

Elena Isabel Calderón-Delgado; RouslyEedyahAtencio-González; Patricio Luis Dávila-Herrería
Juan Carlos Dávila-Herrería

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Impact of virtuality on language teaching and learning. A pedagogical retrospective

Impacto de la virtualidad en la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de idiomas. Una retrospectiva pedagógica

Elena Isabel Calderón-Delgado
helen_calderon21@yahoo.com
Universidad Central del Ecuador, Quito, Pichincha
Ecuador
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5326-3088>

RouslyEedyahAtencio-González
rously.atencio@upacifico.com
Universidad del Pacifico, Guayaquil, Guayas
Ecuador
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6845-1631>

Patricio LuisDávila-Herrería
pldavila@uce.edu.ec
Universidad Central del Ecuador, Quito, Pichincha
Ecuador
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9617-1784>

JuanCarlosDávila-Herrería
dhjc2528@gmail.com
Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador, Quito, Pichincha
Ecuador
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3424-8971>

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Elena Isabel Calderón-DeIgado; RouslyEedyahAtencio-González; Patricio Luis Dávila-Herrería
Juan Carlos Dávila-Herrería

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study focused on analyzing the impact of virtuality on language teaching and learning from a retrospective pedagogical point of view. The methodology was based on a quantitative approach under a non-experimental field perspective. A survey was applied to 30 students and 10 teachers belonging to San José La Salle Educational Unit, who made up the study sample. Among the results, the respondents considered virtuality as a positive aspect for the language teaching and learning process, especially in times of pandemic, since it gave rise to an active pedagogical process that prevented the interruption of the training process; in addition, it awakened the motivation of all towards the use of ICTs from a pedagogical approach through the use of social networks and the use of the target language.

Descriptors: Impact; virtuality; language teaching and learning. (UNESCO Thesaurus).

RESUMEN

En este estudio se planteó como propósito analizar el impacto de la virtualidad en la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de idiomas desde una visión retrospectiva pedagógica. Como metodología se empleó el enfoque cuantitativo bajo una perspectiva no experimental de campo. Asimismo, se aplicó una encuesta a 30 estudiantes y 10 docentes de la Unidad Educativa San José La Salle, quienes conformaron la muestra del estudio. Entre los resultados, los encuestados consideraron la virtualidad como un aspecto positivo para el proceso de enseñanza y el aprendizaje de un idioma sobre todo en tiempos de pandemia, ya que dio lugar a un proceso pedagógico activo que impidió interrumpir el proceso de formación; además, despertó la motivación de todos hacia el uso de las TIC desde un enfoque pedagógico mediante el uso de las redes sociales y el empleo del idioma meta.

Descriptores: Impacto; virtualidad; enseñanza y aprendizaje de un idioma. (Tesauro UNESCO).

Elena Isabel Calderón-DeIgado; RouslyEedyahAtencio-González; Patricio Luis Dávila-Herrería
Juan Carlos Dávila-Herrería

INTRODUCCIÓN

Nowadays, when analyzing the impact of virtuality on language teaching and learning from a retrospective pedagogical point of view, we may affirm that this experience has brought some difficulties, challenges, fear of change and also, motivation for many teachers and students in the educational field, as they have had to move away from the traditional approach to adapt to a new educational process based on the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). To this respect, (Laferrière& Gervais, 2008) stated that traditional teaching has been part of teachers' practices despite the current use of technology required. For this reason, teachers who wish to update their professional performance must face many challenges that hinder the application of technological tools in the education of students. Such situation leads teachers to train themselves in the pedagogical use of ICT in order to awaken the interest of their students in the use of technological tools from a didactic perspective. The same occurs within language teaching, where teachers have expressed their objections against virtuality, because they have felt that they have not been sufficiently prepared to face the use of the new tools in their classes. (Espitia, & Clavijo, 2011) agree with this statement and express that:

Implementing technological tools in EFL classes has not been easy for language teachers, they often struggle to make class activities consistent with the curriculum, policies, students' needs and likes and lately, with computer and internet-based ICTs. The problem regularly is that EFL teachers do not possess the pedagogical and technological knowledge to use technological tools to foster communication and interaction among students to learn collaboratively. (P. 29)

Elena Isabel Calderón-DeIgado; RouslyEedyahAtencio-González; Patricio Luis Dávila-Herrería
Juan Carlos Dávila-Herrería

Consequently, when ICT appeared as an important part of the pedagogical process, university and school principals, as responsible for the management of their institutions, joined efforts together with the ministries of education, in order to update the practice of teachers on the didactic use of technologies through courses, workshops and also, provision of materials, laboratories and equipment to facilitate the educational transformation. About this reality, (Fredes & Espinoza, 2018, p. 11) stated that “the compatibility between use and users and the ability to take advantage of computers for training depends on the infrastructure, resources, and context characteristics”. This is why many institutions received the necessary resources to equip staff with the right tools to start working with technology. However, it was noticed that not all schools and universities have had the opportunity to obtain these resources due to different factors: economic reasons, remote location, among others. In spite of this, most of them have had to train themselves to be up to date, especially at the time of the pandemic, since all professors and students have needed to keep in touch through the use of technologies to avoid interruption of their training.

This reality has led teachers to reflect on each experience and to consider it as a novel action conducive to improving the educational process, particularly when teaching a language. (Quesada, 2005a, p. 1) exposed that “for educators reflection involves “critical thinking” about past experiences or current experiences that occur or are occurring in classroom settings”. Thus, in addition to the aforementioned impacts related to fear, defiance and others, reflection may be considered another relevant impact that has allowed teachers to analyze and improve their teaching process over time.

On the other hand, virtuality has also arisen as a solution for the education of workers with the emergence of distance education, since it has been a great alternative for many

Elena Isabel Calderón-DeIgado; RouslyEedyahAtencio-González; Patricio Luis Dávila-Herrería
Juan Carlos Dávila-Herrería

people who have continued their studies while working. Concerning this, (Snoussi& Radwan, 2020) affirmed the following:

Distance E-Learning (DEL) appeared as a solution to several obstacles that prevent a student from physically attending the classroom. It is suitable for those having work obligations, family constraints, and students who lack a convenient location to access the classes. Lately, DEL has emerged as a savior of the educational process in times of global crises like pandemics. (p. 254)

Considering the above, distance education may be pondered as an excellent option at present, since it will be the appropriate pedagogical process for any of the problems that may arise in the future. Subsequently, teachers must develop technological skills that allow them to keep up with the tools that today's world offers them; for example, web 2.0. In this regard, (Alejandro, 2021) stated that:

...The good use of web 2.0 tools will provide the teacher with the necessary methodologies to induce the transformation of knowledge, promote the development of skills and attitudes so that the learner can get used to his own life project within a contemporary society. The direct beneficiaries are the teachers who will update their knowledge in the technological tools and the students who will sustain their knowledge under a new constructivist model. (p. 21)

Likewise, (Quesada, 2005b, p. 2) adds that “web-based learning is becoming an even more powerful interactive source that increases learners' knowledge and that guarantees quantity and quality of language input and output”.

To achieve the aforementioned, both teachers and students must be committed to their teaching and learning process and show openness to the use of technology to discover more tools and methods that facilitate their pedagogical training over time, especially when studying a language. (Berns & Reyes, 2021) declared that:

Elena Isabel Calderón-DeIgado; RouslyEedyahAtencio-González; Patricio Luis Dávila-Herrería
Juan Carlos Dávila-Herrería

...Learning approaches such as explorative, experiential, constructive and collaborative learning need to be explored much more in future applications. Moreover, the purpose of such approaches must consist of providing learners with more versatile opportunities to interact with the virtual environment in order to foster the acquisition of new knowledge related to the target language and culture, as well as to encourage its application to real-world situations. (p. 168)

According to Berns & Reyes' view, interaction is necessary at the time of working with ICT, since it requires a cooperative action that gives rise to a communication that may be effective through the feedback. (Erkan, 2022, p. 55) stated that "an adequate amount of feedback will be giveaways for students helping them to learn and improve on their current competencies". This may be possible by means of group activities that foster the reciprocal action. Considering this (Castro, 2021) declared the following conception:

The adoption of technologies for teaching and learning is a collective task rather than an individual endeavor. Collectivity refers to the influence handled by other human actors, cultural rules, and artifacts that influence a successful adoption and integration at different levels of the institution. (p. 13)

Castro's statement reaffirms the crucial role of cooperative learning, as it facilitates the sharing of knowledge between teachers and learners when learning a language. (Wilson, & Lengeling, 2021) added that:

Our students managed to integrate technology into their studies as well as their personal lives, making connection with school, friends, family, and the outside world possible, while still maintaining their individuality. The journal responses show how students faced challenges such as learning new technology while dealing with limited access to wifi, computers, and cell phones to continue their education and work. (p. 1)

Elena Isabel Calderón-Delgado; RouslyEedyahAtencio-González; Patricio Luis Dávila-Herrería
Juan Carlos Dávila-Herrería

As described by (Wilson, & Lengeling, 2021), technology has brought benefits to education by facilitating contact between people wherever they are; however, the authors highlighted that learners have had to face difficulties such as the lack of connection, cell phones and computers at home, which have hindered the continuity of their learning process. These authors also exposed that:

Although there is much research about student voices, a search for similar findings related to student identity and the use of technology for remote learning during COVID-19 indicates that this is an area which needs more study. (p. 1)

Therefore, this research intends to analyze the impact of virtuality in language teaching and learning from a retrospective pedagogical point of view, since it has been part of different experiences where man has had to adapt to the new changes in the technological world considering favorable and unfavorable transformations; that is, mental, emotional, professional, individual and collective. Based on these aspects, motivation will be one of the main factors to be analyzed, since it has been an emotional aspect affected by the emergence of ICT, particularly in the process of teaching and learning languages. (Espinar & Ortega, 2015, p.126) asserted that “the idea of motivation is a recurring topic throughout the history of language teaching and is considered fundamental for achieving positive results in any task”. In consequence, we will know how ICT has influenced the motivation of the respondents, especially in the process of language teaching and learning.

Elena Isabel Calderón-DeIgado; RouslyEedyahAtencio-González; Patricio Luis Dávila-Herrería
Juan Carlos Dávila-Herrería

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this research was established in a quantitative approach from a non-experimental field perspective. The study sample consisted of 30 students and 10 teachers belonging to the San José La Salle Educational Unit. A survey was used to obtain the results. The instrument was based on the checklist and the Likert scale. Finally, for the analysis of the information, descriptive statistics were used to present the resulting data in graphs and tables.

RESULTS

In this section, a summary of the survey is shown in order to highlight the most relevant factors stated by the respondents. In this way, the results focus on virtuality, which was considered as a positive aspect for the language teaching and learning process, especially in times of pandemic, since it provided an active pedagogical initiative that impeded the interruption of the training process. On the other hand, teachers and students thought that it awakened everyone's motivation towards the use of ICTs from an educational perspective through the use of social networks and the use of the target language.

To begin with the significant points, the following is a summary of the teachers' opinions regarding virtuality as a positive or negative aspect, its impact on language teaching in times of pandemic and on teachers' motivation.

Elena Isabel Calderón-Delgado; RouslyEedyahAtencio-González; Patricio Luis Dávila-Herrería
 Juan Carlos Dávila-Herrería

Table 1.
 Virtuality as a positive or negative impact on the teaching process.

Teachers' opinions about the impact of virtuality on the teaching process.	Positive	Negative
	7	3

Source: Authors' elaboration based on the survey.

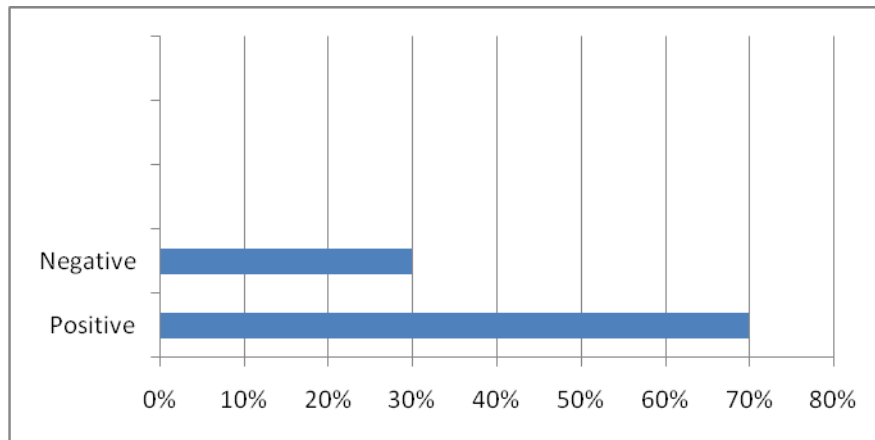


Figure 1. Virtuality as a positive or negative aspect.

Source: Authors' elaboration based on the survey.

As shown in Figure 1, 70% of the teachers affirmed that virtuality has been a positive factor for language teaching and 30% expressed that it has been negative. Although the result did not represent one hundred percent, most of them agreed on the positive impact, as they consider that, since their inception, ICTs have offered many tools that have favored the development of their competencies and those of their students.

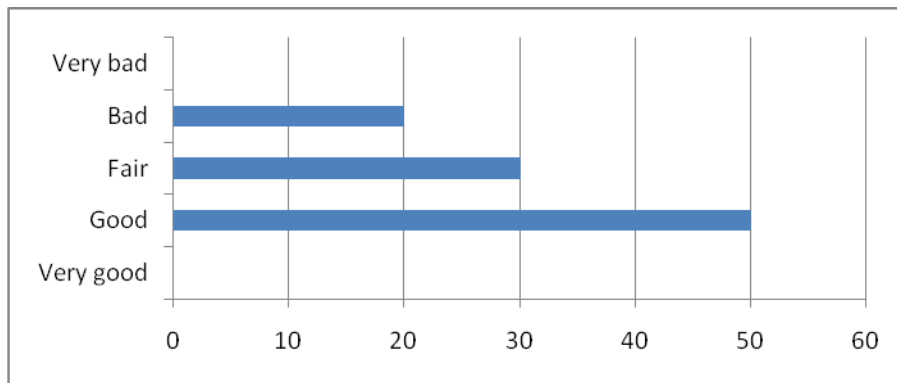
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 Juan Carlos Dávila-Herrería

Table 2.
 Impact of virtuality on Language teaching process in pandemic.

Teachers' opinions about the impact of virtuality on language teaching process in pandemic.	Very good	Good	Fair	Bad	Too bad
		5	3	2	

Source: Authors' elaboration based on the survey.

Figure 2.
 Impact of virtuality on language teaching process in pandemic.



Source: Authors' elaboration based on the survey.

As seen in Figure 2, 50% of the teachers stated that virtuality has had a good impact on language teaching in times of pandemic, while 30% considered it has been regular and 20% stated that it has been bad. There are differences in the results because 50% of the teachers had all the resources to carry out their classes, but 30% of them considered a regular impact because they had to move to other places to connect with their students and 20% of them considered it bad because they did not have any

Elena Isabel Calderón-Delgado; RouslyEedyahAtencio-González; Patricio Luis Dávila-Herrería
 Juan Carlos Dávila-Herrería

resources to communicate with the students, so it was difficult for them to continue with the classes without problems. Despite the situations described above, they said that virtuality prevented the interruption of classes. They also expressed that if all teachers had all the tools at home, virtuality would facilitate the language teaching process.

Table 3.
 Impact of virtuality on teachers' motivation.

Teachers' opinions about the impact of virtuality on their motivation	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
		5	3	2	

Source: Authors' elaboration based on the survey.

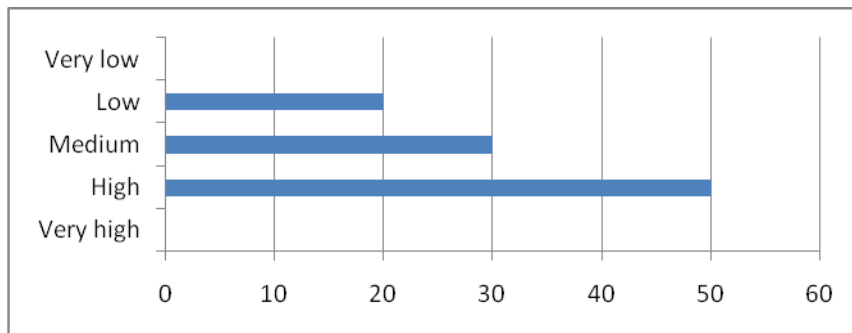


Figure 3. Impact of virtuality on teachers' motivation
Source: Authors' elaboration based on the survey.

As shown in Figure 3, 50% of the teachers stated that their motivation was high with virtuality, 30% maintained a medium motivation and 20% of them maintained a low motivation. These results are consistent with the figure 2, where we realized that teachers who used ICT without problems felt motivated and those who had difficulties

Elena Isabel Calderón-DeIgado; RouslyEedyahAtencio-González; Patricio Luis Dávila-Herrería
Juan Carlos Dávila-Herrería

showed medium or low motivation. This confirmed that when people experienced virtuality, it helped to keep their motivation high.

With respect to the learners, the following tables and figures summarize the opinions of the learners regarding their language learning process through virtuality.

Table 4.

Virtuality as a positive or negative impact on the learning process.

Students' opinions about the impact of virtuality on their learning process.	Positive	Negative
	18	12

Source: Authors' elaboration based on the survey.

Elena Isabel Calderón-DeIgado; RouslyEedyahAtencio-González; Patricio Luis Dávila-Herrería
 Juan Carlos Dávila-Herrería

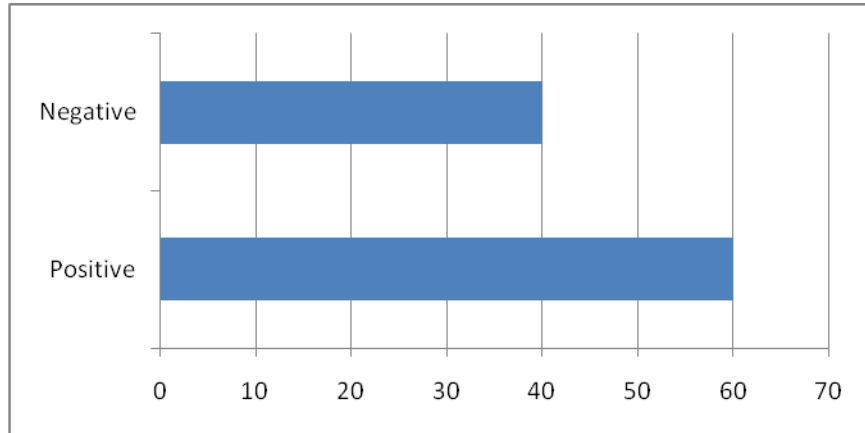


Figure 4. Virtuality as a positive or negative aspect.
Source: Authors' elaboration based on the survey.

Figure 4 indicates that 60% of the students considered virtuality as a positive factor for language teaching and 40% stated that it has been negative. They also agreed with the teachers that ICTs included many tools that benefited the development of their competencies.

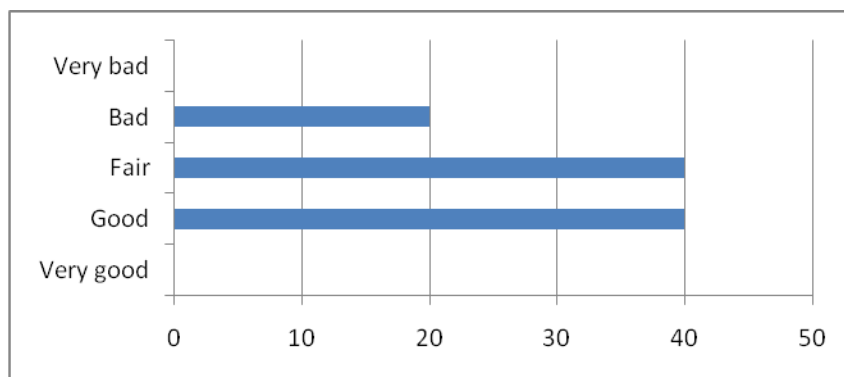
Table 5.
 Impact of virtuality on language learning process in pandemic.

Students' opinions about the impact of virtuality on language learning process in pandemic.	Very good	Good	Fair	Bad	Too bad
		12	12	6	

Source: Authors' elaboration based on the survey.

Elena Isabel Calderón-DeIgado; RouslyEedyahAtencio-González; Patricio Luis Dávila-Herrería
 Juan Carlos Dávila-Herrería

Figure 5.
 Impact of virtuality on language learning process in pandemic.



Source: Authors' elaboration based on the survey.

As noticed in Figure 5, 40% of the students considered that virtuality has had a good impact on language teaching in times of pandemic; in addition, 40% considered that the impact has been regular and 20% said it has been bad. In the case of the students, some of them had internet connection at home; others had to travel to other places to connect with their teachers and others did not have the resources to communicate with their teachers, so some of them dropped their classes. However, they agreed that virtuality would facilitate the language learning process when all the conditions were in place.

Table 6.
 Impact of virtuality on students' motivation.

Students' opinions about the impact of virtuality on their motivation.	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
	18		3		9

Elena Isabel Calderón-DeIgado; RouslyEedyahAtencio-González; Patricio Luis Dávila-Herrería
Juan Carlos Dávila-Herrería

Source: Authors' elaboration based on the survey.

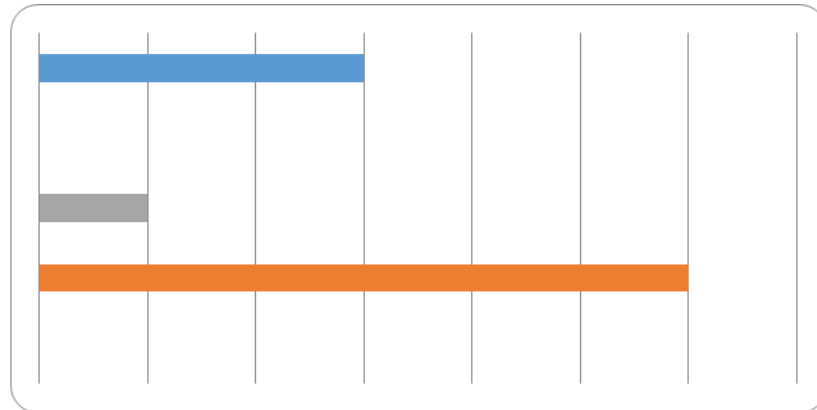


Figure 6. Impact of virtuality on students' motivation.

Source: Authors' elaboration based on the survey.

As shown in Figure 6, 60% of the students stated that their motivation was high with virtuality, 10% maintained medium motivation and 30% of them maintained very low motivation. Despite the fact that many students dropped their classes, they considered that virtuality was motivating because they could use social networks to communicate with others and express themselves in a target language. However, they thought that it was important to provide the entire population with internet connection so that people could easily connect for different purposes: classes, work, family interaction and others. As a summary, taking into account the previous experiences of language teachers and students from a pedagogical retrospective, virtuality has had a great impact, since it has been an adequate solution to face the problems of the world and to keep communicated with others, especially in the educational field. In addition, it has been a good alternative to practice a language through social networks. Therefore, it is important that governments address these realities and provide all communities with technological

Elena Isabel Calderón-DeIgado; RouslyEedyahAtencio-González; Patricio Luis Dávila-Herrería
Juan Carlos Dávila-Herrería

equipment that facilitates connections and keeps countries prepared to face difficult situations such as pandemics.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, after analyzing the impact of virtuality in language teaching and learning from a retrospective pedagogical view, we realized that most teachers (70%) and students (60%) considered virtuality as a positive aspect for language teaching and learning, specifically, in times of pandemic, since its purpose was focused on maintaining an active pedagogical process that avoided the interruption of the formative process. On the other hand, respondents stated that it awakened their motivation towards the use of ICT from a pedagogical perspective through the use of social networks and the practice of the target language.

Thus, reflecting on the emergence of ICTs and their impact on a language teaching and learning process, we may highlight that ICTs have been an excellent alternative for the practice of a language from the moment they appeared, because they have offered many different tools that may be easily adapted to the training action to give quality to the educational context.

FINANCING

Non- monetary.

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Elena Isabel Calderón-Delgado; RouslyEedyahAtencio-González; Patricio Luis Dávila-Herrería
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