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**Teenage Mutual Understanding:  
*BRIDGING THE CULTURAL GAP***

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## **TEENAGE MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING: BRIDGING THE CULTURAL GAP**

*“Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding”.*

*Albert Einstein*

*German Theoretical- Physicist*

*(1879-1955)*

### **1. Introduction**

The present project seeks to put into practice the instruments and programmes that the national system of education in Uruguay has been developing upon the three pillars of the global context of the XXI Century:

- an increased access to Information Technology,
- the emergence of New Pedagogies,
- and the Democratization of Education.

The national system of education is known as Administración Nacional de Educación Pública (ANEP) and it is based on the General Law of Education (Ley General de Educación N° 18437, 2008) which in its Title 1, Chapter 1, article 4 states:

Artículo 4o. (De los derechos humanos como referencia del ejercicio del derecho a la educación).- La educación tendrá a los derechos humanos consagrados en la Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos, en la Constitución de la República y en el conjunto de los instrumentos internacionales ratificados por nuestro país, como elementos esenciales incorporados en todo momento y oportunidad a las propuestas, programas y acciones educativas, constituyéndose en un marco de referencia fundamental para la educación en general y en particular para los educadores en cualquiera de las modalidades de su actuación profesional. (p. 12). [Article 4o. (About human rights as a reference for the exercise of the right to education) .- Education will have the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in the Constitution of the Republic as well as in all international instruments ratified by our country, as essential in educational proposals, programs and educational actions at all times and opportunities, constituting a fundamental frame of reference for education in general and in particular for educators in any of the modalities of their professional performance.]

The value of this law, and especially its article 4, is that it guarantees the right to education, which implies the right of access to information. The use of the possibilities that the new technologies provide seems to be the most appropriate way to ensure those rights.

Likewise, this work might help detect the strengths and weaknesses of those tools when implementing classes and designing materials that include them. The project will take the form of a blended thematic unit of work, which will be integrated to the current face-to-face syllabus of a high school group in the Uruguayan public secondary school system.

Therefore, the personal interest of the author will be justified in the first section. This section states that although our national system is centralized and the decisions are made by the main education authorities, it is essential to acknowledge the teachers' voice because they are the ones in closest contact with the students and their different realities. Concurrently, the idea of the project is to contribute to the enhancement of the collaborative culture and empowerment of teachers who work in teams to generate materials, making use of the new pedagogies and the variety of resources available. In this line, both teachers and learners become participants of a learning community.

Subsequently, the theoretical background intends to expose the state of the art of virtual learning in Uruguay, within the global framework of 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning. The definitions of the three major theories of learning: Behaviourism, Cognitivism and Constructivism are summarized and contrasted to Connectivism, a more recent theory that rather than opposing the previous ones, integrates them in a “post method condition”.

In addition to this, neuroscience has been making significant contributions to the field of education, casting light on the cognitive processes of the brain involved in the learning process. Teachers have started to integrate the terms *Emotional Intelligence* and *Executive Intelligence* to their rationale, which has reflected in new classroom practices. From these practices, new approaches to teaching and learning have materialized. Neurodidactics, neuroeducation, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Brain-based Learning (BBL) play a crucial role in connection with virtual learning environments. All these theories feed the theoretical background of this project.

This project starts from the hypothesis that the integration of a virtual learning environment to a classroom-based course will be of benefit for the learners. Considering this, it appears as necessary to define virtual learning environments and assess their

characteristics. In this modality, the roles of the tutor and the learners readjust. The tutor needs to acquire new skills to compensate for the physical absence. Scaffolding becomes of great relevance in distance learning. In the case of this specific project, to define and measure the advantages and disadvantages of blended learning is a prerequisite. Finally, the author has described in this section, the process of materials design and their evaluation.

The instructional design of the project is described in the Methodology section and withal the qualitative and quantitative instruments that were used in the process of implementation and evaluation. The virtual learning platform selected for the project is Crea2. It is presented in this section, including some images of what the virtual classroom looks like, as only Ceibal users are allowed to access. This section advances a brief description of the unit, and then the focus moves to the classification of the activities used. The classification criteria respond to the communicative approach, cooperative learning, differentiated instruction, and 21st-century skills. An analysis of the forms of evaluation concludes the section.

Lastly, in the Results section, the materials and sequence of activities will be detailed, including the language and content objectives of the different tasks and the result of the surveys that required implementation before, during or after the development of the project.

To conclude, the extent to which the project could be completed and whether it could make an impact on the previously specified objectives, will be reflected upon. If possible, some recommendations will be made, based on the empirical observations and the results obtained. These recommendations will derive from an analysis of the limitations of the project, and consequently will translate into future lines of research.

I need to thank all the people that I involved in the preparation of this project, directly or indirectly, principally the learners, without whom there would be no reason to continue learning. And I profoundly thank my family and friends, who supported and encouraged me to go on.

## 2. Justification of Academic and Personal Interest

With regards to the personal interest to write this Project on Material Design, I need to cite our assignment on Curriculum Design for this Master referring to the selection of materials for a course:

As teachers, we do not make decisions of this type on a regular basis. In Uruguay, these decisions are not in the hands of the institutions where the teaching and learning take place but in the orbit of the authorities of the national education system, namely subject supervisors (Inspectores de Asignatura) who work in a different building, which is in the capital city and from where they regulate the whole country in a centralized manner. (2015-10MAVarela\_CCDPP, Funiber, 2017, p.4)

However, and as it has been stated in many of the reflections made by myself and in agreement with other colleagues when we worked in teams for this course, we are immersed in a change of paradigm, which has been in progress for a long time now. In Uruguay, there are two lines that have been promoting the change, under the orbit of the government and the Ministry of Education respectively: *Plan Ceibal* and *Políticas Lingüísticas*. The former started in 2007 “as a plan of inclusion and equal opportunities with the objective of supporting Uruguayan educational policies with technology” (Translated from <http://www.ceibal.edu.uy/es/institucional/>). Therefore, the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) programme has been implemented and each student receives a laptop or a tablet when admitted to the public system of education. The latter started to work simultaneously, in 2006-2007, generating the first documents and description of the state of the teaching of foreign languages in our country, with the purpose of “educating multilingual citizens who can, through the use of languages, interact in social, academic and / or labour contexts”. (Translated from <http://www.politicasinguisticas.edu.uy/index.php/acerca-del-programa>).

Simultaneously, our national system of education regulated by the Administración Nacional de Educación Pública (ANEP), has a virtual space called *Uruguay Educa*. Here, representatives of the different subjects from the different subsystems (primary, secondary, technical schools and teacher training institutes) generate Open Educational Resources (OER) for teachers and students from all over the country, who have access by means of a password. Uruguay Educa is mainly fed with the resources created by the representatives mentioned above and to a much lower degree, by teachers in general. In



spite of the fact that the space is promoted in the different social networks used by the education authorities (Facebook, Twitter, and official websites) teachers continue to work in isolation, quite attached, in my view, to the old paradigm in which knowledge is separated in disciplines, each one caring about their own field and teaching a given syllabus, failing to consider the fact that our teaching practice generates materials and theory all the time. We produce knowledge that more students, colleagues and ourselves could take advantage of, making our workload lighter, if we learned how to share it.

Richards and Farrell (2011) state that in order to become a competent teacher, eight dimensions need developing:

- the discourse skills of a language teacher
- the identity of a language teacher
- a repertoire of teaching skills
- how to apply professional knowledge
- an understanding of how learning is shaped by context
- the cognitive skills of a language teacher
- learner-focused teaching.
- how to theorize from practice.(p.26)

The eight dimension, theorizing from practice, involves the reflections teachers make on practice.

The theorizing that results from these reflections may take several different forms. It may lead to explanations as to why things happen in the way they do, to generalizations about the nature of things, to principles that can form the basis of subsequent actions, and to the teacher's personal teaching philosophy. (Richards and Farrell, 2011, p.25)

It is this knowledge which needs to be recognized, better valued by teachers and shared with others.

Finally, I would like to mention two recent programmes implemented by our secondary education council (Consejo de Enseñanza Secundaria - CES): *Uruguayos Por el Mundo (UPM)* and *Aulas Alternativas en Línea (AAL)*. The first is aimed at secondary school students living abroad and the second intends to solve the problem of groups at high schools all over our country that for one reason or the other have not been appointed a teacher.

It is in the context described above that I understood this project would be useful. I specifically planned a unit of work that could be used in a blended format as well as adapted to an online course. The unit was selected among the five topics recommended by the National Syllabus for the 5th grade of secondary school education:

- Health
- Technology
- Art
- Entertainment
- Cultural Awareness & Social Responsibility.

I considered Cultural Awareness and Social Responsibility to be the most inclusive of the five and from which the rest could be easily developed. As I will elaborate later in the project, cultural awareness is one of the most significant competencies to be promoted in this century. Subsequently, I planned to share the blended unit in the first place with the team of teachers working with the same grade at the high school where I work. For that purpose, I tried to engage them in collaboratively planning, by using the tools provided by Google such as Google Drive. Eventually, it could be adopted and adapted by teachers of other levels in the same school and even teachers from other subjects could become interested in working interdisciplinarily and finally, it would be shared in the website of Inspección de Inglés and Aulas Virtuales del Consejo de Enseñanza Secundaria (AVCES) for the courses mentioned in the main goals of this project.

Finally, through the design of the present project, I expected to increase learners' motivation, to help them improve their performance and to promote learning autonomy. I understand that, in this knowledge and information society, content knowledge is of as much importance as competency-learning. Additionally I intended to collaborate with other teachers to integrate the use of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) in their teaching practice.

It needs to be stated, however, that the context in which I found myself working at the time of designing this project, was a classroom-based course. Therefore, the implementation of an online unit using a virtual learning environment meant an innovation as it was not a curricular component of the national syllabus for foreign language learning at public secondary schools.

### 3. Objectives

#### 3.1. Main objective

To design a unit of work for 5<sup>th</sup> grade students in a classroom-based course at public High School N° 65 from Montevideo, Uruguay, with the optional support of a virtual learning environment as well as contribute with materials for the following alternative and regular programs from the Secondary School Council within the framework of the Uruguayan National Curriculum of English as a Foreign Language for 5th grade students:

- Uruguayos Por el Mundo (UPEM)
- Aulas Alternativas en Línea (AAL)
- Mainstream face to face courses with online support (Ceibal Conversation Classes based on the platform Crea2)

#### 3.2. Specific objectives

- Identify learners' needs so as to design materials adjusted to them
- Familiarize learners with a VLE and the different types of activities
- Promote the use of digital resources in teachers and students
- Promote collaborative work both among teachers and students
- Promote self-assessment and peer assessment by means of rubrics created with the participation of teachers and students in its design.
- To promote integrated performance assessment.

## 4. Theoretical Background

### 4.1. State of the art of Virtual Learning in Uruguay

Following the line of thought started in section two where the justification to the personal motivation to design and carry out the present project is developed, it seems relevant to share here some qualitative and quantitative aspects of virtual learning in our context, especially regarding Schoology, as it is the platform offered by Plan Ceibal to public education and the one I will be using as part of the present research project. Notwithstanding this, I will also describe what the Uruguayan curriculum states related to the programs mentioned in the objectives: Uruguayos por el Mundo (UPM), Aulas Alternativas en Línea (AAL) and the mainstream face to face courses with the alternative of online support (Ceibal Conversation Classes).

#### 4.1.1. Program Uruguayos Por el Mundo (UPM)

*Uruguayos Por el Mundo* (n.d.) is a Secondary Education Council Program addressed to residents abroad who want to have their secondary studies in Uruguay completed. UPM offers these students the possibility of sitting for the exams of their pending subjects and preparing for them during four weeks with the support of an online teacher-tutor. To this end, online Secondary Education classrooms are used. The student then takes the exam in person at the Uruguayan consulate of his place of residence. There are three annual editions of this program correlated to the examination period of the regular face to face courses: March-April, July-August and November-December. The tutorship consequently, takes place during four weeks in February, June and October each year. The tutors use a VLE to share materials. Tutors and students communicate synchronously and asynchronously. In the case of languages, communication includes videoconferences since the exam requires an oral interview. It seems relevant to emphasize that UPM is not a course but the preparation to qualify for the exam.

#### 4.1.2. Program Aulas Alternativas en Línea (AAL)

*Aulas Alternativas en Línea* (n.d.) is another Secondary School Council Program. The difference with UPM is that AAL aims at groups of students living and attending classes in Uruguay but who do not have a teacher in charge of the class. This situation occurs throughout the country but particularly in remote towns of difficult access. When a group without a teacher is detected because the school principal registers them, the process of election activates and a tutor is assigned. This tutor works with the students through video conference once a week using the school video conference room and the associated

software in the tutor's electronic device. Preferably, a referent from the institution is present during the video conference. The VLE implemented for AAL is the one managed by Ceibal, described with more detail in section 5 (Methodology). The tutor becomes the teacher in charge of the group. Therefore, the course continues until the end of the regular face to face courses and the students can approve it if they meet the requirements. Otherwise they have to take the corresponding exam.

It is relevant to mention at this point that neither the UPM nor the AAL program is part of the mainstream curriculum. Furthermore, to work as a tutor in either of these programs, teachers must apply for specific calls and become part of the staff of tutors. The present project aims at contributing with materials to those programs. However, at the moment of its design and piloting the author could only rely on the context of the streamline course where the group belonged and make use of the non-mandatory alternatives offered by the centralized council: Conversation Classes from Ceibal and Crea2 as an optional tool.

#### **4.1.3. Conversation Classes. *Ceibal en Inglés***

The program Ceibal en Inglés is implemented in primary and secondary schools to facilitate English language teaching in Uruguay. In secondary schools the main objective is that of support: students have their classroom teachers (CTs) and when they become part of the program invited by their CTs, they are appointed a remote teacher (RT) with whom they meet once a week through videoconference and have a conversation class mediated by their CT. In the secondary school version of the program, all RTs are English native speakers living in Uruguay or abroad. Both the CT and the RT work in coordination, integrating materials from Ceibal to the school syllabus covering speaking skills while providing cultural enrichment and intercultural experiences.

Ceibal reaches more than 17,000 students for 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade in our secondary school public system. As illustrated by the testimonial video by Plan Ceibal, *Conversation Class in Liceo N°1, Montevideo, Uruguay* (2016), the program has been well accepted by both Uruguayan teachers and students from all over the country.

#### **4.1.4. Plan Ceibal in Numbers**

What follows is part of the data collection presented by Plan Ceibal as evidence of an increase in digital accessibility and connectivity, the expansion of English language learning and the impact that a greater number of students with access to the Internet has had on the levels of English performance at the end of the primary school cycle in the

Uruguayan system of education. Through the registers that can be read on their website, we are informed that in 2016:

- the number of devices distributed among users and ex-users added up to 797,000;
- they reached 100% Wi-Fi connectivity and Internet access in primary, secondary, technical schools and teacher training centres;
- 92.9% of public education centres in urban areas have access to Internet with optic fibre;
- 99.8% of public education centres in urban areas have Video Conference equipment.

Regarding English as a foreign language and the implementation of VLEs, the vehicle by means of which the objective of this project will be achieved, the following figures appear to be of high interest:

- 95% of the groups in urban primary schools (4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades) have had English lessons in the last three years.
- 73% students learn English through VC (video conference)
- 64% of the students in primary education graduate with an A2 level of the Common European Frame of Reference (CEFR) for language learning.
- 75% of the teachers and students in primary education used the platform CREA-Schoology during 2016.
- CREA-Schoology hosted over 200,000 users in the same year. (Plan Ceibal en Cifras, 2016).

Another piece of quantitative information of relevance from Plan Ceibal is that they have received 28,000 enrolments to training courses related to ITCs on education. Last but not of lesser importance is that 60% of the students in primary and secondary education with lower income count with a “Ceibalita” (laptop provided by the Ceibal program) as the home computer (2015). I count myself among the teachers who have received the training to use the platform and received my laptop in 2013, when working as the English teacher of group of 1<sup>st</sup> grade CBU students in secondary school.

Considering the facts and figures above mentioned we have to assume it is high time that our students, schools and teachers turned our eyes to this century and started aligning our practices to its characteristic features.

#### 4.2. Being a teacher and a student in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century is the time of the Information and Knowledge Society. This time has come to stay, no matter at which stage of the change of paradigm we may be. As it has been described above, Uruguay can be considered to be undergoing this change of paradigm, facing a lot of resistance but seeing more often than not, outbursts of creativity and groups who join for innovation and risk taking. Plan Ceibal has joined Michael Fullan's *New Pedagogies for Deep Learning*, having recently hosted him in an event called Foro de Innovación Educativa #Ceibal10. Red Global de Aprendizajes. Many primary, secondary and technical schools all over the country, as well as Teacher Training Centres have become part of the global net and are starting to implement and share their innovative ideas. This global net, stands on the pillars of the 6 Cs or in other words, the competencies of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century for deep learning: collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, citizenship, character and communication (New Pedagogies for Deep Learning, n.d.). In the knowledge society, both teachers and learners become learners and must be able to “work independently and synergistically in teams (...) learning from and contributing to the learning of others”, as it is stated in the New Pedagogies for Deep Learning website (n.d.), generating innovative ideas and putting them into practice, evaluating and self-evaluating knowledge and sources of information, thinking globally and acting locally, with a resilient and flexible mindset, from the perspective of the life-long learner, and being able to take advantage of the possibilities of interconnectedness we have today.

#### 4.3. From Behaviourism to Connectivism

As a natural consequence of the need to support this project, I found myself revisiting the different Learning Theories and the evolution of the web with its impact in the classroom. Therefore, I read again about Behaviourism, Cognitivism, Constructivism, and Connectivism. Siemens (2004), makes a clear distinction between the first three and Connectivism. He says that when the first three theories were developed, learning was not impacted through technology. It was seen as “occurring inside the person” either by “filling” the learner with knowledge (Behaviourism), considering to a lower or higher degree the cognitive processes of the individual (Cognitivism), or facilitating its construction with a brain-based approach (Constructivism). Schooling was linear, it was all that was required for starting and following a career. As information development was slow, knowledge lasted decades. Learning preceded the application of the acquired knowledge. In his article, Siemens (2004) later refers to Gonzalez' (2004) concept of

“half-life of knowledge” which represents the lapse of time between the moment knowledge is gained and the moment it becomes obsolete. This happens exponentially faster than forty years ago. Consequently, learning-first-and-applying-afterwards is becoming practically impossible. Learning is not linear any longer. Learning requires networks. The world is interconnected and our learners learn in that way. Furthermore, teachers have to learn in that way as well.

Returning to Siemens (2004), he mentions what he calls “*significant trends in learning*” (para. 4) some of which could be very relevant to highlight at this point. This author points out that:

- Many learners will move into a variety of different, possibly unrelated fields over the course of their lifetime.
- Informal learning is a significant aspect of our learning experience. Formal education no longer comprises the majority of our learning. Learning now occurs in a variety of ways – through communities of practice, personal networks and through completion of work-related tasks.
- The organization and the individual are both learning organisms. Increased attention to knowledge management highlights the need for a theory that attempts to explain the link between individual and organizational learning.
- Know-how and know-what is being supplemented with know-where (para.4)

He also states that learning is an on-going, life-long and work-related process and that many times both, learning and work activities overlap, thus insisting on the non-linearity of the process, simultaneously underlining the role of technology as a backup tool for cognitive processes that used to be defined by learning theories as happening exclusively in the individual. The need to understand what happens with technology-manipulated learning and organizations’ learning requires an alternative theoretical background. In this “interconnected world” mentioned before, where information is so instantly at hand, we need to learn how to evaluate the worthiness of learning something. This is a meta-skill that should be present in the classroom, in the syllabus design, in the institutions where we work. No matter how comfortable we used to live in the linear world. The kids that come to our classrooms today need to make decisions based on knowledge they do not have. They need to decide what is priority to learn. Siemens (2004) explains this in the following quote:

Learning theories are concerned with the actual process of learning, not with the value of what is being learned. In a networked world, the very manner of information that we acquire is worth exploring. The need to evaluate the



worthiness of learning something is a meta-skill that is applied before learning itself begins. When knowledge is subject to paucity, the process of assessing worthiness is assumed to be intrinsic to learning. When knowledge is abundant, the rapid evaluation of knowledge is important. Additional concerns arise from the rapid increase in information. In today's environment, action is often needed without personal learning – that is, we need to act by drawing information outside of our primary knowledge. The ability to synthesize and recognize connections and patterns is a valuable skill.(para.2)

The alternative theory then, seems to be Connectivism, not because it will substitute the other three. On the contrary, it will integrate the role of technology and help understand some concepts which have been affecting the way we learn for some years now. One of those concepts, brought to light by Siemens (2004) is the *Theory of Chaos*. For Constructivism he says, meaning is something the learner negotiates communicatively and, in a way, collaborates to create. Chaos implies that meaning exists out there, that everything is connected and the learner (either the individual or the organization) has to learn how to find connections, make associations, “see” the hidden patterns and make decisions. In other words: learn how to adapt to these changing conditions. He brings the concept of “self-organization” from Luis Mateus Rocha (1998), who defines it as the “spontaneous formation of well-organized structures, patterns, or behaviours, from random initial conditions.” (p.3). And finally, Siemens (2004) develops the following Principles of Connectivism:

- Learning and knowledge rest in diversity of opinions.
  - Learning is a process of connecting specialized nodes or information sources.
  - Learning may reside in non-human appliances.
  - Capacity to know more is more critical than what is currently known
  - Nurturing and maintaining connections is needed to facilitate continual learning.
  - Ability to see connections between fields, ideas, and concepts is a core skill.
  - Currency (accurate, up-to-date knowledge) is the intent of all connectivist learning activities.
  - Decision-making is itself a learning process. Choosing what to learn and the meaning of incoming information is seen through the lens of a shifting reality.
- (para.3)

#### 4.4. More Recent Approaches to Learning

In recent years, as a consequence of the increasing number of studies coming from the field of the neurosciences, greater attention has been paid to what happens in different areas of the brain. In the belief that the impact of that research on education will be of significance and that there could be a direct connection between them and the integration of ICTs in the classroom, it appears of relevance to define Brain-based Learning and Social-Emotional Learning.

##### 4.4.1. Brain-based Learning (BBL)

Brain-based Learning (BBL) implies educators' awareness of the conclusions of the neuroscience about how the brain learns. Although most of these findings have been influencing the field of education and learning, there are widespread inaccurate assumptions, related to how the brain regulates emotions and processes cognition, that neuroscientists call neuro-myths. Some of these assumptions are that we only use ten percent of the brain, that we have 'two brains' as if it was possible to operate using the right or the left hemispheres independently, or that there is an age for acquiring new knowledge after which little changes are possible and consequently learning reduces to a minimum. To correct these imprecisions and to come to the encounter of education in its need to find answers to what seems to be lack of motivation to learn, or failure to develop strategies to facilitate learning, neuroscience has joined education developing new paradigms.

Due to the progresses in neuroscience and brain-research in the last decades a new interdisciplinary research field was created: Neurodidactics. It is an interface between neuroscience (neurobiology and brain research), didactics, pedagogy and psychology. It tries to work out principles and proposals for effective learning based on the findings of brain-research. (Sabitzer, 2011, p.1)

Sabitzer (2011), in her paper about Neurodidactics, makes reference to Caine & Caine's 12 Brain/Mind learning principles:

- Each brain is uniquely organized
  - All learning engages the physiology
  - The brain/mind is social
  - The search for meaning is innate
  - The search for meaning occurs through patterning
  - Emotions are critical to patterning
  - The brain/mind processes parts and wholes simultaneously
-

- Learning involves both focused attention and peripheral perception
- Learning always involves conscious and unconscious processes
- We have at least two ways of organizing memory: an autobiographical memory system and a set of systems for rote memory
- Learning is developmental
- Complex learning is enhanced by challenge and inhibited by threat associated with helplessness (p. 2)

Most of these principles correlate with the advantages of using virtual learning environments. VLEs provide learners with opportunities to develop their executive intelligence. Collaboration, problem-solving, initiative, and peer and self-management are among the skills that will help strengthen their executive functions.

#### **4.4.2. Social and Emotional Learning**

Social and Emotional Learning is intrinsically related to executive intelligence. “Social and emotional learning (SEL) enhances students’ capacity to integrate skills, attitudes, and behaviors to deal effectively and ethically with daily tasks and challenges”. (Core SEL Competencies, 2018, para.1). SEL regulates another form of intelligence: emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence refers to learning how to control emotions in three interconnected dimensions: the intrapersonal dimension, the interpersonal dimension, and the cognitive dimension. The intrapersonal dimension involves the ability to recognize and regulate our own emotions. Regulating emotions is one of the functions of executive intelligence. Marina (2012) calls it emotional regulation. He mentions it among other functions of executive intelligence: attentional control, cognitive inhibition, inhibitory control, working memory, cognitive flexibility, planning, and metacognitive awareness (para. 3-10). The interpersonal dimension deals with social awareness and relationship skills. They correspond to the ability to see the others with perspective, develop empathy and start and maintain relationships. These cognitive processes, which operate simultaneously, should be exercised in the classroom. Evidently, Virtual Learning Environments provide an appropriate setting to help improve these recently recognized forms of intelligence enabling learners to direct their learning more efficiently and independently.

#### 4.5. Virtual Learning Environments

A virtual learning environment (VLE) is a set of teaching and learning tools designed to enhance a student's learning experience by including computers and the Internet in the learning process. The principal components of a VLE package include curriculum mapping (breaking curriculum into sections that can be assigned and assessed), student tracking, online support for both teacher and student, electronic communication (e-mail, threaded discussions, chat, Web publishing), and Internet links to outside curriculum resources. In general, VLE users are assigned either a teacher ID or a student ID. The teacher sees what a student sees, but the teacher has additional user rights to create or modify curriculum content and track student performance. (Rouse, 2011, para.1).

The above definition synthesizes the main components of VLEs. However, it appears of relevance to do some further analysis in relation with this learning modality. Wilson (1996) clearly distinguishes virtual learning environments from *computer micro-worlds* and *classroom-based learning environments*. In computer micro-worlds, learners work within a closed computer-based learning environment on an individual basis, while in the classroom-based learning environments, learners work in the traditional classroom, aided by technology in the form of audio or video players, computers, projectors, text messages or emails, etc., to support classroom activities. Conversely, in virtual learning environments, learners encounter themselves and their virtual mates in a relatively open system, where they can interact and find access to the wide variety of tools and resources that are offered online (as cited by Piccoli et al, 2001, p 403). Within the teaching community, VLEs are considered to have brought down the walls of the traditional classroom, allowing for a more democratic access to knowledge. Moreover, they have increased the possibility of making contact among learners worldwide, enabling them not only to share strategies to solve classroom tasks but also to share their diverse viewpoints and even their cultural backgrounds, promoting collaboration in the co-construction of knowledge, which is an inherent characteristic of this 21st-century knowledge society.

Consequently, it appears evident that using VLEs implies improvements as well as hindrances. Therefore, it seems of high significance to develop them further to demonstrate that the former outnumber the latter. What follows is the analysis of those features.

#### 4.5.1. Advantages of using Virtual Learning Environments

Closely related to the application of VLEs is the concept of *Digital Competence*. According to Torres (n.d.) “we can define Digital Competence as *The set of knowledge, competences and skills, combined with values and attitudes, needed for learning in the knowledge society*” (p.22). These *skills* correlate to the five dimensions of Digital Competence. More specifically, each of these dimensions requires the development of the skills referred to in the preceding definition by Torres and should be integrated and strategically used if we want to guide the learner into becoming digitally competent. The following is the description of some of the skills correlating to those dimensions:

- Learning Dimension. It implies the transformation of information into knowledge. A digitally competent learner should know how to process the information available on the world wide web, transforming it, solving problems, reflecting critically and creating new knowledge.
- Information Dimension. It consists of critically assessing the information available before its collection. Not only must the student learn how to obtain information but they should also be able to evaluate the validity, the quality or the relevance of that information and critically select the resource.
- Communicative Dimension. It is associated with the intrapersonal and interpersonal fields. The skill required for this dimension has to do with the development of a collaborative culture, enabling the learners to become co-creators of knowledge using technological devices.
- Digital Culture Dimension. It is connected with the rules of netiquette. The learner should become aware of the concept of digital citizenship and the new socio-cultural practices of the knowledge society.
- Technological Dimension. It could also be named digital literacy and involves the ability to use and manage devices and the mastery of digital environments. (Torres, n.d., p.23)

The above descriptions could be complemented with Jenkins (2006), who provides a list of ten social skills and cultural competencies. Among those ten skills and competencies there are some that appear to be of relevance for the objective of the present project:

- *Play: the capacity to experiment with one’s surroundings as a form of problem-solving.*
- *Simulation: the ability to interpret and construct dynamic models of real-world processes.*

- *Collective intelligence: the ability to pool knowledge and compare notes with others towards a common goal.* (Cited by Torres, n.d. p.24)

Therefore, it is requisite for virtual learning to be efficient that content knowledge and digital competence develop concomitantly.

Consequently, the advantages of using VLEs can be said to correlate with the six dimensions of learning environments, as stated by Piccoli et al. (2001). The six dimensions the authors describe are time, place, space, technology, interaction, and control (p.404). What follows are the advantages of VLEs according to each of those dimensions:

- Time: learners are allowed to participate asynchronously at their own time and pace.
- Place: participants can work from any physical location.
- Space: learners' access to resources is not constrained to the materials provided by the tutors.
- Technology: the variety of tools at hand for tutors and learners multiplies.
- Interaction: VLEs rely on student-student interactions and student-tutor interactions thus enhancing collaboration and co-creation of knowledge.
- Control: VLEs potentially provide learners with a much higher degree of autonomy than traditional classroom education. They become aware of themselves as learners and the strategies required to overcome their weaknesses.

#### **4.5.2. Disadvantages of using Virtual Learning Environments**

Although isolation or the level of digital competence of both the learners and the tutors could signify a major hindrance in the successful implementation of any virtual learning environment, neither of them appear to be the most significant obstacle. According to a qualitative case study of a graduate level, Web-based distance education course at a US university, conducted by Hara and Kling (2003) to increase understanding of students' experiences in a virtual learning environment, the most significant shortcoming detected was related to emotional factors. The study revealed high levels of distress arising from frustration, confusion or anxiety. Hara and Kling (2003) have found two main causes for students' distress: technology and communication. The first, directly related to digital competence, aroused not only from lack of technical support but also from the tutors' management of communications. Although tutors responded to students' help demands, when their doubts remained, students failed to request further clarification and tutors assumed they had resolved the issue. This example makes it evident that the online tutor

needs to possess specific qualities and have mastered particular skills before engaging themselves in a program with these characteristics. The authors make a further important point connected with this main issue and it is the fact that “little literature offers instructors concrete and specific guidance on teaching such a course, although this literature is slowly improving. Further, students may not be well prepared for such courses (for example, they may not have appropriate expectations)” (p.69).

Savery (2005) summarizes the skills of an effective online tutor through the VOCAL approach. The acronym stands for Visible, Organized, Compassionate, Analytical and Leader-by- example. As Savery (2005) himself states:

The ability of the teacher to effectively infuse these characteristics into their instructional practice – to BE VOCAL - will promote a supportive, challenging, constructive, rigorous and effective instructional environment. Instructors who practice a VOCAL approach will have more productive learning environments, fewer management problems and more positive learning experiences with their students. (p.141)

Although the VOCAL skills seem to be defined by their names, they deserve further explanation. Visibility is an essential aspect considering that in virtual learning the personal contact and the social interaction that enables the interlocutors to understand each other through gestures are not present. Organization implies providing participants with the course guidelines including clear instructions, deadlines, evaluation criteria, spaces for doubts and suggestions, forums for social interaction, and even tutorials on how to access the platform. The absence of this feature inevitably will lead to demotivation. Being compassionate should be inherent for educators in general. In virtual learning, owing to the distance of time and space, online instructors should maximize their emotional awareness. The following skill, being analytical, refers to collecting and interpreting data. According to Savery (2005), tutors need to ensure that “students are completing the assignments and achieving the expected learning outcomes” (p.147). Finally, the Leader-by-example skill requires from the instructor modelling what they expect from the learners. The students’ visibility, organization, compassion, and analysis will mirror the tutor’s performance in that respect.

Subsequently, online learning has many strengths but it also presents the online tutor with several challenges. Nevertheless, the strengths seem to outnumber the weaknesses as the latter can be overcome once the former have been mastered. As an illustration, it could be said that teachers would face an overload of work at the initial phase, when

designing the online course. However, once this stage is completed, time will start to be saved particularly regarding grading, individual coaching, differentiating instruction, and standardized testing. Furthermore, teachers' IT literacy, which could be considered an obstacle, might start reversing allowing teachers to appreciate the benefits of improving their digital skills. The following table (Table 1) compares some of the advantages of online learning as opposed to its weaknesses.

Table 1

*Strengths and Weaknesses of Online Learning. Comparative Table*

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Save time and money in class preparation	Teachers' overwork
Spend less time grading	Teachers' IT literacy
Spend more class time on learner and learning-centered tasks	Institution infrastructure
Increase one-to-one interaction with students	Not so effective with dependent learners
Provide students time to practise with standardized tests online	Equity and Accessibility to Technology of all learners
Facilitate group work	Learners' cognitive load
Communicate better with all learners	Plagiarism and credibility problem
Build community and relationships	
Have fun	
Promote metacognition and self-evaluation	

Note: Based on Tucker (2012), *Blended Learning: Will the New Definition Alienate Teachers?*, and Winstead (n.d.), 6 *Disadvantages of Blended Learning You Have to Cope With*. Created by the author.

If we succeed in this new logic of tutorship, and learners' resilience accompanies the process, both tutors and learners will hopefully reach the Post-teaching or evaluation phase to which I want to dedicate a separate section.

#### **4.6. Blended Learning**

The concept of Blended Learning (BL) has been undergoing modifications as the modality is relatively new and context dependant. Accordingly, definitions differ from one source to the other.



According to the Cambridge Online Dictionary (2018) Blended Learning can be defined as “a way of learning that combines traditional classroom lessons with lessons that use computer technology and may be given over the internet”.

Stacker and Horn (cited by Tucker, 2012) state that

blended learning is a formal education program in which a student learns at least part through online delivery of content and instruction with some element of student control over time, place, path and/or pace and at least in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home. (para.3)

Tucker (2012) holds that the notions of content and instruction in the above definition should be enhanced with the concepts of engagement and learning, as they imply the 21st-century abilities aforementioned: critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration innovation and creation. Consequently, she redefines BL as “a formal education program in which a student is *engaged in active learning* at least in part online where they have some control over the time, place, and/or pace and in part at a brick and mortar location away from home.” (para.5). Tucker intends to emphasize the importance of the intervention of the tutors as they bring experience, expertise, variety, empathy and personality, qualities inherent to human facilitators that the computers do not have. She also underscores the importance of collaboration and interactions among students in order not to use the internet as a mere substitution of the teacher in the traditional paradigm, “where teachers instruct and students are passive participants in the process”. (Tucker, 2012, para.11)

Considering the main objectives of the present project, specifically the integration of a VLE to regular face to face courses with online support, it seems coherent to adhere to Tucker’s (2012) definition of BL above quoted.

Distance Learning and Blended Learning share certain characteristics that need to be mentioned before turning to the methodology that will be used in the design of the unit of work for the present project:

- Asynchronous or deferred teacher-student interaction. Learning is based on autonomous work on the part of the student using materials designed for that purpose.
- Diverse and simultaneous new roles of the teacher: content expert, course manager, forum dynamizer, source provider, activity designer using external digital resources, technical problem solver, articulator, facilitator and life-long learner.

- More autonomous, flexible and sociable role of the learners. They are at the centre of the learning process, becoming co-learners with their tutors and even deciding on the pace of that process.
- Organization of mentorship with the purpose of supporting, motivating and assessing, making learning accessible.
- Intensive use of ITCs.
- More planning in advance, including creation and adaptation of materials (OER\_ Open Educational Resources) and learning strategies.

#### **4.6.1. Advantages of Blended Learning**

Besides having the central potential of being a learner-centred approach, blended learning combines the human presence of the teacher from the traditional class-based approach with the learner self-management characteristic of entirely online courses. It allows for versatility in course design and delivery as well as the flexibility of access to the materials, activities, and assessments. Regarding the students, blended learning enables them to develop their independent learning skills. Learners' choices in relation to when and where to complete their assignments increase. The presence of the tutor during class time provides them with the scaffolding required for the successful completion of the assigned tasks. (Blended and Online Learning, 2015)

#### **4.6.2. Disadvantages of Blended Learning**

The two main disadvantages of blended learning are the characteristics of the course design and the level of digital competence. In the first case, it could be too possible to fall in the use the platform as a repository of materials rather than an interactive source of a dynamic practice of the language. In the case of digital competence, it could represent a hindrance as both learners and tutors might need to gain proficiency in their skilful use of technology. (Blended and Online Learning, 2015)

#### **4.6.3. Flipped Classroom**

In the process of learning how to use technology more efficiently and meeting the requirements of digital proficiency, the face to face teachers might resort to the flipped classroom approach. In this modality, students complete autonomous tasks, which require online information research and data processing, employing classroom time to exchange their findings, clarifying doubts and practicing what they have learned. The instructor role implies guiding the learners to utilize techniques, including group problem-solving, simulations, group discussions, etc. (The Flipped Classroom, 2018).

#### **4.7. The roles of the teacher and the learners in distance or blended learning.**

Many authors mention three phases in the teaching process related to course design: Dr. Maheshrwashi, (2012) describes them as the Pre-active or planning stage, Inter-active or execution stage and the Post-active or evaluation and feedback stage. The Pre-active phase or Planning takes place before the tutor and the learner meet, either face to face or virtually, and it implies a lot of decisions including setting goals and learning outcomes, selecting content and materials, organizing the sequence, deciding the approach or approaches with sufficient flexibility, anticipating possible problems considering the needs of the students, and selecting or designing appropriate instruments of evaluation of the desired outcomes. In virtual learning, this phase also includes the design and edition of the virtual class depending on the VLE selected or indicated by the institution depending on the case. The Active phase is the implementation of the plan which implies the interaction with the learners in a specific context: the virtual platform or classroom in this project. The Post-Active phase or evaluation includes both the evaluation of the course design and results, and the evaluation of students' processes and learning outcomes. In the case of the course, the aim of the evaluation is to assess its effectiveness and make the necessary modifications to improve future implementations. However, the time available for this project will not be enough to evaluate it. In the case of the students, evaluation will be summative and formative, being the last one of paramount relevance as the virtual learner needs to acquire increasing autonomy and ownership of learning. And learning evaluation will be included throughout.

In VLE, as well as in other contexts, the three phases are present but the first one, planning, gains much more relevance as the conditions in which learners have to work are quite different from those of the face to face learner. The design has to be visually clear, with course guides and tutorials describing where the materials, the activities and the criteria of evaluation can be found. Learners must know how they are expected to participate, when the deadlines are and especially how to contact the tutor. According to Garrison and Anderson (2005), in VLE, the teacher shows presence not only in the interaction with learners through course updates and forums, but mainly thorough the course design. In terms of virtual learning, course design is the equivalent to “didactic transposition”. (As cited in *Curso Enseñar y Aprender en la Virtualidad*, 2017)

Subsequently, during the active phase or the interaction with the learners both “social presence and cognitive presence” are required (Garrison, 2014). The tutor needs to demonstrate expertise in the corresponding field of knowledge for the course but also has

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to respond to queries, facilitate resources, teach students how to use them or find alternatives when they become an impediment and source of demotivation and resignation. Online learners are usually working in isolation, without frequent contact with other students in their group. Tutors' role of articulators becomes crucial here as well as the need to promote collaboration by designing team work activities.

#### 4.7.1. Scaffolding

That being the case, it appears particularly pertinent to discuss the concept of *scaffolding*, introduced by Wood et al. (1976, as cited by McLeod, 2012). These authors define scaffolding as those “elements of the task that are initially beyond the learner’s capacity, thus permitting him to concentrate upon and complete only those elements that are within his range of competence”.(McLeod, 2012, para.4). Wood et al. (2012) refer to the knowledge that learners do not possess yet and the strategies developed by the tutor or more knowledgeable others to aid students in their learning process. Lev Vygotsky (1978, p.86, as cited by McLeod, 2012), would introduce the expression *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD), defining it as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers". Although Vygotsky (cited by McLeod, 2012) does not use the term *scaffolding* when defining *ZPD*, the concepts underlying both terms overlap, as scaffolding would represent the strategies that the guiding adult or more capable peers would unfold in order to aid the learner or less capable peer achieve the goals that are still beyond his autonomous problem-solving skills.

#### 4.7.2. Tasks, Learning Strategies and Interactions

According to the learning theories above mentioned, the concepts of *task*, *skills and strategies*, *interactions with peers*, *scaffolding*, *cooperative learning*, *guidance*, and *independent problem solving*, can be considered of crucial relevance when planning how to facilitate learning. Concerning tasks, it appears of relevance for the present project to distinguish between learning tasks and communicative tasks. Learning tasks typically aim at distinct learning outcomes related to formal characteristics of the target language while communicative tasks more typically focalize on meaning, learner-centeredness and admit different solutions. Learning strategies are closely related to the concept of task as learners need to use their cognitive abilities or skills to resolve the problems that tasks represent to them. These strategies can be used unconsciously as a cognitive skill or be made explicit and become a metacognitive skill. (Freytes et al, n.d. p.5).

Online learning, because of the fact of the asynchronicity of the communication, must rely on these elements as well. However, the same fact makes it more difficult for the learners to achieve the goals designed by the tutor on the virtual learning environments and thus, scaffolding and interaction become of great importance for learners' motivation, process-engagement, autonomy-development and success. Regarding scaffolding, Wood et al. (1976, as cited in McLeod, 2012) mention some processes that could aid effective scaffolding. The most relevant of those processes, regarding online learning, would be:

- gaining and maintaining the learner's interest
- making the task simple and
- emphasizing the aspects that will help with the solution

Interaction, in turn, connects to Garrison's (2014) notion of *social presence* mentioned before and it should not be neglected, as it is probably the most efficient way to foster positive learning experiences for students. However, interaction is not something easy to achieve, especially at the beginning of an online course. Cho and Cho (2016) make reference to a wide range of examples of empirical research that has demonstrated the important role that the online tutor plays in the in the activation and facilitation of this interactive behaviour on the part online learners. Contrary to what might be expected, the online learner needs this social presence, which the online tutor must not take for granted, much more than the face to face learner in order to materialize interactions.

The degree to which instructors attempt to promote interaction in online settings tends to determine students' learning experiences and successful outcomes. The lack of effort to promote interaction may result in negative learning experiences such as dropping out of online courses. (...) online students' course dropouts was due to the lack of instructors' efforts to use scaffolding strategies to promote interactions. The more instructors promote interactions by providing timely feedback on students' messages, encouraging students to participate in interactive activities, and supporting struggling learners, the more likely it is that students will persist in online classes. (Cho and Cho, 2016, para.4)

Cho and Cho (2016) carried out a study to “develop a valid and reliable scale to measure online instructors' use of scaffolding strategies to promote interactions among students or between students and instructors”, (p.111).

What follows, is the interpretation of the author of the present project of the ten strategies that were studied and validated as effective:

1. Provide positive and supportive feedback to students' interventions to encourage further participation.
2. Encourage students to ask questions.
3. Monitor group collaboration, encouraging students to participate actively.
4. Provide regular announcements with what is expected from students regarding interaction.
5. Encourage students to share concerns or problems.
6. Provide basic guidelines explaining the importance of online interaction.
7. Leave messages to thank students for contributions.
8. Participate actively in online discussion by replying to students, summarizing discussion, or asking questions to students.
9. Send notes to increase interaction when it is low.
10. Provide a timeline for students' online interactions.

#### **4.7.3. Computer-Mediated Collaborative Learning (CMC)**

It is pertinent to consider the analysis presented by Warschauer (1997) to better understand the role of computer-mediated interaction among text, talk, and learning. The framework, based on a socio-cultural view, is consistent with the previously-developed concepts of scaffolding and the zone of proximal development. The analysis is based on the five characteristics of online interaction that follow:

- Text-Based and Computer-Mediated Interaction
- Many-to-Many Communication
- Time- and Place-Independent Communication
- Long Distance Exchanges
- Hypermedia links.

Warschauer (1997) understands that CMC facilitates collaboration in different dimensions. CMC combines the strengths of reflecting through texts with the strengths of interacting through speech. "The computer-mediated feature of online writing has finally unleashed the interactive power of text-based communication" (Warschauer, 1997, p.472). Not only does it combine reflection and interaction, but it also enables multi-point exchange and equalizes participation as any member of the group is able to start a discussion regardless of the diversity of characteristics of the participants. These participants can make contributions from any part of the world, using diverse digital devices at their own pace, with the mediation of the facilitator/tutor. Computer-Mediated Collaborative Learning permits long-distance discussions with the resulting cultural exchange of one-to-one or

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many-to-many interactions. Finally, the incorporation of hyperlinks allows for access to authentic resources instantly and even more important it gives learners the possibility to distribute worldwide the knowledge created in collaboration with others.

The previously described features

provide an impressive array of new ways to link learners. When viewed in the context of sociocultural learning theory, which emphasizes the educational value of creating cross-cultural communities of practice and critical inquiry, these features make online learning a potentially useful tool for collaborative language learning. (Warschauer, 1997, p.477)

#### **4.8. Steps in material design**

The notion of task brought to focus above requires further examination before introducing the process of material design. Nunan (1989), (as cited by Lennon and Ball, n.d.), describes tasks as the combination of five components: goals, input, activities, roles, and settings. When referring to goals, Nunan means the reason why the teacher wants the learners to engage in resolving the task. He says that these goals can be communicative, socio-cultural, learning how to learn and cultural awareness. Input is concerned with the quality of authenticity and genuineness of the data the learners rely on to build solutions and create new knowledge. According to Nunan (1989), activities are what learners do with the input and can be briefly classified in authentic or pedagogic, aiming at fluency or accuracy, and providing an opportunity to acquire or utilize skills and strategies. It seems relevant to add here that not only the activities can appear as authentic or pedagogic but also the goals and the input possess similar characteristics. The decision on whether to include one or the other depends on the purpose of the task. Regarding teachers' and learners' roles and although they were considered in the previous paragraphs, it seems fundamental for the present project to highlight the importance of the learner-centeredness of VLEs and the instructors' quality of facilitator of learning. Tutors must know their students' needs and consider the settings, as this will enable them to promote learners' autonomy and to personalize the learning process. The setting refers to the learning environment, whether it is virtual or classroom-based, implying how the teacher organizes interactions among students.

The cognitive processes language learners rely on, whether consciously or unconsciously, need to be introduced at this point as they are essential for material design. Therefore, bottom-up and top-down dynamics in the process of language acquisition becomes fundamental. Bottom-up is manifest in activities that expect learners to scan for specific information, concentrate on accuracy, utilize grammatical knowledge to recover meaning,

recognize stress and intonation patterns, make use of cohesive devices in discourse or identify grammatical word classes. Top-down, in contrast, becomes evident when we ask learners to predict before listening or reading, to skim for gist, to connect with prior or background knowledge, and when as tutors we create a purpose for performing the task and emphasize on communication over accuracy. (Lennon and Ball, n.d. Chapter 4, p. 57,58)

The preceding analysis of the concepts of task, activity, authenticity and the relationship between top-down and bottom-down processes in language learning makes it possible to turn the focus into the specification of the steps involved in the design **of classroom materials**. Jolly and Bolitho (1998), who carried out a series of case studies, refer to the following stages in relation with material development.

- Identification: material designers proceed from the *identification* of needs for materials into their use in the classroom. The process of creation begins when they identify the need.
- Exploration: students' needs are analysed during the exploration, activating in the designer some questions like the language, the skills or the strategies those learners require.
- Contextual realisation: it involves the finding of sources, namely reading or audio-visual texts to use or modify.
- Pedagogical realization: after selecting the sources, the instructor designs the exercises and activities and writes the instructions.
- Physical production: the material is actually created and implemented. (p.97)

These stages may simplify the process too much as they lack the reflective component of evaluation and reformulation that materials undergo in the actual process of their creation. Jolly and Bolitho (1998) make a point on this and propose a new version of the process. In their version, they include two components: the assessment of materials, which can be carried out by the designer, the learners, the instructors or other teachers, and the possibility of flexibilizing the direction of the sequence, catering for the fact that the process is dynamic and bi-directional enabling *optional steps and feedback loops*.

The component of materials' assessment will be further developed in the next section.



## 4.9. Assessment

### 4.9.1. Assessment of the Material

Ellis (1998, cited by Lennon and Ball, n.d.) distinguishes between macro and micro-evaluations, arguing that “micro-evaluations at the level of task or activity respond to the level of evaluation that a teacher is most likely to do” (p. 37). They emphasize the significance of assessing materials-in-process instead of only assessing materials-as-work-plan. Evaluating materials-as-work-plan measures their theoretical value, aiming at construct validity. That implies checking that they reflect the principles by which they were designed. Assessing materials-in-process, aims at examining the effects of their implementation in the classroom.

With reference to the materials designed for the present project, it seems relevant to emphasize that they mainly belong to the category of supplementary materials. Tomlinson (1998) defines this kind of materials as: “The materials designed to be used in addition to the core materials of a course. They are usually related to the development of skills of reading, writing, listening or speaking rather than to the learning of language items. (Tomlinson 1998, p. xiii, cited by Lennon and Ball, n.d. Chapter 2, p. 24)

Tomlinson (1998) presents the following six principles of language acquisition which, seemed a very relevant framework to assess the materials in this project as work plan:

Principle #1\_ “A pre-requisite for language acquisition is that the learners are exposed to a rich, meaningful and comprehensible input of language in use”. (p.2). This means that the input should include a variety of spoken and written texts and genres related to topics meaningful to the learners. It should also be authentic and contextualized.

Principle #2\_ “In order for the learners to maximize their exposure to language in use they need to be engaged both affectively and cognitively in the language experience”. (p.3). Thinking at different levels to process the information and connecting emotionally to the materials is essential for deep learning to take place. Neuroeducation is a new discipline that supports the previous arguments by emphasizing the importance of training executive intelligence and learning how to manage our emotions.

Principle #3\_ “Language learners who achieve positive affect are much more likely to achieve communicative competence than those who do not”. (p.3). It is essential to build a community in the classroom where everybody learns and reflects on strengths and

weaknesses. Specially in the case of online learning, the need to build that sense of belonging and collaboration becomes priority.

Principle #4\_ “L2 language learners can benefit from using those mental resources which they typically utilize when acquiring and using their L1”. (p.4). Tomlinson says that the use of visual representations of the input being learned and the inner voice that L1 learners use when processing information is not frequently used by L2 language learners. Notwithstanding this, as well as executive intelligence and emotions management, mental visual representations and use of mental voice can be trained.

Principle #5\_ “Language learners can benefit from noticing salient features of the input”. (p.5).When the materials designed succeed in engaging learners both cognitive and affectively, they are more likely to notice linguistic features salient in them and become interested in learning those features. The materials should encourage learners to work collaboratively and discover those features by themselves.

Principle #6\_ “Learners need opportunities to use language to try to achieve communicative purposes”. (p.6)

In Tomlinson (1998) words:

When using language in this way they are gaining feedback on the hypotheses they have developed as a result of generalizing on the language in their intake and on their ability to make use of them effectively. If they are participating in interaction, they are also being pushed to clarify and elaborate and they are also likely to elicit meaningful and comprehensible input from their interlocutors. (p.6)

## 5. Methodology of the Project

### 5.1. Approach

The approach, grounded on the theory of constructivism, is both, qualitative and quantitative. There was a phase of data collection and a phase of data analysis. One phase did not necessarily precede the other but both were continuously attempted. Quantitative data analysis would generate questions on the part of the reflective-teacher-researcher, who would in turn focus on qualitative aspects. This qualitative data would generate hypothesis which would consequently generate a procedure to intervene in the learning process. In the words of Allwright and Bailey (1991, p.67, as cited in Observation and Research, Funiber ch.2, p.14), “It should be clear that we see most value in investigations that combine objective and subjective elements, that quantify only what can be usefully quantified, and that utilise qualitative data collection and analysis procedures wherever they are appropriate”.

According to the theoretical background described in the previous section and the constructivist theory, it becomes evident that the teacher/tutor needs to make decisions based on content knowledge integrated to pedagogical and technological knowledge. In this context, Koehler and Mishra (2009) developed the TPACK model. This “Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) attempts to identify the nature of knowledge required by teachers for technology integration in their teaching, while addressing the complex, multifaceted and situated nature of teacher knowledge” (Miller, 2015, para.2).

Figure 1 illustrates the model, showing how 21<sup>st</sup> Century teachers, and more specifically those working in VLEs are required to make creative links between:

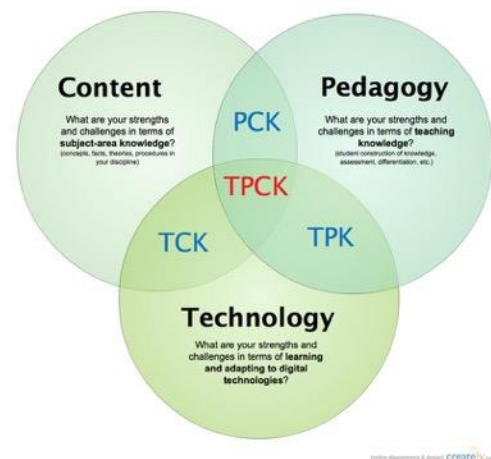


Figure 1: TPACK Model. Retrieved from <https://dshutkin386.wordpress.com/tpack-design/>

1. What is being learned (content) and how it is taught (pedagogy). This is the teacher's Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) and represents the teachers' expertise in deciding how different contents are better learned.
2. How the content is learned (pedagogy) by means of the appropriate digital tools (technology), which is the teacher's Technological Pedagogical Knowledge (TPK). "An understanding of how teaching and learning can change when particular technologies are used in particular ways. This includes knowing the pedagogical affordances and constraints of a range of technological tools as they relate to disciplinarily and developmentally appropriate pedagogical designs and strategies" (Koehler and Mishra, 2012, para.9)
3. What is being learned (content) and the appropriate resources(technology). This is the teacher's Technological Content Knowledge (TCK). Teachers need to understand which specific technologies are best suited for addressing subject-matter learning in their domains and how the content dictates or perhaps even changes the technology—or vice versa" (Koehler and Mishra, 2012, para.8)

Regarding the instructional design of the course, the framework to be used has been the ADDIE model (David, 2014). The model consists of five phases:

- Analysis: this is the diagnostic stage in which we get acquainted with the learners, the learning problem or needs, the LMS with its strengths and constraints and the time available for content we have to teach. Once we have the situation analysed we are ready to move to the next phase.
- Design: the course is thought, considering the previous analysis and specifying the learning objectives and skills required from the learner. Modules, lessons and activities are drafted. Teaching procedures are selected.
- Development: this is the moment of physically creating the course. Materials and resources imported and general outline of the VLE designed. Depending on the tools provided by the VLE, the teacher will create different folders corresponding to the modules with the lessons and activities for students to evidence their interaction with the content.
- Implementation: the course is made visible to students who register and log in to the platform. The interaction starts following the course guidelines and times pre-established.
- Evaluation: formative and summative evaluation should both be present. The former at each stage of the course, the latter at the end of a unit and to evaluate

the whole course. As well as that, tutor evaluation and student self-assessment will contribute to future better performance and course implementation.

## 5.2. Description of the target group

As reference, I chose one of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade groups I teach in my classroom-based courses at Public High School Number 65 in Montevideo, Uruguay. 26 students attended the course. The activities were implemented with this group, integrating a virtual environment to the mainstream face to face course. In this way, the effectiveness and design of the unit was expected to be piloted.

The course materials, selected by the Secondary School Council (Consejo de Enseñanza Secundaria \_ CES) conform a multi-syllabus approach since there is a combination of more than one syllabus:

- The coursebook, *Speak Out pre-intermediate*, shows grammar and lexical syllabus displayed separately, which follows the “Multi-syllabus” approach.
- Procedural syllabi and task-based syllabi “...are based on the belief that both linguistic and communicative competence is acquired through engagement with meaning...” (Lennon and Ball, MR, p. 8).
- Functional-notional syllabus “...highlights what people do through language, and itemizes the communicative and interpersonal uses of language as well as more abstract categories...” (Lennon and Ball MR, p. 7)
- It is a Topic-Based syllabus as it uses topics or themes as starting point for each unit (Lennon and Ball, p. 7), representing however a weak version of CLT because it focuses on grammar as a tool. In the case of the present project I used the theme “Cultural Awareness and Social Responsibility” and the subtopic “Teenage Mutual Understanding” as the unifying context. The rest of the thematic units in the national syllabus are Health, Entertainment, Technology and Art. (Cirimello et al. 2015)

As it can be seen in the above analysis, the course has a recommended coursebook. However, it was not selected as part of the materials for this project because none of its units correlates to the unit Cultural Awareness and Social Responsibility. Therefore, it was necessary to design supplementary materials that would be used online and in class. This proved to be very enriching. I found myself rediscovering my own principles about language learning and engaging in the design of materials that matched my learners’ needs.

The students are between 16 and 17 years old. Their level of proficiency is below B1, according to the Common European Frame of Reference (CEFR). By the end of the course they are expected to approximate a B1 level of English proficiency according to the CEFR. Their mother tongue is Spanish and they are doing the 5th grade in a six-year secondary public-school system, which consists of two cycles of three annual courses each: Ciclo Básico Unico (CBU) and Bachillerato Diversificado (BD). They have three 45-minute-lessons per week and attend classes from Monday to Friday between 7:40 and 13:05. Including English, they have 9 subjects. The school is situated in the capital city of the country and the students belong to working class families, who in general support their teenage children so that they can complete their secondary school studies. However, there are many complex situations that require the school awareness and intervention so that the students do not abandon their studies. In this setting, the target language is not used outside the class except for the media the students have access to (films, songs, video games, the Internet). However, the group has been enrolled to the Conversation Class Program implemented by Plan Ceibal and described in 4.1.1 above. Therefore, they would have an additional opportunity and a purpose to use the target language: a remote English-native-speaking teacher via VC once a week.

The students in the alternative online programs implemented by the Consejo de Enseñanza Secundaria in Uruguay (Uruguayos Por el Mundo and Aulas Alternativas en Línea), mentioned in the objectives of the present project and with whom this unit would in time be developed, would need the support of an online teacher through video conference as in neither of the cases do they count with a classroom teacher. The students abroad are usually self-motivated or with important home support and are preparing to sit for the corresponding exams. The ones from Aulas Alternativas, are students who have been left without a classroom teacher and are in many cases neither autonomous nor very motivated to learn the target language.

### **5.3. The structure that surrounds the materials**

For this purpose, there are several Learning Management Systems (LMS) which can be used. The one both teachers and students have access to at present is Schoology, which is the one used by Plan Ceibal in their conversation classes and is known as Crea2. What occurs at the level of BD (Bachillerato Diversificado) in the face to face situation, is that it is very diverse throughout the country. In the case I will use as reference, students do not have their laptop working any longer and there is a small number of them who do not have

Internet connection at home. Therefore, we have to rely on the school connection. On the other hand, almost all the students own a Smartphone and they can either use the school connection or their own. Schoology has a mobile application which students will be suggested to download. I expect to find some resistance at the moment of using the smartphone for educational purposes. Students are unfortunately too little accustomed to using their computers or other devices for pedagogical activities, and teachers too unaware of the resources available therefore their potential has been largely underestimated.

For the implementation of this project, in our school we count on synchronous communication tools, which allow interlocutors to interact simultaneously in real time, such as the *Ceibal video conference room* (VC). There is one VC room per public school, primary and secondary, all over the Uruguayan territory. Public secondary schools also count on asynchronous tools as the Computer Lab, which has 18 computers with internet connection. This would allow the students to work individually, having some of them working in pairs as there are 22 students in this class. However, the fact of counting with one VC room and one Computer Lab means that the students, who are assigned a classroom at the beginning of the course, will need to move from that room to the lab where the blended course will be implemented. They will also have to move to the VC room, once a week, from the moment the Conversation Classes begin. Therefore, a timely organization on the side of the teacher is essential for the project to develop without interference.

Both for synchronous and asynchronous communication tools, we will resort to WhatsApp accounts, which almost all students and teachers have and which make it very accessible for everyone to be in touch instantly by joining groups created for specific purposes. In addition to those, we have Google Drive, which allows participants to create and modify documents both synchronically and asynchronously. We can also make use of asynchronous communication tools, in which people are not online at the same real time, namely Crea2, Facebook (closed groups and forums), and any other social network that in the process we might consider useful.

### **5.3.1. CREA2 – Schoology**

What makes this platform attractive and one of the reasons why it has been selected as the VLE for the project, is that it looks like other social networks learners are familiar with. Similarly to Facebook, users can manage their profile, post comments on the home page, upload photos, download materials, send and receive asynchronic messages, among

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other utilities. The difference is that in fact as a virtual learning environment it enables a private area for the teacher to manage the course, upload materials as resources, add links to other websites such as YouTube and Google Drive, create assignments and evaluation rubrics, quizzes with automatic and immediate feedback for students, linked to a gradebook that keeps record of all students' work. The teacher decides when to make this content visible to students. "The use of CREA complements classroom and virtual education, thus helping to develop mixed pedagogical proposals (...) CREA centralizes the tools, applications and contents that the teacher wants to use with the class" (Crea 2, Plan Ceibal, para.1). Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the above description of the platform.

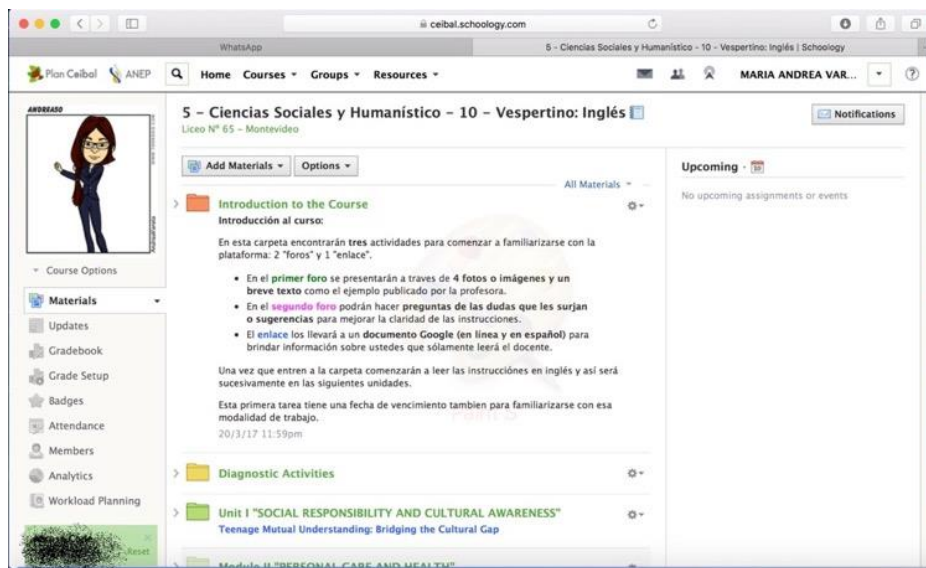


Figure 2: Homepage from the course *Ciencias Sociales y Humanístico-10-Vespertino*. Shared with the permission of the administrators of the platform Crea2, Plan Ceibal. Created by the author.

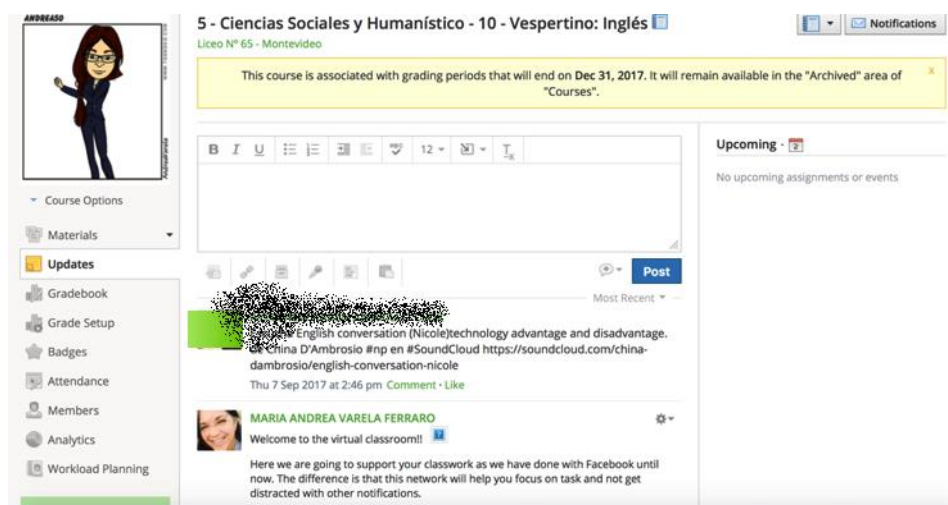


Figure 3:

Updates section with a comment made by one of the students. Shared with the permission of the administrators of the platform Crea2, Plan Ceibal. Created by the author.



## 5.4. Unit Design

### 5.4.1. Description of the Creative Process

Table 2 intends to show the different stages in the design of the unit, including objectives and methodology within a period of three months at the beginning of the course, following the ADDIE model described before.

Table 2

*Stages in Thematic Unit Design*

Objectives	Tasks	Success Criteria
Analysis and Design: To start planning the unit. To carry out initial diagnostic tests.	Choose topic, gather materials, select the platform, coordinate and negotiate activities with colleagues	Suggestions of Project Tutor Veronica Cabañas  Needs Analysis: results of diagnostic with feedback to students. Teacher and students' awareness of strong and weak areas.
Development: To organize the unit on the platform as part of a blended course.	Upload materials and insert links, create activities, design face-to-face lesson plans, share with colleagues	Proofreading and feedback from other teachers not working in the project.  Survey of students' access to Internet devices available.
To start implementation.	Schedule class in Computer Lab. Add students to the platform, and guide them to create profiles and explore the virtual classroom	Learners are registered and able to see the VLE
To continue implementation	Share unit learning outcomes with students as well as rubrics of	Learners do the activities and self-evaluate

	<p>evaluation.</p> <p>Get students to work on the activities and set formative and summative evaluation dates.</p>	
Easter Recess		
Evaluation: To round up activities and assess results.	<p>Assess the unit's impact.</p> <p>Consider students' assessment of the unit.</p> <p>Share feedback with students and colleagues to reflect and plan next unit</p>	Results of Self-assessment and summative assessment
Future Lines	<p>Technology integration in classroom-based courses.</p> <p>The Impact of VLEs on teaching and learning self-efficacy.</p> <p>The impact on VLEs on Neuroeducation.</p>	Future research results

Note: Stages in the design of the unit based on the ADDIE model. Retrieved from <https://www.learning-theories.com/addie-model.html>. Created by the author.

The present project has been developed within the paradigm of the “reflective practitioner” (Schon 1983, 1987, 1990, as cited in Funiber, 2015, p.37), “in which teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own classroom teaching.” This practice leads to “action research” or what “the reflective practitioner actually does in the classroom”. Action research uses an exploratory approach in which the teacher observes what happens in the classroom, makes students aware of it and collaboratively takes action in order to modify classroom reality.

According to the previous chronogram of activities, the analysis of the context started to be carried out in February, when students were still in the summer recess and some of them were sitting for pending exams. In the Uruguayan system, the groups are formed by the school administrators but teachers do not know who the students will be until the beginning of the course in March. Consequently, the first decisions were based on “a

priori” assumptions and interviews with colleagues who knew the students from previous years. Cohen and Manion’s eight-stage model (cited in Funiber, *Observation and Research*, Chapter 5, p.51), describes this stage as the “preliminary discussion and negotiation amongst interested parties – teachers, advisers, researchers, sponsors – culminating in a draft proposal.” In this case, the discussion took place mainly among teachers working in the same institution: the ones who had had the learners in the previous level (4<sup>th</sup> grade) and the ones who would receive them in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Being part of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade team of teachers, I was informed by my colleagues of the learners’ needs in relation to the speaking and writing skill. Additionally, I was told about the fact that these students did not have access to the Ceibal laptops, so I would have to resort to the Computer Lab and their smart phones. I subsequently did some research in the building about the media we would have accessible. I learned that the computer room did not have much demand on the part of the teachers of the other subjects. The source of information was the colleague in charge of the lab and the *Computer Lab Listing* in which we sign so as to book the room in advance.

The above-mentioned analysis was later complemented during March when students started the course and teacher could explain to them the objectives, methodology and ongoing assessment of the blended unit. A survey of students’ accessibility to the Internet and electronic devices (see appendix 4) was implemented to confirm the hypothesis reached during the initial conversations with colleagues. Simultaneously, students were shown the first steps to access the platform (appendix 5) and guided to perform the first online activity in the school’s Computer Laboratory: they would have to complete a Google form, adapted by the teacher, as an instrument to recover information about the students’ interests and social contexts (appendix 7).

#### 5.4.2. Selection of Resources

Table 3 illustrates de process of resources selection.

Table 3

*Selection of Resources in Relation with Learning Outcomes*

Desired Learning Outcome (What?)	Rationale (Why?)	Relevant Activities (How?)	Potential Technological Tools
Self-directed learning	For students to recognize and make use of personal	Quick Placement Test	Google Form Platform self-corrected quizzes

	rhythm of learning. To learn how to manage their own learning		
Co-learning	For students to develop one of the skills of the 21 <sup>st</sup> century: COLLABORATION	Performance assessment at the end of the unit	YouTube Mobile Phones VLE Crea2
Reflective Practice	For students to become aware of their strengths and weaknesses	Personal Information Form and Survey on Internet access and IT devices.	Google Forms

Note: Retrieved from <https://teaching.unsw.edu.au/planning-and-designing-blended-or-online-course>

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According to FORCE11, Open Educational Resources (OER) should be FAIR:

- **FINDABLE:** This means that the data are given a unique identifier, described with rich metadata and registered in a searchable resource.
- **ACCESSIBLE:** It requires the data to be retrievable by the corresponding labeling and a standardized protocol. This protocol should allow for authentication and authorization when necessary.
- **INTEROPERABLE:** It has the capacity to be imported or exported to be integrated into structures and platforms of different diffusion.
- **REUSABLE:** It has the ability to be used several times in different educational contexts and with different purposes, since being identified with the metadata can be located independently. (The Fair Data Principles, n.d.)

The next table (Table 4) shows an example of how the digital resources were evaluated for their utilization. The analysis is based on the principles developed by FORCE11, “a community of scholars, librarians, archivists, publishers and research funders that has arisen organically to help facilitate the change toward improved knowledge creation and sharing”. (The Fair Data Principles, n.d.)Table 4

*Digital Resource Appraisal Protocol*

Evaluated digital tool: Google Forms	
Criteria	Assessment
<p>Accessibility</p> <p>(It can be easily identified, searched and found due to the corresponding labelling through various descriptors (metadata) that allow the cataloguing and storage in the corresponding repository)</p>	<p>Google Forms is accessible through its link, which can be shared with other users with different levels of permission. The administrator creates the form and it automatically saves in Google Drive.</p>
<p>Interoperability</p> <p>(It has the capacity to be imported or exported to be integrated in structures and platforms of different diffusion)</p>	<p>Once it has been created, it can be shared with users of other platforms such as Crea2 (VLE), Facebook, WhatsApp, email, etc.</p>
<p>Reusability</p> <p>(It has the ability to be used several times in different educational contexts and purposes, since being identified with the metadata can be located independently)</p>	<p>It can be shared with colleagues, who can adopt it, remix it and share alike or with modifications.</p>
<p>Autonomy</p> <p>(The objects must be autonomous with respect to the systems from which they were created)</p>	<p>Once the resource is created, the student can visualize it and perform the tasks indicated there without the need for the tutor to be physically present, but always need to register to the site that contains the resource.</p>
<p>Quality of Content</p> <p>(Accurate and plausible of verification)</p>	<p>The contents can be verified since all the sources are registered in the forms. The quality and accuracy depends on the author.</p>

Note: Based on The Fair Data Principles, retrieved from <https://www.force11.org/group/fairgroup/fairprinciples> and Curso "Enseñar y aprender en la virtualidad". (2017), retrieved from [http://campus.semipresencial.edu.uy/web/1099286564/view?path=44\\_breve\\_gua\\_para\\_el\\_diseo\\_de\\_un\\_curso\\_virtual.htm](http://campus.semipresencial.edu.uy/web/1099286564/view?path=44_breve_gua_para_el_diseo_de_un_curso_virtual.htm)  
 | Created by the autor.

### 5.5. Description of the activities

The typology of activities therefore, responded to a weak form of CLT in which grammar would appear in context and "in communicative tasks" in order to promote second language acquisition. (Funiber, Tasks and Projects, Chapter 3, p.29). The activities were designed in relation to the topic, with integration of the four macro skills and with a

communicative aim related to learners' interests. Following Graddol (2006, as cited in Materials and Resources, Funiber, Chapter 2), "English is no longer a language as such but a core *skill*. Learner-centeredness is therefore focused on the dynamics between the materials and the learners, what he/she brings to the materials and what he can take away from them" (p.16). Consequently, and as Nunan (1989) poses, activities not only implied rehearsal for real world, skills use and fluency vs accuracy, but also adaptation of materials from authentic sources, teaching strategies and meta-cognitive skills and a continuum between an implicit and an explicit approach.

### 5.5.1. Learning activities

As published by the University of Tasmania (Examples of Learning Activities, 2018), a website oriented to provide guidelines for blended courses, learning activities should be intentional, meaningful and useful. The concept of intentionality implies the alignment of the activity to the learning objectives. The teacher determines first the intended learning objectives and how to assess whether the learners have achieved those objectives, considering their needs and context. Then, he directs his attention to the design of the activities. Learners will consequently understand the intention of those tasks.

The idea of meaningfulness is intimately related to intentionality, but it mainly involves the correlation of the activities to the learners' background knowledge. Meaningful activities should enable the students to participate in the construction of their own knowledge progressing from the already known to the new. The theory of meaningful learning proposed by Ausubel (1968) supports this aspect. Ausubel (1968) proposes that meaningful learning occurs when the learners can make connections between their prior knowledge and the new concepts. Human beings possess schemas or representations of the world. These schemata allow us to understand reality, which we modify when we integrate new associated knowledge. In the preface to his book *Educational Psychology: A Cognitive View*, he says: "The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach him accordingly" (Ausubel, 1968, p. vi).

The notion of usefulness refers to the possibility of transferring knowledge obtained from engaging in the activity to other contexts. The activity becomes useful for the learners when they can apply the new knowledge in the next task, in an evaluation, with another subject or in life.

### 5.5.2. Types of Learning Activities

The website of the university mentioned above, includes the classification of learning activities that follows:

- Content Focus (and Interaction) Activities

These activities should advisably take place after every 5 or 15 minutes of classroom work in the case of classroom-based activities, and students guided to interact with content. The tasks can require watching a video, reading a text or observing an image and responding to it meaningfully. Figure 4 is an example of Content Focus activity from the present project.

4- Impressions on "A Typical Day".

Now you are ready to return to the platform and access the folder called Unit 1. This time you will participate in the forum and discuss the differences and similarities between Uruguay and Colorado, giving your opinion, agreeing and disagreeing. The following table will help you with the language for discussion.

Expressing Opinions	
<b>Personal Point of View</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In my experience...</li> <li>• As far as I'm concerned...</li> <li>• In my opinion...</li> <li>• Personally, I think...</li> <li>• I'd say that...</li> <li>• I'd like to point out that...</li> <li>• I believe that...</li> </ul>	<b>General Point of View</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is thought that...</li> <li>• Some people say that...</li> <li>• It is considered...</li> <li>• It is generally accepted that...</li> </ul>
<b>Agreeing with an opinion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of course...</li> <li>• You're absolutely right.</li> <li>• Yes, I agree.</li> <li>• I think so too.</li> <li>• That's a good point.</li> <li>• Exactly.</li> <li>• That's true.</li> <li>• Neither do I.</li> <li>• I couldn't agree more.</li> </ul>	<b>Disagreeing with an opinion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, but...</li> <li>• I'm afraid I have to disagree.</li> <li>• I'm sorry to disagree with you, but...</li> <li>• That's not entirely true.</li> <li>• On the contrary...</li> <li>• I'm not so sure about that.</li> </ul>

Figure 4: Activity 4 *Impressions on "A Typical Day"*. Shared with the permission of the administrators of the platform Crea2, Plan Ceibal. Created by Andrea Briature and the author.

In this activity students have to access the platform after focusing in class on language for expressing opinions, agreeing and disagreeing in a debate, and exchange comments on a video about teenagers' lifestyle in Colorado, US.

- Interactivity (with Others) Focus

This is referred to as social presence.

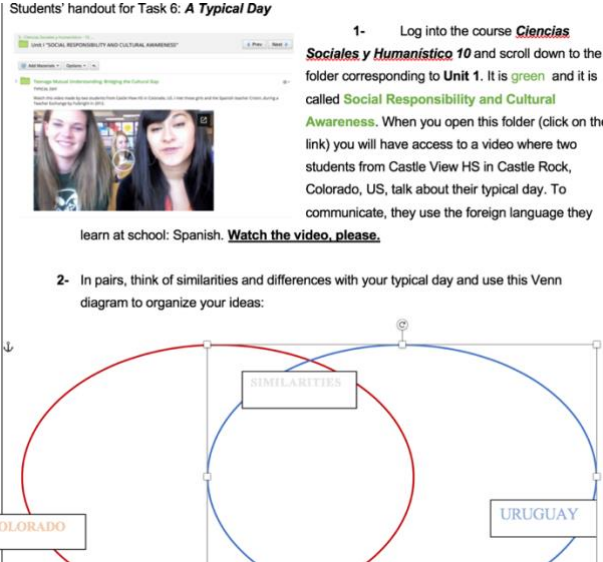
Peer relationships, informal support structures, and teacher-student interactions/relationships all contribute to a student's social presence in a unit. Therefore, including learning activities that foster open communication and group cohesion (as ways of fostering social presence) as well as providing opportunities for active learning are important in every unit.

The activity presented in figure 4 also represents an example of and interactivity-focused activity as learners have to respond to their classmates' opinions about the video. This implies both interaction with content and interaction with peers.

- Critical Thinking

Thinking should be encouraged at all levels. From lower order thinking to higher order thinking, All levels are essential, according to Bloom’s Taxonomy. However, when students are able to analyse, evaluate and create, they are cognitively operating at the highest levels of thinking and gaining control over their own learning.

Students' handout for Task 6: *A Typical Day*



1- Log into the course **Ciencias Sociales y Humanístico 10** and scroll down to the folder corresponding to **Unit 1**. It is **green** and it is called **Social Responsibility and Cultural Awareness**. When you open this folder (click on the link) you will have access to a video where two students from Castle View HS in Castle Rock, Colorado, US, talk about their typical day. To communicate, they use the foreign language they learn at school: Spanish. **Watch the video, please.**

2- In pairs, think of similarities and differences with your typical day and use this Venn diagram to organize your ideas:

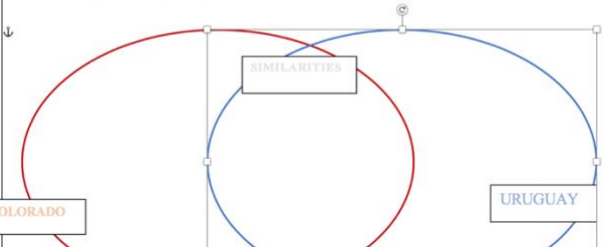


Figure 5: Screenshot from Students' Handout for Task 6\_ "A Typical Day". Shared with the permission of the administrators of the platform Crea2, Plan Ceibal. Created by the author.


Figure 5 shows an example of critical thinking activity from the present work. In this activity, students use the video they watched on the platform during class time, and with a partner they have to compare and contrast the foreign culture with their own, analysing differences and similarities to complete a Venn Diagram. Meaningful learning is promoted as learners have to resort to their background knowledge to complete this task.

- Production

Encouraging production is the most appreciated learning objective especially regarding language learning in the communicative approach. Furthermore, with the ubiquitousness of technology and consequently of VLEs, production is not constrained to the traditional written assignment. The performance assessment (figure 6) required from students at the end of the thematic unit designed for this project is an example of production task.



**END OF UNIT ASSESSMENT**  
**Teenagers Life in Uruguay**



At the end of the unit and in groups of 4, you will have to give a public presentation on **Teenagers life in Uruguay**. By week 4 the group will have to hand in an advance of the script for the presentation. Public speaking will take place on week 6.

Suggested aspects to develop:

- routines on schooldays
- weekend activities
- festivals
- the food we eat/typical food
- the clothes we wear, etc.

Each group member will choose one aspect of the topic so that all contribute to the final product. You will have time to think together in class and continue at home.

First Advance (week 2)  
Final due date (week 4)

Figure 6: End of Unit Performance Assessment. *Teenagers Life in Uruguay*. Created by the author.

- Problem Solving

Problem-solving activities require from learners to process information at all levels of thinking. They have to cooperate, connect with other students and with other subjects, working collaboratively and interdisciplinarily. They have to employ prior knowledge and depending on the problem they will have to produce new knowledge. The activity in figure 6 also represents an example of problem-solving activity as learners will have to decide how they will distribute the presentation and the format they will give to it. They can present it live, through video conference or video recording, to mention some examples.

- Reflection

Activities that encourage reflection subsequently promote metacognitive skills. Students think about their beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes about the topic. The aforementioned enables them to devise ways to overcome the drawbacks. The whole unit designed for this project promotes reflection. In the next section it will be further explained.

### 5.5.3. Assessment of the materials/activities

Following Tomlinson's principles mentioned in the Theoretical Background, I adapted a checklist to assess the materials designed for this project (Table 5). This checklist was intended to be used by myself and colleagues that would eventually implement the unit.

Table 5

*Material Assessment Checklist*

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Rarely	Sometimes	Mostly	Yes	To a large extent






<b>Evaluative Criteria</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Are the materials a meaningful and comprehensible example of the how English is used?		
Are the materials cognitively and affectively engaging for the learners in this course?		
Are the materials motivating enough to encourage learners' curiosity?		
Do the materials promote metacognitive skills?		
Do the materials promote authentic and activities to solve problems?		
Do they provide learners with opportunities to work collaboratively to solve those problems?		

Note: Adapted from <http://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/materialsdip/category/materials-evaluation/>

Additionally I designed a student-friendly version of the same checklist to consider their impression on the same materials (Table 6):

Table 6

*Material Assessment (Students' Checklist)*

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
 Rarely	 Sometimes	 Mostly	 Yes	 To a large extent

<b>What's your opinion about the materials in this unit?</b> (Think about the activity/material your teacher indicates and assess it with the criteria above: from 1 to 5)	<b>Score</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Did they demonstrate you how to use English?		
Did you feel any emotional connection to the materials?		
Did you feel motivated to continue learning?		
Did you learn some strategy to become a better student?		

Did you have to solve problems?		
Did the materials give you the chance to work collaboratively to solve problems?		

Note: Based on <http://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/materialsdip/category/materials-evaluation/> Created by the author.

### 5.6. Brief description of the unit. “Teenage Mutual Understanding: Bridging the Cultural Gap”

The Unit deals with the topic of cultural differences and similarities between adolescents from different countries. It has been designed within the framework of the first Thematic Unit selected from the National Syllabus: “Social Responsibility and Cultural Awareness” and the suggestion from the Consejo de Enseñanza Secundaria (CES) that this year we should join the UNO’s declaration of 2017 as the *International Year of Sustainable Tourism*.

Consequently, the unit will focus on Uruguay and other countries such as the US, Japan, as well as the diversity among the provinces within Uruguay which many students from the capital do not know. It will be preceded by a pre-unit, that will serve the purpose of needs analysis (Richards, 2013) so that students get acquainted with the platform and both the teacher and the learners obtain diagnostic information.

This project comes from the realization, after many years teaching the same level in the capital and also in a small town in the interior of the country, of the fact that we are not aware of our own cultural characteristics until we notice those in other groups of people. Apart from that, when we talk about *cultural exchange* we tend to think of the exchange between different countries, which although will not escape the inputs of the unit, will be accompanied with raising awareness of what happens in our own country. Alongside with that, the importance of online learning and the accessibility to the Internet learners now count on, will be integrated and used in a meaningful blended learning approach.

#### 5.6.1. Learning Objectives

At the end of the unit students will be able to:

- understand the concept of *Culture*
- recognize the aspects of their own culture that distinguish them as Uruguayan teenagers
- compare Uruguayan cultural aspects with those of other countries or within their same country

- identify differences and similarities between the different cultural groups without judging
- express orally and in written form those conclusions
- become aware of their own strengths and weaknesses regarding the four skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing
- use a VLE with autonomy

### 5.6.2. Evaluation Criteria

The unit has been designed following a Backward Design approach (Richards, 2013). Therefore, as evidence of learning, I expect students will be able to communicate the main characteristics of teenage culture in Uruguay in a public presentation to an audience of teenagers and teachers from other countries. The evaluation will be criterion based, in the form of a rubric, and students will be informed about both: the final performance expected from them as well as the rubric, from the beginning of the unit.

Consequently, it appears as relevant to mention the following classification of assessment: diagnostic, summative and formative. Usually, diagnostic evaluation is done at the beginning of a learning process, summative at the end, while formative evaluation is carried out at different stages of the same process, in this case a thematic unit, in order to provide both, teacher and learners with elements to modify strategies, practices, activities, attitudes, etc., towards more successful performances. It could be added that all the forms can become diagnostic of the situation in which the student is at a specific moment of the process, providing either with qualitative or quantitative information to both interlocutors of the learning process. What matters most is that different forms of evaluation are implemented in order to “triangulate the evidences” and that real-life tasks are designed in order to make learning more meaningful, authentic and useful. In VLE and based on the qualities that this historical moment requires from educational systems, it is essential for learners to acquire the “adaptive skill” so as to use relevant knowledge flexibly, creatively and adequately, from diverse but interconnected sources and in a variety of contexts and situations.

Cobo, (2016) argues that a key aspect is to learn how to value and recognize knowledge from a more open, adaptive, reticular and multicontextual perspective. While traditional assessments took a snapshot of a particular moment of learning, today we need to design more ubiquitous, longitudinal criteria that will help us take a more complete look at what technology-enriched learning entails. (Translated from *Enseñar y aprender en la virtualidad*, Profesorado Semipresencial, CFE, 2017.)

For this reason, it is necessary to add an alternative form of evaluation: authentic evaluation. In this kind of assessment, the tasks students have to perform are related to the skills and competences that learners need to achieve. The unit is only designed after having created the final task and how it is going to be measured. This approach is called Backward Design and was developed by Wiggins and Mc Tighe in 2005. In this approach to curriculum design, Wiggins and Mc Tighe (2005) propose to work from the standards to the instructional design.

Let us consider the example of the unit selected for this project: “Social Responsibility and Cultural Awareness”. Forward design would first include the teaching of vocabulary related to the topic that could include a wide variety of subtopics. For example, for Social Responsibility the teacher could decide to work with the environment, bullying, human and animal rights, sustainable tourism, copyrights, etiquette and netiquette, voluntary work, etc., and regarding Cultural Awareness the subtopics could be festivals around the world, people’s lifestyles, arts, education, cultural exchange, etc. Then, he would select the grammar that comes next in the syllabus, considering the stages of language acquisition in foreign language learning and the four language skills.

In Backward Design however, the teacher would start with the end in mind, what Wiggins and Mc Tighe (2005) call “an essential question” (p.105): “What learning for life would be interesting and relevant for this group of learners?” and “What real life scenarios could be simulated so that they could give evidence of what they have learned?” Once he has answered that question he would think about how that evidence could be measured. It is then when the performance task is designed and the criteria for evaluation selected. In our unit of work, the driving question could be: “What are the similarities and differences between teenagers’ lifestyles in Uruguay and in the US?”. And the possible scenario could be to prepare a presentation for a group of US teenagers telling them about Uruguayan adolescents. If possible a real opportunity of exchange could be promoted and the presentation would become an authentic cultural exchange. Instructional design would come more naturally once this scenario has been decided and described. The range of vocabulary to be taught would be narrowed to school routines, free-time activities, clothes and fashion, and grammar would be about simple present, frequency adverbs, question words and question forms. Learners would read and listen to model presentations and real fact files about the foreign teenage lifestyle, rehearse conversations asking and giving information, practise writing informally using WhatsApp or Facebook to post comments or chat, etc.

Summative and formative evaluation would both be applicable but at different moments of this process. Drills, exercises and quizzes would be relevant when the discreet elements of the language are being practised: before and after the communicative performance takes place. Portfolios, discussions, public speaking and performance tasks would be more in the area of formative assessment as they include several aspects of the language in an integrated and holistic authentic or authentic-like task.

At this point it seems important to dedicate some time to the instruments of evaluation, as they will be used for the students to self-evaluate their work on the platform. When learners are expected to work more independently as it happens in VLEs, the criteria of evaluation need to be clearly specified. Consequently, rubrics of evaluation seem to be the most appropriate tool to assess the students' performances previously described.

#### 5.6.2.1. What are rubrics of evaluation?

It was not until recently, many years after I had departed from my pre-service years, that I learned about evaluation rubrics. They started to be used with the advent of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and its strong forms which promoted students' self-evaluation at the end of the lessons, and even included their voice in designing the syllabus. Represented graphically as double-entry tables, analytical rubrics are used to show the main elements of students' performance that are being evaluated, describing at the same time the levels of proficiency they are expected to achieve and the ones they are expected to overcome. The next figure (figure 7) represents an example of an analytical rubric designed on the platform used for the current project. As it can be appreciated in figure 7, the task in this case is *participating in a discussion forum*. The column for the *criteria* shows the three aspects on which students have to focus when they perform the task: the frequency of their intervention, the quality of their contribution and the language mechanics. This is also what the teacher will observe when evaluating the students work. The other four columns on the right, show the description of what the students' performance could be like, clearly showing students what is expected from them at the end of the process. Besides, and provided the rubrics are shared with the learners at the beginning of the unit, which is mandatory in VLEs, they will be able to check at which level of achievement they are during the process.

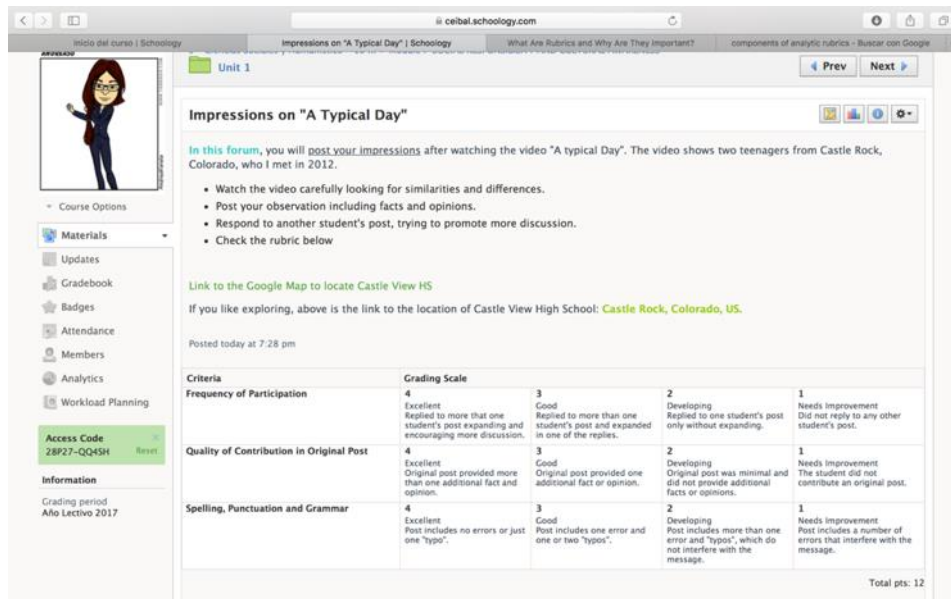


Figure 7: Analytic rubric to evaluate participation in a forum, from the course *Ciencias Sociales y Humanistico-10-Vespertino*, Crea2, Plan Ceibal. Shared with the permission of the administrators of the platform Crea2, Plan Ceibal. Created by the author.

The advantage of using rubrics is that students are not just given a grade for their effort, they are guided and scaffolded towards success. Their performance matches a description and they are helped to understand where they are and they can get involved in reflecting what they need to do to improve. Rubrics evaluate process not only product. As Brookhart (2013) states:

The genius of rubrics is that they are descriptive and not evaluative. Of course, rubrics can be used to evaluate, but the operating principle is that you match the performance to the description rather than "judge" it. Thus, rubrics are as good or bad as the criteria selected and the descriptions of the levels of performance under each. Effective rubrics have appropriate criteria and well-written descriptions of performance. (p.4)

In the following section I will refer to the approach that will be supporting the implementation of this type of evaluation as well as the typology of materials and activities that will be implemented. It is worth highlighting that both methodology and evaluation are part of the same process and as such they should be adequately synchronized.

## 6. Results and Discussion

### 6.1. Materials

What follows, is the sequence of activities as they were presented to students and uploaded to the platform. They have been described in the form of a teacher's plan, including the objectives for every lesson and the description of the different tasks. The paper format versions and the screenshots of the activities on the platform have been included in the appendices. It seems of relevance to justify here, the presence of the above-named screenshots, as this course was piloted in 2016. As a result, it has finished and the virtual class has already been filed by the administrators of Crea2. It is of further relevance to mention, that permission for sharing those screenshots has been granted by Ceibal, on request of the author of the present project. Some of the material was written and delivered to learners in the target language (English), while some other was produced in the mother tongue (Spanish). Although the rationale for this appears explained in the corresponding stage of the forthcoming sequence, it should be stated in advance that for one part, English is taught in Uruguay as a foreign language and that on the other hand, very few teachers have attempted to use of VLEs with face-to-face secondary school students. Consequently, the need for L1 tutorials to facilitate students' access to the platform or to give initial instruction has arisen.

Another aspect that needs to be clarified here, refers to the diagnostic activities, which, as it is specified in the national syllabus for secondary school in Uruguay, are to be applied during the first month of classes. Although they are not the focus of this work, they must be referred to as they aimed at three main goals:

- Diagnose the skills of reading and listening

As stated above, the diagnosis is part of the national curriculum. Therefore, it is mandatory. Teachers must leave them at the institutions where they work, as evidence of their application, process the results, and register them in the Teacher's Book. However, it has traditionally had the format of a quiz and served more the purpose of evaluating students' performance than providing them and their teachers with information about their strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, I decided to separate the diagnostic activities according to the different skills and evaluate the results directly after completion. Hence, students would increase awareness of their strengths and which ones required immediate attention.

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- Provide the students with an opportunity to practise working online autonomously
- This project was intended as part of a blended course and students had the possibility of completing the diagnostic on paper. However, uploading the diagnostic activities to a platform would increase learners' independent work in contrast to what happens in classroom-based courses where the teacher is physically present to provide solutions.
- Serve as useful input for the blended unit as students had to read and listen to content related with the life of teenagers from other cultures

For the above mentioned reasons, these activities were included on the platform in a folder called *Diagnostic Activities* (see appendix 9 and 10) , for students to work with them independently and to be exposed to input related to the lifestyles of teenagers from other cultures.

## 6.2. Learning Sequence and Schedule of activities

Week 1

### Aims:

- To generate rapport between teacher and students and among students as well.
- To start promoting speaking and listening, activating students' background knowledge related to meeting people for the first time.
- To start using a platform to communicate in the target language.
- To introduce the topic of Cultural Awareness
- To explain the performance assessment task for the end of the unit.
- To study students' accessibility to the Internet and electronic devices

**Content Objective:** Personal Profiles

### Language Objectives:

To activate students' previous knowledge of Simple Present, family words, verbs to express routines and preferences, frequency adverbs, clothes, sports, colours, etc.

### Description of Performance Assessment for the students.

According to the Backward Design approach (Richards,2013), learners should be made aware of the main goal as well as how it will be assessed, the earliest possible in the development of the unit. By doing so, a factor of unity and contextualization will be evident, apart from providing the sequence of selected activities with sense and purpose.

Students will receive a written description of the performance assessment task expected

for the end of the unit (see the materials after the appendices). This performance will be used as

evidence of students’ learning and achievement of the main goal of the unit: *bridging the cultural gap*. The rubric for the evaluation of this final task will also be explained to learners as well as uploaded to the platform at this stage. Figure 8 is a screenshot of the task as it appears on the platform and figure 9 is the rubric of evaluation.

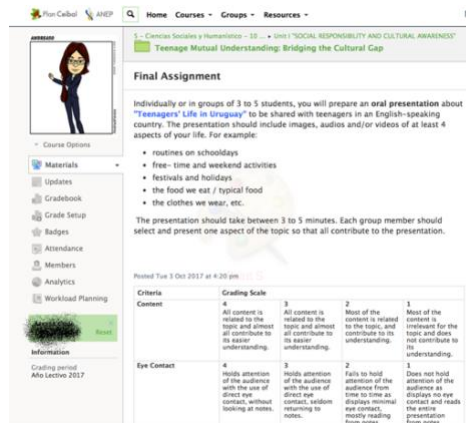


Figure 8: Final task as it appears on the platform. Retrieved from <https://ceibal.schoolology.com/assignment/1292745910/info> Shared with the permission of the administrators of the platform Crea2, Plan Ceibal. Created by the author.

Posted Tue 3 Oct 2017 at 4:20 pm

Criteria	Grading Scale			
Content	4 All content is related to the topic and almost all contribute to its easier understanding.	3 All content is related to the topic and almost all contribute to its easier understanding.	2 Most of the content is related to the topic, and contribute to its understanding.	1 Most of the content is irrelevant for the topic and does not contribute to its understanding.
Eye Contact	4 Holds attention of the audience with the use of direct eye contact, without looking at notes.	3 Holds attention of the audience with the use of direct eye contact, seldom returning to notes.	2 Fails to hold attention of the audience from time to time as displays minimal eye contact, mostly reading from notes.	1 Does not hold attention of the audience as displays no eye contact and reads the entire presentation from notes.
Pronunciation	4 Intonation is fluid and meaningful although at times reads. Pronunciation is correct. Accompanies with body language.	3 Intonation is meaningful almost always. Some mispronunciation that does not interfere with the msg. Uses body language.	2 In general intonation is meaningful but it becomes monotonous at times. Sometimes the pronunciation interferes with communication.	1 Intonation is monotonous and meaningless. The pronunciation interferes with communication.
Fluency	4 Manages to deliver the message in articulated utterance with very little hesitation.	3 Manages to articulate meaningful utterances with some hesitation	2 Manages to some articulate meaningful utterances with a lot of hesitation	1 Only produces isolated words to communicate

Total pts: 16

Figure 9: Rubric of evaluation for the Final Performance Assessment at the end of the unit designed for this project. Retrieved from <https://ceibal.schoolology.com/assignment/1292745910/info> Shared with the permission of the administrators of the platform Crea2, Plan Ceibal. Created by the author.

### Task 1: “Getting to Know Each Other”

In class, students will be invited to open Facebook on their mobile phones and search for the teacher’s work profile, as it appears in figure 10 and which was especially created for this purpose. It is relevant to mention that in Uruguay it is not illegal to have students on teachers’ Facebook accounts. The Administration of National Public Education (Administración Nacional de Educación Pública – ANEP) uses Facebook for communications. In this account, the Director of Secondary Schools among other actors of the education system, posts news and relevant information for secondary schools.:

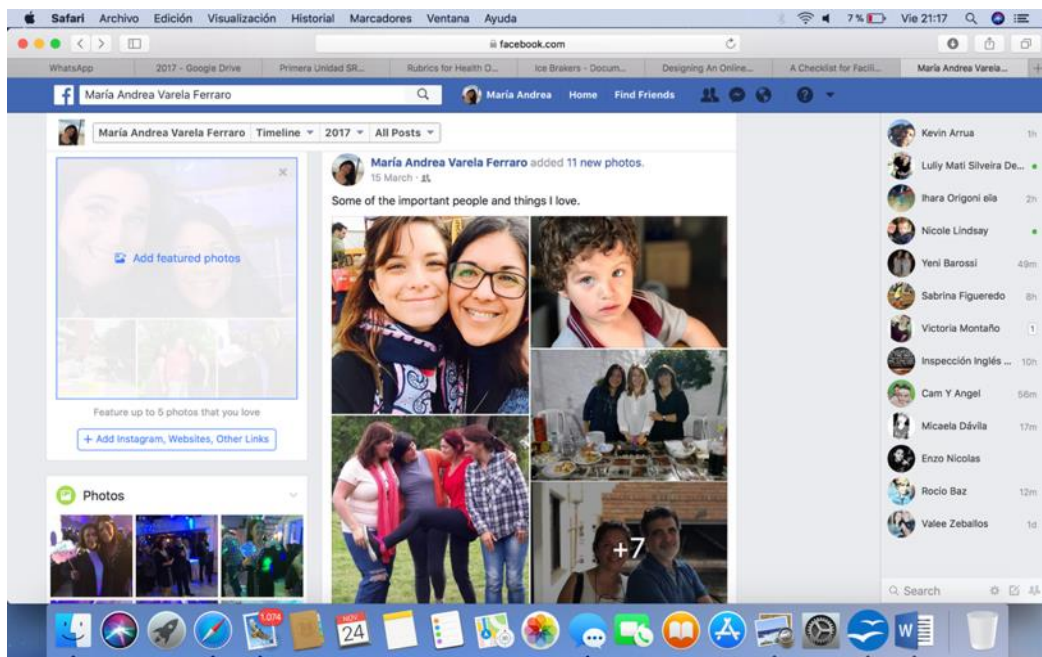


Figure 10: Teacher’s work Facebook profile specially created for this course. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/mariaandrea.varelaferraro.5>

In the teacher’s profile, they will find an album with a selection of photographs which will be used as a model presentation made by the teacher for the students. Students will be encouraged to pick a picture and make oral comments or ask questions to the teacher about it to start a conversation.

As homework, students will be asked to complete the survey called “Acceso a Internet y Uso de Dispositivos”, the link to which, will be inserted in the same social platform. (See appendix 1)

Afterwards, students will be informed about Schoology (2018), the platform that they will be using to complement the face to face course, and invited to download the mobile application to their mobile phones.

**Preparation for Task 2:**

Students will receive a handout with a tutorial to access the virtual classroom. This handout will be written in Spanish in order to make sure learners can more easily access the learning platform, distributed in paper format and uploaded to the Facebook group. (See appendix 2)

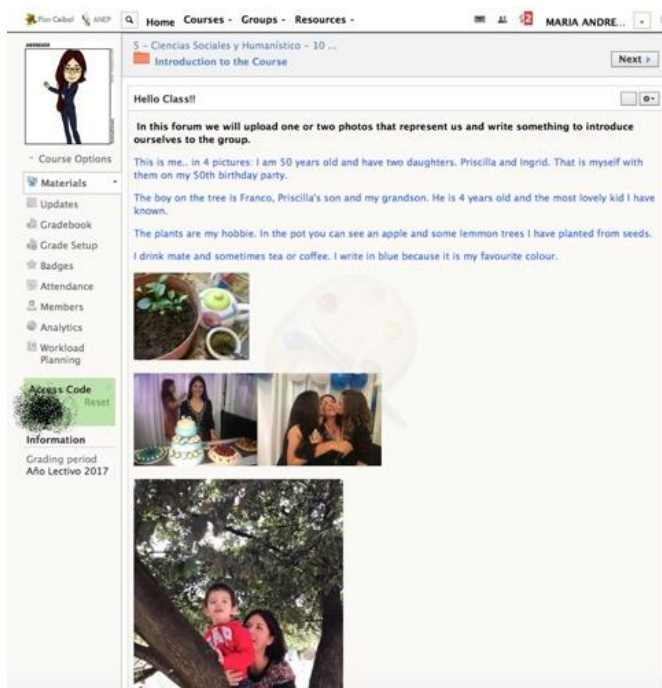
**Week 2****Aims:**

- To continue getting acquainted with the platform
- To start working in the Computer Lab
- To carry out the diagnostic activities
- To promote self-evaluation and metacognitive skills.
- To provide students with useful input for the main aim of the unit

**Content Objective:** Cultural Awareness and getting to know each other.

**Language Objectives:**

Reading and writing skills practice through written exchange on Crea2, Schoology.

**Task 2: “Hello Class!”**

Students will be taken to the Computer Lab to complete their register and access the course in Crea2. Once there, they will find the first online task: *Introducing Myself*. Students will introduce themselves in pictures in reply to a forum started by the teacher. They will have to upload 4 pictures and write a brief description about them as shown in figure 11. Figure 12 shows the folder called *Introduction to the Course*, where the Hello Class! forum appears.

Figure 11: The activity “Hello Class!” as it appears on the VLE. Retrieved from

<https://ceibal.schoology.com/course/1101821820/materials> Shared with the permission of the administrators of the platform Crea2, Plan Ceibal. Created by the author.

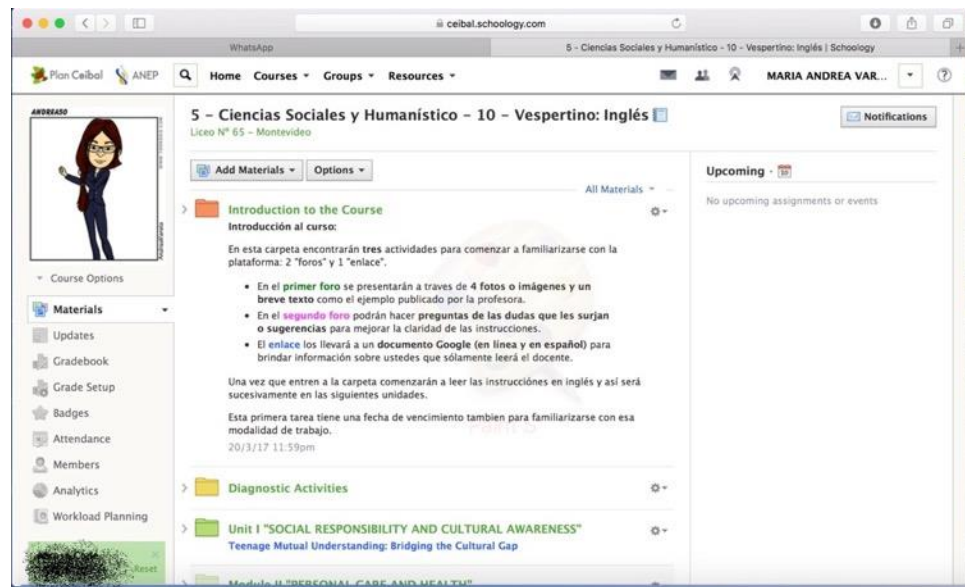


Figure 12: The folder *Introduction to the Course* as it appears on the platform. Shared with the permission of the administrators of the platform Crea2, Plan Ceibal. Created by the author.

This activity can be initiated in class and completed at home. Students will receive a handout to be used as a guide while working online in class and later at home on their own (see the materials after the appendices). It can also be used to prepare the drafts (in classroom and/or at home) of their contribution on paper before posting them on the platform.

### Task 3: Personal Information Form

In order to know students better and get them more acquainted with online resources, they will be asked to fill in the personal information Google Form through a link in the same folder (see appendix 3). This activity can be completed at home and will have a due date so that students get used to deadlines for online assignments.

### Tasks 4 and 5: Online autonomous practice: Diagnostic Activities

Students will be made aware of the folder called *Diagnostic Activities*, containing reading and listening quizzes and instructed to work on them from home for the next two weeks. For a study of their language proficiency level, students will complete the **Quick Placement Test** (see appendix 4). They will also receive a copy of all these in the paper-based materials that appear at the end of this work. The rationale for the paper-based materials is the assumption that some students are not able to access the platform.

Weeks 3 and 4

**Aims:**

- To provide learners with a model presentation of the lifestyle of teenagers from another culture.
- To give groups class time to start the process of writing the drafts of their presentations.
- To start Ceibal Conversation Classes

**Content Objective:** Teenagers lifestyles: differences and similarities

**Language Objectives:**

- To introduce the concepts of opinion and fact.
- Diagnostic and practice of the writing skill and practice of the oral skill introducing themselves to Nicole, the American RT.

**Preparation for Task6:**

(Class should move to the Computer Lab).

In class, afterhaving students remember the end of unit task, they will be shown a video called “A typical day” made by students from Castle View High School in Castle Rock, Colorado US. (Figure 13). Comments will be elicited about similarities and differences between the two cultures. Students will have read the texts about cultural differences of teenagers so they are expected to use the vocabulary included there apart from their own ideas.



Figure 13: Video “Typical Day” as it appears on the platform. Shared with the permission of the administrators of the platform Crea2, Plan Ceibal. Created by the author.

Using the ideas they produce, teacher can show the difference between subjective opinions and facts. For example, Uruguayan students are expected to make comments such as: “Their refrigerator is full!!!”, “They drive to school!!!” or “They dress inappropriately/stylish for school”. They will be encouraged to discover when they are describing facts and when they are making judgements or following a stereotype. (See the handout in the materials after the appendices)

**Task6: “A Typical Day”**

On the platform, in the folder called **Teenage Mutual Understanding\_ Bridging the Cultural Gap**, they will post their comments about the video, considering a rubric of evaluation to perform at the expected level or learn whether they need to improve the writing skill. In case they have not been able to register yet, they will be allowed to participate in the same task on Facebook. (See Appendix 5)

5 – Ciencias Sociales y Humanístico – 10 ... • Unit I "SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND CULTURAL AWARENESS"  
**Teenage Mutual Understanding: Bridging the Cultural Gap** [Prev] [Next]

**Impressions on "A Typical Day"**

In this forum, you will post your impressions after watching the video "A typical Day". The video shows two teenagers from Castle Rock, Colorado, who I met in 2012.

- Watch the video carefully looking for similarities and differences.
- Post your observation including facts and opinions.
- Respond to another student's post, trying to promote more discussion.
- Check the rubric below

[Link to the Google Map to locate Castle View HS](#)

If you like exploring, above is the link to the location of Castle View High School: [Castle Rock, Colorado, US.](#)

Posted Tue 3 Oct 2017 at 7:28 pm

Criteria	Grading Scale			
<b>Frequency of Participation</b>	<b>4</b> Excellent Replied to more than one student's post expanding and encouraging more discussion.	<b>3</b> Good Replied to more than one student's post and expanded in one of the replies.	<b>2</b> Developing Replied to one student's post only without expanding.	<b>1</b> Needs Improvement Did not reply to any other student's post.
<b>Quality of Contribution in Original Post</b>	<b>4</b> Excellent Original post provided more than one additional fact and opinion.	<b>3</b> Good Original post provided one additional fact or opinion.	<b>2</b> Developing Original post was minimal and did not provide additional facts or opinions.	<b>1</b> Needs Improvement The student did not contribute an original post.
<b>Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar</b>	<b>4</b> Excellent Post includes no errors or just one "typo".	<b>3</b> Good Post includes one error and one or two "typos".	<b>2</b> Developing Post includes more than one error and "typos", which do not interfere with the message.	<b>1</b> Needs Improvement Post includes a number of errors that interfere with the message.

Total pts: 12

Figure 14: Impressions on "A Typical Day" as uploaded to the platform. Retrieved from <https://ceibal.schoology.com/course/1101821820/materials/discussion/view/1292987830> Shared with the permission of the administrators of the platform Crea2, Plan Ceibal. Created by the author.

**Task 7: Collaborative Writing (to be done in class)**

Students should have joined in groups to start working on their final presentations. Consequently they will be granted class time to discuss, modify, round up and hand in their written advances.

**Task 8: Conversation Class**

At a certain point of this week and after online coordination with the Remote Teacher from Ceibal Conversation Class Program, the students will be introduced to Nicole, the RT. This will be an excellent opportunity to have a real cultural exchange during which, both, learners and remote teacher will present their respective cultures, mediated by the Classroom Teacher.

Figure 15 shows a screenshot of the first negotiations between RT and CT and the drafts of the RT plans for the first encounter with the students as shared on Google Drive can be seen in Appendix 6

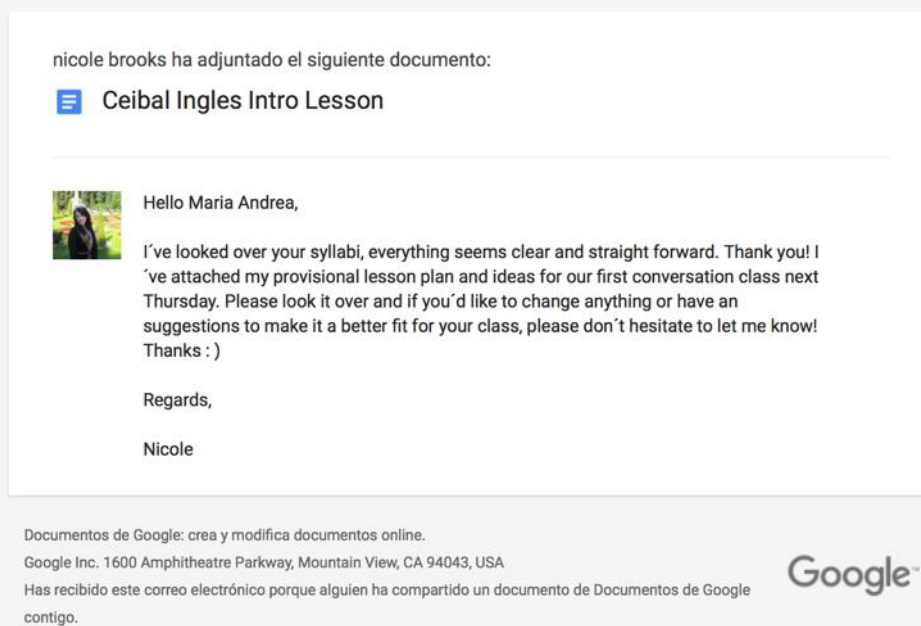


Figure 15: Email between Classroom Teacher (CT) and Remote Teacher (RT) at the beginning of Ceibal Conversation Classes.

**EASTER RECESS (Week 5)**



Week 6 and 7

**Aims:**

- To mediate and facilitate Conversation Classes led by the RT Nicole
- To discuss orally the concept of stereotypes.
- **Oral Presentations**

**Content Objectives:** Stereotypes: the British and the Uruguayans' lifestyles contrasted, promoting self-awareness regarding the Uruguayan stereotype.

**Language Objectives:**

- Integration of skills: reading as a source of input to participate in oral discussion.
- Practice of language for debate: giving opinions, agreeing and disagreeing, thinking supporting reasons and finding logical evidence.

The remote teacher will use the lesson plan provided to her by Ceibal on the platform. Although the lesson is expected to be followed by the RT as posted, it will be slightly modified during delivery, as we will add examples connected to Task 6. (Appendices 7 and 8 display the screenshots of the resources as published by Ceibal, 2017; Appendices 9 and 10 show the lesson plan and a link to access the PowerPoint presentation, both provided by Ceibal and which the RT can modify to connect with this project).

### The 5 Steps to Becoming a Stereotypical Brit

**Step # 1:** the British love to drink tea: You must drink endless cups of tea, you should refuse to drink absolutely anything else.

**Step # 2:** British people are obsessed with Harry Potter: You should, of course, absolutely adore Harry Potter. You must carry a copy of all seven books with you at all times,

**Step # 3:** the British are overly polite: As a Brit, you should start and finish every phrase by excusing yourself with 'sorry'. Equally, you must repeat 'please' and 'thank you' at least five times within a sentence.

Figure 16: Slide 3 of the power point presentation about stereotypes presented by the RT. Shared with the permission of the administrators of the platform Crea2, Plan Ceibal and shared on Google Drive.

The oral presentations will take place both during the 45-minute conversation class in front of the RT, and during the ordinary class with the CT. More confident students will be invited to present first and those who need more support or are less extrovert will be allowed more time and to present before a smaller audience.

## 4.1. Results

### 4.1.1. Results of Diagnostic Activities.

The diagnostic activities that were carried out at the beginning of the implementation of the unit provided the following results:

Table 7

#### *Diagnostic Listening Activity*

Diagnostic Listening Activity	Total number of students	Number of students who completed the assignment	Acceptable (above 60%)	In need of improvement (below 40%)
	26	21	13	3

Note: Created by the author.

Table 8

#### *Diagnostic Reading Activities*

Diagnostic Reading Activities	Total number of students	Number of students who completed the assignment	Level A1	Level A2	Level B1
	26	23	15	4	4

Note: Created by the author.

From the quantitative data in tables 7 and 8, I could observe that most of the students were able to understand spoken English. This understanding would enable them to follow the classroom-based lesson in the target language. Regarding the reading skill, 65% of the students were below the required level to start the 5th grade. Although the expected level is A2, 15 students achieved an A1 level. The reason for the outcome observed could be the speed at which students process the information, the level of tolerance to failure, and the degree of strategy awareness for successful reading. The students and I arrived at this qualitative conclusions during the feedback session after they had completed the activities. This information was relevant to the use of the platform essentially because students would need support especially with reading strategies and feelings of failure.

#### 4.1.1. Results of the survey: “Acceso a Internet y Uso de Dispositivos” / [Internet Access and Use of Technological Devices]

This survey was conducted in Spanish (L1) as it was implemented at the beginning of the course when the relationship between the teacher and students was at its initial stage and rapport was being established. The aim of the survey was to determine the students' accessibility to the Internet and electronic devices and it was designed using Google Forms in Google Drive, as it can be seen in Appendix 4. The students accessed the form following the link inserted in the Facebook account created for the purpose of school work and through which, the virtual platform, Crea2 in Schoology (2018) would be introduced.

What follows is the analysis of the results of the answers of 30 participants, belonging to the different groups taught by the author of this project and provided in the form of graphics. The first question aimed at accessibility to the Internet. Figure 17 shows that most students (29 students out of 30) have connectivity at home and 18 of them access to Internet at school.

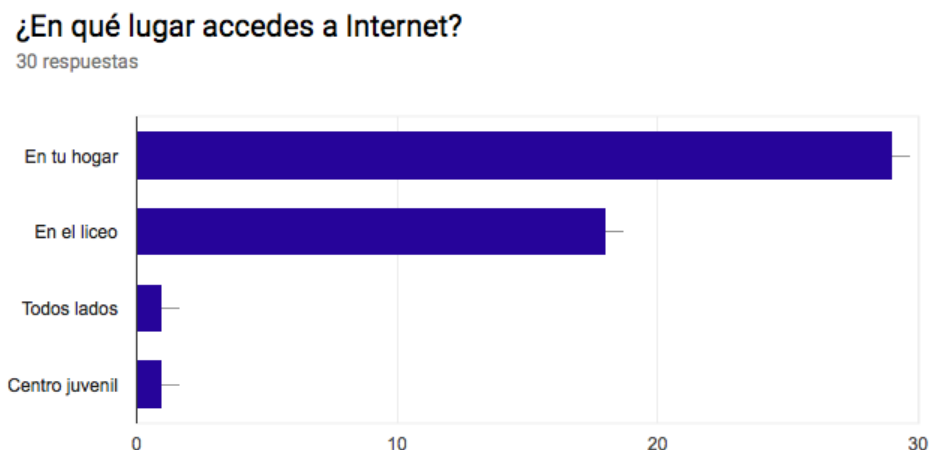


Figure 17: Students' accessibility to Internet. The figure illustrates the most frequent place where the students surveyed access the Internet. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/forms/Ro4GTY1ZzDy6sLO63> Created by the author.

The second question provided information about the devices the learners use to connect to the Internet (see figure 18). Students could opt for more than one of the following devices: personal computer, notebook, “Ceibalita” (the notebook provided by Plan Ceibal) or smartphone. The results confirmed the a-priory hypothesis reached during initial conversations with colleagues: 28 out of 30 students have a cellular phone with internet connection. This would represent a limitation at the moment of designing activities as not all devices have the same capacity and connectivity at school is irregular. Apart from that, the graphic shows that very few of them would be able to complete tasks at home: only

33,3% of the students surveyed have access to portable computers and just 23,3% have personal computers at home.

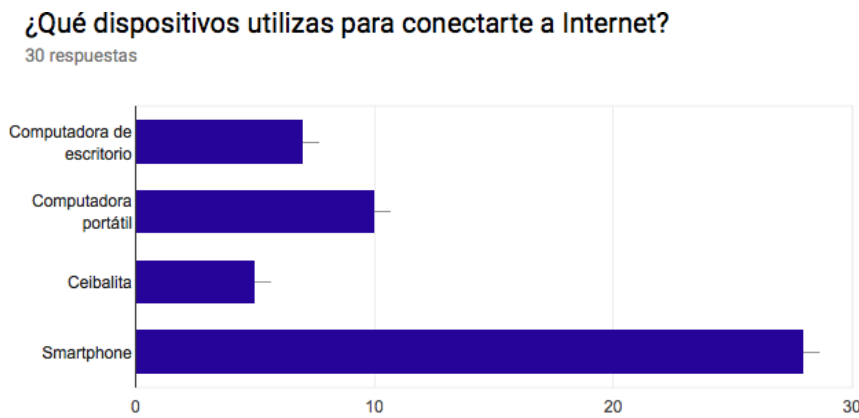


Figure 18: Electronic Devices. The figure shows the devices students most frequently use to connect to the Internet. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/forms/Ro4GTY1ZzDy6sLO63> Created by the author.

Figure 19 represents the number of students who had previously worked on the target platform. 77.8% of the participants said that they had never used Crea2.

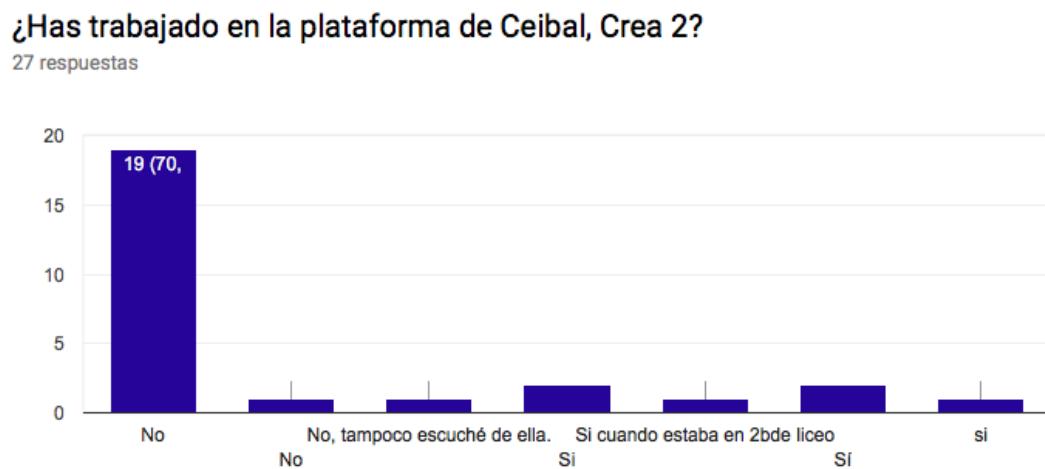


Figure 19: Students' familiarity with the platform. The figure shows the number of students who had worked on the platform before. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/forms/Ro4GTY1ZzDy6sLO63> Created by the author.

The last question in the survey asked students their opinion about using virtual learning environments. What follows is the translation of an extract of appendix 14:

In the first year of high school I remember working with the Ceibal platform for mathematics. The problem that I had continuously was that the teacher did not know much about the platform, and wanted to use it anywhere, and he did, although he had conflicts with accounts, mixed platforms and was not well informed of those who had access to the Internet. Of course, there were many

other factors that made the use of platforms to have failed in this case, but what I mean, is that you have to analyze the situation to use new methods, and this varies depending on who does it. Therefore, they will not always give the same results. There are also very positive things to implement these resources, for example, it is different to do exercises in the classroom than at home, it may be that the student in question feels more confident doing activities from home, where he can search for information, make mistakes, return to try it. Something that demotivates many students is receiving a bad grade in front of the class. Also, it can be done in any place where one has access, which saves time. (Lesly, 5<sup>th</sup> grader, Liceo 65)

The above results anticipated the fact that although the implementation of a blended course was feasible, it would require more time to get face-to-face students acquainted with the platform. This would be probably much easier with students that took part in the online programme for students living abroad (UPEM, Uruguayos Por El Mundo).

#### 4.1.2. Results of the Personal Information Form

The personal information form (see appendix 7) examined matters related to students' background and learning styles. The following graphs reveal the results of the questionnaire. Although just 9 students responded to it, the results represent a sample of the group.

Figure 20 shows how students prefer to work. While 22,2% prefer to follow instructions, 33,3% like to contribute with their original ideas.



Figure 20: Screenshot of graphics showing the kind of task students prefer. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/forms/Ro4GTy1ZzDy6sLO63> Created by the author.

Figure 21 shows the activities students prefer to participate. Most students (66,7%) prefer to read or watch, while the minority (11,1%) expressed that they prefer to learn by manipulating and experimenting.



Figure 21: Screenshot of graphics showing the kind of activities students prefer. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/forms/Ro4GTY1ZzDy6sLO63> Created by the author.

In figure 22 we can see the reasons these students have to come to school. 55,6% declare that they come to school to complete their studies and obtain a good job. 33,3 % of the students who participated in this survey come to school because they want to learn. The rest of them (11,1%) study because they want to finish secondary school. Nobody claimed to be forced to study.



Figure 22: Screenshot of graphics showing the reasons these students have to come to school. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/forms/Ro4GTY1ZzDy6sLO63> Created by the author.

#### 4.1.3. Results of the survey: “Encuesta Docente sobre Entornos Virtuales de Aprendizaje” / [Teacher Survey on Virtual Learning Environments]

This survey (See Appendix 15) was initially intended for colleagues working with the same students this project was being implemented with. However, as participation was scarce

and time limited, it was extended to teachers of other levels working at the same institution. The result might prove to be more enlightening than if it had only included the teachers from the selected group. As figure 23 shows, teachers of Biology, Art, Philosophy, History, Literature, Maths and English answered the survey. Something that seems relevant to mention, is that colleagues were also willing to collaborate and learn about the object of the survey.

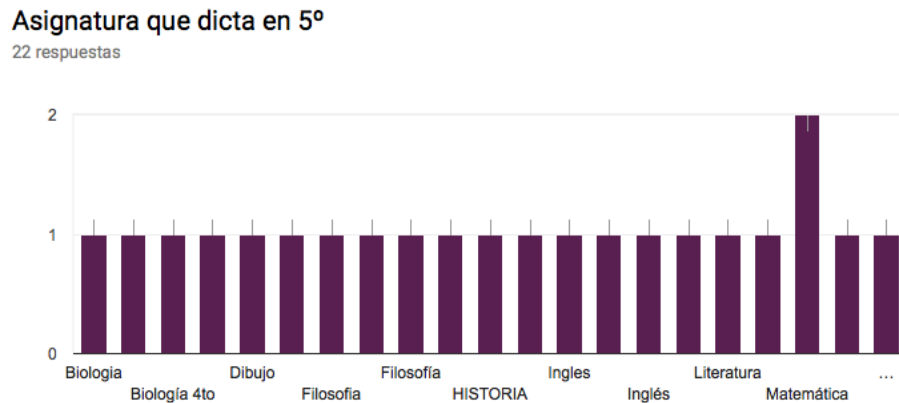


Figure 23: Surveyed Teachers' Subjects. The figure illustrates the different subjects taught by the teachers surveyed. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/forms/wdphmHqj4F33envt2> Created by the author.

The next graphic (figure 24) confirmed the hypothesis formulated previously in this section. 36.4% of the teachers surveyed do not know any virtual platform being currently in use in secondary school.

**¿Conoce algún VLE que se utilice en CES actualmente? (Por favor nombrar los que conoce en "otro")**  
22 respuestas

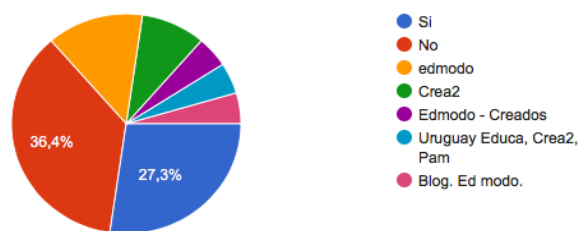


Figure 24: Teachers' Knowledge of the Platform. The figure shows the different platforms teachers are familiar with. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/forms/wdphmHqj4F33envt2> Created by the author.

50% of the teachers who answered affirmatively to the previous question, said that they had used them. However, only 9.1% manifested they were familiar with Crea2.

What follows are some of the teachers' opinions:

- “very practical, improves communication and the learning continues outside the classroom”

- “I had to be very insistent for students to use the platform, I had better results with the social networks students already used”
- “I haven’t used them for they are time consuming at the beginning”
- “I need students to work hands-on”
- “It would be interesting some kind of support to teachers maybe in a teachers’ meeting, so as to be able to learn to manage or improve the handling of these tools”
- “lack of tools per classroom to work with these devices, TV connections, equipment in general, there is no culture or tools for these devices”.



## 5. Conclusions

### 5.1. Main Achievements

The present project originated from the understanding of the author that some students' needs and many teachers' concerns are not being sufficiently met by the current mainstream Uruguayan national English syllabus. Simultaneously, increasing awareness of the wide variety of possibilities that the new technologies known as Communication Technologies (ICTs) started to bring to the education field and the consequent emergence of new pedagogies provoked in me the need to carry out some exploratory research in this respect. With the purpose of confirming this understanding, I designed an online thematic unit of work and used it to support the classroom-based course I was teaching at the public secondary school where I worked. I developed the unit on the virtual learning environment (VLE) provided by Ceibal, Crea2, and partially implemented it at the beginning of the year 2017.

The first specific objective was to identify learners' needs to design materials adjusted to them. To achieve this, I had informal conversations before the courses started with colleagues who had worked with the same students in previous years. These interviews provided me with relevant information regarding the learners' access to electronic devices and to the Internet, their social background and emotional characteristics. Furthermore, the interviews gave me the perspective my colleagues had regarding virtual learning environments. They were still reluctant to use VLEs to support classroom-based courses.

There is an extended impression that using online resources increases the burden of work. Therefore, when the course started, I confirmed these assumptions with the electronic survey for students, *Acceso a Internet y Uso de Dispositivos* / [Access to Internet and Use of Technological Devices] (see appendix 4), carried out in Spanish in order to let students communicate with confidence. As it can be seen in the previous section, the results of this survey confirmed the feasibility of the project in terms of access to electronic devices. I learned that although most of these students did not count with the *Ceibalitas*, the laptops provided to students of *Ciclo Básico* of the Secondary School Council, I could rely on their smart phones with access to the Internet to implement the use of the VLE.

Regarding the socio-affective aspect of my initial inquiries about the group, I only obtained answers from 9 students in the group. However, those answers gave me a sample of the

kind of group dynamics and the activities that these learners favoured. Finally, the diagnostic activities, served the purpose of making learners aware of their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the listening and reading skills.

It seems relevant to state here that this research of learners' needs had a very positive impact on their attitude to classwork. They became aware of the teacher's concern on their motivations and authentic learning, which resulted in more engagement towards learning on the part of the students.

The second objective was to familiarize learners with a VLE and the different types of activities. I consider this is one of the objectives that was partially achieved. Although students enthusiastically joined the closed groups on Facebook corresponding to their class, it took some time at the beginning of the course to have students "migrate" from Facebook to Crea2. Students registered on the platform when guided by the teacher in the school computer lab but not all of them completed the activities suggested there when left alone to work from home. There was some resistance to download the application to their smart phones for the different reasons studied in the previous section. Therefore, as a tutor, I saw myself in the need to return to the original social network, taking advantage of the closed groups available there or paper versions of the activities to be done in class or at home.

The next specific objective, to promote the use of digital resources among teachers as well as among students, is still in process and requires further work. There is a fact that must be considered, and it is that this project represents an innovation in secondary school. Many of the teachers who work with the same students this project was designed for, do not normally use a VLE to support students' learning. This hypothesis, which was formulated in the process and during the evaluation of the project, was proved after the implementation of a second survey called "Encuesta Docente sobre Entornos Virtuales de Aprendizaje" / [Teacher Survey on Virtual Learning Environments]. (See appendix 7)

As it can be appreciated in the previous analysis of results, the teachers surveyed demonstrated interest in knowing more about VLEs. Although they had not used VLEs before, were the conditions given, some of them would consider implementing some form of virtual learning. This is because it is seen as part of students' life and would facilitate ongoing learning.

With regards to the next three specific objectives:

- to promote collaborative work both among teachers and students,
- to promote self-assessment and peer assessment by means of rubrics created with the participation of teachers and students in its design,
- and to promote integrated performance assessment,

the conclusions prove to be more rewarding as the other teachers of English at the school started to use some of the most popular social networks for academic purposes. Two of them created closed groups on Facebook to provide students with materials, make announcements or generate written debate in the form of comments to a post made by the teachers or the students themselves. Outstandingly, all of them started to use Google Drive to design and share materials with colleagues to be used in class. A greater synchrony and a better work environment could be experienced as the collaborative culture became more evident among the English staff. What follows is the testimony of two English teachers from Liceo 65 in Montevideo, Uruguay:

At the beginning I was a bit reluctant to try Google Drive. My colleague kept encouraging me so I gave it a try. It was really much better to work with her online, connected at the same time, on the same documents: plans, tests, activities, etc., sharing ideas and materials. I feel the results of our collaborative work were so good that I will keep using it and promoting its use. (Briature, A., Liceo 65, Montevideo, Uruguay)

Using Google Drive has saved me a lot of time as it has enabled me to work cooperatively with other colleagues while being able to chat or add comments to the documents at the same time. Now, it is possible to work from home without having to get together or wait for the other person to complete his/her task in a document to send it back by mail. Furthermore, we can share different material such as files, documents and books and have them at the click of a finger in case we need them on our cell phones. (Sosa, E., Liceo 65, Montevideo, Uruguay)

Finally, regarding self-assessment and peer assessment, students became notoriously engaged in learning about their own processes and what they could do to improve their performance. The rubrics were analysed and understood and when the moment to deliver their presentations came, students tried to achieve the standards described in the highest levels of the rubrics.

Considering the previous section and the conclusions, it has become evident that using a blended format in face-to-face course increases motivation and engagement in students. However, it does not happen the same with the acceptance of a virtual learning environment as the means to deliver those lessons, on the part of the teachers, for a number of factors deriving from the previous study:

- the knowledge and use of VLEs is not extended among teachers, which generates the expected reluctance to include them in their lesson planning,
- the One Laptop per Child program does not reach students in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade high school and although they were supposed to have received a “Ceibalita” during their middle school years they have left them behind in space and time due to the little use those laptops were given,
- connectivity at school is irregular,
- not all students have their own internet access or sufficient space in their smartphones to download the corresponding applications.

As those same learners were allowed to continue working using the social network of their preference, instead of Crea2 many of the expected aims could be achieved:

- home assignment completion increased
- communication student-teacher and student-student increased
- interest in the activities became more evident as students asked questions to understand and achieve objectives even during school recess,
- creativity increased
- participation increased, as students could do it without feeling “exposed”,
- peer and self-assessment started to be more evident,
- known online resources became part of classroom work and new ones were incorporated.

In spite of the obstacles, the benefits clearly outnumbered the weaknesses. It could be anticipated, as a new hypothesis to be proven with a following implementation of this project, that it would be more successfully completed in an online course such as “Uruguayos Por El Mundo”.

As a mode of conclusion, figure 25 will serve as an illustration of what has just been stated. It is the testimony of a student in the group studied at the end of the course:

What I liked most of the course was the topic on “social networks”. It is a very interesting issue as we are permanently connected. It is good to know and be

informed about what we use, what we have to do when we chat online with people we don't know and avoid something bad that could happen.

(Translation from Sharon's testimony, student from 5H10, Liceo 65)

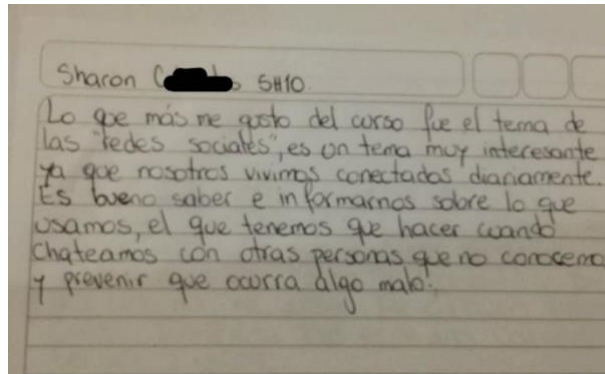


Figure 25: The figure shows a student's opinion of using social networks as a class topic. Photo taken by the author.

## 5.2. Limitations of the project.

Although this project was carefully prepared, I am aware of its shortcomings and limitations. The following aspects require reconsideration for future implementations:

### 5.2.1. *The use of a VLE to support class-based courses is still optional in mainstream courses.*

The present project was piloted with a group belonging to the class-based mainstream secondary school program. In this program, students are expected to attend three 45-minute-lessons a week with an on-site English teacher. They have ten other subjects with a different hourly load. The materials and resources selected by the teachers traditionally consist of the coursebook, supplementary materials designed by them and the technological facilities provided by the school. Using VLEs is an alternative liberated to the teachers' decision. In the case of English, the coordination between the secondary school council (CES) and the government program of Ceibal, offers teachers the possibility of enrolling their groups to the Conversation Classes that have been described earlier in this work. However, its implementation is flexible and by no means compulsory. Consequently, many teachers opt not to use them, generating in the learners a sense of discontinuity regarding the use of ICTs from one year to the next.

**5.2.2. *The most appropriate program to pilot it would have been Aulas Alternativas en Línea (AAL).***

As a consequence of the previous limitation, namely that the use of technology and virtual learning environments are still optional, I understood that the given conditions at the institution where I proposed this project did not encourage the integration of virtual learning environments to the classroom-based course. A new hypothesis stemmed from this observation: Aulas Alternativas en Línea (AAL) would have been a better context in which to conduct the present project. Principally because the use of the VLE is a constituent part of the course and both, teachers and learners accept it as the means to plan and complete tasks, cooperate and elaborate strategies to solve obstacles.

At the moment this project was thought however, the AAL program was giving its first steps and I was not participating in it as a tutor. After that first implementation of the unit, it has been applied a second and a third time. The second time was this year (2018) during a two month period at the beginning of the course with a 5<sup>th</sup> grade group at the same high school. The third time is in process I am in charge of another group of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students at Liceo de Cerro Chato, a public secondary school in a small town in Treinta y Tres, Uruguay. The group had been appointed a teacher at the beginning of the year, who was transferred to another position and there was no substitute available in the area. The group, therefore, was eligible for the AAL program and appointed to me at the end of July. It is a three-month term, instead of the regular nine-month annual course. However, it gave me the opportunity to implement the thematic unit again.

A priori, my hypothesis about a better disposition of students belonging to the AAL program could be confirmed. In spite of the fact that with the rest of the subjects the group continue with the classroom-based, face to face modality, once they understood that the VLE was the means to communicate with the English tutor, practice the language and be evaluated, they gradually started to participate and even adopt the “jargon” of the modality. This time the unit was successfully completed and the students could upload their final tasks at the end of it.

**5.2.3. *The faculty at liceo 65 is mainly integrated by senior teachers reluctant to incorporate technology.***

As it was predicted and evidenced throughout the present project, most teachers working at the institution were resistant to incorporate the use of a VLE to their courses. However, they explicitly manifested their interest in collaborating with the project. Furthermore, they

wanted to know about its results and implications. To exemplify the referred reluctance, it seems relevant to mention that during the development of this project, the national authorities started the implementation of the digital grade book. This digital tool aims at migrating from the paper-based account of students' performance to a digitally-based register. Traditionally, tutors write everything concerning students' development and unit-planning in a book called *Libro del Profesor*. Teachers need to do this register in the school because the book is an official document and as such, it cannot be withdrawn from the institution. Adopting this digital register would imply a significant advance as it would give teachers the possibility to update that record from home, utilizing our home computers and even our mobile phones. Notwithstanding this, not one teacher from the faculty at my school volunteered to start using it when suggested by the school principal.

**5.2.4. *The impact of the fixed mindset of the other teachers from the group on the students' positive affect.***

According to psychologist Carol Dweck (2006), we can understand the world either from a fixed mindset or a growth mindset. People guided by a fixed mindset view intelligence as the ability to accomplish tasks accurately. They do not listen to negative criticism and avoid challenges or risk-taking. Conversely, a growth mindset implies giving more emphasis to the process, scilicet the effort required to achieve the outcomes and to learning. Teachers' attitudes reflect their mindsets and affect their learners' responses. If the fixed mindset is installed in the mind of the educator, students will respond from the same mindset. They will give up when they face the first obstacle, and they will not take risks. However, I believe that the use of virtual learning environments and ICTs in general will gradually gain territory both into school syllabi and into fixed mindsets.

“So children with the fixed mindset want to make sure they succeed. Smart people should always succeed. But for children with the growth mindset, success is about stretching themselves. It's about becoming smarter.” (Dweck, 2006, p.39)

**5.2.5. *Connectivity: when it failed we resorted to class work and it was hard to motivate students to return to the platform.***

There were many opportunities when electronic devices lost connectivity, and the students had to complete the activities in the traditional format. When some students realized that it was possible, they stopped accessing the platform to check and do the assignments, making it necessary for the teacher to devise new ways of encouraging students to return to the VLE. Nevertheless, in the case of the AAL group I have the

opportunity to teach this year, there are still some students who have not done the assignments because they ‘forget’ to log in to Crea2 to do them.

**5.2.6. *Time: balance between developing and implementing the project and meeting the goals of the course I was in charge of.***

This unit was designed and partially implemented within a classroom-based course. During the process I had to make a balance between testing it, working with the unit online and allowing the students to resort to the paper version of the activities in order to work with this one and the rest of the units in due time. This proved to be quite challenging because, as it was stated before, the implementation of this project represented an innovation and as a teacher I also needed to learn from the process. This is exactly what has happened. The unit has been developed with three different groups by the same teacher and the best results seem to be the product of the third implementation.

**5.3. Future research lines.**

The idea for the present project originated from the firm belief that the advantages of using VLEs outnumber its drawbacks. The integration of the online unit to the classroom-based plan faced the previously developed limitations which interrupted its complete implementation. However, it has become evident that those limitations mainly correspond to factors that are external to the unit but crucial to its adequate development. In the light of the new opportunity to implement it, this time with a 5th grade from Aulas Alternativas en Línea (AAL), the following evidence was perceived: given the requirement to use a VLE to accomplish specific goals, the external circumstances swiftly adapt to meet the necessary conditions for success. At the micro level of the classroom, this need is principally generated by the teacher. But the classroom is not separated from the institution it belongs to, and the conclusions reached by the combination of the unit of this project to the face to face classes lead to the forthcoming future study lines.

**5.3.1. *To promote technology integration in classroom-based courses.***

The first line into which it seems essential to intensify research implies developing strategies whereby technology can be integrated into the mainstream classroom-based curriculum. Moersch (1994, cited by Moersch 2010, p.22) introduces a frame called Levels of Technology Implementation (LoTi). The LoTi framework describes the stage at which the institutions, the teachers, the students, and the instruction are, regarding the



integration of technology into the curriculum. The different stages or levels are summarized in table 9:

Table 9

*Levels of Technology Implementation*

<b>0- Nonuse</b>	Technology is predominantly text-based (ditto worksheet, chalkboard, overhead projector, textbook)
<b>1- Awareness</b>	The classroom and the computer lab co-exist but are not integrated. The classroom teacher sporadically makes use of the computer lab and online resources.
<b>2- Exploration</b>	Electronic technology starts to be used as an extension for the mainstream curriculum by the teacher.
<b>3- Infusion</b>	Technology-based tools become integral part of the units of work: Google applications, VLEs, videoconferencing, among others. Teachers guide students to select the tools.
<b>4- Integration</b>	Technology starts to be perceived as a tool to identify and solve authentic problems relating to an overall theme/concept.
<b>5- Expansion</b>	Technology access is extended beyond the classroom.
<b>6- Refinement</b>	Students become aware of what they can do with the technology outside the classroom and are able to solve real problems in authentically creative ways.

Note: Adapted from Moersch (2010), Levels of Technology Implementation (LoTi):A Framework for Measuring Classroom Technology Use. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ874128.pdf>

Although the different participants of this whole system that is an educational institution may be evolving at different speeds in relation with technology integration, Moersch observed in their investigation of the situation in the US that technology integration appeared to be at the initial levels. At a first glimpse, the studied context looks very similar to the current situation in Uruguay. Based on the findings of the present project, it seems ascertained to state that the institution at which the unit was implemented oscillates between the first three levels of the framework: nonuse, awareness, and exploration. Some strategies to promote the integration of technology to a higher degree and challenge the actors to move to the next level according to the framework referred to in this section follow:

### **5.3.2. To increase staff development opportunities.**

In Uruguay, there are isolated attempts to promote teachers' digital literacy and they mainly depend on the orientation of the institutional project at the specific high schools and the more or less interested response of the teachers.

### **5.3.3. To foster connection between the curriculum and ICT.**

The use of the computer and online resources usually correlates to isolated classroom activities without continuum. Moreover, the computer labs are one step removed from the classroom teacher. They are in the dominium of the IT teacher. Although the IT teacher receives the classroom teacher and the students at the lab without interfering, they do not work collaboratively to help classroom teachers overcome their sense of vulnerability when they do not manage technology with confidence.

### **5.3.4. To increase awareness of the impact of ICTs on 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills.**

"Technology is used to sustain the existing curricula rather than serve as a catalyst for change" (Moersch, 1995, p1). There seems to be a lack of awareness of the connection between the integration of technology to the curriculum and the identification of learning priorities, such as the development of higher order thinking skills, collaborative skills, metacognitive skills, self-management of learning, et cetera.

In Moersch (1995) own words:

At best, the role of technology has complemented the conventional instructional curriculum and its corresponding emphasis on expository teaching, traditional verbal activities, sequential instructional materials, and evaluation practices characterized by multiple-choice, short-answer, and true-or-false responses. (p.1)

### **5.3.5. To acknowledge the Impact of VLEs on teaching and learning self-efficacy.**

The reflection on the achievements and limitations of the present project, has provoked further questions that need further consideration and focalized analysis. The possible answers to those questions provided the author with new hypothesis regarding teaching effectiveness and learner empowerment. In turn those hypothesis have generated new lines of future research:

- *To study the impact that implementing VLEs as part of the mainstream syllabus would have on students' motivation.*
- *To carry out research on the impact VLEs can signify on teachers' and students' workload.*
- *To research the implications that collaboratively teacher-designed material might have on a significant change in the current textbook-based courses.*

It seems of great relevance to further investigate the possible answers to those questions based on significant quantitative and qualitative data. Thus, I believe, more teachers would engage in the implementation and further integration of technology into their practices.

***5.3.6. To investigate the impact on VLEs on the development of the Executive Functions of the brain.***

Brain-based learning (BBL) and Social Emotional Learning (SEL), both relatively recent approaches that enable deep, meaningful learning, could benefit from the integration of virtual learning environments to the curriculum due to the characteristics of this modality. Students familiarize with the potentialities of using a platform to complete assignments at their own pace, extending their practice receiving personalized support or finding diverse and original solutions to the same problem. Consequently, students become more effectively aligned in regulating their learning. Executive functions can be described as a group of three skills that enable learners to regulate their emotions and sustain their selective attention to implement more or less successfully their ideas: working memory, flexible thinking, and inhibitory control. Virtual learning environments could help promote those skills.

***5.3.7. To foster research on the implications of the incorporation of virtual teaching and learning to Teacher Training Courses.***

The Uruguayan normal school, which is responsible for primary and secondary school teacher preparation, is currently undergoing an intense process of change. Traditionally, the normal school has not been part of the university system and has been classroom-based. In 2008 the government passed the General Law of Education (Ley General de Educación N° 18437), which in its chapter XIII, article 84, creates the University of Education with the name *Instituto Universitario de Educación (IUDE)*. Therefore, since 2009 the different institutes in charge of teacher training have been designing the new structure of the career. In that context, and in the light of the present project, it seems of particular relevance to propose the incorporation of VLEs to the curriculum. Both, as part

of the modality and as part of the curriculum. The former would imply shifting towards a blended form of teacher training. The latter would require the use of VLEs as part of the practicum of the future teachers. Consequently, a line of research on the implications of this incorporation appears as necessary.

#### 5.4. Final Considerations

This project started with the idea of designing an English thematic unit. I have created a lot of them in the course of my career. The difference this time was that it was the final project for this master. Additionally it implied an innovation for the context in which I was working. Honestly, I thought it was going to be much easier because I relied on my experience as a teacher and on my understanding of much of the theoretical background I have made reference to in the corresponding section.

But it was not easy, and I must admit that I have learnt a lot of theory during the process. And I have found myself observing my practice and deconstructing some of the paradigms I had been so comfortably befriended with, and better supporting others. There was lots of frustration, when I could not keep my students engaged in working through the platform, or when I myself could not meet the requirements of this work.

However, it has left me with the strong conviction and the clearest of the understandings that we are life-long learners. That we need to be so in order to be part of this new century that moves so quickly and accompany the learning of our students. Both tutors and learners need to find new strategies to learn while doing. Therefore, I make mine Einstein words once more when he says:

“I never teach my pupils, I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn”

*Albert Einstein*  
*German Theoretical- Physicist*  
*(1879-1955)*

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## Figures

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Figure 2: Homepage from the course *Ciencias Sociales y Humanistico-10-Vespertino*.

Shared with the permission of the administrators of the platform Crea2, Plan Ceibal. Created by the author.

Figure 3: Updates section with a comment made by one of the students. Shared with the permission of the administrators of the platform Crea2, Plan Ceibal. Created by the author.

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Figure 13: Video “Typical Day” as it appears on the platform. Shared with the permission of the administrators of the platform Crea2, Plan Ceibal. Created by the author.

Figure 14: Impressions on "A Typical Day" as uploaded to the platform. Retrieved from <https://ceibal.schoology.com/course/1101821820/materials/discussion/view/1292987830> Shared with the permission of the administrators of the platform Crea2, Plan Ceibal. Created by the author.

Figure 15: Email between Classroom Teacher (CT) and Remote Teacher (RT) at the beginning of Ceibal Conversation Classes.

Figure 16: Slide 3 of the power point presentation about stereotypes presented by the RT. Shared with the permission of the administrators of the platform Crea2, Plan Ceibal and shared on Google Drive.

Figure 17: Students’ accessibility to Internet. The figure illustrates the most frequent place where the students surveyed access the Internet. Retrieved from [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1gwWFRa2ATLI2BRm7Mo\\_cZBiSXddlecovVUzm\\_b7KhXsc/edit](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1gwWFRa2ATLI2BRm7Mo_cZBiSXddlecovVUzm_b7KhXsc/edit) Adapted by the author.

Figure 18: Electronic Devices. The figure shows the devices students most frequently use to connect to the Internet. Retrieved from [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1gwWFRa2ATLI2BRm7Mo\\_cZBiSXddlecovVUzm\\_b7KhXsc/edit](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1gwWFRa2ATLI2BRm7Mo_cZBiSXddlecovVUzm_b7KhXsc/edit) Adapted by the author.

Figure 19: Students’ familiarity with the platform. The figure shows the number of students who had worked on the platform before. Retrieved from [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1gwWFRa2ATLI2BRm7Mo\\_cZBiSXddlecovVUzm\\_b7KhXsc/edit](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1gwWFRa2ATLI2BRm7Mo_cZBiSXddlecovVUzm_b7KhXsc/edit) Adapted by the author.

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Figure 24: Teachers’ Knowledge of the Platform. The figure shows the different platforms teachers are familiar with. Retrieved from

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Figure 25: The figure shows a student's opinion of using social networks as a class topic.

Photo taken by the author

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Survey of Students' Internet Access and Use of Devices.

#### Acceso a Internet y Uso de Dispositivos

Este formulario apunta a recoger datos entre los estudiantes de 2º de Bachillerato (5º año) del Liceo 65 relacionados con la accesibilidad a Internet y dispositivos electrónicos. La información será utilizada para la toma de decisiones en la planificación del curso y como parte de un proyecto de estudio de la Maestría de Enseñanza de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera de Funiber (MTFL)

Los campos con asterisco (\*) son obligatorios. Las preguntas con casilla de verificación admiten mas de una respuesta. Las preguntas abiertas tienen límite de 50 palabras.

Muchas gracias, tu colaboración es muy importante.

Andrea Varela

(adaptado de <https://es.surveymonkey.com/r/PHKTY95>)

\*Obligatorio

1. Dirección de correo electrónico \*

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#### Blended Learning (Aprendizaje Combinado: Aula Física y Entornos Virtuales)



2. ¿A qué grupo del Liceo 65 perteneces? \*

---

3. **¿En qué lugar accedes a Internet?**

*Selecciona todos los que correspondan.*

- En tu hogar
- En el liceo
- Otro: \_\_\_\_\_

4. **¿Qué dispositivos utilizas para conectarte a Internet?**

*Selecciona todos los que correspondan.*

- Computadora de escritorio
- Computadora portátil
- Ceibalita
- Smartphone
- Otro: \_\_\_\_\_

5. **¿Para qué utilizas tu acceso a Internet?**

*Selecciona todos los que correspondan.*

- Estudiar
- Trabajar
- Leer noticias o buscar información
- Ver películas o series en línea
- Socializar en las redes
- enviar y recibir correo electrónico
- Otro: \_\_\_\_\_

6. **¿En qué momento del día utilizas mas la Internet?**

*Selecciona todos los que correspondan.*

- De mañana (entre las 6:00 y las 11:59 am)
- De tarde (entre las 12:00 y las 17:59)
- De noche (entre las 18:00 y las 23:59)
- De madrugada (entre las 00:00 y las 5:59am)

7. **¿Has trabajado en la plataforma de Ceibal, Crea 2?**

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Si la respuesta anterior es afirmativa, ¿cuál es tu opinión sobre los ENTORNOS VIRTUALES DE APRENDIZAJE?

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Recibir una copia de mis respuestas

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Con la tecnología de  
 Google Forms

(Retrieved from <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1H5KWOWgHOu-1PeVeDQUMKekiLW1etvEB-DHM13Fk5u0/edit?usp=sharing>, created by the author)



## Appendix 2: Crea2 Tutorial (Created by the author)

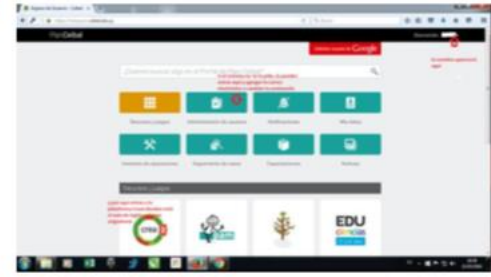
Inglés 2016\_ Liceo 65\_ Profa Ma Andrea Varela.

Tutorial para ingresar a la plataforma Crea2 y al aula virtual de ingles



1\_ Ingresa a la página de ceibal: [www.ceibal.edu.uy](http://www.ceibal.edu.uy)

2\_ Una vez dentro, haz clic en "Mi Espacio"



3\_ Para ingresar a tu cuenta, usas tu número de cédula con el dígito verificador sin puntos ni guiones. Tu contraseña es el mismo número

4\_ Una vez que veas tu nombre en el ángulo superior derecho estás en tu sesión. Ahí puedes modificar ciertos datos, como agregar el correo electrónico o modificar tu contraseña. Y si corres hacia abajo en la página verás la plataforma Crea2. Entra allí.



5\_ Una vez en Crea2 busca en Cursos el aula de inglés. Entra haciendo clic e intenta realizar las tareas.

Retrieved from <https://ceibal.schoolology.com/course/1101821820/materials/discussion/view/1367561235> with the permission of the administrators of Crea2, Plan Ceibal. Created by the author.

**Appendix 3: Personal Information Form.****Inglés 5H10(Datos de interés)**

A continuación verás una serie de preguntas. Tus respuestas me servirán para ayudarte a lo largo de este curso. Este cuestionario no influirá en tu calificación y los datos que aportes serán confidenciales. (Adaptado de <http://ficus.pntic.mec.es/spea0011/ptsc/cadp.pdf>)

\*Obligatorio

1. Dirección de correo electrónico \*

---

2. Nombre y apellido \*

---

3. Lugar y fecha de nacimiento \*

---

4. Edad \*

---

5. Barrio \*

---

6. Celular \*

---

7. ¿Con quién convives?

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8. Trabajo y horario (en el caso que trabajes)

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**9. Estudios privados de ingles \***

Último nivel aprobado o cantidad de años cursados. En caso que nunca hayas estudiado inglés en forma privada, pero sepas que tienes un manejo del mismo de algún tipo puedes expresarlo aquí. (Por ejemplo: "entiendo lo que leo" o "puedo comunicarme oralmente con amigos por chat", etc.)

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**Historia Escolar**

Aquí encontrarás preguntas relacionadas con los años anteriores

**10. ¿Qué grado cursaste en 2016 y en qué liceo? \***

En caso de estar recursando expresa que materias recursas y por qué.

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**11. ¿Cómo te ha ido en el último curso en Inglés? \***

Puedes compartir calificación y en cuales son tus fortalezas y debilidades en la asignatura: leer, escuchar, escribir, hablar, gramática, vocabulario, etc

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**12. Asignaturas pendientes \***

¿cuáles?

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**¿Qué te inspira esta imagen?**



13. Responde aquí la pregunta anterior

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### Herramientas de aprendizaje

Las preguntas de esta sección son mayoritariamente de múltiple opción y refieren a tu manera de aprender. Si no habías pensado en ello antes este curso te presenta una buena oportunidad para hacerlo. Elige la opción que mejor te identifique.

14. ¿Qué tipo de trabajos prefieres?

*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- Me gustan los trabajos donde puedo plasmar mis propias ideas y usar mi imaginación.
- Me gustan los trabajos dirigidos con pautas bien marcadas.
- Me gustan los dos anteriores

15. Cuando estoy en clase

*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- atiendo los aspectos generales del tema.
- me fijo en aspectos o hechos concretos.
- Opción 3

16. Si una cosa me sale mal

*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- intento hacerlo, insisto.
- abandono, no intento hacerla.

17. Antes de comenzar una tarea

*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- pienso como hacerla.
- comienzo a realizarla sin parar a pensar.

18. Prefiero las tareas donde puedo

*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- leer, observar.
- hablar, escuchar.
- manipular, hacer, experimentar

19. De estas formas de trabajar: \*

Marca con una cruz lo que corresponda (en cada columna)  
 Marca solo un óvalo por fila.

	¿Qué te gusta mas?	¿Cuál te sale mejor?
trabajar solo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
trabajar con un compañero	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
trabajar con un pequeño grupo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
trabajar con toda la clase	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20. Cuando estudio o repaso apuntes

Marca solo un óvalo.

- Intento comprender
- Intento memorizar

21. Tengo organizado el tiempo de estudio en casa con un horario y lugar que utilizo regularmente

Marca solo un óvalo.

- Si
- No

22. Mis razones para venir al liceo

Marca solo un óvalo.

- aprender
- me obligan
- para conseguir un buen trabajo
- Otro
- Otro: \_\_\_\_\_

23. En tu vida personal o escolar, ¿hay algún hecho que consideras tan importante como para haberte influido mucho?

Marca solo un óvalo.

- Si
- No

24. Si lo consideras conveniente explica cual es y como te ha influido

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25. **En tu hogar, al hecho de que estudes**

*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- se le da mucha importancia
- se le da poca importancia

26. **¿Pertenece a alguna asociación, club o haces algún trabajo comunitario?**

En caso de ser afirmativo, ¿qué te aporta personalmente el hecho de pertenecer al mismo o realizar dichas tareas?

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Se enviará una copia de tus respuestas por correo electrónico a la dirección que has proporcionado

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Con la tecnología de  
 Google Forms

(Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/forms/Ro4GTY1ZzDy6sLO63> created by the author).

## Appendix 4: Quick Placement Test

### Quick Placement Test

This test has 50 questions, each worth one point. The first 40 are grammar questions and the final 10 are vocabulary questions. To decide your level, use the chart below as a guide.

- 0 - 15 : Beginner
- 16 - 24 : Elementary
- 25 - 32 : Pre-intermediate
- 33 - 39 : Intermediate
- 40 - 45 : Upper Intermediate
- 46 - 50 : Advanced

(Source: Straightforward Quick Placement & Diagnostic Test - Second edition © Macmillan Publishers Limited 2012)

\*Obligatorio

1. Dirección de correo electrónico \*

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Name and group \*

\_\_\_\_\_

3. 1. I \_\_\_\_\_ from France.

*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- is
- am
- are
- be

4. 2. This is my friend. \_\_\_\_\_ name is Peter.

*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- Her
- Our
- Yours
- His

5. 3. Mike is \_\_\_\_\_.

*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- my sister's friend
- friend my sister
- friend from my sister
- my sister friend's

6. **4. My brother is \_\_\_\_\_ artist.**  
*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- the
- an
- a
- 

7. **5. \_\_\_\_\_ 20 desks in the classroom.**  
*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- This is
- There is
- They are
- There are

8. **6. Paul \_\_\_\_\_ romantic films.**  
*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- likes not
- don't like
- doesn't like
- isn't likes

9. **7. Sorry, I can't talk. I \_\_\_\_\_ right now.**  
*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- driving
- 'm driving
- drives
- drive

10. **8. She \_\_\_\_\_ at school last week.**  
*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- didn't be
- weren't
- wasn't
- isn't

11. **9. I \_\_\_\_\_ the film last night.**  
*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- like
- likes
- liking
- liked

12. **10. \_\_\_\_\_ a piece of cake? No, thank you.**  
*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- Do you like
- Would you like
- Want you
- Are you like

13. **11. The living room is \_\_\_\_\_ than the bedroom.**  
*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- more big
- more bigger
- biggest
- bigger

14. **12. The car is very old. We're going \_\_\_\_\_ a new car soon.**  
*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- to buy
- buying
- to will buy
- buy

15. **13. Jane is a vegetarian. She \_\_\_\_\_ meat.**  
*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- sometimes eats
- never eats
- often eats
- usually eats

16. **14. There aren't \_\_\_\_\_ buses late in the evening.**  
*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- some
- any
- no
- a

17. **15. The car park is \_\_\_\_\_ to the restaurant.**  
*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- next
- opposite
- behind
- in front



18. Sue \_\_\_\_\_ shopping every day.

Marca solo un óvalo.

- is going
- go
- going
- goes

19. They \_\_\_\_\_ in the park when it started to rain heavily.

Marca solo un óvalo.

- walked
- were walking
- were walk
- are walking

20. \_\_\_\_\_ seen fireworks before?

Marca solo un óvalo.

- Did you ever
- Are you ever
- Have you ever
- Do you ever

21. We've been friends \_\_\_\_\_ many years.

Marca solo un óvalo.

- since
- from
- during
- for

22. You \_\_\_\_\_ pay for the tickets. They're free.

Marca solo un óvalo.

- have to
- don't have
- don't need to
- doesn't have to

23. Jeff was ill last week and he \_\_\_\_\_ go out.

Marca solo un óvalo.

- needn't
- can't
- mustn't
- couldn't

24. These are the photos \_\_\_\_\_ I took on holiday.

Marca solo un óvalo.

- which
- who
- what
- where

25. We'll stay at home if it \_\_\_\_\_ this afternoon.

Marca solo un óvalo.

- raining
- rains
- will rain
- rain

26. He doesn't smoke now, but he \_\_\_\_\_ a lot when he was young.

Marca solo un óvalo.

- has smoked
- smokes
- used to smoke
- was smoked

27. Mark plays football \_\_\_\_\_ anyone else I know.

Marca solo un óvalo.

- more good than
- as better as
- best than
- better than

28. I promise I \_\_\_\_\_ you as soon as I've finished this cleaning.

Marca solo un óvalo.

- will help
- am helping
- going to help
- have helped

29. This town \_\_\_\_\_ by lots of tourists during the summer.

Marca solo un óvalo.

- visits
- visited
- is visiting
- is visited

30. He said that his friends \_\_\_\_\_ to speak to him after they lost the football match.

- Marca solo un óvalo.*
- not want
  - weren't
  - didn't want
  - aren't wanting

31. How about \_\_\_\_\_ to the cinema tonight?

- Marca solo un óvalo.*
- going
  - go
  - to go
  - for going

32. Excuse me, can you \_\_\_\_\_ me the way to the station, please?

- Marca solo un óvalo.*
- give
  - take
  - tell
  - say

33. I wasn't interested in the performance very much. \_\_\_\_\_.

- Marca solo un óvalo.*
- I didn't, too.
  - Neither was I.
  - Nor I did.
  - So I wasn't.

34. Take a warm coat, \_\_\_\_\_ you might get very cold outside.

- Marca solo un óvalo.*
- otherwise
  - in case
  - so that
  - in order to

35. \_\_\_\_\_ this great book and I can't wait to see how it ends.

- Marca solo un óvalo.*
- I don't read
  - I've read
  - I've been reading
  - I read

36. What I like more than anything else \_\_\_\_\_ at weekends.

- Marca solo un óvalo.*
- playing golf
  - to play golf
  - is playing golf
  - is play golf

37. She \_\_\_\_\_ for her cat for two days when she finally found it in the garage.

- Marca solo un óvalo.*
- looked
  - had been looked
  - had been looking
  - were looking

38. We won't catch the plane \_\_\_\_\_ we leave home now! Please hurry up!

- Marca solo un óvalo.*
- if
  - providing that
  - except
  - unless

39. If I hadn't replied to your email, I \_\_\_\_\_ here with you now.

- Marca solo un óvalo.*
- can't be
  - wouldn't be
  - won't be
  - haven't been

40. 38. Do you think you \_\_\_\_\_ with my mobile phone soon? I need to make a call.

Marca solo un óvalo.

- finish
- are finishing
- will have finished
- are finished

41. 39. I don't remember mentioning \_\_\_\_\_ dinner together tonight.

Marca solo un óvalo.

- go for
- you going to
- to go for
- going for

42. 40. Was it Captain Cook \_\_\_\_\_ New Zealand?

Marca solo un óvalo.

- who discovered
- discovered
- that discover
- who was discovering

43. 41. You may not like the cold weather here, but you'll have to \_\_\_\_\_, I'm afraid.

Marca solo un óvalo.

- tell it off
- sort itself out
- put up with it
- put it off

44. 42. It's cold so you should \_\_\_\_\_ on a warm jacket.

Marca solo un óvalo.

- put
- wear
- dress
- take

45. 43. Paul will look \_\_\_\_\_ our dogs while we're on holiday.

Marca solo un óvalo.

- at
- for
- into
- after

46. 44. She \_\_\_\_\_ a lot of her free time reading.

Marca solo un óvalo.

- does
- spends
- has
- makes

47. 45. Hello, this is Simon. Could I \_\_\_\_\_ to Jane, please?

Marca solo un óvalo.

- say
- tell
- call
- speak

48. 46. They're coming to our house \_\_\_\_\_ Saturday.

Marca solo un óvalo.

- in
- at
- on
- with

49. 47. I think it's very easy to \_\_\_\_\_ debt these days.

Marca solo un óvalo.

- go into
- become
- go down to
- get into

50. 48. Come on! Quick! Let's get \_\_\_\_\_!

Marca solo un óvalo.

- highlight
- cracking
- massive
- with immediate effect

51. 49. I phoned her \_\_\_\_\_ I heard the news.

Marca solo un óvalo.

- minute
- during
- by the time
- the moment

52. 50. I feel very \_\_\_\_\_. I'm going to go to bed!

Marca solo un óvalo.

- nap
- asleep
- sleepy
- sleeper


Se enviará una copia de tus respuestas por correo electrónico a la dirección que has proporcionado

Con la tecnología de  



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Adapted by the author.

**Appendix 5: Evidence of students' written exchange on Facebook as a forum in preparation for Task 6**

 **María Andrea Varela Ferraro** 6 March · 🌐



Castle View High School, Castle Rock, CO.  
(Colorado, USA. Fulbright Teacher Exchange, 2012)







👍 3      5 Comments 89 Views



👍 Like    💬 Comment    ➦ Share






View 1 more comment

 **Mauricio Techera** Your famili differences  
Like · Reply · 25w  
↳  María Andrea Varela Ferraro replied · 2 Replies

 **Shannaina Islas** They go to school by car 🌐 1  
Like · Reply · 25w  
↳  María Andrea Varela Ferraro replied · 1 Reply

 **Sarah Fagian** In colorado the students move from class to class  
Like · Reply · 25w  
↳  María Andrea Varela Ferraro replied · 1 Reply

 **Anthony Barboza** in colorado they have sport in the school  
Like · Reply · 24w  
↳  María Andrea Varela Ferraro replied · 1 Reply

 Write a comment...    

## Appendix 6: RT's draft of her plan for first meeting with students through VC

27.4.17

Ceibal Ingles 10\_R6

Conversation Lesson 1

### Warm-Up Activity/Icebreaker

- Introduce myself and where I'm from: The United States

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B\\_Nbv8aGkbgvVm5YOWJzZkZraE0](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B_Nbv8aGkbgvVm5YOWJzZkZraE0)

- Ask if the Ss can guess where my State Maine is:

Clue: It's in the North-West, we have a coast and we are next to Canada

Try to elicit some guesses...

- About Maine

In Maine we eat a lot of seafood and in the summer we grow delicious blueberries:

- Ask Students what their names are and where they are from:

At this point I hope to go around the room and have each Student introduce themselves. I'm looking for them to produce the language

" Hello, My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am from \_\_\_\_\_ "

It will be great if they would like to share any relevant things they would like.

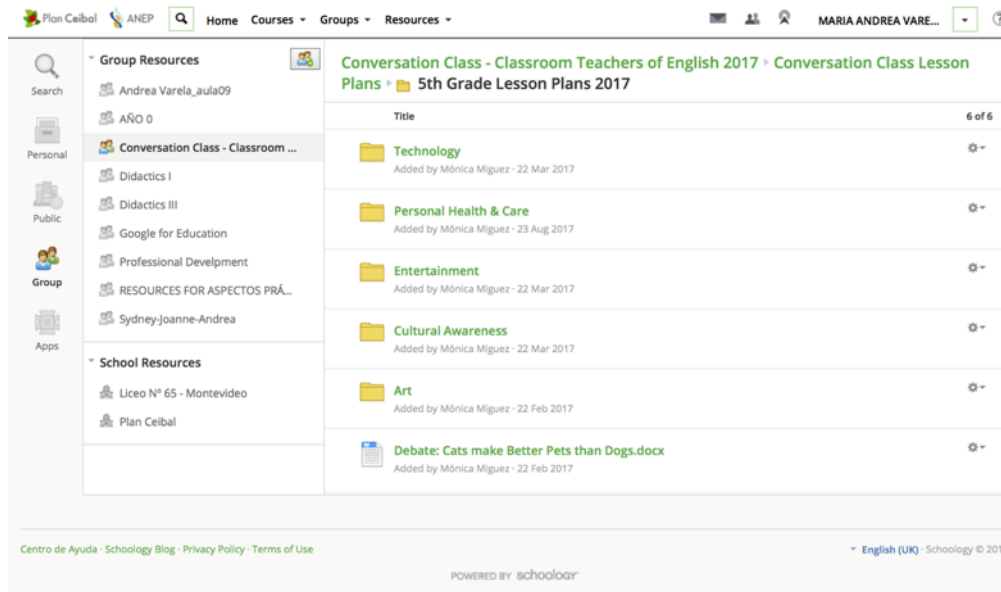
( I will have some pictures ready to share of the typical clothes, festivals, etc as they ask. I can share them on the screen as I answer)

Retrieved from

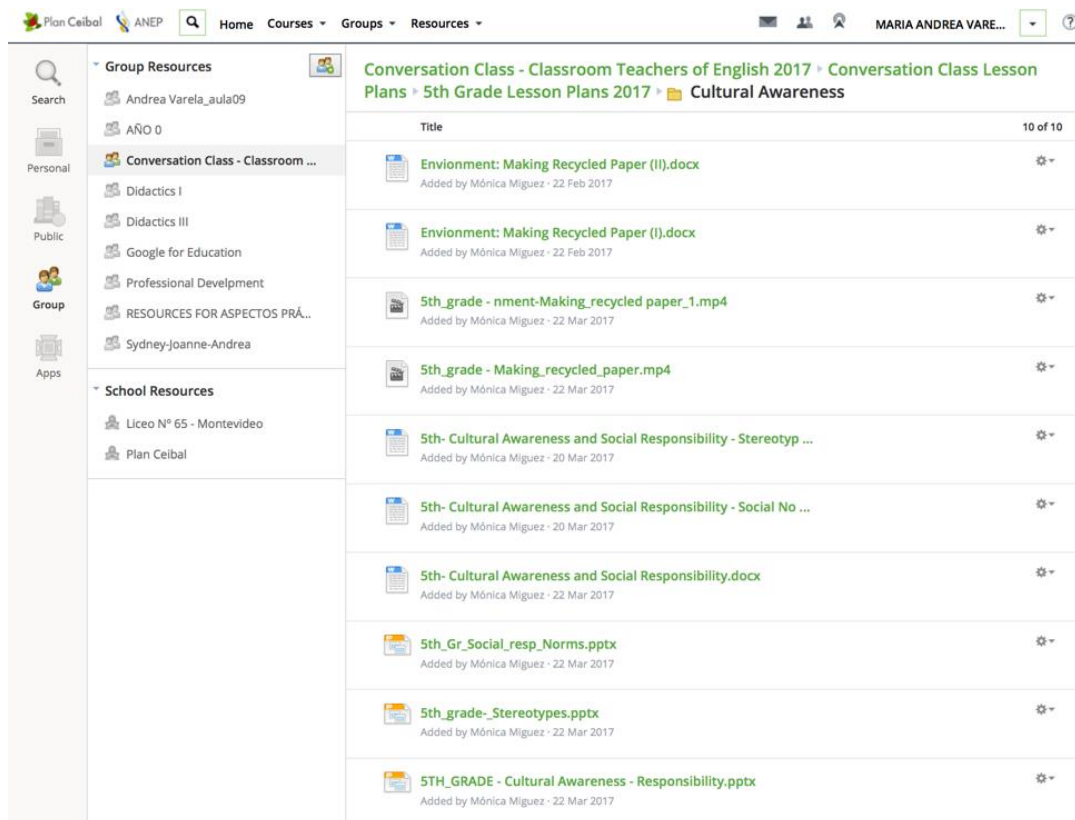
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/16RpV69SXLV22SUiVP1UCeSMQUUQnxcHGmCEgk3as/edit?usp=sharing> Create

d by Nicole Brooks (Ceibal Remote Teacher assigned to 5H10 in 2017)

**Appendix 7: Screenshot of the materials provided to RTs and CTs by Ceibal on Crea2.**



**Appendix 8: Screenshot of the contents of the folder called *Cultural Awareness* provided by Ceibal**



Retrieved from <https://ceibal.schoology.com/resources/group/-/resources/group/970657594?f=39285218> Shared with the permission of the administrators of the platform Crea2, Plan Ceibal. Created by the author.

## Appendix 9: Ceibal lesson plan: 5<sup>th</sup> Cultural Awareness and Social Responsibility - Stereotypes



Plan Ceibal  
Uruguay



### Topic: Stereotypes

**Aims:** This lesson is about the concept of stereotypes with special emphasis on the British and Uruguayan ones

**Year:** 5<sup>th</sup>

**Level:** B1

**Time:** 45 mins

**Lesson summary:** By the end of the lesson the learners will have: Learnt about the concept of stereotype, learnt about the British stereotype and reflected on their own, practised reading skills (both for general understanding and specific information), practised speaking skills by means of interacting among each other and with the remote teacher



### Procedure

Aims and timing	Steps	Interaction type
1. Activate students' schemata on the topic (3 minutes)	Show <b>slide 1</b> and elicit the meaning of stereotype from students, by showing two images related to the Argentinian and the Brazilian ones. Ask students guiding questions if needed e.g. Who are these pictures referring to?, Why?	Whole class
2. To introduce the topic (2 minutes)	Show <b>slide 2</b> which contains the definition of the term stereotype and ask for a volunteer to read it aloud.	Whole class
3. Pre-reading activity (3 minutes)	Introduce the topic of the lesson to students Show <b>slide 3</b> which contains an image referring to the British stereotype.  Ask students to look at it and try to guess what culture they are going to learn about.	Individual work  Whole class
4. To practise reading skills (for general and specific understanding) (20 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Show <b>slide 4</b> and ask students to read the text once, focusing mainly on the general understanding of it.</li> <li>Show <b>slide 5</b> which contains a true or false activity based on the text they've just read. Ask students to get in pairs so as to read all the statements.</li> <li>Show <b>slide 4</b> again so that students can focus on specific information and do the activity.</li> </ul>	Individual work Pair work Whole class

Check the answers with students

5. To practice speaking skills (15 minutes)

Ask students to change pairs

- Show **slide 6** and tell students that now it's time to reflect on their own culture.
- Ask for a volunteer to read the example provided.
- Show **slide 7** containing other useful chunks which may come in handy when trying to express their views. Read the examples to make sure they understand how to use them.

Pair work  
Individual work

Whole class

6. To round up the lesson

Ask some students to share their views orally.

Ask students whether the British and Uruguayan cultures have anything in common or not.

Whole class

(2 minutes)

#### Homework/ Round up

Ask students to record themselves while saying one typical custom from a culture different to their own. e.g. *A stereotypical Mexican eats spicy food.*

#### Material

1. Powerpoint presentation.
2. Text about the 5 steps to becoming a stereotypical Brit taken and adapted from <http://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/magazine/life-around-world/5-steps-becoming-stereotypical-brit>

#### Digital tools



Retrieved from <https://ceibal.schoolology.com/template/1016145684>



**Appendix 10: Link to Power Point presentation provided by Ceibal: 5<sup>th</sup> Grade- Stereotypes.pptx**

[https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Wvh7SQmlQUEy1KRf\\_uktamNXjU\\_EU5jg](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Wvh7SQmlQUEy1KRf_uktamNXjU_EU5jg)

**What do you think they represent?**



**Appendix 11: A students' response to the opinion question in the survey Acceso a Internet y Uso de Dispositivos.**

“Si la respuesta anterior es afirmativa ¿cuál es tu opinion sobre los Entornos Virtuales de Aprendizaje?

*Creo que el uso de la tecnología como método de estudio, si bien puede ser muy beneficioso, también tiene sus contrariedades cuando estas no son bien empleadas. En la escuela fue una prueba la que realizamos a base de ceibal y resulto bastante exitosa. En primero de liceo yo recuerdo haber trabajado con las plataformas ceibal para con matemáticas. El problema que tenia continuamente era que el profesor no sabía mucho acerca de el tema, y quería emplearlo a donde de lugar, y lo hacía, aunque tenia conflictos con las cuentas, mezclaba plataformas y no estaba bien informado de quienes tenían acceso a Internet. Claro que hubieron muchos factores que influyeron para que la utilización de plataformas en este caso haya fracasado, pero a lo que voy, es que se tiene que analizar la situación para emplear nuevos métodos, y esto varia según quien lo haga. Por lo tanto no siempre van a dar los mismos resultados. También hay cosas sumamente positivas al implementar estos recursos, por ejemplo, es diferente hacer ejercicios en la clase que en casa, puede ser que el alumno en cuestión sienta mayor confianza realizando las actividades desde su hogar, donde puede buscar información, equivocarse, volver a intentarlo. Cosa que a muchos les apena es recibir una mala nota en plena clase. También que se puede realizar en cualquier lugar donde uno tenga acceso, cosa que ahorra tiempo. Desarrollar el conocimiento tecnológico también es positivo, ya que básicamente la tecnología es el futuro. Igual algo que me gustaría resaltar es que hoy día, muchos estudiantes solo tienen celular, y no es muy cómodo acceder desde uno, a básicamente ninguna red a menos que sea una aplicación. Tampoco veo necesario utilizar esta herramienta durante el periodo de clases, ya que solo incita la distracción de los alumnos.(Lesly, 5th grader at Liceo 65)*

## Appendix 12: Teacher survey on Virtual Learning Environments

### Encuesta Docente sobre Entornos Virtuales de Aprendizaje

La presente encuesta busca recoger datos y opinión sobre el uso de entornos virtuales de aprendizaje entre los docentes de 5to grado del liceo 65, en el marco de la finalización de la MTFL de Funiber (Maestría en Enseñanza de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera) de esta docente. Los datos se utilizarán para comprender los resultados del proyecto implementado. Los colegas solo necesitan identificarse con su asignatura. Desde ya agradezco la colaboración que puedan brindar.

"Un entorno virtual de aprendizaje (VLE en inglés) es un conjunto de herramientas de enseñanza y aprendizaje diseñadas para mejorar la experiencia de aprendizaje del alumno al incluir computadoras e Internet en el proceso de aprendizaje. Los principales componentes de un paquete de VLE incluyen mapeo curricular (dividir el currículo en secciones que pueden asignarse y evaluarse), seguimiento de estudiantes, soporte en línea para docentes y estudiantes, comunicación electrónica (correo electrónico, discusiones, chat, publicación web), y enlaces de Internet a recursos curriculares externos. En general, a los usuarios de VLE se les asigna una ID de maestro o una ID de estudiante. El profesor ve lo que ve un alumno, pero tiene derechos de usuario adicionales para crear o modificar el contenido del plan de estudios y hacer un seguimiento del rendimiento del alumno". (Rouse, M., 2011)

\*Obligatorio

1. Dirección de correo electrónico \*

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Asignatura que dicta en 5º \*

\_\_\_\_\_

3. ¿Conoce algún VLE que se utilice en CES actualmente? (Por favor nombrar los que conoce en "otro")

Marca solo un óvalo.

- Sí
- No
- Otro: \_\_\_\_\_

4. ¿Los ha utilizado?

Marca solo un óvalo.

- Sí
- No

5. Si la respuesta anterior fue afirmativa, ¿cómo le ha resultado?

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6. Si la respuesta fue negativa, ¿por qué no los ha utilizado?

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7. Otros comentarios

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Recibir una copia de mis respuestas

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 Google Forms

Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/forms/wdphmHqj4F33envt2> Created by the author.

Materials

TEENAGE

MUTUAL

UNDERSTANDING

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY  
& CULTURAL AWARENESS

**BRIDGING THE CULTURAL GAP**

*"Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only  
be achieved by understanding".*

**Albert Einstein**  
(1879-1955)

*Prof. M<sup>A</sup> Andrea Varela*

**Description of materials.**

As it was stated before, this project is to be implemented primarily in a blended format, using the VLE mentioned above (CREA-Schoology) to support, the face to face class. The materials and activities were selected based on several factors that will be mentioned here.

The first factor to be considered was the current National Syllabus of English for Secondary Schools for 5<sup>th</sup> grade. (Programa de Inglés, 2<sup>o</sup> Año de Bachillerato Diversificado, Reformulación 2006). In our work for the subject “Materials & Resources” (Cirimello E., Garate G. & Varela M.A., 2015. p.3) the same syllabus was studied. This analysis led us to conclude that both, the course and the materials in it suggested, conform a multi-syllabus approach based on the following arguments:

- the course book follows a multi-syllabus approach,
- the official syllabus includes procedural, task-based and functional-notional approaches,
- the syllabus is topic-based as it uses topics or themes as starting point for each unit

The next factor was the needs of the learners. The online unit would be implemented after meeting the students for the first time and a phase of diagnostic evaluation had been completed. This would generate information that would make it necessary to modify some of the materials and/or activities included in CREA-Schoology.

Another consideration was the actual accessibility the learners had to the platform. As it has already been described, both the school and the learners have access to a number of devices and facilities that would make this project possible.

Finally, we would start the Conversation Classes in April so, more negotiation would take place and more materials could be integrated.

## END OF UNIT ASSESSMENT

### Teenagers Life in Uruguay



At the end of the unit and in groups of 4, you will have to give a public presentation on ***Teenagers life in Uruguay***. By week 4 the group will have to hand in an advance of the script for the presentation. Public speaking will take place on week 6.

Suggested aspects to develop:

- routines on schooldays
- weekend activities
- festivals
- the food we eat/typical food
- the clothes we wear, etc.

Each group member will choose one aspect of the topic so that all contribute to the final product. You will have time to think together in class and continue at home.

First Advance (week 2)

Final due date (week 4)

#### RUBRIC OF EVALUATION

Criteria	Grading Scale			
Content	<b>4</b> All content is related to the topic and almost all contribute to its easier understanding	<b>3</b> All content is related to the topic and almost all contribute to its easier understanding	<b>2</b> Most of the content is related to the topic, and contribute to its understanding	<b>1</b> Most of the content is irrelevant for the topic and does not contribute to its understanding.
Eye Contact	<b>4</b> Holds attention of the audience with the use of direct eye contact, without looking at notes.	<b>3</b> Holds attention of the audience with the use of direct eye contact, seldom returning to notes	<b>2</b> Fails to hold attention of the audience from time to time as displays minimal eye contact, mostly reading from notes	<b>1</b> Does not hold attention of the audience as displays no eye contact and reads the entire presentation from notes
Pronunciation	<b>4</b> Intonation is fluid and meaningful although at times reads. Pronunciation is correct. Accompanies with body language.	<b>3</b> Intonation is meaningful almost always. Some mispronunciation that does not interfere with the msg. Uses body language	<b>2</b> In general intonation is meaningful but it becomes monotonous at times. Sometimes the pronunciation interferes with communication	<b>1</b> Intonation is monotonous and meaningless. The pronunciation interferes with communication.
Fluency	<b>4</b> Manages to deliver the message in articulated utterance with very little hesitation.	<b>3</b> Manages to articulate meaningful utterances with some hesitation	<b>2</b> Manages to some articulate meaningful utterances with a lot of hesitation	<b>1</b> Only produces isolated words to communicate

HS 65 **THEMATIC UNIT: SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND CULTURAL AWARENESS**  
Group \_5H10



STUDENTS' HANDOUT

### Sub Topic: Teenage Mutual Understanding: Bridging the Cultural Gap

#### Introduction to the course.

Students' handout for first online task: **HELLO CLASS!**

- 1- Log into the course *Ciencias Sociales y Humanístico 10* and read the description of the first folder. It is orange and it is called *Introduction to the course*. This folder will help you become more familiar with the platform. You will start working on three activities: two forums and one link.



- 2- Once you have read these initial instructions in Spanish, click on the heading (*Introduction to the course*) to open the folder and start working on the first forum.
- 3- Forum #1 \_Hello Class!!

In this forum we will upload one or two photos that represent us and write something to introduce ourselves to the group. I will introduce myself as an example:

*This is me.. in 4 pictures: I am 50 years old and have two daughters. Priscilla and Ingrid. That is myself with them on my 50th birthday party. The boy on the tree is Franco, Priscilla's son and my grandson. He is 4 years old and the most lovely kid I have known.*

*The plants are my hobby. In the pot you can see an apple and some lemon trees I have planted from seeds.*

*I drink mate and sometimes tea or coffee. I write in blue because it is my favourite colour.*

Profa.: María Andrea Varela Ferraro

#### Diagnostic Activities



## Listening Comprehension

Questions 1–5 of 5 | Page 1 of 1

### Question 1 (5 points)

Listen to the first part of the presentation about Eco Tourism and tick the word you hear:

(You can tick more than one option)

What is Ecotourism?



- a VACATION
- b HOLIDAY
- c ENVIRONMENT
- d GOVERNMENT
- e TOURISTS
- f PASSENGERS
- g ELEPHANTS
- h RIVERS
- i WILDLIFE
- j RESOURCES

### Question 2 (2 points)

Ecotourism is (more probably) visiting:

(Choose the correct option)

- a a seaside resort
- b a natural area

**Question 3** (2 points)

It benefits

- a Only the tourists
- b Both the tourists and the locals

**Question 4** (2 points)

Ecotourism implies

- a not feeding the animals
- b not wasting water
- c both 1 and 2

**Question 5** (10 points)

**Listen to the second part and complete the notes:**

1. Ecotourism means respecting local \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Examples of activities in ecotourism: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Monteverde Cloud Forest is in Costa Rica, \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Ecotourism has created many new \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

**Word Bank:**

customs America swimming Central jobs cycling traditions surfing business  
rock climbing walking South America

Blank 1:

Blank 2:

Blank 3:

Blank 4:

Blank 5:

Blank 6:

Blank 7:

Blank 8:

Blank 9:

Blank 10:


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## Diagnostic Activities

### Reading Comprehension

**Level A1 Text and activities.** (Source: <http://www.uruguayproperties.com.uy/en/sustainable-tourism.html>)

ANDREASO



Course Options

- Materials
- Updates
- Gradebook
- Grade Setup
- Badges
- Attendance
- Members
- Analytics
- Workload Planning

Access Code Reset

Information

Grading period  
Año Lectivo 2017

5 - Ciencias Sociales y Humanístico - 10 ...

Diagnostic Activities ◀ Prev Next ▶

Reading Comprehension A1 Submissions Enabled

Questions Settings Preview Results Comments

+ Add Question Options - 6 questions · 15 pts


1 Read the following text about Uruguay and create a title for it: ⚙

(source: <http://www.uruguayproperties.com.uy/en/sustainable-tourism.html>)

Uruguayan geography offers a wide range of options for nature tourism. Travelers will not only find beaches and hills available on the menu of natural offerings. The quest for peace and the desire to be in touch with nature give way to ecotourism in its multiple forms.

There are numerous tourist ranches across Uruguay, where visitors can enjoy horseback riding, peaceful afternoons fishing in a lake, and traditional asados (barbecues), eating first rate beef, lamb or pork, as well as other more exotic choices of game meats, such as rhea, a madillo, hare, capybara or wild boar.

All of this is offered in an environmentally-friendly setting, without disrupting the area and affecting its ecosystem. Come rediscover the pleasure of bringing out the best of yourself and your family in harmonious places especially conditioned to make your experience last a lifetime.



There are many options available. From a weekend in the countryside, staying at a rural establishment for 20 dollars a day, where you and your family can get up at dawn, learn to milk cows and go horseback riding; or spending a weekend in a five star rural hotel for 100 dollars a person, all inclusive, in the middle of the countryside

Short-Answer/Essay Question - 4 points - Subjective

---

2 According to the same text about Uruguay, are the following statements true or false? ⚙


Beaches and hills are part of Uruguay's geography.

True/False - 1 point

2	According to the same text about Uruguay, are the following statements true or false?	⚙
	Beaches and hills are part of Uruguay's geography.	
	True/False – 1 point	
3	This kind of tourism harms the ecosystem.	⚙
	True/False – 1 point	
4	Name <b>three</b> activities travellers can do while visiting Uruguay.	⚙
	Short-Answer/Essay Question – 3 points – Subjective	
5	Which are the options mentioned in the text for accommodation in the countryside?	⚙
	Short-Answer/Essay Question – 1 point – Subjective	
6	Match the pictures to the animals mentioned in the text	⚙
	Matching – 5 points	

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## Level A2- B1 Text



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5 – Ciencias Sociales y Humanístico – 10 ...

Diagnostic Activities

◀ Prev Next ▶

Reading Comprehension A2

Submissions Disabled

📊 ⓘ ⚙️

Questions Settings Preview Results Comments

+ Add Question Options ▾

6 questions · 10 pts

1 **Read this extract from an online article called "*Cultural Differences of Teenagers*" (Hardy, M. Love to Know. N/D) and select the titles that correspond. (You can check more than one option):**

Knowing the cultural differences of teenagers can help you understand friends who are of a different ethnicity. With this understanding, you won't run the risk of being disrespectful. You'll also know if you are misunderstanding your friend's behaviour when it seems like he/she is being offensive. Attending a culturally diverse school means you will have to communicate with teenagers from different ethnic backgrounds. You will notice cultural differences in body language and oral communication, since these are the two ways that people express their beliefs and values.

**Asian, Hispanic and American Cultural Differences**

One of the reasons for cultural differences between certain ethnicities and Americans is because of the teachings of that culture. Being raised by parents who did not grow up in America can prove to be difficult when the customs and ways of thought are not the same as their American counterpart. What happens is that when teens from different cultural backgrounds come together, they become confused to why everyone doesn't act or think the same way that they do. Two ethnic groups that fall into this case are Asian and Hispanic teens because they often have a different cultural background than American teens.

**Hispanic and American Cultural Differences**

a) \_\_\_\_\_ Family comes first in the Hispanic culture. Teenagers stay close to home and have a stronger commitment to their parents than many American teens do. While Hispanic families enforce dependence on each other, American families encourage their children and teenagers to be independent.

b) \_\_\_\_\_ You may notice that some Hispanic teenagers don't like it when someone confronts them or shares a difference of opinion, while many American teenagers stand up to confrontation and find power in voicing their opinion.

c) \_\_\_\_\_ Since some Hispanic teens have

Course Options

Materials ▾

- Updates
- Gradebook
- Grade Setup
- Badges
- Attendance
- Members
- Analytics
- Workload Planning

Access Code ✕

Reset

**Information**

Grading period

Año Lectivo 2017

**Activities for A2:****Hispanic and American Cultural Differences**

- a) \_\_\_\_\_ Family comes first in the Hispanic culture. Teenagers stay close to home and have a stronger commitment to their parents than many American teens do. While Hispanic families enforce dependence on each other, American families encourage their children and teenagers to be independent.
- b) \_\_\_\_\_ You may notice that some Hispanic teenagers don't like it when someone confronts them or shares a difference of opinion, while many American teenagers stand up to confrontation and find power in voicing their opinion.
- c) \_\_\_\_\_ Since some Hispanic teens have such a strong tie to their family, they may show a similar commitment to their boyfriend/girlfriend. However, if the family does not approve of the relationship, the Hispanic teenager may be more apt to break it off out of respect for his/her family.
- d) \_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic individuals are comfortable with less personal space. They also will hold onto a hug or handshake longer. When standing in front of a Hispanic teen, refrain from putting your hands on your hips or in your pockets, he/she may think you are being rude.

Multiple Choice – 1 point

- |          |   |    |
|----------|---|----|
| <b>2</b> | <p><b><u>Can you insert the subtitles in the correct paragraph?</u></b></p> <p><u>There is one extra subtitle:</u></p> <p>Matching – 5 points</p> | *~ |
| <b>3</b> | <p>Cultural difference is evident in body language and conversation</p> <p>True/False – 1 point</p>   | *~ |
| <b>4</b> | <p>Asian and Hispanic cultural backgrounds are quite different from American cultural background</p> <p>True/False – 1 point</p>                  | *~ |
| <b>5</b> | <p>Hispanic teenagers are more independent than American teenagers</p> <p>True/False – 1 point</p>  | *~ |
| <b>6</b> | <p>American teenagers like physical contact very much</p> <p>True/False – 1 point</p>   | *~ |

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**Activities for B1**

**Question 2** (2 points)

Read the **introduction** (paragraphs 1 and 2) and **answer** the following questions:

*What are the two ways people use to express their beliefs and values?*

**Question 3** (2 points)

*Asian, Hispanic and American teens can attend a culturally diverse school. What happens when they come together? Why?*

**Question 4** (18 points)

Complete the table with the main ideas from the text: (You do not need to write complete sentences, just write the number and the notes in the space provided below)

	ASIAN	AMERICAN
Friendship	1- small group of lifelong friends	2-
Working relationships	3-	4-
Confrontation	5-	6-
Romantic relationship	7-	8-
Body language	9-	10-

Example:

1- small group of lifelong friends

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HS 65 THEMATIC UNIT: SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND CULTURAL AWARENESS  
 Group \_5H10

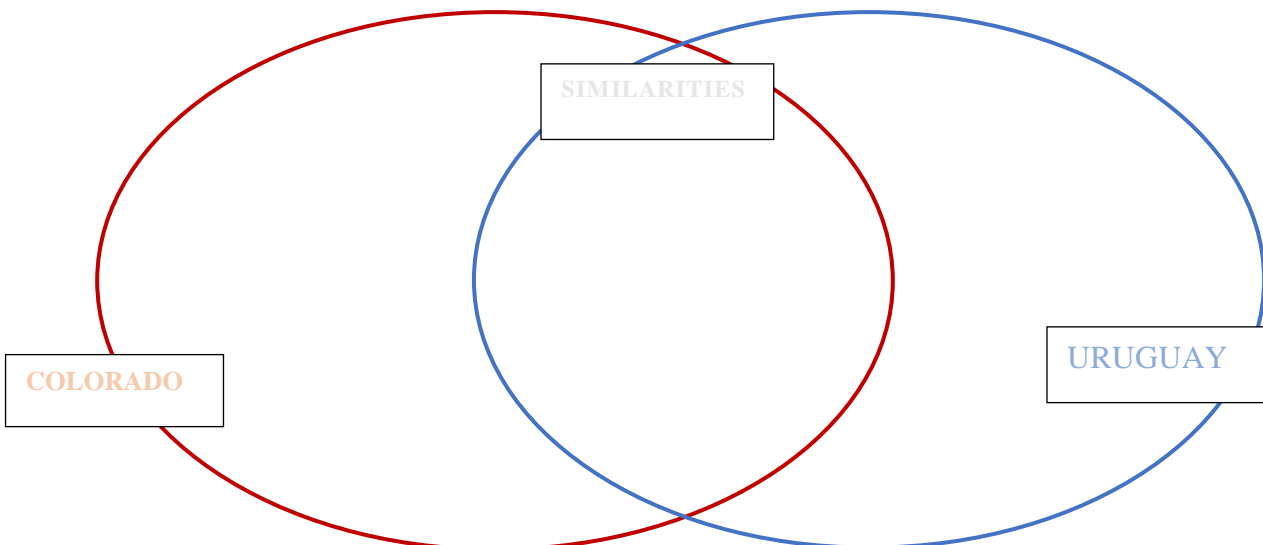


**Sub Topic: Teenage Mutual Understanding: Bridging the Cultural Gap**

Students' handout for Task 6: *A Typical Day*



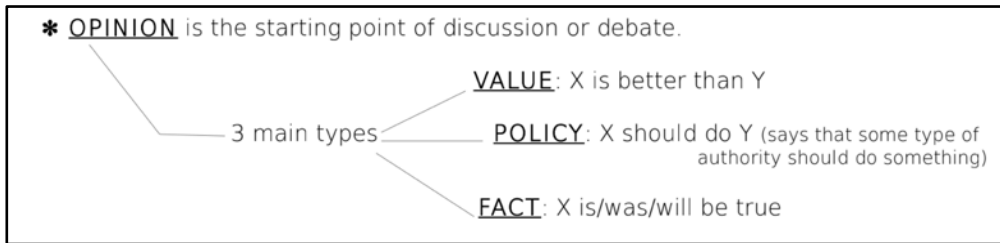
- 1- **Log into the course** *Ciencias Sociales y Humanístico 10* and scroll down to the folder corresponding to Unit 1. It is green and it is called **Social Responsibility and Cultural Awareness**. When you open this folder (click on the link) you will have access to a video where two students from Castle View HS in Castle Rock, Colorado, US, talk about their typical day. To communicate, they use the foreign language they learn at school: Spanish. **Watch the video, please.**
  
- 2- In pairs, think of similarities and differences with your typical day and use this Venn diagram to organize your ideas:





**3- LANGUAGE FOCUS #1:**

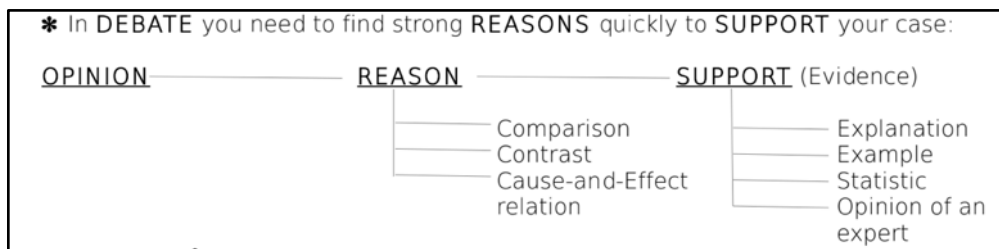
Have you thought how objective or subjective your opinions are? Look and discuss the following classification of opinions. Then find examples in the Venn diagram for each type or create examples for the ones you can't find an example of.



As an example, let's decide together what type these opinions are:

- a- I think that they shouldn't show the contents of the fridge
- b- Students' life in Colorado is more comfortable than ours
- c- They play lacrosse in school.

**LANGUAGE FOCUS #2:**



The following are reasons for the previous model opinions. Can you decide what type they are?

- a- They drive their own car to work while we have to walk in cold weather or take crowded buses.
- b- The weather in Colorado is much colder than in Uruguay.
- c- It's so cold, that classes are called off and nobody goes out, especially during snow storms.

#### 4- Impressions on “A Typical Day”.






Now you are ready to return to the platform and access the folder called Unit 1. This time you will participate in the forum and discuss the differences and similarities between Uruguay and Colorado, giving your opinion, agreeing and disagreeing. The following table will help you with the language for discussion.

## Expressing Opinions

<p><b>Personal Point of View</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In my experience...</li> <li>As far as I'm concerned...</li> <li>In my opinion...</li> <li>Personally, I think...</li> <li>I'd say that...</li> <li>I'd like to point out that...</li> <li>I believe that...</li> </ul>	<p><b>General Point of View</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is thought that...</li> <li>Some people say that...</li> <li>It is considered...</li> <li>It is generally accepted that...</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agreeing with an opinion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Of course.</li> <li>You're absolutely right.</li> <li>Yes, I agree.</li> <li>I think so too.</li> <li>That's a good point.</li> <li>Exactly.</li> <li>That's true.</li> <li>Neither do I.</li> <li>I couldn't agree more.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Disagreeing with an opinion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes, but...</li> <li>I'm afraid I have to disagree.</li> <li>I'm sorry to disagree with you, but...</li> <li>That's not entirely true.</li> <li>On the contrary...</li> <li>I'm not so sure about that.</li> </ul>

Created by Profesoras Andrea Briature and Andrea Varela 2017

**Can you help me evaluate the materials?**

1	2	3	4	5
Rarely	Sometimes	Mostly	Yes	To a large extent
				

**What's your opinion about the materials in this unit?**

Score    Comments

(Think about the activity/material your teacher indicates and assess it with the criteria above: from 1 to 5)

Did they demonstrate you how to use English?

Did you feel any emotional connection to the materials?

Did you feel motivated to continue learning?

Did you learn some strategy to become a better student?

Did you have to solve problems?

Did the materials give you the chance to work collaboratively to solve problems?