

A principle-based approach in ELT for tertiary education: a case study of an innovative pilot English course Project

Ángela Tironi¹
Patricio Canales²
Mónica Pozo³
Catalina Sandoval⁴
Macarena Palominos⁵

Abstract

This paper presents a two-year longitudinal study conducted under the Second Language Pilot Project at the Universidad Metropolitana de Ciencias de la Educación in Santiago, Chile. The research-based project comprised the design of English courses based on the university's educational model and key principles of Sociocultural Theory (Aimin, 2013), Adult Learning Theory (Knowles, 1984) and Post Method Approach (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). It also examined students' perceptions of their learning under these principles through questionnaires, focus groups, and templates. The findings reveal a positive attitude towards the teaching approach, which students perceived as distinctive, and a positive impact on students' motivation and language needs. Future programs are encouraged to implement systematic actions for the teaching/learning process.

Keywords: adult learning theory, post-method, principled-based approach, sociocultural theory, teachers as researchers.

Un enfoque basado en principios para la enseñanza de inglés en la educación universitaria: estudio de caso de un innovador proyecto piloto de curso de inglés

Resumen

Este artículo presenta un estudio longitudinal de dos años realizado bajo el Proyecto Piloto Segundo Idioma en la Universidad Metropolitana de Ciencias de la Educación en Santiago, Chile. Este proyecto de investigación comprendió el diseño de cursos de inglés basados en el modelo educativo de la universidad y principios claves de la Teoría Sociocultural (Aimin, 2013), Teoría del Aprendizaje de Adultos (Knowles, 1984) y Enfoque Post-Método (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). También examinó las percepciones de los estudiantes sobre su aprendizaje bajo estos principios a través de cuestionarios, grupos focales y plantillas. Los resultados revelan una actitud positiva hacia el enfoque de enseñanza, el cual los estudiantes perciben como distintivo, y un impacto positivo en la motivación y las necesidades lingüísticas de los estudiantes. Se alienta a los programas futuros a implementar acciones sistemáticas para el proceso de enseñanza/aprendizaje.

¹ Magíster en Lingüística, mención lengua inglesa. Correo electrónico: atironi@uchile.cl

² Master of Applied Linguistics (TESOL). Correo electrónico: patricio.canaloes@uoh.cl

³ Magíster en Educación, mención en docencia nivel superior. Correo electrónico: monica.pozo@umce.cl

⁴ Master of TESL, Teaching of English as a second language. Correo electrónico: catalina.sandoval@uoh.cl

⁵ Magíster en Lingüística: Teorías de aprendizaje en Lengua Inglesa. Correo electrónico: macarena.palominos@umce.cl

Palabras clave: teoría del aprendizaje de adultos, post-método, enfoque basado en principios, teoría sociocultural, docentes como investigadores.

Recibido: 29 de julio 2020

Aceptado: 23 de marzo 2021

1. Introduction

Since the early 2000s, there has been a strong emphasis on promoting innovative teaching practices in ELT domains, ranging from secondary to higher education. Based on our experience in multiple language schools and institutions, we found that a significant number of language schools promised students innovative teaching practices using laserdiscs, computer labs, teacher rotation, communicative approach, native English teachers, and immersion programs, among others. On the other hand, in tertiary education universities have been less prone to adopt innovative methodologies or approaches. In the last two decades, innovation in this sector has been mostly centered on implementing licensed software to aid learning. Its impact, however, has not been measured consistently. In addition, some institutions have developed blended programs that have contributed to some improvement in the development of communicative skills (Bañados, 2006). Despite these efforts, it is not clear to what extent the technological resources used correlated with second language attainment.

Similarly, Martinic et al. (2019) studied the relationship among tutorials, EFL lessons, and an online platform. They found that students appreciated the use of an online learning resource but discovered that its integration with the two face-to-face learning spaces did not necessarily promote meaningful learning. This phenomenon has also been reported in other countries in which dissatisfaction with traditional methods has led to changes in EFL educational systems (Hasratzad and Gheitacnchian, 2009). In sum, very little research on actual classroom experiences has been conducted. To our knowledge no study in the country has created an entire three-level EFL course program - curriculum, syllabi, lesson, material and evaluation design - based on the university's educational model implemented with a combination of the principles

derived from Sociocultural Theory (Aimin, 2013), Adult Learning Theory (Knowles, 1984) and Post Method Approach (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to assess the relevance and appropriateness of such a combination of principles in the context of a Chilean public university by collecting and analyzing students' perceptions and their self-reported learning experience. Throughout the paper, we will provide a review of the literature on the approaches supporting our research, the research questions, objectives, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusions.

2. Literature Review

The principles supporting the teaching approach adopted in our study are Sociocultural Theory, Adult Learning Theory and Post Method Approach.

2.1 Sociocultural Theory

2.1.1 Background

Sociocultural theory is based on the premise that human cognition and mental function develop from social interaction (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Under this view, learners' high mental processes are organized by cultural artifacts, activities, and concepts in which language plays an essential role as a mediational tool (Vygotsky, 1986). If learners did not participate in a variety of settings (e.g., family environment, peer group and institutional interactions), their developmental processes would not occur (Lantolf, Thorne and Poehner, 2015). It is hence through collaboration with other members of the learner's community that learning takes place since it provides an opportunity for imitation and identifying maturing psychological functions that are still inadequate for independent performance (Shabani et. al., 2010).

2.1.2 Sociocultural theory and teaching

Given its importance for learning, sociocultural theory has several implications for both students and teachers. For ELT, in particular, it has been found that activities based on the constructs of sociocultural theory, such as peer-scaffolding, positively influence EFL writing skills (Ranjbar and Ghonsooly, 2017; Gagne and Parks, 2013). In addition to language gain, students develop their cognition and autonomy (Panhwar et al., 2016) for learning, as well as autonomy for managing classroom activities (Feryok, 2013). In turn, sociocultural theory has also permeated and benefited teaching settings, where it has played a crucial role in the design of mentoring activities, observation/assessment instruments, action research guided activities, and study groups (Aimin, 2013; Shabani, 2016).

2.1.3 Constructs

Following Aimin (2013), and for the purpose of this study, we have chosen the following constructs to guide our curriculum design and teaching approach.

- (a) Mediation: It provides the link between the individual and the environment. In this study, the most critical mediation artifact is language, which works through social and psychological activities with the necessary scaffolding.
- (b) Regulation: It refers to people's monitoring of their activity using language, their participation in mental and physical activities, subordinated or regulated by other members of the community.
- (c) Internalization: It refers to the process of negotiation, which reorganizes the relationship between people and their social environment.
- (d) ZPD: The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) refers to the developmental level in which a learner can learn skills through receiving support from the teacher or more experienced peers.

- (e) Verbal thought: It refers to how language and speech are connected. This construct is divided into social speech (thoughts and emotions), private speech (talk to oneself), and inner speech (thinking).
- (f) Activity theory: This refers to the integration of both cultural and social mediation, which includes motives, goals, and conditions arising from either social or biological needs (Lantolf, 2007).

2.2 Adult Learning Theory (or Andragogy)

2.2.1 Background

As the name suggests, Adult Learning Theory focuses on how adults learn. In comparison to younger learners, adults are self-directed, responsible for their own decisions (Knowles, 1968) and place greater importance on their learning process than the outcome. For the adult population, strategies in which instructors adopt the role of facilitator, role-playing, and simulations are the most useful. The following is a summary of the five guiding principles behind this theory (Knowles, 1968):

- (a) Self-concept: Adults are at a mature developmental stage; thus, they have a more confident self-concept than children, which enables them to take part in directing their learning.
- (b) Adult Learning Experience: Adults have accumulated a growing reservoir of experience, which becomes an increasing resource for learning.
- (c) Readiness to learn: Because they are older and have had previous learning experiences, adults value education much more than younger learners and are more focused on learning than on external motivations.
- (d) Orientation towards learning: Adults prefer practical, problem-centered approaches to learning.

- (e) Motivation to learn: Adults are often more internally motivated to learn than younger learners.

2.2.2 Adult Learning Theory and Teaching

When teaching adults and according to the principles discussed above, there are several implications for language learning. A study conducted by Deveci (2007) revealed that subjects who were taught under the andragogy approach were flexible in their orientations and paid particular attention to learning. Working with adult populations may also result in more considerable negotiation and collaborative work in the language classroom (Wang et. al., 2015). However, some individual differences may be challenging for the language teacher to address for successful language learning to occur as well. For example, adult students may have varied learning strategies, educational needs, social and professional experiences, competencies, and conditions of learning (Nizkodubov et. al., 2015; Shumaker, 2010).

2.3 Post Method Approach

2.3.1 Background

Whereas much research on EFL language teaching has been focused on finding the most successful teaching method, Kumaravadivelu (2003) differs by proposing a "post method pedagogy". Language teaching is studied not only through the analyses of methods but mostly through the ideological and pedagogical perspectives behind language instruction. The pedagogical parameters supporting the Post Method Approach are *particularity*, *practicality*, and *possibility*.

2.3.2 Post Method Approach and Teaching

According to Kumaravadivelu (2003), the guiding principles related to L2 learning and teaching are called *macro strategies*. A macro strategy is a broad guideline referring to what teachers can generate based on their specific teaching context or classroom techniques. Due to their relevance in our study, the ten macro strategies are described in Table 1 below:

Table 1

Macrostrategies for language teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2013: 39-40):

-
- (a) *Maximize learning opportunities*: This refers to creating and utilizing learning opportunities to their highest potential. This process also refers to the role of teachers when managing their teaching acts as mediators of learning acts.
 - (b) *Minimize perceptual mismatches*: This highlights the potential perceptual mismatches between intentions and interpretations of the learner, the teacher, and the teacher educator.
 - (c) *Facilitate negotiated interaction*: It refers to a meaningful classroom interaction between learner-learner and learner-teacher.
 - (d) *Promote learner autonomy*: This helps learners to know how to learn by giving them the means to self-direct and self-monitor their learning.
 - (e) *Foster language awareness*: This draws learners' attention to the properties of L2, increasing the degree of explicitness required to promote L2 learning.
 - (f) *Activate intuitive heuristics*: This highlights the importance of providing rich textual data so that learners can infer and internalize underlying rules governing grammatical usage and communicative use.
 - (g) *Contextualize linguistic input*: This means showing students how language usage and use are shaped by linguistic, extra-linguistic, situational, and other situational contexts.
 - (h) *Integrate language skills*: This refers to integrating the four linguistic skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), which are traditionally studied in isolation.
 - (i) *Ensure social relevance*: This refers to the need for teachers to be in contact with a societal, political, economic, and educational environment in which L2 learning and teaching occur.
 - (j) *Raise cultural consciousness*: This emphasizes the need to treat learners as cultural informants so that they can be engaged in the process of classroom participation, putting a premium on their power/knowledge.
-

Although the three theoretical approaches described so far support our design and implementation process, L2 learners' *motivation* is a crucial concept in order to characterize our participants and interpret their subsequent perceptions. A brief description of Dörnyei's (2009) L2 learner's motivation system is the last part of this section.

2.4 Motivation

According to one of the leading proponents of L2 motivation studies, Dörnyei (2009) describes three dimensions of the L2 learner's motivation system: the ideal L2 self, the ought-to self, and the L2 learning experience. The ideal L2 self represents the ideal image an L2 learner would like to have in the future, as well as the learner's positive attitude towards the L2 speakers and community. For instance, an L2 learner imagines him or herself, interacting and communicating with international friends using the L2 fluently. On the other hand, the ought-to self refers to the attributes (obligations, responsibilities, and perceived duties) that an L2 learner possesses to meet expectations and to avoid adverse outcomes. For example, an L2 learner wants to please their family, teacher or boss with their L2 language fluency. In other words, what motivates the ought-to L2 self's learning is meeting the expectations of others. Finally, the L2 learning experience dimension refers to the influence of the immediate learning environment and experience, such as the curriculum, the L2 teacher, the peer group, and the teaching materials. It follows then that the adequate environment or situation improves learners' attitudes towards L2 learning.

2.5 Objectives and research questions

The main objective of this research is to explore the students' perceptions of the pilot program's model for their L2 learning, as well as their self-perceptions as language

learners while they participate in the pilot program at Universidad Metropolitana de Ciencias de la Educación (UMCE) in Santiago, Chile.

2.5.1 Specific objectives

1. To characterize the participant students in terms of L2 learner's motivation;
2. To analyze learners' perceptions towards L2 learning under the proposed model;
3. To analyze learners' self-perceived impact of the model in their learning process.

2.5.2 Research Questions

1. What are the participating students' L2 learner motivation profiles that may inform their perceptions of the model, as well as their self-perceptions?
2. Which theoretical principles appear to be more saliently perceived by learners?
3. How do students evaluate their learning experience under this principle-based model?
4. How do these learning experiences impact their self-perceived learning process?

3. The Pilot's Pre-Implementation Process

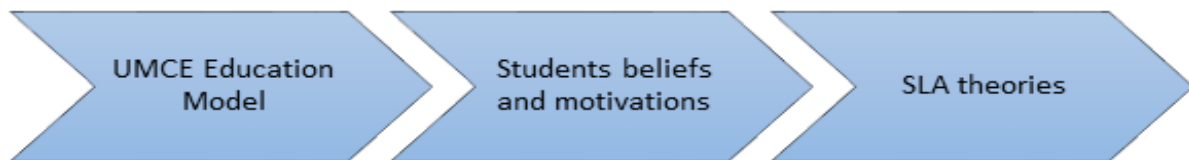
Universidad Metropolitana de Ciencias de la Educación (UMCE) is a teacher training university created in 1981 (UMCE, 2019). During the last four decades, there have been several attempts to change the institutional curriculum, and the latest one - now in its final stage of implementation - has been the most radical in curricular innovation. As an essential part of this innovation, a pilot study was designed in order to evaluate the possibility of developing a second language program across all pedagogy programs in the university, non-existent until the creation of this pilot. Since L2

learners and the creation of a meaningful program for them were the pillars of this pilot, the first step was to collect data that would inform the curricular design.

The initial phase of this process was to adopt the tenets of a philosophical and epistemological nature in education studies as conceived by UMCE, the core of which would be the engine for curriculum design. In this phase, the major themes for the course units were created. The next step consisted of the collection of diagnostic information. During the second semester of 2016, a sample of 200 students took a diagnostic test that included the question, "Why do you want to learn English?" The answers were then analyzed against Dörnyei's (2009) theory of motivation. The results revealed that most students declared that their motivation for studying English was to "communicate with people in a globalized world." Although the figures for instrumental motivation were high, self-regulation appeared quite often. Ultimately, these results were crucial to justify the need to develop a context-based second language program whose main objectives were to develop communicative skills among learners rather than replicate unsuccessful attempts to implement ready-made ESP programs that might not guarantee success in L2 communicative competence. Figure 1 below illustrates the three core elements underlying our proposed curricular design orientation.

Figure 1

Curricular Design Orientation: Core elements considered



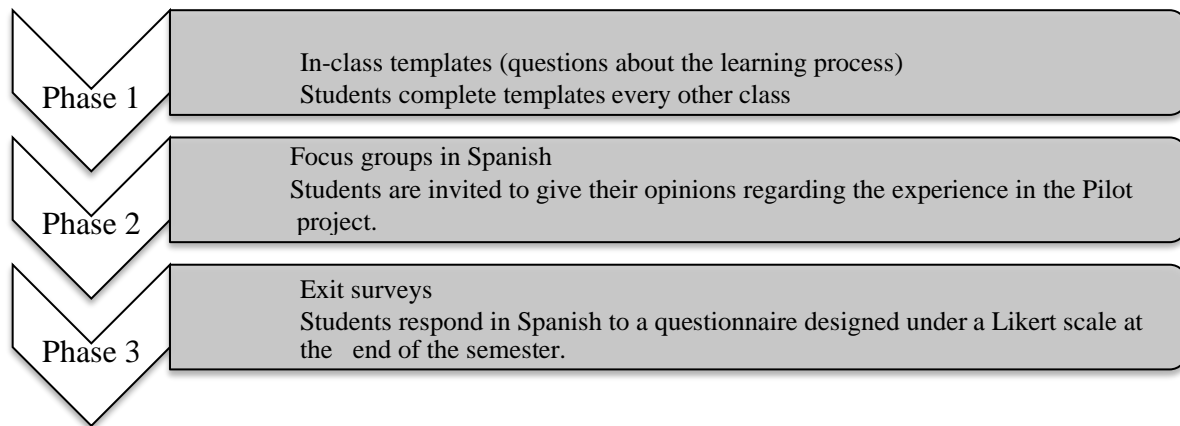
3. Methodology

The research is a longitudinal case study that explores the students' perceptions of the model, informs its practice and implementation process, and explores students'

perception of their learning process. The participants of this study were nearly ($n=120$) university students from different cohorts and programs at UMCE who enrolled voluntarily in our English courses. We adopted a mixed-method approach of a sequential type, collecting both qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell, 2009). The course began in March 2017, and it is still an ongoing study at the time of writing. The study comprised three major phases, which were essential data sources used to inform the curriculum design and teaching strategies (see Figure 2):

Figure 2

Project phases



Note. The data collection shows the process of students' perceptions of the principle-based teaching approach and their perceived impact on learning.

As Figure 2 shows, the first phase consisted of creating and implementing templates for students to complete with questions that promoted metacognition about their language learning process. Additionally, these templates allowed us to understand how students were feeling in each class. In the second phase, we conducted focus groups in three of the courses taught during the first semester of 2018. Finally, the third phase consisted of analyzing exit surveys implemented during the last class week of two class periods. The following table presents the number of templates, focus groups, and exit surveys collected for this study, which amount to 810, 3, and 34, respectively.

Table 2

Sample summary

Courses	Number of templates	Focus group	Number of focus groups	Exit Survey
English 1	248	English 1	1	4
English 2	300	English 2	1	17
English 3	174	English 3	1	7
English 4	88	English 4	0	6
Total	810		3	34

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Data source: In-class templates

A one-sheet template was designed to collect information about how students were learning and feeling after each class. The design considered metacognitive questions, such as "What did you learn today?", "What did you find hard to understand?" "What material was used in class?" among others. The template also included a small self-assessment rubric that measured learning strategies used in class: dictionary use, asking questions, registering new words, and others. Students took around seven minutes to fill out the templates each time.

4.1.2 Template Results

The content analysis of these templates revealed the spontaneous emergence of the most salient aspects of the approach implemented. Discussions, interviews and oral presentations were reported as critical social activities performed in class, which agrees with Aimin's (2013) findings. As for the appraisal of these activities, participants found interviews and oral presentations user-friendly but challenging. Regarding the

use of course material, students perceived it as useful and meaningful, which validates it following Kumaravadivelu's (2003) macro strategies.

To implement the principles of Zone of Proximal Development, mediation and regulation, and meaningful learning, we made sure we moved away from the typical teacher-centered classroom environment: relying on a textbook and the board or ICTs, such as a course platform or PPT presentation. Instead, we focused on creating a classroom experience in which the students were presented with learning opportunities that would encourage them to navigate in meaningful interaction supported both by class material and peer or teacher during the class. The templates' content analysis revealed a positive attitude towards the way teachers mediated learning in class, whether by promoting student-student interaction and regulating activities using the target language or by translanguaging or engaging individual students and groups into cognitive and physical activities during class.

Overall, all aspects of the principles adopted were, to some extent, present in the students' templates. However, what was found to be more salient was their capacity to self-direct their learning process; that is, they were able to identify aspects they deemed absent in their class but still necessary for their perceived second language acquisition. Some of these aspects were cognitive strategies that involved matching images to oral descriptions and difficulties in attaining target sounds.

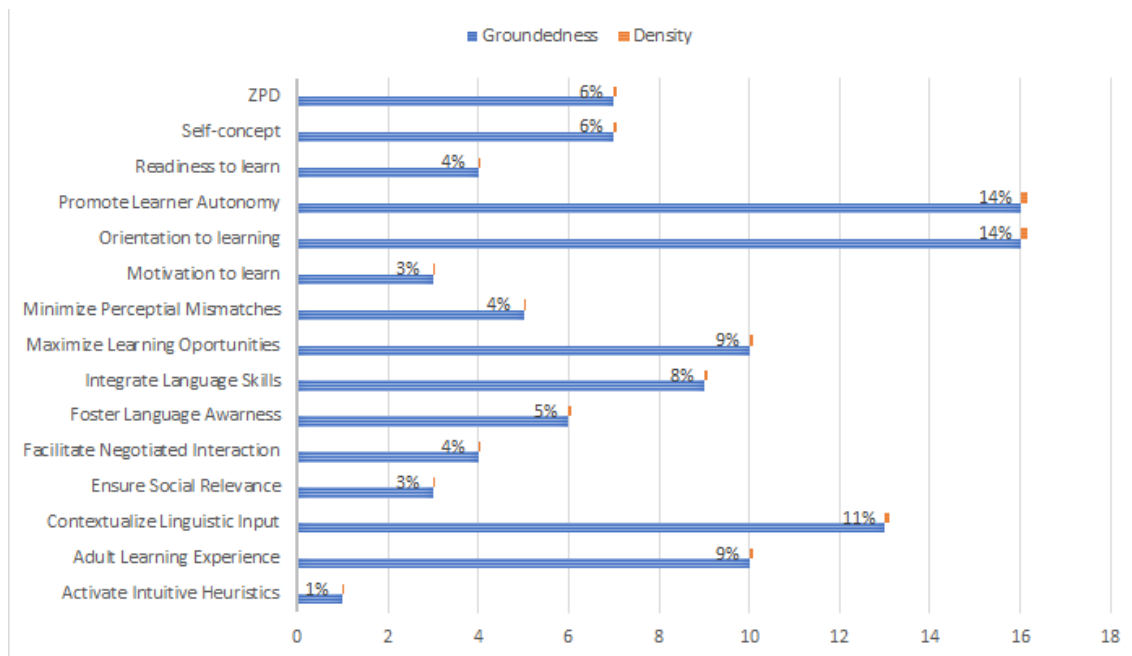
4.2 Focus group results and discussions

To answer our second research question, in this phase of the study, we wanted to understand what principles were perceived as the most helpful by students. The process consisted of creating questions to elicit spontaneous answers and narratives and then analyzing the data with Atlas ti software. Content analysis was conducted against core categories that helped us identify the impact of the strategies used in the students' learning process. For clarity and emphasis purposes, principles mentioned in the focus groups will be presented in italics.

Figure 3 below shows that *orientation to learning and promotion of learner autonomy* (Knowles, 1984) are the highest categories identified as codes in students' narratives, showing that the participants considered these principles the most helpful for their learning process. Overall, participants considered that the teaching approach helped them understand contents and structures easily by considering *previous knowledge* and *scaffolding* as a strategy to model situations to learn fast.

Figure 3

Focus groups – Conceptual categories



Note. Focus Group Content Analysis.

As can be seen from the figure, the principles *contextualize linguistic input and maximize learning opportunities* (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) is the second-highest category cluster coded. The following excerpts show the participants' identification of learning activities, which maximized their learning opportunities.

... *“estamos viendo distintos tópicos que en realidad uno aprende mucho de esa manera más global... participant 1*
(*we are studying different topics so that you can learn a lot in a more general way*)

...*“por ejemplo, esta clase está focalizada más a la comprensión eso es súper bueno porque al final el aprendizaje del inglés es equilibrado”... participant 2*
(*...“for example, this class was more focused on comprehension, that was very good because learning is more balanced in the end”*)

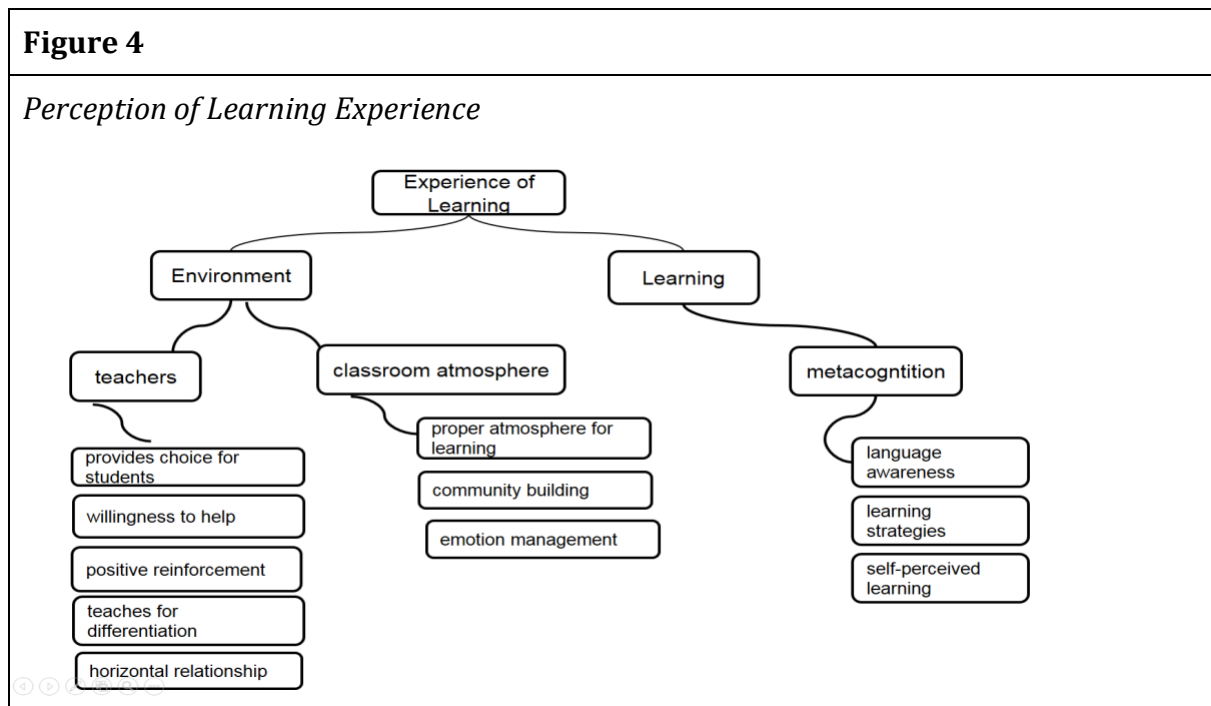
Foster[ing] language awareness (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) is also another important principle that is positively appraised by learners. The participants noticed that they were able to understand specific ideas through the context; as an example, they reported that they were now more conscious of poor translations when watching movies. When it came to *facilitating negotiated interaction*, most of the participants appreciated how classes were implemented; they highlighted that the activities and tasks facilitated interaction among peers and teachers. This particular finding shows that the designed activities were not only aligned with Kumaravadivelu’s third macrostrategy, but also that students perceived the implementation of such a macrostrategy. On the other hand, *promoting learner autonomy* was also salient. In particular, such autonomous work consisted of completing some Moodle platform activities, whose main objective was to reinforce the concepts presented in class.

In terms of sociocultural theory (Aimin, 2013), 14% of students reported that *collaborative work* was important. This collaborative work gave them the chance to interact and negotiate meaning when using the target language throughout the activities implemented in class. The participants also considered feedback given by teachers and peers as crucial when learning the L2. Finally, one of the aspects participants highlighted was the *integration of language skills* in the class design and implementation. They felt confident when doing tasks and showed a positive attitude towards them. An additional principle was raising cultural awareness (Kumaravadivelu, 2003), as the participants expressed that during this process, they

were able to value their own culture and appreciate the culture of others, which they considered necessary when learning a foreign language.

4.2.1 Perception of Learning Experience

To answer our third research question of how the experience of learning English related to their self-perceived learning process, we analyzed the data against Dörnyei's (2009) conceptualizations of motivation, precisely the third element: *learning experience as a component of L2 self-concept*. The analysis revealed a positive appraisal of their learning experience; students perceived aspects of the environment and learning to be the most critical factors that positively affected their learning. The elements that were more salient and more frequently reported were the following: teachers as active promoters of learning and the class being a safe space for learning. Figure 4 below highlights the major themes, codes, and categories that emerged in the students' narratives.



Note. The figure shows the major themes, codes, and categories in students' narratives.

The implementation of the approach allowed students to enhance their understanding of how they were learning English. They became more conscious of specific aspects of their learning that had improved and of those that still needed improvement. They also valued the atmosphere and the social relations promoted by the strategies used by the teachers. The material was also assessed as an essential element that aided their learning, as they felt a cultural connection with the materials. They also perceived the topics discussed as academically relevant and crucial to the development of their language skills.

4.2 Exit Survey Results

The exit survey included five areas: methodology, expectations, learning, attitude towards the language, and metacognition. Each area will be shown separately in its table, starting with methodology:

Table 3

Methodology

Methodology	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
1. The methodology used in class was more innovative than the one used in other English courses.	31	3	0
2. The strategies used by the teacher helped me to learn English.	31	2	0
3. The learning material (booklet) helped me to learn English.	29	5	0

4. The supplementary material (posters, markers, lollypop sticks, etc..) helped me learn English.	25	9	0
---	----	---	---

As seen in Table 3, 31 out of 34 participants agree on a new methodology to learn English. They also agree with the use of meaningful strategies applied in class when learning English. In terms of course materials, 29 out of 34 students agree on the use of a booklet, as it helped them to learn in class. Finally, 25 out of 34 agree on the use of extra course materials in the learning process.

Table 4

Expectations

Expectations	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
1. I feel able to speak English in class.	28	6	0
2. I understand the teacher when he/she speaks English.	33	1	0
3. I feel able to express ideas in English when writing.	25	8	1
4. I understand when I read in English.	30	4	0

Table 4 shows that 28 out of 34 of the participants feel that they can speak English in class. Thirty-three of them say that they can understand the teacher when speaking English. Similarly, 25 out of the total number of participants can express their ideas when writing in English. Finally, 30 of them can understand when reading in English.

Table 5

Learning

Learning	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
1. I felt confident when doing activities in class.	29	5	0
2. The class activities motivated me to learn.	33	1	0
3. The class activities helped me to understand English-language culture better.	25	7	0
4. The class activities helped me to understand my culture better.	22	11	1

Table 5 shows that 29 out of 34 are confident when doing the activities in class. Thirty-three of them agree with the use of these activities in class and say that they motivate them to learn English. Regarding culture, 25 of the participants agree with the use of these activities, because they help them to appreciate the English-language culture better. Finally, 22 of them agree with the use of these activities as they help them appreciate their own culture.

Table 6

Attitude towards the language

Attitude towards language	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
1. I like English better now.	28	6	0

2. Now I am more aware of the use of English in my daily life.	27	7	0
3. Now I think English is not as easy as I thought.	20	14	0

Table 6 indicates that 28 out of 34 of the participants say that they like English. Twenty-seven of them say that they have become more aware of the use of English in their daily life. Finally, 20 of them think English is not as difficult as they thought before taking the course.

Table 7

Metacognition

Metacognition	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
1. I feel I know more than before.	33	1	0
2. I feel that I can communicate better.	26	8	0
3. I know more words in English.	31	3	0
4. I still have a lot to learn.	29	4	0
5. I feel I need more help with grammar.	26	7	1
6. I feel I need more help with pronunciation.	27	7	0
7. I cannot express myself in class because I feel embarrassed to speak.	5	8	21
8. I cannot express myself in class because I do not know-how.	4	8	22

As Table 7 shows, 33 out of 34 of the participants report that they know more English than they did before. 29 out of 34 say that they can pronounce it better. Similarly, 31 reports knowing more English words, while 29 think they still have plenty to learn. In terms of grammar, 26 out of 34 agree with the use of grammar to learn more. One of them argues that grammar is not essential in their learning process. 27 out of 34 report they need more help when pronouncing some words in English. Finally, 21 participants report feeling confident when speaking in English in class, whereas 22 express that they can speak in English in class because they know how to do it t.

A closer analysis of the exit survey's sections revealed that most of the participants of this study found that the *methodology*, strategies, and booklet were different in comparison with the other English courses they had enrolled before. This perception may be readily attributed to the use of the study's principles emerging from adult learning theory (Knowles, 1984), sociocultural theory (Aimin, 2013) and the ten macrostrategies for language teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2003), which were considered when designing and implementing both class handouts and teaching strategies. In the expectations section, the survey also revealed that most of the participants were confident when speaking and writing English in class. This confidence is likely to have occurred because of the use of three of Kumaravadivelu's (2003) macrostrategies: maximize learning opportunities, facilitate negotiated interaction, and integrate language skills.

Concerning the *learning* section of the survey, it revealed that the participants appreciated the importance of their own culture when learning the target language. This perception may have resulted from the use of two macrostrategies: contextualize linguistic input and raise cultural awareness (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Regarding the dimension of *attitude towards the language*, the participants reported a positive attitude and found English easier than it had been in the previous courses they had taken. This positive attitude may have been so because of the use of three macrostrategies: foster language awareness, minimize mismatches (Kumaravadivelu,

2003) and adult learning theory (Knowles, 1984) when designing and implementing the program.

Finally, the *exit survey's metacognition* section showed that the majority of the participants of this study felt confident when using the target language in class when speaking. This confidence correlates with the principles of adult learning theory (Knowles, 1984). It is also likely that such confidence be the result of the sociocultural theory principles (Aimin, 2013) and the ten macrostrategies for language teaching established by Kumaravadivelu, which were all reflected through the material designed for the class.

5. Limitations

Despite its positive results, this study has some limitations that need to be considered if the study were to be replicated. One of the limitations was that templates did not always elicit the expected information. Although several adjustments were made to improve the instrument, some students still wrote something different from what we were expecting. Such mismatch may have probably been due to the class time constraints or the automaticity of filling them out time and time again. In any case, they still provided us with valuable ongoing information regarding their learning process. Newer versions of the template would need to consider students' perception of intercultural awareness since we could only analyze its impact with the exit survey.

Besides, even though the implementation process and data collection revealed a positive appraisal and evaluation of the strategies and the learning material and teaching approach used, one aspect that should be considered is the validity period of the learning principles chosen for the study. This claim means that while these principles are informative and much better than the blind adoption of theoretical models, what should be strived for is searching for recent and state-of-the-art findings in second language acquisition theory that may further strengthen the proposed model.

This endeavor would avoid the exclusive - and perhaps somewhat limited - reliance on sets of principles stemming from trendy teaching approaches or models.

Finally, since this is a context-based study, results are not to be taken on general grounds; every institution should find the learning or teaching principles that best suit the context of their students and their specific needs. Still, the pre-implementation phase and the instruments used as data sources may be helpful for institutions in a similar ELT curricular innovation process.

6. Conclusions

The main objective of this longitudinal study's was to explore students' perceptions of an innovative context-based approach to ELT. It examined students' learning experience as well as their self-perceptions as L2 learners. The innovation was given by the adoption of a variety of pedagogical principles stemming from Cultural Theory (Aimin, 2013), Adult Learning Theory (Knowles, 1984) and Post Method Approach (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). After a pre-implementation phase, data collected from class templates, focus groups and exit surveys revealed a positive appraisal of all the activities implemented under this principle-based approach to ELT. Students reported that the methodology and material used in class helped them to learn and identify gaps in their learning process. They also valued the opportunities to experience a different, more engaging, meaningful, and safer learning environment, which was reflected in their feeling confident in class when producing the foreign language.

As English teachers, implementing this curricular innovation by teaching under these principles made us reflect on the importance of ensuring a safe environment and a more natural approach to acquiring a second language. It was quite motivating for both teachers and students to learn English by having the opportunity to teach and learn, by appreciating the cultural differences, by raising cultural awareness, and by taking advantage of the opportunities provided in class for self-direction and autonomy.

From an institutional viewpoint, designing a generic competence under this model has provided us with invaluable insights on the importance of rigorous data collection to inform the implementation process of a new English language program. Several institutions have adopted new trends to innovate their syllabus, such as the integrated language skills approach. However, few have opted for examining their community to find a way to incorporate all the stakeholders involved during the creation and implementation process. Further research should ultimately tackle how an English program may contribute to developing student agency and teacher identity.

References

- Aimin, L. (2013). The study of second language acquisition under sociocultural theory. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 1(5), 162–167.
- Arriagada, R. O. (n.d.). Historia de la UMCE. Retrieved from <http://www.umce.cl/index.php/universidad/institucionalidad/historia>.
- Bañados, E. (2006). A blended-learning pedagogical model for teaching and learning EFL successfully through an online interactive multimedia environment. *CALICO Journal*, 23(3), 532–550.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. New Delhi: Sage.
- Deveci, T. (2007). Andragogical and pedagogical orientations of adult learners learning English as a foreign language. *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*, 21(3-4), 16–28.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (2009). *Motivation, Language Identity, and the L2 Self*. Buffalo, NY: Multilingual Matters.
- Feryok, A. (2013). Teaching for learner autonomy: The teacher's role and sociocultural theory. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 7(3), 213–225.
- Gagné, N., & Parks, S. (2013). Cooperative learning tasks in a Grade 6 intensive ESL class: Role of scaffolding. *Language Teaching Research*, 17(2), 188–209.
- Hazratzad, A. & Gheitanchian, M. (2009). *EFL Teachers' Attitudes Towards Post Method Pedagogy and their Students' Achievement*. Proceedings of the 10th METU ELT Convention.

Knowles, M. S. (1984). *Andragogy in Action: Applying Modern Principles of Adult Education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2003). *Beyond Methods Macrostrategies for Language Teaching*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Lantolf, J. P., & Thorne, S. L. (2006). Sociocultural theory and second language learning. In B. VanPatten & J. Williams (Eds.), *Theories in Second Language Acquisition: An Introduction* (pp. 201–224). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Lantolf, J. P. (2007). Sociocultural theory: A unified approach to L2 learning and teaching. In J. Cummins & C. Davison (Eds.), *International Handbook of English Language Teaching* (pp. 692-701). New York: Springer.

Lantolf, J., Thorne, S. L., & Poehner, M. (2015). Sociocultural theory and second language development. In B. Van Patten & J. Williams (Eds.), *Theories in Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 207-226). New York: Routledge.

Martinic, R., Urzúa, S., Úbeda, R., y Aranda, R. (2019). Evaluación de proceso de un programa universitario de inglés mediante Blended Learning. RIED. Revista Iberoamericana de Educación a Distancia, 22(2), pp. 305-324. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5944/ried.22.2.23124>

Nizkodubov, G. A., & Evseeva, A. M. (2015). Planning and implementation of the process aimed at teaching English to adult learners. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(2), 643.

Panhwar, A. H., Ansari, S., & Ansari, K. (2016). Sociocultural theory and its role in the development of language pedagogy. *Advances in Languages and Literary Studies*, 7(6), 183-188.

Ranjbar, N. & Ghonsooly, B. (2017). Peer scaffolding behaviors emerging in revising a written task: A microgenetic analysis. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 5(2), 75-90.

Shabani, K. (2016). Applications of Vygotsky's sociocultural approach for teachers' professional development. *Cogent Education*, 3(1).

Shabani, K., Khatib, M., Ebadi, S. (2010). Vygotsky's zone of proximal development: Instructional implications and teachers' professional development. *English Language Teaching*. Vol. 3, No.4. 237-248.

Shumaker, M. G. (2010). *Learning Strategy Preferences in an Intensive English Program* (pp. 1–5).

Vygotsky, L. (1986). *Thought and Language*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Wang, V. C. X., & Storey, V. A. (2015). Andragogy and teaching English as a foreign language in China. *The Reference Librarian*, 56(4), 295–314.