

## INCREASING STUDENTS' MOTIVATION BY USING COMPUTERS

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**T**he lack of motivation in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students of Tomás Rueda Vargas School was the objective of this project, so we planned a series of workshops in Microsoft Word to apply in the computer lab. We observed that by working in groups of four in the computer lab, the students did the activities with enthusiasm. It could also be noticed that the workshops were effective in reinforcing English learning.

### Introduction

In this project we aim to prove how using the computer in a rational and occasional way can contribute to more effective English learning. The use of technology as a tool of motivation gives us the possibility of reinforcing the topics studied in class in a real context, because the intention of technological education is to improve the quality of education by preparing the students to understand, use and apply technology.

### Procedures

- \* Two surveys were used for the diagnostic stage. A group of fifteen students were selected to observe their work and behaviour.
- \* It was decided to follow the teaching activity of Stella by using two observers. At the end of the four workshops, the students completed a survey to conclude and do the triangulation.
- \* Classroom observations were carried out four times in two months.
- \* Four workshops were planned to apply in the computer lab using photocopied guides for each group. After each class, the observers and the teacher reflected on the lessons.
- \* In the end, a survey was taken to find out if the students' motivation had increased.

### Results

In the diagnostic stage, two surveys were used, one to identify the students' interests in order to use appropriate activities, and the other to detect the students' expectations about computers.

In the following charts are the results of the surveys.

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
1. I like English	4	7	4	
2. I like to participate in class	2	4	9	
3. In class I like to listen to and use cassettes	6	6	2	1
4. In class I like to listen to and learn songs	5	2	4	4
5. I like to learn English out of the classroom	6	5	4	
6. I like to practice sounds and pronunciation	7	2	6	
7. I like to learn many new words	6	2	6	1
8. I like to use computers	14	1		

	# of SS*	% of SS	# of SS	% of SS
	YES		NO	
1. Do you have a computer at home?	1	7	14	93
2. Would you like to learn English in the computer lab?	15	100		
3. Do you know vocabulary about computers in English?	4	27	11	73
4. Do you understand instructions given in English on the computer?	5	33	10	66
5. Do you like to work in small groups?	15	100		

\*SS = students

As evident from the information above, the students were not motivated to participate in class, and the materials used by the teacher did not satisfy the expectations they had of English class; besides this, they were very enthusiastic about the possibility of using computers to learn English.

Most of the students did not have a computer at home and the school was the place where they had the chance to confront technology. All of them wanted to learn using computers and to follow instructions because the programs are in Spanish now. They liked to work in small groups and this arrangement

is another kind of learning because students can share their knowledge and experiences.

### Classroom observation

Through the workshops we observed that students had a good knowledge of computers in Spanish; most of them knew how to use a computer and the vocabulary related to it. Only a few words were unknown.

In general, they enjoyed the activities and worked with enthusiasm and most of them did all the activities because they had had a previous lesson in the classroom on the topic. They practised writing in English there. They had to write letters, copy texts and create short paragraphs. Different topics like present, past and future tenses were studied in class and reinforced in the computer lab. Then, when the teacher checked the groups, she asked them to read the exercises and she corrected the oral mistakes.

It is important to clarify that the students were more interested in the format of their work than in the content because they had different options to choose from in order to present their work (font, size, colour).

To detect how the students used the computer lab, we applied a survey. They were asked to choose one of these answers:

- |                     |                   |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1. <i>Always</i>    | 2. <i>Usually</i> |
| 3. <i>Sometimes</i> | 4. <i>Never</i>   |

1. Do you like English in the computer lab?
2. Do you do all the activities there?

3. Do you learn new words using the computer lab?
4. In your group, do you use the computer?
5. Do you use oral English in the computer lab?

### Discussion

The aim of this project was to involve the students in their English learning process by using computers. Data was collected using surveys, planning workshops and observation.

The first finding is that the computer is a useful tool for teachers and students because they can exploit new technology in the language classroom. The second finding is the importance of selecting and planning the activities so that the students enjoy them and learn. A third aspect is concerned with group work; generally there is a more outgoing student that tries to do all the activities and the others only look and do not have the chance to use the computer. It would be necessary to distribute the use of the computer for each student, possibly class by class, each one 20 minutes. Finally, we consider it necessary to plan more workshops to go on with the project using other programs such as Power Point or Excel.

### Conclusion

The results of the study show that the students changed their behaviour in the computer lab, they worked with enthusiasm, and generally they did all the activities; moreover, they controlled the program with

confidence in spite of most of them not having a computer at home.

On the other hand, at Tomás Rueda Vargas School, there are good pedagogical materials that are really not properly exploited. Consequently, it is necessary for the teachers to get involved in the new technology in order to innovate and change the learning and teaching strategies. Therefore, teachers must be trained in the new technology and be able to use these tools. Further research is needed on how to plan a more effective syllabus that considers students' needs and likes.

## Bibliography

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