

The implementation of *Lengua Inglesa I*: An analysis of its effectiveness in developing communication skills in English

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ABSTRACT

One of the aims of the degree in English Studies at the University of La Laguna is to facilitate students the acquisition of the four basic communication skills (reading, listening, writing and speaking) in English that would allow them to communicate effectively in this language. These skills are developed and reinforced throughout the four years that the degree lasts, although the English language subjects pay special attention to achieving this goal, being *Lengua Inglesa I*, taught in the first semester of the second year, one of these subjects. However, and for the time being, no study has analyzed the effectiveness of this course in the process of developing the already mentioned communication skills.

Following an action research approach, within the framework proposed by applied linguists such as Mills (2003), this project seeks to examine the teaching-learning context in order to identify those aspects that need to be changed in the classroom, with the ultimate aim of suggesting positive changes on educational practices and improving students' results. The specific aspects that have been analyzed in this project are: the students' main motivations to learn the language, the skills they find more difficult to achieve, the ones they consider more attention should be given, and their opinions regarding different aspects of the teaching implementation, such as the assessment criteria. The appropriateness of the methodological approach and the textbook used in class are also examined.

To obtain the pertinent data, a questionnaire was administered to a total of 45 students enrolled in *Lengua Inglesa I*, both from the morning and the afternoon shift, who attended one of the last lessons. An additional questionnaire was sent via e-mail to the two professors who teach this subject, and a checklist was prepared following different authors' works (AbdelWahab, 2013; Garinger, 2002; Miekley, 2005; Mukundan et al., 2011).

The analysis of the data obtained revealed an overall positive impression on the subject in terms of its effectiveness, although there are some features that can be improved. The general attitude of students regarding some aspects of the teaching process, such as the materials used, is not equally positive. These findings should allow us to consider the combination of some characteristics of different methodological approaches to make teaching more dynamic and the use of a more academic and university-student oriented book.

Key words: *action research, communication skills, L2 acquisition, teaching-learning context.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The new degree in English Studies at the University of La Laguna (ULL) began to be implemented in the 2009-2010 academic year and, at the moment, it is immersed in a process of evaluation by the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA). One of the main goals of the degree is to facilitate students the acquisition of the adequate communication skills that would allow them to communicate effectively in English in the diverse academic settings and in their future careers. In this context, the English language courses represent essential subjects to develop these competencies.

At the end of the first year of adaptation to the new degree, students must have achieved level B1+, what represents the consolidation of the English language skills that they had acquired in secondary school. However, it is in the first semester of the second university year when there is a marked transition to an upper level (B2). Although the four basic communication skills are worked simultaneously in the various subjects that make up this first semester, special attention to the developing of these skills is given in the subject *Lengua Inglesa I*.

Despite the importance of examining periodically the weaknesses and strengths of university courses with the aim of improving teaching practices and students' outcomes, no studies have analyzed so far the effectiveness of the implementation of this particular course in terms of the development of the four basic skills, the difficulties that students may have when acquiring the skills and their actual needs, the methodological approaches or the teaching materials used in class. This project, therefore, aims to shed some light on how effective the implementation of the course *Lengua Inglesa I* in the 2014-2015 academic year has been. It specifically seeks to investigate if the course has actually met the expectations of the students enrolled in this subject in terms of the development of the four basic skills, the assessment criteria and the appropriateness of the textbook used in class. The methodological approach used to teach the subject will also be an object of research.

In the following subsections of this project, I will discuss the importance of English as the current language of international communication. I will do a critical overview of the different methodological approaches that have been used worldwide in the teaching of English as a second language (L2), with a special emphasis on the functional or communicative, and I will discuss the importance of the four basic skills for developing communication competencies in English. In the second part of this project, I will describe the methods and procedures followed for the analysis of the course. In section three, the results of the analyses are

reported and interpreted, and in the last section I state the main conclusions obtained from the analyses and give some recommendations for the improvement of teaching practices.

1.1. The role of English as the language of international communication

According to a recent report on the number of speakers of a language (see Lewis et al. 2005), English is the third most spoken language in the world, with 335 millions of speakers, behind Mandarin Chinese (1,797 millions of speakers) and Spanish (399 millions). This data is based on the number of native speakers of the languages mentioned, but this amount changes when referring to the total number of speakers, regardless if they are native speakers or not. Leaving aside the place of birth of the speakers, nearly a billion people speak English around the world and this is remarkable because, as Tapia (2010, July 4) argues, there are more people that speak English as a second language than native speakers of this language. The importance of English as an international language and its considerable weight in the world is also emphasized by David Crystal (2003, p. 24) when he affirms that “there’s never before been a language that’s been spoken by more people as a second language than a first”.

To this regard, Crystal (2003) goes further by analyzing the reasons why English has become nowadays a global language:

[..] What does it mean to say that a language is a global language? Why is English the language which is usually cited in this connection? How did the situation arise? And could it change? Or is it the case that, once a language becomes a global language, it is there forever? (Crystal, 2003, p.2)

According to this author, a language achieves the position of global language when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country. This status is not accomplished because of the number of speakers, but because of who speaks that language, as “there is the closest of links between language dominance and their economic, technological and cultural power” (Crystal, 2003, p.7), something that is reflected in English history. Therefore, and following the arguments Crystal gives in his book, the reason of English being a global language lies on geo-historical and socio-cultural facts. Looking back in time, Britain became the country that led industry and trade in the world in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, the British Empire was the responsible of sending English around the globe thanks to the colonies it possessed. By the end of the century, the population of the United States was larger than

any other Western country's and its economy was growing at an unimaginable speed. During the twentieth century, the position of English in the world was maintained because of the economic power of the USA. Therefore, economics replaced politics as the driving force "and the language behind the US dollar was English" (Crystal, 2003 p. 10).

With regard to the future of English as the language of international communication, there are speculations about some other languages disputing the hegemony of this position. Some refer to the emergent economy of China; others take Russians purchasing power or the wealth of some Arabic countries as the reasons for learning Chinese, Russian and Arabic, convinced that any of them will become the language of international communication. However, according to Jenkins (2003) there is no reason to believe that in the next 50 years any other language will occupy English's position as an international language, but there may be some changes in the hierarchy of the world languages because of the effects of globalization and economy. Jenkins also assures that it is "more likely that a small number of world languages will form an 'oligopoly' [...], so we can expect languages which serve regional communication to rise in popularity" (p. 206). And the truth is that if we take a look to different societies in the developed world, English is the most taught foreign language. In fact, it is taught in more than 100 countries around the world (Crystal, 2003, p. 5). Focusing on the European Union, most of the pupils study English in primary education in the vast majority of the Member States. Besides, "learning English is mandatory in several countries within secondary education institutions, and so a number of EU Member States have close to 100% of pupils learning this language already in primary education" (Eurostat Statistics Explained, 2015, July 1). With this datum English dominance is shown, although, as it is stated in the EU Eurostat: "the relative importance of English as a foreign language may be further magnified because pupils tend to receive more instruction in their first foreign language than they do for any subsequent languages they (choose to) study". According to the EU Eurostat report, in the case of Spain, Austria and Italy, between 98.9% and 99.6% of the students learn English as a second language. Focusing on our country, English is the first foreign language taught in the great majority of schools, it is also required to have level B1 (EFRL) in order to be able to study a master's degree and in many areas of the world of work. This has made society even more aware of the weight of the aforesaid language as an international means of communication. In fact, we will see in this study that the students of the second year of the degree in English Studies at the ULL, when asked in a questionnaire about their motivations to learn English, most of them have stated that their main motivation

for acquiring a good command of English is their desire to be able to communicate fluently in this language in order to be understood around the globe.

1.2. Approaches to the teaching of English as an L2

Throughout the history of English as a second language teaching, there have been many pedagogical approaches which have had a great influence on the most frequent practices that are being used today. Mora (2013, May 17) distinguishes four general orientations when it comes to the teaching of a second language:

- The *structural or linguistic approach* involves much meta-language content in order to learn the language. In other words, grammatical and syntactic structures are isolated, so it defends that it is necessary to learn about the language to learn a language.
- The *cognitive approach* is based on developing theories and methods that make generalizations about the language, memorization and competence leading to performance easier to the student and taking into account the learners own style.
- The *affective or interpersonal approach*, as its name indicates, focuses on “the psychological and affective pre-disposition of the learner” (Mora, 2013, May 17). The relation between the teacher and the student is closer and the student’s motivations and the learning situation are emphasized and used to learn the language.
- The *functional or communicative approach* focuses on meaningful communication. That is, it is concerned with “the input students receive comprehension of the ‘message’ of language and student involvement at the students’ level of competence” (Mora, 2013, May 17). In short, it promotes the use of language rather than the study of it.

Apart from these four general orientations, Mora (2013, May 17) mentions other relevant methods or approaches traditionally used to teach a second or foreign language:

The *grammar-translation approach* is focused on the written part of the acquisition of the language. In consequence, pronunciation is given none or little attention, classes are taught in the students’ mother tongue and the target language is very little used. Vocabulary is given in isolated lists of words and extended grammar explanations are provided. Little attention is paid to the content of texts, but they are treated as exercises in grammatical analysis.

As a reaction to this method, the *direct approach* was born. It attempted to integrate the usage of the target language in the process of learning and to do so, material is presented orally, the mother tongue is never used and grammar is taught inductively, that is rules are generalized from the practice and experience with the target language. The culture of the target language is also considered important and it is also taught inductively.

Following this, the *audio-lingual approach* adopts and adapts many of the procedures of the direct approach. Material is also presented orally in the form of dialogs and grammar is taught inductively as well. Contrary to the grammar-translation approach, a great importance is given to native-like pronunciation and, as its name indicates, a lot of tapes, visual aids and language laboratories are used. As for the usage of the mother tongue, it is permitted to the teacher but students are encouraged not to use it, reinforcing successful responses and taking care to prevent errors.

The *reading approach* concentrates its strategies on the reading skill, but it also gives importance to the historical knowledge of the country where the language is spoken. Since reading is the ability to which more attention is dropped, the only grammatical aspects given are those that facilitate reading comprehension and fluency. Due to the great amount of texts that students have to read, vocabulary is expanded quite quickly.

It is also worth mentioning here another interesting methodology created by Charles Curran (1976) that he calls the *community language approach*. The methods used in this approach are a bit far from the methods of teaching that have already been described, because the learner is not seen as a student but as a client. What the teacher aims is to share the client's anxieties and threats when learning a new language, so the general orientation of the affective or interpersonal approach is, somehow, present. From that point onwards, the learner is led to increasingly become an independent learner.

Gattegno, in his 1972 work, describes another pedagogical approach that he calls the *Silent Way*, in which verbal commands are used in order to achieve different objectives, such as to avoid the use of the mother tongue, to make the situations remained under the teacher's control and to pass the responsibility to students for the utterances; and to let the teacher concentrate on how and what the students say. This method allows starting just with the only voice of the teacher using the foreign language and move to a great number of voices using it. Even though the Silent Way gives importance to the pronunciation and fluency, it also reduces imitation and encourages the personal production sounds.

An additional pedagogical approach worth mentioning is the *Total Physical Response method*, created by Asher (1979), which has had a great impact since this allows a rapid acquisition of skills and a higher level of motivation, having as basic principles the understanding of the spoken language before developing the skills. Imperatives are used as the main structure to communicate information and the students are not forced to speak, but they are given the time they need to feel comfortable and confident to produce utterances.

Considering that the *functional or communicative approach* (also referred to as the *natural approach*) is the one that is predominantly used in the teaching of English in subjects such as *Lengua Inglesa I* (object of study in this project), it will be necessary to describe here in more detail the principles of this approach.

The first question to take into account is what communicative competence is. According to Oxford (1989, p. 32), communicative competence is the progressive acquisition of the ability to use language in order to achieve one's communicative purpose; it is "the negotiation of meaning between two or more people sharing the same symbolic system"; it gives the participants the capacity to choose the appropriate style and register depending on the context in which the conversation is taking place; it focuses on the communicative purposes of the language (functions of language, purpose of the message, etc.); it "requires the mastery and comprehension of communicative acts or speech acts" (p. 33). To achieve all the goals that are involved in the communicative competence, the classrooms must meet a series of characteristics. It "is devoted primarily to activities that foster the acquisition of L2" (p. 34) and students' speech errors are not going to be directly corrected; they will be given the freedom to answer in their mother tongue, the target language or a mixture of both and they are personally involved in class, receiving input in a low-anxiety environment. Regarding the language acquisition, Oxford (1989, p. 34) establishes three stages:

1. Comprehension or pre-production
2. Early speech production
3. Speech emerges

Within the functional-notional approach, notions are described as meaning elements expressed through nouns, adjectives, prepositions, conjunctions or adverbs and their use depends on three factors: function, elements in the situation and the topic of the discussion. Finnochiaro and Brumfit (1983), for example, have classified the functional aspects into five

categories: personal (to express one's ideas, thoughts and feelings), interpersonal (to establish social and working relationships); directive (as its name indicates, to influence the actions of others or to accept or refuse orders); referential (to name things, places, people... in the different tenses); and imaginative (to include creative or artistic elements in the discussion). These authors also argue that the elements in a situation and the topics of discussion may affect variations of language use as the use of dialects or the level of formality of the language.

As stated by Krashen and Terrell (1983), the natural approach to learn a language is based on the hypothesis that an adult can learn a language in the same way they learned their first language, through implicit and subconscious learning; the learning process follows an order that is quite predictable and similar to the way in which grammatical structures and syntax were learned in their mother tongue; therefore, to acquire fluency and the understanding of the language, to receive comprehensible input plays an important role. The affective part is also relevant because the student's personality and motivations, as well as the environment in which they are learning a language, can accelerate the process. Normally, the learners of a language "will naturally substitute competence in L1 for competence in L2 [and they] should not be force to use the L1 to generate L2 performance" (p. 43). These authors also believe that students should be taught and encouraged to develop native-like intuitions and, regarding the event-structures of experience, they will be easier to produce, understand and recall if they are produced following an episodic order.

According to Rhalmi (September, 2009), the functional or communicative approach was born as a response to the audio-lingual approach and as an advance and more developed functional-notional syllabus. It is during the 1960s when the communicative approach starts to make its way into classrooms due to the criticism that the prevailing methods (the audio-lingual approach and the situational language teaching method – this one based on a structural view of the language presented in different situations) had received. Nevertheless, the communicative approach has also received some criticism over the last years. As Rhalmi (September, 2009) states, some applied linguistics researchers argue that the functional approach merely replaces a list of grammatical structures with another list of notions and functions, since this teaching approach focuses on the use of language, whereas the study of formal structures are, in a way, left aside. Another point of criticism is that the different categories of language are not graded like structures of the language, but they are overlapped instead. Some also argue that since the syllabus of the communicative approach is based on

the functional-notional one, heavy demands are placed on learners. Furthermore, it may be seen as a negative point the fact that the communicative approach takes also into account the learner's interests and needs, and consequently the teachers should change the syllabus to fit them. The requirements of the communicative approach may also be quite difficult to fulfill, considering that not all the classrooms are suitable for group work or that not all the teaching materials are designed appropriately to achieve the desired purposes.

Despite the criticism received, in my view the communicative approach is an efficient teaching method, although it would be a good idea to combine or modify some aspects. It would be interesting, for example, to take into account some of the importance given to the study of grammatical structures by the structural or linguistic approach in order to create a solid basis on students' competence, as well as to take into account the culture of the target language, as it is done in the direct approach. In other words, placing the communicative approach as the center of the teaching process, some characteristics of other methods and approaches could be added to complement and compensate the possible scarcities of the aforesaid communicative approach.

1.3. The four basic communication skills

Communication skills are defined by the Collins English Dictionary as “the ability to convey information and ideas effectively” and they are generally divided into four: speaking, listening, reading and writing. At the same time, two subgroups could be created taking into account whether information is produced (speaking and writing) or received (reading and listening).

The four basic communication skills are typically used every day in the classroom, sometimes without paying much attention to this fact as it implicit in some of the routine activities developed in a classroom, such as listening to the teacher, reading instructions or grammar drills, writing sentences to describe what we feel or doing fill-in-the-blank sheets and greeting or creating a dialog are activities through which speaking is created (Bilash, 2011). According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and taking into account the level that the students of the second year of the degree in English Studies are required to reach (B2) at the end of the course, their command of the language taking the four skills as a basis is represented in Table 1:

	Reception		Interaction		Production	
	Listening	Reading	Spoken Interaction	Written Interaction	Spoken Production	Written Production
B2	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.	I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular stances or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.	I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view.

Table 1. Level B2 descriptor (CEFR)

At this point, it will be of relevance to discuss the importance of each of the aforesaid skills:

Speaking is, perhaps, the most valued skill by the students of a second or foreign language. However, spoken interaction and production situations are the ones that typically produce more anxiety among students. The importance given to speaking is obvious and teachers want their students to be able to use language effectively in order to communicate. In other words, “the goal of language is communication and the aim of speaking in a language context is to promote communicative efficiency” (Bilash, 2011).

Writing is the other productive communication skill that students must develop when learning a second language. Because communication does not only occur orally, this skill is necessary.

Generally, students consider writing to be “a less stressful activity [...] as the audience for mistakes is more selective; on the other hand, written work is concrete and is therefore open to closer examination and correction” (Bilash, 2011). This author also claims that writing promotes students to use language, but noticing it. This means that when they write, they are forced to pay attention and reflect about the use of certain grammatical structures and vocabulary instead of making use of others. Therefore, developing writing skills helps to improve and practice many other aspects of language while learning.

Moving forward to the comprehension skills and the input of information in communication, listening plays an important role to have a conversation. It is essential to understand the message and, thus, listening may be considered “a key initial step in communication” (Bilash, 2011). According to this author, developing this skill allows students to notice some of the characteristics of the target language, something that will later influence the development of the other communication skills.

Lastly, but not less important, reading skills must be gained too. Bilash, actually, refers to them as “vital in language development” and she gives three of the multiple advantages of the already mentioned skill. Firstly, it provides cultural knowledge and access to literature in the target language that will approach learners to “authentic materials in the target language [...] as well as provides them with insight into the cultural values and beliefs”. Secondly, the fact that students are exposed to complex structures and vocabulary will favor their use in future situation and it also contributes to a rapid improvement of the acquisition of the target language. Another benefit that comes along with reading skills is that it helps to develop many other competences in the language:

- Linguistic competence: Students gain knowledge about specific elements of language such as vocabulary and grammar.
- Discourse competence: Students are exposed to the structure of texts and how they are put together.
- Sociolinguistic competence: Students learn about different texts and structures in the target language and just how those are used in a particular culture.
- Strategic competence: Students gain insight into different linguistic learning strategies. For example, a top down strategy might be emphasized, where students would use the general meaning of a text to determine its specifics. A bottom up strategy, on the other hand, would focus on the specifics, such as specific words, and work its way up towards the general meaning (Bilash, 2011).

After having classified the four basic communication skills in English and having commented on their importance and perception, there are still two aspects that should be discussed: Are they independent from one another? How can they be used together?

In relation to the first question and taking into account what has been discussed about reading, writing, listening and speaking, it is clear that the answer is no. These skills are, by some means, interrelated to one another since, as Bilash (2011) clearly puts it “improving one will result in improvements in the others”. In consequence, there are a series of approaches that allow teachers to work with the four skills at the same time and to use them together. Bilash (2011), for example, suggests the following:

- The *focal skill approach*. What this approach advocates is to study using the second language in order to acquire it. This curriculum “stresses the balanced development of listening, speaking, reading and writing by measuring competency in each skill and then focusing on the development of the weakest skill” (Bilash, 2011).

- *Content-based Instruction (CBI)*. Bilash (2011) cites Oxford (2001), who describes the two approaches that the CBI combines: theme-based and adjunct learning. The theme-based CBI is based on a theme for which students show a high interest and that help to develop a bigger number of language skills and motivate them. The four basic skills are required to be used due to the exposure to a wide variety of forms of information that the theme chosen contains. On its part, with the adjunct form, “language and content are taught separately but carefully coordinated so that literacy, oral language development and thinking skills are positively enhanced” (Bilash, 2011).

- *Task-based Instruction (TBI)*. To describe this type of approach Bilash (2011) refers to Nunan (1999), who explains that the task-based instruction uses tasks and other activities to make learners comprehend, manipulate, produce and interact in the target language. Normally, these tasks will require the use of the four skills, although the amount of each of them is dictated by the activity itself. TBI provides the possibility to bring real-life situations to the classroom.

- *Project-based approach*. This approach not only combines the four skills, but also culture, learning strategies, experiences and language, as stated by Turnbull (1999), as cited by Bilash (2011). This is finalized with the election of a final project in which the student will have to demonstrate their capacities not only through written production, but also orally.

To summarize, in order to achieve efficient communicative competence in English it is important to work with the four basic skills simultaneously, since they are closely connected. It seems obvious that if one is proficient in reading and writing, for example, this positively will speed up spoken performance. Classroom activities should, thus, be designed to help learners develop efficiently the four skills and perceive the interrelationships between them, and these activities should strike a balance among those abilities. An effective approach to the teaching of the four skills (including grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation) at an advanced level should imply the exclusive use of the second language in class, topics of interest for the students that will enhance their motivation or the use of real situation task-based exercises.

2. METHODOLOGY

In order to gain understanding of the various factors related to the implementation of the subject *Lengua Inglesa I*, I have used an action research approach following the framework postulated by Mills (2003). This involves a previous analysis of the teaching-learning context in order to identify what needs to be changed in the classroom, with the ultimate aim of effecting positive changes on educational practices and improving students' outcomes.

Following the steps of the action research process (see Mills, 2003, p.4), I have started with the selection of some particular aspects to study the teaching-learning situation. This has been followed by the choice of the appropriate instruments to collect the information, the elaboration of the questions and the analysis and interpretation of the data.

2.1. Participants and materials

The participants of this study were 45 students, both from the morning and afternoon shifts, enrolled in the subject *Lengua Inglesa I* (taught in the second year of the degree in English Studies at the ULL), who were attending one of the last lessons of the first semester in the 2014-2015 academic year. Additionally, the two professors in charge of teaching the subject, both in the morning and the afternoon groups, were also surveyed.

Outcomes – Upper Intermediate (Student's Book), by Hugh Dellar and Andrew Walkley, was the textbook used to teach the subject and, therefore, a main object of analysis in this project.

2.2. Instruments used and procedures

To gain understanding of the actual motivations, perceptions and needs of the students enrolled in the subject, I used a questionnaire (see Appendix I) which was administered to a total of 45 students that attended one of the last lessons of the first semester. Although we thought it could be appropriate to write the questions in Spanish to avoid possible misunderstandings, in the end we decided to write the questions in English, since the level of proficiency of the L2 they were supposed to have was not a drawback for understanding the questions. In any case, we gave them the option to write the answers in English or Spanish in

an anonymous way. The questionnaire is made up of ten questions, both open and closed questions. The statistical analysis of the responses to this questionnaire is shown by means of graphs in Appendix II. In order to gather information about the methodological approach used in class, the data collection technique that I decided to be more appropriate was once again a questionnaire, which I sent via e-mail to the two lecturers of the subject. The open and close-response questions asked (including the answers given) are shown in Appendix III.

As regards the analysis of the textbook, according to AbdelWahab (2013), a textbook can be evaluated using one of the three basic methods that exist for this purpose: the impressionistic method, the checklist method and the in-depth method. The first one bases the analysis on the general impression of the book reached by looking at the table of contents and, then, by skimming the material to see its layout, organization or the topics that are treated. However, AbdelWahab also states that this is not a good method to use alone, but it can be combined with any of the other two methods. The checklist method, as its name indicates, makes use of a list of those aspects to consider when choosing the material that suits best both teachers' and students' expectations. The criteria on the list are checked following a certain order and that is why this method is considered to be systematic. Finally, the in-depth method "suggests a careful examination of representative features such as the design of one particular unit or exercise, or the treatment of particular language elements" (AbdelWahab, 2013, p. 56).

Furthermore, two types of materials evaluation can be established depending on whether a decision should be made regarding the materials to use (predictive evaluation) or to evaluate to what extent the materials used have fulfilled their goals (retrospective evaluation) (Ellis, 1997, cited in AbdelWahab, 2013, p. 57). Taking this distinction into account, the analysis of the textbook that was done for this project was a retrospective evaluation of the same one, since the objective of it is to examine its effectiveness in the process of developing communication skills. The method chosen to carry out the analysis is the checklist method and it was especially focused on the four first units of the book because those are the ones that students worked on during the course, as it is stated in the subject's program guide. The objectives of the course¹, included in the mentioned document, were taken into consideration when analyzing the textbook.

¹ Dominar eficazmente la lengua inglesa tanto en la expresión oral como escrita con un nivel equivalente al B2 descrito en el Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas (MCERL). Aplicar estrategias de aprendizaje basadas en el trabajo en equipo. Utilizar las nuevas tecnologías aplicadas al aprendizaje del inglés.

After having checked some author's checklists (AbdelWahab, 2013; Garinger, 2002; Miekley, 2005; Mukundan et al., 2011) to evaluate English textbooks, a new list was made combining some of the aspects found in the ones they elaborated. With the checklist created I have aimed at evaluating not only some of the general aspects of the textbook's content, its physical make-up and whether it helps to fulfill the goals dictated by the program guide, but I also carried out a deeper analysis of the exercises and activities concerning grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and the four basic skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) by rating them with good, OK or poor (see Appendix IV). Considering this, the checklist is divided into six sections:

- A. General aspects.** In this part, the appropriateness of *Outcomes Upper – Intermediate* regarding the level of the students and the learning context is analyzed. To what extent the book's layout and the images it contains can be appealing or attractive to the students is also evaluated under this section.
- B. Practice.** This part is focused on the exercises found in the textbook, making reference to their difficulty, their format and the type of exercises students have to deal with and to their contribution to achieve the purposes in the program guide.
- C. Four basic skills.** In this section, the appropriateness of the exercises to practice and develop the four skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking) is evaluated, as well as the way in which they are presented.
- D. Grammar.** What is analyzed in this part is the way in which grammatical explanations are given and the way in which the grammar aspects are practiced through exercises.
- E. Vocabulary.** The effectiveness of the exercises related to vocabulary is evaluated in this section of the checklist.
- F. Pronunciation.** In this final part, the analysis refers to the way in which exercises regarding pronunciation are presented, in addition to their focuses and appropriateness.

Having itemized the checklist, I have proceeded to analyze the four first units of the Student's Book because, as it has already been said in the project, those are the ones studied in class during the course of *Lengua Inglesa I*. The results of the analysis are marked in bold type in Appendix IV.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Students' motivations, perceptions and opinions: Analysis of the questionnaire.

When asked about their main motivation for acquiring a good command of the English language (question 1), only 26.67% of the students responded that they wanted to use it professionally in their future, something that can be striking because of the degree they are studying. Around 60% of the answers were, somehow, related to personal satisfaction in the sense that they responded that their main motivation was to be able to express correctly in English, to travel or to be able to talk to English-speaking people around the world. It is also worth commenting that 13.33% of students do not know why they are learning English or they have not answered this question.

The second question referred to the importance that the students give to each of the four basic skills and, to do so, they had to use a scale from 1 = less important to 4 = very important. The result obtained was that an overwhelming 80% consider speaking to be the most important skill to develop. The second skill selected as the most important was writing (64.44%), followed by reading (57.78%) and listening (48.89%). Only 35.56% of the respondents consider that the four skills are equally important. The truth is that all the skills should be given the same importance when it comes to their development since, as it has been commented earlier in this project, communication is not only based on speaking, for example, but the other skills also take place when transmitting a message and to allow interaction. Besides, communication does not only happen orally and to achieve a good command of a language it is important to master all of them. This is something that may need to be reminded to the students.

The next two questions asked are related to the four basic skills too. Question 3 referred to the amount of work that they considered to have done concerning each skill. 31.11% of the students surveyed deemed that they had not done enough work on reading skills. This was followed by listening (15.56%), speaking (11.11%) and writing (8.89%). The results obtained in this question can be related to the quantity of exercises that are found in the textbook used in class because, as it will be seen later in section 3.3., there are not sufficient exercises on reading or listening in the Student's Book. Neither is there enough writing practice, but this was solved thanks to five additional on-line writing tasks assigned by the professors throughout the course. The speaking activities of the book were also reinforced with

individual and group seminars, and an oral presentation. Concerning the skills they consider more difficult to achieve (Q. 4), the survey revealed that it is speaking the most difficult for most of the students (55.56%), mainly because they need “more time to practice and to be corrected”, “because you have to be very careful with your pronunciation, intonation, vocabulary, grammar, etc.”, because of “the improvisational element”. Other reasons given were related to the difficulty that for them supposes making them be understood or because they get nervous.

The students were also asked about their self-perceived level of English in each of the basic skills (Q. 5). In order to pass the subject, students were required to have acquired level B2 at the end of the first semester. According to the data obtained from the questionnaire, 84.45% of the students have B1 or more in the four skills. From that 84.45%, 51.11% consider their level to be B1/ B2 and 35.56 % claim to have from B2 onwards. This means that around 15% have or think that they have A1 or A2 in any of the skills. In general, it could be said, therefore, that they consider they have acquired the appropriate level at the end of the course. Moreover, most of the students that have graded their level with A1 or A2, make reference to one (3 out of 5 students) or two (1 out of 5) skills. Only one of the students considers his/her level to be A2 in the four skills, except in reading which was rated A2/B1.

Questions 6 and 7 refer to the content of the book and these will be analyzed further on in section 3.3.

Another aspect students were asked (Q. 8) refers to their perception of the virtual platform (Moodle) used in class as part of process of teaching-learning the English language. The majority of the students (86.67%) think that Moodle is a useful tool, in opposition to 8.89% who do not find it very helpful.

When asked about the extent to what they agree with the assessment criteria established in the program guide of the subject (Q. 9), surprisingly enough, 28.89% of the surveyed students had not read the program guide, and from those who did read it (71.11%), 37.78% disagree with some aspect of the assessment criteria established. The most repeated reason is that it does not really rewards those students who have attended classes regularly and who have done their homework, as it can be seen in some of the answers given:

“I believe that, since this is a practical subject, its assessment should not rely on an exam so heavily (60%), but the work done in class, the speaking seminars and the on-line tasks should be valued more”.

“The continuous assessment should be revised. I believe it is not properly structured, as we have been working weekly (that is to say writing reports, essays, reviews) and these online tasks are only the 10% of our final mark”.

“The change from the 60% exam and 40% continuous evaluation to the 80/20% is quite contra productive, there is no incentive to participate in class and do the tasks”.

Finally, they were asked (Q. 10) to give any suggestion to improve the subject: 37.78% of the responses were related to the four basic skills in the sense that they suggest more activities to practice and improve speaking, listening, reading or writing. Some suggest not focusing the lessons on the book that much, but making teaching more dynamic.

3.2. The methodological approach used in class: Analysis of the questionnaire.

As it has been previously mentioned in this project, the communicative or functional approach is the methodological orientation that is used primarily to teach the subject *Lengua Inglesa I*. This has been deduced by the analysis of the textbook (see subsection 3.3) and reinforced by the analysis to the answers given by the two professors that teach the subject to the questions asked in a questionnaire (see Appendix III).

The answers of the two professors coincide in all the questions made, as seen in Appendix III. To begin with, both of them consider that the methodology used is based, not only, on the communicative aspects of the second language, but also on a holistic approach that takes into account the particular context in which people communicate and the specific purpose of a speaker in a given context, together with the study of grammatical structures and vocabulary. This last concept is what is described by Van Ek & Alexander (1975) and Wilkins (1976), as cited by Rhamil (September 2009), as the notional and functional categories respectively.

In relation to the types of exercises or activities implemented in class, the ones reported are those in which interactions and real communication is involved, those in which language is used to carry out meaningful tasks, and activities aimed at developing vocabulary and

improving grammatical accuracy. This would be another evidence of the usage of the communicative approach as the methodology employed in class because this approach's syllabus emphasizes these types of exercises under the idea that it should be done in order for the learning process to take place (Rhamil, September 2009). Moreover, by putting into practice those kinds of activities, different dimensions of the communicative competence described by Canale and Swaine (1980), as cited in Rhamil (September 2009), are also developed, such as the discourse competence so as to understand and interpret a message and its meaning within the whole text or discourse; the sociolinguistic competence that allows students to understand the linguistic context in which communication takes place; and the grammatical or linguistic competence to acquire knowledge about grammatical structures and gain vocabulary (Bilash, 2011).

Both of the professors agree on the fact that their teaching has been centered on the student in the learning process, as opposed to a teacher-centered approach, since students have been encouraged to actively participate in class as well as to work autonomously and they were given the opportunity to choose topics of their interest to discuss in the speaking seminars, as it can be read in one of the professor's response:

"I felt that I acted as a guide while the students were actively participating in class, without interrupting them and only giving them feedback at the end of their presentations/exercises. They were also given the opportunity to choose topics of their interest for discussion in the speaking seminars. They were encouraged to work autonomously throughout the course using the Workbook and other internet resources".

The last question of the questionnaire was related to the usage of the new technologies of information and communication in the classroom due to their relation with the communicative approach. Both professors state that their usage of technology has been "relatively limited" as they say in their answers:

Professor 1: "Relatively limited I'd say since it's mostly Moodle and recordings for listening exercises. I realize that there is much more I could do".

Professor 2: "I used the Moodle platform to provide students with information, materials, etc. and especially the forum section so that they could do written tasks and interact with the other students. We should improve in this aspect. Could you give us suggestions?"

In short, after having analyzed the responses to the questionnaire, it could be said that the methodological approach used in the teaching of *Lengua Inglesa I* is primarily a functional or communicative approach: a method that emphasizes the means and ultimate goal of communication having students as the center of the process and outlining activities which help to develop different dimensions of the communicative competence. However, it could rather be defined as a holistic approach since it also pays attention to the study of grammatical structures and vocabulary. Although the use of the Moodle seemed to be effective, the use of new technologies could be increased by, for example, including YouTube videos related to the topic treated in class to complement explanations or project PowerPoint slides to make some of the lessons more visual. Tasks related to foster the digital competence of students that require the use of new technologies (any other resource apart from PowerPoint or Prezi) is another idea that could be implemented.

3.3. Teaching materials. Analysis of the Student's Book

As described in the Methodology section of this project, in order to examine the adequacy of the textbook used in class, I have used a checklist and the analysis of the responses to questions 6 and 7 in the questionnaire administered to the students.

After looking at the four first units of the book following the aspects reflected in the checklist, the conclusion that has been reached concerning the first issue included in the checklist ("General aspects"), is that the book is not appropriate for the learning context in which it is used. This impression has been confirmed by means of the analysis of the responses to the questionnaire, since 40% of the students have found no change in comparison to those they used in high school and 26.67% claim to have found some little differences, such as more vocabulary or grammar (11.11% out of the total of students surveyed) or a higher level or difficulty in the exercises (8.89% out of the total of students surveyed), although the structure and formula are quite similar to the ones of the books that were used in high school. Neither the cover, nor most of the images that are found in *Outcomes-Upper Intermediate* seem to be really appealing for learners at a university level, either.

Other weak points pointed out by the students are:

"The book is mainly focused on grammar".

“The book contains different and helpful exercises but maybe they should be combined with interactive exercises”.

“Maybe it needs more exercises”.

“It is really confusing”.

“It could have more writing activities”.

“Not enough listening”.

In relation to the topics treated in the four units – with the exception of the last one – (“Unit 1: Entertainment”; “Unit 2: Sightseeing”; “Unit 3: Things you need”; and “Unit 4: Society”) they are repetitive as regards the topics included in the textbooks in previous years (e.g. *Outcomes – Intermediate*) and do not seem to raise the sufficient interest in the students as to foster participation in class. We may then conclude that a book more specifically addressed to university students would be more suitable for teaching purposes.

As a positive aspect, we should mention that the textbook has a supplementary booklet (*Outcomes Vocabulary Builder*) that provides lists of definitions of key language used in each unit to facilitate the students to refer to the words they need while they are studying, although the phonemic transcription of these words is not provided. This booklet also contains examples, collocations and exercises focused on the uses and grammar of the words. The *Outcomes Vocabulary Builder*, as a whole, is a useful tool that complements the vocabulary exercises included in the Student’s Book. Besides, the pin code to an online resource is provided. *MyOutcomes ONLINE* is the name of the webpage in which extra exercises can be found. The *Workbook*, that the students were asked to use autonomously as a way of reinforcing the language and skills practice dealt with in class, was also a valuable additional resource.

Regarding the second aspect (“Practice”), the difficulty of the exercises included in each unit does not really increase progressively as the students move through the textbook, but it is invariably maintained from unit 1 to 4. However, they are presented in different ways and format, containing both controlled and free practice in which the students have freedom to give their own answers or opinions, even though the former kind of exercises is predominant. Depending on the format in which the exercise is presented, the degree of difficulty may vary depending on the actual level of the student, but, as it has been commented above, the

complexity of the exercises does not change significantly throughout the units. This is also the perception of almost half of the students to whom the questionnaire was administered, since 46.67% of them found the exercises too easy or repetitive and boring. This last point may be explained because of the fact that the *Outcomes - Upper Intermediate* is quite similar in terms of the design of exercises to the textbooks that students used in high school and, as Garinger (2002) states, “familiarity and routine can be comforting, but too much familiarity can lead to disinterest and boredom”. This is the primary reason why I consider that the exercises of a textbook should be varied and challenging. Here are some of the students’ answers that reinforce this point:

“The exercises are quite repetitive”

“Sometimes its lessons can be very basic and its exercises too repetitive”

“The weak point for me is the low level. I already knew most of the vocabulary and the activities can be tedious and repetitive”

“I consider it very basic”

“Too basic and not challenging. Also quite boring”

“Most of the exercises are too easy and simple, so something more difficult would be nice”

As far as the purposes exposed in the program guide are concerned, the Student’s Book partially contributes to their achievement since what the subject evaluates or pursues is primarily focused on writing and speaking. Although the number of speaking activities may fulfill this purpose, the writing activities are insufficient and had to be complemented by additional writing tasks designed by the professors of the subject.

In order to analyze the quality of the activities provided in the book for the students to develop appropriately the four basic skills, the following section of the checklist (“Four basic skills acquisition”) was divided into four subgroups: listening, writing, reading and speaking. Starting with listening tasks, they are quite well presented in the book since clear explanations are given, the situations presented in the exercises could be perfectly compared to real life circumstances and they are, at the same time, contextualized within the content of the units in which they are included. Furthermore, students are able to listen to native speakers’ different

accents, voices and pronunciation, something that trains their listening ability and prepare them to face a real conversation with ordinary English-speaking people.

However, in relation to writing, although models are given for the different types of texts, not enough practice or explanations of their structure are provided by the textbook. Moreover, the writing section is not within the units but apart, at the end of the book and this might be a little uncomfortable. The texts used to practice and develop reading skills have also some negative aspects in relation to their difficulty. They are rather simple texts with easy vocabulary and grammatical structures. Concerning their length, some are a bit short taking into account the level of the students. Nevertheless, the reading material that is used is authentic and the topics treated are quite interesting; aspects that are important and useful for the learners and that help to maintain their motivation and interest.

Finally, speaking is practiced through different exercises that combine individual responses or pair or group work, so students are encouraged to speak and to gain confidence in English. Besides, the situations presented in the activities are also considered natural and could be helpful when the time to face those types of situations come. This is particularly relevant if we take into account the responses given by students in the questionnaire to question 2, as most students consider the development of speaking skills very important for their future careers.

Concerning grammar, it is contextualized in the units in which the different structures and rules are introduced and further explanations and exercises are also provided, which is good, but they are in a grammar reference at the end of the book and this could be uncomfortable and confusing. The grammatical aspects studied in the four units seen in class (talking about habits; adjectives and adverbs; non-defining relative clauses; the future; *so*, *if* and *to* for describing purpose; indirect questions; *so/such*; *the...,the...+ comparatives*) were already seen in high school and previous years and, even though it is also good to practice grammar and refresh our knowledge, it can result repetitive and not appropriate for the level of the students if we take into account the complexity of the exercises.

The next aspect analyzed in the checklist is vocabulary, which is normally presented through different exercises and all the definitions of key language used in the unit can be found in the booklet *Outcomes Vocabulary Builder* with more exercises to practice. The vocabulary of the texts is very easy however, and it could be said that the new words are not repeated efficiently

to make students able to retain them. Although it is true that the vocabulary does not change much from the one learned in high school. It is also worth commenting the sections of *native speaker English* that the book includes and which are mainly related to vocabulary and expressions commonly used by native speakers. These sections are very interesting and useful to students since they provide tools that facilitate a daily-life conversation and a better command of the language; in short, to sound more native-like.

The last section in the checklist focuses on pronunciation. My analysis revealed that the activities designed in *Outcomes-Upper Intermediate* are not sufficient to learn all the main features of pronunciation, although the few ones that are included in the book facilitate the learning of some aspects related to stress, intonation, individual sounds (consonants) and the contractions of colloquial words of frequent use. Thus, they contribute to highlight and practice a natural pronunciation.

To summarize, the book has many positive aspects that contribute to the development of the speaking skills and vocabulary, and the fact of using authentic reading materials or the *native speaker English* parts, for instance. However, there are many other aspects that are not appropriate for the learning context in which the book is used or that do not really help to achieve all the goals of the subject.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study has aimed to research the effectiveness of the implementation of the subject *Lengua Inglesa I*, mainly in terms of the development of the four basic skills, the methodological approach and the appropriateness of the textbook used in class. After having analyzed the responses to the two questionnaires administered to both the students and the professors, and after having conducted a textual analysis of the book used in class, the following main conclusions have been reached.

First, the students seem to be highly motivated for acquiring a good command of the English language, especially the speaking skill, as they recognize the importance of English as the global language for communicative interaction. However, speaking is for them the most difficult skill to achieve, although they consider that enough work has been done in class to develop it. This is not the case when referring to the reading skill, as they consider that not

enough attention has been given in class to develop this skill. Regarding the assessment criteria, they consider that more value should be given to the work done in class throughout the continuous evaluation. They also consider that a teaching approach less heavily based on the contents of the book, which they do not consider quite appropriate, could make the teaching-learning process more dynamic.

Second, all the skills should be evaluated. At the moment, the program guide only considers the assessment of two of the four basic skills: speaking and writing. However, reading and listening should be also evaluated and taken into account in the final grade, since all the skills are equally important in the acquisition of a language, in order to have a good command of it, and these skills are also worked on in class. Moreover, at the end of the second academic year, students have to prove that they have acquired level B2+ in all the four skills, so it seems that there is a gap in between as regards the assessment of the reading and listening skills.

Third, the methodological approach used in class (communicative or functional approach) has proved to be effective, considering the high percentage of students that think that they have acquired level B2 at the end of the course. It also seems to be a complete approach since it combined with some aspects of other approaches like the structural or the situational language teaching approach (see, Rhalmi, August, 2009) in as much as a focus on the study of grammatical structures and vocabulary has also been incorporated, as well as the procedure of the cognitive approach that tries to facilitate generalizations about “competence” leading to “performance”, as it was discussed in section 1.2. The consideration of the target language’s culture, as the direct approach proposes, could also be an interesting aspect to take into account in a degree like the one we are studying.

Fourth, the book that is used in class is not appropriate to achieve all the purposes of the subject *Lengua Inglesa I* in this degree. As it has been discussed in section 3.3., some of the exercises in relation to the development of the writing skills had to be complemented with additional activities designed by the professors because the ones in the book were not sufficient to properly practice and develop the skill. The sections related to developing pronunciation were also insufficient. Furthermore, as seen from the results of the analysis of the book itself and the questionnaires given to current students of the subject, the book tends to be very basic, boring and repetitive, as a consequence of its similarity with the ones that were used in high school. Those who claimed to have found little differences did not make

reference to significant changes, but just to the fact that the book contains some new vocabulary or grammatical aspects or some specific content. However, in general terms, the formula of *Outcomes – Upper Intermediate* is quite similar to the one found in high school books. I would, therefore, suggest the use of a new alternative textbook more suitable for teaching purposes: a book that presents a change in format or structure from the ones used in high school and more focused on the university academic context would be more adequate; a book that goes a step further in the complexity of grammatical structures and exercises; a book which deals with topics more related to the age of students and context in which they are learning (the university, in this case).

Finally, the subject *Lengua Inglesa I*, taught in the first semester of the second year of the degree in English Studies at the ULL, is necessary and effective, but it could be even more effective if some changes were made in order to improve its implementation. Changes like the ones that have been already suggested: the usage of a more university-student oriented book that allows professors to make students reach more adequately all the desired goals at the end of the first semester and, therefore, to facilitate the acquisition of higher levels. The assessment of the four skills would also contribute to this goal, as well as to combine the communicative approach with the aspects of some other methods to make it even stronger and more efficient. Regarding the use of new technologies, innovations can be made regarding tasks that include students' digital competence or making technology part of theoretical classes with videos or PowerPoint presentations to get the learners more actively involved in the teaching-learning process.

Following the framework of the action research approach (see, for example, Mills, 2003), the research conducted in this project has modestly contributed to the reflection on L2 educational practices by means of the analysis of a specific teaching-learning situation, with the ultimate aim of improving students' outcomes.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I – Students' questionnaire

SURVEY ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSE

Purpose: to better understand the actual needs of students enrolled in the course *Lengua Inglesa I* (2014/2015)

- Please answer the following questions, anonymously:
 1. What is your main motivation for acquiring a good command of the English language?
 2. What degree of importance would you give to the development of the following skills for your future professional career? (Please use the following scale: 1 = less important, 2 = important, 3 = quite important, 4 = very important)
Reading
Listening
Speaking
Writing
 3. Do you think that there has been enough work on these skills throughout the course? (Please use the following scale: 1 = not enough, 2 = enough, 3 = quite a lot, 4 = very much)
Reading
Listening
Speaking
Writing
 4. Which of the above skills is for you the most difficult to achieve? Why?
 5. What do you consider your level of English is (in the four basic skills) according to the CEFR? (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2)
Reading
Listening
Speaking

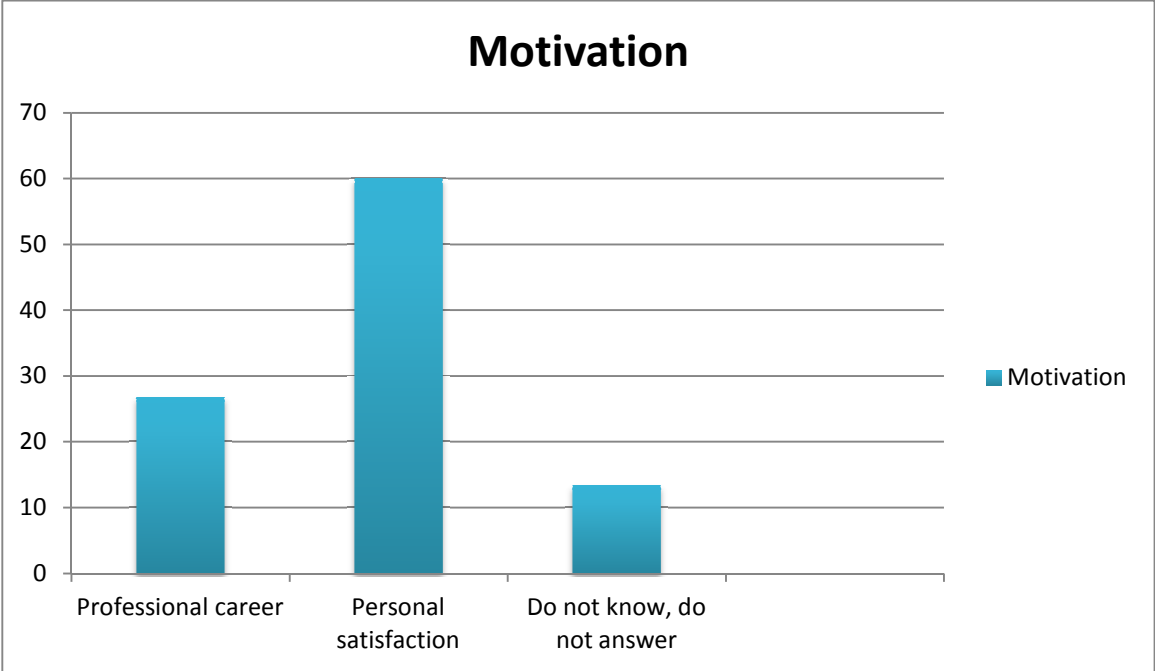
Writing

6. What is your opinion about the Student's book used in class? Weak and strong points.
7. As regards the contents of this book, have you noticed any difference in comparison with the books used in high school?
8. How useful do you find the use of Moodle in the process of teaching-learning the English language?
9. To what extent do you agree with the assessment criteria established in the program guide (*guía docente*) of the subject?
10. Suggestions for improving the design and implementation of an English language course (e.g. teaching strategies, language testing, etc.)

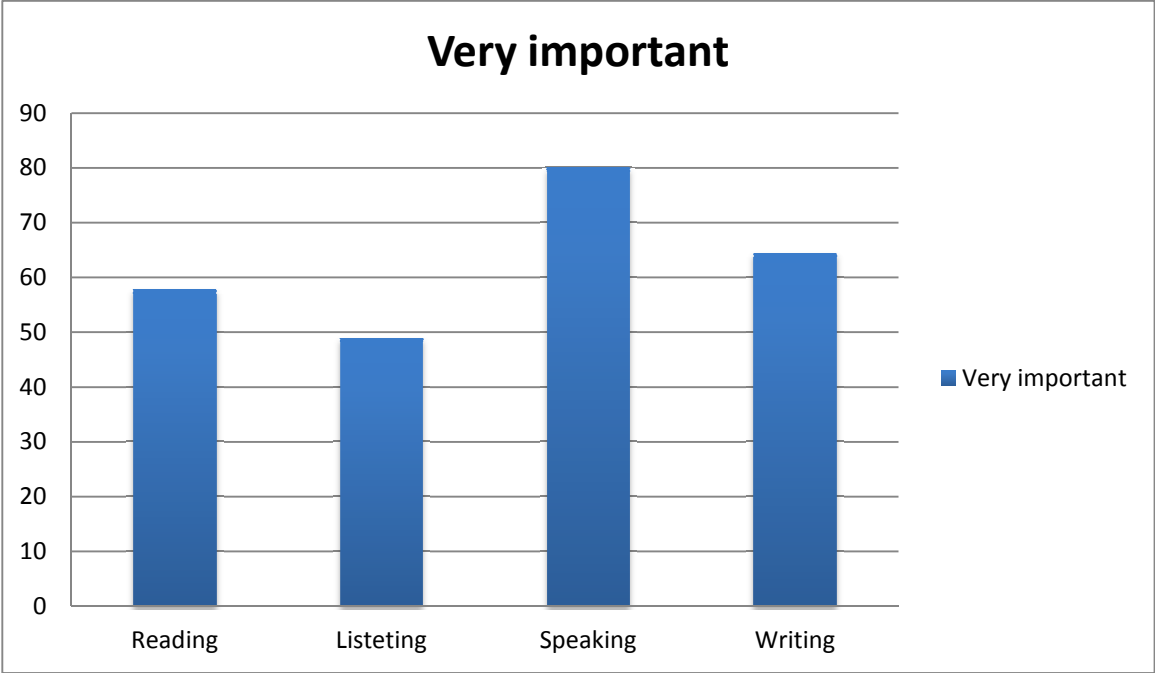
MANY THANKS FOR YOUR COLLABORATION!

Appendix II – Statistical analysis of the questionnaire

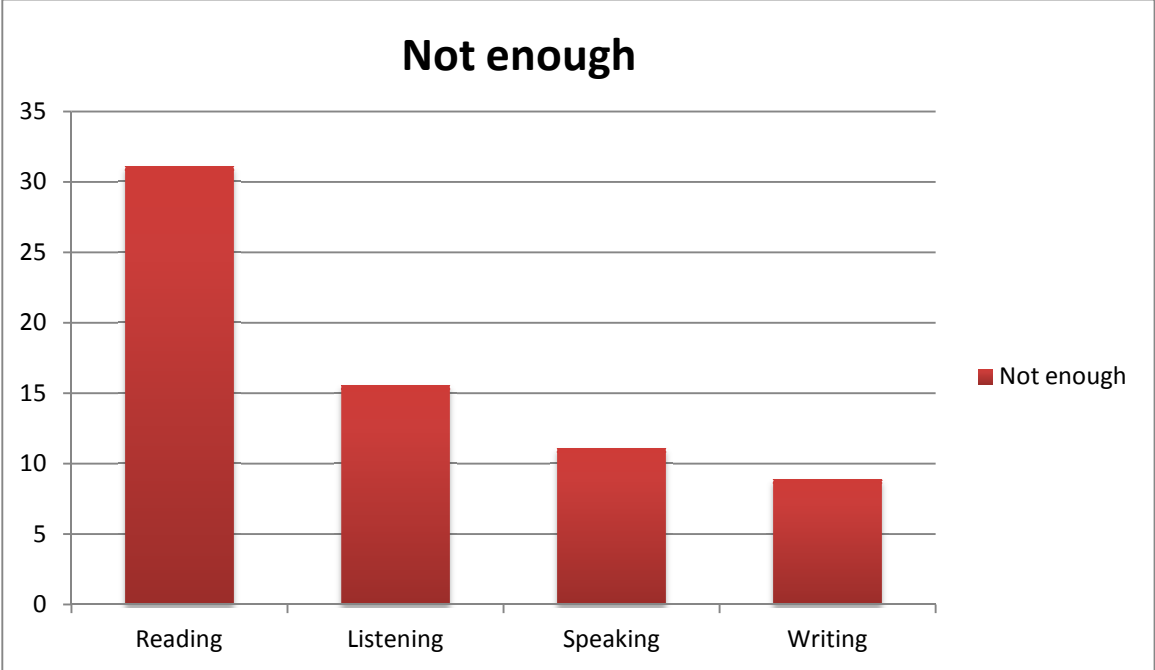
Question 1: What is your main motivation for acquiring a good command of the English language?



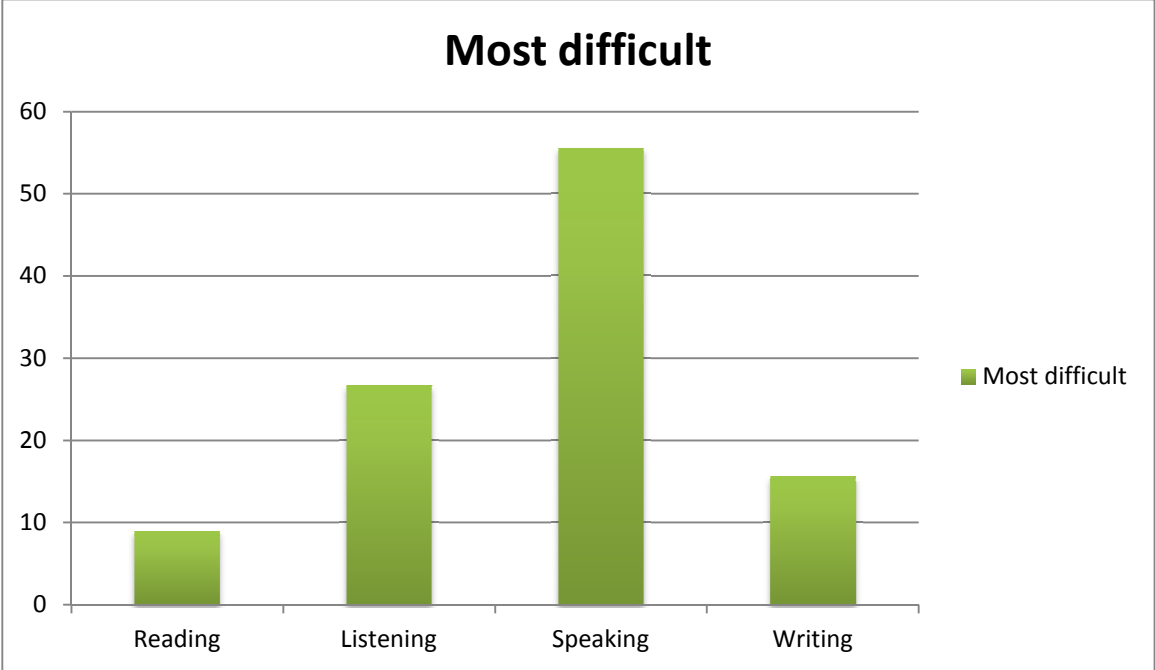
Question 2: What degree of importance would you give to the development of the following skills for your future professional career?



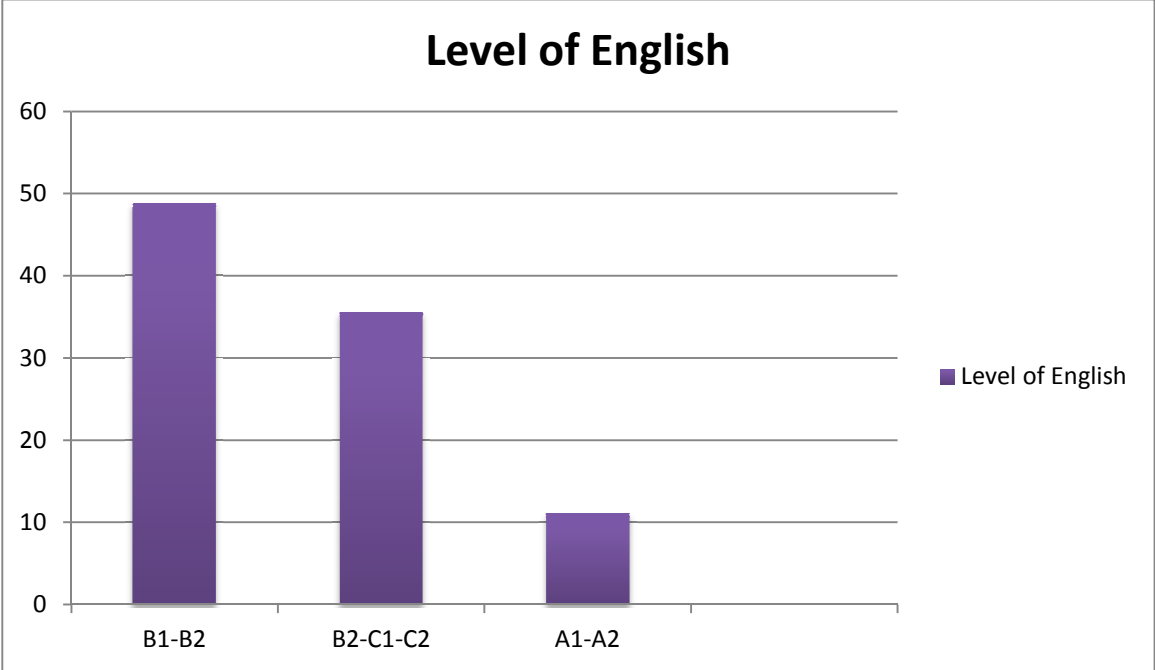
Question 3: Do you think that there has been enough work on these skills throughout the course?



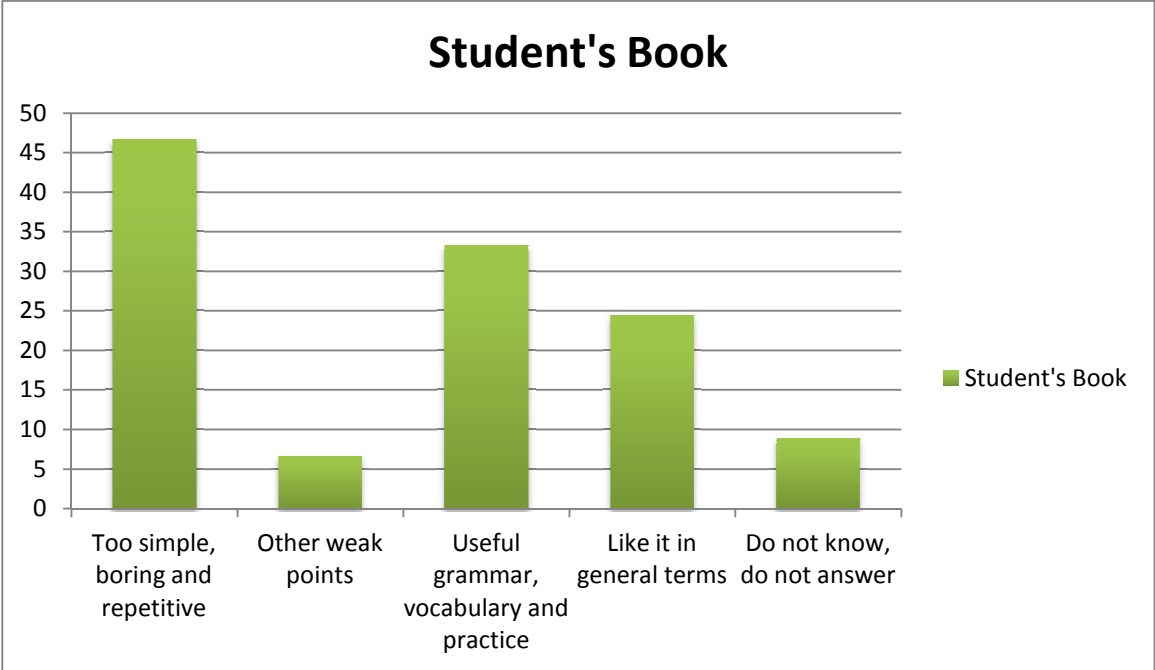
Question 4: Which of the above skills is for you the most difficult to achieve? Why?



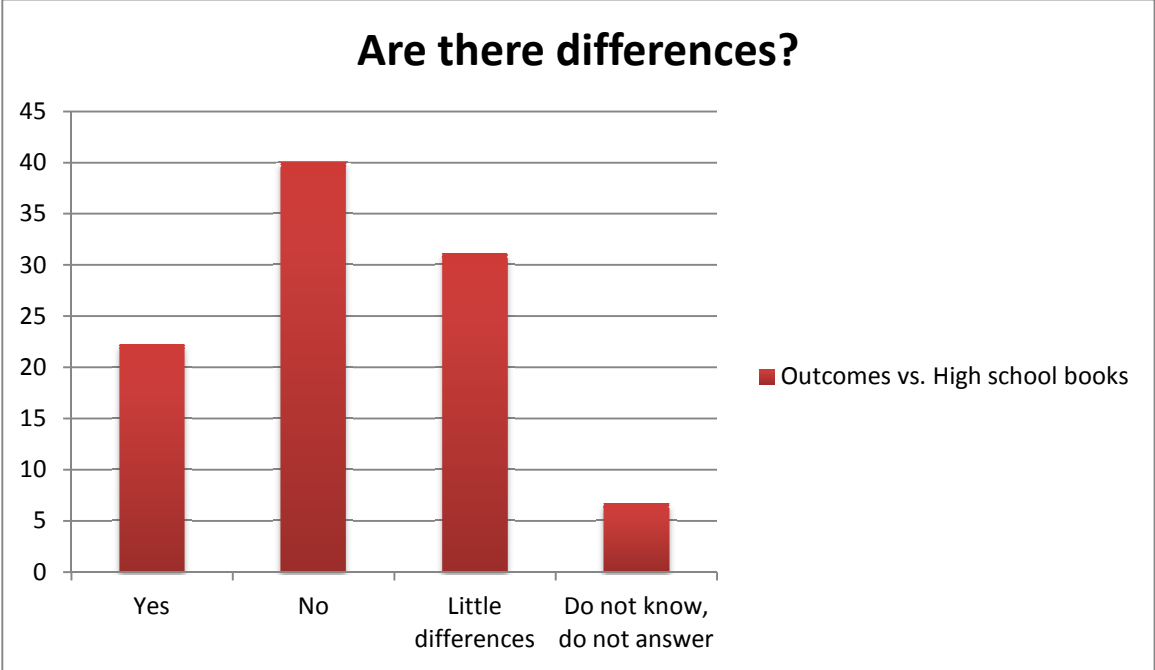
Question 5: What do you consider your level of English is (in the four basic skills) according to the CEFR?



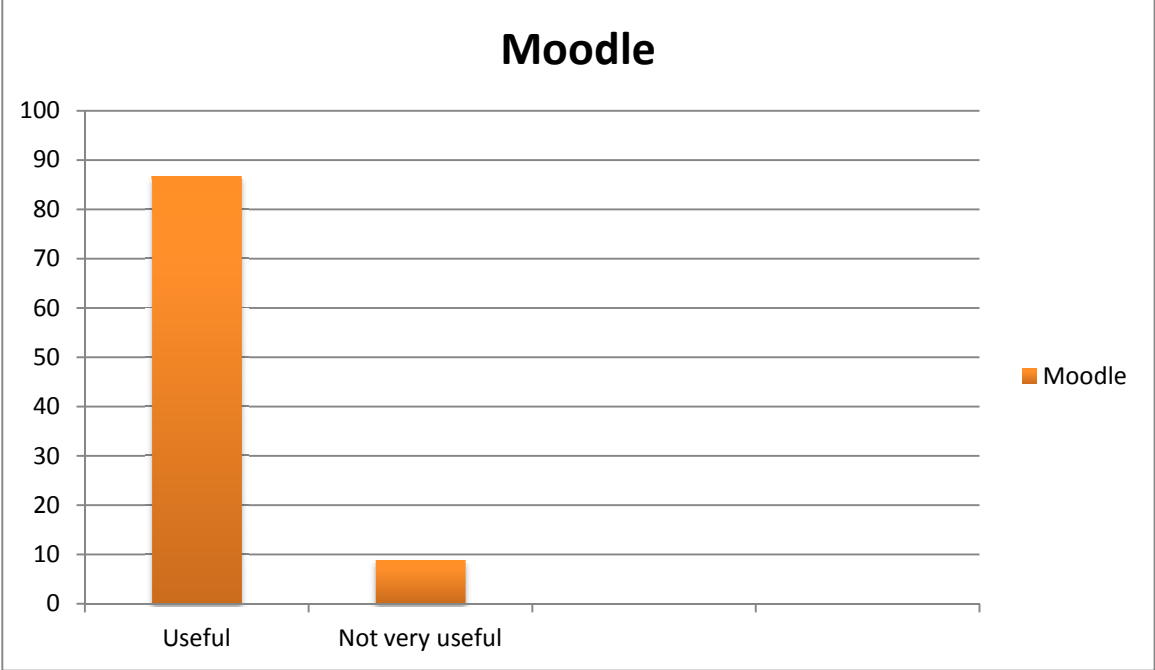
Question 6: What is your opinion about the Student's book used in class? Weak and strong points.



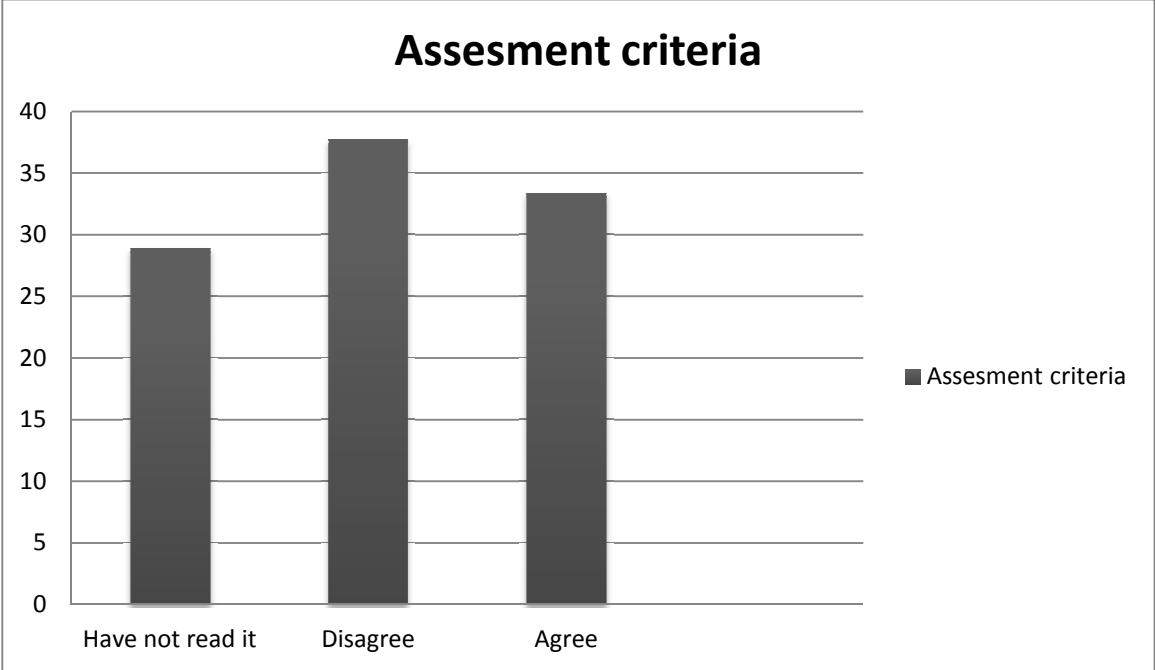
Question 7: As regards the contents of this book, have you noticed any difference in comparison with the books used in high school?



Question 8: How useful do you find the use of Moodle in the process of teaching-learning the English language?



Question 9: To what extent do you agree with the assessment criteria established in the program guide (*guía docente*) of the subject?



Appendix III – Teachers' questionnaire

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH - *Lengua Inglesa I* (2014-2015)

1. On which of the following aspects was your methodology based?

Professor 1 and 2: X The communicative aspects of the L2 language.

The structural teaching of the L2 language.

Professor 1 and 2: X A holistic approach that considers the particular context in which people communicate and the specific purpose of a speaker in a given context, together with the study of grammatical structures and vocabulary.

2. What types of activities did you implement in your classes?

Professor 1 and 2: X Activities that involve interactions and real communication.

Professor 1 and 2: X Activities in which language is used to carry out meaningful tasks.

Professor 1 and 2: X Activities aimed at developing vocabulary and improving grammatical accuracy.

3. Your teaching approach was primarily based on:

The centrality of the teacher in the learning process.

Professor 1 and 2: X The centrality of the student in the learning process.

- Please justify your answer.

Professor 1: *Could I say I try to have the students be central in the learning process? You'd really need to ask the students if they feel they are central or not.*

Professor 2: *I felt that I acted as a guide while the students were actively participating in class, without interrupting them and only giving them feedback at the end of their presentations/exercises. The students were also given the opportunity to choose topics of their*

interest for discussion in the speaking seminars. They were encouraged to work autonomously throughout the course using the Workbook and other internet resources.

4. To what extent did you use the new technologies of information and communication in your classes?

Professor 1: *Relatively limited I'd say since it's mostly Moodle and recordings for listening exercises. I realize that there is much more I could do.*

Professor 2: *I used the Moodle platform to provide students with information, materials, etc. and especially the forum section so that they could do written tasks and interact with the other students. We should improve in this aspect. Could you give us suggestions?*

5. Any other comment.

THANKS FOR YOUR COLLABORATION!

Appendix IV – Checklist for the analysis of the textbook

A. General aspects	
1. Is the book adequate for the students' level and the learning context in which is used?	- Good - OK - Poor
2. Does it have supplementary material?	- Good - OK - Poor
3. Are the cover of the book and its images appealing for learners?	- Good - OK - Poor
B. Practice	
1. Do the exercises contribute to achieve the purposes exposed in the course's teaching guide?	- Good - OK - Poor
2. Is the difficulty of exercises progressive as the students move through the textbook?	- Good - OK - Poor
3. Are the exercises varied and challenging?	- Good - OK - Poor
4. Are the exercises balanced in their format, containing both controlled and free practice?	- Good - OK - Poor
C. Four basic skills acquisition	
Listening	
1. Could the situations presented in the exercises be compared to real life circumstances?	- Good - OK - Poor
2. Do the activities present different accents, voices and pronunciation of native speakers?	- Good - OK - Poor

3. Are the listening activities contextualized within the topics of the unit?	- Good - OK - Poor
Writing	
1. Are there explanations of the structure of the different types of texts?	- Good - OK - Poor
2. Are models provided for the different types of texts?	- Good - OK - Poor
Reading	
1. Are the texts' length and difficulty appropriate?	- Good - OK - Poor
2. Do the texts treat interesting topics for the students?	- Good - OK - Poor
3. Does the book use authentic reading material?	- Good - OK - Poor
Speaking	
1. Do the activities encourage students to participate and help them to become more confident when speaking English?	- Good - OK - Poor
2. Could the situations given in the activities be considered natural situations?	- Good - OK - Poor
3. Is there a balance of exercises that require an individual answer, pair or group work?	- Good - OK - Poor
GRAMMAR	
1. Are useful explanations provided regarding the uses and forms of the	- Good - OK

different grammatical aspects?	- Poor
2. The grammar provided is appropriate to the students at this grade?	- Good - OK - Poor
3. Is grammar contextualized in the units?	- Good - OK - Poor
VOCABULARY	
1. Are the new words presented at an appropriate rate so that texts are understandable and so that students are able to retain new vocabulary?	- Good - OK - Poor
2. Is the new vocabulary presented in a variety of ways?	- Good - OK - Poor
3. Are the new words repeated and used efficiently?	- Good - OK - Poor
PRONUNCIATION	
1. Do the activities highlight and practice natural pronunciation (intonation, stress...)?	- Good - OK - Poor
2. Is the material used adequate to facilitate its learning?	- Good - OK - Poor