UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

THE IMPORTANCE OF A VIRTUAL SPECIALIZATION FOR FUTURE PROFESSIONALS
THAT INCLUDES ONLINE LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS FOR ENGLISH
LANGUAGE TEACHING

LA IMPORTANCIA DE UNA ESPECIALIZACIÓN VIRTUAL PARA FUTUROS
PROFESIONALES QUE INCLUYA SISTEMAS DE GESTIÓN DE APRENDIZAJE EN LÍNEA
PARA LA ENSEÑANZA DEL IDIOMA INGLÉS

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INFORME FINAL DE CURSO DE ESPECIALIZACIÓN

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APRENDIZAJE DE IDIOMAS EXTRANJEROS

IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE DEGREE OF:

BACHELOR IN MODERN LANGUAGES WITH SPECIALIZATION IN

ENGLISH AND FRENCH.

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Abstract

Within the following document it will be demonstrated the importance and contribution of the on-line course of specialization to the three careers offered by the Department of Foreign Languages at the University of El Salvador to specialize future professionals who are completing their graduation process. The main objective of the specialization is for students from different careers who are about to complete their academic curriculum to be at the forefront with the latest tools and applications to facilitate the learning and teaching of languages with the usage of virtual platforms. Three learning modules were developed, which are divided as follows: on-line english language teaching, educational applications for learning a foreign language and design of virtual resources.

The participants also learned some audio, video and image editing tools such as Audacity, Openshot, Genially and other platforms. This report presents in greater depth everything learned during the three modules of the specialization course and the achievements, conclusions and recommendations. Besides, the action of adding the most recent LMS and technological resources during the class made it great because technologies change constantly and it is everybody's responsibility to stay up to date with modern on-line technologies.

Keywords: applications, platforms, tools, resources, technologies.

I. INTRODUCTION

The following investigation has been carried out meticulously to obtain good reasons for the development of online environments for teaching a language at the University of El Salvador. Between the project and the ideas presented, there will also be theories, methods, tools and even technologies to better understand the online learning process.

Over the past century, humans have worked very hard in the discovery of new technologies and the Internet was one of them. With the discovery of the Internet, humans also tried to expand the areas where the Internet could be used. In recent years, the use of this new technology has become a necessity due to its real-time updates, job search, communication, purchases, financial transactions and therefore studies. The development of online tools and resources is enormous, so schools and universities must take advantage of them.

This project is based on the University of El Salvador, specifically the Foreign Language Department during the Covid-19 pandemic and the students who were preparing for the graduation process.. This research will demonstrate good reasons to continue working on the specialization so that students are prepared for online environments and the uses of learning management systems.

The research also includes some benefits of developing an online course, examples of use of tools, images of tools, achievements of the course taught in the 180 hours it lasted, approaches, methodologies, and a well-structured explanation of the development of the course and tasks performed.

II. OBJECTIVES

General

- To determine the fundamentals used by the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador to build up future professionals in the English language teaching process through virtual means.

Specifics

- To label the different types of technological tools and their benefits while using them in real scenarios of virtual environments for teaching and learning English as a second language.

- To compare the pedagogical structures established for each module during the formation of future professionals in the virtual classes specialization.

- To describe the easiness created by virtual environments in the English language teaching process.

- To exhibit the influence of virtual environments in the formation process of teaching professionals of English as a second language.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

During last months, the digital age has grown up into an educational system worldwide, showing a new educational areas that have given the way to a new modality in the field of distance education, thus changing the way of teaching and learning, moving from a onsite modality to virtual education, through the use of educational platforms and video conferencing applications.

Most common learning management systems

According to Capterra, one of the biggest platforms related to the selection of softwares for businesses, has determined a list of the most common and important LMS in the world. Aspects such as comprehension and intuition have helped each of the chosen platforms. The first ten of the list are: Moodle, Edmodo, Blackboard, SumTotal Systems, Skillsoft, Cornerstone, Schoology, NetDimensions, Collaborize Classroom.

Social constructivism approach

The social constructivist approach is based on the learning and construction of knowledge and meanings through interaction with others. According to it, knowledge is not presented to the individuals, but results from dialogues where people create their own learning paths and knowledge.

Influence of COVID-19 developing a virtual modality

English is a language used by millions of people for different purposes and there are two important environments for the successful learning of a second or foreign

language: what happens inside and outside of a classroom which is why it is important to know how to implement it in virtual environments.

While properly and professionally learning English, it is essential to develop four macro skills like listening, speaking, writing and reading at the same level. These skills are grouped into two categories that are oral and written communication. At the same time, some external factors help improve student's abilities in developing their macro skills, having the opportunity to be exposed to the real English language in virtual environments, such as practicing these skills through platforms or websites that help students to improve.

There are three types of e-learning tools here: curriculum tools, digital library tools, and knowledge representation tools. Teaching tools provide a systematic and standard environment to support learning in the classroom; its functions are particularly useful in the initiation and selection phases. Digital library tools facilitate effective and efficient access to resources to support exploration and collection, while knowledge representation tools focus on formulation and representation.

Adjustment from traditional to modern-digital education
After all, the teaching of English has gone through different methods and applications over time. Before, teachers utilized known tools like the ones found in a classroom to deliver their class before the advance of technological resources.

English teaching professionals have learned to integrate these helpful resources to make their lives easier and their jobs better. Teachers must find creative ways to

help students understand the complexity of the language in its many elements, such as grammar, sound, and form.

The Adjustment into modern-digital education due to te COVID-19 pandemic was quick. From that moment, at the University of El Salvador, especially in the Department of Foreign Languages, the need to implement the specialization course in the virtual environment was noted. Everybody around the world had been forced not to leave their homes due to the pandemic and to look for alternatives to continue with our daily lives, which in our case included continuing with our studies. This is mainly the reason that made students aware of the importance of learning about technological teaching tools that have helped implement virtual teaching, since it allowed them to deliver assignments without having to physically look for their teachers.

Virtual Learning Environments provide various resources in the form of documents, worksheets, and PowerPoint presentations. In practice, teachers can link students to other online courses and embed YouTube videos and newspaper articles, and provide platforms for students to create podcasts. As stated on the Firefly Learning Environment website: What is a Virtual Learning Environment? (2009) "More than a virtual repository of learning resources, the most valuable virtual learning environments and virtual learning software provide gateways to unlimited possibilities to connect, content and learn with business leaders 'school, students and parents In this way, having a virtual learning environment becomes more fundamental for the new education as it allows students to develop their skills by having an improvement in the field of practice.

Furthermore, it has been more than two years since COVID-19 made its first appearance in the world, education has not been the same since then and now the use of new technologies, online learning tools are a vital component to continue with the learning process in all areas. Education since the beginning of the pandemic has completely modified the way that courses were taught in schools and universities and student's homes became the environment of study because of the need for regulations made by the pandemic. Face to face modalit, in which most educational institutions were working, was forced to change to online and look for new teaching methodologies that could adapt to the emergency that was being experienced.

In the meantime, the new digital arrived to transform education around the world, where teachers have had to adapt to the new demands that are being developed alongside a globalized and technological world.

These new educational strategies proposed a new curriculum, connectivity, and equipment, teaching and learning processes, and in the continuous training of professionals since this modality requires them to be trained and acquire the necessary digital skills to adapt and design innovative teaching strategies.

Not too far in the past technology progressed and improved in a variety of ramifications, at the same time education has also seen a change in teaching methodology. Now teachers can synchronize numerous electronic devices to show videos, pictures, dialogues, role-plays, listening exercises, movies, and everything else that can be done with these marvelous technological tools.

Also, the increase of knowledge and the progress of technology in our country has been growing significantly over the years, especially in education and in a great manner at the University of El Salvador which has had an impact since nowadays classes are taught with the use of technology. Facilitating how a subject can be taught and helping students who are deeper into this world of technology, making them feel more attracted to the learning process. Currently, technology is part of everyone and is a fundamental part of our development as human beings since it is included in study and work. Therefore, old and new teachers should look for methods, technological tools, and applications that keep them at the forefront of the latest in terms of new technologies for teaching to achieve more meaningful classes. Therefore, the use of technology and internet access from home became a priority in order for teachers to continue fulfilling their role as educators and for students to continue their learning process from home.

Use of technology in the 21st century for teaching environments

Furthermore, education in the 21st century is the center from which all changes and developments emerge in information technology. This culture needs to be learned along with the use of hardware and software resources, the system needs to be educated to use information technology; otherwise, the purchase and transfer of technology and investment will be nothing but a waste of resources. It is very important to know and analyze the importance of online education in the 21st century because in that way teachers and students can take advantage of all the resources that technological resources offer. There are four major areas that explain why technology is essential to 21st-century education.

First, as stated in the learning environment the website Why Technology is Essential to a 21st Century Education?(2015) "The addition of technology into the classroom can help transform the classroom experience from a classic teacher-centered one into a student-centered experience – with students taking a more active role in their learning. In a student-centered classroom, the teacher becomes more of a guide as the students engage with and tackle the day's lesson. And there is nothing better than seeing your students fully engaged". For teachers it is very important that students feel comfortable in the classroom, make them feel confident with themselves and with the teacher makes the teaching-learning process easier and productive, and technology engages the students to be more independent in the learning process. Second, the area that explains why technology is essential points out that technology provides teachers and students with access to a variety of educational resources that inspire creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. This means that the variety of technological tools improves the teaching-learning process because having a lot of resources creates a comfortable environment for the process. There are many benefits of the variety of resources such as it promotes inclusion and the development of digital literacy skills. Also, it extends learning beyond the text, and beyond the classroom walls. It ultimately exposes students and teachers to new online global communities. This in turn promotes global awareness, which is an essential component of 21st-century education.

Thirdly, as a teacher, it is essential to keep in mind that every student is different from each other and that is why their needs are different. In the teaching area, knowing the needs, weaknesses, and strengths of the students allow the teacher to help them in the area they need to be guided. The use of technology requires

practice and getting familiar with that takes some time. As stated in the learning environment the website Why Technology is Essential to a 21st Century Education? "We all know that there has been, and will continue to be, different levels of students in our classrooms – and with uniquely important learning needs. Through the use of instructional technology, differentiated instruction can be made much easier. It can become more of a reality with differentiated instruction, students are provided an education that is personalized – and that meets them where they are, developmentally. More students are able to benefit from this type of instruction. The use of technology also provides students access to very rich learning materials outside of the classroom".

Finally, the last area says that students must have access to the technological tools that allow them to prepare for their future according to their needs and expectations in the academic field. Integrating technology in the classroom is not easy work because it requires constant preparation and innovation over time. There are a lot of tutorials available on the internet that can help students and teachers to get familiar with the old and the new technology. While there are many schools successfully incorporating technology into their classrooms, there is an even larger number of schools that are suffering from a big lack of technological resources even in this 21st century.

To summarize, with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic around the world, everything changed, especially in the education area. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all the education around the world leaving an impact on the educational opportunities for a huge number of students and teachers. As it was mentioned before, the lack of technological tools in many schools around the world suffered the

COVID-19 pandemic with more difficulties than the schools with many technological resources.

Then, going from traditional education to a completely virtual education was an arduous task for teachers, students, and parents, since no one was prepared to drastically change their lifestyle; traditional education was forgotten for a while, teachers ceased to be the main guide for the student's learning process, turning the computer and the Internet into the main teacher of millions of students of all ages and academic levels. According to Fernando M. Reimers (2022) "The study also confirmed that most governments created alternative education delivery systems during the period when schools were closed, through a variety of modalities including online platform, television, radio, and paper-based instructional packages. Governments also adopted targeted measures to support access to this platform for disadvantaged students, provided devices or subsidized connectivity, and supported teachers and caregivers".

Lastly, a very common obstacle for teachers and students is unreliable technology. Even the best prepared and innovative lesson using technological tools can collapse when there are technical issues. The typical teacher population in most schools includes novice, intermediate, and advanced technology users.

IV.   DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

Module I

Online English Language Teaching

From August 21st, 2021 to October 9th, 2021

At the beginning of the formation for future professionals, the main goal in the fist module was to present the most recognized learning theories by using different methodologies during classes. As an extra, the sessions were developed in the usage of a very friendly and technological tool, Google Meets.

Synchronous activities permitted an active role from students during the course. Analysis and discussions helped to improve the way facilitators designed a resource for e-learning. On the other hand, asynchronous tasks helped differently, because that was when students were putting in practice the knowledge acquired. Not only learning occurred while practicing but also tips and shortcuts were discovered during this type of assignments. Multimedia material and LMS were of such great importance since they were the guide of how to present proper resources online.

Methodologies and techniques always allowed interaction to take place. For example during the first task, where students were assigned to participate in a forum discussion related to methodologies and good practices by facilitators. Opinions and suggestions were the key for learning. The creation of online resources including infographics or virtual classrooms were also the main focus for understanding the impact of methodologies in the learning process.

As a big closure for the course, apprentices were entrusted to construct a demonstrative class using methodologies and LMS taught. In that project, students were empowered to optimize and show all the capabilities and proficiency acquired. Pupils were also able to participate as facilitators, by exposing themselves to an online environment. The last but not least aspect along the formation was the guidelines for each of the assignments, they integrated structure, purpose, methodology and a very detailed explanation, which are important.

Module II

Educational Applications for Learning a Foreign Language

From October 16th, 2021 to December 4th, 2021

During this module, the main goal according to content presented in classes and syllabus, was to develop the usage and knowledge about eight technological tools while utilizing them in the teaching-learning process : Edpuzzle, Flipgrid, Flippity, Liveworksheets, Nearpod, Padlet, Kahoot, Powtoon Classroomscreen. One of the most noticeable characteristics of the class was the fact of making the sessions full of interactions where all students had the opportunity to share their opinion about a project, comment or even an activity. Learning emerged spontaneously, as a result, students kept improving permanently.

The module was developed online and cooperative, which means these future professionals are basically prepared to teach a class in virtual environments. Asynchronous and synchronous instructional practices were developed during the period of classes with many purposes but the most reflected, improving skills to create content when planning an English lesson with technological tools. The course was provided in a total of eight weeks; with the help of non tangible resources on the web such as: readings, infographics, videos, tutorials, demonstrations, discussion questions and multimedia materials.

The principles and foundations for education were the basis on the activities assigned to students in the formation among them, the highlighted one: A demo class using Technological tools which was the last activity. In that practice, students

were able to design their own content while sharing ideas, creativity and the most important the correct usage of tools for virtual environments.

The modality for the formation made the advantages in e-learning to show up. Technology making the classes more fun or technology encouraging individual learning were just some of the most common aspects reflected. Meaning, the sixty hours for it seemed to be short but full of knowledge. The activities completed all along the module were all directed to one objective: the mastering of using technologies for teaching English as a second language.

First project was the creation of an infographic based on the fundamentals of technological tools when teaching a language. With the usage of asynchronous activities and resources students were able to understand and apply the basis of e-learning. Then, the usage of new webtools was evaluated with next activities, for example the production of a video in Flipgrid:, Flipgrid, Flippity, Liveworksheets and Powtoon.

Module III

From January 22nd, 2022 to March 12th, 2022

While the previous two modules worked in the formation of professional to adapt them to the usage of virtual environments, as key tools in the teaching process of English as a second language , as well as adapting their pedagogical skills to applied them within those means, in this third module the aim was to build within this future professionals the abilities to create and design of Didactic Materials that could be easily adapt to any virtual environment.

The main objective was for these future teaching professionals to learn how to effectively use a minimum of four webtools where educational material and didactic material could be created. Within the material to be created we can talk about podcasts, online presentations, interactive images, videos, among others. The didactic material was going to be created with the unique purpose to be used in the teaching and learning of a foreign language. The creation of this digital material needed to be integrated as one in an easy access for learners.

Within the first two weeks, a quick introduction and background to multimedia resources was shared with the professionals. This with the only purpose of adding historical data into the knowledge base of the participants. They were also involved in the first evaluated activity that they were going to be asked to do, which was the creation, editing process and future posting of a Podcast. Before the actual activity was performed, groups within them were formed and topics were shared and assigned in order for the professionals to follow and retain a guide where to direct their didactic material. Following the course, in week three and four, the

specialization was routed to immerse the participants in the importance of selection of images with the aim of catching audience's attention. The fundamentals of what an image is and what it could represent was shared with the future professionals. Looking to soften things ahead in the course a quick introduction of the usage of google sites was discussed and at the same time the usage of Genially was taught in the course. In addition to this, the assignment of the creation of an interactive image was implemented.

In the third quarter of this final module, during week five and six the implementation of Google Slides was presented to the future professionals. Acknowledging the benefit that all Google Workspace virtual environments are out of cost at an individual level the professionals were instructed to prepare, construct and share a complete presentation. As in all activities following the subjects they were assigned during week one.

In order to prepare the participants for the final assignment, in week seven, fundamentals of the creation of videos were shared with them, examples and tutorials were shown to the class in order to clarify doubts in the creation of a video. All of these without incurring expensive costs since all the didactic material they were instructed to create could have been made with basic tools that much of time is already within their possession.

In the final week, the future professionals were instructed to gather all the didactic material they created during the module and with the creation and implementation of a Google site, this didactic material was going to be shown to the rest of the class.

V.   ACHIEVEMENTS

Within the achievements after the specialization finished the was to experience the fact of enriching much of the knowledge acquired on virtual platforms that can be used today to improve teaching methods.

Once each of the platforms studied in class were finished , the students developed an activity to put what was taught into practice. It was required to perform further research on each platform to discover how we could develop and innovate each of the assigned tasks.

During the specialization, the participants managed to handle each of the platforms provided by the skilled professionals.

They were able to identify that each one of them has its own objective that not all virtual platforms can be used in the same way, without this course we would not have studied it. The participants were able to practice with new technologies by applying all the pedagogical systems learned in the course to properly teach English as a second language.

At the end of the specialization, the participants managed to complete the group work delivered by the professionals in a considerably reasonable time while assimilating teamwork and group collaboration.

VI. CONCLUSION

Before the pandemic, the way to get the approval for graduating at the University of El Salvador was by doing research by analyzing data of a traditional way of giving and taking classes. An extra option, getting a specialization was always on the corner but never seriously taken. Circumstances changed all the panoramic views, when COVID-19 arrived in El Salvador. Since the virus was transmitted very easily, by having contact with people and objects touched by others, society was pushed to isolate. As a result, salvadorans started to look for solutions in order to achieve their roles in society. New jobs, activities and language emerged. Online learning already existed, but the methodologies and techniques were the main focus at the moment. Not only Foreign Languages Department but all departments and majors were developing their own methods.

Among all the benefits, with the recent type of mastery for future professionals, it is necessary to include: the amount of time and money that was saved because of the modality, the unlimited quantity of materials students were able to access and the different experiences they faced while studying online and preparing themselves for the unknown future. Learning styles and techniques were discovered while getting that unfamiliar skill.

This is a new face given to education, one that involves innovation, autonomy and technological development. Students are able to become autodidactic because this model allows them to acquire more information. A clue of this is the enormous

amount of videos available on Youtube in relation to a thematic, opinion, tutorials, guides, explanations, etc.

One of the most noticeable facts during the formation was that students evolved differently, even though they were given the same classes, materials and tasks. Stimulus, just as Kenneth Spence mentioned in his theory of cognitivism, was involved. Technological inputs permitted students to have great stimulus for imagination at the time of developing their own materials.

Benefits such as the immediacy, flexibility play a big role in e-learning. Traditional classes only allow students to have interaction with others when being in the physical area of learning. Online learning increases the opportunity for students to have interactions. According to Lev Vygotsky, a theorist of socio-constructivism, he believed that social interaction played a fundamental role in the development of cognition. This means, even if students are not physically in school, they will learn.

Society, humans, and life are always changing. Then, Why to keep the same methodologies, techniques, resources, methods, approaches when teaching a language? The Internet is now opening the big door, so it is necessary to take advantage of it with caution though.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

For the authorities of the Department:

● To maximize the resources available for providing a top well-prepared formation for future professionals by keeping the information and platforms updated.

● To add more instructional and technological resources for the formation of professionals, which can improve the quality of modern learning styles.

For teachers:

● To continue teaching about technological tools by demonstrating own results, as resources or as drafts to help meaningful learning.

● To keep the learning process enhanced by giving students control of interactions with media and guiding learners' reflection.

● To set more norms in the virtual classroom for keeping a healthy learning environment.

VIII. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND WEBLIOGRAPHY

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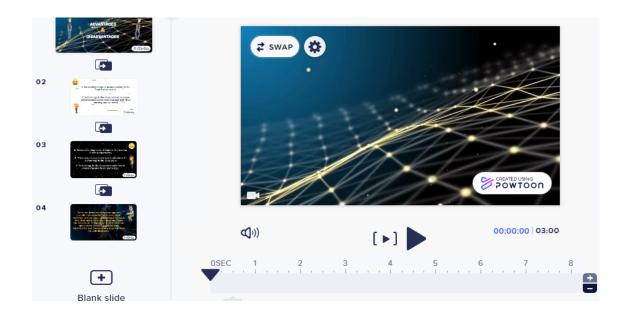https://www.capterra.com/learning-management-system-software/

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IX. APPENDIXES

Infographics

Video in Powtoon

Google Site

The origin of language

Home

The divine source _ Luis Alejandro Piche Raimundo

The natural sound source _Joel Balmore Salinas Melara

The bow bow theory _ Leydi Melani Rodríguez Pérez

The pooh pooh Theory_Roberto Iván Romero Chávez