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A WEBSITE FOR DEVELOPING STUDENTS' ORAL SKILLS IN ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES

UN SITIO WEB PARA DESARROLLAR HABILIDADES ORALES DE ESTUDIANTES EN INGLES CON FINES ACADÉMICOS

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ABSTRACT

In today's society professionals are expected to have solid oral skills to enter the labor market to communicate effectively. Mastering Academic English is probably one of the most reliable ways of attaining socioeconomic success in today's society. It provides professionals with employability and the opportunity to disseminate the scientific results all over the world by applying it in different fields of study. However, in the English Language course with a second foreign language: French at the Universidad Central «Marta Abreu» de Las Villas, there are not enough didactic materials to develop those skills in the subject English Language II, devoted to the study of English for Academic Purposes, a liability evidenced by an extensive analysis of the syllabus of the subject and by the application of surveys to professors and students. In response to this problem, this paper proposes the creation of a website to systematize

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the contents dealt with in the subject, taking advantage of the ICTs' benefits to develop students' oral academic skills.

Keywords: didactic materials; English for Academic Purposes; listening for academic purposes; information and communication technologies; speaking for academic purposes; website

RESUMEN

En la sociedad moderna los profesionales requieren tener sólidas habilidades orales para acceder al mercado laboral y establecer una comunicación efectiva. El dominio del Inglés con Fines Académicos es probablemente una de las formas más seguras de triunfar en el ámbito socioeconómico en la sociedad actual. Este ofrece a los profesionales tanto la empleabilidad como la oportunidad de diseminar los resultados científicos en todo el mundo mediante su aplicación a diferentes campos del conocimiento. Sin embargo, en la carrera Lengua Inglesa con segunda lengua extranjera: Francés en la Universidad Central Marta Abreu de Las Villas, no existen suficientes materiales didácticos para desarrollar estas habilidades de la asignatura English Language II, dedicada al estudio de Inglés con Fines Académicos, que han sido evidenciadas a través de un análisis exhaustivo de los contenidos de la asignatura y de la aplicación de encuestas a alumnos y profesores. En respuesta a este problema, se propone la creación de un sitio web para sistematizar los contenidos que se tratan en la asignatura para aprovechar así las ventajas de las TICs en el desarrollo de las habilidades académicas de comunicación oral.

Palabras clave: materiales didácticos; inglés académico; audición con fines académicos; tecnologías de la información y las comunicaciones; expresión oral con fines académicos; sitio web.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, in the context of a globalized world, professionals are expected to have good oral skills to enter the labor market with the ability to communicate effectively. In that way, university must provide students with communication skills demanded by employers (Russ, 2009). Communication skills are required to communicate scientific results, give presentations at conferences, symposia or other meetings. In order to be effective communicators, innovators, critical thinkers and problem solvers, today's students "enhance their skills and

capacities by improving their means of linking their skills and capacities to the world market" (Živković, 2014). Because of the necessity for those skills, students need instructions and guidance in accessing information, preparing, organizing and participating in scientific events and meetings delivering oral presentations, discussions, seminars, debates, etc.

In this sense, technology provides a lot of opportunities for education which can be accessed by almost everyone around the globe. The educational field has completely been transformed, ever since the Internet and technology are included in the equation. According to (Tezci, 2011), *teachers should learn not only how to use technology to enhance traditional teaching or increase productivity, but also should learn from a student centered perspective how ICT can be integrated into classroom activities in order to promote student learning.*

Due to the growth in social networking websites, educators are looking for their potential in education, mindful of the fact that social networking sites may have the ability to endorse both collaboration and active learning. Social networking sites not only assist students but also offer great opportunities for communication between students and teachers.

Language learning is an area where open-access resources, online courses, virtual classrooms and social networks based on Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are being increasingly used to give learners access to information, promote interaction and communication, and enhance digital literacy skills.

In order to maximize the potential of ICTs in language teaching, it is crucial their use in a pedagogically sound way that corresponds to the individual needs of the learners. It is also important that the use of ICTs is introduced and supported in a sustainable way and in a range of pedagogical approaches that promote lifelong learning. *Nowadays, language classrooms are increasingly turning into blended learning which uses multiple teaching and guiding methods by combining face- to-face sessions with online activities and utilizing a mix of technology-based materials* (Swapna Kumar, 2017). So, the growing use of ICTs in blended language learning environments has changed the face of language teaching and learning in a beneficial way and will continue to do so along with future technological innovations.

Various are the advantages of including website materials in pedagogical scenarios that go from making the whole process more interesting for students to making it easier for teachers to keep their attention, motivation and improve their ability to retain information. According to this author, the following advantages of websites can be cited:

- Websites provide language teachers with tools to enhance their teaching practices and let them improve their professional performance.
- They take into account different learning styles, different learners' needs and interests.
- They increase learners' motivation and thus enhance personal commitment and engagement.
- They improve independent learning
- They are a useful tool for developing blended learning in the classroom.

In Cuban Higher education, universities actively interact with ITCs at a social and institutional level, which is expressed in a new vision regarding its use, availability and access in order to fulfill their mission. The Universidad "Marta Abreu" de Las Villas is also engaged in these goals. It has a Moodle platform, which facilitates professors and students the access to sources of information for the different academic courses.

However, in the context of the teaching and learning process of the degree course English Language with French as a second foreign language at this university, some difficulties have been evidenced in the subject English Language II aimed at developing students' academic language skills at C1 level according to the Common European Framework.

It becomes difficult for students to master oral language skills and learn the contents (sometimes lectures, long talks), due to some lack of multimedia materials necessary to enhance motivation and attract students' attention to the academic contents of the subject. Listening materials such as lectures and dialogues in academic settings are presented to students mainly in audiotaped format; therefore, they should try very hard to understand the main ideas to take notes from the recordings played only once or twice. Thus, teachers and learners demand the use of audio-visual input, which can be achieved through the introduction of more multimedia resources and interactive environments, to meet students' needs in respect to the development of oral language skills and eventually enable motivation to study the subject for life-long learning.

It is evident that students also face some difficulties when making oral presentations of their academic reports, like the term paper and the internship practice report. They usually either memorize the contents or rely too much on their notes to present the results. Nevertheless, they should learn skills associated with identifying and pursuing employment opportunities, such as networking, resume-writing, making oral presentations, translating and interpreting, teaching foreign languages, interviewing, being interviewed etc. Students should know and should be prepared for the conditions they will experience upon employment. That is why, activities such as internship, research work, job-shadowing and job-based simulations can provide the necessary exposure that will best serve their long-term career interests.

In fact, effective communication is vital since the degree course alone will not give students sufficient experience in the oral communication, the foreign language curriculum should include plenty of in and out of classroom speaking opportunities, and they should be evaluated critically by the professors.

Statement of the problem:

Second year students taking the degree course English Language with French as a foreign language at the University "Marta Abreu" de Las Villas have difficulties with the oral language skills at C1 level in the subject English language II devoted to English for Academic purposes.

It is thought that the incorporation of a wide range of diverse didactic materials is one of the solutions, since students would be exposed to more practice of oral communication. Also, the creation of a website for English Language II offers a coherent and consistent framework for the organization of the selected materials according to the contents of the oral skills of the subject, its grammar and language as well as the necessary practice on each of the units. It would provide feasible access to the information, completeness and updated variety of reliable materials.

So, the **overall aim** of this paper was:

- To propose a website with more multimedia didactic materials to develop oral language skills in academic environments following a systematic approach with the syllabus' contents of the subject English Language II.

The website would provide students with a wide range of multimedia resources: documentaries, lectures, talks, movies, weather forecasts, presentations in scientific

events that complement the contents they usually receive in classes together with a set of communicative tasks for developing oral skills in academic settings.

The following **specific objectives** guided the study:

- To determine the theoretical and methodological foundations of the use of ICTs as a tool for the improvement of the teaching and learning process in higher education
- To diagnose the needs concerning the bibliography of the subject English Language II and also the availability of ICTs resources in the research context for both, professors and second year students of the degree course English Language with French as a second foreign language.
- To design the website with multimedia resources following a systematic approach with the syllabus' contents of the subject English Language II in order to develop oral language skills in academic environments.

Theoretical framework

Defining Information and Communication Technologies

One of the many challenges facing developing countries today is preparing their societies and governments for globalization and the information and communication revolution. Policy-makers, business executives, activists, academics, and ordinary citizens are increasingly concerned with the need to make their societies competitive in the emergent information economy.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs)—which include radio and television, as well as newer digital technologies such as computers and the Internet—have been publicized as potentially powerful enabling tools for educational change and reform. Since the increase in the usage of ICTs in the world today has been considered of profound importance, many definitions have been given to clarify the meaning of the term.

According to (Negoescu, 2009):

ICTs stand for Information and Communication Technologies and comprise a set of technological tools and resources used to communicate and also to create, disseminate, store and manage information. In the classroom, technologies can include all kinds of tools from computers and internet to broadcasting technologies and telephony.

The United Nations Development Program cited in (Jayanthi, 2016) gives a broader and more complete definition of the term and it reaffirms that ICTs are more than computers and internet :

ICT 's are basically information-handling tools- a varied set of goods, applications and services that are used to produce, store, process, distribute and exchange information. They include the 'old' ICT's of radio, television and telephone, and the 'new' ICTs of computers, satellite and wireless technology and the Internet. These different tools are now able to work together, and combine to form our `networked world' a massive infrastructure of interconnected telephone services, standardized computing hardware, the internet, radio and television, which reaches into every corner of the globe.

This definition is more updated and incorporates wireless technology and the possibility of a broader scope in its use.

ICTs and their role in education

In recent years, there has been a groundswell of interest in how computers and the Internet can best be harnessed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of education at all levels and in both formal and non-formal settings. However, the use of ICT's in the classroom includes older technologies such as the telephone, radio and television, which have a longer and richer history as instructional tools. For instance, the Open University of the United Kingdom (UKOU), established in 1969 as the first educational institution in the world wholly dedicated to open and distance learning, still relies heavily on print-based materials supplemented by radio, television and, in recent years, online programming; similarly, the Indira Gandhi National Open University in India combines the use of print, recorded audio and video, broadcast radio and television, and audioconferencing technologies.

But the experience of introducing different ICTs in the classroom and other educational settings all over the world over the past several decades suggests that the full realization of the potential of their educational benefits is not automatic. The effective integration of ICT's into the educational system is a complex, multifaceted process that involves not just technology but also curriculum and pedagogy, institutional readiness, teacher competencies, among others.

For instance, the importance of ICTs as a long-life learning skill is highlighted in the Definition and Selection of Competencies (DeSeCo) Project carried out in Europe by the OCDE, which defines computer literacy as a key competence for ensuring an overall successful life and a well-functioning society:

Interactive use of technology requires an awareness of new ways in which individuals can use technologies in their daily lives. Information and communication technology has the potential to transform the way people work together (by reducing the importance of location), access information (by making vast amounts of information sources instantly available) and interact with others (by facilitating relationships and networks of people from around the world on a regular basis). To harness such potential, individuals will need to go beyond the basic technical skills needed to simply use the Internet, send e-mails and so on. The social and professional demands of the global economy and the information society have that requirement.
(Definition and Selection of Key competences, 2002)

Indeed, when integrated correctly into the educational field, ICT's can have the potential for increasing access to and improving the relevance and quality of education. When used appropriately, they can be used to help expand access to education, strengthen the relevance of education to the increasingly digital workplace, and raise educational quality by, among others, helping make teaching and learning into an engaging, active process connected to real life.

More advantages of the ICT's are outlined by the World Bank 1998 report, cited in (Tinio, 2002):

ICT's greatly facilitate the acquisition and absorption of knowledge, offering developing countries unprecedented opportunities to enhance educational systems, improve policy formulation and execution, and widen the range of opportunities for business ...
Consequently, *the traditional view of the learning process is typically teacher-centered, with teachers doing most of the talking and intellectual work, while students are passive receptacles of the information provided, is not the most effective way to help students* (Resta, 2002).

New technologies challenge traditional conceptions of both teaching and learning and, by reconfiguring how teachers and learners gain access to knowledge, they have the

potential to transform the teaching and learning process into a more fruitful environment. According to UNESCO, cited in Mikre (2011):

ICT's provide an array of powerful tools that may help in transforming the present isolated, teacher-centered and text-bound classrooms into rich, student-focused, interactive knowledge environments. To meet these challenges, schools must embrace technology and appropriate the new ICT tools for learning. They must also move towards the goal of transforming the traditional paradigm of learning.

This refers to ICTs as a tool for teaching and learning itself, the medium through which teachers and students can teach and learn. It appears in many different forms, such as drill and practice exercises, in simulations and educational networks. Therefore, ICTs are considered as fundamental information management tools at all levels of an educational system.

The role of ICTs in the teaching and learning process of a foreign language

Language learning is a complex and challenging endeavor. For students to achieve the desired proficiency in a foreign language, educational institutions need to invest time, effort and huge resources in order to cater for different learning styles.

To be effective, language-teaching institutions strive to provide intensive foreign language (FL) instruction to reduce the time period needed to learn the target language. This explains the keen interest in combining different methodologies with instructional technologies that promise to motivate learners and to respond effectively to their needs. In fact, generally, technology use in learning environments has presented itself as a necessity for continued lifelong learning with research suggesting that institutions that lag behind in integrating technology will be unable to meet the needs of knowledge based societies and as a result will not survive the change in paradigm of education. (Rahma Al Mahrooqi, 2014)

The application of ICTs gives more opportunities for communication between peer learners: they can exchange information in real time, they can participate in blog discussions, work in teams on different projects, exchange emails, search for information, etc. By using the authentic material provided by the Internet, they will

have a better insight into the culture of the country and people whose language they study.

Internet also offers a wide variety of reference materials like online dictionaries, encyclopedias and search mechanisms very helpful for developing students' individual work. They can find the missing information, the meaning of new words, synonyms, antonyms or can communicate with the rest of the group online, via e-mail or in any other ICT environment.

In short, the World Wide Web has become a tool for business, communication, learning, leisure, and a whole host of anticipated and unanticipated activities across a broad spectrum of the population. The use of the web, an inherently collaborative tool, has led to an enormous proliferation of data and information available to any sector, a medium of choice for the distribution and use of information by individuals, teams, organizations, and communities. Web sites specifically are the fundamental means by which that information is retrieved and distributed.

Since websites have been given a relevant importance, many definitions have been provided to elucidate their meaning.

According to Bryan R. Battina (2015) a website is *“a set of interconnected webpages, prepared and maintained as a collection of information.” Structurally, a website consists of content and software to assemble that content.*

Ibrahim (2013) defines website in a similar way but focusing more on the structure: a web site is a collection of web pages on a particular subject that includes a beginning file called a home page.

Later, (Bakheet, 2016) provides a broader and more complete definition of the term:

A 'website', also written as 'web site', or simply 'site', is a set of related web pages typically served from a single web domain. A website is hosted on at least one web server, accessible via a network such as the Internet or a private local area network through an Internet address known as a Uniform Resource Locator (URL).

A web site can embed a variety of different types of resources such as:

- *style* — controlling the site's look-and-feel
- *scripts* — which add interactivity to the site
- *media* — images, sounds, and videos.

All web sites available on the web are reachable through a unique address.

Features and purposes of English for Academic purposes in Higher education

English as a worldwide subject varies with respect to such factors as topic, purpose, and situation, as well as with respect to region, social class, and ethnicity. Varieties of English are characterized by distinctive linguistic characteristics and rule-governed systems of communication. Some varieties of English are more effective than others in specific situations and are more valued within particular communities. As an example, English for Academic Purposes is more useful in institutes of higher education than in informal environments.

The need for English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is an international activity of tremendous scope.

It is carried out in four main geographical domains, each of which exhibits particular characteristics and purposes. It is carried out, first, in the major English-speaking countries (the US, UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand), where large numbers of overseas students whose first language is not English come to study. It is conducted, second, in the former colonial territories of Britain (and less importantly the United States) where English is a second language and is used as the medium of instruction at university level. It is conducted, third, in countries which have no historic links with English, but which need to access the research literature in that language (the countries of Western Europe, Japan, China, Latin America, Francophone Africa and others (*John Flowerdew, 2001*)).

As put by Rumberger & Scarcella (2000) cited in Scarcella (2003):

This variety of English entails the multiple, complex features of English required for long-term success in schools, completion of higher education, and employment with opportunity for professional advancement and financial rewards. It involves the mastery of a writing system and its particular academic conventions as well as proficiency in reading, speaking, and listening.

Learning academic English is probably one of the most reliable ways of attaining socioeconomic success in today's society. Without knowledge of Academic English, individuals may be excluded from participation in educated society and prevented from transforming it. It differs from general English in a number of aspects. It is important to be able to distinguish a formal (academic) style from an informal style and to

understand that what may be acceptable in spoken language may not be appropriate in writing a paper, thesis, project, formal letter.

The primary purpose, of all English for Academic purposes' courses is the same. It is to equip nonnative speakers with the language and study skills needed so that they may successfully follow their field of academic study. Traditionally this has meant a syllabus defined primarily in terms of 'discourse functions' such as 'cause and effect', 'description', 'narrative', 'process' etc. and delivered through skills classes such as 'academic writing, speaking, listening and reading' (Jarvis, 2001).

Stevens, cited in (John Flowerdew, 2001) proposed four absolute characteristics of English for Academic purposes:

- It is designed to meet specified needs of the learner
- It is related in content (i.e. in its themes and topics) to particular disciplines, occupations and activities
- It is centered on the language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics etc., and analysis of this discourse

Furthermore, he suggested that EAP is based upon four claims:

- Being focused on the learner's need
- Being relevant to the learner
- Being successful in imparting learning
- Being more cost-effective than 'General English'

Another distinctive feature of EAP work is the increasing collaboration with subject specialists. The earliest account of systematic subject/language teacher collaboration in EAP is described by T. Johns and Dudley-Evans (1980) cited in (John Flowerdew,2001). They claim that problems encountered by overseas students in the UK are rarely concerned with 'knowledge of the language', or 'knowledge of the subject' alone, but that these two factors are "inextricably intertwined". Johns and Dudley-Evans believe that the EAP teacher needs to be able to grasp the conceptual structure of the subject his students are studying, if he is to understand fully how language is used to represent that structure. In short, there should be a collaboration of the teacher and the students with the specialists of the subject being taught, which can be developed by means of face to face lectures on the topic or by video recordings.

Therefore, EAP should be taught taking into consideration the issues described above, since it has well-defined and teachable features.

Methodology

In order to develop this research work, several methods and instruments for collecting data were used. As it is mainly a qualitative research, for the results analysis, the method of content analysis was used in addition to the interpretation of the data.

In selecting the participants, an intentionally selected sampling procedure was employed.

- 12 students of English Language with a second foreign language: French, from 2nd year, since they are the ones currently taking the subject English for Academic purposes.
- Students from 4th year, since they take the subjects of translation and interpreting and know the importance of having mastered the academic vocabulary taught in the second year.
- Professors related to the subject (the professor of the subject in second year and the professors of translation and interpreting in 4th year).

In this section, a descriptive analysis is carried out for each of the theoretical, empirical and statistical methods.

From the theoretical level, the Historical-logical was used to study the different stages through which the ICTs have evolved and the different conceptions used in the educational context, specifically in respect to the design and use of web sites as one of its various tools for improving the teaching and learning process. The Analytical-synthetic method was applied to develop the whole process of research and to synthesize the most important elements related with the object and field of the study. The Structural-systemic was used throughout the whole research process and in the design of the proposal from a logical and systematized view and the Inductive-deductive made possible the generalization about the topic at a global level and from particular elements.

From the statistical level, various methods were applied to analyze the frequency, and the percentages of the data obtained through the different empirical methods. Table analysis and graph representation was used in order to group data in different classes and to distribute the absolute frequencies and percentage to describe the results.

From the empirical level, document analysis was used to analyze the main documents in respect to educational policies concerning the research context with the

purpose of finding out what is regulated in relation to the teaching and learning process of the subject English Language II in the degree course English Language with French as a second foreign language. The documents analyzed were the curriculum of the subject, the English Language Discipline syllabus, the syllabus of the subject English language II and the Computer Strategy.

Also the participant observation was applied to gain a closer insight into students' practices in respect to information management and the ICT in the subject English Language II. Surveys to the students and professors were applied: one to 12 students from second year, another to 17 students from fourth year, another to the professor of the subject and another to the professors of translation and interpreting in fourth year looking for interdisciplinary bonds. A total sample of 32 people participated. They were applied in order to get a deep understanding of the bibliography needs in the subject and how it may affect students' academic achievement.

Results and discussion

Results of the document analysis

In the curriculum of the course the main descriptors analyzed were the general objective for the academic course, exercise of the profession, fields and areas of action. The general objective states that the graduates must be able to solve problems related to the interpretation of texts in English or the second foreign language: French into Spanish and with the teaching and learning process of foreign languages in higher education taking into account ethical, economic and environmental considerations. They have to be mediators in the communication between Spanish speakers and non-Spanish speakers, from English or the second foreign language to Spanish and vice versa and be able to teach English or the second language. Their professional performance will be mainly in areas of tourism, international events and foreign affairs, etc.

In the case of the Syllabus of English Language Discipline, this one is considered the backbone of this academic program. As general objectives, students should be able to use English language as a means of communication and working tool; to deal with written and oral texts in English language through different activities; to assess different life and cultural expressions of the English Speaking countries, based on the materialistic and dialectic approach, as well as to acquire study skills and self-preparation in the knowledge and system of the English language. English Language

discipline integrates the contents and skills that students will need for succeeding in the rest of the disciplines of the course curriculum. Therefore, the analysis of its syllabus is important in order to determine the impact English Language II (as part of the discipline) has on future professionals.

English Language is the ground of this research work. This subject is taught in second year of the academic course throughout a whole year. It is delivered in 256 hours mainly of practical lessons and 48 hours of assessment divided into 35 weeks. According to the objectives of the syllabus, students should integrate a verbal and non-verbal communication in their linguistic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic components in order to be able to analyze and produce texts in the academic communication context. The assessment process includes the four language skills: Listening, Reading, Speaking and Writing. It is carried out in the form of systematic evaluation, partial and a final exam. The assessment criteria take into account creativity, language use, accuracy and spontaneity according to the proficiency level C1 aimed for this subject. This level is described by the CEFR, the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and the Certificate in Advanced English (CAE).

Therefore, the bibliography used for the students to achieve a C1 level in this subject is taken from several sources including the ones mentioned before, adapted to the students' needs and subject conditions. The basic bibliography in the Syllabus is the textbook "Focus on IELTS" by Sue O'Connell and "Vocabulary for IELTS" by Pauline Cullen. To sum up, the analysis of this document allowed to determine the place English Language II occupies in the discipline and in respect to other disciplines of the curriculum as a ground knowledge for interpreting, translation and teaching.

Together with the syllabi, the Computer Strategy of the degree course was also analyzed since the solution of the research problem was based on the ICTs. According to this strategy, it is crucial to master skills concerning the use of text processors, Microsoft Office, text tabs and email. The strategy is also aimed at elaborating and using databases and surfing the web (Local Network or Internet) looking for information.

This document highlights the importance of using professional software and tutorials related with the specialty as well as using information from servers and Remote Databases in the students' research component of the curriculum. In the case of English Language II, the document states that students have at their disposal a folder

with the bibliography elaborated by professors in the Local Network. Students should show a high command of the word processors, including automatized elaboration of summaries and table of contents. In conclusion, a computer knowledge, specifically of ICTs in general, opens many doors to a wide range of resources and information.

The subject English language II has most of the bibliography in digital format, which means using a website as part of the computer strategy developed in this university, can be a positive, easy and good solution to organize and systematize its bibliography.

Results of the participant observation:

- There is a computer lab in the faculty for the English Language with a second foreign language: French and Philology courses equipped with 8 computers and there are some tables available for those students who have personal computers.
- There is another computer lab for the course of Journalism equipped with 10 computers that can be also accessed by the students of the English Language with a second foreign language: French.
- The connection can be achieved through the WIFI and network cable.
- Due to the limitations in the lab schedules, students cannot visit them at any time.
- There is a folder in the local university network for the bibliography of the subject English Language II, divided into semesters and units.
- The bibliography of the subject in the local network is still insufficient: contains a textbook and a complementary book. There are also Mp3 files and some videos, but not for all the units of the book used for teaching the subject.
- The main two books are in a printed version ("Focus on IELTS" by Sue O'Connell and "Vocabulary for IELTS" by Pauline Cullen) but students only have access to them during the lessons in the classroom. The printing is in black and white, which limits the interpretations of graphs and pictures.
- There is also a Digital Library but it is too big and it needs a place to be installed on and has not been implemented yet.

Results of the Survey applied to second year students

The questionnaire used for the survey applied to second year students consisted of 6 questions. The first question was aimed at determining whether the students thought or not that the contents dealt with in EAP were important for their development as professionals of the English language. Most of the students who represented 83%

approximately (10 students) of the total, recognized that the subject was essential for their development as future professionals; however, it caught the researcher's attention the case of two respondents (17%) who considered that it was not.

The second question focused on the characterization of the subject contents. The respondents were supposed to determine if they were easy, difficult or so difficult. As it can be seen in **table 1**, 7 of the respondents (58%) agreed that the contents were difficult, 3 agreed that they were so difficult (25%) and only 2 (17%) agreed that they were easy.

Table 1. Level of difficulty of the subject according to second year students' opinions

Categories	Number of students	%
asy	2	2
Difficult	7	58
So difficult	3	25

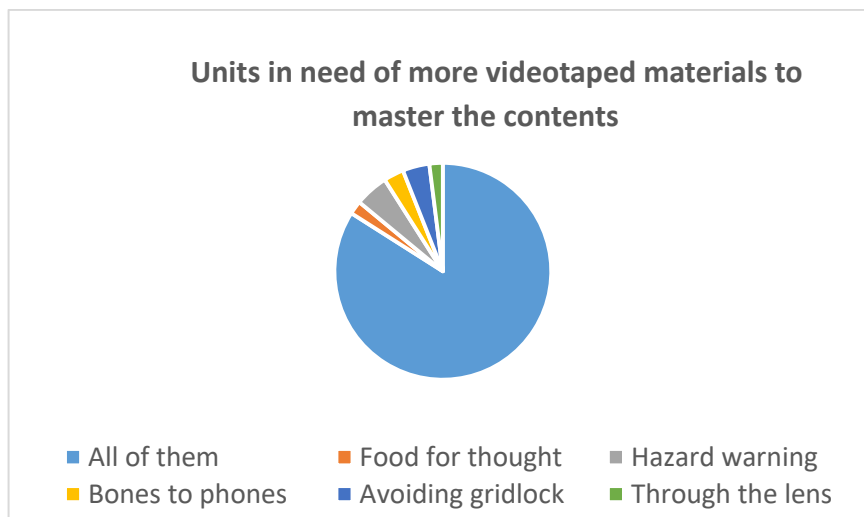
The third question was asked in order to know about the students' motivation towards the subject. 100% of the students considered that the level of motivation was low. The cause could be probably the lack of bibliography for the subject and the variety of videotaped materials. Question number four had the purpose of identifying whether the bibliography available for the subject (not only in printed copies but also in the electronic folder) was sufficient or insufficient. 11 out of the 12 students surveyed considered that it was insufficient (92% approximately) and only 1 student considered that it was sufficient (8% approximately).

The possible solution for the lack of motivation of the students towards the subject evidenced in question number three and for the lack of bibliography available for the subject which was evidenced in question number four, could be epitomized through the results obtained in question number five. Specifically, question number five's aim was to determine if a bigger amount of videotaped materials could be a means of increasing students' motivation. In this question, the vast majority of students said it was.

Finally, in question number six, the units in need of more videotaped materials were determined. As a result, 7 students agreed that all units needed more bibliography, the

rest selected 5 units as the ones that were in need of more bibliography, as it can be seen in the following graph, (*Food for thought*, *Hazard warning*, *Avoiding gridlock*, *Through the lens* and *Bones to phones*)

Graph 1: Units in need of more videotaped materials for developing oral skills



Survey to fourth year students:

This survey was applied to 17 students from 4th year. The main objective was to determine if they considered that the subject EAP was important for their future development as interpreters and translators.

Questions number 1 and 2 coincided with the ones from the survey applied to the students of second year. In question number 1, most of the students who represented 94% approximately (16 students) of the total, recognized that the subject was important for their development as future professionals.

In question number 2 (See table 2), which was addressed to the characterization of the subject contents according to the level of difficulty, 12 of the respondents (71%) agreed that the contents were difficult, 3 agreed that they were so difficult (17%) and only 2 (12%) agreed that they were easy.

Table 2: Level of difficulty of the subject according to fourth year students' opinions

Categories	Number of students	%
Easy	2	12
Difficult	12	71
So difficult	3	17

Question number 3 was aimed at determining the usefulness of mastering the contents of EAP for the subjects of translation and interpreting, which are taught in fourth year. As it can be seen in Table 3, 13 of the 17 respondents agreed that it was useful (76,47%), 4 agreed that it was very useful (23,53%) while no student said it was not useful. They said that most of the texts to be translated and interpreted are related with academic topics dealt with in the subject such as environmental issues, sources of energy, developed and developing countries and all the vocabulary is related to Human Development index, poverty levels and some other economic and political issues.

Table 3: Importance of having previous knowledge of EAP to master the contents of translation and interpreting according to fourth year students' opinions

Categories	Number of students	%
Not useful	–	–
Useful	13	76,47
Very useful	4	23,53

Survey to the professors

In the case of the main professor of the subject, the survey contained four questions. In respect to the level of motivation of students towards the subject he stated that it was low. The professor said that an increase in videotaped materials would raise students' motivation and that the didactic materials available for developing oral skills was still insufficient in spite of all the efforts made by the professors. The professor

considered that some units lack audio and videotaped materials and mentioned some which coincided with the ones previously provided by the students and others like Unit 7 *Retail therapy* (related with shopping habits) and Unit 11 *Use it or lose it* (related with sleep patterns and memory).

When the professors of translation and interpreting were surveyed they agreed that having mastered the academic vocabulary in second year was useful for the students to succeed at the contents of translation and interpreting in fourth year, in terms of background knowledge of different sociopolitical topics and academic vocabulary. However, they highlighted that their students' background knowledge was acceptable but not enough.

Building the Website for developing students' oral skills in English for Academic Purposes

From the needs analysis presented above, it was decided to design the website in order to improve the bibliography of the subject English Language II, in an attempt to meet students' needs and enhance the teaching and learning process. Therefore, it was elaborated considering the theoretical framework presented, in addition to the results of the needs analysis.

The website will contribute to the development of oral language skills in academic settings providing students with a wide range of multimedia resources: documentaries, lectures, movies, weather forecasts, presentations in scientific events that will complement the contents they usually receive in classes for debates, discussions and interaction. It will also offer a coherent and consistent framework for the organization of the materials according to the contents of the subject, as well as the necessary practice on each of the units of the textbook. It will provide feasible access to the information, completeness and updated variety of reliable materials.

In respect to the layout, features such as color, structure, interactivity, search and retrieval were taken into account to create an attractive interface easy to navigate through. The homepage facilitates the access to the website, it is divided into two parts focusing on the theoretical part of the research by giving the students the possibility of finding out the meaning as well as the purpose and features of EAP in Higher education and the main menu with hyperlinks to its different sections.

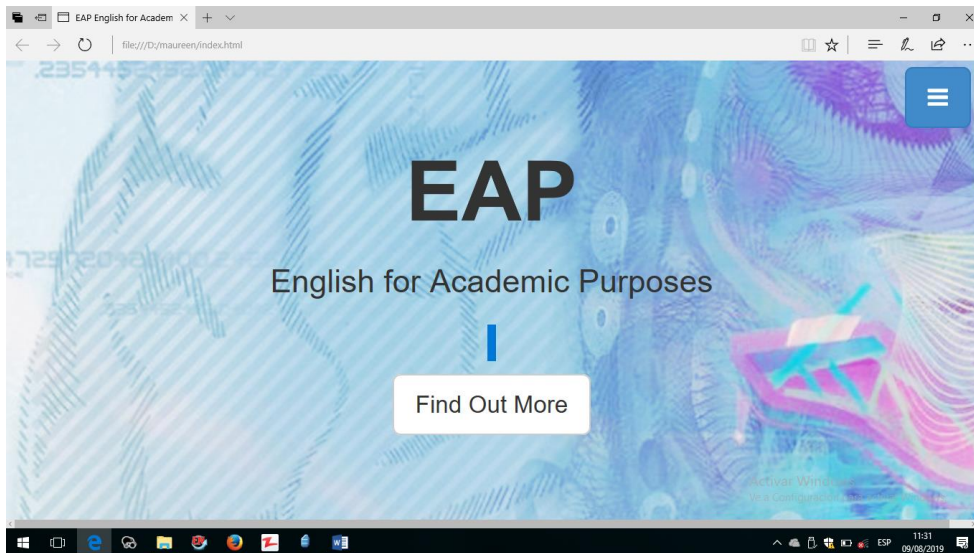


Fig 1. Homepage (first part related with the theoretical knowledge of EAP)

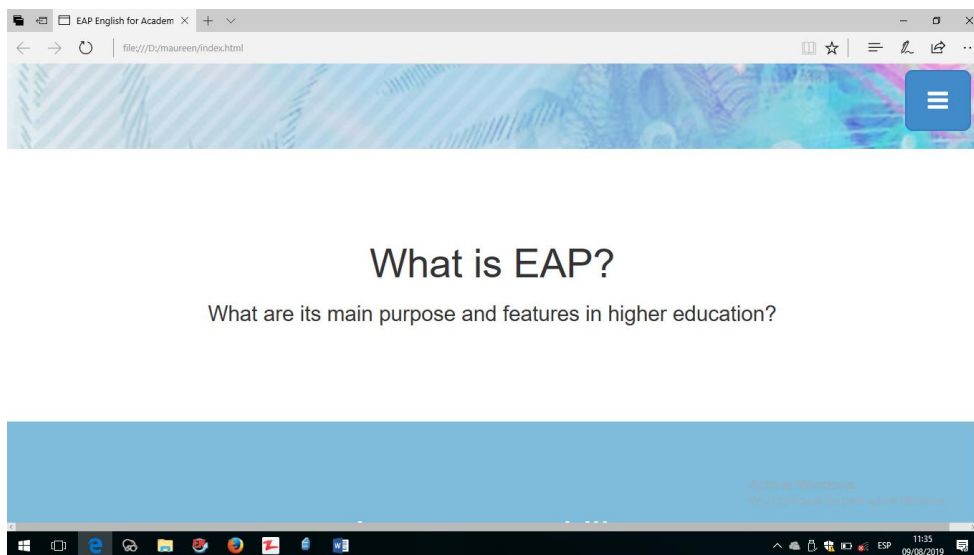


Fig 2. Homepage (hyperlink to the purpose and features of EAP)

The second part of the homepage shows the two skills chosen to be systematized with this website. The student can select any of them. The contents of each of these skills will be presented following the same order of the units of the book *Focus on IELTS*.

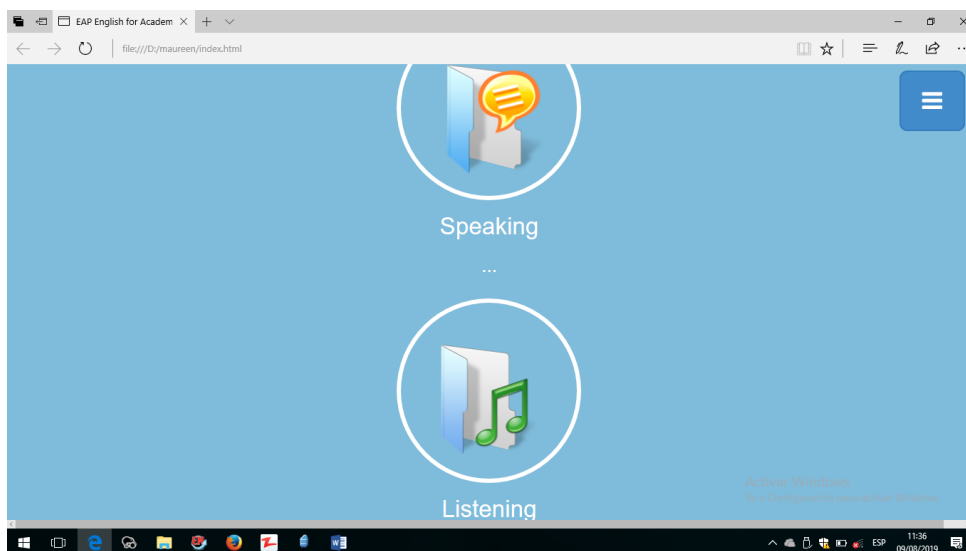


Fig 3. Folders with the audiotaped materials for listening and videotaped materials for speaking

The website not only contains multimedia resources, but they are accompanied by a set of communicative tasks selected and adapted from the books which are aimed at preparing students for the international standardized exams. The multimedia materials come from reliable sources such as National Geographic Discovery Channel, University of Cambridge's lectures, etc. The potential benefits of such tasks include more class interaction and participation, increased interest in learning and improvement in communication in relevant and realistic academic contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

- The development of internet applications and educational websites has brought many advantages in respect to the improvement of motivation and oral language skills in the EAP courses.
- The results obtained in the study showed that students and professors of the degree course perceived the need of having more didactic materials for developing oral skills for successful communication in the academic and future professional surrounding.
- Based on the needs analysis carried out in the research work, the proposal of the website for developing students' oral skills in English for Academic Purposes was designed including a wide range of multimedia resources and a set of communicative tasks for listening and speaking in academic settings. This way,

the didactic materials of the subject were enlarged contributing to students' motivation and facilitating teachers' practices and students' learning.

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