

Having Fun and Teaching Learning English Outreach Project Evaluation UNAE Ecuador: A Quantitative Study in Virtual Education

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Abstract— This research evaluates the impact of the community outreach project called Having fun and teaching/learning English of the English teaching major (Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros PINE) at Universidad Nacional de Educación (UNAE). The project involved 800 children and was carried out in the 2021-2022 academic period. A quantitative methodology of data collection and analysis was used to evaluate the impact of the program. This evaluation assessed the perceptions of the children, student teachers from the PINE major, and their academic tutors. The research focuses on 1) children's language learning and skills development; 2) student teachers' professional development through the design implementation and didactic reflection; and 3) the impact of academic tutoring on professional teaching training. Based on the findings of this research, adjustments were made to the program to maximize English language teaching and learning in the virtual modality

Keywords— *evaluation, english, Ecuador, tutoring, outreach programs.*

I. INTRODUCTION

This article is a systematization of the experiences of the Having fun and teaching / learning English project, which has provided support to public schools in the teaching of English as a foreign language since 2017. The project has materialized through a pedagogical guidance plan to develop the language skills of students in public institutions.

The program provides online English sessions of 40 minutes two times a week. This modality made it possible to maximize the reach to children in several provinces of Ecuador. In fact, by being virtual, the program expanded to the entire national territory, benefiting 800 children each semester. On this occasion, the second and third semester PINE students participated in the two weekly sessions for nine weeks. There were three categories of children organized by age: 1) from 5 to 6, 2) from 7 to 9, and 3) from 10 to 12 years old.

The PINE students received weekly guidance from six academic tutors, who accompanied them in the process of designing their classes. In the process of teaching English, certain conditions should be created such as: strengthening of pedagogical knowledge and professional skills; moral and cultural values; the essence of the key concepts: "awareness, professional awareness, pedagogical awareness; the factors that promote their development; self-reflection, goal setting, and, mastery of diagnostic methods of self-assessment"[1]. Thus, the tutorials contributed to the construction of lesson plans with special attention to the articulation of content,

selection of teaching materials and age-appropriate communicative methodologies.

The objective of this research is to evaluate the impact of the community outreach project in mention, considering the didactic foundations: To whom? what? how? for what? and why? is teaching and learning done [2]. Based on these conceptions, this research assesses the professional development of the future teachers, who, using different methods, techniques and tools, tried to facilitate the learning of the participating children by understanding and responding to their needs.

Given that the project is expected to continue at UNAE University in the future, it is important to carry out the internal evaluation of the process from the voices of its members: the students of the PINE program, their academic tutors and the children who benefit from the program. Internal evaluation is aimed at determining the effectiveness and efficiency of educational programs for decision-making at all stages [3]. It focuses on contents, processes, as well as the roles of the members involved. It is designed to measure the active impact of teachers and their performance in the classroom, and this is possible especially when program developers take experiences into consideration in a reflective approach [4]. In the future, this research will allow decision making to the coordinators of this program or other similar ones about contents, organization, times, modalities, didactic processes, and tutoring in community outreach programs as a training tool for PINE students.

This research is aligned with quantitative methods through the collection and analysis of data obtained from surveys, in order to provide objective results discussed in this article, in response to the following questions:

- 1) To what extent did it contribute to the learning of the contents and linguistic development proposed for the three groups?
- 2) What aspects of teacher training were generated from the design, implementation and didactic reflection in the virtual modality?
- 3) What effects did academic tutoring have on teacher training?

II. METHOD

This research falls within a quantitative paradigm. As described by [5] this paradigm allows researchers to understand the problem and research questions through data

collected from a large sample of the population studied by analyzing the results through statistical processes.

Data were collected using two surveys that combined open-ended questions to identify participants' perceptions with Likert-scale questions to statistically quantify the data. According to [6] the survey is widely used because of its speed and efficiency. The information obtained was standardized by means of a questionnaire with the same instructions for all participants. This allowed for intragroup comparisons based on the research objectives, variables and sample.

The first survey was applied to 517 parents or legal guardians of the beneficiary children at the end of the program, using a battery of questions in Google Forms. For the specific purposes of this survey, a questionnaire was designed with variables such as: 1) participant's age group, 2) class schedule, 3) level of satisfaction, 4) characteristics of the learning environment, 5) activities proposed in relation to the children's interests, 6) activities proposed in relation to the children's needs, 7) professionalism of the PINE students, and 8) recommendations.

The second survey was applied to 87 PINE students from second and third semester, at the end of the design and implementation process of the virtual classes. This instrument was applied through Google Forms and focused on gathering information about the professional development processes for teaching English to children in the virtual environment and the advantages and challenges of tutoring as a teacher training tool. For the specific purposes of this second survey, a questionnaire was designed with variables such as: 1) sociodemographic data of the participants such as gender, cycle, age group with whom she worked, 2) level of English, 3) number of students who started and completed the course, 4) the contribution of tutoring to their teacher training specifically for working with children in virtual environments, 5) the development of language skills: speaking, listening, reading, writing, 6) methodologies used for linguistic development, 7) perception about the teaching process, 8) frequency of implementation of EFL teaching-learning principles, strategies, and activities, 9) pedagogical considerations for the selection of educational materials and resources, 10) contribution of teaching tutoring, 11) evaluation: strategies, techniques and instruments, and 12) recommendations given to the organizers and future PINE students of the program.

The processing, analysis and cross-referencing of the data was obtained through the triangulation and systematic coding of the categories studied to organize the results in response to the research objectives. In this sense, the report of the measurement of the 1) impact of the program on children's learning, 2) the development of teaching skills in teaching English in virtual environments, and 3) the impact of tutoring as a teacher training device was carried out.

III. RESULTS

Regarding the impact of the academic tutoring on the teacher training processes of the PINE students, it was identified that the greatest contribution was in aspects such as: the development of the English language, for example, by learning vocabulary and rules necessary for its teaching in the project. In addition, the tutoring contributed to the methodological knowledge of listening and speaking skills

with greater emphasis than reading and writing, due to the very nature of the project. Likewise, knowledge about teaching from a lexical model was generated and classroom management techniques, pedagogical tact and hospitality were emphasized. It was also identified that theatrical techniques for teaching English need to be used to a greater extent in future programs.

Upon categorizing the parents' responses, similarities were found between the suggestions given by the parents of group 1 and 2 to improve the program in two dimensions: the pedagogical dimension and the administrative or operational dimension. In the first case, parents recommend more strategies, use of materials and pedagogical tact according to the age of the children. In fact, some parents indicated that, it is necessary: "...the explanation of more related topics and the use of adequate material, "...use of better learning strategies", "...explanation in Spanish and English", "...greater empathy when working with the children since they are young". In the second case, parents recommend more class hours and face-to-face classes. In fact, the representatives suggest "...extending the classes to more months so that they learn about more topics".

Suggestions and recommendations aimed at improving the program were taken from 200 parents of beneficiaries in the 10-12 age group. The responses were classified and organized showing two approaches: the pedagogical approach and the administrative or operational approach. For the first approach, parents recommend the use of new strategies, the use of didactic materials, punctuality, more homework to be done at home and greater participation of children in class, as stated by some parents: "...inclusion of new methodological strategies for the development of classes", "...use of material to work before class since they are children and this will help them", "...greater punctuality for children to class", "increase in feedback activities in each session". In the second approach, parents most frequently recommend more class hours and categorizing groups according to the children's knowledge, as stated by some parents: "... increase the number of class hours and carry out outdoor activities, or camps, etc.", "continuity of the courses since it was very interesting for our children to share their knowledge", "... more connection time".

IV. CONCLUSIONS

This research allowed us to reach important conclusions divided into three different areas: 1) the efficiency of academic tutoring as a teacher training tool, 2) the development of professional competencies of PINE students, and 3) the linguistic development of the children benefiting from the English courses of the Having Fun and Teaching/Learning English outreach project.

First of all, the evaluation of the project's impact highlighted the need to strengthen the good tutoring practices adopted by PINE teachers, such as active listening to the needs and proposals of the PINE students. In addition, the importance of addressing everyday details such as communication management with parents through clear, concrete and professional texts; as well as the creation/selection of educational materials guided by principles of gender equity, sustainability, interculturality, inclusion, etc. In response to

the initial findings of this research, it is recommended to have a general meeting for the planning of logistical and didactic details adapted and made flexible to the particularities of each age group. In addition to the selection of contents by thematic blocks that contribute to the development of communicative skills from a playful approach. It was identified that students developed their knowledge and skills in different areas thanks to tutoring as an improvement tool for pedagogical and administrative aspects.

Secondly, in reference to the development of the basic and professional competencies of the PINE students, a growth and didactic development was evidenced in aspects such as: classroom management, selection of materials and educational resources from the playfulness and according to the age of the groups. The PINE students recommended that the outreach program be developed from the 4th cycle, since this is when they learn English didactics for children. This knowledge gives them more confidence for planning and implementing didactics, thus nurturing their teaching vocation through the first professional team approach (co-teaching). In addition, it is important to highlight that the project was a means to strengthen professional values such as group responsibility (accountability) and cooperative work with a leading student role.

Thirdly, the children's willingness to learn English and to take part in the free courses, characterized by a playful and communicative approach despite the conditions of learning in virtual environments, is outstanding. The data analysis showed the impact of the program with its beneficiaries

through a survey applied to parents, where they indicated that the activities and classes were always of interest to their children. The learning development of the beneficiary students was analyzed through a survey of PINE students, where the results showed that in the first group of 5-6 year old children, speaking and listening skills were developed at a higher level than reading and writing; in the second group of 7-9 year old children, there was more emphasis on the development of reading and writing skills than the other two; and in the third group of 10-12 year old kids, all four skills were developed.

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