



# Teaching Methods of English During Covid-19 in Members of the Technological Degree on Teacher Assistant

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**Abstract.** This article proposes an analysis of innovation in the English language teaching methodology during the health emergency of COVID-19. To this end, teachers and students in professional teaching practice of the Teacher Assistant degree offered by Instituto Superior para el Desarrollo ISPADE have been surveyed. This research collected information on training in virtual tools and teaching methodology prior to the health emergency. Virtual education, during the pandemic, forced teachers to review their usual practices and led to alternative pedagogies for its execution within the classroom. The analysis of these new proposals will allow future studies to apply activities, evaluations, presentations, and usage of tools that will contribute to pedagogical thinking.

**Keywords:** Education · Virtuality · Higher Education · Innovation · Pandemic

## 1 Introduction

This research focuses on the importance of discussing the educational field and the use of new methodologies for teaching English due to the pandemic. For instance, it is important to observe the teaching practice and dialogue with the actors involved in the educational area. This research, therefore, seeks to contribute with data on pedagogical initiatives that have emerged in the last two years.

Within the current geopolitical context, the need for professionals who master new concepts, grammar, writing, reading, and teaching in English is a priority for all countries. This is sustained through various historical and contemporary milestones; therefore, English has been the main means of communication between the countries of the world for more than sixty years [1]. Nowadays, English is a vehicle of international communication and, as such, has an instrumental meaning [2]. Besides, due to the nature of the language, it also has a function of new representation of reality. For this reason, it provides educational values that must be promoted. The study of the teaching methodology of English refers to the constant redefinition of models; therefore, the proposal of new alternatives that benefit the learning process for students [2].

In the Ecuadorian Public Policy of the educational system, the importance of learning and mastering a second language has been highlighted; hence, English continues to be

the language that is most offered in educational institutions. Then again, the *Organic Law of Intercultural Education* establishes that every bilingual educational institution must include at least forty percent (40%) of their curricular distribution in a foreign language [3]. In addition, it emphasizes that English teachers must have all the skills, knowledge and abilities to perform their job. To guarantee their qualifications, they must present the results of an international standardized test that certifies the achievement of, at least, a B2 English level according to The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages [3].

For higher education, the Policy establishes that the curriculum must include the approval of certain courses in a foreign language as a compulsory requirement for students. On one hand, students of a technical level, at least, must acquire the A1 level. On the other hand, students of a technological level, require, at least, the A2 level to graduate. For other undergraduate studies, the B1 level must be fulfilled [4]. Under regular conditions, the teaching and learning practice of English used a traditional model that met the needs of the moment.

The health emergency has been one of the phenomena that generated the most significant changes daily. The confinement altered, as in many other practices, the modalities of both teaching and learning within the classroom. Thousands of schools, colleges, universities, and other training centers had to refresh and seek for new alternatives to educate. Teachers, with their own resources and strategies, created specific dynamics to communicate with their students through the screens.

Under this perspective, it is essential to examine those modifications for remote teaching, also during the various inequalities and problems that were evidenced in this context. The methodology used to obtain this information is detailed in the next section.

### **1.1 Teaching Methodology Before the Pandemic**

For the development of this research, it is convenient to identify the teaching methods of English applied in a face-to-face type of education before the health emergency of 2020. Cobo and Moravec [5] propose that, to carry out an effective teaching process, three fundamental aspects must be reviewed. First, the strategies of learning and unlearning continuously; next, the permanent innovation of learning; finally, the promotion of critical thinking. Ramos [6] mentions several approaches to teaching English as a second language. For instance, the author refers to the classical method, in which the teacher is the center of the learning process, and it is related to the linguistic aspects of the learners' native language. In addition, there is also a reference to the Direct Method, where grammar was taught inductively based on structures in conversations. Finally, the Audiolingual Method is also referred to. Under this methodology, memory and repetitive practice of grammatical elements sought results that would allow students to function in real situations [6].

Teaching methodologies, before the pandemic, focused mainly on planning activities in classrooms, where methods will be applied based on oral and communicative practice of the language, and the exercise of grammar.

## 1.2 Covid-19 and the Ecuadorian Educational System

On March 11th, 2020, the Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Education, Senescyt, among others, established specific guidelines for education during the sanitary emergency [7]. For instance, the Ministry of Education ordered the suspension of classes throughout the national territory, and the continuity of work for all the administrative and teaching staff of the National Education System under the teleworking modality. Similarly, on April 2nd, the National Emergency Operations Committee ordered the suspension of face-to-face classes throughout the month of April for the entire National School Education System at all levels [7]. For higher education, the regulations demanded that educational institutions may use technological platforms to impart classes virtually, remotely or online. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), therefore, played an important role in supporting this process; the use of ICT tools encouraged the strengthening of collaborative learning, by promoting the exchange of ideas and tasks, completely done under a remote modality.

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Materials and Methods

This section focuses on the presentation of a solid methodology to address the innovation in the teaching methods of pedagogical specialization during the pandemic. Based on the theoretical approach, the research design for this study is structured to determine the innovation in the teaching methodology and the perceived causes for these changes. Furthermore, this section also will expose the sample from which this study will be conducted and the presentation of the data collection procedure.

#### 2.1.1 Research Approach and Strategy

This study is based on the structuring of its analysis under the following theoretical framework: Ecuadorian Educational System, Teaching Methods of English before the pandemic, and Teaching Methods of English after the pandemic. The discussion starts from prior knowledge of the topic. Therefore, a deductive approach has been used. This approach organizes information based on what is already known and establishes new relationships that go from the general to the specific [8]. In the case of this research, in order to identify innovation in the English language teaching methodology after COVID-19, it is imperative to first identify how this methodology worked before the health emergency and understand the legal foundations of the educational system in Ecuador, as it has been described in previous sections.

To carry out the analysis of this research, the quantitative methodology has been considered as a starting point. Under this premise, one of the main benefits of this perspective is that it allows a structured approach to study the phenomenon and, in addition, to identify general patterns that can be applied to a segment of the population.

### 2.1.2 Quantitative Research Sources and Sampling

For the analysis of this research, the survey has been considered as the quantitative research instrument. The survey allows information to be obtained from a sample and, through its coding, to carry out an immediate and precise data analysis [9]. For this research, the survey was designed for teachers of the Teacher Assistant Technological program offered by Instituto Superior Tecnológico para el Desarrollo ISPADE, whose professional experience corresponds to that of teaching in English.

ISPADE is an institution that is part of the Higher Education System of Ecuador, since November 18, 2005 [10]. Currently, the Institute offers seven technological degrees, among them, the Teacher Assistant, whose professional profile states that the graduate of this program will master the teaching and learning techniques, with a bilingual profile (English language level B2), and can work in different professional scenarios: elementary, middle, high school, and others.

The curriculum of this program was designed with the objective of training professionals who, apart from mastering the bases of grammatical, syntactic, and idiomatic applications of English, will provide pedagogical support to the teacher in all their main functions; recognize the methodological processes within a class; design curricular plans; contrast the different methodological strategies within the teaching-learning process. In addition, they can recognize and apply different management techniques of a class and maintain harmonious coexistence with all members of the educational community [11].

Currently, the program has 30 members between teachers and students who work as teachers as well. For sampling, this research will consider a non-probabilistic sampling technique. This approach has been selected since it is based on general assumptions about the distribution of variables in the population. The non-probabilistic approaches present subdivisions. For this research, the non-probabilistic sampling of expert selection has been taken as a reference. In other words, this technique starts from a representative or typical selection, according to the expert's criteria [12]. For this reason, the expert selection was aimed at participants from the initial universe who are currently in the teaching profession. This research will serve as a basis for future research on the subject and other more specialized sampling techniques can be implemented. According to the simple random sampling formula, the number of participants that this research must consider is 29.

## 3 Data Collection

The survey was created and spread through Google Forms to carry out this research. It consisted of 23 questions, distributed in five sections as follows: Demographic information, Teaching characteristics from March 2020, Teacher professional development, Teaching method during the pandemic, and Assessment and learning.

The type of questions used in this questionnaire correspond to: option and multiple choice, which allows choosing one or several answers from the options defined by the interviewer; linear scales, which allow the respondent to measure the degree of agreement or disagreement on a topic; cell grids, which is very useful when multiple factors need to be measured in a single question; open questions, which allow the respondent to elaborate their ideas in a deeper way [9]. To analyze the responses obtained from this survey, the SPSS program, version 25, has been used.

### 3.1 Analysis of Main Data

As mentioned, this article discusses the innovation in the teaching methodology of English teachers due to the pandemic. Regarding the demographic data, it is important to highlight some relevant findings. For instance, 50% of the participants are between 36 and 47 years old. Similarly, 53.4% of the respondents have studies at the technological or undergraduate level, while 10% have fourth level studies. In addition to this information, 60% of them have professional teaching experience that exceeds five years, and the most frequent type of educational work experience is carried out in primary and secondary education. Regarding the educational institutions in which they work, it is important to mention that 90% of the respondents work in a private institution. Also, 63.3% of the participants state that, since the beginning of the health emergency, their workload has increased.

On the other hand, the five-point Likert scale was used in the survey to ask participants about their perception on the adaptation process by teachers and students to virtual environments. The criteria followed to interpret the results was: responses greater than 3 were considered as a fast adaptation process, while those less than 3 were considered a slow process. Under these guidelines, 56.7% of teachers stated that their perceived process of adapting to classes in virtual format was fast. Similarly, for them, 53.3% of students had a quick process of adapting to online classes.

A relevant data obtained through this questionnaire is that only 46.6% of the participants report that the educational institutions in which they work had a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) before the pandemic. Virtual education in public and private

**Table 1.** Comparisons between respondents from Private and Public Institutions

		Type of Institution	
		Private	Public
Adaptation process as a teacher to online classes. 1 = Slow 5 = Fast	1	0	0
	2	1	0
	3	8	3
	4	8	0
	5	10	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>3</b>
Increase in working hours from virtuality	No	7	1
	Yes	20	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>3</b>
Institutions that had a virtual learning environment before the health emergency	No	14	2
	Yes	13	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>3</b>

institutions has been managed differently. Therefore, in Table 1 are shown three main comparisons between specific aspects when related to the type of institution variable.

When asked about the most used technological equipment for the development of their classes, the laptop or personal computer was selected as the most used with 86.7%; followed by the cell phone, 53.3%; the desktop computer with 33.3%, and the tablet with 10%.

Regarding the teaching methodology, specific questions were asked to the participants, most of them through the Likert scale. For the interpretation of results, the analysis criteria were as follows: responses corresponding to *almost every day*, and *every day* were considered *frequent*, while those corresponding to *occasionally*, *almost never*, and *never* were considered *infrequent*. Therefore, when asked about the most frequent communication channels between teachers and students, private messages through the VLE and Whatsapp were the most frequent with 66.6%, followed by email with 46.6%, and phone calls with 20%.

Additionally, when asked about the most frequent technological tools used in the classroom, the videoconference was handled by 29 participants, that is, 96.6%; followed by the virtual material generated by the teacher with 93.3%; Virtual presentations or slides with 86.6%; audiovisual resources (third party videos, podcast, among others), 83.3%; Interactive cards, 76.6%; WhatsApp, 73.3%; finally, gamification tools and use of a VLE, 70%.

When the participants were asked about the changes in the way they teach their classes as a result of virtuality, the answers were diverse. These were categorized into three groups: main modifications, resources used in class, and limitations of virtual classes. The respondents categorically agreed that the planning of classes, the organization, and the time allocated to activities changed drastically. The premise of developing clearer, more concrete, playful and shorter classes is a constant. This allowed, according to the answers given, that student's attention improved with the use of more digital resources. In turn, this gave the teacher the opportunity of being able to explore other ways of transmitting knowledge and it being accepted without difficulty. Due to the interaction with other digital platforms, the students had an easier time investigating and understanding the class topics at the time of receiving the lectures.

Regarding the resources used, the participants mentioned that music was an important tool for teaching English. Tools for gamification that were not used before the pandemic were included. Similarly, the responses indicate that virtuality allowed the creation of their own content with content generation programs. Likewise, in terms of teaching English to children, the possibility of using existing resources at home was important because learning English was integrated into daily life.

On the other hand, some limitations were also identified regarding the virtuality of the classes. Participants mentioned the importance of training students in the use of digital tools for the execution of classes. During the pandemic, the great deficiency that students and teachers have in handling technological tools and how this can slow down the teaching process was highlighted. In the same way, the answers mention the importance of the motivational and psychological aspects of the students and their role in the performance of the class. Teachers had to pay special attention to these factors

since many were unmotivated and even thought of dropping out due to direct and indirect causes of the pandemic.

In the last section, the participants' perception on the assessment and learning process of their students was analyzed. For this, a four-point Likert scale was used. In this sense, when asked about their perception of the academic performance of students in virtual mode, 3.33% of the participants answered that their performance was *Above Average*, while 50% answered that their perception of the performance was *Average* and 46.67% responded that their students' performance was *Below Average*. Similarly, when asked about their perception on sending homework (autonomous work) as a consolidator of knowledge in virtual education, 13.3% answered that it was *More helpful than expected*; 63.3% stated that it was *Useful as expected*, and 23.4% answered that it was *Less helpful than expected*.

Finally, in the question about their perception on the degree of support and containment that their students received from a member of their family in the performance of their studies, 26.6% stated that this support was *Higher than expected*, while the 46.66% indicated that the support was *As expected*. Similarly, 23.33% indicated that their perception of the support received was *Below than expected*, and 3.41% expressed that the support was *Non-existent*.

## 4 Discussion

One of the findings of the study is the methodology applied in the teaching of the English language and the change in teaching habits, since the beginning of the health emergency. In this sense, it has been identified that English teachers got used to tele-teaching and teleworking; therefore, they feel more attached to the use of new technologies. It is also important to highlight the resounding modification in terms of the work schedule. The participants of the survey assured that the number of working hours increased significantly during the health emergency, compared to previous years. Before the pandemic, most of the dedication time to everyday work as a teacher was not related to the use of ICTs [6].

In addition, studies have identified that there are specific difficulties in the development of competences when it comes to the educational field [13]. For example, in a process of developing oral and written competence, the role played by the communication process is vital. The objective of the sender with the receiver is that he understands and receives the message; however, when the speaker fails to produce a concrete message, it becomes difficult to inform, entertain, persuade or act [13]. This position may relate to why the participants reported that the process of adaptation to virtual environments was not as fast for everyone. Normally, if the communicative competence is not ideal, there will be difficulties when using the language/resources/tools appropriately in the various social situations that are presented to us every day [13].

In any case, this adaptation process does not last forever; once knowledge has been integrated, communication skills are restored and opportunities for innovation through technology increase. For example, this leads to teachers and schools towards levels of quality that allow the educational community to have a better relationship in the process of student learning [14]. This has been reinforced by teachers' assessments when asked

about the main modifications in classes due to virtuality. For example, the possibility of using music, gamification tools and digital content -which were previously non-existent in the classroom in the traditional format- now acquire a different connotation. Not because they were not available in the past, but due to the lack of necessity for innovation in the educational system.

When discussing the VLE usage before the pandemic, data showed that only 46.6% of the participants report that the educational institutions in which they work had a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) before the pandemic. Therefore, the capacity to respond from educational institutions and teachers to face technicalities has also been unequal, a difference marked especially by the type of financing of the institution [15].

In the previous section, the results related to the usage of technological equipment and the most frequently used communication channels between teachers and students. This change in the pattern of behavior and use of technology has brought innovations to the classroom that could well be maintained even after the health emergency. Regarding the teaching tools, in the technological context, the most applied, according to the study, have been those related to gamification: Kahoot, Quizizz, and Genially. Gamification has been incorporated, using new technologies as a source of motivation and engagement. Gamification is defined as the set of techniques and strategies used by the games themselves and are adapted to contexts that are not properly playful [15]. To do this, academic activities are built for educational purposes to motivate new learning experiences and generate significant learning.

In accordance with Gamification, other resources such as Storytelling have tended to receive remarkable recognition. Storytelling is an alternative used in the learning environments of a second language [14]. Under this perspective, this tool should be proposed as an English teaching resource: the most important characteristic of storytelling is its language that is based on emotional and experiential content, an aspect that causes interest in audiences, since it connects with your personal experiences and stories. In addition, there is the interactivity of the digital media that generates dynamism.

When asked about the most frequent technological tools used in the classroom, the videoconference was handled by 96.6%; followed by the virtual material generated by the teacher, virtual presentations or slides, audiovisual resources (third party videos, podcast, among others), interactive cards, WhatsApp, and, finally, gamification tools and use of a VLE. Therefore, the material generated by the teacher has had a very significant incidence during virtuality. The creativity of the teacher and the student in English pedagogy is a fundamental component that has been observed at the time of executing teaching activities. Creative responses are hierarchized on a scale that, applied to English learning, is reflected by producing propositions and communicating; the speaker always states something completely new, either because of the linguistic structure, for the meaning or meaning for the context [16].

This fact entails a coding of what is already known based on the necessary transformations to generate new forms of language and thought, which implies a development of the capacity for intellectual and emotional condensation, since it forces the student to a great verbal and conceptual economy, especially at the initial and intermediate levels [17]. It is also important to mention that Whatsapp was both mentioned as a technological tool and a channel of communication with students during the pandemic. It can be related, of course, to a justification related to technological access by students as an economic factor (an aspect that was not analyzed in this research) or it could also be



related to what some authors suggest around an *App generation*; this generation manages their privacy and creativity through digital applications [18].

Finally, this research collected perspectives from teachers based on what the change in their classes since the pandemic has meant. However, many of these new proposals may remain to innovate the educational system even when it returns to face-to-face teaching in its entirety. Students, now more than before, will challenge teachers to incorporate and develop new digital skills 85. As other authors state, technological innovation, and its insertion in the educational field, seek to transform the educational process from what already exists (and which could continue to function) and extend it to an experience with new learning instruments that will give more value to the English learning process, in this case.

## 5 Conclusions

Although the Ecuadorian educational system has been experiencing political difficulties, the discussion on the curricular bases and objectives of teaching have increased in the last decade. In relation to this, the educational changes brought due to the pandemic also invite us to reflect on the new methodological approaches regarding English teaching methodology.

The pandemic showed the gap between the public and private sector. Additionally, this difference also impacted the way in which teachers developed pedagogical strategies, used technological material, and the way of carrying out the academic and administrative tasks under their responsibility.

Pedagogy formation in English demands more scientific research. The migration of the complete education system worldwide meant a radical change in habits and the daily life of teachers and students. The discussion about online, virtual, or hybrid education involves in principle, understanding the educational transformation due to the new methodological practices created in the pandemic context.

Virtual education during the pandemic forced teachers to review its usual practices and led to alternative pedagogies within the context of virtual education.

The approach of new pedagogical models in the field of teaching and learning could occur through the deep observation of the changes generated during the emergency. Studying the activities, evaluations, presentations and handling of tools for the study of a second language will allow contributing to pedagogical thinking.

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