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Fortaleciendo las habilidades productivas con CIRIPI: una secuencia didáctica establecida dentro del enfoque de aula inversa

Enhancing productive skills with CIRIPI: a didactic sequence established within the Flipped Classroom Approach

Resumen

Este artículo reporta un estudio de caso realizado a partir de la implementación de una estrategia de enseñanza-aprendizaje en inglés como extranjera con 42 estudiantes universitarios del nivel A2. El objetivo fue determinar la efectividad de una secuencia didáctica que integró un elemento de la tecnología digital (sitio web) con uno de tecnología análoga (diario de aprendizaje) dentro del enfoque de Aula Inversa. Los datos se recopilaron mediante el diario de aprendizaje, dos grupos focales, una prueba de entrada y otra de salida. Los resultados mostraron que, aunque las habilidades productivas (hablar y escribir) son las más difíciles de desarrollar en grupos grandes de estudiantes, estas pueden mejorarse cuando hay una secuenciación dinámica de los diferentes elementos de la clase.

Palabras clave:
método de enseñanza; habilidades; lengua extranjera

Abstract

This paper reports a case study about a teaching and learning strategy in English Foreign Language (EFL) with 42 university students from the A2 level. It was intended to determine the effectiveness of a didactic sequence that integrated one element of digital technology (a website) with one element of analog technology (a learning journal) within the Flipped Classroom Approach. The data were collected by using the learning journal, two focus groups, a pretest, and a posttest. The results showed that, although productive skills (speaking and writing) are the most difficult to develop in large groups of learners, these can be enhanced when there is a dynamic sequencing of the different class elements.

Keywords:
CIRIPI didactic sequence; Teaching EFL; productive skills.

1. Introduction

According to the most recent approaches for teaching foreign languages, efficiency in communication must be the main objective of any process carried out in this field. To achieve efficiency in communication, the four language skills must be developed in a cohesive way that gives each one equal importance in the teaching process (Gautam, 2019). However, some Colombian university teachers need to establish strategies to improve productive skills in the classroom, in order to deal with issues such as large groups of students who are unable to communicate effectively (in writing or speech) despite having been exposed to EFL during elementary school and high school processes. It implies addressing different components to guide the learning process towards effective communication. To this respect different scholars have posited that circumstances such as globalization demand the inclusion of new elements and processes within the EFL classroom (Tomlinson, 2011; Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Kramsch, 2014 and others). Undoubtedly, globalization and the other dynamics make foreign language teaching a demanding task for teachers and curricula developers, who face tremendous

All of these scholars suggest that teachers position themselves as transformative intellectuals when they go beyond the mere fact of teaching grammar structures and encourage deep teaching attitudes and actions towards communication.

challenges when they organize courses for specific levels and backgrounds.

Because of the nature of the research reported here, the emphasis is placed on the teacher's role, understanding that it modifies the role of the students according to the class environment set by the teacher. From this epistemological point of view, teachers are the most important resource to enhance educational effectiveness in any field. Therefore, "the quality of an education system cannot outdo the quality of its teachers" (McKinsey et al, 2010, p. 92). This standpoint is in accordance with the rise of critical pedagogies in which teachers emerged as transformative intellectuals. (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Benesch, 2001; Pennycook, 2001). All of these scholars suggest that teachers position themselves as transformative intellectuals when they go beyond the mere fact of teaching grammar structures and encourage deep teaching attitudes and actions towards communication. Then, they may favor processes that allow students to catch implicit meanings and understandings from a discursive structure immersed in the social world. Consequently, these kinds of teachers have to be able to link theory and practice by accounting for different social issues in both specific and

general contexts. This can help students become more aware of ideologies involved in human actions and use the foreign language in a meaningful way. With all those aspects in mind, the research carried out was designed to determine the effectiveness of a didactic sequence that integrated one element of digital technology (a website) with one of analog technology (a learning journal) within the Flipped Classroom Approach.

1.1 Pedagogical viewpoint

Taking into account this understanding of teachers as transformative intellectuals, didactics become the backbone of the teaching processes that teachers must lead in different contexts. However, structuring a didactic sequence can be a very demanding task, as teachers must be aware of different issues that arise when planning, applying, or evaluating a foreign language class. This task becomes more complex if teachers are required to follow strict plans provided by the institution they work in (as is frequently the case in Colombia). Those plans are usually established according to an approach and method previously defined. Such situations become problematic considering that most of the methods are set by experts according to language assumptions and teaching and learning theories, but they do not cover specific issues of some learning contexts. Then, analyzing and modifying didactic sequences according to circumstance can become a good opportunity for teachers to gain some independence in their professional development, and for students to receive assistance with their specific learning needs and interests.

In relation to the aforementioned idea, it is important to mention that since didactic sequences for teaching English as a Foreign Language have not received special attention because they have been included within the components of different teaching approaches,

and sometimes teachers are unaware of their seminal importance for classroom management. Some experts have addressed didactic sequences under labels like 'Parts of a class', 'Instructional sequences', 'Teaching sequences', and so on. These experts have organized the structure of their proposals by emphasizing one of the elements of the teaching process. Some of them, such as Dakin (1980), Doff (1988), Lewis & Hill (1993), and Nunan (1991), highlighted the role of information. Others like Gower *et al* (1995) emphasized the importance of process, and Woodward (2001) & Harmer (2007) proposed what can be described as a student-centered class organization. All of this information may help define a didactic sequence as the way in which a teacher organizes the different moments of his/her class. Then, s/he has to make decisions related to what activity is going to open the class, which one is going to be the next one, what would be the final activity, what is going to be evaluated and in which way, etc. This also determines the student's role in aspects such as the level of autonomy students can get during the classroom experience or outside of it.

Related to the approach that was used to guide the research process, in a general way it can be said that Flipped Classroom is a student-centered approach that eases the execution of communicative tasks during class sessions (Sambandamurthi & Balakrishnan, 2015; Bergmann *et al.*2012; Wang, *et al* 2018). This approach stimulates the change of strategies in the foreign languages field, making the roles of teacher and learner more valued from different perspectives.one approach that is much more holistic and situated, and which recognizes the complexity of interactions to fulfill the purpose of communicating in a foreign language. Consequently, teachers must direct their teaching process by structuring different elements that involve the use of technology outside of the classroom and

active participation of learners and teacher inside it.

Then, teachers have to analyze elements like the characteristics of their learners, physical & immaterial resources, and strategies to collect, address, and evaluate the information gathered by the students through technology to favor their communicative competence. To this regard, Demirel (2016) states that:

> Flipped learning provides all in one. First, taking the students as the core, the students feel important and responsible. Having the responsibility, the students get engaged and have the opportunity to learn independently. Having technology included in the learning environment, the students don't feel alienated. Having a more relaxed atmosphere, the students don't feel nervous and have time to interact with the peers and the teacher, to practice more and feel safe when get stuck." (p. 112*)*

Therefore, a Flipped Classroom environment is suitable to develop productive skills (speaking and writing) because of teachers devote the whole class to making students produce statements by using the information collected in advance. The goal of this strategy is for students to become less frustrated when they have to interact, because they know the information that is going to be used in the classroom. Another advantage of this approach is related to its defiance of traditional class structures, which do not provide teachers with enough time to perform tasks like checking homework in a very rigorous way, especially in large groups.

1.2 Language viewpoint

The aforementioned productive skills need special attention because of their complexity. Although some authors claim that the development of communicative competence entails the integration of skills (see Ellis, 2009; Tomlinson, 2012; Richards, 2015), it

is undeniable that productive skills have a higher degree of difficulty. This is because learners provide information about their thoughts and feelings *from* and *in* a social context through these productive skills. In this respect, Jaramillo, and Medina (2011) conceive productive skills as an important form of expression which is used to share ideas and feelings, as well as persuade or convince the otherness about our thoughts. The complexity of these skills lies in the fact that both of them involve processes of receiving, processing, and producing information *from* and *for* different communicative backgrounds.

Consequently, teachers must recognize that speaking is the productive skill that involves the highest level of spontaneity while a speaker is performing. As such, speaking demands more practice than other productive skills. To develop speaking micro-skills (Escudero *et al* 2020), a teacher must focus on two categories of elements that constitute the oral production in a foreign language. The first one is related to phonemic inventory and ordering, while the second emphasizes supra-segmental phenomena, such as syllabication, prominences, tones, and intonations. Additionally, oral communication depends on much more than proper pronunciation

Oral communication depends on much more than proper pronunciation of words, phrases, and sentences; it hinges on many non-verbal elements such as facial expressions, eye contact, body language, etc., that are carried out while students interact.

of words, phrases, and sentences; it hinges on many non-verbal elements such as facial expressions, eye contact, body language, etc., that are carried out while students interact. All of these issues make speaking an intimidating experience for learners who only have a basic level of proficiency. Nevertheless, it is also true that being orally successful provides learners with knowledge and satisfaction of the foreign language, as Subramanian & Muniandy (2016) assert.

For experts such as Susikaran (2012), the goal of teaching students to speak a foreign language is to improve their communicative skills, because improving communicative skills is the way that learners can express themselves and understand how to follow the social roles appropriated to each communicative background. To this regard, Torres (1997) asserts that accuracy and fluency become essential components in real communication enactments since they represent "the precision and linguistic acceptability of the language," while fluency is "the ability to develop ideas and the way for expressing them" (p.97). According to this expert, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar \ are some of the elements that allow teachers to test accuracy. On the other hand, Torres emphasizes that fluency can be tested by checking pauses, length, and speed during the learner´s performance.

Related to the writing skill, it is important to mention that writing has permitted people to communicate through time and space even when they are not alive anymore, guaranteeing permanent access to their ideas. According to Cloninger (2009), methodologically, writing skills are considered more complex to develop than speaking skills. It happens because writing requires more time to prepare the ideas the writer wants to present and to select a coherent set of language elements according to communicative aspects related to the context. As such, writing provides some opportunities for

learners to express themselves in an appropriate way, they need to develop abilities such as the gathering and classification of information, selection of correct grammar according to communicative intentions, etc., to get good written communication. In this regard, different studies have proved that in the Colombian education system, the micro-skills needed to be effective in textual communication are not fully developed, even in students´ native language.

The aforementioned difficulties occur because of challenging situations that teachers face in elementary and high school programs, such as large groups of students per class, insufficient time to accomplish the demanding tasks entailed by the writing process, or because they are not sufficiently equipped to lead such complex processes. Ortiz (2015) conducted a research project that demonstrated that a high percentage of Colombian people who are enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate programs present awkwardness related to cohesion and coherence, which are the backbone of the writing skill.

For Halliday (1985), cohesion and coherence are the main elements of smooth written communication. According to this author, cohesion refers to the way a writer organizes his/her ideas by using organizers, devices for reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical structures. These elements make writing discourse a semantic unit, a reasonable relationship among the ideas the writer has in her/his mind. Likewise, coherence can be understood as the meaning construction within the text. Cassany (2006) states that coherence is related to the permanency of the same block of meaning throughout the whole text and reader´s pertinent apprehension of it depends on the clear construction the writer makes in the text when adding new ideas.

To close this section, it is important to note that the research reported in this paper was carried out with a group of 42 first-semester students in the education faculty of a private university in Bogotá. 85% of those students came from public schools. They were tested at the beginning of the course, and their main difficulties were related to productive skills (speaking and writing). These results may have been caused by traditional classroom procedures during previous processes, which may have focused only on the transmission of content and memorization of grammar rules as Ruffinelli *et al* (2012) state. Accordingly, the research sought to determine the effectiveness of a didactic sequence that allowed the involvement and personal assessment despite the large group of students. It was done by using a didactic sequence called CIRIPI (**C**ollecting **I**nformation, **R**eflecting on the **I**nformation and **P**racticing by using the **I**nformation) as a program in which students had to watch a sitcom on a website. After watching the sitcom, the students had to select pieces of language and organize them in a learning journal. Finally, they were driven to socialize the information within the classroom by doing different exercises oriented by the teachers who conducted this research.
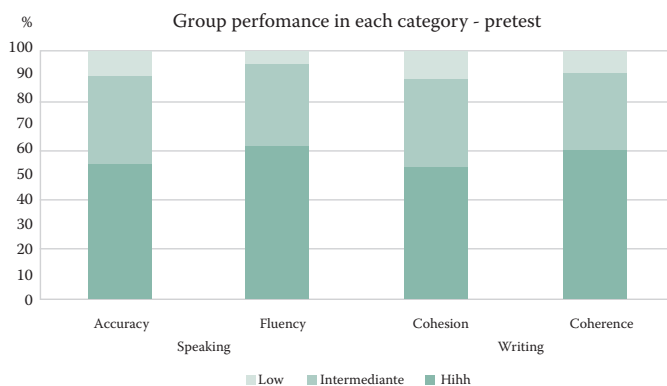
2. Methodology
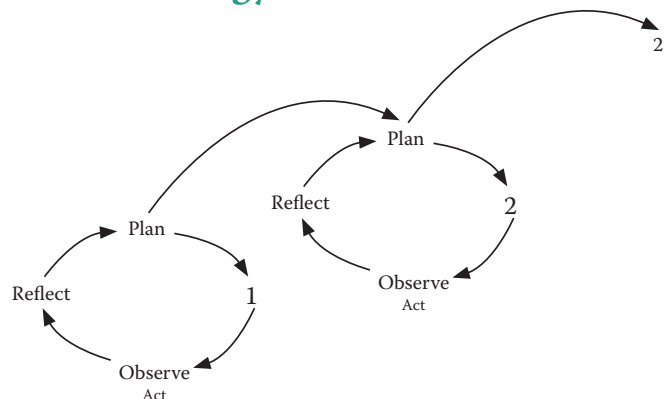
Graphic 1. Zuber-Skerritt Spiral Circle for Action Learning Research. Image adapted from Pretorius & Swanepoel (2003).

The research process was carried out using the Spiral Cycle described by Zuber-Skerritt (2002) in her Action Learning Proposal (see Graphic 1). According to this, planning had to be the first part of the teachers' research process. The second part was acting. The third part was observing the results of the process. Finally, researchers had to reflect on the whole process and readapt elements to ensure success in learning. Zuber-Skerritt states that these stages can be modified according to the circumstances that teachers encounter in their classrooms, but also states that teachers must remember that the backbone of this Spiral Cycle is the assurance of a reflective teaching process.

2.1 Planning

The case study described here took place in a credit-bearing English as a Foreign Language course at a private university during the first semester of 2019. The 42 students were exposed to the class methodology for 120 minutes weekly over a period of ten weeks. Every student was an adult who worked during the day and studied at night to become a language teacher in public or private schools. At the beginning of the course, they were classified in the A2 level according to CEFR by applying the Key English Test (KET) Exam. They got the lowest scores in productive skills, as can be seen in Graphic 2.

Once the students' levels of proficiency had been determined, the researchers proceeded to establish a general scale to ease the classification of the undergraduates in both productive skills. The following are the levels of equivalence for this research purpose:
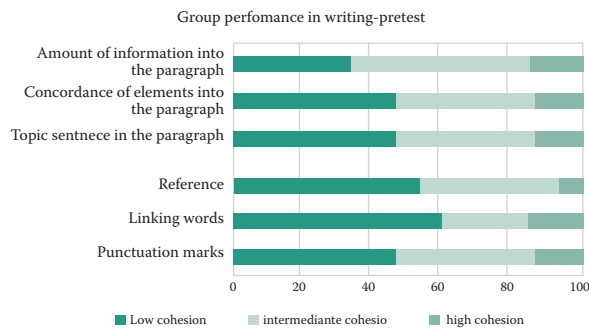
High: the candidate fully meets the requirements for the language and communicative skills according to the KET exam.

Intermediate: the candidate partially meets the requirements for the language and communicative skills according to the KET exam.
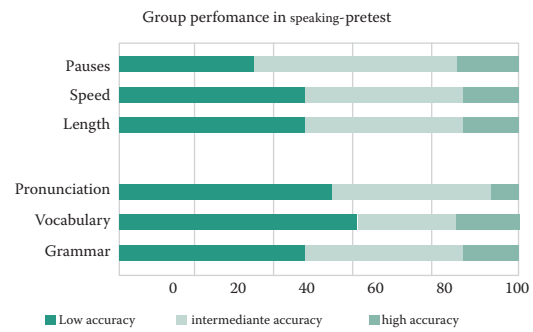
Low: the candidate does not meet the requirements for the language and communicative skills according to the KET exam.

The categories established to study the writing skill were coherence and cohesion. Coherence was divided into the subcategories *amount of information in a paragraph, concordance of sentence elements*, and *ambiguity in topic sentences*. For the category of cohesion, were addressed the subcategories addressed were *punctuation marks, linking words*, and *referential elements within a text*. This can be seen in Graphic 3.

Related to the speaking skill, the components selected to be analyzed within the process were accuracy and fluency. In terms of accuracy, aspects linked to *grammar, vocabulary* and *pronunciation* were addressed. In terms of fluency, *speed, length* and *pauses* were addressed. As can be seen in Graphic 4, pronunciation and speed caused the most difficulty for the students tested.

Graphic 2. Results of pretest in productive skills by using KET.

Group perfomance in writing-pretest

Graphic 3. Results of pretest in both components of writing skills by using KET.

Group perfomance in speaking-pretest

**Graphic 4.** Results of pretest n both components of speaking skill by using KET.

2.2 Acting and observing

On account of the imminent need to improve their language and communicative skills (as detected at the beginning of the course) the researchers decided to implement a specific didactic sequence that helped the learners gather information from a website and bring that information to class to discuss. Then, the teachers agreed that the most suitable strategy was to "flip the classroom" by using a learning journal to collect the information from the website. Accordingly, the **CIRIPI** didactic sequence was established to guide the course (see Graphic 5).

This didactic sequence consists of laying down a route to organize students' learning process around information that they could bring to the classroom in the way demanded by the Flipped Classroom Approach. The meaning of each letter of the acronym is explained below:

CI= **C**ollecting **I**nformation from a specific website. The selected website was ORORO T.V, a platform that provides useful tools for elementary level learners. These tools include a speed grader for listening skills, a multi-language translator, and a question solver about grammar issues, among others (see Image 1). Another important feature of this website is the opportunity to watch a short free daily episode.
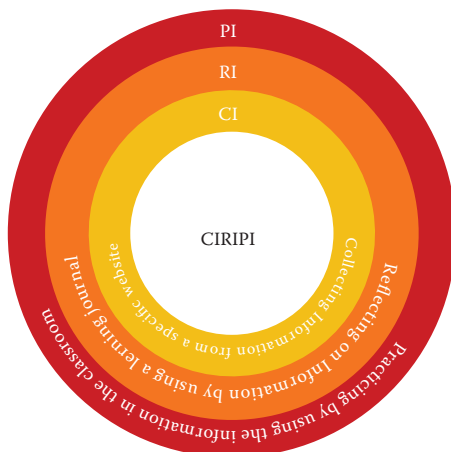
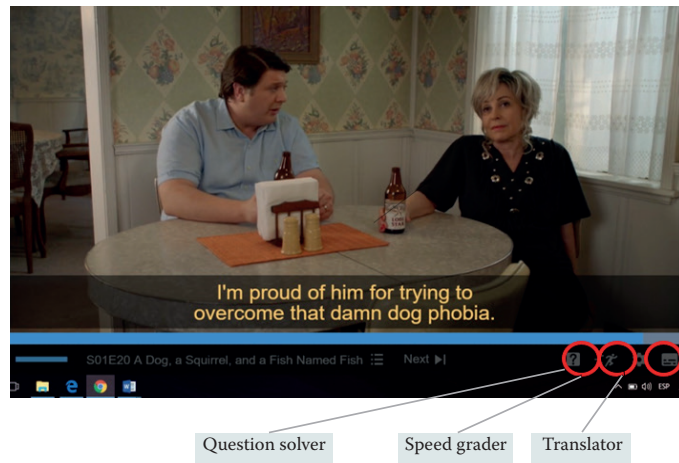**Graphic 5.** Principles of CIRIPI didactic sequence. Author's own creation.

Image 1. Ororo T.V website to watch free sitcom episodes. Source: author's own compilation.

RI= **R**eflecting on the **I**nformation gathered by using a learning journal. After watching the sitcom episode (whatever they wanted to watch), learners had to organize some information using a learning journal. This was a mandatory weekly assignment for all the students registered in the course (see Table 1).

MAIN IDEAS ABOUT YOUR WEEKLY EPISODE (Write an abstract by using no more than 150 words).	
LANGUAGE ISSUES (Write at least five new words or expressions).	
CULTURE ISSUES (Compare aspects of your culture with that of the target culture).	Similarities
	Differences

Table 1. Learning Journal form. Source: author's own compilation.

The researchers assessed the information provided in the learning journal for the first three weeks. This took extra time outside of the classroom, so the researchers decided to organize the class in a different way. During the first part of the class (60 minutes), students did peer-assessment by using *correction codes and rubrics*, and the researchers oriented them if they were not sure about grammar or punctuation marks. Teachers decided who worked with whom, so that students with higher skill levels served as a source of support for students with lower skill levels. Regardless, when they observed that a mistake was repeated consistently, they went to the board and explained it for the whole group. This strategy not only helped the teachers with the hard task of evaluating writing, but also made the exercise more dynamic by requiring all students to assume a more active role.

PI= **P**racticing English by using the **I**nformation previously collected from the website. In this part of the didactic sequence, the learners could practice by using the information in two different moments: while they wrote in the journal at home, and when they reported the main aspects of the weekly episode in class. To do this, the researchers prepared miscellaneous activities to keep students active and motivated. For example, students sometimes worked on **speed dating** exercises in which they practiced different types of questions to ask about the characters and situations in their classmates' sitcoms. Other activities included were **the sitcom show**, **the telephone game**, **the news reporter**, **riddles,** and **jokes** about the characters, among other activities.

The observation stage was a continuous process that allowed for constant change when issues related to the strategy arose. This permitted the strategy to be meaningful for students and functional for the teachers. Therefore, the information collected in the learning journals, the students' comments at the beginning of each focus group, and their attitudes in class and at the end of the strategy's implementation, were essential to emphasize that both students and teachers could achieve meaningful outcomes using this strategy.

2.3 Reflecting

As in the stages of observing and acting, reflection was carried out throughout the whole research process, and it allowed the researchers to report results, mention findings, and draw conclusions about the experience. Then, it is important to note that the usefulness of the CIRIPI didactic sequence was determined by taking three sources of information into account: the outcomes obtained in the pretest and posttest, the evidence provided in the learning journal and the information collected in the two focus groups (one focus group at the beginning of the process and the other at the end of the

process). All that information was analyzed in relation to *accuracy and fluency* in speaking and *cohesion and coherence* in writing. In the same vein, intercultural competence progress was assessed when students were interviewed in the posttest and when they were asked in the focus groups.

To this point, it is substantial to clarify that during the three initial weeks some students got disheartened and thought about giving up. Then a special tutoring plan was set to help them get acquainted with the instruments and become more confident with the use of language. Therefore, 42 students out of 45 who had started the course ended it; two were exempt of the strategy because they fully met the requirements for the language and communicative skills according to the KET exam, and another one abandoned the process in the earliest stage.

3. Main findings and discussion

Retaking the question: what could be the impact of a dynamic didactic sequence to develop productive language skills, in a large group of basic learners of English as a Foreign Language? And after reflecting about the information collected from the learning journals, the students' comments during the first and second focus group, and mainly, the results obtained in the pretest and posttest in both productive skills, it is suitable to say that the didactic sequence had a positive effect in the students' learning of English as a foreign language (as can be seen in the evidence provided below). These positive effects are linked to their language performance, their awareness about different elements involved in the development of communicative competence according to what Hymes states about it, and their feelings and attitudes toward the production of utterances in EFL by using CIRIPI.

Related to the students' improvement in their language performance, the most meaningful result was the shift they did from low level to intermediate one in both productive skills. Thus, at the end of the process students in low level resulted in a variation of .505 in the posttest for coherence and a .438 in relation to the pretest of cohesion. The same happened with the elements of the speaking skill: fluency got a variation of .479, while accuracy got one of .437, the lowest one. As showed in Graphic 6, both productive skills had a similar performance, nevertheless cohesion (writing) and accuracy (speaking) got the best performance because they moved the highest number of students from low to intermediate and from intermediate to high levels. Any other way, coherence (writing) and fluency (speaking) were those subcategories with the worst performance as they kept the highest number of students in the low level. This may have occurred because they are processes that require more time to be developed as Phipps (2010) asserts.

The positive results could be related to the fact they were continuously exposed to the English language by means of sitcoms. Also, to the need the students had to constantly picking up vocabulary chunks previously collected to communicate within the classroom. This validates what Sherman (2003) and Hlosková (2013) point out in relation to the use of sitcoms and how they could be beneficial as a language model for specific language items or as a general source for students collect language issues. It is due to sitcoms provide updated linguistic input in both oral and written language. Consequently, when students follow a story in a sitcom, they receive a lot of social and linguistic information that they need to organize for a communicative task within the classroom. This is in what CIRIPI demonstrated to be helpful in.

In this regard, Jaramillo and Medina (2011) state that learners perform more accurately

in their productive skills if they focus on a topic, and structure the information correctly inside a specific assignment aimed to practice the English language.

Related to the speaking ability, results showed a smooth performance of the students in both categories, accuracy, and fluency. However, accuracy was the component with the most significant increase of improvement. See Graphic 7: Errors were analyzed and scored according to the requirements of KET Exam, setting special focus on syntactic, morphological, and spelling issues. It is in accordance with Boonkit (2010) who asserts that a good preparation of speaking tasks became an effective strategy to minimize anxiety in learners. By the same token, this author poses that a free topic selection may encourage students to feel more motivated to learn and to communicate their ideas about the information they are collecting, that was the researchers´ intention when they asked each student to select his/her favorite sitcom to practice with.

This improvement in both subcategories of speaking, also could have occurred because in the final test the students were asked to talk about issues related to the sitcom that they watched during the didactic sequence. Then, they had internalized lexical structures and information that they could reuse during the oral test. This situation is considering a special issue to be discussed because the researchers had to modify KET exam, and it could affect aspects as spontaneity which is required in real exam performance. Thus, it is appropriate to say that if the aim of the strategy had been to prepare the students for the real KET, CIRIPI can be questioned because did not respect test parameters strictly. Related to the students' performance during the oral part of the test, it is suitable to mention that during the interview they were more relaxed and secure than they looked during the pretest. In this regard, it is suitable to say that the biggest challenge
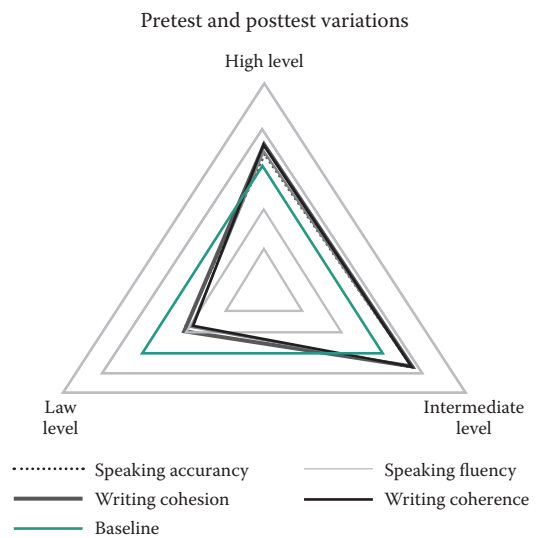
Graphic 6: Variations of the different elements addressed in both productive skills. Source: pretest and posttest forms.
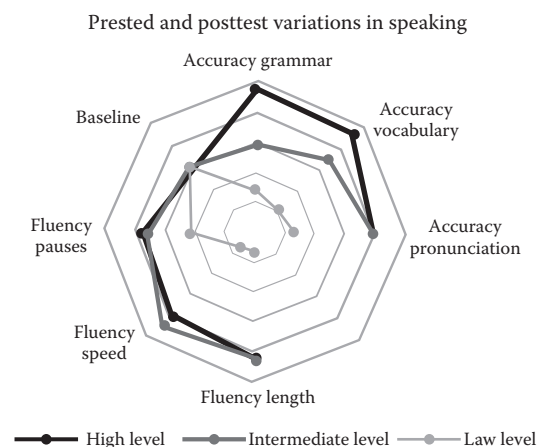
Graphic 7. Variations of the different elements addressed in speaking. Source: pretest and posttest forms.

for the researchers along the CIRIPI process was helping the students gain confidence to speak. At the beginning of the strategy most of them were very anxious and nervous when they had to say something in English, but as time went by and the strategy got stronger, the students started to express themselves more freely and with a better pronunciation of words and sentences.

Pretest and posttest variations in writing
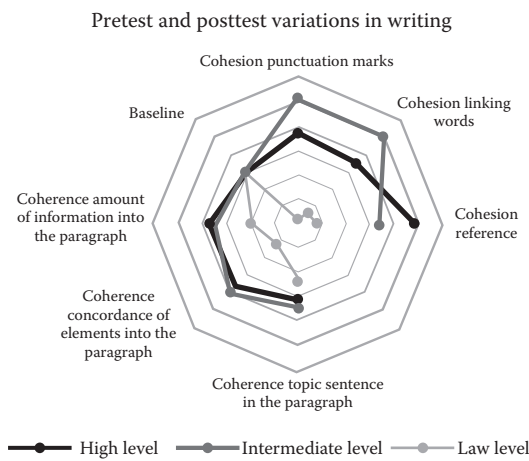
Graphic 8. Variations of the different elements about cohesion and coherence addressed in writing. Source: pretest and posttest forms.

Connected to the writing skill, an important finding is related to the number of students who moved from the low level to the intermediate one, but not to the high one. See Graphic 8. It could be explained in terms of difficulties they also had in their writing performance in Spanish, their mother tongue. Therefore, difficulties such as the misuse of punctuation marks and linking words, identification of top sentences, etc., were transferred to their pieces when the students wrote in English. For instance, when students were asked to identify and analyze what they had tried to say in their paragraphs, most of them even affirmed that there were no mistakes because these ideas had been translated as they thought them in their mother tongue so they must be correct; not even recognizing contradictory elements, punctuation mistakes they were making in the Spanish version of their texts or particular elements of English grammar.

Some situations that could have eased the positive outcome in writing were: firstly, the use of the learning journal to collect information from the website, and secondly, the continuous assessment process of the abstracts, by using instruments like *correction codes and rubrics.* According to Entwistle & Smith (2000) these formal strategies require a deep preparation but can push learners toward accepting more responsibility for their writing learning process. It also may lead them to get skills in relation to the organization of information, the use of lexical structures to connect ideas, the understanding about how punctuation marks work, etc. In this sense, Riddell (2001) states that the use of error *correction codes* makes students become more responsible and independent in the writing process. To this respect, the learning journal became an important source to determine the students' improvements linked to the use of punctuation marks, connectors, and some deictic references. They also could identify a topic sentence and schematize their ideas before starting to write. However, they kept making mistakes related to the use of punctuation marks (period and comma) in a sentence or a paragraph; some of them used these elements at random, which is understandable due to the complexity of the writing process and the short time of exposure to the strategy.

In the same way, and although the KET exam does not provide activities that allow the evaluation of intercultural competence, it is undeniable that a teaching strategy structured under The Communicative Approach should tend to appropriation of social knowledge and development of intercultural skills and attitudes in students. Being aware of this, the researchers introduced a section in the journal for intercultural reflection. It was measured by asking students about differences and similarities of both cultural backgrounds; the one they belonged to and that addressed in the sitcom they had chosen. Table 2 provides an example about this aspect.

Intercultural competence also was linked to the activities students had to do during the class sessions, by doing exercises like **the sitcom show** and **the news reporter.** This

Table 2. Learning Journal form for intercultural aspects. Source: Student 7**:** Grey´s anatomy

CULTURE ISSUES (Compare aspects of your culture with the target culture ones). CULTURE ISSUES (Compare aspects of your culture with the target culture ones).	Similarities	*Giving nicknames to fresh students is a common practice *Enlisting in the army means service, helping others and men is be brave
	Differences	*They respect the norms *They don´t have soup at lunch *They respect the norms

showed awareness of cultural differences, and those attitudes of tolerance and respect that Rico (2011) poses as essential elements to obtain intercultural proficiency. This author also contends that learners of any foreign language do not need to have a high level of proficiency in grammar to develop this competence. Aguillón (2017) corroborates this, and asserts that recognizing differences and similarities is the first step to be aware of intercultural issues. Another finding to this regard was related to activities that eased intercultural reflection; the most successful for that purpose were those in which students could chat about different sitcoms such as the **speed dating event**, and the

Intercultural competence also was linked to the activities students had to do during the class sessions, by doing exercises like the sitcom show and the news reporter. This showed awareness of cultural differences, and those attitudes of tolerance and respect that Rico (2011) poses as essential elements to obtain intercultural proficiency.

sitcom show, in which they had to prepare and perform a short skit with characters of different episodes. By doing these activities, students showed awareness about differences that could hamper communication with people from other cultural backgrounds. They also were aware about those similarities they could take advantage to start a dialogue. Intercultural competence was a topic addressed during the final focus group, in which students mentioned the importance of being careful with stereotypes and they permanently reflected about otherness issues as physical appearance (it linked to the Colombian practice of giving nicknames to everyone). Despite of all of this, researchers recognize that CIRIPI strategy did not prioritize in this competence and the work with this could be extended to cover more than just similarities and differences among cultural backgrounds.

Finally, it is worthy to remark that students were questioned about their feelings on the didactic sequence. Thus, in both, the first focus group and in the second one, they were asked about how they felt on the class arrangement and their role in it by taking into account two categories: sense of improvement in communicative skills and intercultural and pragmatic awareness. Then, to the questions: *How do you feel about this methodology?* And *do you feel your English skills improved?* (These questions were given both, by oral way with some students and in a written way with the whole group), the students made comments such as:

"I felt scared at begin, but now I feel good because I understand many things natives say".

"I feel happy with this methodology because the teachers and classmates accompanied me all the time. Yes, in this course I learned a lot vocabulary and understand when I listen native speakers".

""I feel nervous because I have to talk to others, yes, I realize that have much vocabulary help me a lot".

"I am happy with the strategy. Yes, because I received many words when watching my sitcom, so now I can talk about other things with my friends".

"I feel good. I never wrote in a diary and now I´m sure I write better and that´s good".

"I am so happy with all information I can give thanks to the sitcom. Yes, my English improved very much.

"I feel exhausted, did not like the journal, but I loved the sitcom".

"I feel CIRIPI is a good strategy, now I get many things when somebody talks to me, I will continue watching my sitcom because I love the story of Rick and Morty".

"I feel tired for the journal and the sitcom was the same for me cause I´ve watched t,v by myself".

Related to the intercultural and pragmatic awareness, students were asked: What *do you think about CIRIPI related to cultural issues?* And, *do you think to identify cultural differences and similarities can help you to communicate in a better way? Please, explain.* Some responses were:

"I think is good because I had the opportunity of know many things of the culture. Yes, because things often people say can be stereotypes".

"I think ciripi is amazing because one can collected much information from people that live in los Angeles. Yes, I think is very important because one can mistake and people not understand or offend".

"I consider the sitcom is nice because says how people live in other places. Of course yes, it helps to communicate with respect".

" I think CIRIPI is an interesting strategy to learn some words that they use to insult, for example moron or silly. I also learned other forms of greet, for example hey ya! Or What´s up?"

According to their responses, the majority of the learners demonstrated consciousness about the importance of being aware about intercultural issues to become more effective in EFL communication. These responses provided at the end of the strategy plus those posed at beginning of the research work, allowed the researchers to classify their feelings towards the didactic sequence into three categories: negative, positive, or neutral. Therefore, adjectives such as *scared*, *bored*, *anxious*, *ridiculous*, *nervous*, etc. (that were exposed mainly in the first focus group), were considered as negative feelings towards the proposal and adjectives such as i*nterested*, *happy*, *amazing*, *interesting*, *exciting*, etc. (that were exposed mainly in the second focus group), were considered as positive feelings. Also, answers such as *"I don´t know", "I don´t care", "it is indifferent to me because I knew English before", "I don´t mind",* and so on, were classified as neutral. These perceptions changed along the process as shows table 3. It Happened because of factors as the rapport students develop with their sitcom and the sense of accompaniment that was generated during the strategy. This helped them to gain confidence and discover that they could be good at English performance.

Table 3. Results of the subjective impressions collected in focus groups. Source: own compilation.

Focus Group	Number of students with positive feelings	Number of students with negative feelings	Number of students with neutral feelings
Initial	14	18	13
Final	27	5	8
Var.	0.364	-0.275	-0.089

4. Conclusions

This new era has allowed people to immerse themselves in tons of information and new communicative practices. This challenges foreign language teachers to maximize strategies that allow students to take advantage of the possibilities that technology provides. More importantly, there are a lot of strategies that teachers can set in order to guide reflections about different things that happen in the world, and to learn how structures invented by mankind work, including linguistic codes. In other words, teachers are seen as transformative intellectuals because they must understand the world they are situated in and establish coherent frames of teaching that permit students to learn a foreign language and be able to respond to real global communication styles. In this sense, Flipped Classroom Approach emerged as an open invitation to involve technology in obtaining a wide range of data. However, it is the teachers' responsibility to customize and analyze the information, in order to ease the adaptation of new knowledge in learners.

This research demonstrated that digital and analog technologies can work together in a suitable way in contexts of large groups per class. It is not just about removing old elements or processes; it is about thinking how to make some of them fit together and support a learning process in the best way. To this respect, it is appropriate to say that the decision about a didactic sequence is a major concern for teachers because they become responsible for producing results in students when developing a language skill. But it is also an opportunity to position themselves as transformative intellectuals, as long as they can teach any linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, strategic or cultural component, to make learners communicatively skilled.

Consequently, teachers can support students with a better understanding of language concepts and communication dynamics, through practical application of grammar structures. Thus, it can be said that there is no need to have an outstanding technological structure to flip the classroom out. The most important issue for this methodology is the way teachers mediate the process of collecting, analyzing, and socializing the information to allow students to become active seekers, analyzers, and socializers (real language practitioners) and not merely passive receivers of information. In this sense watching sitcom episodes can be a very challenging and meaningful activity for students, if their teacher guides them with a proper methodology of teaching. One methodology that help them surpass the complexities found in the first stages of learning a new language. Alongside watching a sitcom episode, it was possible to practice all language skills, from receptive to productive ones. In the case of receptive language skills, sitcoms helped to develop students' understanding of main and secondary ideas of authentic oral expressions about daily societal topics; distinguishing between individual speakers in speech, recognizing different styles, attitudes

of these speakers, and inferring the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary based on prior knowledge and context.

Finally, it is significant to mention that the use of the learning journal emerged as a result of the need of enhancing writing skills and it worked as a way to organize information meant to be exposed during class. The structure of the journal permitted students to focus on specific matters that would ease their communication process (language and intercultural communication). In addition, it provided them the chance to correct their texts several times by receiving individual or peer review, to broaden their point of view on what they were trying to orthographically transfer to other people. By means of CIRIPI students had the opportunity to rewrite their ideas more than once until they got a smooth organization of text.

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Conflict of interest

The authors assert that there is not declared or potential conflict of interest.

Authors´ contributions

Both authors participated in the different stages of the research process and in the preparation of the manuscript. In the same vein, they declare that both agreed with the final version of the paper.

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