

**Emotions of University Student Teachers Towards Learning English from a Literacy
Perspective**

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Abstract

This research project aimed to analyze the emotions of a group of Mexican student teachers towards learning English from a literacy perspective. The participants were 90 students of the bachelor's degree in foreign languages of the B1 course of English at the University of Colima in Mexico; the methodology implemented was a case study. The data were collected through three instruments: a questionnaire, observation guides and a descriptive inventory of literacy materials. As a result of this research, we found that the adequate use of different literacy strategies and materials generates a positive emotional response from students and contributes to their English learning process. Further, there is a relationship between the literacy materials supplied by schools and the literacy strategies implemented by teachers in the English classroom. Finally, we draw some conclusions about the use of literacy materials and strategies and students' emotions in the English learning process, and made some recommendations on how to approach future research on this topic.

Keywords: literacy strategies, students' emotions, English language learning, literacy materials

Degree Requirement

This case study project is submitted as a requirement to graduate from the Bachelor's degree in Foreign Languages with emphasis in English (Licenciatura en Lenguas Extranjeras con énfasis en Inglés) at the School of Humanities and Education, Universidad Católica Luis Amigó, in Medellín, Colombia.

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Introduction

Problem

Education has been in constant change, so every day there are different and more teaching strategies. Furthermore, taking into account the needs of each student, teachers should know and implement strategies in their classrooms, so students can experience meaningful learning. The different theories for teaching a second language, over time, have sought strategies that help improve the language skills of students. According to the National English Strategy the purpose of teaching English from the earliest years of compulsory education is for students to develop skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, and learning strategies to participate in oral and written language practices with a greater number of people from diverse backgrounds (SEP, 2017, p. 12).¹

When English teachers promote the use of literacy, students acquire new knowledge in a second language, which allows them to develop the four linguistic skills in English; through literacy education students also develop social skills as they engage in language use as a communicative, cognitive and reflective activity. In Latin America, some researchers have enquired about academic literacy in relation to the teaching of a second language (Medina, 2022) and the use of language and semantic structures (Martínez & Garcia, 2019). In addition, Carrillo (2019) analyzed the teaching of academic literacy in higher education through the lens of three models: the study skills model, the academic socialization model, and the critical sociocultural model. On the other hand, Mora (2016) has restructured the field of literacy in the region through studies conducted in Colombia.

Concerning emotions in second language learning, Richards (2020) considers them a fundamental part of both teachers' and students' experiences that influence the way they manage teaching and learning. Accordingly, Rahimi and Askari (2014) state that positive emotions can generate cognitive and emotional resources, implying that these can contribute to an effective second language learning process. Finally, Zhang and Tsung presented three factors related to the positive impact on English learning, such as: "Personal satisfaction, interpersonal relationships

¹ Cita traducida del español (Estrategia Nacional de inglés, secretaria de Educación Pública SEP, 2017).

and social bonds” (2021, p. 1); which render different results depending on the contexts in which they are evidenced.

Regarding literacy instruction and students’ emotions, Tong et al. (2021) reported positive results from the implementation of literacy strategies in the learning of a second language, which were reflected not only in the students, but also in the parents, despite their limited English proficiency. Furthermore, the use of literacy strategies was recognized as an effective tool to develop motivation and self-confidence for second language learning. However, we found no study reporting negative results concerning the emotions that emerge from the implementation of literacy strategies and materials in the teaching of a second language.

Although researchers have focused on either the use of literacies in a second language or the impact of emotions on learning, we found no studies where both aspects are related, that is, studies exploring the impact of literacy strategies and materials on students’ emotional responses both positive and negative, which in turn influence their learning process.

Theoretical Framework

Emotions are a fundamental component of every human being. They are involved in every aspect of their development; therefore, they must be considered in every educational process. Defining emotions is a complex task, since they have their origin in different fundamentals. Emotions are associated with reactions of great intensity, which are mostly transitory and changeable. Therefore, they “predispose individuals to an organized response as a primary appraisal”²(Alzina, 2003, p.12), which is an important point to take into account since this response can have a positive or negative influence on the learning of a second language. In this order of ideas, it is important to theoretically review emotions as a component within this process.

Second Language Acquisition Theory (Krashen, 1982) consists of 5 hypotheses: the acquisition-learning distinction, the natural order hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis. Although these hypotheses can never be fully tested, they are, nonetheless, supported by data. Furthermore, the author states that they have been found

² Cita traducida del español (Educación Emocional y Competencias Básicas para la Vida, Rafael Bisquerra, Revista de Investigación Educativa, 2003)

to be consistent and that so far, no data have emerged to refute them considerably. Out of the five hypotheses, the last one, i.e., *the affective filter hypothesis*, will be used to theoretically support our research as it “states how affective factors relate to the second language acquisition process” (Krashen, 1989, p.30).

Several emotional factors determine the success of second language acquisition, but studies on these emotional variables (reviewed in Krashen, 1981) focus on three. The first one is motivation. Individuals with high motivation tend to obtain more satisfactory results in the acquisition of a second language, but this is not always the case. The second factor is self-confidence. Individuals with a good self-image and self-confidence obtain better results in acquiring a second language. Finally, there is anxiety, which also influences the acquisition process either individually or in the classroom.

The strength of the affective filters varies, therefore, an individual with low motivation and self-confidence, but with high anxiety may lose interest in seeking information, and the knowledge will be understood but not acquired, since the input does not reach the brain and the proper process for acquisition is not performed. The affective filter hypothesis implies that language teachers should not only supply comprehensible input, but also create an environment that encourages a low filter (Krashen, 1989, p.2). To that aim, the teacher should not only provide information but also make it understandable for students, who should have low anxiety so the acquisition of a second language is ensured.

It is therefore valid to ask when language teaching helps in the process of acquiring a second language and when it becomes unnecessary. In the first instance, it helps for those who are not immersed in the target language context. The classroom becomes a main protagonist since it promotes an environment where they can easily receive the information, as opposed to those who have a greater external stimulus and are at a higher linguistic level. In this case the teaching ceases to be a primary element for language acquisition.

On the other hand, in the past, many people reached adulthood without knowledge of reading and writing, which explains the need to give greater importance to the integral development of individuals through literacy strategies.

Definitions of literacy vary widely; ... the interpretation of texts has been a cultural, social, political, and theological matter in which the stakes can be severe ... literacy (reading and writing) has overwhelmingly been defined as a set of cognitive processes and skills. (Judith Lee Green & David Bloome, 2015)

Likewise, a literacy model allows individuals to use their cognitive and linguistic processes and social skills according to situations that arise in their daily lives, in which the use of reading and writing is necessary. Primarily in higher education academic contexts, literacies are characterized by an emphasis on social practices about texts, recognition of difference, and particular attention to relations of power, authority, meaning-making, and identity (Horner, 2013; Lea & Street, 2006). Currently in Latin America the traditional model for teaching academic literacy has been challenged by a model based on literacies from a sociocultural-critical perspective.

We rely on these two theoretical models, since they provide us with support to observe and analyze the positive and negative emotions that occur when using literacy strategies in the process of learning a second language. We also contemplate the use of the materials implemented by teachers and how these have an impact on students' learning.

According to our own experiences in the learning process and observations as teachers in training, we identified that most of the students show different emotions towards English learning, so we recognize the need to analyze the emotions of a group of Mexican student teachers towards learning English from a literacy perspective. Therefore, the general framework of our study revolves around the following research question: What positive and negative emotions are observed in Mexican undergraduate foreign language student teachers when they use literacy strategies to learn English? in search of the answer to this question, we rely on the following specific objectives:

- Document the English teaching strategies applied in the teaching program at Universidad de Colima
- Inventory the literacy material implemented in the teaching program at Universidad de Colima
- Describe student teachers' positive and negative emotional responses towards learning English through literacy strategies and materials

Method

In the second semester of 2020, we started our research project, which seeks to observe positive and negative emotions in foreign language university students, as they use literacy strategies while learning English; for this reason, it was considered appropriate to implement the case study methodology, which allowed us to conduct observations and questionnaires to English students between 17 and 25 years of age from the public university of Colima-Mexico in the second semester of 2022. Data collection yielded both qualitative and quantitative data on emotional reactions in relation to literacy strategies and materials implemented by teachers in teaching a foreign language.

Paradigm and Methodology

The interpretive paradigm is ontologically constructivist. This establishes that reality is not static; on the contrary, it is divergent, holistic and under permanent construction. According to Phothongsunan (2010)

Interpretative researchers do not regard the social world as “out there” but believe that it is constructed by human beings. While the objects of study of the natural sciences have independent existence, the objects of study of the social sciences are both dependent on and are the creation of human beings. (p.1)

This paradigm recognizes the influence of values on the investigated reality, on the researcher, and on the research process itself. For this reason, we selected a case study method which, according to Yin (1994), implies "an empirical investigation that studies a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident" (p. 13). Therefore, the participants were selected in their own context, which facilitated the interpretation of their reality from the data collection instruments, such as questionnaires, observations and description of material, to obtain results about students' emotional reactions to the implementation of literacy strategies and materials in the classroom.

Participants

For our research proposal, we considered it appropriate to use criterion or purposeful sampling, since it focuses on selecting participants based on some criteria and, therefore, may

reveal a major aspect of the phenomenon under study. Consequently, 90 participants were selected according to the following criteria: subjects between 17 and 25 years of age; students at the public University of Colima, in Mexico, who were studying English level B1 in their degree program. The 90 students were distributed by the academic management in 3 groups of the same level of English, but were studying in different semesters of their degree program. The level of English was selected based on the size of the sample, for which level B1 was the level with the largest number of students. In order to carry out this research, it was necessary to structure an ethical protocol permission addressed to the program director, who approved the request.

Data collection

We designed three instruments: a questionnaire mediated by ICTs, a classroom observation form, and a chart for the documentation of materials. Each researcher observed a group of 30 students, which allowed us to describe the process of teaching English in an educational institution, as well as to observe the positive and negative emotional responses in the process of learning a second language.

The observation format in the classroom was applied during 6 sessions by each of the researchers in each session; we considered aspects such as emotional reactions to class activities, the literacy tools used by the teacher, the use of English, and the classroom interactions.

On the other hand, the questionnaire (Appendix A) was applied only once and was mediated by the Google Forms platform. We designed it looking for qualitative and quantitative data, and it was based on previously established search criteria. This questionnaire contained elements that aimed to help us characterize students' emotional responses to the English learning process and their perceptions of the literacy strategies and materials implemented by teachers.

In order to document the literacy strategies implemented in the teaching of a second language, a scheme (Appendix B) was used to describe each of the tools used by the teacher. The criteria used for the assessment of material included quantity, adequacy and contextualization.

Data Analysis

After the data collection, data were encoded in relation to the categories we had initially established. Then, we categorized the information obtained in a matrix through Microsoft Excel.

Therefore, new categories emerged and we added them to the categorial matrix, and those that lost relevance were discarded. After coding the information obtained, we performed the analysis by writing up interpretive and descriptive memos, which later served to construct the findings.

Trustworthiness and Validity

We enhanced the validity and trustworthiness of our project through different forms of triangulation. The implementation of the 3 data collection instruments allowed us to validate the responses of the participants and find correspondence between the observations made and the answers obtained from the questionnaire. In addition, the triangulation of researchers allowed us to have different perspectives that enriched the analysis of the data and helped us to reach consensus regarding the interpretation of the phenomenon under study. On the other hand, the triangulation of sources was achieved through the analysis of teachers, materials, and students, which allowed the information collected to have greater validity.

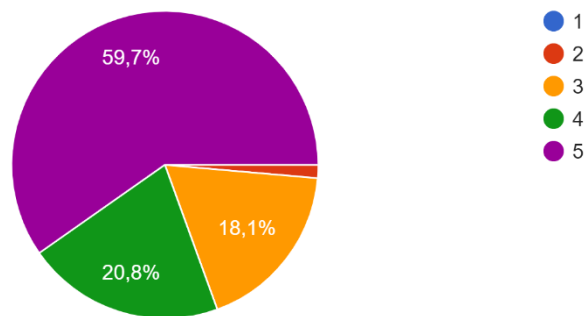
Findings

Finding 1: English Teaching Process

The data collected through the different instruments show that the teachers implemented diverse strategies and didactic materials according to the needs of the English course and the students, such as (1) the guide book and virtual platform, belonging to National Geographic New Close-up; (2) activity reading reports, for which the student had to submit a weekly report, consisting of summary, reflection, grammatical theme, and key words; (3) English workshops, which were distributed in music, theater, oral discourse, and writing workshops aimed at the practice and use of English; (4) dialogues and games, whereon speaking in the mother tongue was not allowed; (5) a final exam for each level that tested students on the four linguistic skills, following the Cambridge model. Consequently, it was demonstrated that the use of these different strategies and materials contributes positively to the students' English learning process and to their integral development. Figure 1 below shows students appraisal of the reading and writing strategies used at school from 1 to 5.

Figura 1

Students Appraisal of the English Literacy Strategies Used by the Teacher



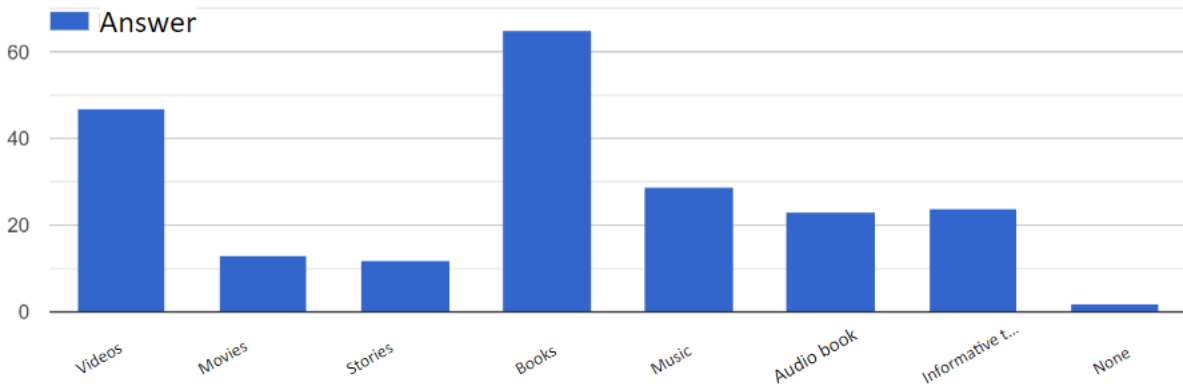
Finding 2: Literacy Materials and Strategies in Second Language Instruction

There is a relationship between the materials and the literacy strategies implemented by teachers in the English classroom. Among the strategies most used by teachers were readings, writing tasks, reading aloud, and the creation of dialogues and stories. For the implementation of these literacy strategies, teachers used print and audiovisual materials such as guides, videos, music, books, and stories. When these materials were decontextualized, teachers sought to contextualize them by means of examples, through everyday life situations; likewise, when the linguistic level of these materials did not match students' proficiency, teachers adapted them to the needs and contexts of the students; therefore, learners valued these literacy strategies and materials, and expressed that these helped in their process of learning a second language. Below there are some excerpts from class observations and students' answers that support this finding. In addition, Figure 2 shows the most common materials used by the teachers in class.

- In this class, the teacher used common strategies, such as dialogues, readings and listening. (O4. A. L1)
- The teacher implemented a strategy that required image reading, redaction and speaking. (O5. C. L2)
- Students created their stories from the vocabulary of the dice and with details drawn from their own realities (O5. C. L3)
- We used cards with different images, with which the students had to create a story that had to have a beginning, conflict, and end. (O5. A. L2)
- The audiovisual materials most used by teachers are videos and music. (Q.10)
- Descriptive text is the most used by teachers in English classes. (Q.12)

Figura 2

Materials used by the teacher in the classroom

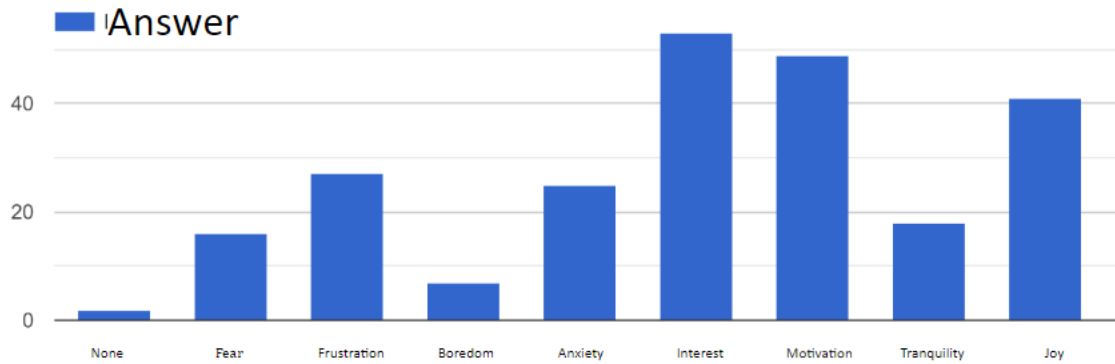


Finding 3: Students' Emotional Response to Literacy Material and Strategies in English Learning

In English classes, it is evident that there was a positive emotional response from the students, who expressed joy, initiative, and interest. This is due to the different strategies and materials implemented by the teachers that made the English class enjoyable and motivated students to participate actively by asking questions, giving answers and arguing their different points of view. Figure 3 below shows the emotions that students related to the English classes.

Figure 3

Emotions that Students relate to Learning English



However, in tests or activities where students required improvisation or had very little time, negative emotions such as fear, frustration and anxiety were evident. This negative emotional response was provoked by the insecurity of some students, which was reflected in their performance in the foreign language, or because they see themselves at a disadvantage with some of their peers. Below there are a few excerpts that exemplify this situation.

- Some students were apprehensive about presenting their story out loud in front of the rest of their classmates, this may have been because they had to do it in English and in an improvised way and some of the classmates did not know each other. (O5. A. E1)
- Some of the students were anxious as they may not have wanted to participate in the activity and were just waiting for the class to end. (O5. A. E4)

Discussion

After conducting the literature review for the present research, we found no studies relating literacy strategies and materials to students' emotional response to learning English. However, results show that there is a relation between these two categories, as 59.7% of the population positively valued literacy strategies and materials such as creation of dialogues, workshops, music in English, and videos implemented by the teachers in their English classes, towards which the students showed interest, motivation, joy, and tranquility. Although students value these materials and strategies positively, they can also have a negative influence on them, particularly as a result of the following classroom elements: questions directed to a specific student, required improvisation, activities with pressing time limits, forced public participation, mandatory reading aloud, and exams that generate in students' emotions such as frustration, anxiety, fear, and boredom.

There are different studies on the emotions that are present in the process of learning English. Albeshier et al. (2018) argue that most adult learners show the highest level of anxiety when they must make use of the English language in the classroom, for fear of mockery and making mistakes. Although this study did not focus on the same categories, its results present some similarity with ours, showing that negative emotional responses (anxiety, discomfort, tension and fear) are present in the process of learning English. However, we found a greater positive emotional response to learning English, as a result of the different literacy strategies and materials used by teachers in the classroom.

Recommendations and Conclusions

In conclusion, the present study focused on analyzing the emotions of a group of Mexican student teachers towards learning English from a literacy perspective. The results obtained from the data collected at the University of Colima, in the English program of the bachelor's degree in languages, from students at a B1 level of English, showed that the strategies and literacy materials used in English classes influence the emotional response of students and, thereby, their learning process. However, it is necessary to investigate more about this relation, since the literacy strategies and materials used by language teachers can be a determining variable to enhance students' positive emotional responses towards learning and to mitigate the negative ones.

Limitations, Recommendations, and Lessons

One of the limitations was the structuring and collection of the data, since, as we were in a different culture, our vocabulary and way of expressing ourselves were sometimes misinterpreted, so we had to adapt our questions and the way we communicated.

Another limitation was that at the beginning of the research the students were not very willing to participate in the project by answering the questionnaire, so it was necessary the intervention of the teachers to arrange a time in class to answer the questionnaire.

For future research, we recommend knowing in depth the context where the data will be collected, so that communication problems or cultural barriers do not prevent or limit the research process. In addition, implementing other instruments for data collection such as video recordings, interviews and interactive worksheets, would allow researchers to recognize a greater number of emotional responses from students in the English classroom,

As future teachers we learned the importance of correctly selecting the materials and strategies that we will use in class, as they influence students' emotions in their English learning process. This research also allowed us to recognize what the educational process is like in a country different from ours and to learn from it.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire Format

Emotions of University Student Teachers Towards Learning English from a Literacy Perspective **Objetivo:**

Este cuestionario es confidencial, tiene como objetivo analizar las emociones de un grupo de estudiantes mexicanos de licenciatura en lenguas hacia el aprendizaje del inglés desde la perspectiva de la alfabetización. Con la información que obtengamos ampliaremos nuestra investigación analizando la respuesta emocional de los estudiantes y cómo esta afecta en su proceso de aprendizaje.

De la pregunta 1 a la 4 marca con una x la respuesta que consideres adecuada. Siendo 5 el máximo nivel y 1 el mínimo.
(única respuesta)

- 1) ¿Cuánto te gusta el inglés?
- 2) ¿Cuánto es tu interés por aprender inglés?
- 3) ¿Cómo ha sido tu experiencia con los maestros de inglés?
- 4) ¿Cómo valoras las estrategias de escritura y lectura en inglés utilizadas por el maestro?
- 5) ¿Has estudiado inglés en un lugar diferente a la escuela?

Dónde: _____

Indica si estás de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con los siguientes enunciados: Siendo 5 el máximo nivel de acuerdo y 1 el mínimo.

- 6) Piensas que el inglés es fácil de aprender
- 7) Crees que el inglés es importante
- 8) La forma en que el maestro enseña en la clase de inglés te ayuda a aprender.
- 9) Indica que tanto te gusta la lectura.

De la pregunta 10 a la 12 marque con una X las respuestas que consideres apropiadas. Es válido poner más de una respuesta.

- 10) Cuál de las siguientes actividades utiliza el maestro en la clase de inglés.

Videos	
Películas	
Cuentos	
Libros	
Música	

Audio libros	
Textos informativos (periódicos, revistas)	
Ninguno	

Otro, ¿cuál?: _____

11) Cuáles de estas emociones relacionas con el aprendizaje del inglés.

Miedo	
Frustración	
Aburrición	
Ansiedad	
Interés	
Motivación	
Tranquilidad	
Alegría	
Ninguna	

Otra(s): _____

12) ¿Cuáles de estos textos se leen en el curso de inglés?

Texto guía	
Texto argumentativo	
Texto expositivo	
Texto descriptivo	
Cuentos cortos	
Ninguno	

Otro(s): _____

13) ¿Consideras que algo se debería cambiar o estás de acuerdo en la manera en la que se dan en las clases de inglés?

Si hay algo que cambiar, ¿Qué cambiarías?:

Si	No
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14) ¿Qué tipo de literatura te gustaría leer en el curso de inglés?

Appendix B: Descriptive Inventory of Literacy Materials

MATERIAL	QUANTITY Is the quantity of material available sufficient to fulfill the needs of the institution or classroom?	CONTEXTUALIZATION Were the materials or strategies used in class correctly adapted to the reality of the students?	ADEQUACY Did the materials or strategies used in class address the different needs of students? (Rhythms, learning styles, physical, motor and cognitive disabilities)
Guide text	Each student had their own guide book	In the book some activities were not contextualized to the reality of the students.	The book was appropriate to the needs and level of English of each student
Worksheets	The amount of worksheets were sufficient for all students	The content of the worksheets was contextualized thanks to the teachers looking for content according to their needs.	The worksheets addressed the specific needs of the students, thus if they were appropriate.
Quizzes	The amount of quizzes were sufficient for all students	The quizzes were contextualized to the thematic view in class.	The quizzes were adapted to the differences and needs of the students.
Audios	The audios were used in each unit, in addition to the audios working on the platform.	In some activities the audios had content decontextualized to the reality of the students.	The audios were suited to the needs of the students
Platform	Each student had access to the platform and their own account.	In some activities the platform had content decontextualized to the reality of the students.	The platforms were suited to the needs of the students, in some cases the audio activities were difficult to reach.
Notebook	Each student had their own notebook for the English class	The content written in the notebook was directly related to that of the class, so sometimes the examples were decontextualized	Each student made the selection of his notebook, so this fulfilled the needs of each.
Book (Reading logs)	The amount of Reading logs were sufficient for all students	The books used for out-of-class readings were contextualized and at a level of English appropriate for the students' language level.	The books used for out-of-class readings were appropriate for the different needs of the students.
Videos	The videos were used in classes regularly.	The videos presented in class were contextualized with the topics worked on.	The videos presented in class were at an appropriate linguistic level and, in some cases, were presented with subtitles to match the level.
Friday workshops	The workshops were held weekly from the beginning of the semester.	The workshops dealt with different themes, related to English skills and everyday life situations.	The workshops were worked with different dynamics that allowed all students to participate in them.
Dynamic activities	Teachers in group A and C did not use these activities each class unlike the teacher in group B who did each class.	Classroom activities contained topics related to the students' daily lives.	class activities were appropriate to the needs and abilities of the students.

