PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS: A JOURNEY TO FUN.
ARISING PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS IN EFL STUDENTS

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TÍTULO: PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS: A JOURNEY TO FUN. ARISING PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS IN EFL STUDENTS.

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- AVA
- Aula Invertida
- Fonética

DESCRIPCIÓN:

En el siguiente documento, se hace una descripción de la propuesta que tiene por objetivo la creación de un Ambiente Virtual de Aprendizaje (AVA) para desarrollar habilidades lingüísticas en estudiantes de inglés como idioma extranjero, a través de la consciencia fonológica. Se considera en la propuesta elementos como el enfoque de Aula Invertida, la cual permitirá que estudiantes de grado tercero de primaria de un colegio bilingüe puedan fortalecer sus habilidades lingüísticas dentro de un proceso donde el AVA es el elemento primordial. A pesar del hecho de que esta propuesta se enfoca en situaciones problema que tienen lugar en un proceso de aprendizaje de lengua extranjera, también se enfoca en la tecnología como mediación pedagógica, y se proyecta al cambiante contexto que ha demandado una exploración de la educación a distancia en Colombia, incluso en educación primaria. Esta iniciativa se origina desde la evidencia de dificultades en estudiantes de grado tercero, en lo concerniente a habilidades de lectura, escritura y escucha en inglés.

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Las fuentes utilizadas por los autores en este trabajo de grado fueron:

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CONTENIDOS: Este documento describe la propuesta de la creación de un Ambiente Virtual de Aprendizaje enfocado en el desarrollo de la Conciencia Fonológica, en un total de 8 capítulos, dentro de los cuales los autores de este trabajo de grado hacen una descripción de los aspectos concernientes a la construcción de la propuesta. Estos capítulos son:

- **Introducción:** Aquí, los autores hacen los planteamientos iniciales en relación con el problema que significa la necesidad de fortalecer las habilidades lingüísticas dentro del proceso de aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera, en este caso el idioma inglés. En este apartado también se hacen consideraciones respecto a los diferentes capítulos que conforman el documento de este trabajo de grado.
- **Contexto:** El capítulo de contexto describe con detalle el escenario donde los autores encuentran el problema que genera la idea de la propuesta. Este contexto es el Colegio Abraham Lincoln, ubicado en Bogotá. Es un colegio bilingüe, calendario B, y constituye un ambiente propicio para hablar del progreso de la conciencia fonológica, a raíz de los conocimientos previos de la población elegida, que es niños de grado tercero, quienes han estado en contacto con la lengua inglesa desde sus primeros años de formación.

- **Antecedentes:** Los autores hacen aquí un recuento de los trabajos e investigaciones que preceden a la idea de construir el Ambiente Virtual de Aprendizaje en el que se materializa la propuesta. La búsqueda de estos antecedentes se realiza a partir del AVA en cuestión, la estrategia elegida en la proyección pedagógica de la propuesta, el Aula Invertida, y por supuesto la enseñanza del inglés como Lengua Extranjera.
- **Descripción del trabajo de grado:** En este capítulo se aborda en específico el problema que genera la propuesta que fundamenta este trabajo de grado. De este modo, se encuentra aquí también la justificación de la creación del AVA, especialmente dentro del contexto elegido, enfocándose en la importancia del desarrollo de las habilidades lingüísticas dentro de un proceso de aprendizaje de lengua extranjera, donde además el estudiante toma un rol activo y consciente respecto a qué necesita para fortalecer sus habilidades. En este capítulo también se exponen los objetivos y preguntas que se plantean en el desarrollo de la propuesta.
- **Metodología:** Los autores aquí hacen una descripción de todo el proceso mediante el cuál se dio la realización del trabajo de grado que aquí se presenta. Se plantea una metodología a partir de fases, que no solo evidencian el desarrollo de la idea que da lugar a la propuesta, sino el proceso a través del programa de la especialización.
- **Marco Teórico:** Es aquí donde los autores dan cuenta de los soportes teóricos que soportan la propuesta aquí presentada. Estos se abordan desde tres aspectos: la conciencia fonológica, la estrategia de Aula Invertida y Ambiente Virtual de Aprendizaje (AVA). En este capítulo se hace evidente la visión de los autores y cómo se integran los planteamientos de los autores consultados en la formulación de la propuesta.
- **Propuesta:** Los autores realizan una descripción del AVA creado para desarrollar la conciencia fonológica en estudiantes de grado tercero del Colegio Abraham Lincoln. Esta es la materialización de la propuesta que surge como eje central del trabajo de grado. Se hace una descripción de los objetivos, pantallas y elementos que componen el AVA.
- **Proyecciones:** En el capítulo final del documento, los autores plantean no solo las conclusiones del proceso en relación con las preguntas problema planteadas en la descripción del trabajo de grado, también se establecen esos aspectos a considerar desde la propuesta, en diversos escenarios que implican no solo su implementación pedagógica en otros procesos, sino también su evolución.

METODOLOGÍA: Como se mencionó anteriormente respecto al capítulo del documento que hace referencia a la metodología, los autores plantearon fases en la realización de este trabajo de grado, que son: Planteamiento de la situación problema, Lluvia de Ideas, Identificación del problema, Planteamiento y Diseño del AVA como Propuesta, Creación del AVA, y Presentación. Estas fases se establecen tomando como referencia el proceso que se evidencia desde el programa, consolidando las habilidades adquiridas a lo largo de los seminarios; por lo tanto, el trabajo de grado aquí descrito no se refiere a una intervención pedagógica, pero si al desarrollo de una propuesta en aras de resolver un problema real en un contexto determinado, y en este caso, desde la perspectiva de la tecnología como mediación pedagógica.

CONCLUSIONES:

El Ambiente Virtual de Aprendizaje que constituye la propuesta de este trabajo de grado, ciertamente recoge una serie de elementos que no solo se enfocan en el desarrollo de habilidades linguisticas, también contribuye a que los aprendices de la lengua extranjera en cuestión adquieran una comprensión del lenguaje como tal, en términos de estructuras, sintaxis y reconocimiento de palabras, habilidades propias de un sujeto que posee conciencia fonológica.

Además, el AVA consolida elementos vitales dentro de la estrategia de Aula Invertida. Un ejemplo de esto son los instrumentos de evaluación dispuestos para los estudiantes y docentes, dado que se exploran diferentes tipos de evaluación (del profesor, autoevaluación y coevaluación). También es preciso mencionar la variedad de recursos de apoyo, que incentiva al estudiante en la exploración de sus habilidades y los caminos para mejorar las mismas.

Uno de los aspectos más destacables de esta propuesta es la navegabilidad del AVA, pues permite a los estudiantes desplazarse en distintos lugares del ambiente a través del Menú Recurrente. Esto permite, por ejemplo, que el estudiante pueda verificar su proceso o evaluarse desde cualquier módulo o momento en el proceso.

El AVA, que constituye la materialización de la propuesta descrita anteriormente, genera una gama de potencialidades de investigación. Sin embargo, vale la pena destacar los factores que pueden influir en las condiciones que impulsan la creación de un AVA, en el sentido de provocar situaciones que promueven una mayor relevancia de la propuesta en el contexto dado.

Una de las potencialidades más relevantes de la propuesta es la posibilidad de ampliar la población objetivo, por lo tanto, alcanzará a los nuevos estudiantes de EFL, como los adultos, teniendo en cuenta que todo tipo de estudiantes

debe adquirir cierto nivel de conciencia fonológica, existiendo la necesidad de acceso a dicha onformación. En un contexto de aprendizaje virtual, se convertirá en un gran apoyo para ellos.

Por otro lado, teniendo en cuenta las condiciones actuales que enfrenta la educación en todo el mundo, debido a la pandemia de Covid-19, es vital mejorar las estrategias y los recursos que promueven el aprendizaje virtual, especialmente aquellos recursos que se centran en el desarrollo de habilidades promovidas en un ambiente presencial, principalmente en los grados de primaria. Dadas estas condiciones, el AVA que incorpora esta propuesta será un elemento clave en el momento de apoyar un proceso de aprendizaje EFL.

Además, se cree que este AVA se implementará, por lo tanto la idea será presentada la institución y justificada por los creadores para que se materialice y se utilice, esto se traduce en cambios tangibles no solo en la pronunciación de los estudiantes, sino también en su ortografía y precisión de lectura, habrá un crecimiento el cumplimiento por parte de los estudiantes con todos los requisitos para aprobar la asignatura de inglés, y no solo para comunicarse de manera efectiva.

Asimismo, este documento y el AVA desarrollado junto con este, se convertirán en la base de la propuesta que se llevará a cabo para cumplir con las estipulaciones requeridas para lograr el título de Magister en educación en tecnología, esta propuesta conducirá a la investigación y la innovación. así como la implementación y recolección de resultados en la etapa posterior.

ELABORACIÓN: Junio 2020	**ELABORADO POR:**	**REVISADO Y CORREGIDO POR:**
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RESUMEN*: Esta propuesta tiene por objetivo la creación de un Ambiente Virtual de Aprendizaje (AVA) para fortalecer habilidades lingüísticas en estudiantes de inglés como idioma extranjero, a través del desarrollo de la conciencia fonológica. La propuesta toma como estrategia pedagógica el Aula Invertida, y se origina en el contexto de un colegio bilingüe con estudiantes de grado tercero de primaria. Esta propuesta se enfoca en situaciones problema que tienen lugar en un proceso de aprendizaje de lengua extranjera, y considera la tecnología como mediación pedagógica. Esta iniciativa se origina desde la evidencia de dificultades que presentan los estudiantes, en lo concerniente a habilidades de lectura, escritura y escucha en inglés.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: Ambiente Virtual de Aprendizaje (AVA), Aula Invertida, Fonética.

ABSTRACT: *This proposal aims to create a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to reinforce language skills in EFL students, through the development of the phonological awareness. The process is framed in a flipped classroom approach, and emerges from the context of a bilingual school, with elementary third grade students. This proposal focuses on problem situations stated in the EFL learning process and considers the technology as a pedagogical mediation. This initiative arises from the evidence of difficulties in EFL students, in terms of reading, writing and listening skills in the English language.*

KEYWORDS: VLE (Virtual Learning Environment), Flipped Learning, Phonetics.

1. INTRODUCTION

During the last few years, the educational field in Colombia has found different challenges, that require the strengthen of many of the practices within the classroom; two of these challenges are the need of technological literacy and the domain and proficiency of a second language. These two become equally relevant considering the global context that demands every citizen to be aware of the current conditions, in terms of communication, information and innovation of practices that will lead to development (MEN, 2008). With this purpose, a set of action plans were set, such as the National Bilingualism Program by the Ministerio de Educación (2010), which aimed that institutions along the country were educating proficient students in foreign languages, especially English.

Of course, in our experience as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, we notice that many institutions, mostly private, have a significant advantage in the area, considering that the common aim is frequently placed on the communicative skills. However, as we see it, learning a language goes beyond than communicatingo, it is about understanding, comprehending. Hence, the development of language skills in EFL processes also sets a challenge, that can be faced along with the technological literacy quest.

Accordingly, as teachers we see technology as a vital element within EFL learning, mainly considering it as a pedagogical mediation, but also as the key to understand the current world and how it constitutes the human evolution, as such. Therefore, in this paper, a proposal focused on the enhancing of language skills within an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning process, will be described. The engine of the proposal is the aim of reinforcing language skills which have been spotted to be a weakness in general, categorically English language accurate pronunciation by means of recognizing the sounds required for this purpose are an area to be strengthened. The development of the mentioned proposal reflects a process within the Technology Education specialization program, which influenced the methodology that was carried out.

The context that frames this proposal is also a determining element on the designing of the Virtual Learning Environment, articulated so that the elements in it consolidate all the requirements given the characteristics of the population, that also have risen the inquiry in regards of the phonological awareness considering their constant immersion in a English speaking environment. The proposal itself is built considering the background research carried out on the EFL field, in regard to VLE's within the Colombian context, which will be described in detail, as well as those theoretical constructs that supports us in the building of the proposal. In addition to that, the projections of the proposal are also stated in this paper, aiming a pedagogical implementation as further research opportunity.

2. CONTEXT

The Abraham Lincoln School (ALS) is a private institution that provides an education service of high quality in preschool, elementary, secondary and high school. As it is a bilingual school, it focuses on reaching high proficiency on the English

language and a basic domain of the French language. It is located on Suba, at the north of Bogotá.

The population of the school includes families which are placed in socioeconomic levels 4 to 6. The age of students ranges from 4 to 18 years old. The Abraham Lincoln School is a nonprofit institution that belongs to the parent's association (Asolincoln), which is why the parent's participation in the decision making is vital, and this certainly influences the context of the institution in comparison with other calendar B schools from the area. It is an IB school, which builds an environment and conditions where students become authors of ideas and projects focused on the development of all disciplines, however focusing on science, engineering, math and literature.

On the other hand, while being part of organizations like UNCOLI (Unión de Colegios Internacionales) the school has the opportunity of measuring its influence in the area, city and country in terms of indicators such as the results of Saber tests. In the ranking of best schools in the country, ALS is located among the first 20 places, due their last Saber test results. The school is on place 13 from calendar B schools and place 18 among all the institutions in the country. (Dinero, 2019).

In ALS, within the elementary branch, the English area gathers the subject called Language Arts, which frames the proposal. In this subject, besides covering the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learning process, it also focuses on the development of the skills of reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing and visual representation. The curricular axes of this subject include the stipulated from the MEN (Spanish initials for National Ministry of Education) guidelines and the European Framework.

This subject has the highest rate of hours per week in the branch, given the emphasis on the English language in the school. From this area, class projects are developed, aside from the grade projects, in which the area makes a contribution as well. In addition, the Human Rights and Mobility chairs are approached in these classes.

On the other hand, the English area includes the Interactive Zone subject, which is developed in one hour of class per week, in a physical environment that is named the same. There, students have the opportunity to reinforce the language skills development, through the use of virtual platforms, that share topics seen during the Language Arts class.

3. BACKGROUND

We have developed a gathering of information from research projects to support our own proposal, which is focused on the development of a VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) aiming to enhance the phonological awareness of students of English as a Foreign Language, these research projects are particularly related to the key words: phonetics, flipped learning, VLE, and EFL. In the subsequent parcel we will briefly analyze the constructs and how they are relevant to our project.

3.1. Teaching Strategies

We decided to include in our proposal Flipped Learning as a teaching strategy, bearing in mind that autonomy turns out to be an imperative aspect in the student's role within the learning process. Also, the technological resources are a crucial element in this strategy, which allows us to explore the integration of a VLE. We considered the views of some authors suitable in this aspect. Heydee González (2016) considered flipped learning to enhance the listening comprehension in students of English as a Foreign Language. Her research called "Flipping EFL Classroom and Integrating Metacognitive Strategies to Foster Listening Comprehension in Ninth Grade Students" was led by the inquiry: "To what extend applying flipped classroom FC and metacognitive strategies MS influence EFL ninth grade students' listening comprehension LC?", which directly address the influence of FL within an EFL process.

As for the pedagogical intervention, the use of the Edmodo platform was key in order to provide the contents students should revise in the time outside the class, for the Flipped Learning strategy to be successful. González considered aspects such as students' time dedicated to the tasks and the way they kept record of the input obtained, which in this case was note taking, then the activities developed during the eight hours of class; in addition, González (2016) emphasizes on the student's awareness in their process, as it is key in a metacognitive process.

Similarly, Maria Victoria Garzón (2014) carried out a research project called: "Modelo Flipped Classroom como propuesta pedagógica en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de inglés en el Sena, centro de servicios financieros en la modalidad semi-presencial para el tecnólogo en análisis y desarrollo de sistemas de información". In which she discussed the difficulties faced by both teachers and students at SENA in their English learning classes due to the big number of learners per teacher and how hard it made it for them to communicate both student-student and teacher-student; in the same way, the institution requires both students and teachers to propose innovative strategies that motivate learning, strengthen the use of Technologies Information and Communication and principally ensure the relevance of the skills to develop, therefore designing an educational proposal for the program of Technologist training in Analysis and Development of Information Systems is a challenge but also an opportunity that will favor cooperative learning and Autonomous learning in learning a second language, English, through the model "Flipped Classroom" or inverted classroom.

Her proposal consisted of a learning strategy in which, students received an explanation of the topics through videos, they could prepare questions, appropriate the content of the training program and later in class collectively; they were provided with spaces to perform activities related to the explanations given in these videos. It focused on the promotion of autonomous learning the teacher proposed in each quarter and in turn that strengthens cooperative learning in the classroom in line with the pedagogical model of SENA. Through

this educational proposal it is intended to generate a transformation of the established practices for teaching English, which contribute to the learning of student respecting, at the same time, the pace of apprehension of knowledge that each one owns.

The Flipped Classroom method based on cooperative learning and autonomous learning allows to ensure the students' understanding of the proposed topics, as it promotes a more personalized attention in the time allocated for meetings face-to-face In this sense, it also recognizes the relevance of learning with others by allowing the activities to be carried out in class while these have in their essence the particularities of learning cooperatively.

3.2. VLE (Virtual Learning Environment)

We took as referent the research called "Los EVA como Motivadores en los Procesos Lecto – Escriturales" by María Stella Betancourt García and Olga Lucía Suárez Salcedo (2016), which as the title suggests, aims as general objective, to enhance the reading and writing learning processes. Although this research focuses on the development of language skills in the mother tongue, is certainly guides us in the quest of creating a VLE in terms of language development.

The authors encounter with the problem that, as they suggest, most language teachers find in their pedagogical practice: engaging students with reading habits, especially when the school or educative institution doesn't provide the adequate spaces or resources to make this task easier.

Within the proposal, the pedagogical intervention starts from the students' interaction with the in the space called RED LEAL Y TIC, through Moodle, in which they will be able to find different literary works as main material to develop activities focused on reading comprehension, writing, and interaction through debates, video conferences, among others while using different audiovisual resources. In the findings, Betancourt and Suarez (2016), suggest that given the fact VLE's use a considerable amount of audiovisual resources, these certainly contribute to the student's motivation in the reading and writing learning process as well as the actual progress in this matter. Therefore, they suggest the need of including VLE's in the pedagogical practices around the schools, given the results found.

3.3. English as a Foreign Language learning process

Now, to focus on the EFL learning, especially while dealing with technological resources, we find support in two research projects. The first one is called "Instructional design applied in a blended learning environment for the English Language Teaching in pre-intermediate students (level 3) at Universidad de la Sabana" written by Yeimy Lorena Suárez Duarte (2017). In this research, the research question is "How are the techno-pedagogical guidelines used for the asynchronous session design in Virtual Sabana (a Moodle based platform) to boost A2+ English students' language proficiency?". To clear this inquiry, Suárez (2017) aims, as a general objective, to "create an instructional design for the asynchronous session CPS for A2+ English students at Universidad La Sabana by using an enhanced Moodle based platform".

On the other hand, we also found as reference the research project made by Diana Catalina Puentes Vargas (2019), which is called "Involucramiento y uso de tecnologías, una propuesta para el aprendizaje de inglés como lengua extranjera".

The problematic situation found by Puentes (2019), was the gap between the demands of the National Ministry of Education in Colombia, whose expectations with their National Plan of Bilingualism, in Spanish "*Plan Nacional de Bilingüismo"* (PNB), that expected every professional who graduated in our country to have a B1 English language proficiency, according to the Common European Framework for languages, which differs in terms of reasonability with the results obtained by those who accessed Universidad Manuela Beltrán, in the programs of Nursing and Speech Therapy in 2017, whose results in the national tests evidenced an outcome in this matter of an average of A1 and A2, also according to the Common European Framework, which makes this objective far from being reachable.

These were some of the reasons why Puentes (2019) dared to affirm that it was fundamental to make changes to the educational practices and processes of learning this language, through the implementation of pedagogical proposals that incorporate tools that technological developments have provided in recent years to foster innovative and differentiated learning environments that allow optimize these processes and in turn direct students to get involved in their learning process to get better academic performance and motivation Natural to learn.

Although the statistical analysis showed no significant changes in the levels of Experimental group involvement, platform work reports and surveys of output are artifacts that give account of the relevance of the intervention in the population from the characteristics of the internal system and the dimensions of the involvement. The majority of the students felt interested in the class and the use of the tool Duolingo®, thus denoting a positive emotional response to the knowledge acquired in Both spaces. According to Marzano and Kendall (2007) the emotional response of an individual versus the knowledge component will trigger or not the motivation and the involvement.

It is certain that EFL has a strong connection with technology nowadays, and the projects we gather present ideas that support the encouragement for schools to take the leadership and include the use of VLE within their pedagogical practices in order to enhance any learning process, regardless of the discipline.

As for the contribution to our project, we were able to identify not only ideas and procedures that support our quest, but also

inquires and needs in terms language development, specially phonics. With the research made by Puentes (2019), she considered the lack of interaction in the speaking component of Duolingo, which turns out to be a key element within the language development; from this perspective, we also wondered about how the app deals with the phonics aspect.

It can also be concluded that Puentes' research (2019) project is potentially kindred to ours considering that as she stated, the requirements of the PNB released by the National Minister of Education demand autonomous work from students to achieve the expected B1 level and as a natural consequence it requires some sort of guidance and support in order for them to foster the skills needed to do so, the use of technological tools becomes a key element in this process. In the same way the proposals developed by Gonzalez (2016) and Garzon (2014), are relevant and connected to this necessity that we want to endure with our very own proposal, which is linked with flipping all those contents that turn out to be mandatory for students still hard to embrace by teachers considering the time limitations that must be handled.

Hence, a VLE as argued by Betancourt and Suarez (2016), is most definitely an appropriate tool to promote the interest of students towards their autonomy through the use of technology as well as critical thinking pointing to their own abilities.

4. DEGREE WORK DESCRIPTION

4.1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem situation that propitiated this proposal is framed on the EFL learning process of children who have been able to be immersed in an English-speaking environment since early years. However, despite of the fact their fluency is outstanding, their language skill development has been focused on the communicative purposes, rather than the encouragement of abilities such as reading comprehension, sound recognition and writing. Nevertheless, students have been through a process of phonics within their process, to support the early stages of learning how to read and write, but this process seems to break at some point in the transition from preschool to elementary. This is evidenced on processes like writing, where the spelling of words corresponds to the phonemic structures of their mother tongue, considering their perception of the English language sounds.

Figure 1. Rate of language skills achievement failure.
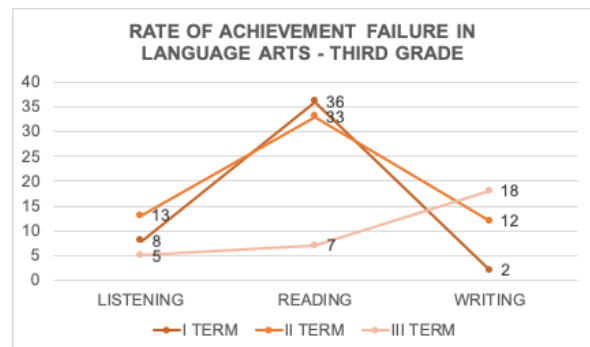
Source: Prepared by the authors.

4.2. JUSTIFICATION

Within the EFL learning process in this context, students have access to a number of resources for their language development, which are focused on improving skills like listening and reading, mainly, but also reinforcing grammar structures. However, these resources are mostly used during classes, when teachers are monitoring, even though students are encouraged to use these resources at home. Because of this, progress in skills development is not remarkable. This gives several opportunities and specific aspects to work with this proposal: first, we would be able to encourage autonomy in students, as main characters of their learning process; to be able to intervene in this aspects, the building of a VLE guided course within a flipped classroom approach, is certainly a way to attend this problematic.

On the other hand, the recognition of the importance of phonological awareness in students, besides being of great significance on the conscious and empowered learning, will give students the opportunity to try a different focus on their learning tasks, which can give us new perspectives on how the phonological awareness and language skills should be taught.

4.3. GUIDING QUESTIONS

Which resources can be gathered within a VLE for EFL students to build up phonological awareness?

Which elements of a VLE can be accurate to develop a phonics course with the Flipped Learning Strategy?

4.4. OBJECTIVES

4.4.1. GENERAL

Designing a VLE with accurate navigability and content characteristics to promote the phonological awareness of students of EFL through the Flipped Learning strategy.

4.4.2. SPECIFIC

Design activities and assessment charts in a VLE in order to provoke third graders to develop English language skills while arising phonological awareness.

Incorporating navigability and assessment such manner that students can access the content through different routes as they explore the VLE autonomously.

5. METHODOLOGY

This proposal is aimed to create a VLE that increases the phonological awareness in third graders from a bilingual school, strengthening their EFL learning process, with the English language. In that sense, the methodology for the degree work is focusing on the main product of the proposal, which is the VLE. Therefore, a series of stages are established, in order to comply with the purposes of the degree requirements and the creation of the VLE, which are as follows.

Figure 2. Methodology phases.
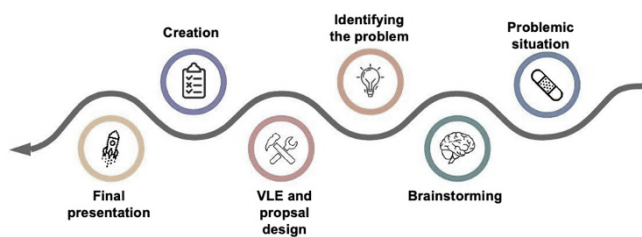
Source: Prepared by the authors.

5.1. PROBLEMIC SITUATION

In this initial stage of the process, the context is analyzed with the purpose of finding a problem. Among the considerations, it is observed that third graders from this bilingual school have difficulties in the reading and writing skills, even though their communicative skills in the language are outstanding.

5.2. BRAINSTORMING

With the goal of identifying the problem, the learning process of the population is observed. How did they start? Which methods were used during the first phases of the EFL teaching process? Which was the outcome profile?

5.3. IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

From reflections on teaching experiences and theoretical background as teachers, the importance of phonological awareness in the EFL learning process becomes relevant within the problem situation and context.

5.4. VLE AND PROPOSAL DESIGN

With the problem statement as reference and focusing on the population's specific needs, a VLE is designed. Also, the proposal draft is be presented.

5.5. CREATION

The VLE as main product of this proposal is created through the process within the seminars of the degree program. Feedback will be provided by tutor and judges before the final phase.

5.6. FINAL PRESENTATION

The final proposal and VLE will be presented, including feedback provided. Projections will be set from the perspective of further research in terms of a pedagogical implementation of the proposal.

6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This proposal is situated within the Colombian educational context, which has started to develop new sorts of practices around technological abilities that allow teachers to plan and perform new types of content, promoting learning in students over an effective use of those technological resources. Nowadays, we are called to find effective pedagogical paths that connect our students with technology in order to boost their motivation towards learning, using tools and ways that translate into meaningful experiences within the school processes. In this field it is relevant to conceive technology as the engine of human activity and at the same time a vehicle for the construction of society and culture. With this in mind, this proposal is thought on the development of processes in education with technology, bearing in mind that it seeks to promote the increase of aspects of language required to guarantee communication referring to phonological awareness heightened by the use of a VLE.

For the development of the proposal there are three core elements that integrate it, firstly and as identified in the research questions section it is Phonological Awareness (PA) the aspect of language that this proposal seeks to attend. On the other hand, a Virtual Learning Environment is the technological element through which it is intended to achieve this objective, and finally at the same level of relevance the Flipped Learning strategy will be part of the backbone of this overture, so that

each concept is closely related and will be explained in the following parcels.

6.1 Phonological Awareness

Phonetics is the branch of linguistics that examines sounds in a language. Phonetics describes these sounds using the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) which uses a single symbol to describe each sound in a language. If a letter in a word is silent, there will be no IPA symbol used in the transcription. This can be helpful for studying a language, especially languages that use letters that are silent or have multiple pronunciations. Spanish is consistent in its spelling and pronunciation which means that each letter represents a single sound which rarely varies. English is different. It has many letters with two or more sounds and many letters that are silent therefore it is necessary to look at phonetics more deeply. Roach (2009) explained:

> Phonetics is the scientific study of speech. It has a long history, going back certainly to well over two thousand years ago. The central concerns in phonetics are the discovery of how speech sounds are produced, how they are used in spoken language, how we can record speech sounds with written symbols and how we hear and recognize different sounds. (p.2).

To support this proposal, it is necessary to understand the need and importance of developing phonological awareness (PA) among students, likewise it turns out to be imperative the acquisition of conceptual clarity regarding what PA entails, as it is the aspect of language we are dealing with. That being said, PA does not only refer to the understanding of sound articulation required for mastery of a language orality. Anthony and Francis (2005) argue that:

> Phonological awareness is a single, unified ability during the preschool and early elementary school years that manifests itself in different skills throughout a person's development. Thus, there is consensus that phonological awareness refers to one's ability to recognize, discriminate, and manipulate the sounds in one's language, regardless of the size of the word unit that is the focus. (p.256).

Correspondingly, in order to understand PA, it results paramount to enclose the abilities from PA that are expected to be achieved through the development of this proposal. Anthony and Francis (2005), mentioned that some examples of different Phonological Awareness skills that are distinguished by the type of task performed include blending sounds together, separating (segmenting) words into their constituent sounds, recombining sounds of words, and judging whether two words have some sounds in common. The most basic activity in phonology is phonemic analysis, in which the objective is to establish what the phonemes are and arrive at the phonemic inventory of the language. Very few phonologists have ever believed that this would be an adequate analysis of the sound system of a language: it is necessary to go beyond this.

6.2 Flipped Learning

The proposal takes place in the language field particularly in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language), keeping in mind that a VLE is being used as the mediator of the whole project, we consider important to understand the organization of the proposal. Flipped Learning is in fact a very common method in the EFL classroom that allows teachers and students to take advantage of the time provided in the classroom just as the time at home, as Fearon, Starr, & McLaughlin (2011, cited by Zainuddin and Halili, 2015) affirmed:

> Flipped learning comes as one approach that combines the traditional classroom with technology-based learning. Blended learning does not ignore the traditional learning because it applies both face to face interaction in the classroom and online multimedia technology outside the classroom. (p.15).

Thus there are elements from flipped learning that go beyond learning contents at home as assigned and facilitated by the teacher, in fact there are different types or techniques associated to flipped learning and explained by Staker & Horn, (2012), who refer to flipped learning as a pedagogical that encompasses multiple models including Station rotation, lab rotation, individual rotation and flipped classroom.

6.2.1. Flipped Classroom

Flipped classroom is an element of blended learning and it is the reverse of the traditional classroom. The students do not listen to the lectures delivered in the classroom but outside the classroom through online video lecture. The teachers record themselves explaining the subject or get videos from free website such as Youtube to share with students to be watched outside the class. The Flipped Classroom has several advantages; students become more motivated and confident while discussing in the classroom because they have prepared by watching video lectures before coming to class, the classroom activities become more student-centered rather than teacher-centered because the teachers just act as facilitators (Zainuddin & Haili, 2016).

Therefore it is flipped classroom the element from Flipped Learning that consists of the assignment of certain elements to be learnt by students at home through the use of different elements like technology typically back-boned by what Staker & Horn (2012) called a Virtual Enriched Model, which consists of the use of virtual spaces either designed by the teacher or gathered by the facilitator from multiple or single free websites in order for the student not to be limited to the content given in the classroom; this allows teachers not only to flip content to cope with absences and lack of time, but also to have students prepare for upcoming lessons and rotations. Comparing with traditional classroom, in which the content of the theory is introduced in the classroom by a teacher, while higher level areas of application happens outside of the classroom without guidance of teacher. Thus, under the Flipped Classroom strategy, the role of teachers shifts from teacher to facilitator, while status of students is also changed to active and self-confident participants.

Flipped classroom has evolved through the time also due to the number of researchers and teacher who have implemented it and made relevant findings to make it more effective, in fact, Bergmann and Sams (2014) stressed that the Flipped Learning model established less lecturing and more activity in the classroom; group activity was usually conducted in the Flipped Classroom to build an interactive and active learning. The learners have a great time to exchange and elaborate their idea during the class discussion. Two strong elements in the flipped classroom are using technology media as the instruction of learning while outside the class and establishing interactive and communicative learning while inside the class.

6.3. Virtual Learning Environment

This proposal takes form on the designing of a Virtual Learning Environment that will certainly mark the difference in the process, aiming to achieve the objectives set, not only from the proposal as such, in terms of EFL development, but in its contribution to a better understanding of technology in the educational context. In that order of ideas, we explore the concept of technology in an attempt to shape the VLE as a holistic element.

6.3.1. What is a VLE?

The Virtual Learning Environment is a huge element within education nowadays, and to define it can be as complex as to consider the implications it entails. To start tracing the definition of the VLE, we take the statements made by Guiza, Salinas and Flores (2011), in which they consider the facets of what it can be, considering a space in terms of both hardware and software to promote a learning space. They also consider the VLE as a space that gathers a series of content that foster learning in specific areas, or a virtual space aimed to develop activities that would be done during on-site courses. Consequently, we consider accurate the definition provided by Begoña (2001) that states the VLE as the creation of teaching-learning materials mediated by the interaction through a personal computer.

Among the multiple definitions that can be state for the VLE, it is certain is that it is a learning environment in which the student is definitely taking the lead in the learning process (Dillenbourg cited by Guiza, Salinas & Flores, 2011), which concurs with the purposes of this proposal. It is also stated that the VLE encourages the collaborative work among students involved within the learning process, in terms of achieving goals as a team (Dillenbourg cited by Guiza, Salinas & Flores, 2011); despite of our focus on the autonomy processes of students in the process, this stance also takes importance on the interaction element of the VLE, given the fact that this will also be a classroom on-site subject. Therefore, we must consider here the connectivism principles stated by Siemens (2004) in which interaction is highly consider as a key element within the learning nowadays, encouraging the connection with other learning communities and the decision making that certainly will remain in the active role of the student.

7. PROPOSAL

7.1. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

The proposal framed in this degree work aims to the design of a VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) focused on the development of phonological awareness in EFL students, specially third graders from the Abraham Lincoln School. Considering this population, we target a set of abilities that will encourage the progress of students in terms of their language skills development.

The intention of this VLE, is to get students to identify the phonetic symbols and sounds associated with them so that they are able to differentiate English sounds when listening to them and as a natural consequence, pronounce them distinctly and clearly particularly those phonemes that are non-existing in Spanish language by interpreting the phonemic transcription. The VLE as proposal for this degree work, was developed in Moddle 2.5, which on its design allowed us, the authors, to include resources from different platforms, such as Genially or Wordwall.net. The VLE can be accessed through the link in here http://ciencias.udistrital.edu.co/aduvirtual3/course/view.php?id=533&section=0

7.2. RELEVANCE

"Phonemic Awareness: A Journey to Fun" as the VLE of this proposal is named, becomes relevant in a context in which the EFL learning process not only is one of the most important components in the education of the chosen population, but also sets an opportunity of consolidating the assessment processes, and embracing a changing reality in which technology as a pedagogical mediation becomes even more necessary.

The proposal takes its form as a VLE due the significance of considering the need in technological literacy (MEN, 2008) and language learning, which as stated in the introduction has been some of the challenges in our educational context in Colombia. Also, we considered how versatile a VLE can be, regardless of the type of education we encounter with, if it is long distance, face-to-face or mixed environments (Herrera, 2016), which certainly provides the conditions for Flipped Learning strategy.

7.4. COMPETENCES

According to the Common European Framework (2001), there are a series of competences that are build from the experience in the language use. These competences are developed and enhanced as long as the learner is involved in events that require interaction and communicative skills. Within the general competences that are stated (CEFR, 2001), the *ability to learn* competence becomes relevant.

In its most general sense, *savoir-apprendre* is the ability to observe and participate in new experiences and to incorporate

new knowledge into existing knowledge, modifying the latter where necessary. Language learning abilities are developed in the course of the experience of learning. They enable the learner to deal more effectively and independently with new language learning challenges, to see what options exist and to make better use of opportunities. Ability to learn has several components, such as language and communication awareness; general phonetic skills; study skills; and heuristic skills. (p. 106).

Now, considering the *ability to learn* competency, we find the *General Phonetic Awareness skills,* which are focused on the issue we address on this proposal. It refers to the ability of pronouncing new languages, as a result of developing the following, which are actually different from the pronunciation of a language.

• An ability to distinguish and produce unfamiliar sounds and prosodic patterns;
• An ability to perceive and catenate unfamiliar sound sequences;
• An ability, as a listener, to resolve (i.e. divide into distinct and significant parts) a continuous stream of sound into a meaningful structured string of phonological elements;
• An understanding/mastery of the processes of sound perception and production applicable to new language learning. (p. 107).

7.3. OBJECTIVES

7.3.1. GENERAL OBJECTIVE

Developing the phonological awareness in third grade EFL students, through a VLE guided course framed on a Flipped Learning Strategy implementation.

7.3.2. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Developing the language skills in third grade students while developing phonological awareness.

Incorporating self and peer assessment within the VLE through the use of assessment charts.

Encouraging students to take an active role in their learning process through the Flipped Learning strategy.

7.4. STRUCTURE OF THE PROPOSAL

In the VLE that embodies this proposal, one of the most important elements to consider is the use of IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) which allow students to build a referent in terms of sound recognition, and it sets the course in which the VLE itself is designed. Students will be able to explore the content in three different modules: consonants, vowels, and diphthongs. Each of these modules includes the sections that will be described in this part of the chapter.

### 7.4.1.   PREVIOUS   KNOWLEDGE   AND CONCEPTUALIZATION

The first tab of each module begins with a video introduction where students are briefly told about what is awaiting and encouraged to visit the different sections of the tab, subsequently the exploration of students' previous knowledge about each of the categories being introduced through the use of a questionnaire which will not be evaluated but analyzed in order to dismiss this findings, simultaneously this tab represents the first exposure occasion to those sounds and symbols students are not fully enlightened with, this occurs by means of a genially.com presentation in which students will be faced to some questions and will then be allowed to look at the symbols and click on them in order to hear a model of how they are to be pronounced. the sounds are fully presented to them by the use of videos and images, the first tool to help them consolidate the concepts is a game, designed on wordwall.net which allows the teacher to keep record of their understanding, once students complete the sequence of previous knowledge exploration, exposure to new knowledge and activation of new concepts they can decide whether they want to go to the next tab to practice or one of the three recurring icons (assessment, games, and community).

Illustration 1. Sample of a Previous Knowledge Video

Source: VLE: Phonetic Awareness: A Journey to Fun.

Illustration 2. Vowel Sounds Previous Knowledge screen.
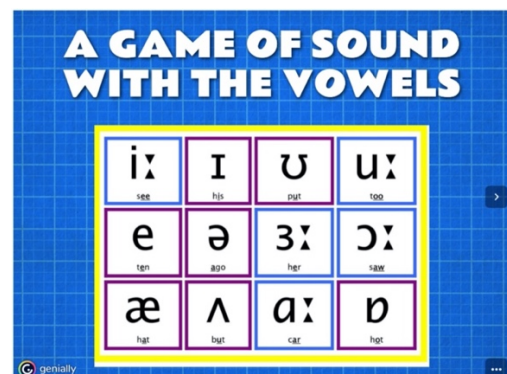
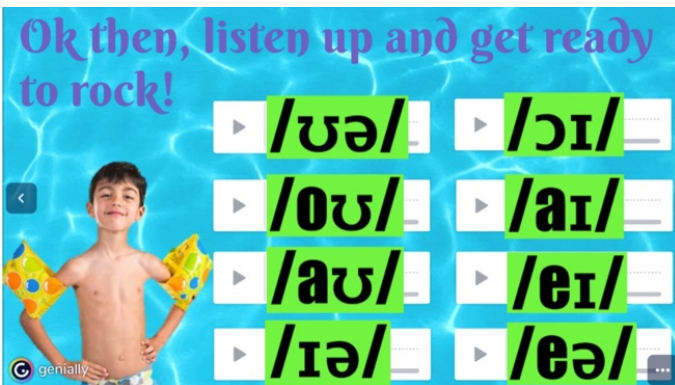Source: VLE: Phonetic Awareness: A Journey to Fun.

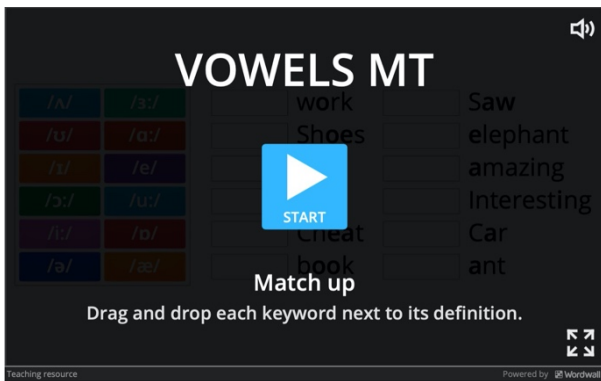Illustration 3. Consonant Sounds Previous Knowledge

Source: VLE: Phonetic Awareness: A Journey to Fun.

Illustration 4. Consonant Sounds Previous Knowledge screen

Source: VLE: Phonetic Awareness: A Journey to Fun.

Illustration 5. Vowels Wordwall Exercise

Source: VLE: Phonetic Awareness: A Journey to Fun.

7.4.2. HANDS ON

This is the place where students can attend as they consider it necessary, either because they had a hard time with the assessment, by following the chronological order of the environment or simply because they want to have some more practice, external videos and games can be found here so
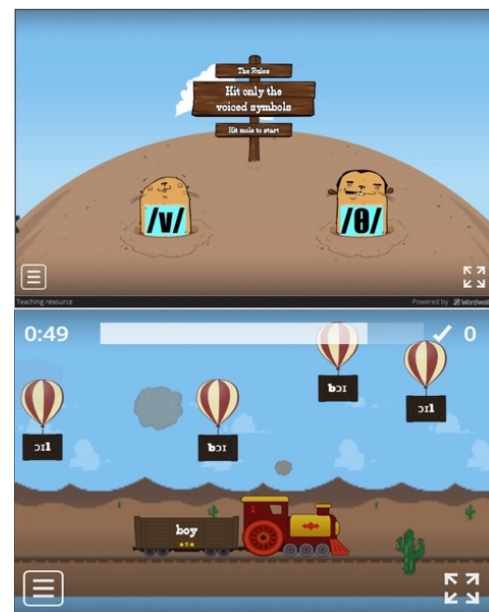
students can strengthen the knowledge acquired in the preceding.

Illustration 6. Hands on screen. Consonant Sounds.

Source: VLE: Phonetic Awareness: A Journey to Fun.

Illustration 7. Hands on Wordwall exercise. Consonant Sounds.

Source: VLE: Phonetic Awareness: A Journey to Fun.

7.4.3. MAIN MENU AND RECURRING ICONS

The main page is the core of the whole environment it is from this tab that students can reach every single section in the

environment, hence it is possible to get back to this section from any tab, additionally its layout gives a digestible idea of the sequence to be followed by the explorer, as the titles of each segment are distributed in such way that students can go back and forward but also all the way to any section in the environment.

Illustration 8. Main menu.

Source: VLE: Phonetic Awareness: A Journey to Fun.

Students are also introduced to the recurring icons which lead them into some of the most relevant areas of the environment and can be easily accessed and clicked on from almost every tab, they are mostly for extra practice, socialization with fellow classmates and assessment.

Illustration 9. Recurring Icons

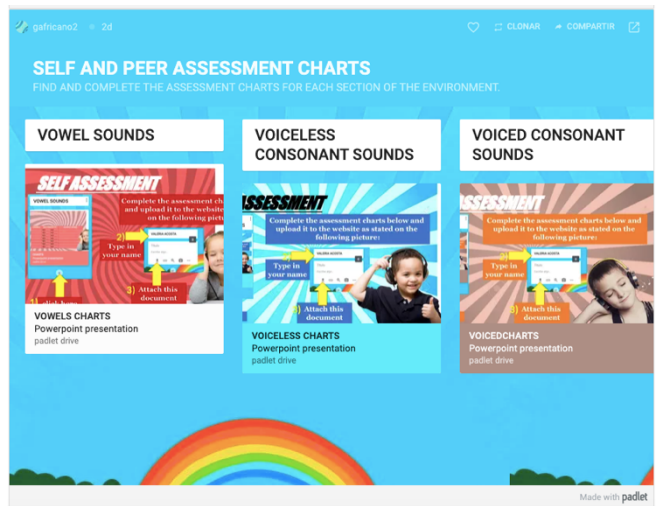Source: VLE: Phonetic Awareness: A Journey to Fun.

7.6. ASSESSMENT

Assessment is one of the elements that is present in every single tab within the environment, through a recurring icon which students are introduced to in the welcome page. Assessment practices must be reflective in nature seeking to raise awareness of progression in the attainment of learning goals, factors hindering learning, and possible action plans to be chosen from the environment that both deal with learning problems and maximize students' strengths, therefore it is ongoing and takes place in multiple moments, assessment comes from the teacher (teacher's assessment), their classmates (peer-assessment), and themselves (self-assessment) and so do the action plans.

Illustration 10. Teacher's Assessment.
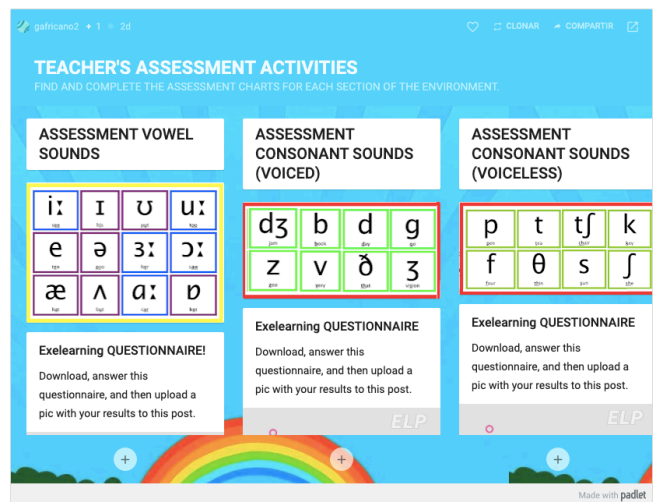
Source: VLE: Phonetic Awareness: A Journey to Fun.

Illustration 11. Self and Peer Assessment Charts.

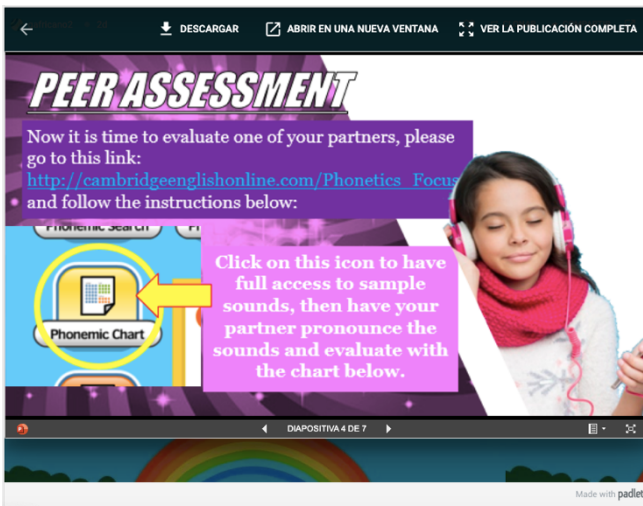Source: VLE: Phonetic Awareness: A Journey to Fun.

After reviewing the material, games, and workshops they decide when they are prepared to take it they are allowed to go to the assessment tab and they are then provided with a set of assessment tools where in which are required to complete a self-assessment chart with specific criteria items so that they are able to perform it. Additionally, they have to pick one of the activities to be evaluated and complete it so that the teacher will be able to carry out teacher's assessment. Once a module is completed students' access to the peer assessment tool and evaluate their classmates.

Illustration 12. Vowel Sounds. Self-Assessment.

Source: VLE: Phonetic Awareness: A Journey to Fun.

Illustration 13. Voiced Consonant. Peer-assessment.

Source: VLE: Phonetic Awareness: A Journey to Fun.

Certainly, the assessment in this VLE not only provides students with the opportunity of taking an active role on the evaluation of their progress, but also gives them a space of interaction with their partners and teacher, and it encourages them to get more involved with the resources included in the VLE as support. These aspects in the VLE are evident when students are given the options of uploading material to be evaluated (teacher and self-assessment), when they can interact and get access to their partners material (peer-assessment), and when the teacher provides feedback from the material uploaded through the VLE and the resources integrated within. (López, Ledesma & Escalera, 2009).

Illustration 14. Voiceless consonant sounds. Self-assessment instruction.
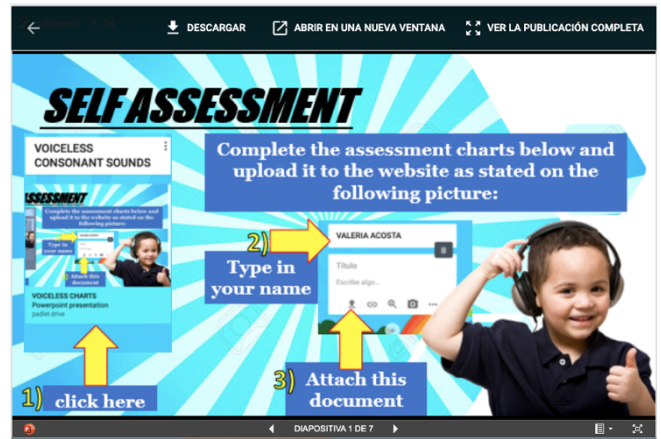
Source: VLE: Phonetic Awareness: A Journey to Fun.

8. PROJECTIONS

Phonological Awareness (PA) implies a wide range of language components, which not only entails the adequate pronunciation in the language, but also allows recognition of the language as a sequence of elements, of words. Words are made of small units called syllabi and phonemes, which provides a structure, and when the learner is able to make this recognition, it is possible to say that he or she has phonological awareness. (Ruiz-Miravalles, 2014). In those terms, the VLE in this proposal gathered a series of elements and resources that not only aim to develop language skills on EFL learners, but also provides tools in order to comprehend language configurations, especially when it comes to learners that don't have English as their mother tongue.

Moreover, the VLE developed contains quite accurate elements within the flipped learning strategy such as assessment charts students can work on their own either at home or in class, additionally the audiovisual material poured into the different tabs of the environment constitute an asset in its achievement.

The VLE which is the materialization of the proposal previously described, draws a range of research potentialities. However, is it worthy to highlight the factors that are likely to influence the conditions that engine the VLE creation, in the sense of provoking situations that promote a higher relevance of the proposal in within the given context.

One of the most evident accomplishments is the easy navigability of the environment which allows users to go from the main menu to any part of the environment, moreover, there was a recurring icon creates for the assessment section of the site, thus icon is clickable from almost every tab including the main menu which permits students to explore it as they fancy, similarly all the screens were equipped with back and forward bottoms in case a lineal pattern of exploration is desired.

Among the most relevant potentialities of the proposal is the possibility to widen the target population, accordingly it will reach out for new EFL learners such as adults, considering that phonological awareness needs to be acquired by all sorts of learners and given the current situation a virtual learning environment will become a great asset to them.

On the other hand, considering the current conditions that education is facing worldwide, due the Covid-19 pandemic, enhancing the strategies and resources that promote virtual learning is vital, especially those resources which focus on the development of skills that are mostly encouraged in a face-to-face environment, especially on elementary grades, as the population of our proposal is. Given these conditions, the VLE that embodies this proposal will be a key element at the moment of supporting an EFL learning process, along with the current transformation of the Colombian classrooms.

Additionally, this VLE is thought to be implemented, consequently, the idea will be presented to the school and justified by the creators for it to be materialized and utilized, this translates into tangible changes not only in students pronunciation, but in their spelling, and reading accuracy, there will be an outgrowth in students meeting all the requirements to pass the Language Arts subject not only communicating effectively.

Likewise, this document and the VLE developed aside, will become the base for the proposal that will be carried out in order to fulfill the stipulations required to achieve the title of Master's on education in technology, this proposal will lead to research and innovation as well as the implementation and gathering of results in the subsequent stage.

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10. APPENDIX

Phonological Awarenes: A Journey to Fun. Arising Phonological Awareness in EFL Students. VLE proposal: http://ciencias.udistrital.edu.co/aduvirtual3/course/view.php?id=533&section=0