will review VanPatten's Processing Instruction model and see how it can be used to create engaging, collaborative tasks that can be adapted to different topics connected with students' interests. The participants will also see how activities using discourse frames can provide scaffolding to support speaking and writing that incorporates target structures.

M.A. Mark Foster Cormier, Centro Cultural Costarricense Norteamericano, Universidad Latinoamericana de Ciencia y Tecnología, Universidad Castro Carazo, Costa Rica.



Biography

Mark Foster Cormier is an English teacher, teacher trainer, university professor and Spanish-English translator with over 14 years of experience in the field. He holds a Master's in TESOL from Marlboro College and undergraduate degrees in English teaching and Latin American studies from *Universidad Americana* and Appalachian State University respectively. Mark's interests include teacher development, reflective practice, materials design, and online education. He is currently Head of Training and Professional Development at the *Centro Cultural Costarricense Norteamericano*, professor in the school of education at *Universidad Latinoamericana de Ciencia y Tecnología* and an English teacher at *Universidad Castro Carazo*.

An eXe Learning Object to Innovate EFL Multiethnic Literature Teaching

Abstract

Teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in a formal environment goes beyond traditional classroom methodologies and didactic materials. For academicians at *Universidad Nacional, Coto Campus*, integrating technology into the existing curricula has become necessary to provide students with more lively classes and inclusive learning environments by using different platforms and digital tools available for interaction. This research was aimed at creating a “Learning Object” whose socio-constructivist language methodology was applied to a group of sixteen fourth-level students of the Multiethnic Literature course of the English Teaching major. The purpose was to analyze how this learning object designed in the eXeLearning platform contributes to the students’ foreign language learning process, and how technological activities, ranging from substitution to redefinition, innovate classroom interaction.

M.Ed. Cecilia López Morales, Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica, Costa Rica.



Biography

Cecilia López Morales holds a Master’s Degree in Education with a minor in University Teaching from *Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica*. Her teaching experience started in 1994 at MEP, including institutions such as public high schools, *Colegio Humanístico Costarricense* and CONED. She has also worked at private universities (*Universidad Latina de Costa Rica* and *Universidad Católica*). From 2001 to 2008, she worked at UCEDA Institute as a second language teacher for specific purposes. She has been working at *Universidad Nacional, Coto Campus* for over 10 years. She is the coordinator of the project Team-UNA, whose aim is to foster social engagement with the community and public high schools in the region. Her research interests are EFL, teaching, assessment, higher education and its impact on society, technology, blended learning and teacher identity.

M.Ed. Roberto Arguedas Zúñiga, Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica, Regional Brunca Campus, Coto Campus, Costa Rica.



Biography

Roberto Arguedas Zúñiga holds a Master's Degree in Education with a minor in English Language Learning from the *Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica*. He has worked as a professor at *Universidad Nacional*, Coto Campus, for over five years, imparting English Teaching major courses, as well as other language courses for other majors. He has also worked as a professor at the University of Costa Rica, Southern Campus in Golfito. Currently, he works at *Universidad Nacional*, Coto Campus, where he is also the coordinator of the major. His research interests include matters regarding language teacher identity, language ideologies, assessment, technology, and language education.

Enriching Language Instruction through Online Newspapers

Abstract

In this instructional and informative practice-oriented session, the presenters will share their educational experience on how teachers at their large IEP use online newspapers to enrich their teaching practices and their ESL students' learning experience by using news articles as an invaluable teaching resource. The presenters will reflect upon their practices and discuss the ways faculty members use this technology to enhance their students' learning success. Examination will be made of how technology raises the quality of the class, making classes interactive, and involving students deeply in their own learning by incorporating electronic interaction. The presenters will discuss the activities they included, their questions, the lessons they learned through online newspaper resources, and how these can be used throughout the year in every curriculum area at different proficiency levels. They will share tips to help teachers make the most of similar resources to enhance their students' learning experience. The presenters will also provide suggestions and recommendations for best practices to intensify student learning success. Moreover, they will talk about some of the surprising rewards experienced along the way. By attending this presentation, teachers will be given the necessary tools to plan more effective and challenging classes. Set your students up to succeed in a tremendous way!

M.Ed. Fernanda Ortiz, University of Arizona, United States of America.



Biography

Fernanda Ortiz was raised in Sonora, Mexico, where she completed her undergraduate studies in Teaching English as a Foreign Language and her graduate studies in education. She has been an instructor at the Center for English as a Second Language (CESL) at the University of Arizona since June of 2010. She has over 28 years of experience teaching English and Spanish in the US, Mexico, and Japan. Over the years, she has developed a teaching philosophy that is constantly evolving as she seeks new knowledge, training, and interactions with colleagues in her daily approach to being an effective instructor. She strives to maintain an inviting, stimulating classroom that inspires a love of learning and creativity.

Interactive Use of Online Resources for Student Engagement

Abstract

Since the COVID pandemic, a lot of us have been forced to suddenly shift our focus from papers and pens to online whiteboards. While some of us have taken to this new mode of teaching like fish to water, many feel overwhelmed with the resources available and the pressure to use them in a way that would benefit our students to the maximum. If you are one of these teachers like me, then this is the workshop for you. A carefully curated list of websites and apps, with help on when and how to use them. A definitive list that can help ease the pressure of planning for engaging and interactive lessons.

B.A. Bina Ashraf Ali, Richard Language College, Pakistan.



Biography

Bina Ashraf Ali has been teaching English for over 15 years now. She started her career in 2006 with a CELTA and has continued her professional development over the years. She has had a varied experience as a teacher trainer, DELTA tutor, ICT coordinator, academic course leader, materials developer and she worked on the launch of blended learning at the British Council, Oman. She is deeply interested in using technology to enhance students' learning experience and has worked hard to raise awareness on its benefits. Since 2019, she has worked as a principal and then, after COVID-19, as a consultant for Richard Language College.

Digital Solutions to Support English Language Instruction

Abstract

The Age of Learning Foundation is a nonprofit organization that provides applications, resources, and training at no cost to our partner countries. Our presentation aims to champion blended learning in classrooms by sharing an overview of our current and future applications that support English Language Learners, as well as ways to use each application. Our presentation aligns with the central theme of technology use. The presentation will be a practice academic session that will be divided into three sections. Section 1 will provide an overview of our solutions. Section 2 will focus on how these solutions can be utilized within the classroom. In section 3, the participants will be provided with information on how to access our applications.

Dr. Danelle M. Conner, Age of Learning Foundation, United States of America.



Biography

For over 20 years, Dr. Danelle Conner has been working in education. She obtained her school leadership certification from Carnegie Mellon University and her Doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Danelle has been a teacher, curriculum and instruction director, school leader, and college professor. She recently joined the Age of Learning Foundation as the Head of Programs. In this role, Danelle supports school level implementation of applications through professional development and resource development. Danelle has worked extensively with schools in high need areas, which has guided her research in reading, differentiation, technology, teacher development, and coaching.

Lic. Marcela Vaglio Ureña, Age of Learning Foundation, Costa Rica.



Biography

Marcela Vaglio is a passionate English language professor devoted to using her 25 years of teaching experience, in both public and private institutions, to coach others in the exciting journey of TEFL. She started her career in early childhood education as a bilingual teacher. After graduating from the *Universidad Central* in Costa Rica, Marcela became an English language teacher at the elementary and high school levels. Marcela was a college professor, and the academic coordinator of the English Teaching School at *Universidad Latina*. Recently, she became

the academic advisor at Age of Learning Foundation in Costa Rica, where she collaborates with MEP and private schools in the implementation of blended learning tools.

Successful Pedagogical Practices with Interactive Materials and Independent Users' Linguistic Results

Abstract

This practical academic session reflects on pedagogical strategies that join technology use with interactive activities to create well-structured classes that give learners what they require to develop their linguistic competencies. Students must experience class activities that make them confident and independent while exploring, interacting, questioning, and using the target language in prefabricated and spontaneous scenarios; however, most learners do not accomplish the linguistic level they need and deserve, and teachers frequently fail to design their classes with the most effective mediation strategies. As a response to this reality, sharing ideas based on a teacher's experience and the results obtained might help the use of authentic, designed, and adapted materials online for developing successful mediation strategies that aim at students' autonomous and collaborative learning processes.

Lic. Olger Francisco Soto Castro, Colegio Técnico Profesional Nataniel Arias Murillo, Costa Rica.



Biography

Acquiring his formal education in English teaching at the University of Costa Rica has given Olger the opportunity to put his professionalism into practice. Currently he is also undertaking a Master's Degree in Applied Linguistics with an Emphasis in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) at the *Universidad Nacional*. He knows first-hand how overwhelming and frustrating classrooms can be these days; hence, his ability to make his students feel at ease, as well as his ability to think outside the box, together with his hard work and dedication, have led to the development of his students' linguistic competencies in an ongoing adaptive process over his seventeen years as a high school teacher.

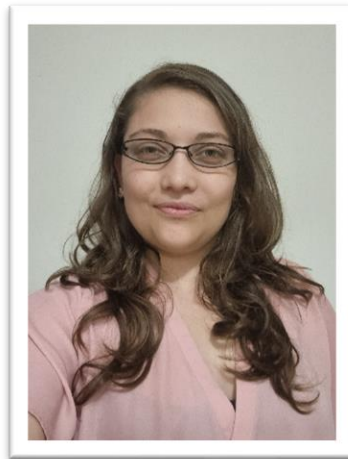
Interactive Workshops

Engaging and Interactive Digital Materials and Resources for English Teaching

Abstract

This workshop explores the importance and the creation process of materials and resources for English teaching that engage students in the learning process in a fun and relaxed way, with the objective of building confidence in the use of the English language. Participants will learn about the importance of including digital resources created for the specific needs of the class, and how to develop and design these in an easy way. Creating boards, games, and interactive materials will allow you to get your students engaged in the class, interacting and building the language by using it with a purpose, while creating an environment that will help students ease any fear of judgment, to build strong, fearless bases for the language.

M.Ed. Andrea Cristina Vargas Ortiz, Fundación Tecnológica de Costa Rica, Costa Rica.



Biography

Andrea has a Bachelor's Degree in English Language Teaching and a Master's Degree in Education. She was an assistant teacher for middle school, creating resources according to teachers' requests and needs. She has taught English to high school students, senior citizens and adults. Currently, she works as an English teacher, teaching adults and young adults at FUNDATEC. She constantly researches ways to improve her digital teaching resources, seeking information not only on how to make these, but also on their functionality and advantages for students according to teaching techniques and learning abilities and processes. This has helped her students acquire the language in a more relaxed and anxiety-free environment.

Language Elicitation in Virtual Learning Environments

Abstract

Language elicitation, seen as a tool for language acquisition, is one of the most powerful mechanisms to create meaningful learning environments in all modalities (face-to-face or virtual learning). As a result of recent dire worldwide situations, the classroom has moved from the physical to the virtual universe where teachers have found substantial challenges to translate what they have been used to doing into new dynamics. Thus, this interactive workshop aims to aid teachers with some theoretical reminders of elicitation and how it is approached at FUNDATEC. It also aims to give teachers the space to create a learning lesson plan with activities based on a specific topic they are currently teaching or will teach in the future.

M.B.A. Esteban Andrés Fuentes Mora, Fundación Tecnológica de Costa Rica, Costa Rica.



Biography

Esteban obtained his Bachelor's Degree in English Teaching at UCR and his Master's Degree on Management and Assessment of English Programs at ULACIT. He has 11 years of experience in the field of English teaching and has worked with all age levels from kindergarten to college. His interests include the impact of digital tools on learning, the relevance of feedback, the way rapport is built and how it affects learning, and elements about assessment. He considers that being informed about these topics makes a huge positive impact on teaching quality. Currently, he is working at FUNDATEC as a full-time language teacher.

Pedagogical Mediation and ICT Tools: The How To & When To

Abstract

As educators, we have been bombarded with the idea of using ICT (Information and Communication Technology) tools in our classes. But a tool by itself will not do the job! Nor will being tech-savvy or even trying to keep up with the latest and coolest app. What matters is pedagogical mediation and having a strategic teaching-learning approach in applying this. Are tools even needed? How do I select one from the overwhelming array of options? What should I do once a tool is selected? How should I embed it in the class environment (on-site, online, synchronous or asynchronous)? These questions will be answered in this workshop.

M.A. Cindy Rodríguez Soto, University of Costa Rica, Universidad Técnica Nacional, Costa Rica.



Biography

Cindy is a passionate educator who truly enjoys everything related to learning and education. She graduated as an English teacher (UCR) and then obtained a Master's Degree in Translation (UNA) and a Master of Education in Educational Management (UNED). Cindy is currently working on her Doctorate dissertation on Early Childhood Language Learning. She works at UTN and UCR, in this latter as a pedagogic assessor. Cindy is interested in pedagogic mediation, eco-pedagogy and assessment. She is constantly looking for new learning experiences.

From Potential Burnout to Engaged and Energized: Teacher and Student Well-being

Abstract

In 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) classified burnout as a syndrome caused by “chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.” Since the pandemic started, both virtual and face-to-face learning and teaching have taken on new dimensions for which not many of us were prepared, and teachers and students are more stressed than has been noted in the past. Because of this, it is important that educators and students focus on the roles that balance, care and well-being play in our classrooms to learn to manage the stress we are experiencing. In this interactive session, we will look at 3 different kinds of “burnout” and explore prosocial skills as a way for teachers and students to care for themselves and to cultivate effective ways of responding to stress so that our virtual and face-to-face learning environments do not lead us into burnout.

M.A. Mary Scholl, Institute for Collaborative Learning, Costa Rica.



Biography

Mary Scholl values learning, empathy, community, creativity, and curiosity. The founder and a fellow of the Institute for Collaborative Learning, she has been teaching language for 30 years, designing and implementing educational projects in Latin America for over 20 years and has served as an English Language Specialist in 12 countries. Mary holds an MA in Teaching English and Spanish from SIT Graduate Institute and has done doctoral studies in Adult Learning and Leadership at Teachers College, Columbia University. In 2021, she was named as one of the top 30 English Language Specialists by the U.S. Department of State in recognition of her lasting impact on the Specialist Program and on the field of TESOL.

M.A. Iván Suazo Castillo, Institute for Collaborative Learning, Costa Rica.



Biography

Iván Suazo is a fellow of the Institute for Collaborative Learning. He believes in the role of empathy and communication to create an inclusive learning environment. He studied Law at the *Universidad Centroamericana* in Nicaragua and received the Fulbright scholarship to do a Master of Teaching at the School for International Training in the USA. Iván is a licensed trainer of World Learning's TESOL Certificate Course. He has taught prosocial skills for educators in different countries. Iván has presented at conferences in Peru, Panama, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and the USA. Iván is a past president of TESOL-Nicaragua.

Exploring Blended Learning: An English Language Learning Ecosystem of Tech Solutions

Abstract

The Age of Learning Foundation is a nonprofit organization that provides applications, resources, and training at no cost to our partner countries. Our presentation aims to champion blended learning in classrooms by sharing an overview of our current and future applications that support English language learners, providing practical experiences with our applications and the opportunity to try them out. Our presentation aligns with the central theme of technology use. The presentation will be an interactive workshop that will be divided into three sections. The first section will focus on the foundation, our applications, and video assets. The second section will focus on a teacher's experience with *ABCmouse Aprende Ingles*. In the third section, participants will have an opportunity to try two applications. The session will end with reflection on the applications.

Dr. Danelle M. Conner, Age of Learning Foundation, United States of America.



Biography

For over 20 years, Dr. Danelle Conner has been working in education. She obtained her school leadership certification from Carnegie Mellon University and her Doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Danelle has been a teacher, curriculum and instruction director, school leader, and college professor. She recently joined the Age of Learning Foundation as the head of programs. In this role, Danelle supports school level implementation of applications through professional development and resource development. Danelle has worked extensively with schools in high needs areas which has guided her research in reading, differentiation, technology, teacher development, and coaching.

Lic. Marcela Vaglio Ureña, Age of Learning Foundation, Costa Rica.



Biography

Marcela Vaglio is a passionate English language professor devoted to using her 25 years of teaching experience in both public and private institutions to coach others in the exciting journey of TEFL. She started her career in early childhood education as a bilingual teacher. After graduating from the *Universidad Central* in Costa Rica, Marcela became an English language teacher at the elementary and high school levels. Marcela was a college professor, and the academic coordinator of the English Teaching School at *Universidad Latina de Costa Rica*.

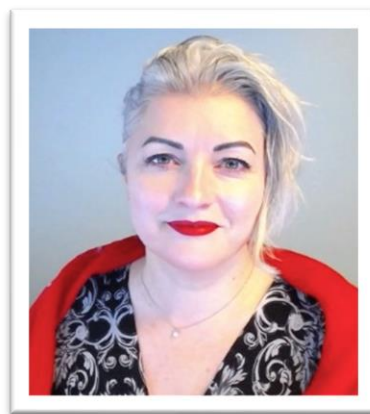
Recently, she became the academic advisor at Age of Learning Foundation in Costa Rica, where she collaborates with MEP and private schools to implement blended learning tools.

Classroom Communication Skills, Competing with the Dopamine Effect of Technology and Building the Teacher's Toolkit

Abstract

In the world of constant engagement with fun technologies, it can be a struggle to work with students in the classroom and keep their attention. In this 2-hour workshop, we will review our own process of reflection on our communication techniques, understand our own cultural biases, remove judgment from our teaching reflection, and practice the art of engaging students in their own learning path.

Dr. Madeleine Monaghan Golda, Golda Consulting, United States of America.



Biography

Madeleine has been designing and delivering professional development seminars for over two decades to educators, corporations, and host families. Madeleine has observed teachers in their classrooms and evaluated their cultural presence there. Most recently, she works as the global head of training for a private corporation. The past few years of her work experience have been focused on training in the area of communications and change management. Madeleine has taught high school and higher education in the USA and abroad and has spent many years researching the area of learning English as a second language. Madeleine lived abroad and learned French as her second language. She emigrated to the USA in 1993. As a native of Ireland, she grew up in a world where learning many languages was the norm. Madeleine has a Doctorate in Education, specializing in adult learning. She has a Master's Degree in Teaching and an additional Master's Degree in Information Systems from Fairfield University in Connecticut, USA. Studying communications is a key part of our success in life.

Discover Powerful Phonemic Awareness with the Color Vowel® Chart

Abstract

Phonemic awareness – the ability to identify and manipulate the sounds of a language – is essential to mastering English in both its spoken and written forms. The Color Vowel® Chart provides English learners of all ages with a practical and engaging foundation for building phonemic awareness. In this session, participants will experience Color Vowels® through hands-on activities that they can use with their students. Participants will also be invited to participate in a 3-month professional development project sponsored by MEP and the U.S. Embassy in which teachers use Blue Canoe®, an English pronunciation improvement app powered by AI and the Color Vowel® methodology, to learn more about the Color Vowel® Chart as they boost their own phonemic awareness and spoken English confidence.

M.A. Karen Taylor, Color Vowel/ELTS, United States of America.



Biography

Karen Taylor holds a Master's Degree in TESOL from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey and a Bachelor's Degree in English Literature from Georgetown University, and is a proud alumnus of the United World College. A former Fulbright TEFL Specialist in Mexico, Karen served as Practitioner in Residence at American University in Washington DC for nine years, where she discovered her passion for phonology, accent equity, and effective instructional strategies for teaching spoken English. Karen is co-author of the Color Vowel® Chart, and co-founder and Director of English Language Training Solutions.

Lic. Randall Centeno Hernández, Ministry of Public Education, Costa Rica.



Biography

Randall Centeno Hernández has university degrees in English Teaching from University of Costa Rica and *Universidad Internacional San Isidro Labrador*. He has worked as an English teacher in private and public institutions for more than fifteen years. He has experience working with young learners, teenagers and adults. Randall believes that learning is a human process that is enhanced by a positive and safe learning environment. He has an SIT-TESOL certificate from *Centro Espiral Mana*. He is currently working as a National English Advisor for First and Second Cycles of the Ministry of Public Education.

Reflection Sessions

Reflecting on English Teaching at the Preschool Level in the Costa Rican Public Education System: Challenges and Realities

Abstract

English teaching at preschool level in Costa Rica is developed through four different scenarios, each with its own challenges and realities. The aim of the session is a) to reflect on each scenario (its pros and cons), and how they can be improved to foster English language learning in our children from very young ages; and b) to learn from the successful experiences of English teachers working with preschool students.

M.Ed. María Gabriela Castillo Hernández, Universidad Técnica Nacional, San Carlos Campus, Costa Rica.



Biography

María Gabriela Castillo Hernández has over 22 years of experience as an EFL teacher and a teacher trainer. She worked as an English language advisor for the Ministry of Public Education at the Northern Regional Office in Costa Rica for 12 years. She holds a Master's Degree in English Language Teaching from *Universidad Latina de Costa Rica*, and a SIT TESOL Certificate from the World Learning SIT Graduate Institute of *Centro Espiral Mana* in Costa Rica. She strongly believes that learning and teaching must actively engage the learner in authentic and connected-to-life tasks beyond the classroom, promoting opportunities that allow meaningful and life-long learning experiences. She currently works as the Academic Coordinator and an EFL professor at *Universidad Técnica Nacional, San Carlos Campus*.

Reflecting on How Much English Should an English Teacher Use if an English Teacher is Teaching English?

Abstract

There is no doubt about the importance of exposure to a language; however, how much L1 and L2 should be used in a lesson raises several questions. While the Ministry of Public Education requests educators to teach English in English, in practice, many teachers have second thoughts about this. Many educators wonder if there are some specific situations in which the use of Spanish may be necessary or if every single situation in the classroom should be addressed in the target language. Join this reflective session in which we will all discuss this relevant topic.

Lic. Randall Centeno Hernández, Ministry of Public Education, Costa Rica.



Biography

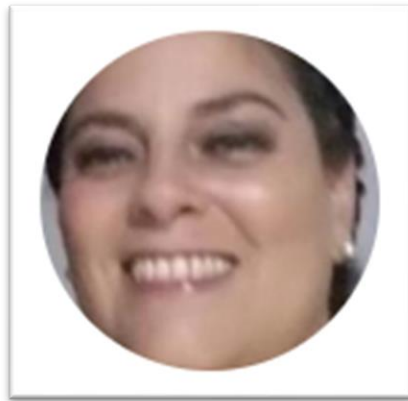
Randall Centeno Hernández has university degrees in English Teaching from the University of Costa Rica and *Universidad Internacional San Isidro Labrador*. He has worked as an English teacher in private and public institutions for more than fifteen years. He has experience working with young learners, teenagers and adults. Randall believes that learning is a human process that is enhanced by a positive and safe learning environment. He has an SIT-TESOL certificate from *Centro Espiral Mana*. He is currently working as a National English Advisor for First and Second Cycles of the Ministry of Public Education.

Reflecting on How to Implement PEI in Educational Planning

Abstract

Curricular accommodation is one of the most common situations we find in all our classes due to our legislation, which allows every person in Costa Rica to be included and to receive a quality education. Over the years, in the implementation of this in our daily lessons, these issues have changed in many ways. Nowadays, we have to incorporate those accommodations for students with special educational needs into our planning, so they can participate, communicate and be part of the pedagogical mediation with all their peers.

M.Sc. Livia Gamboa Cordero, San Carlos Regional Directorate of Education, Ministry of Public Education, San Carlos, Costa Rica.



Biography

Livia obtained a Master's Degree in Educational Administration from the University of Costa Rica, starting this amazing journey of being an elementary English teacher in 1999 in Monterrey-Vargas Araya School. As was the case for many other teachers, she started without holding a diploma. When later working in Puntarenas, she began her studies in ESL, obtaining a Bachelor's Degree from the *Universidad Central*. Her 23 years of experience as a teacher led her to become a Pedagogical Advisor for the Ministry of Education, first at the Peninsular Regional Office, and since 2020 at the San Carlos Regional Office.

Reflecting on Universal Design for Learning: The Path to Inclusive Education

Abstract

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) or Universal Design for Instruction (UDI) is a very valuable teaching strategy resulting in a fundamental tool for inclusive education. Nonetheless, the lack of time and the scarce training offered in this subject make it difficult for teachers to be informed and implement this in our classes.

M.L. Paola Gabriela Artavia Moya, Western Regional Directorate of Education, Ministry of Public Education, Costa Rica.



Biography

Paola holds a Master's Degree in Neurolinguistics and Neuroeducation, and has additionally studied ESL/EFL at the *Universidad Nacional*, UNED, *Tecnológico de Monterrey* and the University of Costa Rica. She further studied linguistics and second languages and cultures at *Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica* and holds a Bachelor's Degree in Second Language Acquisition at the University of Costa Rica. She has worked as an English teacher in public high schools and universities such as the University of Costa Rica and *Universidad Militar Nueva Granada* in Colombia. She has worked for the Ministry of Education in Costa Rica since 2007 as a pedagogical advisor for English teachers in the Western Region. Her research interests include phonics, how to teach languages through neurolinguistic programming, pedagogical grammar, literature and STEAM.

Reflecting on the Integral Academic Leveling Plan (PINA)

Abstract

During recent years, the cumulative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, strikes and even natural disasters have affected our educational system. Schools were temporarily closed and new methodologies had to be implemented to lower the impact on the students' learning process. In spite of those efforts, there is evidence that students show low academic performance and learning loss. The Ministry of Public Education has designed a plan called *Plan Integral de Nivelación Académica*, (Integral Academic Leveling Plan, PINA), which is intended to implement strategic actions to recover students' learning and improve the teaching-learning process.

M.Sc. Shirley Rojas Leiva, Norte-Norte Regional Directorate of Education, Ministry of Public Education, Costa Rica.



Biography

Shirley Rojas has a Master's Degree in English Teaching. She worked as an English teacher in both elementary schools and high schools for 8 years. She has also worked as a professor at private and public universities. She is currently working as a regional advisor at the Norte-Norte Regional Directorate of Education. She has been working in that position for 15 years. She is in charge of assisting and training teachers in pedagogical and curricular areas and designing didactic resources to enhance teaching and learning mediation. Among her interests are implementing new pedagogical approaches and using educational technology resources to improve students' linguistic competencies.

Reflecting on What Went Fine but Nobody Talks About

Abstract

Experience is the key to most of our achievements through life. All the ups and downs are worth the work as they create who we are becoming. Teachers should thus reflect on and celebrate achievements and growth from the past. What has made teachers more resilient, skillful, and resourceful in the past two years? Do we prize, thank, or celebrate ourselves for what we have done well? Do we celebrate our victories? Let's share our experiences and our best practices to learn from each other and celebrate the professionals we have become and the triumphant outcomes of the different challenges we have overcome in our teaching practice.

M.Sc. Leandro Mora Torres, Sarapiquí Regional Directorate of Education, Ministry of Public Education, Costa Rica.



Biography

Leandro Mora is an English teacher from Guápiles, Limón. He has worked as both a primary school and a high school teacher in the Sarapiquí Regional Directorate of Education for the last 13 years. During the last year he has held the position of English regional advisor at the MEP office located in Sarapiquí. Leandro has considerable experience teaching at the university level for a variety of institutions, as well as at other English language centers across the country. Leandro holds Bachelor's, Licentiate and Master's Degrees in English Teaching from *Universidad Latina de Costa Rica*. He earned his TESOL certification at Centro Espiral Mana in 2018. He is passionate about working with language learners of all ages. He hopes to see every student grow in all areas of their development—academic, social, language, and motor skills. Daily he strives to create a fun, positive, nurturing environment for his community of learners.

Reflecting on the Lessons Learned from the COVID Emergency to Enhance Face-to-Face Teaching

Abstract

Nearly every country declared an emergency during the first quarter of 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools around the world closed their doors and massively resorted to distance education. Now that schools have returned to a new normality, it is crucial to analyze the tools, skills and lessons learned that can help enhance face-to-face instruction in the POST-COVID era.

Dr. Macedonio Alanís González, Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico.



Biography

Dr. Macedonio Alanís is a full professor of Management Information Systems at *Tecnológico de Monterrey* in Monterrey, Mexico. He teaches face-to-face and distance learning courses in Technology Management and Digital Transformation. He has published over 120 articles and books, presented at international conferences and received the prestigious Eisenhower Fellowship. Dr. Alanís is a strategy and technology consultant. He participated in preparing Mexico's national Information Technology Policies and designed education programs in technology for universities in different countries. He holds a Doctorate in Management from the University of Minnesota, a Master's Degree in Computer Science from Brown University, and a Bachelor's in Computer Science from *Tecnológico de Monterrey*.

Reflecting on the Importance of English for the Huetar Northern Region

Abstract

To attract new investment to the Huetar Norte region that can in turn generate new and better jobs, the Costa Rican agency in charge of attracting new investment, CINDE, has identified the need to increase the quantity and improve the quality of the bilingual workforce. This is a key constraint that must be overcome nationally, but in particular in the rural areas of the country, in order to generate a level playing field in terms of opportunities for the rural population. In this session, CINDE will give an overview of what investors are demanding from the regions in terms of bilingual workers, and how that compares to other countries and regions with which Costa Rica competes when attracting new investments. The *Programa Estado de la Educación* (State of Education Program) will then give an overview of the current situation of the bilingual population of the Huetar Norte region, with a special emphasis on ways that the bilingual skills of the population can be improved. Finally, ADENORTE will wrap up with an overview of the region, that will focus on the importance of organizing the initiatives and efforts of local stakeholders, to integrate these into results that are greater than the sum of the individual parts.

MEM. Manrique Rojas Araya, Agencia para el Desarrollo de la Zona Norte, San Carlos, Costa Rica.



Biography

Manrique Rojas is the General Manager of Edificadora Beta, an engineering and construction company. He holds a Bachelor's in Biology from Connecticut College and a Master's in Environmental Management from Yale University. He has worked for The Nature Conservancy, IUCN, the World Commission on Dams, UNEP, JICA, and the World Bank as staff or a consultant on issues related to water resources management, conservation finance, and climate change. He is currently the president of the Development Agency of the Huetar Norte Region (ADENORTE), as well as the Costa Rican Association of Power Producers (ACOPE).