Methodological Changes in the Teaching of English as a Second Language During the Pandemic to University Students

Cambios Metodológicos en la Enseñanza del Inglés Como Segunda Lengua Durante la Pandemia a los Estudiantes Universitarios

Rosaida Romina SÁNCHEZ VASSELL
ORCID: http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8839-2114, Rosaida.sanchez@up.ac.pa
Universidad de Panamá, Centro Regional Universitario de Colón, Facultad de Humanidades, Departamento de Inglés, Panamá

Karina del Carmen HARDING
ORCID: http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8214-4734, Karina.harding@up.ac.pa
Universidad de Panamá, Centro Regional Universitario de Colón, Facultad de Humanidades, Departamento de Inglés, Panamá

ABSTRACT
The teaching of English as a second language has always prevailed in education, as it is essential for students at the higher education level to prepare them for a good job position. Over the years, various methodologies have been used to make this effective. In the 21st century, technology was integrated into the teaching and learning process with virtual classes due to the arrival of the virus pandemic where study centers closed. During this transition, many changes and questions were generated, mainly in teachers and students such as the use of platforms, teaching and learning techniques, access to a good Internet, obtaining devices to receive and give classes, the preparation of classes virtually by the teacher and the use of different techniques and evaluations to involve students in their learning process. Similarly, the economic, logistical, and methodological levels affected both teachers and students in this change to virtual classes. The purpose of this research was to know the methodological changes that arose in the teaching of the English language in higher education centers due to the pandemic. The methodology of the study is quantitative; the participants were students of the Faculty of Informatics, between the ages of 19 to 45 years old, selected by means of sampling. The data was obtained through Google Forms, which was made, and administered electronically. The results were that they have made use of digital platforms for...
INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic led to the closure of schools and universities worldwide. As schools and universities moved to distance learning in the early 2020s, professors were been forced to rapidly revise their teaching methods (Hall et al., 2020; Lorente et al., 2020; Moham et al., 2020). The disruption caused by the Coronavirus pandemic was unprecedented, and the resulting economic and social measures have led to massive changes (Krishnamurthy, 2020). The current scenario has involved a rapid pedagogical shift from traditional classroom sessions to online, from face-to-face to virtual instruction, and from seminars to webinars (Mishra et al., 2020). Years ago, the resources that professors implemented in their classrooms to teach English as a second language were audiovisuals, excessive use of texts, and repetitive writing exercises (drill). With the pandemic, universities were been forced to change instantly by using online teaching and implementing digital platforms and technological resources so that teachers could prepare and
teach their classes online. Teaching English is quite a complex task for English educators.

The fundamental purpose of this research is to extract information from university students who have experienced firsthand the pandemic scenario and had to adapt to new technological ways of studying that our country was not prepared for.

Therefore, with this application of digital platforms; teachers who did not have a good knowledge of technology were able to take seminars to know how to use the platform. When teaching a new language, teachers need to be dynamic and motivating to make students more interested in learning and have a better understanding of learning English as a second language.

There are many factors that contribute to variation, but there is one factor that is likely to contribute to variation in the degree to which it was been affected by students by the closure of educational institutions is the availability of digital educational materials and online learning tools (Ferri et al., 2020). Globalization and the coronavirus have led to significant global challenges in different areas. In the area of education, the use of new methodology has brought a paradigm to the teaching and learning process affecting the transformation process, especially in the area of education, which has led to an alteration of the paradigm in the teaching-learning process. As is known, each student comes from a different environment with unique academic needs, language, culture, interests, and attitudes toward learning a new language. Communication technology has become very important in the modern era of education ICTs have provided different technological tools and resources that not only serve to communicate, but also to produce, store and manage information. Moreover, technology and the Internet play an important role in the innovation of a resilient society. It is important to know how teachers used technology in their teaching process with students during the pandemic.

It is clear that (Dykes et.al. 2013) said, "Education must be at the center of society's response to these powerful forces. Our collective
progress depends on each of us applying knowledge and skills, particularly scientific knowledge and skills, to address these formative and far-reaching issues. It is critical that we develop a pervasive culture of innovation not only within schools, colleges, and universities, but also within and across communities of learners and educators to drive positive social, economic, and technological change."

Today, with the pandemic, our students are becoming more connected to the use of technology in their ESL learning process, where they are more responsible in their learning and creating knowledge rather than memorization and repetition of content. Although the digital transformation process at the university level has accelerated with the pandemic. "Globally, there is a wide variety of online communication platforms and solutions that help digitize the entire teaching-learning process in the Covid-19 scenario" (Mishra et al., 2020). Technological transformation implies profound changes in teaching methodology, competencies, and assessment methods.

From all the information provided by the students, we intend to give an alert to the society and governmental entities that have to do with education, of the need that students have, and to open a new curriculum design that includes technological competencies and provides the necessary tools to educational communities; reinforcing with seminars, and training where an agreement is reached with the institutions that provide internet services to open the band and improve the service of connectivity and above all to instill the responsibility that students have in their preparation to be more competitive in a globalized society.

With the new digital environment, teachers had to offer students classes in which the outside world of emerging technologies enters the classroom and acts as a guide. Digital education requires an excellent infrastructure and digital platforms such as (Google Classroom, Moodle, Edmodo, and Microsoft Team) that can support virtual classes and methodological training for teachers and students to receive and deliver their assignments, activities, resources, and tests. However, due to several factors such as network signal, obtaining devices such as a
computer, Tablet, or cell phone was a disadvantage for many of the university students. The adaptation of the platforms at the beginning was stressful for everyone and the implementation of the new methodology was a challenge for teachers, and the application of the evaluations with the platforms had no control and there is still no control or good application for the effect of such evaluations at the end of the semesters.

In this article, we intended to give an analysis where we can focus on the way in which the methodology of teaching English language learning took effect during the pandemic at the beginning of 2020 to the students of the University of Panama, Centro Regional de Colón. To highlight the impact that the pandemic generated in the educational system, specifically on the university students, who saw their social and emotional scheme intensely affected.

The justification for the development of this topic can be established as follows; because our country has one of the worst statistics in terms of the distribution of wealth worldwide with what has stopped investing in such important areas such as education and health; therefore, the pandemic represented a challenge for the low technological coverage of our society mainly in the most vulnerable areas of the country of Panama. Moreover, in this research we intend to obtain the necessary information from a very important sector of the educational community, which is the students, which guides us on the needs, establish new projects and make curricular adaptations that allow us to create new platforms necessary for the development of the various topics.

**Method and Materials**

This research deals with the methodological changes in the teaching of English as a second language during the pandemic. The quantitative diagnostic technique used based on the statistical results obtained through a selection of questions and direct answers that gave us as teachers to understand the positive and negative aspects that occurred during the first year of the pandemic and will allow us to make the necessary corrections for the teaching and virtual learning of the English
language. The selection of the students who contributed to this survey was based on first-year students of the computer science major, with ages ranging from 19 to 45 years old, male and female. Because they handle technological tools, their responses allowed us to establish our criteria for the benefits and efficiency of the methodology applied during the pandemic. It decided to ask direct questions on the subject that allowed us to analyze each answer in a scientific and objective way; which gives us orientation on how to improve the teaching of the English language virtually. In addition, being that this research is recent because of the changes that education has had during Coronavirus-19, it has only a few authors' information about the topic. I try to expand the information using my own experience and that of others in my area during the pandemic.

Therefore, this research is non-experimental and cross-sectional because the variables are not manipulated; the environment was simply observed and then analyzed. The main source was the students at the Colon Regional Center and the teaching and learning methods that changed from the beginning of the pandemic to the present day.

Data analysis

For the presentation of this research, we used Microsoft Excel 2022 of Microsoft Office and Google forms with the students of informatics this semester. In addition, this helped us to determine the frequency of external-internal factors that affected the method of learning the English language with the TIC, which by percentages is represented.

Results

The survey was been applied to 12 students in the career of informatics at the Centro Regional Universitario de Colón.
Graph 1: This graph shows the age range surveyed and the genders of the students. Centro Regional Universitario de Colón (2022)

Have you received any governmental or institutional support to access the network, and for the provision of computer or tablet equipment?
Graph 2: In this graph, we see that 100% stated that they did not receive any support in terms of accessing an internet network, computer, or tablet.

Do you consider that teachers have mastered the technological tools for English language teaching?

Graph 3: Only 66.7 of the teachers mastered the use of technological tools for teaching English classes.
Have you received any courses as a student for the management of English language learning tools?

Graph 4: This graph shows the percentage of students who did not receive a course in the management of digital tools. It is reflected that 66.7% did receive a course for the management of English language learning tools, while 33.3% responded that they did not.

Have you encountered difficulties connecting to the network?
**Graph 5:** On some occasions, the students had difficulties connecting to the network to receive their classes. 66.7% of the students of the computer science program of the Regional Center of Colón responded that they sometimes had difficulties connecting to the network, 16.7% rarely, and 8.3% never had problems with connectivity.

Do you believe that virtually has reduced school dropout rates?

**Graph 6:** The percentage indicated in the graph shows that there has not been a reduction in student dropout rates. 66.7% responded no, while 33.3% responded that the dropout rate has decreased.

Do you think that there is a need to improve the provision of more effective tests that better measure the knowledge acquired?
Graph 7: The application of tests through the different platforms should be improved in order to measure the knowledge acquired in a more effective way. 91.7% of the students responded that the application of the tests should be improved, while 8.3% consider that the application of tests is fine.

Do you believe that there is a real analysis of the results obtained in language learning in the virtual world by institutions and governments?

Graph 8: With this sample, we see that the results obtained in the learning of the English language virtually through the institutions and the government are 50%. Yes, and 50% no.

From this research, we can infer interesting results through the survey of first-year computer science students at the University of Panama, of which we can highlight the following positive aspects.

- Their quick adaptation to the new virtual platforms
- The effort of the professors for their preparation in these virtual tools, which for many was something new or innovative.
• The concern of the students to adapt to the new demand of virtually through trial and error and innovation to obtain the necessary information.
• The use of new strategies allows students to be more motivated, to be researchers, and in some cases to be self-taught.
• Real-time discussion of relevant topics virtually, did not make them miss their classrooms.
• Low school dropout rate.
Among the negative aspects, we have:

• Poor quality or internet signal in different areas of our provinces in Panama.
• Lack of institutional and governmental commitment to provide equipment to vulnerable sectors of society.
• The lack of planning in the massive creation of seminars for teachers and students that allow better management of the different virtual tools.
• Improve the evaluation system during the virtual evaluations that allow teachers to obtain a real result of the student's performance.
• -As for the analysis of the results obtained in the learning of the English language in the virtual world by the institutional and governmental authorities, in reality, it has not existed because it was improvised a lot since the pandemic was not expected by anyone. This is useful for each one of us, from the teachers to those in charge of the curricular part, to know that it is necessary to make strong changes that will allow us to achieve the proposed objectives.
• There is no known analysis or commitment on the part of the institutional or governmental sector with the companies that offer their internet services to reach permanent agreements that facilitate access to the different virtual platforms for both teachers and students.
Discussion

In the result of the research, we can highlight the following criteria:

Unfortunately, the public sector has not given the necessary technological support to university students for the integral development of their training.

- We can say that in spite of the economic and technological limitations, most of the teachers have managed to satisfactorily handle the management of the different technological applications.

- Our survey shows that the vast majority of university students have not received any training in the use and management of virtual platforms, i.e., students have been self-taught in their training.

- In different sectors of the country of Panama it was difficult for most of the students to have access to connect to the network since they had problems with their devices, they did not have to enter data and have access to the network, the distance of some towns where the signal was a problem, among others.

- With the virtual, many students entered the university to be trained academically and professionally, since they saw the possibility of doing it without making economic expenses, for example, the trip to get to the university and return home, payment of tuition in the first years of the pandemic that was exempted, and they were more relaxed in their homes.

- Indeed, I consider that the tests should be standardized in a better way, to achieve an optimal quality of the results of the students in a globalized world.

- As for the analysis of the results obtained in the learning of the English language in the virtual world by the institutional and governmental authorities, in reality, it has not existed because it was improvised a lot since the pandemic was not expected by anyone. This is useful for each one of us, from the teachers to those in charge of the curricular part, to
know that it is necessary to make strong changes that will allow us to achieve the proposed objectives.

CONCLUSIONS

One of the biggest challenges facing our country is the lack of a mechanism that allows comprehensive development and an effective way for the teaching-learning process. Although it is true that the pandemic took us by surprise, the lack of technological resources, the lack of internet in the classrooms, and improvisation delayed the progress of the process.

Precisely, this research allows us to infer that educational institutions and the central government must work in close harmony and collaboration that result in the conditioning and provision of the various resources necessary to develop this important area of technology. It is not possible for the vulnerable population to ignore the equipment and wireless network necessary for the development of their activities, as well as the maintenance of the network.

We cannot exonerate the telephone companies from their responsibility in maintaining quality and sustained signals in the different neighborhoods of our country Panama. We must demand that they improve their services to the citizens. It is necessary to provide teachers, students, and the educational community in general with the preparation and follow-up in the handling of the necessary tools to teach classes in the English language.

We must understand as a society that we live in competition in a globalized world and we must strengthen the technological process that guarantees our students real employment opportunities, so we must commit ourselves to devise a realistic system that really meets our needs that allows us the success we want as Panamanians.
RECOMMENDATION

- MEDUCA (Ministry of Education) should draw up a contingency plan to establish new trends to deal with new outbreaks of Covid that could once again lead us totally to virtual education.
- That a new technological curriculum be established for the development of the proposed objectives.
- Expand technological coverage (internet, broadband) nationwide, mainly in vulnerable areas.
- Provide technological equipment to both teachers and students through international agreements that allow a more accessible cost of such equipment.
- Massive training for teachers and for students, that allow better management and actualization of software and platforms designed for all-purpose.

REFERENCES


**BIODATA**

**ROSAIDA ROMINA SÁNCHEZ VASSELL** Bachelor´s Degree in English, University of Panama, 2000. I was born in Panama City; I am an English Facilitator at the University of Panama. I have a Master's Degree in TESOL and another Master's Degree in Higher Education at the university level, with a Specialization in Didactics of the English Language. I have not had the joy of publishing research articles or scientific journals. I hope to publish some if God allows me. I participated in a conference at the University of Panama. This will be my first time writing a research article. I am a teacher in an Integral
Educational Center at the secondary level where I teach Pre-Middle and High School students and currently I am a university teacher of English Linguistics.

KARINA DEL CARMEN HARDING

- Bachelor's Degree in English, Universidad de Panama, 2005.
- Professor of Secondary Education with a Specialization in English, Universidad de Panama, 2007.
- Postgraduate Degree in Higher Education, Universidad de Panama, 2008.
- Postgraduate Degree in English Language Didactics, U Del Istmo 2022.
- Master's Degree in TESOL, Universidad Latina, 2014.
- With 3 published and certified booklets from the Universidad de Panama in 2021; English I- 119. Commercial English120 B; Technical English 124.
- I am currently working at Universidad de Panamá extension de Colón, as an English Facilitator, 2018-2022.