

Encouraging Students to Learn English through Topic-based Approach in a Rural Public School
in Guarne

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Abstract

This action research project was developed in order to analyze the effect of a theme-based unit applied in a rural school in Guarne and the way it engaged the students throughout the course to learn the target language. This project was carried out in a public institution to a group of thirty students of the eighth grade of men and women. In the action part, a topic-based unit about life in a rural area was designed and implemented in the second term of the academic year. Interviews, surveys and a journal were performed to collect the data for the analysis. Such findings displayed three categories which allowed to obtain some conclusions about the promotion of positive attitudes in the students towards the learning of English.

Keywords: Topic-based teaching and learning, Rural Schools, Communicative Approach, Learner-centeredness.

Degree Requirement

This is an action research project submitted as a requirement of the Bachelor of Education in Foreign Language Teaching (English-French) at the Escuela de Idiomas, Universidad de Antioquia, in Medellín, Colombia.

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Preface

As part of our learning process to become officially foreign language teachers, we need to perform an action-research at the end of the program of our bachelor's degree. For this project, it is necessary to find a topic to develop an action plan based on a problem that we observe in the classroom during the first stage of the practicum. To do this, we have to take into account what we have studied at the school of languages to apply the right methodologies and approaches and find a possible answer for the problem which we want to analyze. In this action research performed in a rural institution, we are going to be able to see how the project was carried out and the impact it had in my personal and professional development since it was a very enriching experience that I had never had before as a teacher in a public institution.

Context Description

The Institución Educativa (I.E.) Rural Chaparral is an official public school located near the highway Medellín-Bogotá at the kilometer 30 in the municipality of Guarne. This is an institution that has over 1.100 registered students from preschool, elementary, middle and secondary instruction. It has English courses in all its grades from 1st grade up to 11th grade. One principal and one academic coordinator manage the institution. It currently has 26 teachers, of which 4 are English teachers. The area is close to a commercial sector of the rural zone and surrounded by many farms and a countryside environment. It works in two different sessions during the morning and afternoon from Monday to Friday. . The institution has classrooms for all the grades, and it also uses some places in the school for other activities.

According to the manual of the institution, its philosophy is focused on holistically forming people so that they can live in harmony with others and have the knowledge to compete in a globalized world. The culture of the school is based on human dignity, autonomy, and interculturality according to the statutes of the institution. The mission of the school is to contribute to the education of the students in a social, spiritual and intellectual manner to promote ethical values in different environments. Also, in the vision of the school, they want to be an innovative and creative institution for the next year promoting social interaction, and the learning of a second language.

The English department has two teachers for secondary school during the afternoons. They have to go to the different classrooms assigned to teach the language according to the timetable of the institution. My Cooperating Teacher (CT) is in charge of the eighth and ninth

grades. She graduated from the UPB in the year 1992 and obtained her degree as *Profesional en Idiomas Inglés-Francés*. Since then, she has been teaching English in different rural institutions.

Additionally, the English classroom has a board for markers, chairs for every student, good light with a huge window, and desk for the teacher. The group I have for this project is the 8-1 grade, and they have class every Monday from 5:00 to 5:50, and Wednesdays and Thursdays from 3:50 to 4:40. This group has thirty students, fifteen men and fifteen women. Most of them live near the school in Chaparral, and they belong to the second and third strata in the socio-economic system of the country. Some of the students are new in the school, and they come from Venezuela due to the socio-political problems of their country. In terms of general proficiency, these students have a basic level of English based on the content and observations.

I am a student of the School of Languages of the Universidad de Antioquia. I have worked as a teacher for two years teaching English, French and Spanish. The reason I chose this place for the project is that I had always wanted to work in a rural public institution; also, to be able to solve some of their problems and to be more knowledgeable as a foreign language teacher. Moreover, I live in this town, and I know first-hand most of the students' difficulties to learn English because I had already participated in some activities in this place and I also studied in a similar environment. Some of these issues are caused by the lack of a proper methodology of teaching, the poor connection between the topics and the lives of the students, and the need to be encouraged to participate during the learning process.

Statement of the Problem

Nowadays, we can see that English has become the most distinguished foreign/second language to be learned all around the world. In fact, it is a requirement that everybody who is

studying must have a certain level of English in almost every country due to the globalization process. However, it has been a difficult challenge since many countries do not have the same means such as human resources, materials, training and budget to accomplish the international standards provided by global corporations.

In our country, the bilingual program, *Colombia Bilingüe* (2014-2018), of the Ministry of Education has been implemented for many years without reaching the main goal which is to have 8% of the students in the B1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Perhaps, some private institutions have even overcome this level. Nonetheless, public institutions are lagging to succeeding. The main reasons for this problem are the lack of effective methodologies, the large number of students in a classroom, updated material and resources. Furthermore, there are not enough prepared teachers to impart this subject.

As a matter of fact, I have perceived all these drawbacks in the public institution where I chose to do my practicum. The I. E. Rural Chaparral, which I already described before, does not have a clear perspective to articulate what the bilingual program proposes. They have some of the textbooks such as *Way to go* for the 6, 7 and 8 grade and *English, please!* for the 9, 10 and 11. Yet, these books are used randomly without following a syllabus for every course. This is something that I have confirmed as part of the observations in this institution.

In the 8-1 grade, which I have chosen for this research project, all the aspects that I mentioned are seen in a very particular way. Most of the students do not like the English course even when they affirm that this language is essential for their future. In general, these methods are focused on the grammar-based approach, and they are teacher-centered. Every class is

almost the same, and it gives the impression as if the students did not care about their learning process. For this reason, I think that they need another perspective towards the language to solve this problem.

Thanks to the experience that I have had using theme-based learning in other institutions, I may affirm that it would be a meaningful approach to apply in this classroom since the students have the chance to see the importance of the language in their lives from topics that are related to them as part of a communicative approach. Therefore, they would be able to see the use of the target language in everyday situations. Additionally, it would give them the chance to acquire new knowledge through the learning of a foreign language, and it might encourage them to carry on studying it.

Theoretical Background

This action research pretends to show the effects of a theme-based unit applied on a group of eighth graders in a rural public school in Guarne. This methodology was chosen to give a new direction to encourage the students in the learning of English due to several reasons analyzed previously for this project. Such ideas are going to be described here to understand, according to different authors, the importance of a theme-based unit. Moreover, some of the concepts that are going to be defined are the communicative approach, theme-based learning and learner-centered classrooms.

Topic-Based Approach (TBA) (Also termed Theme-based learning and theme-based instruction) comes hand in hand with the communicative approach. In this method of language teaching “...many activities are linked together by their content” (Cameron, 2001, p.180).

Meaning that everything we plan for the lesson is related to a specific topic which is going to be developed throughout the unit. One of the purposes which has been defined broadly by Diana Mumford (2000) is that "...this method of teaching links curriculum strands and capitalizes on children's interests, creating a sense of purpose and community in the classroom." (p. 4). Hence, the teacher needs to spend time wisely to plan the lessons and find the right material. Despite the responsibility demanded by the teacher, this method has a positive impact on the students' learning since as it is stated, it focuses on the students' needs and their motivation. Therefore, it creates a better environment for learning, which might be the right way to solve the problem of the study of this research.

The education system is continuously changing to be updated and adapted to the demands of society. In this case, we have a method which is part of a modern approach for teaching a foreign or second language. Moreover, as we have observed, the students of this grade have been learning concepts in an isolated way and without a real meaning for their lives. Given this situation, throughout the history of language teaching, the communicative approach has changed the role of the students and teachers in the classroom. Some theorists such as Canale & Swaine 1980 and Noam Chomsky in the '60s have highlighted the importance of this approach since they affirm that the primary purpose of language is to convey meaning and create communicative acts for different purposes. (In Basta. 2011 p. 125).

Consequently, to these changes, Nunan and Lamb (1996) explained one of the crucial concepts to developing a theme-based unit which is Learner-centered classrooms which is defined as "... those in which learners are actively involved in their own learning processes." (p. 9). This concept of learner-centeredness is closely related to the philosophical view of a more

humanistic and experiential learning since it makes students reflect on their learning process. It changes the paradigm of traditional thinking where the teacher was the center of the class and the one who knew everything, and it encourages the students to participate and have a voice in "... the decision-making regarding the content of the curriculum and how it is taught" (Nunan 1988, p. 2). That being so, we can see that it is going to help motivation to increase "...when the lesson has a purpose, and it is relevant for the students, they are going to work harder to learn and show commitment to the activities proposed in the unit. (Freeman & Freeman in Yang (2019, p.162).

However, one of the issues discussed by Cameron about the theme-based methodology is the high level of responsibility required by the educators "Effective theme-based teaching is extremely demanding on teachers in both planning and implementation" (2001. p. 180). This means that the instructors have to act like real professionals to achieve good results, since they have to look for authentic material, adapt the content of the textbooks, and create a clear and cohesive plan that links every single lesson. For this reason, we are also going to find the best way to cope with these issues by reflecting on the developing of actions, the students' needs and feedback provided by the teachers.

As we can see, a theme-based unit aims to encourage the students to learn from a theme which makes them feel comfortable, and that is important for their lives. Many scholars have described the "theme-based approach as a "meaningful" way to personally engage students in the learning process" (Handal & Bobis, 2004; Lipson, et al., 1993 in Tessier & Tessier 2015, p. 4). From my personal experience with theme-based units, I can admit that it has been a brilliant opportunity to develop it throughout two years. Nonetheless, we have a different context from

the one where I was applying this methodology because they have never had the experience to study English with it.

To conclude, these definitions have led us to structure the objectives and research question of this study, which are going to be shown in the next section.

Research Question

Consequently, with the problems stated in the previous sections, I posed the following question for my action research project:

How does Topic-based approach encourage students to learn English in an 8th grade of a rural public school in Guarne?

General Objective:

To establish to what extent the topic-based approach promotes positive attitudes in the students towards the learning of English.

Specific objectives:

- To analyze the encouragement of the students in language proficiency after developing the unit.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the materials designed.
- To identify the pros and cons of TBA in the classroom for further variations.

Action Plan

The action plan for this project has been carried out from the second semester of 2018 until the beginning of June 2019. On the following table, we can observe the timetable for each stage. Moreover, there is a detailed itinerary for the development of the unit added at the end of this report. (See Appendix A).

Semester I - 2019						
<i>Activity</i>	2018.	February.	March.	April.	May.	June.
Project presentation and signing of the consent form.		<input type="checkbox"/>				
Implementation of the actions.			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Collection of samples, interviews and observations.				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Transcription of the interviews and some excerpts from the class sessions.	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Data Analysis and interpretation.	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Findings write up.				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Discussion and conclusions writing.					<input type="checkbox"/>	
Review and revision of all sections.					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Project submission to the coordinator.						<input type="checkbox"/>

For the actions planned in the unit, all the activities attain the accomplishment of the objectives mentioned on the previous section to answer the research question, and they also follow the standards and recommendations of the institution. Moreover, the progress of the students can be tracked through the collection of their assignments, which was an essential element to obtain information for the final results and conclusions. All the students were

formally assessed from the beginning of this term with eight grades for the follow-up and finishing with a 30% grade for the final exam. In the remaining 70%, there is also a grade for self-assessment and participation. The institution previously defined these percentages.

Development of Actions

From the very beginning of the course, the lessons were planned following the unit, which was designed based on a topic related to the environment of the students. The name of the learning unit was “*Living in a Rural Area.*” It consisted of a series of workshops and tasks about real-life situations around the students’ experiences, surroundings and ordinary events they do every day. Moreover, the objectives, content and assessment for this second term at the rural school were chosen, taking into account the recommendations of the CT and the syllabus of the institution. A set of activities which cover the four skills from listening, writing, speaking and reading were developed with the students until the end of the course.

For this term, the lessons were divided into three sections. This decision was made due to the timetable assigned for the subject given that we have three days of class per week. Typically, the first day began with the explanation of what the students were supposed to learn and perform and its connection with the other topics of the unit. Then, for the two days left, the students had to work on the task and activities following the itinerary of the unit.

Unfortunately, the whole set of activities planned for this term were not fully applied due to the constant irregularities with the timetable of the classes. Almost every week, the students were missing one or two lessons because they had other events at the school or because they did not have to attend. It means that it affected the planning for most of the sessions, the materials

that I had for every class and the content. Nonetheless, this situation was something familiar as I was told from the CT among other teachers of this institution. They needed to follow some pre-established activities and projects which demand extra time or even time from the subjects they had to see. (Interview with the CT question 4 on the frequent problems about class development May 28th, 2019)

The first action worked in the unit was related to the vocabulary of the activities performed every day in the students' lives in the rural area. Therefore, we created a list of words, including verbs and expressions, taking into account the students' background knowledge to elicit a response to the topic chosen for this term.

Furthermore, a reading about the ordinary life of an undergraduate student of Biology who lives near the school was part of this opening activity to the course. In the text, the students were able to find vocabulary related to the things they do in their surroundings, and it used simple language connected to the study of the simple present tense and yes/no questions. At the end of the reading, the students were to answer some questions about the characters and the connections to their lives in the countryside.

Connected to this topic, I played a song on my guitar called *Heart of Gold* by Neil Young. I told the students that this song was composed and sung by a country musician from the United States. The purpose of the song was to introduce the WH question. Hence, the students had a sheet of paper with the lyrics and some questions about the words of the singer. Some of the questions were:

What is he looking for?

What does he want to do?

What places does he know?

What is happening to him?

Who is he?

Why does he feel like that?

I played the song twice, and after that, I gave them ten minutes to write down the answers and then we discussed what they had for every question. “It was a quite simple activity, but the students seemed very happy with it. They even clapped at the end of the song.” (Journal entry, April 10th, 2019. p, 15). I also brought four dictionaries that I bought for the students because some of them do not have the resources to buy one. We used them for almost every lesson that we had.

The second action that was carried out from the unit was a set of two interviews that the students had to do about their lives. First of all, they had to find people who like specific things such as a type of food, a movie, leisure activities, a genre of music, and so forth. It is a sort of variation of the game *Find someone who*; then they had to find someone with the most likes or dislikes in common. The other interview was using information questions in general. Therefore, I provided some incomplete questions to work in pairs. The students had to finish them and then ask those questions to their partners. Both had different worksheets so that they were able to practice with different constructions and multiple answers. Some of the questions were:

What do you do in your free time?

Why are you learning English?

Who do you live with?

How many pets do you have?

What kind of music do you like?

Who is your best friend, and why?

How often do you exercise?

What do you want to study in the future?

“The students seemed very motivated to interview their classmates, and they were working the whole class to complete the task” (Journal entry, May 9th, 2019. p, 25). At the end of the class, they handed in their worksheets with the interviews because this activity was part of the follow-up.

Finally, as part of their project in the middle of this term, they had a task using what they had learned to create an invitation for a friend or a relative of theirs to a place at the countryside. They had to include the date, the reason for the event, what they had to bring, and the location. Before this task, we had one lesson to explain what they had to do, the knowledge and vocabulary they needed to write the invitation. For this project, they had been collecting a vocabulary bank in every lesson about the activities in the countryside, places, clothes, professions and information about time expressions using the simple present tense. They worked in pairs, and there were two groups of three people. The invitation might include different formats. Namely, it could be a letter, an email or a WhatsApp conversation (see appendix B). We took three weeks to complete this task, and I was all the time helping them to follow the guidelines for the project. However, I did not help them with the writing part since I wanted them to use what we have learned in the course.

Other activities were developed during this term such a dictation, a reading aloud, giving directions, and a dialogue. The final three sessions were devoted to reviewing the previous content of the unit. The purpose of this action was to solve doubts and questions about what we have studied in this course to take the final exam, which was worth 30% and was due May 30th,

2019. I designed this exam following the objectives of the course and the format proposed by the CT.

Data Analysis

In this qualitative action-research, I conducted classroom observations, interviews, surveys and I completed a journal with the description of the events of every class in order to collect the data for the final analysis. These instruments were vital to determine the effectiveness of the methodologies that I applied in my practicum and to understand the achievement of the specific objectives that I defined for this project. As it can be seen on the action plan, every technique for data collection and analysis was performed in a different stage of the action-research to ensure a broader perspective of the students' progress.

The data collected were coded into three different categories since “coding allows you to ‘cluster’ key issues in your data and allows you to take steps towards ‘drawing conclusions’.” (Bell, 2005, p. 214). Additionally, I used the objectives of this study to obtain the categories drawn up through codes. That procedure was needed in order to use time wisely due to the diverse amount of groups that emerged from the data.

The classroom observations began from the first session I attended, as I mentioned before, they helped me to choose the topic for the unit. However, the journal was the instrument that provided the most valuable information about the implementation of the actions since I wrote what happened in every class descriptively and reflexively. It provided information about the development of the lessons, the students' reactions, the CT's recommendations, the continuity of the activities, the connection of the topics and some issues or good things that

occurred in the course. In fact, most of the categories and codes emerged from the information contained in the journal.

Five interviews with different students were applied with some leaded questions which are also focused on the objectives of the project. The students were chosen randomly from the consent form that they signed to be participants of this research. The students were interviewed at the end of the class in the institution, and their voices were recorded in audio files which were later transcribed to do the analysis and define the codes and categories.

Sixteen surveys at the end of the course were applied in a random way to the students who wanted to participate. These surveys do not have the names of the students because the purpose was that they expressed what they feel about the course in a free-way. The first two questions have some options to choose, and the rest were five opened questions linked with what they think about the methodology of the course, activities, what they suggest to improve and the learning process of a foreign language.

Last but not least, I had an interview with the CT at the end of the course to analyze what she thought about the implementation of the actions which I proposed following a Topic-Based Approach about the life of the students in the rural area. I added some questions about the learning goals to know her opinion based on the final grade and achievements of the students. The teacher decided to have her answers recorded via WhatsApp because she did not want to forget some details and further recommendations. This interview was useful to support some of the ideas that were depicted in the final results, and it was transcribed before the final analysis.

All these instruments were put together at the end using the triangulation method to answer the research question with factual information from the learners, the teacher and the

events recorded in the journal. Moreover, some samples of the activities and tasks of the students were collected and evaluated throughout the course to see how they worked and progressed with the approach adopted.

Findings and Interpretations

For this session, I used the methodology to analyze the data collected from the action plan proposed by Burns (1999) which to begin compiles the data in different codes and categories so that we can construct and interpret the final results (pp.157-160). The most important instruments that I used for this analysis were the five students' interviews, the sixteen surveys and the journal that I wrote after every lesson taught. However, I decided to add in some cases what the CT shared in her interview because I found it essential to answer some of the questions about the objectives proposed for this study and the problem.

Initially, five categories emerged from the gathered data. Nonetheless, these categories were compiled in three since two of them had some commonalities which are going to be discussed below. Also, the information obtained from the surveys was divided into two parts. Firstly, three graphs that show quantitatively the data with the answers chosen by the students about the course and its approach. Secondly, the qualitative contributions of the participants divided and coded regarding every opened answer of the questionnaire. The interviews were transcribed and translated, and then, they were codified and placed in the category where they fit. The journal was also analyzed to acquire vital information. Finally, some samples of the activities worked by the students were also taken into account to show some evidence and support some ideas.

Students' attitudes towards TBA

Let us begin with the first category, which reflects some of the advantages and disadvantages of TBA in the classroom from the experiences that promoted different attitudes towards the target language in the students. According to Soori & Ghaderi (2015) on the selection of activities, “The topic also suggests relevant listening and speaking tasks, interactive activities (for example, games, information-gap, etc.), reading texts, and a variety of writing tasks keyed to the topic.” (p.5). Starting from this point, I asked the students in the survey what they liked or disliked about the course and the activities. Some of the positive comments were

“the dynamic activities and group work” (Survey, student 3, May 13th, 2019).

“the variety of activities which are different from what we normally do” (Survey, student 6, May 13th, 2019).

Besides, the CT affirmed that there was a positive attitude in general from the students to learn English and the topic chosen for the unit. “...students pay attention to the explanations given by the teacher; they work in class and participate” (Teacher interview, May 28th, 2019).

Additionally, she stated that “...some of the students want to master a foreign language and new knowledge; this was good to show them the importance of English.” (Teacher interview, May 28th, 2019). The students' reflections about the topic and activities of the course were for the most part positive since most of them answered that they preferred groups or pairs to do the assignments for every lesson and the workshops proposed were hardly ever individual. This was something favorable since they were motivated, even though the evaluation was assigned individually. We can observe their inclination to group-work on table 1 taken from the survey:

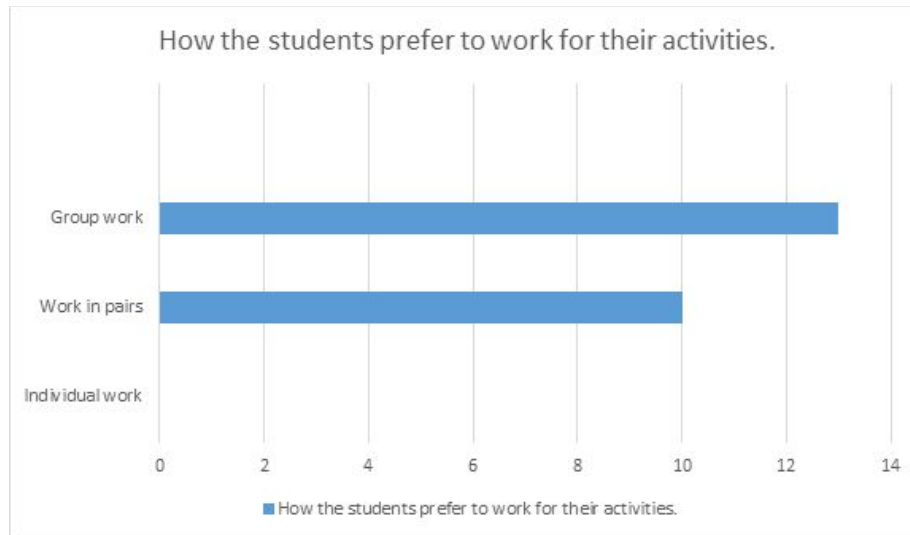


Table 1. (Students' survey May 13th, 2019)

All the students participated in every activity, and they handed in all the assignments proposed for every class. It also seems from the evidence that there was a change in their attitude as it can be seen in the interview with one of the students, “Well, at this moment I feel comfortable as I go and I am learning well. In the school that I was in, it did not fit me very well, but now, I am already doing well, and I plan to continue like this.” (Student 3, May 20th, 2019).

Nevertheless, there were some negative aspects found which emerged from the TBA activities and also from the behavioral attitudes of some students. This was due to a group of students who were most of the time disrupting the class and the time it took them to be organized and begin with the activities. “Sometimes the environment of the classroom is heavy, and we can't study” (Survey, student 11, May 13th, 2019). The CT affirmed that for some of the students there was a lack of commitment and that “some of the students do not care about the activities of the class” (Teacher interview, May 28th, 2019). These were some of the foreseen issues already mentioned by Cameron (2001) stating that the implementation of a TBA unit is quite demanding and it requires in most of the times an optimal environment to work (p.180).

Language proficiency progress

In terms of language proficiency, I evidenced notable improvement in the students' learning. I tried to balance the focus of every skill, following what the students wanted to reinforce the most. For this reason, we had more chances to practice the written and listening skill, and this tendency can be seen in table 2:

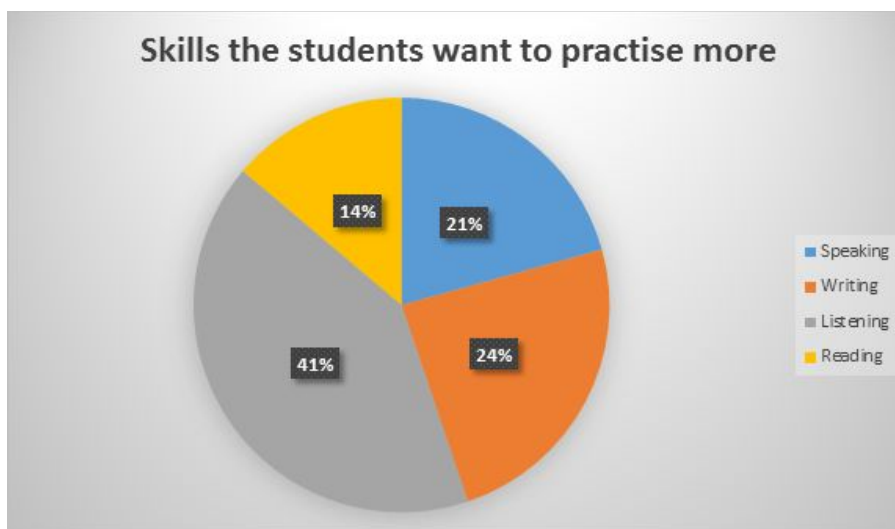


Table 2. (Students' survey May 13th, 2019)

Their progress is reflected in their grades since 90 % of the students are passing the subject, and most of them have not studied these topics before. Some of the thoughts of the students about their project taken from their interviews are:

- “Well, I found it very excellent, everything has been very ... how I explain it eeehhh. That is not pure theory but we practice, we talk, we share between the living room then it has seemed very good.” (Student 3, May 20th, 2019)
- “Well, at this moment I am understanding. The idea is that one is doing the activities, and one is becoming more aware of what I am doing.” (Student 4, May 20th, 2019)

Encouragement concerning materials and tasks' development

In terms of the implementation of the materials, we did not have significant problems. However, the activities were interrupted continuously by external factors. Namely, “Unfortunately, the time of the class was over, and we had to reschedule the activity for the next lesson.” (Journal entry, May 6th, 2019). Additionally, the teacher backs this idea with her following comments taken from the interview “Some classes were missing and interrupted due to academic events, national protests and meetings.” (Teacher interview, May 28th, 2019).

On the other hand, all the activities proposed helped most of the students to learn the concepts of the unit and be encouraged to participate in the tasks and activities. “The techniques and materials were adequate and motivating.” There was a wide variety of activities, and the students were kind, responsible, and interested in learning; they hand in the activities on time” (Teacher interview, May 28th, 2019).

The previous insights of the three categories provide valuable evidence for the results of the action part of this project. They have unfolded several elements which were helpful to draw essential conclusions, which determined the accomplishment of the research objectives.

Conclusions

The data analysis led to the conclusion that the students involved in this project showed a notable improvement regarding the engagement to participate in the tasks and activities of a TBA unit. They proved commitment to fulfill the assignments of every class, and there was evidence which demonstrated that they learned new concepts and abilities to use English in the actions performed throughout this term.

Nonetheless, there were some constraints which delayed the process and the development of the whole unit. Besides, some other problems which were not part of this study emerged and

left some doubts and further research to be performed to understand them in a better way. There were students with special needs, cognitive and behavioral problems. However, it was not something that obstructed the progress of the lessons. Perhaps, the interruption of activities due to institutional factors was more restrictive to get more data on the missing topics which were rescheduled for the following semester.

On the other hand, the materials designed for this course obtained favorable results in terms of development, implementation and assessment. However, they required much time to be created, and some of the activities had to be shortened due to the interruptions mentioned previously. Additionally, this approach helped the students to act collaboratively, and that was fundamental to keep them learning and participating actively. Still, doing the workshops in groups and pairs needed other strategies to work more efficiently.

This institution is very convenient to carry on running future projects on this topic since rural schools are not often studied, and they provide much data and experiences for novice teachers in the foreign language field. These results might be different because the students of this school belong to a very particular background. Such studies might help other teachers like the CT in decision making about the methodologies and tasks of the course to get better results. On the following chart (table 3), there are some topics chosen by the students in the survey, which might be helpful when designing another topic-based syllabus for this population:

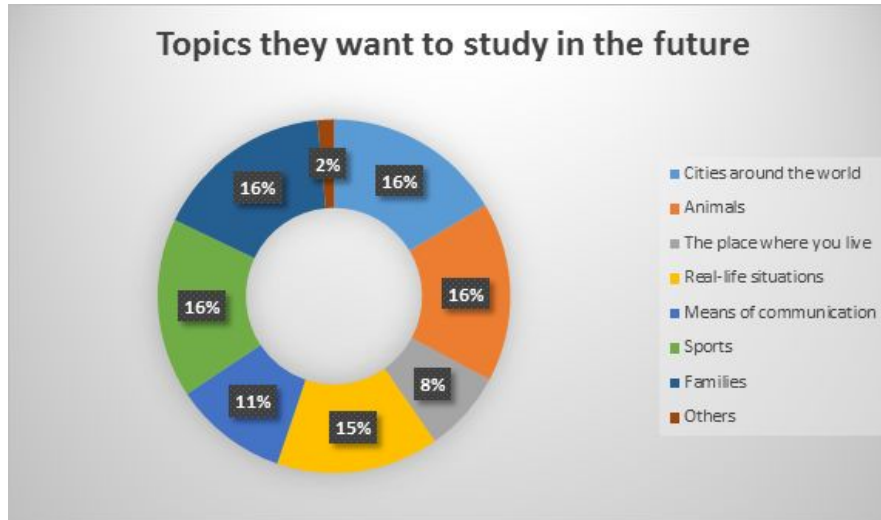


Table 3. (Students' survey May 13th, 2019)

Reflections and Insights

The process to develop this action research was very meaningful in many ways. Some good and bad things happened throughout my practicum, but all of them have served as a drive to become a better teacher and person. Since the very beginning, I have seen that the education system is more complex of what I thought. Many factors influence the way it acts for the students and the teachers. All of this was perceived when writing this study and also for the data collection.

Every person involved in this process, such as the CT, the students, my classmates, advisor, among other people were essential for my learning experience at the practicum. They were vital at the data collection stage because I was able to know more about them face to face. Even in the challenging moments, they helped me to think about my role as a teacher and what I have to do to improve. Luckily, the lessons worked in a very efficient way at the rural school, and I have been able to develop what I planned for my project. The students seemed very motivated, and it gave me the strength to make my best effort to fulfill this research.

Most of the things that happened in the institution were new, and it was great to be part of it. To see how the teachers shared in their room at the school, the environment during the breaks, and the plans they have for every week. It is also good to appreciate what happened in the surroundings of the school and how it had a direct effect on the students and the location of it. This is a place where teaching is impressive because the students want to learn and you can learn many things from them. I highly recommend this place to the teachers who want to do the practicum there, and I would advise them not to be very ambitious when planning the activities due to the lack of time.

Moreover, I really liked to teach in my town where I have had the chance to work as a teacher in several places and with different people. That has been something great, and I would like to do it mostly in a rural area. In case I get a job with the government, the best thing would be to teach where I belong. The students were very kind to me, and they appreciated what I did for them. They were always willing to participate, and they were very honest about my lessons. So, it helped me to make some changes to improve the classes. However, I would like to explore in the meantime other environments since I think that it is very gratifying to be able to share what you have learned with other people.

On the other hand, there are many things to improve and learn according to what I have seen during my practicum experience. For example, every school has a different system with its own rules and philosophy about the way they teach and manage the lessons. The students' needs are diverse and sometimes hard to understand; plus, dealing with time in a public school is a bit demanding.

This research also showed that there are other remarkable aspects to know when we work in a school, things to do apart from being a teacher. We are in charge of the students, their behavior and safety, including their emotional part. Additionally, we need to participate in other activities of the institution and perhaps be in charge of another subject. We never stop learning because every day comes with a different challenge, and in spite of the bad things that we may face, it will always be a very enriching and satisfying profession. All in all, we need to use what has been studied in our field from the experts such as the methodologies and approaches since they provide many answers to the problems that we face in our daily endeavor to improve the educational system.

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Appendix A

UNIT No. 2 TOPIC: LIVING IN A RURAL AREA

Learning Guide: What does it imply to live in a rural
area?

I. E. RURAL CHAPARRAL - GUARNE

Second Term

2019

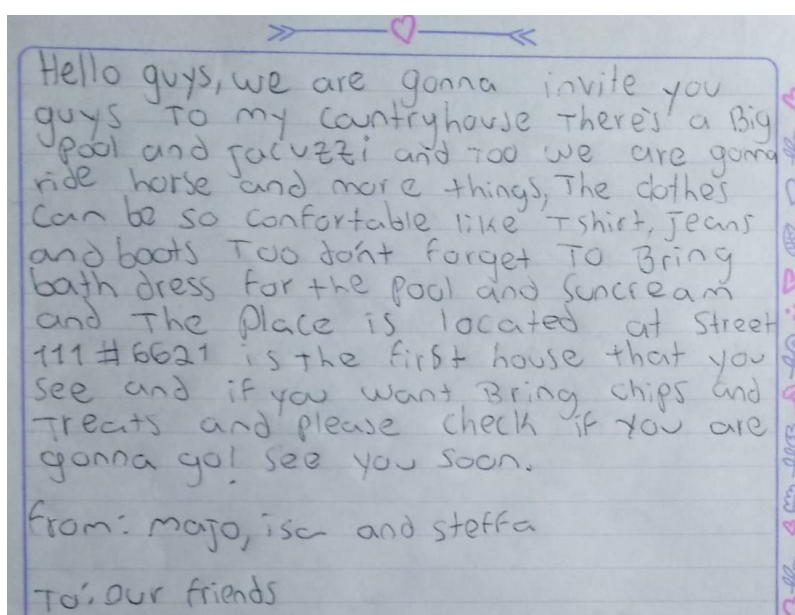
Four hours per week Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.



# WEEK / DATE	ACTIVITIES	LINGUISTIC ASPECTS (vocabulary, structures)	SUMMATIVE AND FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT TASKS
Week 1: April the 1 st to April the 4 th .	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Explanation about the use of the simple present tense. Flashcards with different verbs. Sara's day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simple present tense - Vocabulary related to the life in town and daily activities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz about the simple present tense proposed by the CT. Listening about Sara's Day.
Week 2: April 8 th to April 11 th .	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Yes no questions about Sara's day reading. What do you do at the weekends? Find someone who. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simple present tense - Daily Routines - Adverbs of Frequency 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Questionnaire about Sara's day. The daily routine at the weekends.
Week 3: April 22 nd to April 25 th	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Explanation about wh questions Workshop about Adverbs of Frequency. (In Pairs) Interviewing a classmate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WH questions - Personal information - Hobbies 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Interview
Week 4: April 29 th to May the 2 nd	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The beginning of the project about the touristic place. (In groups of 6 students) Example of the final result 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WH questions - The Saxon possessives - Family members 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Task to work on the possessives with the apostrophe.

	of the project. 3. Mike's family tree		
Week 5: May 6th to May 9th	1. Life in Medellin vs Life in Guarne 2. Reading: Saturday Sancocho. 3. Questions about the reading.	-Comparative and superlative. -Places of the town and the city. - Making recommendations	1-Write a text comparing the difference between living in Medellin vs Guarne.
Week 6: May 13th to May 16th	1. Final part of the Project 2. Reading: Dialogue between two farmers 3. Role play about the dialogue answering some additional questions.	-Comparative and superlative. -Places of the town and the city. -WH questions -Personal information	1-Presentation of the project.
Week 7: May 20th to May 23rd	1. Review of the content. 2. Their relatives' daily routine. 3. Questions about relatives' personal information.	-Adverbs of Frequency -Personal information -Family members	1-Questionnaire about their relatives.
Week 8: May 27th to May 30th	1. Review of the content. 2. What does imply to live in a rural area? 3. Final exam of the second Term.	-WH questions -Personal information -Comparative and superlative. -Final exam of the second Term	1-What does imply to live in a rural area? 2-Final exam of the second Term 30 %
Week 9: June 3rd to June 6th	3. Questions from the topics seen in the course.	-The Saxon possessives	1. Self-evaluation, 5%

Appendix B





Hey friend Maria and me we are invented
 in the Big city for camping in the forest,
 go to the park to have fun, go to the pool
 to swim, It's the day perfect for being
 with your friends it's the day twenty-three
 of May, At 6:30 pm

Boy.

Sincerely: Samuel and
 Maria Jose.

← 1:31 pm

 Cami 

Hi cami

Hi isa

would you like to
 go with me in a
 camping day?

yes, of course

But, where is it?

Is in el retiro, is
 very beautiful

Ok, and How I
 get there?

