Foreign language teaching and technologies during COVID-19 critical times: A course design proposal for English language teaching students at Universidad Austral de Chile

Enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras y tecnologías en tiempos críticos del COVID-19: Una propuesta de diseño de curso para estudiantes de enseñanza del inglés de la Universidad Austral de Chile

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Abstract

Historically, human beings' life has been transformed by technologies, impacting their daily activities such as work or the way they communicate. Therefore, the school is no exception, since technologies have also changed the way of teaching and learning. Long before the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, technologies and their use in language teaching have represented a focus of study, as they provide support for both learning and teaching. However, it has been shown that the use of technologies in the foreign language classroom requires the development of digital skills and the training of teachers. This research proposes the design of a course on "Teaching Foreign Languages and Technologies" for students enrolled in the English teaching as a foreign language program at Universidad Austral de Chile. It is expected that the design of the proposed course will allow students to reflect and develop technological skills that promote the transformation of foreign language teaching processes, through the design, production, evaluation and use of available technologies for language learning. Finally, it is considered that the teaching of foreign languages cannot be based on beliefs, ideas, needs, and resources from the past, but on beliefs, ideas, needs, and resources from the present with the inclusion of digital and technological skills of the 21st century.

Keywords: foreign language teaching, technologies, technological skills, teacher training.

Resumen

Históricamente, la vida de los seres humanos ha sido transformada por las tecnologías, impactando sus actividades diarias como el trabajo o la forma en que se comunican. Por tanto, la escuela no es una excepción, ya que las tecnologías también han cambiado la forma de enseñar y aprender. Mucho antes de la propagación de la pandemia COVID-19, las tecnologías y su uso en la enseñanza de idiomas han representado un foco de estudio, ya que brindan apoyo tanto para el aprendizaje como para la enseñanza. Sin embargo, se ha demostrado que el uso de tecnologías en el aula de lenguas extranjeras requiere el desarrollo de competencias tecnológicas y la forma-

ción de los profesores. Esta investigación propone el diseño de un curso sobre "Enseñanza de Idiomas y Tecnologías Extranjeras" para estudiantes matriculados en el programa de enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera en la Universidad Austral de Chile. Se espera que el diseño del curso propuesto permita a los estudiantes reflexionar y desarrollar competencias tecnológicas que promuevan la transformación de los procesos de enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras, a través del diseño, producción, evaluación y uso de las tecnologías disponibles para el aprendizaje de idiomas. Finalmente, se considera que la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras no puede basarse en creencias, ideas, necesidades y recursos del pasado, sino en creencias, ideas, necesidades y recursos del presente, lo que incluye las competencias digitales y tecnológicas del Siglo XXI.

1. Introduction

The constant growth of globalization as a world phenomenon has generated the need for people to communicate in at least one foreign language. The competent command of a foreign language is of great importance in areas such as: science, tourism, communication media, commerce, international relations and education. For this reason, on a global scale, the teaching of foreign languages has been added to the educational curriculum at all levels, in order to develop linguistic and communicative skills in students, and also to promote the global development of society. The selection of the foreign language depends in most cases on the linguistic needs of each countries. For example, on the one hand, in the United States, the most widely taught foreign language is Spanish due to the relations that this country has with native speakers of the Spanish-speaking world. On the other hand, in most Latin American countries, English is the foreign language generally taught as a consequence of the communication needs they have with the different English-speaking countries through tourism, business, media and technological and scientific advances.

Since its inception, the teaching of foreign languages has been characterized by different methodologies. In the methodological field of foreign language teaching, teachers can adopt and apply various approaches, methods and techniques according to the learning needs of their students. The methods constitute fixed teaching systems with established techniques and practices. The approaches contain teaching philosophies that can be interpreted and applied in various ways in the classroom. In its beginnings, the teaching of foreign languages was characterized by the adoption of a merely traditional approach, aimed at learning aspects related to the morphological, syntactic, phonological and grammatical structure of the language. However, over the years, the teaching of foreign languages has adopted new approaches, within which, the one that remains in force is the Communicative Approach. With the incorporation of the Communicative Approach, language teaching went from being interested in studying the structures and rules

of the language to having an emphasis on the use and development of linguistic and communicative skills of students (Walia, 2012; Chang 2011; Attar and Chopra, 2010; Tyler, 2008; White, 1988 and Hymes, 1972).

In the language classroom, there have been various changes and advances as a consequence of the adoption of new teaching approaches and methodologies. This has increased the need to integrate new tools and resources that optimize and transform teaching and learning processes. In this sense, the integration of new tools and resources for the optimization and transformation of teaching has been closely related to the pedagogical use of technologies. Several researches related to the integration of technologies as tools that promote an eminently significant teaching and learning scenario have recently taken place (Hadjithoma and Karagiorgi, 2009; Monereo, 2004; Thompson, 2013). However, there are opposing approaches to considering the educational potential of technologies. Basically, this is due to the discourse that has been sustained in political, educational and social matters where they are associated with processes of change and improvement in the quality of education. In this regard, Coll and Monereo (2008) and Ertmer (2005) highlight that technologies are tools that promote access, search, processing, transmission and exchange of information.

Due to the above, in the educational context, actions have been aimed at transforming pedagogical processes. Such actions are characterized by TAC *"Tecnologías para el Aprendizaje y el Conocimiento"* (Learning and Knowledge Technologies), which are aimed at redirecting the concept of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) to one that is more formative, pedagogical and less informatic. TAC go beyond learning how to use ICT. These are dedicated to exploring the technological tools available for learning and acquiring knowledge (Lozano, 2011). The introduction of TAC affects the teachers' role, regarding their teaching practice and the strategies they implement in conventional or traditional teaching situations (Salinas, 2010). The change of focus from traditional teaching to a technological one brings about the redefinition of tasks, where the attitudes, competences and teacher training play a fundamental role in the integration of technologies in the educational work (Newhouse, 2002).

In this line, the life of the human being has been transformed by technologies, making their daily activities such as work or the way of communicating be impacted. Therefore, the school is not the exception, since technologies have also changed the way of teaching and learning. The entrance of technologies into the classroom is mainly due to: pedagogical, administrative and management needs, and to the demands of modernizing society.

The use of technologies in the foreign language classroom requires the development of teachers' competencies. Universidad Iberoamericana del Deporte (2008) expresses that competences constitute a set of knowledge that includes knowledge, actions, axiological sense and purposes that the teachers develop throughout their training, professional practice, personal and social life, which they combine to facilitate their performance effectively. Competences from a technological point of view make up the concurrence of aspects related to personality, attitudes, knowledge, abilities and beliefs that define professional teaching performance. These aspects are associated with knowledge (KNOW), attitudes (BE), and skills (DO).

According to the previous idea, the update of the technological standards and competences proposed by UNESCO (2019) is aimed at harmonizing the necessary training of teachers worldwide.

To update the standards and competencies, three productivity factors were defined:
- Deepening of capital, related to teachers' ability to use new equipment, more productive than previous versions of it.
- Improvement of the quality of work, concerned with teachers with better knowledge, who can add value to the national economic result.
- Technological innovation, focused on the teachers' ability to create, distribute, share and use new knowledge.
These three productivity factors form the basis of three complementary approaches that link educational policies to economic development:
- Increased technological understanding of students, citizens and the workforce through the integration of ICT skills in the curricula (Technology basics approach).
- Increased capacity of students, citizens, and the workforce to use knowledge in order to add value to society and the economy, applying that knowledge to solve complex and real problems (knowledge deepening approach).
- Increased capacity of students, citizens and the workforce to innovate, produce new knowledge and take advantage of it (knowledge generation approach).
The previously described UNESCO standards update responds to a concern shared by many teachers, since having computers in the classroom is not enough to guarantee that students can develop the essential skills in the use of technologies that they need for work and daily life in the 21st century. These standards are not limited to addressing competences in technologies, in other words, they go further and examine these competences in the light of pedagogical innovations, curricula, the organization of educational institutions and the needs of teachers who want to improve the quality of their work and the ability to collaborate with their colleagues.

In the national context, in Chile, the different implemented public policies have been aimed at closing the existing social gaps. In education, various public policies have been implemented, one of which is *digital education*. This public policy is oriented to innovate in the different elements that make up the structure of the Chilean Educational System, in order to lead it to new conditions, criteria and instruments of teaching and learning (MINEDUC, 2017). In this sense, the Ministry of Education implemented the national technology policy *"Enlaces"*, in order to create new learning spaces for students. But, the reality is that the use of these new environments is very unequal depending on the socio-economic origin of their families (Yilorm and Acosta, 2016; MINEDUC, 2017).

In this order of ideas, currently, due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, MINEDUC decreed the in-class suspension in all educational establishments in the country. For the MINEDUC, it is imperative that pedagogical contents are not lost during the days of preventive isolation, so in coordination with the Coronavirus Action Plan that the Government of the Republic of Chile has ordered, the promotion of the use of technologies was implemented. , through a remote learning platform called *"Aprendo en Línea"*, where students can access all school texts digitally, complementary pedagogical material and a school digital library. This latest educational policy requires teachers to become revolutionary distance learning guides for their students, through digital communication platforms.

The educational policies implemented, up to now, have tried to improve the key conditions that contribute to the educational use of technology in and outside schools, through the

modernization of infrastructure, acquisition of resources and teacher training and updating, but not always with the depth, continuity and breadth that is required. This is because the integration of technologies in education is a complex process, in which the capacities, competences, attitudes and beliefs of teachers must be considered, so that, their pedagogical potentials are converted into generating axes of new experiences of learnings. According to what has been stated, the current moment in the country requires teachers who take advantage of technologies to innovate both inside and outside the classroom and prepare 21st century students for the emerging digital society. Based on the foregoing, the present research aims to propose the design of a "Foreign Language Teaching and Technologies" course for English teaching students at Universidad Austral de Chile.

2. Description of the pedagogical context

The program of English teaching as a foreign language of Universidad Austral de Chile is attached to the Faculty of Philosophy and Humanities, and is offered under the face-to-face modality in the day shift with a duration of five years. The administration of this study program has the following disciplinary areas: language acquisition, linguistics, literature, didactics of English as a foreign language, education, social sciences and humanities. The certification granted at the end of the academic and administrative requirements is "English Teacher". This certification allows graduates of the program to work at different levels of the Chilean educational system as English teachers. Currently, the aforementioned program has 252 students enrolled, mostly from southern Chile. In general terms, the age of the students ranges from 17 to 26 years. It is highlighted that more than fifty percent are women. Regarding training in the area of technologies, students must take two general compulsory courses: (PLAC 097) Information and Communication Technologies and (ICED 097) ICT Mediations and learning environments. With the approval of the two aforementioned courses, students are expected to develop general technological skills.

3. Technology and education

The spread of the global COVID-19 pandemic has made it an experience that teachers must be prepared to offer their students more and better learning opportunities mediated by the use of technologies. In this sense, the professional preparation of teachers regarding the use of technologies in teaching is a prevailing need and a characteristic of the 21st century teacher. According to UNESCO (2019) "Teachers must be prepared to train students with the advantages that technologies can bring" (page. 1). Therefore, both face-to-face and distance learning must have teachers who have highly developed technological skills so that they can effectively teach the contents of their course. Unfortunately, in-service teachers have been challenged to develop technological skills that have not been part of their training.

In technology-mediated teaching, traditional teacher's tasks related to time management, organization and teaching of learning contents have been impacted. This is because the use of technologies in teaching is closely linked to teacher's creativity, the use of synchronous and asynchronous communication strategies, and the design of materials for the development of autono-

mous learning (Rappoport, Rodríguez and Bresanello, 2020).

Through the use of technologies, students learn with the immediate interaction of digital materials, with or without the teacher's mediation. Therefore, digital learning materials play a central role in the self-learning process that students must develop. Therefore, the preparation of the teacher in the design of tasks and digital materials is one of the needs to optimize the quality of teaching. Unfortunately, traditional teaching does not provide teachers with the development of the skills necessary to teach their students how to survive in today's world.

4. Foreign language teaching and technology use

The explosion of technologies over the last decade certainly has changed foreign languages teaching. While teachers gradually learn how to use these pedagogical resources, there is also an increasing need on understanding how students can use technologies to develop foreign language skills. Nowadays, students mostly rely on technology-based language learning (Saglain, 2012). Language teaching and learning through the use of technologies place both teachers and students at a higher level beyond the traditional classroom walls. Thanks to technology, a foreign language course can be created and fostered by input from students and content specialists, and easily be updated over time (González and St. Louis, 2012), thus permitting content and the learner to interact through technology in order to create an authentic, self-contained learning environment (Butler-Pascoe, 2009).

Significantly, all of these viewpoints related to the advantages in electronic communication allow students to express themselves freely and creatively when learning a foreign language (Renaud, 2011). In support to this idea, some researchers have found that most students prefer to learn a foreign language through technology than face-to-face instruction (Ravathi, 2008). Since the beginning of the new century, many scholars have been excited about the potential use of technologies in foreign language, although they acknowledge limitations (Chinnery, 2006). The following are user-friendly applications which can be used for promoting language learning and interaction. They are also easy to use for those teachers who have little experience with technology tools. However, teachers can explore some unknown ones, step by step.

Audacity: It is an audio recorder and editor - Offline. With the use of this application, students can record and edit interviews on various topics and create sound documentaries or sound stories and stories.

Genially: It is a creator of digital presentations - Online. With the use of this application, teachers can produce an interactive presentation and design hypermedia teaching materials.

Padlet: it is an interactive mural maker - Online. With the use of this application, both students and teachers can brainstorm about the different ways to solve a problem and design hypermedia teaching materials.

Avidemux: It is a video editor - Offline. With the use of this application, both students and teachers can shoot a short film representing a historical or social event and edit a film to cut out some fragments and share them to generate debate or think about continuities of the story related.

Canva: It is a poster maker - Online. With the use of this application, teachers can design infographics to summarize constructed concepts and create a graphic representation to explain

a concept.

EdPuzzle: It is a creator of video quizzes - Online. With the use of this application, teachers can evaluate students' learning processes from videos intervened with questions and insert sentences about the causes of phenomena into a video with questions to be answered by students from research on the subject.

Quizzlet: It is creator of interactive flash cards to study, practice, and test vocabulary. With the use of the application, teachers can help learners with the pronunciation and spelling of words and phrases.

From text to speech: It is a vocalizer of texts. With the use of this application, teachers can convert written texts to speech and so allow students to improve their listening comprehension skills. This is exclusively beneficial in EFL contexts where native speakers are not always available.

The different designs of digital learning materials made by teachers can be stored or housed in different virtual environments. These virtual environments can be of great help to be in contact with students, family members and to optimize teaching work time. In addition, they are private and useful spaces for organizing courses, assigning tasks, accompanying students, communicating and sharing information (Rappoport, Rodríguez and Bresanello, 2020). The use of the following platforms requires certain level of competence of both the teacher and the students.

Google Classroom: This virtual environment can be accessed for free with a personal Google account. However, the possibilities of use are increased if students and teachers have an institutional account of G Suite for Education. If the group of students has a device with an internet connection, it is an excellent option to manage teaching.

Edmodo: This virtual environment works as a social network similar to Facebook. Announcements, questions, tests and tasks can be published on the portal. Students, family members and teachers can communicate through these posts, indicate likes or comment on them. The paid version offers additional services.

Moodle: It is a learning management platform, which combines actions offered in the previous two. Additionally, it is freely distributed under license, widely used in the university environment and for distance learning.

Online teaching requires both teachers and students to have some virtual encounters. If the class group, teachers and students, have good internet connectivity, these are excellent resources for developing content, generating encounters, solving doubts and maintaining close ties (Rappoport, Rodríguez and Bresanello, 2020). The following alternatives are relatively easy to use:

Google Meet: In its most basic version, it allows 100 people to be added simultaneously per meeting, with no limit on the duration of the call. If teachers and students have a G Suite for Education account, the limit is extended to 250. Teachers can share a link for students to join the meeting.

Zoom: It is an application for smartphones and computers that allows video calls with groups of up to 300 people. The meetings last 40 minutes, free version. In addition, screen sharing, exchanging text messages, recording the session and sharing files are allowed. The teacher can send a link for the students to access the meeting. Two other similar applications to make videocalls are Skype and Jitsi Meer.

Telephone contact is a powerful communication channel in a scenario without the possi-

bility of physical contact and without internet or limited connectivity. It is an excellent personal-ized approach option that allows people to maintain the bond with each of the children or young people and with their families (Rappoport, Rodríguez and Bresanello, 2020). In this line, in our classes we can use WhatsApp. It is the most popular smartphone application. With the use of this application, both teachers and students can exchange text messages, audios, images, files, videos and make video calls, with up to 50 people. In addition, groups with many users and broadcast lists can be set up. It is recommended to use for more informal, brief and immediate communi-cations, such as solving simple doubts, transmitting encouragement and greeting.

It is imperative to state that the technology applications considered above are appropriate to help students learn interactively and socially. The higher use of technology can be appreciated through the promotion and examination of its real use. Teachers can be skilled by evaluating instances of practical applications in their current teaching practice. These technologies can in-crease and build on traditional forms of learning, giving birth to an improved and more multifac-eted approach to knowledge acquisition that complements the current more general shift toward an increasingly technological world (Renaud, 2011).

5. Course design proposal

Course name: *Foreign language teaching and technologies.*
Author: *Sc. Dr. Luis Felipe Casimiro Perlaza.*
Program: *English Language Teaching.*
CTS-Chile credits: *3*
Semester: *VI.*
Course: *Elective.*
Minimum requirements: *None.*
Semester chronological hours: 76.5

General description:

The main purpose of the subject is for students to reflect on the context in which technologies support foreign language teaching processes, through the development of design, production, evaluation and use of digital materials for online language learning purposes.

Specific skills:
Domain level: *Higher*

- To generate educational knowledge contributing to professional development and multidimensional improvement of the quality and equity of education, assuming the teaching profession from an updat-ed ethical and political dimension in the eco-cultural contingency of an autonomous professional act and resistance to uncritical logic of reproduction.
- To work in interdisciplinary teams oriented to the construction of educational knowledge, the inte-gration of curricular areas and the design of transversal, situated and pertinent educational actions
- To mediate inclusive learning processes that occur primarily in school, with contextualized didactics

relevant to the characteristics of the students, which are projected into essential skills for teaching and adequate procedures for a dialogical and continuous evaluation.
- To design contextualized curricular proposals considering the research around the psycho-socio-cultural world of students (children, youth and adults) and the current curricular framework; critically evaluating the didactic incorporation of technologies and digital resources in the design of learning environments.

Generic skills:
Domain level: *Higher*

- To manifest an innovative, entrepreneurial and adaptive attitude to change in global and local contexts, in the professional and interprofessional context of English language teaching.

UACh skills:
Domain level: *Higher*

- To demonstrate commitment to knowledge, nature and sustainable development, in the formative context of the personal and professional development of the English language teaching profession with UACh Skills.
- To demonstrate commitment to quality and excellence, in the formative context of personal and professional development of the English language teaching profession with UACh Skills.
- To demonstrate commitment to freedom and respect for diversity, in the formative context of the personal and professional development of the English language teaching profession with UACh Skills.
- To demonstrate skills to work independently, in the formative context of the personal and professional development of the English language teaching profession with UACh Skills.
- To act with social responsibility, in the formative context of the personal and professional development of the English language teaching profession with UACh Skills.
- To demonstrate commitment to their socio-cultural environment, in the formative context of personal and professional development of the English language teaching profession with UACh Skills.

Learning Expectations:
At the end of the course, students will be expected:

- To critically reflect and be aware of the benefits and obstacles of technologies use in foreign language teaching and learning.
- To select and evaluate available technological tools and applications for foreign language teaching and learning.
- To design original and unique digital language learning materials.

Contents:
- Teachers' beliefs and technologies: How are ICT used in the classroom?
- Being Digital Citizen.
- Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL): Pedagogical pros and cons.

- Flipped Classroom: A Paradigm Shift in English Language Teaching.
- Using E-Learning to Develop EFL Students' Language Skills and Activate Their Independent Learning
- Emerging technologies, emerging minds: digital innovations within the primary sector.
- Integrating technology into secondary English language teaching.
- Digital tools for online language teaching and digital class design.

Teaching methodology:
- Most of the classes will be online with 4 face-to-face sessions. The content will be available through a platform where students can access each topic, academic articles, videos. Likewise, in digital form, students must answer several questions for reflection and discussion with the teacher and classmates. The discussions will be through chat, audio or text, through a learning platform and the reflection will be through a personal diary on Penzu. The use of chat for discussion is very important since the course will be taught remotely and will be the means of communication and feedback for the group. The platform to be used in the course will be Edmondo.

Learning assessment:

- Reflections on the topic and the application of what was discussed to a specific classroom situation.	*30%*
- Active participation in discussions through voice or text chat.	*20%*
- Active participation in group learning through feedback on ideas and work from classmates.	*20%*
- Final project: Digital class design.	*30%*

6. Final considerations

Historically, the countless advances developed by humanity have been closely related to the use of technologies, and of course, to the innovations and creations obtained from this use. In this sense, the use of technologies in the daily life of human beings has allowed their needs and problems to be solved in a more efficient and productive way. Therefore, the development and use of technologies responds to a merely human need. In other words, if there are no needs or problems to be solved, human beings are not encouraged to create or use technologies.

Therefore, the critical times due to the expansion of the global pandemic by COVID-19 have generated in humanity the need to develop and use technologies in different aspects of daily life. In particular, in the field of language teaching, the use of technologies has proven to be of great relevance. This is mainly due to the fact that teachers, surprisingly and without prior training, have had to use technologies, and at the same time, they have had to solve problems associated with teaching mediated by technologies in order to optimize it and maintain its continuity.

The experience that foreign language teachers obtain, during the COVID-19 pandemic, will allow them to perceive and understand that the educational use of technologies represents more than a necessity, but an opportunity to advance, transform and modernize teaching processes. For this reason, the teaching of foreign languages cannot be based on beliefs, ideas, needs and resources from the past, but on beliefs, ideas, needs, resources, and above all, on digital and technological skills of the 21st century. For this, at present, it is necessary that the next generations of foreign language teachers be trained under a systematic approach that allows them to design, create and use technologies as work tools to meet learning needs and transform language teaching in an efficient, productive and contextualized way.

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