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**Using ICT Tools to Teach Grammar in Context**

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**Abstract**

This action research study carried out at “Institución Educativa Lola Gonzalez” in Medellin was aimed at determining how the teaching of grammar in context mediated by ICT tools helps the ninth graders of the Institution better understand the real purpose and use of English. For the purpose of the project, various actions were implemented and oriented to the development of a mini-project where students presented a personal profile for a specific and real-life situation at the end of the study. Data were collected through several journal entries, two questionnaires, one applied at the beginning of the study and another one at the end, and students’ artifacts such as their initial and final writings or scripts for the videos with their personal profiles. Data analysis demonstrated that the implementation of different strategies in class using real-life and contextualized situations to teach grammar in English mediated by Information and Communication Technologies - ICT tools could help students better to understand the real purpose and use of English.

*Keywords:* Grammar, grammar in context, ICT tools, use of English, purpose of English

Título del proyecto en español: El uso de las TIC para enseñar gramática inglesa en contexto

### **Degree Requirement**

This action research project was submitted as a requirement for the Bachelor of Education in Foreign Language Teaching (English-French) at the Escuela de Idiomas, Universidad de Antioquia, in Medellín, Colombia. The study was conducted at Institución Educativa Lola González from August 2022 to May 2023.

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### **Preface**

This research project is conducted as a requirement for the Bachelor of Education in Foreign Language Teaching (English-French) at the Escuela de Idiomas, Universidad de Antioquia, in Medellín, Colombia. This work aims to determine how the teaching of grammar in context mediated by ICT tools helps the ninth graders of the “Institución Educativa Lola González” better understand the real purpose and use of English. 38 ninth-grader students from the Institución Educativa Lola Gonzalez participated in this project that began on August 2022 and finished on May 2023. By means of this work, the impact of the methodology implemented in the EFL classroom will be described.



### **Context**

In this section, I will provide information about several aspects of the institution where this research project will take place. Thus, I will write about the location of the school, the academic schedules, and the organization. Also, its mission, vision, pedagogical model, and pedagogical principles, taken from the PEI (Proyecto Educativo Institucional) of the institution, will be described. Later, I will add information concerning the Subject of English, the students, and the English classroom. Lastly, I will address the Cooperating teacher's (CT) information.

The "Institución Educativa Lola González" is a public institution located in Medellín, Antioquia. The school is a coeducational institution with two branches in the Santa Lucía neighborhood, one for primary education and the other for secondary education. Currently, the institution has 2279 students enrolled, but only 1502 belong to the secondary level. In high school, there are four intermediate technical programs specialized in commerce, graphic design, software design, and sports intended for students in the tenth and eleventh grades. Moreover, according to I.E Lola González (2022), the school year is divided into 3 terms, but after the pandemic, they have been working in two semesters. The institution offers classes from Monday to Friday in two sessions, from 6:15 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and from 12:15 p.m. to 6:05 p.m. In the morning session, students enrolled in the sixth, eighth, and eleventh grades attend classes, and the seventh, ninth, and tenth ones in the afternoon.

The institution's mission focuses on the promotion of the human development of children and teenagers from the recognition, valuation, and strengthening of their individual and collective potentialities. About its vision, the institution aims at being more recognized in Medellín, Antioquia, and Colombia because of its human, academic, technical, investigative, cultural, and sportive qualities. Also, the institution has adopted the Potentialist Pedagogical

Model which consists of the development of the potentialities of the education agents. Moreover, the pedagogical principles that guide the educational processes are complementarity of knowledge, the inclusion of diversity, flexibility, reflective action, significance, and the path to autonomy. (PEI, I.E Lola González, 2022).

Concerning the subject of English, the institution offers 3 hours a week for secondary education with a duration of 55 minutes each. The syllabus implemented is organized by the English teachers. Taking into account that there is a teacher for each grade, they can make some adaptations to the content they are going to teach. The English syllabus is a notional/functional one because it proposes the achievement of several competencies that students will be able to develop by means of the language. Through this type of syllabus, students are able to ask and give information, describe or express their opinions. Moreover, the English syllabus is guided by the *Estándares básicos de competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés*, and the students are supposed to be assessed based on them.

With regard to the participants, it is a ninth grade composed of 38 students, 14 males, and 24 females aged between 14 and 15 years old. Although the school is located in “Comuna 12”, most of the students are from “Comuna 13” and pertain to the socio-economic strata one and two. The classroom, where all the English classes in ninth grade are developed, is spacious and has 6 windows on the left side. Furthermore, the classroom is equipped with a video beam, a pc with an internet connection, several speakers, two fans, a board, and a metal cabinet where the teacher keeps several kinds of materials such as books and games mostly. Also, there is an old tv that does not work anymore.

The Cooperating teacher (CT) had a degree in Foreign Languages from the University of Antioquia in 1998. He also has two specializations, one in English Language Teaching from the

*Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana* in 2001 and the other one in didactics. Regarding his work experience, he has been linked with the municipality of Medellín since 1998 and he has been teaching for approximately 25 years in different public institutions.

Moreover, he has been working at I.E Lola González since 2015 teaching English, and currently, he teaches this subject in all the groups of the ninth grade. Besides that, he is in charge of teaching ethics in the grade in which he is a homeroom teacher.

### **Statement of the problem**

Grammar instruction is the main focus of English teaching in secondary schools. As Al-khresheh & Orak (2021) argues that “Since grammar has a fundamental role in language learning, it is undoubtedly one of the first things that learners must be taught” (p. 10). In this ninth grade at I.E Lola González, even if grammar has great relevance, it is taught in a decontextualized way without context or real situations that help students to understand the real purpose of using linguistic resources. Although the Colombian documents that regulate the teaching of English in public institutions advocate for the use of topics, competencies, abilities, and language functions, in this course the learning of English is merely centered on the practice of systematic exercises. This aspect can be evidenced in the teaching activities supported by a traditional grammar methodology that does not provide meaningful topics and purposes that facilitate the use of English in real contexts. Moreover, the institution counts on technological resources such as internet connection, computer, video beam, and speakers. However, these resources are not used wisely in order to facilitate access to a variety of multimodal and authentic texts to promote the teaching of grammar with a real and meaningful purpose.

On the one hand, keeping in mind the traditional grammar methodology applied in the classroom and from what I could realize in my journal entries, students were exposed to the

employment of isolated grammar exercises from a printed document that did not provide any real context and use of the target language. Also, most explanations by the Cooperating teacher were decontextualized or non-adapted to the students' situations since most of the examples were isolated and imaginary sentences that were not applied to real context as it was observed:

“The CT explains the use of the verbs need, like and want. The CT says that after those verbs, the verb is not conjugated and he gives these examples: “I need to sleep”, “I like to sing” and “I want to paint”. (Journal 8, September 19th, 2022).

This way and as I registered in my journal on September 19<sup>th</sup>, I consider that it would be more pertinent if the examples provided were more focused on real context or students' information. As Farhod (2022) establishes “learners will be able to perceive the language's structures more effectively if grammar is taught in context” (p. 125).

In addition, taking into account the students' answers to a survey that was conducted on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 65.7% of them consider that showing the use of English in real situations is important to better understand the use of the grammatical topics of the class and the 31.4% consider that maybe it can help. (Exploratory survey, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022).

On the other hand, although the institution is equipped with technological resources in the English classroom such as internet connection, computer, video beam, and speakers, the computer and the video beam are only used to project the PDF document with grammatical exercises. Nevertheless, considering all the class technological resources, they are not being used for activities such as exploring information, watching videos, implementing games, and others that can enhance the students' learning process. Additionally, according to the student's responses to the exploratory survey, 44.4% of them think that the use of materials mediated by technological resources such as videos or songs, could motivate and help them to

better comprehend the grammatical topics in English. Furthermore, as Azmi (2017) mentions “The investigation of the impact of technology use in EFL classrooms has shown that EFL effective activities can be enhanced by means of technology” (p. 112).

In third place, due to the lack of variety of activities implemented in the classroom, it has been observed that students become demotivated during the class as I registered in my journal: “During the development of the activity, it is observed that students get distracted, some talked among them, watched their cellphones and one student was sleeping in the back of the classroom”. (Journal 10, September 26th, 2022).

I also added:

I can say that the repetition of the grammatical exercises is one of the reasons why some students get distracted in class and tend to do other activities. I know that doing many exercises, in the same way, can be boring. (Journal 10, September 26th, 2022).

Additionally, when I asked students: What activities of the class help you to better understand the grammatical topics? 66,7% of them answered games, 36,1% said material where the real use of English is presented and 30.6% selected explanatory videos. (Exploratory survey, October 24th, 2022).

I believe that if students are exposed to a great variety of activities that can be implemented with the aid of information and communications technology (ICT) by allowing students to interact with other types of materials different from a printed document, they could be more active in class and their motivation towards the activities would be more durable.

In such a way, I would like to take advantage of the ICT tools provided by the classroom, to help students to better understand English grammar by showing them its real use in real situations through videos, podcasts, interviews, dialogues, songs, news, and others.

### **Theoretical framework**

For the purposes of this research project and after the analysis of a specific learning and teaching situation in the classroom related to how grammar is being taught, it is crucial to explore the theory and the principles that are connected to the topic proposed. Thus, four key concepts will be addressed: grammar, grammar in context, the teaching of grammar in context, ICT, and its benefits in English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms.

#### **Grammar**

It is defined as “the study of the classes of words, their inflections, and their functions and relations in the sentence” (Merriam-Webster, n.d, definition 1). Furthermore, as Hashemi and Daneshfar (2018) argue “In linguistics’ point of view, grammar is a set of internalized rules speakers use for generating and interpreting language” (p. 340). Thus, grammar is an essential part of any foreign language acquisition process since as Farhod (2022) expresses “Learners will be able to construct better sentences in their speaking and writing performances if they have a better understanding of grammar” (p. 123). In this sense, the role of grammar becomes crucial in secondary education as well as the importance it should be given to the teaching and learning of grammar. “To be an effective language user, learners should study grammar because grammar skills will help learners to organize words and messages and make them meaningful” (Mart, 2013, p. 124).

However, if the grammar is not conceived as a part of the language with a meaningful purpose, its relevance can be lost. According to Mart (2013), learners are incapable of using grammar rules and understanding how they work in a sentence when the traditional approach is implemented. That is to say, grammar is not only a set of rules that are taught and learned by means of memorization or decontextualized sentences, it also involves an ensemble of elements,

such as context or the real use of the language, that guide teaching and learning processes to be meaningful.

### **Grammar in Context**

Considering the great importance of grammar in EFL classrooms, this concept requires special attention in the way in which it is taught in secondary schools in Colombia. As Mart (2013) states “Presenting grammar in isolated sentences will not allow learners to see how grammatical structures function in sentences” (p. 126). By doing so, grammar is not only the assimilation of a set of rules, but also the construction of language through context to be better understood by learners. As Nunan (1998) states:

In textbooks, grammar is very often presented out of context. Learners are given isolated sentences, which they are expected to internalize through exercises involving repetition, manipulation, and grammatical transformation. These exercises are designed to provide learners with formal, declarative mastery, but unless they provide opportunities for learners to explore grammatical structures in context. (p.102).

Additionally, Nunan (1998) establishes that “grammar and context are often so closely related that appropriate grammatical choices can only be made with reference to the context and purpose of the communication” (p. 102). In such a way, the relationship between grammar and context becomes indissoluble because of the meaningful purpose they pursue in the teaching and learning processes of a foreign language. According to Farhod (2022), “Grammar in context provides a useful foundation that links to reality in the target language” (p. 124).

### **Teaching Grammar in Context**

In order to improve the teaching practices in EFL classrooms, various authors have expressed the importance of teaching grammar in context and agreed on how fundamental it is to

use language more effectively. Oumsalem and Djabarni (2012) state that the exploration of grammar in context is different from traditional grammar due to many of the examples are used from real contexts. With this, the use of context in teaching grammar not only allows the use of real examples when learning a foreign language but also to be closer to real English in general. In addition, Farhod (2022) suggests that students are able to see how grammatical structures function in sentences through teaching grammar in context.

According to Mart (2013) “Teaching grammar in context will give learners an opportunity to understand how language works and this will improve their communication skills” (p. 125). By doing so, the teaching practices focused on decontextualized exercises are away from being effective strategies to teach grammar in secondary schools.

One of the strategies proposed to teach grammar in context is dialogues. “The use of dialogues in grammar teaching is useful because the use of dialogues generally matches learners’ expectations of how language is used in the real world: people use language primarily to talk to each other” (Thornbury, 1999, p. 76, as cited in Mart, 2013, p. 126). When using dialogues in class, students can listen to people speaking more naturally and try to use language meaningfully.

### **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**

Information and communication technology (ICT) is defined as “the use of computers and other electronic equipment and systems to collect, store, use, and send data electronically” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d, definition 2). ICT can be also called multimedia technology or media technology. According to Azmi (2017), “Curricular integration of ICT offers access to a set of electronic facilities such as interactive video, the Internet, email and the World Wide Web” (p. 111). Moreover, as Azmi (2017) establishes:



These ICT tools can help learners acquire linguistic skills, establish contact and interaction with other language users and broaden their minds about different cultural practices, values, and contemporary lifestyles in countries where English is used as a mother tongue or as a second language.

Through ICT tools, students have the opportunity to access different types of material that allows them to be in contact with the target language and learn in a more contextualized way. “Media technology can help students to understand grammar rules in their context and combine practice in other language skills like reading, speaking, listening, and viewing with grammar” (Tompkins, 2012, as cited in Albalawi, 2014, p. 34). Thus, media technology represents great opportunities in EFL classrooms that facilitate the teaching and learning of a foreign language and help students to learn in a real context.

To mention some of the strategies and their benefits when using ICT tools to teach grammar in context, the videos, for example, are an essential strategy to apply in EFL classrooms due to their advantages in the English learning process. “Language teachers like video because it motivates learners, brings the real world into the classroom, contextualizes language naturally, and enables learners to experience authentic language” (Tomalin, 1981, as cited in Bajramia and Ismailia, 2016, p. 504). Bajramia and Ismailia (2016) also mention:

A great advantage of the video materials is that they provide original and authentic input as they are produced originally for native speakers such as films, different TV programs, and songs,. Videos can be used in a variety of instructional and teaching settings- in the classroom, as a way of presenting content, initiating discussion, providing illustration for a certain topic and content, self-study, and evaluation situations.

Furthermore, as Ilina, Kutlub, and Kutluay (2012) state “Instead of mechanical Fill in the blanks or Write the past form of the verbs exercises in the coursebooks, an animated video would be more beneficial. Along with these, videos can be of vital help in contextualizing the language items” (p. 273).

Regarding other strategies to implement in EFL classrooms, “The use of modern media technology and sources is one route to improving the teaching of English skills” (Albalawi, 2014, p. 34). By doing so, with the evolution of technology and the easy access to several resources, their use is a good way to bring to the classroom different alternatives to encourage students to learn in a more meaningful and contextualized way. For instance, Albalawi (2014) argues that the use of media in English language classrooms around the world is supported by many research studies. According to Albalawi (2014), “The media includes newspapers, magazines, TV, and of course the Internet. It is considered another method to help enhance learning and teaching in the EFL classroom” (p. 4).

Nevertheless, in spite of the benefits of using ICT tools in EFL classrooms, it has to be used carefully to avoid issues in the classroom since as Azmi (2017) expresses “using ICT without careful planning and well-defined objectives will more likely be a waste of time and effort” (p. 117).

Considering the previous concepts, the following question was formulated to guide this project.

### **Research question**

How can the teaching of grammar in context mediated by ICT tools help the ninth graders of the “Institución Educativa Lola González” better understand the real purpose and use of English?

## **Objectives**

### **General objective**

To determine how the teaching of grammar in context mediated by ICT tools helps the ninth graders of the “Institución Educativa Lola González” better understand the real purpose and use of English.

### **Specific objectives**

1. To explore how different real situations in which grammar can be applied in a contextualized way help students to understand the use of English
2. To determine how the development of the linguistic topics and activities contextualized in a mini-project contribute to the better understanding of grammar in context
3. To evaluate how the implementation of more authentic and contextualized materials supported by ICT tools can facilitate teaching and learning grammar meaningfully
4. To monitor how the implementation of the mini-project help the students to contextualize grammar in a real communicative situation

### **Action plan**

After observing my teaching practicum group for several weeks, I decided to work on teaching grammar in context mediated by ICT tools to help the ninth graders better understand the real purpose and use of English. In order to achieve this action research project's objectives, I will carry out different actions that will be covered during the first period of the school year.

To begin, during the first week, real situations in which we use the linguistic content proposed in the term will be presented to raise awareness about the real purpose of learning grammar to communicate meaningfully. For this, a diagnostic activity, an exploratory survey, and journals will be used to know students' perceptions about the use of linguistic topics in real life. Connected to this, the context and the situation for the mini-project will be defined in the same week, and the design of the timetable during the second week. These activities will be carried out to contextualize the students about the way they are going to learn the grammatical content through a class project and establish the activities that are going to be developed with the tasks for each stage of the project. Here, as in the first week and most of the stages, journals will be used to evidence several aspects of the development of the actions, and students' reflections, among others.

Throughout weeks 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, we will develop the timetable activities proposed for the mini-project when practicing through different worksheets which include these topics: personal information, introducing myself and introducing others, likes and dislikes, hobbies, and personal interests. The aims of these activities are to introduce the linguistic and content topics raise awareness about their use or applicability in real life, provide students with activities, worksheets, and materials to practice the linguistic topics, and design students' own segments of their script for the video they are going to present using the linguistic topics learned.

After that, modeling the final product will be implemented in week 7 to show the students the teacher's profile for them to know how to do their own productions. Moreover, during weeks 7 and 8 students will design the final product which will be a video where they are going to use all their scripts written in the classes. The purpose of this will be to outline the final product the students are going to present according to their real information. Thus, students' artifacts will be taken into account as the data collection instrument as well as in the next stage.

In order to help students to practice their oral skills through ICT tools to enhance their performance during the presentation of the final product, students will prepare the oral presentation under the student teacher's guidance and online tools in week 9. Finally, during the tenth week, students will share the final products with the whole class to appreciate them and conclude their performance and reflections after the development of the mini-project through a self-assessment activity.

### **Development of actions**

In order to explore the usefulness of teaching grammar in context mediated by ICT tools to help students better understand the real purpose and use of English, I implemented several research and teaching actions. Concerning the research actions, I applied an exploratory survey, a diagnostic activity, and a self-assessment format. In relation to the teaching actions, the definition of the context and situation for a mini-project, the negotiation of the project timetable, the development of the activities, the presentation of a model for the final product, and its design and preparation were carried out. It is essential to mention that there were some difficulties with the time due to the amount of class lost because of different school activities mainly. This way, some actions were implemented without going deeper and the use of different resources was reduced.

Concerning the research actions, the exploratory survey had the purpose to identify and know students' perceptions about grammar, grammar in context, the use of ICT tools, and different aspects connected to the research topic. This survey was carried out on February 21st, 2023 with 34 participants. Besides, the diagnostic activity in which students had to write a text of information about their personal information according to their previous knowledge was taken into account. The purpose was to identify students' writing practices and use of grammar in a written text in English and to determine students' weaknesses and strengths before teaching grammar in context mediated by ICT tools. This written activity was developed on February 16th, 2023. Furthermore, I conducted a self-assessment format at the end of the research project to know the students' opinions about their performance in class and their reflections after the development of the actions.

Regarding the teaching actions, I began with the definition of the context or situation for the mini-project which would be the creation of a video to apply for a scholarship or an academic exchange. As it was a class project, I negotiated a timetable with the activities and deadlines connected to the English syllabus: personal information, introducing myself and others, likes, dislikes, hobbies, and personal interests. I provided students with activities such as online worksheets, videos, songs, and dialogues, among others, to explore the grammar topics in simple present tense and vocabulary about family, occupations, adjectives of personality, physical appearance, and verbs to express likes and dislikes, among others. Those activities were developed between February 23rd and April 27th.

Afterwards, I presented a model text with my own personal information that contained all the grammar topics and vocabulary taught before. That text was read aloud in class and I took advantage of that sample to provide students with a model that could guide their own text

constructions. Also, the text analysis activity was useful to remind several concepts worked previously and clarify some students' doubts.

For the design and preparation of the mini-project, students had to create a video about their personal profiles to apply for a scholarship or an academic exchange and its script. While developing this task, I tried to solve students' questions and provide them with resources and ideas to practice pronunciation and write their texts. Because of the lack of time, students were asked to write their scripts at home and send the video via email.

### **Data analysis**

In order to analyze the data collected during this research study, I took into account the instruments applied during the whole process and they were two questionnaires, several journal entries, and students' artifacts (final scripts and videos). In the first class session, an exploratory survey was carried out with the purpose of identifying and knowing students' perceptions about grammar, using grammar in context, the use of ICT tools, and different aspects connected to the topic of teaching grammar in context mediated by ICT tools. This survey was applied on February 21st, 2023 in which 33 students responded to 6 closed-ended questions and two open questions. Furthermore, in the last part of the project, a self-assessment format was implemented with similar questions to the exploratory survey to compare students' responses and perceptions after the development of the actions. This last format was applied on May 9th, 2023. Both instruments, the exploratory survey, and the self-assessment format, were applied through a Google Forms to obtain more precise information.

Besides, through the development of a diagnostic activity at the beginning of the project, students were asked to write a text with information about themselves according to their previous knowledge taking into account their personal information such as age, place of living, family,

etc. In such a way, the purpose of this diagnostic activity was to identify the students' performance in English and their weaknesses and strengths in grammar when writing about them. In this activity, 34 students participated on February 16th, 2023. For the revision of the texts, a rubric with aspects such as textual organization, use of grammar, content, use of vocabulary, and task delivery were considered as criteria to evaluate the texts and recognize students' writing practices.

At the end of the project, students' artifacts consisted of their final scripts and videos for the mini-project of their profiles to apply for a scholarship or an academic exchange were analyzed through a rubric. The scripts and videos were delivered on May 4th, 2023. The purpose of collecting these data was to identify students' attitudes, performance, and awareness after the teaching of grammar in context mediated by ICT tools and to verify the students' understanding of grammar after the activities carried out. For this, a rubric with aspects such as textual organization, grammar, vocabulary, content, delivery and commitment, and pronunciation and intonation was used to analyze these data.

Moreover, throughout the implementation of the actions, I registered in my journal entries all the situations, performances, attitudes, and experiences while teaching grammar in context mediated by ICT tools. I wrote them after every class and analyzed all the activities and situations by identifying different themes and defining categories related to my research topic.

After reading and analyzing all the data collection instruments carefully, I identified common themes, defined some preliminary categories, and classified the most relevant information based on those categories. Finally, I completed a recurrence chart to triangulate data and identify recurrent patterns and come up with some findings.



### **Findings and Interpretations**

The purpose of this study was to determine how the teaching of grammar in context mediated by ICT tools helps the ninth graders of the “Institución Educativa Lola González” better understand the real purpose and use of English. According to data analysis, it was shown that students could understand the real purpose and use of English and they were able to use the target language in a more contextualized way by applying the knowledge acquired during the classes in situations of real life such as creating a profile to apply for a scholarship, an academic exchange, a talent program, etc. However, it is important to say that in spite of the positive impact of the project, there are a few cases that can demonstrate ineffectiveness in some students. In the following lines, I will elaborate on these findings in detail and the evidence of how the teaching of grammar in context mediated by ICT tools helped ninth graders reach the aims of this study.

#### **Using Grammar in Context**

According to Nunan (1998) “grammar and context are often so closely related that appropriate grammatical choices can only be made with reference to the context and purpose of the communication” (p. 102). The activities and strategies implemented in class allowed students to understand how to use grammar in contextualized situations supported by the use of ICT tools. The different grammatical structures, topics, vocabulary, or content, in general, using simple present tense were presented and practiced through dialogues, conversations, videos, and songs, among others, that showed real-life situations that helped students to learn grammar in a more contextualized way.

In the following section, I am going to make a comparison between the exploratory survey and the students’ self-assessment where it is possible to observe changes in their

perceptions about grammar, the use of real-life situations to understand grammar, and how they gained comprehension of the grammatical categories in English. In such a way, before the implementation of the actions, an exploratory survey based on the students' perceptions of grammar was carried out.

### *Using real-life situations to understand grammar*

On the one hand, based on the answers in the exploratory survey, 72.7% of the students considered that they did believe that the use of real-life situations is important to learn English grammar in a better way. (Exploratory survey, February 21st, 2023). On the other hand, according to students' answers in the self-assessment developed at the end of the project and after the implementation of the actions, 84.8% of them established that the teaching of grammar in context using real-life situations had been important to better understand grammar topics. (Self-assessment, May 9th, 2023). With this, it is proved that the students' perceptions increased positively when talking about the use of real and contextualized situations to learn grammar.

I observed that students engaged more in the classes when I explained grammar topics using adapted profiles based on Shakira and El Pibe's biographies "When real information of real people is used in the English class to explain specific topics, students show more interest in the activities and participate more actively". (Journal 6, March 9th, 2023).

When grammar is contextualized in scenarios, situations, and real interactions, it can be seen how the use of the language is adapted taking into account the level of formality of the context, the use of structures or grammatical rules embedded in real texts, ways of interaction among the audiences, the communicative purposes and the paralinguistic elements such as volume, tone, speed, gestures, and intonation in communicative situations.

***Gaining comprehension of grammatical categories***

Moreover, at the beginning of the term, before students received instruction and practiced the use of grammatical categories, only 27.3% of the learners manifested that they had a clear comprehension of the use of grammatical categories such as nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions and/or articles in English. However, most of them, that is 72.7% expressed their little or null understanding of the use of those categories. (Exploratory survey, February 21st, 2023). Later, after students had been provided with instruction about how to use those grammatical categories in context and after being familiar with different kinds of authentic or adapted texts such as audio and videos with conversations, descriptions of profiles through online worksheets, songs, shorts of films and series, among others, they gained understanding of grammatical categories. According to the self-assessment students' answers, 66.7% of them considered that they had increased their comprehension of the use of nouns, pronouns, verbs, and adjectives in a better way. (Self-assessment, May 9th, 2023). Thus, students' comprehension of grammatical categories improved meaningfully when they had the opportunity to be exposed to real and contextualized situations to learn grammar in English.

The evidence taken from the following journal entry illustrates how using grammar in context helped students to better understand the use of grammatical categories:

Students were very participative and showed that they could understand the use of those possessive adjectives through the development of an activity in which they had to help me to complete some information about Shakira and El Pibe on the board. Students were able to know where they had to complete with *his* or *her*, *is* or *are*, for example. (Journal 4, February 23rd, 2023).

It was demonstrated that the use of various audiovisual resources, and authentic and adapted texts, facilitated the comprehension of the grammatical categories taught in class when students had the chance to identify them in context through videos, dialogues, songs, short films, series, etc. For example, in one of the classes, I used several songs to show the use of the verb *be* as one of the grammatical categories. The following journal entry illustrates this class activity:

I played a video with 6 different songs in which the verb *be* was strongly used. I stopped the video several times to check the students' understanding of this verb. In general, students seemed to have understood the use of that verb in affirmative, negative, and interrogative questions when I stopped the video and they answered why the verb was used in those parts of the songs. (Journal 4, February 23rd, 2023).

By doing so and to show consistency of this finding, as Çakir (2006) states “language teachers like video because it motivates learners, brings the real world into the classroom, contextualizes language naturally and enables learners to experience authentic language in a controlled environment.” (p. 67). By means of the use of audiovisual aids such as videos, it is possible to connect students with real-life situations and it allows them to interact with images, sounds, cultures, or real communication while they learn grammar despite the limitations of being in a classroom.

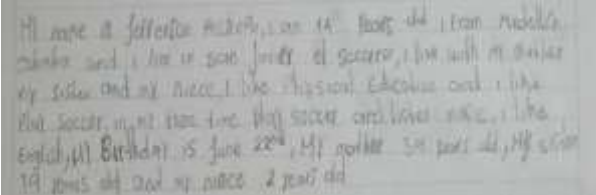
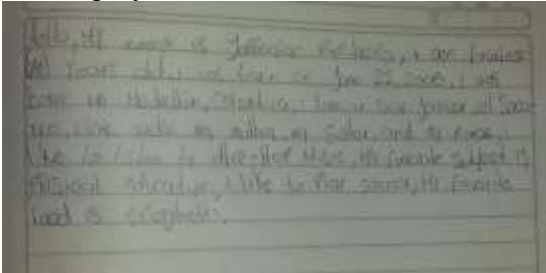
### ***Expanding linguistic resources***

The students not only gained comprehension of the grammatical categories, but they also expanded the linguistic resources when writing their final scripts for the mini project in which they had to record a video introducing themselves with the purpose of participating in a call of a scholarship or an academic exchange. 27 students presented all the initial and final writing activities. At the beginning of the term, they were asked to write a personal information text

about themselves through a diagnostic writing activity. 59.2 % of the learners had difficulties using sentence structures in simple present tense correctly such as *Subject + verb + complement* to provide personal information, the use of *adjective + noun* to describe personality and physical appearance, sentence structures to express likes and dislikes such as *Subject + (like, love, dislike) + to* or *Sub + (like, love, dislike) + VerBING*. At the end of the project, their performance using the sentence structures mentioned above improved significantly since 29.6% of the class continued presenting those grammatical problems.

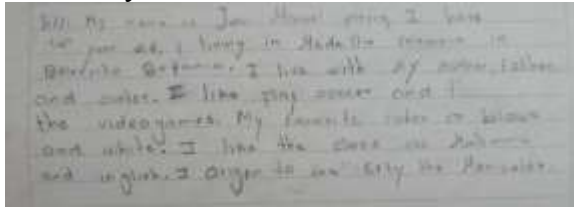
Before the implementation of the actions where the idea was to teach grammar in context using real-life situations, students were asked to write freely about themselves by using their previous knowledge to talk about their name, age, place of living, origin, family, etc. Then, at the end of the project, students had to write their own profiles and record a video to apply for a scholarship or an academic exchange. When we compared those activities, most students showed improvement when talking about their personal information and their written and oral texts were more complete and accurate.

Their improvement can be evidenced in the following cases comparing the two activities:

Diagnostic activity	Final script
<p>Jose:</p> <p>“I like play soccer in my free time play soccer and listen music”</p> 	<p>Jose:</p> <p>“I like <b>to</b> listen to Hip-Hop music, My favorite subject is physical education, I like <b>to</b> play soccer”</p> 

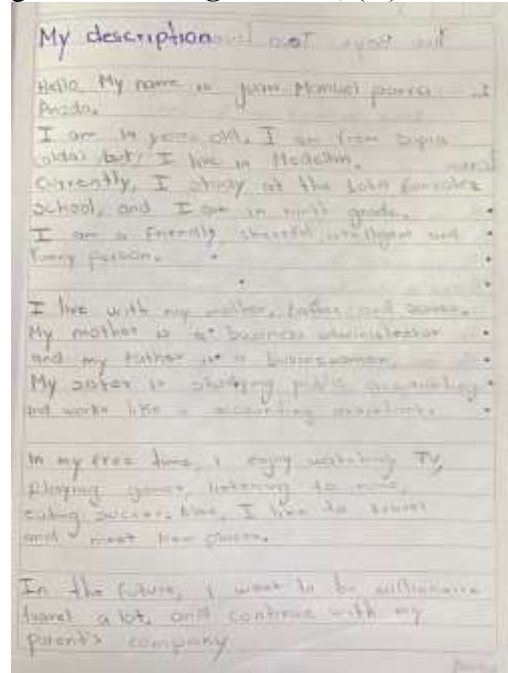
Marcos:

“I have 14th year old, I living in Medellin (...) I like play soccer and the videogames. My favorite color is black and white (...) I origin to the City the Manizales”



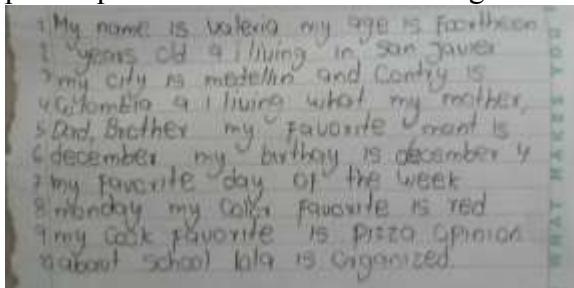
Marcos:

“I **am** 14 years old. I **am from** Supia Caldas but I **live** in Medellin. (...) In my free time, I **enjoy** watching TV, playing games, listening to music, (...)”.



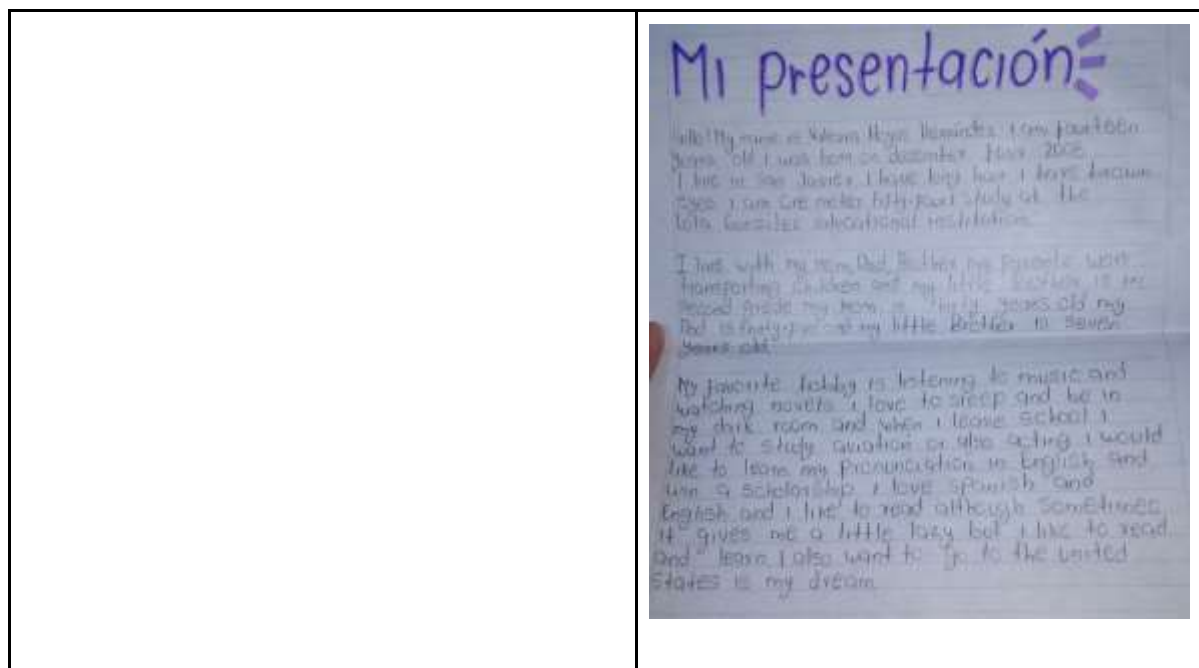
Vanesa:

“my color favorite is red my cook favorite is pizza opinion about school lola is organized”.



Vanesa:

“My **favorite hobby** is listening to music and watching novels I love to sleep and be in my **dark room** (...)”



(Diagnostic activity, February 16th, 2023). (Students' artifacts, final script, May 4th, 2023).

As it can be evidenced in the students' initial and final writings, several changes can be noticed. For instance, Jose presented improvement by using the infinitive when separating the verbs to express his likes. He also used the correct possessive adjectives according to the subject used in the sentence and used the preposition *to* after the prepositional verb *listen to*. Jose could elaborate more complete sentences, especially when talking about likes and dislikes following correct sentence structures. Regarding Marcos' performance, he also wrote a more complete text and conjugated verbs in simple present tense correctly. He learned the way in which age is expressed in English, the use of the verb *be* to talk about the origin, and the structure *verb + gerund* to express likes and dislikes. For her part, Vanesa was able to write a more organized text using the structure *adjective + noun* correctly to describe her favorite activities.

Keeping that in mind, when they had the possibility to acquire knowledge about grammar in a more contextualized way through the use of real situations, all three students showed great

improvement when writing their information building complete sentences using *Subject + verb + complement* to provide personal information, using *adjective + noun* form to describe people, expanding repertoires to express likes and dislikes, and including appropriate verbs in their sentences.

Furthermore, the impact of the implementation of the actions had a positive effect on the expansion of the lexical choices. Students were willing to select appropriate vocabulary to talk about personal information, preferences, and family, among others. Also, it was found a reduction of code-switching when students wrote their final scripts for the profile. At the beginning of the study, when students wrote the text about their information in the diagnostic activity, 59.2% of them presented difficulties with lexical choices and code-switching. However, after the implementation of the actions, the percentage reduced significantly since only 22.2% of the students continued with the vocabulary difficulties mentioned previously.

Students recognized the importance of grammar from the beginning of the course and at the end they increased their opinion about using grammar in contextualized situations. Also, they showed a significant advance in the way they were expressing information about themselves and developed the tasks proposed in the course using sentences in the simple present tense, vocabulary, and all the content in general. When observing students' performance and attitudes in the class, it was evident that they gained comprehension of the topics and began to use the structures and vocabulary taught in a more natural way. It was found that using grammar in context is a great advantage in English classrooms since students have the possibility to be closer to its real use and better understand its purpose when doing meaningful tasks about their own real lives.



### **Using ICT resources to introduce, practice, and understand grammar and vocabulary topics**

Teaching and learning grammar in context implies the use of real-life situations to contextualize language and provide explicit instruction on grammatical categories. These actions could not be possible if ICT tools and resources to introduce, practice, and understand grammar and vocabulary topics were not present in the classroom. Several types of resources used in this ninth grade showed to be effective when learning grammar in English and helped students to better understand the grammar topics and feel motivated during their learning process. Among the ICT tools used in class, we can list a computer, an internet connection, a video beam, and several speakers. Also, some adapted resources such as explanatory videos, scenes from an English page, online worksheets, and dialogues were implemented throughout the term. Besides, authentic materials such as shorts of different real series, films, and songs were used to encourage and help students to better understand the use and real purpose of the English language.

In spite of the fact that the English classroom was equipped with ICT tools such as an internet connection, computer, video beam, and speakers and that as it was mentioned in the statement of the problem of this work, the computer and the video beam were only used to project a PDF document with grammar exercises, the challenge was to use those tools more efficiently and in a way that students could feel encouraged and comfortable when learning and practicing grammar in English. By doing so, ICT tools represented an important factor during the implementation of the actions when using them to learn through a variety of resources such as dialogues, songs, online worksheets, and videos, among others. Without these conditions, the

impact of the actions achieved in the design of the thematic units, a mini project, and activities that integrated ICT resources would not have been possible.

Data analysis demonstrated that despite several challenges using ICT resources in class, they were helpful to mediate the learning of grammar in context. In this respect, when students responded to the exploratory survey at the beginning of the study, it was found that 78.8% of them agreed that the use of ICT tools such as videos, songs, or dialogues could motivate and help them to better understand the grammar topics in English. (Exploratory survey, February 21st, 2023).

According to students' appreciation of the use of ICT tools in the classroom, I could realize that they would value the integration of a variety of resources and activities in class and even if they do not like English very much, these kinds of materials could contribute to their better English learning process. Because of that, after the development of the strategies put into action in class related to the use of ICT tools to teach grammar in context, 84,8% of the students expressed that the use of ICT resources such as videos, songs, online worksheets, or dialogues had motivated and helped them to better understand the grammar topics in English. (Self-assessment, May 9th, 2023).

With this, it was shown that learners could take advantage of the technological resources, their performance in their English learning process was benefited and their perceptions about the use of ICT tools in class continued to be positive. Besides, as students expressed, resources such as videos, online worksheets, dialogues, and songs were those that helped them more to better understand and practice grammar. (Self-assessment, May 9th, 2023). To show the consistency of this finding with what several authors establish, Ilina, Kutlub, and Kutluay (2012) state “instead of mechanical Fill in the blanks or Write the past form of the verbs exercises in the coursebooks,

an animated video would be more beneficial. Along with these, videos can be of vital help in contextualizing the language items” (p. 273).

The benefits of the implementation of the ICT tools in class can be evidenced not only by the positive students’ perceptions about this aspect, but also by their performance, motivation, and comprehension of the topics during the development of the activities throughout the project. For instance, as I observed in a class, students could practice and show their understanding of the physical appearance descriptions in an enjoyable way when using online worksheets:

During the development of the online game about famous people’s physical appearance, students showed a pretty good attitude and attention towards it because of their high participation when providing answers. Also, although it is evident that some students prefer not to respond when asking oral questions to the whole class, most of them showed they knew most of the adjectives used to describe physical appearance and it seemed that the use of known people in the activity helped them to answer each item much easier. (Journal 12, April 25th, 2023).

Furthermore, students felt motivated to do the tasks assigned in class when using authentic materials such as songs “In this opportunity, authentic material such as a song was used to practice the simple present tense and I think that students were motivated to do the task because of their active participation when completing the lyrics of the song”. (Journal 9, March 28th, 2023). With the use of authentic material, learners can be in contact with the language, appreciate its real use, purpose, and context, and feel motivated to learn and practice the content broached in class. Berardo (2006) explains “Authentic materials enable learners to interact with the real language and content rather than the form. Learners feel that they are learning a target language as it is used outside the classroom. (p. 62). Through authentic materials, students not

only can learn English meaningfully, but they also can enjoy their favorite singers, songs, series, and interesting topics, among others, making their English learning process easier and more pleasant.

Without a doubt, students' performance in class was improved and evidenced by their active participation when using ICT resources in class. Also, as they had the opportunity to learn grammar by means of a variety of resources and materials they were not used to, most of the time they showed more motivation and concentration when doing the tasks compared to when they just had to complete sentences in a paper. Nevertheless, it was a challenge to check all students' understanding when I used an online worksheet and I asked them to solve the exercises as a whole class activity. It was difficult to recognize whose students' voices were answering or who was solving the exercise.

As it was illustrated previously, several benefits associated with the learning process, students' performance and motivation, and the use of authentic material in class emerged through the project implementation. On the one hand, the students expressed and highlighted the usefulness of technological resources in English class and how they motivated and helped them to better understand grammar. On the other hand, I realized that the use of ICT tools was fundamental for students' performance in class and helped them to do the activities with more enthusiasm and facilitate the comprehension of the grammar topics through context. Additionally, the use of authentic material benefited students since they could engage better in the class, they showed more interest in the activities and they went deeper into the topics they had to explore. These findings match with the idea "Media technology can help students to understand grammar rules in their context and combine practice in other language skills like

reading, speaking, listening, and viewing with grammar” (Tompkins, 2012, as cited in Albalawi, 2014, p. 34).

### **Promoting students’ awareness of the real purpose and use of English**

I have already mentioned how teaching grammar in context mediated by ICT tools has contributed positively to the students’ English learning process. Therefore, it is also important to stress how the awareness of the real purpose and use of the English language was promoted among ninth-grade students. Thanks to the development of a great variety of activities, I have shown that the strategies implemented and described previously not only have helped students to better understand grammar but also motivated them to use the language for real purposes. For example, at the end of the project, as the final action implemented, students were asked to write their own profiles with their personal information to apply for a scholarship or an academic exchange and record a video with the same purpose. These specific real situations were proposed taking into account that they were in ninth grade and started thinking about academic and professional choices after high school.

Throughout the development of the project, students showed a better understanding of the purpose of learning and using grammar topics and vocabulary in English in specific situations. At the beginning of this work, I could observe that in some cases, students did not know the purpose or the use of specific content. For instance, as I expressed in one of my journal entries, students could not give me a reason why they learned the alphabet in English or used spelling. “I asked them if they understood the purpose of spelling names as it was shown in the video. Some said that it was just to spell, but they did not know a specific situation when that aspect is needed”. (Journal 3, February 21st, 2023).

Keeping that in mind, after providing context when explaining the grammar topics and vocabulary for these two months, I realized that students started to gain awareness about the use of English and the expressions or vocabulary used in specific cases to use the language correctly.

When students try to do the activities proposed on their own and ask the teacher to solve their doubts about appropriate vocabulary to talk about a specific topic, they are showing interest, motivation, and awareness of the use of English when talking about real aspects of their lives. (Journal 11, April 24th, 2023).

I also wrote:

It was observed that in general, even if it was not done perfectly, students could provide different real information about their classmates and they showed that they understood the purpose of introducing someone by means of the use of English. (Journal 7, March 14th, 2023).

Such a way, it can be asserted that when students are exposed to real-life situations and can understand why they are learning the content proposed in class, they are able to do the activities more effectively, coherently, and consciously according to the purpose of the task. This can be evidenced in the students' answers to the self-assessment conducted at the end of the project. 78.8% of the students expressed that they were aware of the real use of the different grammar topics in English to provide information in real situations such as applying for a scholarship, an academic exchange, or meeting new people. (Self-assessment, May 9th, 2023).

The purpose of the mini-project was that students could apply for a scholarship or an academic exchange, and could introduce themselves in situations where they had to meet new people. Students showed their awareness of the purpose and use of English when they recorded their videos. For instance, Salma, Liliana, Silvana, and Sandra designed their profiles including

resources such as images or real short videos that showed they gained awareness about the content, purpose, and format of the final product they had to create. In Salma's case, to design her video, she made sure to be in a quiet place where she could record her voice without any background sound that could interrupt her. Moreover, she showed several images and short videos about her real family, place of living and study, hobbies, and personal interests that displayed coherence in the text. Even though the student did not show her face during the video, her tone of voice and intonation were concordant with the context of it. Regarding Liliana's video, she also included several images when talking about specific personal information, likes, or people. Her image projected in the video was connected with different topics she had to consider for the video. While she was developing her ideas, she acted and made gestures according to her speech. Besides, she was wearing formal clothes appropriate for the academic situation. Liliana was strongly aware of the purpose of the video due to her final words that expressed how the scholarship she was applying for would help her to pursue her passion for music. Both students included the content I suggested to apply for a scholarship or an academic exchange, and used linguistic and paralinguistic resources according to the situation and purpose of the task that intended to simulate a formal and academic context.

Nevertheless, although most students presented complete and formal videos, several of them were just reading their written texts or scripts demonstrating that they were not aware enough of the purpose of the task. Hence, it was perceived that the impact of the mini-project was positive among students and helped them to better understand the real purpose and use of English in spite of several cases of learners that were not sufficiently impacted.

To sum up, most students could improve their performance in class and gain awareness of some linguistic resources through the use of grammar and vocabulary in context that could be

evidenced in real tasks. At the end of this work, students could present their own personal profiles informed by a real and formal context and situation.

### **Conclusions and Suggestions**

This action research study was done to determine how the teaching of grammar in context mediated by ICT tools helps the ninth graders of the “Institución Educativa Lola González” better understand the real purpose and use of English. In short, the goal of the project was accomplished and the impact of the actions implemented was positive in spite of the challenges and a few cases that demonstrated the ineffectiveness of the actions in certain students. With all the evidence presented above in three different categories, I can assure that the teaching of grammar in context mediated by ICT tools undoubtedly helped students to better understand the use and purpose of English and allowed them to use the foreign language in a more contextualized way.

Students understood how to use grammar in real and contextualized situations supported by the use of ICT tools and resources, and they engaged more in the classes when adapted and authentic materials were used to explain grammar and vocabulary topics. Furthermore, students’ comprehension of grammatical categories improved meaningfully through the use of contextualized situations and audiovisual resources. Learners also expanded their linguistic resources, and lexical choices, and improved their discourse about personal information.

Among other resulting benefits, data analysis showed that the use of ICT resources was helpful to mediate the learning of grammar in context since the authentic or adapted materials used in class such as dialogues, videos, songs, and online worksheets, among others, allow students to be closer to real-life and communicative situations and identify the purpose, context, level of formality, and lexical and grammatical choices proposed for the assigned tasks. By the



same token, students' engagement was significantly enhanced due to their active participation and commitment to the development of the activities carried out during the lessons.

Besides, the learners gained awareness by applying the knowledge acquired in class in real-life situations. The use of audiovisual materials favored students' awareness since they could identify the context, purpose, and paralinguistic elements in real communicative situations that served as models to help them design their own tasks, in this case, their personal profiles.

Nevertheless, I have to recognize that despite the positive results, the lack of time to implement the actions due to the unexpected school activities can be an obstacle to the teaching and learning processes when trying to implement strategies that require constancy to get better outcomes. In addition to that, although I already established the benefits of using ICT tools and resources to learn English in class, they also can be a challenge for teachers since whether the aims are not clear and the materials are not well selected, their effectiveness in the classroom can be affected. Moreover, concerning students' performance and evaluation of the topics addressed in class, teachers cannot control the use of the ICT tools at home and be sure that students really did the tasks on their own since they can use different technological resources for this purpose.

To conclude, I would suggest working on teaching grammar in context by using ICT tools if possible. No doubt about it, grammar can be better assimilated in EFL classrooms much easier if the models used to exemplify are contextualized by means of real-life situations. Moreover, the use of ICT tools can enrich and help a lot in teaching grammar in context. However, it is suggested to well determine the purpose of every single choice when using technological resources and be sure about students' awareness of the purpose of the activities to avoid waste of time. Additionally, due to time constraints, the process of implementation was not

as effective as it was expected. To reach better outcomes, it would be fundamental to count on a continuous and regular schedule to be able to implement the actions proposed.

### **Reflection**

This teaching experience has significantly contributed to my personal and professional life and it has also been a big challenge I really appreciated. I could learn a lot from different situations during this practicum stage. On the one hand, the experience at school was really enriching since I had the opportunity to know so closely the education environment by means of cooperating teacher's experiences in the field, the students' attitudes and situations, and my own experiences during this phase.

On the other hand, throughout the experience, I could realize how important it is to try to give our best as teachers in the classroom. The teaching process in the classroom should not merely be seen as a job where teachers provide knowledge in their specific areas, but as an enriching space to interact, build meaningful experiences, and learn from each other. Undoubtedly, being an English teacher implies more than managing the language since it involves passion for the profession, responsibility, commitment, and being open to learn every day.

Lastly, the teacher action research developed during these months has highly helped me to understand that teaching labor is a huge world to explore and the chance to know deeply various aspects of it. Moreover, action research is an activity that requires several personal attitudes such as commitment, persistence, and criticism, among others, which are fundamental to never giving up along the way.

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