USING TECHNOLOGY BASED INSTRUCTION IN GENERAL LINGUISTICS: HOW DOES IT CHANGE CLASSROOM DYNAMICS?

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Abstract: The use of technology in higher education is becoming ever more frequent. Recent studies in technology-based instruction show that when it is well implemented it can have several benefits for both students and teachers such as: reducing overall costs, reducing learning times, increasing retention in students, changing classroom dynamics, among others. In addition, technology- based instruction can lead students to become autonomous learners that will decide the pace and depth of their learning. Notwithstanding, for instructors in general is a challenge to engage students in the activities and dynamics in the class. The aim of this study is to describe to what extent technology-based instruction influences students' engagement, participation, and responsibility in an EFL General Linguistics course. In the light of the positivistic and naturalistic research paradigms, this study adopted a mixed research design with an emphasis on the qualitative approach (naturalistic paradigm). In other words, it followed a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The purpose of using both methods was to make the investigation more accurate and reliable, which in turn contributed to a better understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny. The instruments used to gather the data were classroom observation, an assessment instrument for the virtual classroom and a self-assessment instrument for reflection on classroom work for students. At the end of the study some

students showed some clear signs of engagement in the classroom, brought their works solved and did not forget their materials and arrived on time, they also showed receptiveness to explanations and asked for clarification more often (participation). On the other hand, this study also shed light on the importance of logistics before and during the usage of the virtual classroom in order to guarantee its success. The fact that a teacher uses a new trend in technology does not guarantee students success in learning. There were connectivity issues and apathy from some students that were not content with using technology and complained about the lack of multiplatform compatibility when using the virtual classroom in their mobiles devices.

Keywords: Technology based instruction, students' engagement, classroom dynamics, EFL, e- learning.

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Relevancia Temática

Este trabajo de investigación es de gran importancia por diversas razones. Está destinado a llamar la atención de los educadores hacia las nuevas tendencias tecnológicas que se pueden utilizar en el aula. Además permite a los instructores en general analizar su efectividad y conveniencia en los diferentes contextos educativos.

Este trabajo tiene como propósito demostrar que los/las profesores (as) pueden mejorar el aprendizaje de los estudiantes por medio de las ayudas tecnológicas disponibles. También, con los resultados finales, estos sirven como base para tomar medidas antes y durante la implementación de las herramientas tecnológicas. Incorporando las recomendaciones se garantiza una mejora en la efectividad de las herramientas tecnológicas

en el aula. Asimismo se espera seguir realizando más estudios en áreas determinadas relacionadas a las herramientas tecnológicas en la educación y compartir estos resultados con otros colegas para el fortalecimiento de la carrera Enseñanza del Inglés dentro del Campus.

Justification: Educational Need that needs to be Solved

Ever since one of us started teaching the general linguistics course at UNA campus Coto, the researcher recorded on his teacher's diary that third level students from the English teaching major tended to show an apathetic attitude towards the course. In the first three weeks, neither were they reading the material nor solving the exercises from the anthology. They explicitly expressed that receiving classes in an auditorium (and not a classroom) after lunch was affecting their attention span in the lessons. Thus, we decided to run a strategy that would allow them work at home in different areas. For instance, by using a virtual platform they could: (1) clarify their doubts, (2) learn by themselves, (3) share their knowledge, (4) solve additional exercises, (5) and increase their retention span accessing the material when they think they are most receptive to learning (in the morning, in the afternoon, or at night). According to Umek and Aristovnik, research shows that the benefits of using E- learning in teaching are many (1495) Thus, this study's purpose is to assess the impact of the usage of the virtual classroom on students by means of systematizing students' experiences and interaction in the classroom.

Research Question

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-To what extent does technology-based instruction influence student engagement, participation, and responsibility in an EFL General Linguistics course?

Theoretical Framework

Among the different topics used as a reference to support the thus study are E-LEARNING, action research, classroom dynamics, receptivity, and virtual classroom.

Results

In the light of this study, it cannot be said that there is a direct relationship between arriving on time (responsibility) and the use of the virtual classroom. However, after implementing this tool, students showed good levels of responsibility in terms of being on time in the class and bringing their materials and exercises solved(this a clear sign of engagement).This is a behavior they did not show before the use of the virtual classroom. Students also recommended a friendlier virtual platform that could be used in their mobiles as an app. Another major point that we would like to give emphasis is the fact that even though a teacher uses new trends in technology in the class that will not guarantee students' learning and success. The implementation of the strategy was not a complete success in terms of improving interaction and more participation (only some students participated more) in the class but it definitely improved certain areas such as students' responsibility and commitment. Finally, there were some students that fully took advantage of the virtual platform's tools and aids and this was shown in their engagement and participation in the class.

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2nd Author's biography

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