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THE INNOVATION OF THE USE OF ENGLISH MINI PROJECTS
IN LICEO EXPERIMENTAL BILINGÜE DE SARCHÍ IN ORDER
TO ENGAGE TENTH GRADE STUDENTS IN THE TEACHING
AND LEARNING PROCESS OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN
LANGUAGE

CAMBRONERO ARROYO JUNIOR ALEXANDER
MOREIRA HUERTAS DANIEL

GRECIA
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THE INNOVATION OF THE USE OF ENGLISH MINI PROJECTS IN LICEO EXPERIMENTAL BILINGÜE DE SARCHÍ IN ORDER TO ENGAGE TENTH GRADE STUDENTS IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Firma

MOREIRA HUERTAS DANIEL
Nombre sustentante

117480518
Cédula sustentante

Jury's approval sheet



TRIBUNAL EXAMINADOR

Esta tesis fue aprobada por el Tribunal Examinador de la carrera de **La Enseñanza del Inglés**, requisito para optar por el grado **Licenciatura en La Enseñanza del Inglés**.

MBa. Roy Alfaro Alfaro
Tutor

MBa. Ariel Gustavo Vargas Vindas
Lector

Licda. Yanory Arguedas Carballo
Lector quien Preside

VERIFICACION DEL TRIBUNAL EXAMINADOR

Licda. Patricia Porras Jiménez
NOMBRE DE DIRECTOR DE CARRERA

FIRMA

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FECHA

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Abstract

The implementation of the integrated mini-project has been established since 2017 as part of the requirements for those applying the official English curriculum of the Ministry of Public Education in Costa Rica. The motivation to conduct this research comes from the experiences of the researchers in two main areas: the process of training to become teachers, i.e. university time, and the actual teaching of languages in a public or private institution under the regulation of the MEP. The objective of this research was to analyze the implementation of integrated mini projects by the Ministry of Public Education to improve the process of learning English in 10th grade students and with this to make a proposal in terms of training for teachers so that they can obtain tools for the creation of creative and innovative integrated Mini Projects that comply with all the regulations of the MEP curriculum. The research is based on the question How do integrated and innovative mini-projects involve tenth grade students? In order to solve this question, the methodology to be followed is deductive, since it starts from a theory. Since there was no possibility of applying instruments due to the pandemic, the research was based on bibliographic references. The type of research has been established as descriptive. The nature and focus of this study guided the researchers to use a qualitative approach. As a result of this research work, a proposal has been created under the workshop modality to train English teachers and university students who are in the process of becoming teachers in the implementation of the Mini Integrated Project. The developed bibliographic research shows that integrated mini projects are efficient, that students could develop motivation by engaging in this type of tasks, a wide range of applications and technological features could be used by students and teachers, and it also highlights the whole new world of opportunities that is aligned to the use of mini integrated projects. This research can be considered a useful tool for many people in education who have felt the need to improve their understanding of integrated mini-projects.

La implementación del mini-proyecto integrado se ha establecido desde el 2017 como parte de los requisitos para quienes aplican el plan de estudios oficial de inglés del Ministerio de Educación Pública en Costa Rica. La motivación de realizar esta investigación proviene de las experiencias de los investigadores en dos ámbitos principales: el proceso de formación para ser docentes, es decir, el tiempo universitario, y la propia enseñanza de idiomas en una institución pública o privada bajo la regulación del MEP. El objetivo de esta investigación fue analizar la implementación de mini proyectos integrados por parte del Ministerio de Educación Pública para mejorar el proceso de aprendizaje del inglés en estudiantes de 10^o grado y con

ello realizar una propuesta en términos de capacitación para docentes con el fin de que puedan obtener herramientas para la creación de Mini Proyectos integrados creativos e innovadores que cumplan con todas las regulaciones del programa de estudio del MEP. La investigación se basa en la pregunta ¿Cómo los mini-proyectos integrados e innovadores involucran a los estudiantes de décimo grado? Para resolver esa pregunta la metodología a seguir es deductiva, por cuanto parte de una teoría. Dado que no hubo posibilidad de aplicar instrumentos debido a la pandemia, la investigación se basó en referencias bibliográficas. El tipo de investigación se ha establecido como descriptiva. La naturaleza y el enfoque de este estudio orientan a los investigadores a utilizar un enfoque cualitativo. Como resultado de este trabajo de investigación se ha creado una propuesta bajo la modalidad de taller para capacitar a los docentes de inglés y a los estudiantes universitarios que están en proceso de ser docentes en la implementación del Mini Proyecto Integrado. La investigación bibliográfica desarrollada muestra que los mini proyectos integrados son eficientes, que los estudiantes podrían desarrollar motivación al involucrarse en este tipo de tareas, podrían ser utilizadas una amplia gama de aplicaciones y características tecnológicas por los estudiantes y profesores, y además pone de manifiesto el mundo completamente nuevo de oportunidades que está alineado al uso de los mini proyectos integrados. Esta investigación puede considerarse una herramienta útil para muchas personas del ámbito educativo que han sentido la necesidad de mejorar su comprensión de los mini-proyectos integrados.

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CHAPTER I
Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The Learning Process has always been considered as something generic, as teachers constantly repeat their activities, practices and methodologies to "make sure" that their students learn the topics or content necessary, with the simple purpose that they need them to succeed in the evaluations. Even this aspect, evaluation, is highly criticized. Since education in Costa Rica is somehow considered standard, it is a common practice to reuse some instruments and apply some activities that teachers contemplate as effective. In these terms, integrated projects break with the rule given the fact that there are some requirements that can produce variations every time that they are planned. These types of tasks are well-known as "mini projects" in the educational community in Costa Rica, even though their official name is Integrated Project. For the purposes of this research, it will be referred as integrated mini project.

Integrated mini projects are different types of activities that allow teachers to evaluate the learning process, but it is also something that is already predetermined within the syllabus. It is rare but not impossible for teachers to consider an idea from students to modify that mini project, as they too, may consider it "generic". After opening a gate like this in which students are involved in their own process, the interaction between students and the content could be more effective in the sense of feeling engaged with the topic and encouraged to improve specific skills through the task.

It is normal for teachers to just follow or stick to that script that has already been assigned to them, the syllabus from the Ministry of Education (from now on MEP). They prefer to keep the activity simple and boring even when they are aware that they might have the capacity to modify or create a much more interactive type of assessment, not only for the students but also for themselves, because they are a part of the process as well.

And one of the most interesting aspects is that as a teacher, there is no need to carry all that weight to modify the integrated mini project but take into consideration ideas provided by students. As a teacher it is possible to let their imagination flow and go wild, and as a result you can get a motivated group because they will feel involved and appreciated. Besides, the result will be different and new fresh ideas might arise because their minds and perspectives are totally different.

Therefore, the integrated mini project has a bigger chance of being an interactive activity, with a good class environment because the students will be having fun and enjoying

their work, rather than just working in a boring activity. It is quite relevant to clarify that even though in this paper some concepts, definitions, and steps of the project-based learning method (PBL) are used, it does not mean that method is equivalent to an action-oriented approach (AOA). The AOA uses mini projects at the end of each unit, this aspect will be explained thoroughly later in this paper, meanwhile PBL uses projects throughout the whole learning process. The AOA and PBL will be supported based on the perspective of some authors in the theoretical framework of this investigation.

This paper is divided in seven chapters. Chapter one deals with the introduction, problem statement, justification, objectives general and specific, scopes and limitations. Then, chapter two has to do with the theoretical framework, in this part of the investigation theory like principles, regulations, perspectives of some authors, related studies, and use of literature resources will be implemented to provide support to the study. Next, chapter three is about methodological framework. In this section, the research method is explained, the type of investigation is defined, the research Approach is established, the sources and subjects of information are shown, the population and sample are shared, and the instruments are described. Later, chapter IV has to do with the data analysis. In this segment, the theory from different authors is compared or contrasted in order to establish clear points of view. Moving on, chapter V deals with strategies that were designed following the found theory, in this case 3 well-organized integrated mini projects that could guide the readers through the process of creating tasks like these. Following, chapter VI is about conclusions. In that fragment of the paper there are final recapitalizations based on the literature used to build up this paper. Finally, chapter VII regards recommendations that arise once the investigation is done.

1.2 Problem Statement

Developing projects might be a field that not many people feel comfortable with. Overseeing a proposal, a final paper, an educational project, or even any kind of work beyond the educational area is something that teachers and students in general are not prepared to deal with. Following the regulations of MEP is mandatory for teachers and professors to apply integrated projects. In that sense, teachers must carry out integrated mini projects with their students through the different periods in the year.

Understanding these projects, associating them with context, letting students develop critical thinking, and keeping track of them is a lot of work. A significant number of teachers

struggle while applying integrated mini projects. This might have many causes like lack of time, unknowing the process, lack of creativity, undersupply of resources, and so on.

Considering the aspects previously stated, the problem statement falls on the question: How does innovative mini projects engage tenth grade students?

1.3 Justification

In elementary schools and high schools, students are required to perform a four-stage integrated mini project to assess their knowledge and thus rate their skills based on language, but these are often generic and unattractive to the student. This research seeks to generate knowledge regarding the integrated mini projects proposed in the syllabus of the MEP for the use of teachers. At the same time, a series of innovative strategies will be proposed with the intention of motivating students to implement these projects.

This research tries to fulfill one gap that has been identified after considering the educational formation and teaching experience of the researchers. The lack of preparation of new teachers (those who are just finishing their degree) to implement and develop projects like are required for MEP's purposes. It has been recognized as one of the weaknesses of the curriculum in many universities. After realizing that situation, the motivation of conducting this investigation has become a necessity.

Finally, two great intentions of this research are to develop critical thinking in students and to become active participants in their own learning process considering the advantages that integrated mini projects offer, and to encourage teachers to look for new activities to be applied during these assignments. Achieving these objectives will create a meaningful learning in teachers that make them grow professionally and it will benefit students in terms of engaging and motivation.

1.4 Objectives

1.4.1 General Objective

- a. To analyze the integrated project implementation by the Ministerio de Educación Pública for improving the English Learning process in 10th grade students.

1.4.2 Specific objectives

- a. To describe the implementation of integrated projects for improving the English learning process in 10th grade students.
- b. To illustrate the advantages of using integrated projects in the English class in 10th grade students.
- c. To propose a liable source of information for integrated projects based on Ministerio de Educación Pública syllabus for 10th grade students.

1.5 Scope and Limitations

Regarding the scope of this investigation, there are some populations that will be benefited. Firstly, English teachers could have access to a liable and contextualized source of information related to Integrated Mini Projects. Moreover, this might be an antecedent to motivate further investigations. Besides, reaching this population means to improve the quality of education since a gap could be fulfilled. Finally, a well-organized integrated mini project should have a social impact and should be significant enough to create knowledge and develop critical thinking in students, that is why there are some guidelines and example to help teachers to accomplish this goal.

Limitations during the investigations come from different areas. The affection of COVID-19 represented a challenge to conduct the original investigation. As a result, changes in methodology, sources of information, research instruments, and even the objectives suffered variations. This investigation was conducted following a bibliographic approach but originally it was designed as an applied investigation.

The researchers feel encourage to develop an aside investigation considering students' perspective, teachers' points of view, and applying some techniques in order to create a control group and an experimental group to compare results and draw new conclusions.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Teaching languages has been changing dramatically in the last decade. Transformations include contents, functions, methods, evaluations, the use of cutting-edge technology, and even official syllabus from the national authorities of education. In Latin América, Costa Rica leads the percentage of literacy according to Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (UNESCO). This vanguard is the result of multiple modalities of education available in Costa Rica such as: elementary schools, high schools that could be academic, technical, bilingual, night schools, special centers to work with people who present disabilities, among others, and private institutions that must follow the regulations of MEP. Going back to the teaching of languages, some advances and efforts have been put into practice as well. The “Transformación curricular”, “Alianza para el Bilingüismo”, partnerships with Alegra Learning y EduTech of Central America are examples of the innovations that have been implemented by MEP.

Considering the application of the syllabus and other regulations, it is quite interesting to understand where those policies come from. Since those norms influence the application of integrated mini projects somehow. It is significant to establish a clear background. García (2017) in his research “Gestión curricular en centros educativos costarricenses: Un análisis desde la percepción docente y la dirección”, using a mix methodology, in the first instance, the method takes on an empirical-analytical character, which follows a deductive process and with an ex post facto design, that is, without any manipulation of the variables, from this quantitative approach, data collection was carried out in a transactional or cross-sectional manner with the teaching community, states that all the arrangements created by the ministerial entities on education are established and applied in the institutions, and not just in Costa Rica, it happens the same way in other countries of Latin-America. This situation is important to the people who see themselves involved in the implementation of these new methods or policies, they see how big entities are involved in that perception as well, for instance the MEP, The United Nations Education Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, the World Bank (WB), and others like public or state universities and international conventions.

Analyzing this information, it is clearly understood that the educational decisions are taken by some national institutions and international as well. Besides, there are some interests while taking courses of action like: economic, social, politics, human rights situations, and so on.

Following this line, the use of alternative evaluation relies on others but the teachers. Some results of this research are some of the aspects that the teaching community considers relevant to curriculum management, where they indicate that they strongly agree or disagree, pedagogical mediation and course programs (83%), aspects such as teacher evaluation, laboratories, or materials (approximately 75%). On the other hand, aspects such as transport, the School Board, or the Board of Education, almost half of the sample indicate not knowing, disagreeing, or very much disagreeing (García, 2017).

In order to apply integrated mini projects at the end of every unit teachers are clear about the fact that these policies explained above also cover the assessment strategies. Portillo (2017) in his paper "Educación por habilidades: Perspectivas y retos para el sistema educativo", portrays some challenges of the new syllabus, not only English. According to him, there are three main challenges to be faced, but the second one is the one that fits with this research because the second challenge is the creation of an evaluation system that is more emphasized on formative evaluation and not so much on the summative aspect. Meanwhile in traditional education the grades can hide the true progress of the student, in skills education formative evaluation is the key piece.

Integrated mini projects are not considered part of the final grade in terms of credit or scores. There is no aspect of the summative evaluation that gives credit after completing a project like this. The implementation of this technique requires a lot of innovation and hard work to engage students because the traditional motivation of "points" or "percentage" will not be included.

Carless (2012) defined innovation as an attempt to change educational improvement by doing something which is seen by people as something new or different, in addition, how the education has seen some evolution over the past decades, like new pedagogical approaches, teaching materials, and technological tools. Waters (2009, as cited in Carless, 2012) declared,

...the management of innovation is a critically important field because the development of education rests in its hands. The litany of failures of educational reforms indicates that an enhanced understanding and implementation of the principles and practice of the management of educational change would make a major contribution to the discipline (p.1).

Furthermore, Pinzon (2013) carried out a spectacular research about how a project-based learning approach will increase motivation of 8th grader students in a rural area of

Colombia. The author proposed the following question, to what extent does Project Based Learning Method keep the students motivated to learn English? It might not seem easy to answer so two projects were developed with these students and then they must compare their previous classes with the ones that involve integrated mini projects.

This study was carried out in Institución Educativa Jordán. This is a rural public Institution from Moniquirá, in Boyacá. All the students belong to the rural area and these students are in eighth grade of high school. They follow a Vocational High School through an agreement with SENA Institution. Some findings of this investigation are:

- a. The students evidenced how speaking was easier when they remembered the activities done during the whole process.
- b. In the same line, the students stated how motivated they felt when they were talking to the smaller students because they felt they were important people.
- c. Richard mentions how motivated he felt when talked to his younger partners. His self-esteem has increased.
- d. Richard is stating how his self-confidence allowed him to take mistakes as normal in his learning process.
- e. Even though the students made mistakes, they evidenced how confident they felt when they talked to the other students.

In order to contrast the lack of motivation that a learner might experience while developing integrated mini projects the use of technology represents a great opportunity to innovate. The study conducted by Ilter (2009), "Effect of technology on motivation in EFL classrooms", tried to erase the common doubt that questioned if teachers should use technological tools in order to increase their student's motivation by applying a survey to male and female students, and it explains how the use of technology triggers a different ability on the students who are more reserved or shy, and pushes them to reveal their capacity and creative mind, it is just another and different way to motivate them to participate by using apps and other platforms. It is important to remember that the use of any program has multiple benefits like the creation of practical, creative, and authentic activities that can be really the engaging factor some teachers need at the moment of developing a project.

Deeler and Gray (2000, as cited in Binnur, 2009) declared:

Although technology does not substitute for a good teacher it will motivate the language learners and enrich classroom atmosphere. To use technology in the classroom effectively

teachers have important roles, they should plan and organize the lessons according to these materials. First, they should plan, set up and use the correct equipment in EFL classrooms (p.137).

The study of Binnur (2009) showed that both male and female students believed that the use of technology and its tools in the classroom motivated them to pay more attention and to participate more in the development of the class, therefore they felt how the use of it had the chance of increasing their level. At the end, based on the results the author of the paper mentioned some suggestions:

- a. Technology should take place in English language curriculum, which can create a lively classroom atmosphere and facilitate learning.
- b. Instructors at universities should focus on the importance of using technology and use authentic and interactive activities for maximum success in EFL classrooms.
- c. Materials which are available on the internet should be selected according to the needs and interests of the students.
- d. The teacher should not think that using technology is the only solution for good motivation; the lessons should be based on well-designed technological classrooms and pedagogical considerations.
- e. A good teaching-learning process should be supported by technological equipment, which will provide students with more interest.

In the study of Sarrazin (2019) it is mentioned that there is a possibility that the students may need a more balanced class, as they have more knowledge than thought at first, meaning they require more practice and activities related to the topics. Yet, those activities must not be based on memorization, as the students are not in agreement with the time they would need to sacrifice in order to memorize all the information. That is why everything must find a balanced point, in which they are learning and also, they can have free time to enjoy.

Sarrazin (2019) also explains how the students have the feeling that they are wasting time by putting the extra effort in their free time, as they do not see actual results, as they have the option of just looking for the answer on the internet, those methods are not working out for that kind of teacher anymore. Meaning the teacher who bases their work on some textbook and nothing else, that is why they are supposed to evolve, by using integrated mini projects the students cannot just look for an answer, they must investigate why the answer is correct.

The article written by Carless (2012) "Innovation in Language Teaching and Learning" explains how classes were throughout history and the way the multiple challenges they faced in order to change the educational process at the time were underestimated by others. In recent times this has changed a little bit, some of the classic inconveniences remain, but people are more open to new ideas and that is perfect, because nowadays the innovation in the classroom is completely necessary if a teacher wants to create a good, meaningful, and successful class.

Carless (2012) also mentioned multiple aspects that show how the lack of innovation can affect the learning process, but he did not stop there, he went further and explained three reasons or barriers that are always part of the problem that the absence of innovation can be.

The main barriers facing innovation can be broadly grouped into three categories according to Carless (2012):

- a. *Teacher-related*: lack of teacher ownership or understanding of the innovation; change not congruent with existing teacher values and beliefs; negative attitudes, often engendered by the additional workload entailed; teachers are often emotionally bound up in existing practices; and change can be personally threatening.
- b. *System-related*: poor communication and lack of mutual trust between change agents and frontline implementers; putting too much emphasis on the intricacies of the innovation itself and not enough on consideration of how it could be implemented; lack of appropriate resources to support the innovation; insufficient professional development and support for teachers; failure to bridge the gap between rhetoric and reality; cynicism engendered by previous failed attempts at innovation; failure to align a pedagogic innovation with the requirements of high-stakes examinations.
- c. *School-related*: lack of supportive culture for change; conservative forces within a school; lack of support or understanding from senior management; inadequate school-based resources; student difficulties in adapting to teacher change, particularly if the rationale has not been persuasively articulated.

Blumenfeld *et al.*, (1991) mentioned how even the detailed and carefully planned projects cannot be a source of motivation for the students, the teacher has a big role to play in it. It is critical to determine the best way possible to help and motivate the students in the process of developing the research. But it is important to remember that just like the students, the professor or teacher also needs to feel engaged with the process.

Besides the third element stated before is also reinforced by Blumenfeld *et al*, (1991) by saying “Classroom conditions will affect whether students adapt learning or performance goals in doing projects. Even if they are interested in the problem and perceive themselves to be competent to carry out the project, students may not engage the topic in a manner that promotes understanding if the teacher makes performance orientation salient” (p. 380). It is evidence that there are many factors that can play against or in favor in the learning process.

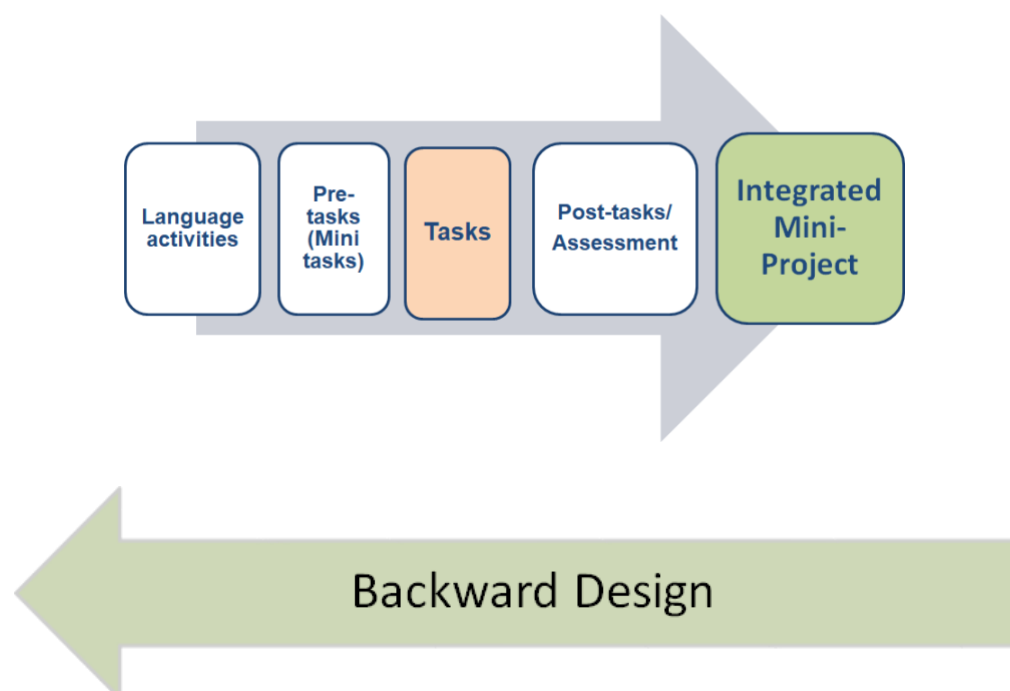
The carry out of integrated mini projects is mandatory in educational institutions under the modality of academic, technical, bilingual, and some others. These tasks are part of each grade and each trimester in the national education system of Costa Rica and it is linked to the use of the Action Oriented Approach (from now on AOA). To understand what an integrated mini project is, it is highly relevant to clarify some aspects about AOA. Using this approach, the performance of tasks is linked to “can do” or aims, besides, “scenarios” must be considered as stages to develop the linguistic skills and interact with peers, and themes to narrow the learning process.

Moreover, there is an encouragement to research about further contents and ideas in order to accomplish a goal-oriented product (project) based on an integrated sequence of activities within some domain, scenario and theme. These projects take into consideration the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Students in tenth grade should be placed in the B1.1 level based on that reference. This aspect is not only considered in summative evaluation but also while performing their project.

To understand even more the sequence of the AOA and the final integrated mini project the following figure has been taken from a Power Point Presentation created by Marianella Granados Sirias and Yamileth Chaves Soto from National English Advisory Third Cycle and Diversified Education in 2017:

Figure 1

Task Orientated to a Product.



Created by Granados y Chaves (2017).

Another interesting aspect of creating an integrated mini project while using action-oriented approach (AOA) is materials. After the official decision of changing the syllabus and launching the curricular transformation, teachers used to have textbooks as allies. Besides, in many educational institutions the use of complete textbooks is no longer allowed, at least in English as a subject. Consequently, some authors have been evaluating the written materials that teachers have been using. Acar (2020) in his paper “Transforming communicative tasks into mini-projects”, critically analyses the tasks named as ‘projects’ at the end of the first and eighth units of the English textbook ‘İngilizce 7’ used in the secondary schools in Turkey to show that they do not reflect the characteristics of mini-projects as a form of the application of the action-oriented approach in language textbooks. Secondly, how these tasks can be transformed into mini projects is explained. This research is particularly appealing because the author creates a way to change textbooks projects into life experience mini projects. One the findings according to the author is:

Given that both the curriculum and the textbook do not successfully present the design of mini-projects as an implementation of the action-oriented approach, the English teachers

may naturally find it difficult to implement the action-oriented approach in and/or outside the classroom. It is, however, still possible to transform these tasks in the textbook into mini- projects by adding the characteristics of mini-projects to the tasks, which is the main objective of this article. In this respect, it is hoped that the article will show the teachers how to transform these tasks into mini-projects (Acar, 2020, p.9).

Therefore, as we can see through evidence, the implementation of integrated mini projects is part of the syllabus, implies a new way of evaluation, requires the use of technology and motivation of the students, it also needs the creativity of the participants, and finally they are rarely stated in old textbooks.

As Sazarrin (2019) describes “Rather than asking students to regurgitate facts, which would probably send students directly to their phones for an answer, PBL allows students to use their phones as sources of information in the process of problem-solving. In other words, the phone is not going to give them the answers anymore, cannot form the questions they need to ask, or can’t identify the process they need to work through to find the solution. Students must divine this for themselves.”

As mentioned, the use of phones can be outstanding for the development of the project, as it makes it easier to find information about a specific topic or question and because of it there is little to no need to look or use old books or papers, as the data can be found in a few clicks. And one of the key aspects of it, is how the answer is not just handed to the students, they must search and adjust the information in order to fit it with the contextualized problem stated in the task.

Acar (2019) in his paper “The Action-Oriented Approach: Integrating Democratic Citizenship Education into Language Teaching” says, “This means a contribution to personality development while learning languages. The students freely and voluntarily choose projects they will be involved in and make the necessary search for information and design and implement them cooperatively to give a product” (p.5). The author links the use of projects with an affective dimension in terms of providing freewill to students while choosing their topics and activities of projects.

Besides, the author describes and compares the use of action-oriented approach like “language classrooms in the action-oriented approach, should be turned into mini-societies in which language users should be social actors who can live and work together harmoniously” (p.3). Theory suggests that involving students in projects will give them the chance to face real,

or at least, simulated reality, situations. Those experiences will be extremely helpful to the students in terms of managing future problems.

Perrault and Albert (2018) in their paper “Utilizing project-based learning to increase sustainability attitudes among students” mention that “In no other situation is active learning better reflected than through project-based learning (PBL) where students are tasked with an authentic, real-world challenge they must tackle by working with a team to analyze and interpret information (Lee et al., 2014, p. 20, cited in Perrault and Albert, 2018, p. 5). These are other supporters of the PBL method. These authors highlight the relevant aspect of involving students in activities that challenge them and make them grow to be prepared once they leave the theory of the classroom and must apply it to the real world.

Following these principles, what is exactly an integrated mini project? According to the MEP’s syllabus (2017): “The Integrated Project is a formative, skill-integrated performance, both didactic and assessment strategy performed in the class environment” (p.34). After analyzing this definition, it is evidenced that the execution of integrated mini projects is a complex mission. The use of a combination of skills makes this strategy incredibly enriching because students can take advantage of the master skill or challenge themselves to use the less developed one.

Therefore, by being part of projects, students are capable of enhancing not only their linguistics competence but also their social skills like Lee and Lim (2012) states “Team project-based learning is one of the most used methods to activate interactions among students. Team project-based learning has been introduced and is increasingly used as a teaching and learning method in higher education to promote knowledge building through social interaction (Von Kotze & Cooper, 2000, cited in Lee and Lim, 2012, p. 214) This is another author who holds up the significance of the use of projects in the teaching-learning process.

Based on the definition by Ministerio de Educación Pública (2017) of what an integrated mini-project is, it can be described as a teaching method in which the students need to put into practice everything they have learned, this method is also known as Project Based Learning. As mentioned on the article “What is PBL?”, “Project Based Learning is a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging, and complex question, problem, or challenge” (Buck Institute for Education, n.d.).

There are some aspects while establishing the difference between an integrated mini-project and a simple project, and that is precisely what MEP is developing in order to get the best out of this the learning process, they are using to their advantage the skills the students already master, to say it in a way, and they base the integrated mini-project from that point, it is not a simple project in which they just get a topic, little bit of research, presentation and they are done, no. For MEP, integrated mini projects are based on the collaboration among students, it is more than just memorizing information, they practice critical thinking to find a solution to a problem and use the right manner of communication with one another in order to keep the “work environment” in a healthy atmosphere. Bender (2012, citing to Barell, 2007, 2010; Baron, 2011; Grant, 2010) states “PBL may be defined as using authentic, real-world projects, based on a highly motivating and engaging question, task, or problem, to teach students academic content in the context of working cooperatively to solve the problem” (p. 15). From the previous quote it is quite remarkable the use of the word “motivating” since some authors mentioned in this paper also share the idea that the use of projects is extremely linked to the motivation of students. Once students identify a new way of teaching, like the use of projects, they might be willing to participate and get involved in the class.

The educational institution where this investigation takes place is bilingual, so the skills are divided in terms of listening and speaking - reading and writing. By using integrated mini projects, the chance to be flexible and let students decide about the use of an integrated skill could give them more confidence to perform the final task. The second part of the definition falls on the academic aspects which refer that the task has an educational goal and must follow some steps and stages in order to be considered as a formative but not summative element.

The integrated mini project has five specific characteristics that are also mentioned in the MEP’s syllabus (2017). First, it must be proactive, not reactive. It means that students have the chance to propose a variety of activities to develop the task and not only react to the ones that have been planned by the teacher. Students are allowed to use their creativity considering the scenario and the social interaction somehow in order to give closure to the theme and contents covered.

Second, the projects must be interconnected with the classroom activities. Regarding this topic it is also relevant to highlight the role of the teacher based on the AOA. Based on the approach and MEP’s syllabus, teachers are “...mediator; a guide and a catalyzer for helping the learners learn and reinforce their competences to become autonomous thinkers and active agents of change while successfully performing the tasks.” (p.36). Scenarios and themes are

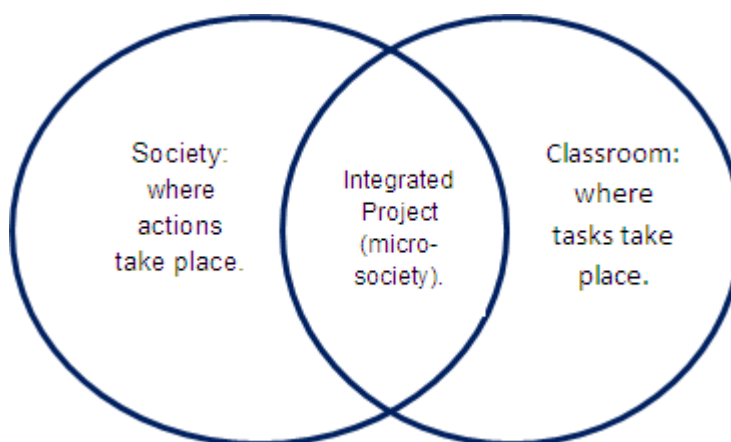
part of the syllabus, but the teacher must look for the activities to make students internalize that theory as well as promote the investigation of further contents that could be used in integrated mini projects (MEP, 2017).

Third, it is a formative and skill integrated activity that embodies the four macro skills if needed and does not have any percentage in the final score for the students. This innovative way of assessment is concatenate with the critical thinking that is also part of the new strategies to create citizens. Fourth, there is a social dimension in which integrated mini projects have their context. It means that learners have interacted using scenarios and most of time those scenarios have social contexts to use the language so the project must consider and impact in society (MEP, 2017).

Fifth, one of the main objectives of integrated mini projects is to promote the democratic citizenship which is extremely related to the previous characteristics. To illustrate these words the following figure has been taken from the MEP's syllabus (MEP, 2017).

Figure 2.

Integrated Project in the English Class



Ministerio de Educación Pública (2017)

It is clearly identified that the three dimensions are linked in terms of tasks in class – integrated projects with impact in the society and then - society where the scenario recreated in class becomes a reality to deal with. That is one of the best advantages of using an integrated mini project, both the teacher and the student are learning in a different way. Both parties are

not just reading a book or creating a presentation, they are truly involved in every topic, and that is how the students are engaged with their work. Learners understand what they are developing or learning at school has the capacity to be applied to the real world (MEP, 2017).

Another aspect to acknowledge is the stages or phases that integrated mini projects must have. There are four stages and they are included in the six-week plan given to the corresponding academic coordinator (in case of experimental bilingual high schools). The following are the stage of integrated projects based on MEP's syllabus (2017):

- a. *Participating to negotiate*: Brainstorming, discussing, negotiating, making decisions and selecting the work strategies and resources. After each week's lesson, learners identify which learning activities completed that week could be adapted for use in their chosen Integrated Project. In this stage learners create teams or pair in order to draft their first ideas.
- b. *Thinking for planning*: Planning and creating, outlining and finding information collaboratively about the language content and strategies.
- c. *Acting out for completing responsible actions*: Completing the product, rehearsing, practicing the Integrated Project presentation.
- d. *Responding and sharing*: Delivering the Integrated Project, in pairs or groups, and promote self/co-assessment. Plenty of activities could be adapted for this final stage like: role playing, presentations, plays, interactions outside the class, videos, discussions, round tables, debates and so on.

As Shaffer (2018) mentioned "Project-based learning (PBL) is a powerful teaching method that has extensive benefits for students, ranging from critical thinking to project management to self-confidence". The students become more collaborative because they are not only learning how to work with someone else, they are able to explain themselves and give positive input to others, also they learn how to listen and resolve issues when they are presented, and they are creative in many ways, as they are using their skills and critical thinking to provide new ideas in order to develop a better integrated mini-project.

Remziye and Keskin (2013) conducted a research in order to determine if after applying a PBL the teaching made in accordance with it and then compare it to the one made in accordance with the current program. They looked for different effects on students' success. The investigation used an experimental method with a pretest-posttest and control group. Their investigation took place in Turkey in 2011 and the sample were 92 students of sixth grade in

one specific science unit called “Electricity in life”. Pre-test and post-test control groups were used. During the Electricity in Life unit instruction, lesson is given in accordance with the principles of project-based learning method to the experimental group, while teaching the control group in accordance with the Ministry of Education program. After the investigation, some findings were stated. There was a significant difference between the groups regarding students’ success, being the experimental group highly benefited after using the PBL method.

Vogler, Thompson, Blayne, Mayfield, Finley, and Yasserli conducted a research in 2016. In their research “The hard work of soft skills: augmenting the project-based learning experience with interdisciplinary teamwork” they wanted to explore the learning process within an interdisciplinary PjBL task designed to facilitate the development of both hard and soft skills through an authentically collaborative process. This study was carried out in a lapse of 2 years. Basically, they took students from three different classes and assigned them a project to experience the perspective of clients and contractors. Students were capable of developing hard and soft skills in order to face the project and those skills will be used in real life situations as concluded the authors. Following this line, the scenarios established by MEP in its official syllabus make sense in terms of recreating possible events that students might find in their communities. The combination of learning hard skills like programming, typing, answering an emailing and soft skills like empathy, teamwork and communication is clearly one of the objectives of the investigation mentioned before as well as one of the axles for MEP formation of new citizens.

Woodson (2014) described that for some teachers is not particularly hard to find or create an entertaining and engaging project that has an effective result in the learning process, however for other teachers it is tough to find a balance between that activity or project and a regular class. (para.7). The author of that blog considers that applying a project in class needs creativity. And even though it is going to need an extra effort from both parts, the students will get a good result at the end, because they will have the teacher by their side all the time, providing feedback and helping them if they reach a problem or have a doubt (Woodson, 2014). That blog post mentions that there are some steps that are helpful in the development of a good project-based class:

- a. *Expose students to an engaging topic that gets them thinking:* Project-based learning lessons are all based on solving a central question or problem. Ideally, these questions/problems are ones that are posed by the students. When students ask questions, this shows that they are actively engaged and thinking about the material.

Hopefully, some of these questions can prompt further research, exploration and study. This is the beginning of PBL.

- b. *Pose the essential question that will drive the project:* Ideally, students will make observations and inquiries that can drive research and study. In many situations, however, you may need to help your students along by posing a central question for them. This can be especially necessary for ESL students, younger students and teachers who are new to PBL. When developing your question, be sure to keep in mind that it should not be Google-able!
- c. *Design a plan that lays out clear steps to follow:* Once you have identified the question that will guide the project, it's imperative that you sit down with your students and create a plan. The plan is a general guide that identifies the steps to investigating your central question or problem. Don't worry if this needs to be adjusted as the project progresses. Having the plan in place will make things much easier – even if it needs to be changed later. This is a great opportunity to give your ESL students practice writing steps and outlines.
- d. *Create a schedule with flexible deadlines and post it in the classroom:* With your plan outlined, you can now create a schedule! Just like the plan, the schedule may change, and that is perfectly okay. You'll want to create loose deadlines around the key steps in your plan and post the schedule in a place where the students can see and refer to it daily.

Finally, in this explanation about integrated mini projects, is it significant to mention when it is delivered? According to MEP, integrated projects must be shared at the end of each unit. It represents a constant work considering the four stages previously explained and dealing with the fact that lesson plans are designed to cover six weeks. During week five or six the last stage of the task must take place (Table 1).

Table 1*Timeline*

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
Introducing Scenario	Some tasks can relate to Integrated Mini-Project	Some tasks can relate to Integrated Mini-Project	Some tasks can relate to Integrated Mini-Project	Review and Integrated Mini-Project	
Selecting Integrated Mini-Project (5-10 min)	Planning Integrated Mini-Project (5-10 min)	Planning Integrated Mini-Project (5-10 min)	Planning Integrated Mini-Project (5-10 min)		
<i>Participating Thinking</i>	<i>Participating Thinking</i>	<i>Participating Thinking</i>	<i>Participating Thinking</i>	<i>Rehearsing Acting out Responding and sharing</i>	<i>Rehearsing Acting out Responding and sharing</i>

Created by Granados y Chaves (2017).

In view of the theory found, the guidelines to create integrated mini projects, the official syllabus from MEP, the perspectives of authors, and other sources of information, this research has been oriented. Variables like innovation, the use of technology, motivation, engaging activities, and so on have triggered the curiosity of the researchers in order to develop the investigation. Evidence has shown that the use of integrated mini projects can improve the skills of students. Not only the macro linguistic skills (listening-speaking-reading-writing) are enhanced but also skills like teamwork, social awareness, linguistic consciousness, and soft skills for life. Literature provides instructions for mini projects, pieces of advice to organize them using stages, and so much other useful information for teachers.

CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Research method.

The research method used in this investigation is deductive. A deductive research starts with a theory. Since there is no chance to apply instruments due to the pandemic, the research was based on bibliographic references. Considering the theory consulted the research was conducted following the deductive method. Jaana (2018) provides a perspective about deductive research, the author claims “The deductive method can start from any theoretical base, from which any number of alternative hypotheses could be deduced. Authors are expected to start their papers with substantial introductions, justifying their theoretical starting points and the hypotheses they have deduced.” (p.186). After analyzing the quote, it is clearly evidenced that this investigation fits with the perspective given by the previous author since the theoretical basis of the study has been widely discussed by plenty of authors.

Besides, another author who supports the deductive method is Pearse (2019). This author proposed 7 steps to conduct a deductive research. Those steps have been adapted in order to fulfill the requirements of this paper.

- *Step 1:* Conceptual framework by means of a literature review. Plenty of sources have been scrutinize in order to explain thoroughly the main aspects of this study. For this framework a combination of graphical and narrative descriptions are used in order to cover the variables.
- *Step 2:* Propositions from the frameworks, the propositions that will be researched are identified. In terms of this research the propositions are the objectives that are aimed to be develop.
- *Step 3:* Code book based on the propositions; the researcher can develop a code book. For the author this code book starts with the literature review but could be enriched by a coding memorandum in order to divide each concept or variable and go deeper into the analysis. For his paper the concepts were divided and analyzed but not labeled or numbered.
- *Step 4:* Question matrix. The author proposes to interview experts in the subject of study using questions that come from the code book stage. For this specific research, no interview will be applied considering the pandemic condition and also the lack of time. Nevertheless, it is relevant to mention that the English advisor of the western region provided some pieces of literature that improve the comprehension of the implementation of integrated mini projects.

- *Step 5:* Data collection using the question matrix or equivalent guidelines and protocols, research data is collected. Plenty of questions have emerged while going through the investigation and those inquiries have brought new theory to light. It provoked to look for more information in order to satiate the need to gather information that explains what has been raised in this paper.
- *Step 6:* Analysis. The analysis of data consists of three stages based on the author. Firstly, the literature review is applied to analyze what theory says and also to compare or contrast some points of view from some authors. In this specific part more references could be added in order to support the information or debate the theory found. Secondly, themes are identified. For the purpose of this research themes were grouped and literature references were added in the same part of the paper, this following what Pearse (2019) states “From the perspective of a deductive approach, identifying themes involves looking for evidence in the data of the patterns that were articulated in the propositions of the study.” (p. 266-267). Finally, for the propositions of each theory, there is a register of useful and useless references in order to select the ones that fulfill the requirements of the analysis.
- *Step 7:* Reporting The findings are written up, initially focusing on one theory at a time, followed by an integrated section showing how the theories “work together”; but also acknowledging any contradictions or tensions between them that may arise. In this paper the findings were analyzed following what the author proposes.

3.2 Type of investigation descriptive

The type of investigation has been established as descriptive. As Hernández, Fernández, and Baptista (2014) stated, this kind of study wants to clarify all the aspects that are constantly experiencing an analysis, such as characteristics or profiles of people, communities, objects, processes or any other context that can undergo an breakdown to see its core. The main goal of this type of investigation is not to specify how the variables, objectives or concepts are related to one another, it seeks to gather all the information independently about the variables that where set at the beginning of the investigation.

Considering that this investigation will take into account only bibliographic references and there is no chance to study the correlation among variables, the descriptive investigation fits perfectly with the intention of this paper. Since the intention of this research is to describe the integrated mini projects in depth, share its advantages

according to some authors, and analyze what mini projects are for MEP's authorities the descriptive investigation supports those procedures.

3.3 Research approach qualitative

The nature and focus of this study guide to the researchers to use a qualitative approach. This selection is supported based on the arguments of Hernández, Fernández, and Baptista (2014) where they claim that researchers must be involved in the reality that embodies the subject of study in order to find a problem to be investigate and then create research objectives, questions of investigation, then justify the reasons of conducting the investigation and the and viability, setting, and population. Consequently to these arguments, the process and order of this paper have been linked to each of the previous moments of investigation.

3.4 Sources and subjects of information

The sources that have been used to gather information are mainly secondary. Considering the nature of the research and the limitations due to the pandemic, the sources are entirely bibliographic by means of a literature review. Specifically, books, academic magazines, scientific articles, posts in blogs, official syllabus, dissertations from experts in charge of training teachers in Costa Rica, and no published documents used in training sessions by national English advisors in Costa Rica.

3.5 Population

This research considers students from the Liceo Experimental Bilingüe de Sarchí who are currently in tenth grade. This population was selected with the first intention of taking advantage of their English level in case of being interviewed and also because they have had experience in developing integrated mini projects before. This population fulfills the particular requirements in order to gather information and also to be considered a liable source of information. Besides, this educational level could represent a rich source of information while sharing experiences and proposing new ideas for integrated mini projects. Furthermore, to be part of the research might encourage them to go the extra mile while dealing with the stages of integrated mini projects in order to innovate.

CHAPTER IV
DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Data Analysis

The analysis of the gathered information is presented according to the theme developed by the authors who enriched this paper. Following the variables investigated, the analysis has been organized following these topics: background information, evaluation of mini projects, innovation to motivate students, use of technology, advantages of using mini projects, and structure of integrated mini projects. The analysis includes a description and summary of data, comparison of information among authors, and trace possible results. Besides a chart will be included at the end of this section in order to make easier the comprehension of the data.

Evidence shows that changes in the way of teaching have affected our educational system. The most relevant decisions involve a multi sector structure and agents take part with the intention of dealing with some issues like budgets, methods, evaluation, use of cutting-edge technology, and so on. As García (2017) and MEP's authorities declare in some of their papers. The role of some of these entities is significant enough to conduct another research. Since MEP has so many alliances with a lot of suppliers, private educational institutions, public universities, national and international entities, and the budget for education varies every now and then, the amount of factors while taking decisions is very high. That is why the implementation of new syllabus means a serious issue and in 2021 there is another change, the implementation of the syllabus for tenth and eleventh grade in the experimental bilingual high schools and bilingual section all around Costa Rica.

Regarding evaluation, Garcia (2017) and Portillo (2017) agree in the fact that new techniques and ways to assess students have to be applied. Both argue that formative evaluation should be in the aspects to consider. Following this line, the current syllabus from MEP emphasizes the development of skills instead of memorizing data, so formative evaluations fall perfectly in that sense. In 2021, MEP launched the new syllabus for tenth and eleventh grade, this document also includes an integrated project at the end of units and reinforces the use of alternative evaluation. The use of integrated mini projects goes beyond measuring student's competence like the traditional summative way does, it implies to let students get into the specific part of the process or theme they have liked the most through the covered unit.

Nowadays, innovation is a concept that is really hard to apply because more and more the information is systematized so the use of something really new is quite difficult.

Nevertheless, the use of contextualized activities is leading to a variety of activities, materials, and even ways to invest time and resources. Carless (2012), Waters (2009), Deeler and Gray (2000), and Binnur (2009) recognize that innovation is crucial in the new teaching and learning process. Some of them linked innovation with the use of technology and some others associated with motivation like Pinzon (2013) and Ilter (2009). Besides, some authors proposed barriers that might interfere with the successful development of the learning process. To illustrate these words, Carless (2012) and Blumenfeld et. al, (1991) recognize that some barriers and factors could affect the results of projects. The first one establishes a triad that embodies teacher- system - school in terms of innovation. It means that any of these 3 agents might face problems to deal with innovative ways to teach, adapt, or learn. The second one, endorses the fact that there are aspects in the process of developing integrated mini projects that could affect the final results like lack of material or proper places to teach.

Plenty of advantages of integrated mini projects have been described through this paper. The current syllabus from MEP states that the exposure to scenarios in order to face the real world makes students more willing to solve problems and also contextualize their learning process. This fact is reinforced by Perrault and Albert (2018) while arguing that these types of tasks enhance the social ability of the students in terms of recreating the possible events that students are going to deal with. Besides Vloger, et al (2016) emphasize the development of soft skills while learning through projects, skills that are essential in real life to success in a healthy social interaction. Another positive aspect is mentioned by Bender (2012) while saying that teamwork is crucial to develop an integrated mini project. Learning how to collaborate and get along with peers is essential in order to solve the tasks linked to integrated mini projects, as Lee and Lim (2012) also state. According to MEP's syllabus, the integrated project is an excellent opportunity to integrate some skills in the same task. By following the steps to develop mini projects students have the chance to read, write, listen, and speak, and also, they have the option of using micro skills, that is why it is considered an integrated task. Pinzon (2013) uses the motivation of students as a significant element that promotes the engagement of students toward projects. Following this line, Ilter (2009) proposes that the use of technology is a great idea to motivate students to take part in projects as well.

Finally, authors like Woodson (2014) and the educational authorities of Costa Rica declare that the structure of integrated mini projects helps teachers and students because once

they understand and follow the established steps it is relatively easy to take a course of action. Besides, the way that projects are demanding promote the successful delivery of it.

The following chart provides a broad view of the data that was analyzed. The intention of creating this chart is to make easier the understanding of the information regarding authors, ideas, and other references.

Table 2

Summary

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Data Connection</u>
Background Information	As indicated by García (2017) and MEP's authorities, the creation of the program or Syllabus, relies on more than one person or and it takes more than one decision as there are multiple factors to be considered in order to create the best learning environment for the students.
Evaluation of Mini Projects	Garcia (2017) and Portillo (2017) come to an agreement with their ideas and point out the need to apply new techniques and ways to assess the students. Mini Projects are out of the ordinary, they are not evaluated nor developed as other activities within the classroom, that allows the students to understand why they are completing a specific task or looking for information. The formative aspect of the Mini Projects is essential as the students learn how to work for a precise goal whether it is individual or group task.

<p>Innovation to Motivate Students</p>	<p>Carless (2012), Waters (2009), Deeler and Gray (2000), and Binnur (2009) agree that innovation within the classroom is crucial in the new teaching and learning process. Although sometimes the idea of innovation can be considered problematic or hard to achieve, there is always a new approach to any activity, and something as simple as an activity with a slight variable becomes vital in the classroom, as the students will recognize it as something new and that will engage them with the class, improving the learning process.</p>
<p>Use of Technology</p>	<p>Pinzon (2013) and Ilter (2009) made a correlation between innovation with the use of technology as the new generations are inclined towards the use of it, based on the simple to use, easy access, the quantity/quality of data, has led technology to be considered an essential tool.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Advantages of Using Mini Projects</p>	<p>There are many advantages of the Mini Projects, and various authors recognize that, yet all of them have their own perspective. Perrault and Albert (2018) indicate that the use of Mini Projects is very helpful due to the fact that it recreates a real-life situation within the classroom, preparing the students for the future events that they will face in life. Or as Vloger, et al (2016) mentioned how important the development of soft skills is while developing Mini Projects, those skills which are crucial in real life scenarios. Similar to Bender (2012) and Lee and Lim (2012) who reference the importance of collaboration amongst students in order to achieve a goal. Another one is mentioned by Pinzon (2013) who is in favor of motivating students to engage them in the learning process and Ilter (2009) has a similar perspective, the difference is he based the motivational aspect on the use of technology.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Structure of Mini Projects.</p>	<p>Woodson (2014) and the educational authorities of Costa Rica have the same idea that the structure of Mini Projects makes the job of the teacher and the task of the student easier, as the instructions help them understand what stages need to be made and how. And thanks to it, both parts involved are able to develop their work the best way possible.</p>

Source: Authentic Material.

CHAPTER V

STRATEGIES

5.1. Strategies

5.1.1 Integrated Mini Project Example #1.

Based on the current MEP's syllabus (2019) put into practice in 2021 in Experimental bilingual high schools, during the second term students are covering themes about health. Considering those aspects, the following integrated mini project has been designed as a guide.

General objective:

To promote self-esteem among students by appreciating their strengths and beauty.

Specific objectives:

- a. Getting the gist of audiovisual materials related to personal care and health.*
- b. Improving self-esteem by conducting a social experiment in order to put into practice the vocabulary and structures related to inner and outer beauty*
- c. Developing a field work in terms of collecting data based on a social experiment.*
- d. Sharing results and personal perspectives about the topic.*

Materials:

- Video / video beam / speakers*
- Cardboard (big enough to create doors) / acrylic paintings / colors / decoration*
- Notebook (take notes during the social experiment)*
- Any needed material that students may need to present their results (power point / t.v / ect)*

Syllabus support:

In the following chart it is evidenced the structure and other relevant aspects while planning an integrated mini project.

Details like: CEFR band, scenario, domain, theme, linguistics competence, goals, and stages to accomplish the integrated mini project.

Table 3.*Strategy # 1*

Level: 10th Term 2 // CEFR Band: B2	
Scenario: Healthy Minds & Bodies	
CEFR Band: B2	Theme:
Domain (s): Socio-Interpersonal and Academic	2. Practicing Mindfulness (Happy thoughts Heal...)
Enduring Understanding: A healthy balance life style contributes to people´s physical and mental growth.	
Essential Question: What does living healthy look like? Am I maintaining an optimum physical and mental life style? How my habits, physical and mental condition can impact those around me?	
Linguistic Competencies	Goals Learner can...

Oral and Written Comprehension

L.1. use a variety of strategies to achieve comprehension, including listening for main points; checking comprehension by using contextual clues

L.3. catch much of what is said around him/her, with some effort, but may find it difficult to understand a discussion between several speakers who do not modify their language in any way.

L.4. understand spoken language, live or broadcast on both familiar and unfamiliar topics normally encountered in personal, social, academic or vocational life.

L.6. understand the main ideas of complex speech on concrete and abstract topics delivered in a standard speech, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization.

R.1. understand articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt stances or viewpoints.

R.3. identify the main conclusions in texts which clearly argue a point of view.

R.4. understand the main points in formal and informal letters relating to his/her personal and professional interests with occasional use of a dictionary.

<p>Oral and Written Production</p>	<p>SI.1. help along the progress of the work by inviting others to join in, say what they think, etc.</p> <p>SI.2. pass on detailed information reliably.</p> <p>SI.9. use stock phrases (e.g. That's a difficult question to answer) to gain time and keep the turn while formulating what to say.</p> <p>SI.10. help organize the discussing in a group.</p> <p>SP.1. give a clear, detailed description of how to carry out a procedure.</p> <p>SP.2. give clear, detailed descriptions and presentations on a wide range of subjects related to his/her field of interest, expanding and supporting ideas with subsidiary points and relevant examples.</p>
<p>Written Production</p>	<p>W.10. produce intelligibly texts using paragraphing convention, spelling and punctuation accurately but may show signs of mother tongue influence.</p>

Ministerio de Educación Pública. (2020)

L= listening R= reading SI= Spoken Interaction SP= Spoken Production W= Writing

Procedures:

After being part of the classes and getting vocabulary and structures, students need to develop an integrated mini project related to the themes covered so far. To accomplish this requirement and considering all the stages that should be followed, the following activity is proposed.

Let's recall the stages of the integrated mini project:

- a. Participating to negotiate (PN):* Brainstorming, discussing, negotiating, making decisions, and selecting the work strategies and resources. After each week's lesson, learners identify which learning activities completed that week could be adapted for use in their chosen Integrated Project. In this stage learners create teams or pairs to draft their first ideas.
- b. Thinking for planning (TP):* Planning and creating, outlining, and finding information collaboratively about the language content and strategies.
- 3. Acting out for completing responsible actions (AO):* Completing the product, rehearsing, practicing the Integrated Project presentation.
- d. Responding and sharing (RS):* Delivering the Integrated Project, in pairs or groups, and promoting self/co-assessment. Plenty of activities could be adapted for this final stage like: role playing, presentations, plays, interactions outside the class, videos, discussions, round tables, debates and so on.

- 1. The whole class watches the video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TyZNSCfbeUK> . (PN)*
- 2. The class reacts to the video by sharing opinions and feelings (orally). (PN)*
- 3. The class will be divided in groups of 4-5 students (teacher contextualizes based on the reality of the group).*
- 4. Each group will help to create two doors that will be placed strategically in a spot in the high school. One door says "AVERAGE" and the other "HANDSOME / PRETTY". The idea is that students conduct a social experiment in which other students are guided to walk through one of the doors, the one that they consider describes their physical appearance. The students conducting the survey will take notes to count how many students use one*

door or another. Besides, some of the participants will be randomly interviewed with the intention of getting more information about their decision. **(AO)**

5. Students prepare a presentation to share their findings / feelings / and response to questions from their peers. **(RS)**

6. The teacher and classmates provide feedback about the presentation considering error correction and reaction toward the findings and experiences.

7. The teacher closes the topic with a motivation about the proverb “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder” and explaining that the mental health and the way we see ourselves is as important as the physical care we provide to our body.

5.1.2 Integrated Mini Project Example #2.

Based on the current MEP’s syllabus (2019) put into practice in 2021 in Experimental bilingual high schools, during the third term students are dealing with topics related to the digital world. Considering those aspects, the following integrated mini project has been designed as a guide.

General objective:

To encourage students to be actively involved in the Digital World.

Specific objectives:

- a. *Analyze the behavior and body language while performing.*
- b. *Adapt the conversation depending on the topic given.*
- c. *Recommend solutions to a detailed problem.*
- d. *Provide relevant and accurate opinions to a conversation.*

Materials:

- *Video / video beam / speakers*
- *Cardboard (big enough to create doors) / acrylic paintings / colors / decoration*

- *Notebook (take notes during the social experiment)*
- *Any needed material that students may need to present their results (power point / t.v / ect)*

Syllabus support:

In the following chart it is evidenced the structure and other relevant aspects while planning an integrated mini project.

Details like: CEFR band, scenario, domain, theme, linguistics competence, goals, and stages to accomplish the integrated mini project.

Table 4.

Strategy # 2

Level: 10th Term 3 // CEFR Band: B2	
Scenario: Digital Realities	
CEFR Band: B2	Theme:
Domain (s): Socio-Interpersonal and Academic	3. Succeeding: Online Job Opportunities
Enduring Understanding: : Technological progress brings new opportunities and possibilities to personal and work worlds but also brings controversial dilemmas.	
Essential Question: How can we responsibly use and deal with the tech world and do network? How can we fit into a digital world?	

Linguistic Competencies	Goals Learner can...
Oral and Written Comprehension	<p>L.1. follow the essential of lectures or talks within his/her own field, if the subject matter is familiar and the presentation is clearly structured.</p> <p>L.2. identify the main reasons for and against an argument or idea in a discussion conducted in clear standard speech.</p> <p>L.4. understand radio documentaries, live interviews, talk shows, plays and the majority of recorded or broadcast audio material delivered in the standard form of the language.</p> <p>R.1. read short stories and novels written in straight forward language and style, making use of a dictionary if s/he is familiar with the story or the writer.</p> <p>R.2. scan quickly through long and complex texts, locating relevant details.</p>

<p>Oral and Written Production</p>	<p>SI.1. follow the discussion on matters related to his/her interest.</p> <p>SI.2. sustain his/her opinions in discussion by providing relevant explanations, arguments and comments.</p> <p>SI.7. ask for explanation or clarification to ensure to understand complex texts and abstract ideas in different contexts live or online.</p> <p>SI.11. use and play different roles (e.g. role plays, body posture, line of vision, mimic)</p> <p>SP.1. give a clear, prepared presentation, giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view and giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.</p> <p>SP.2. construct a chain of reasoned argument.</p> <p>SP.3. develop a clear argument, expanding and supporting his/her points of view at some length with subsidiary points and relevant examples.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">Written Production</p>	<p>W.8. use an appropriate range of vocabulary and idiomatic expressions connect to topic of his/her interest.</p> <p>W.10. produce intelligibly texts using paragraphing convention, spelling and punctuation accurately but may show signs of mother tongue influence.</p>
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Ministerio de Educación Pública. (2020)

L= listening R= reading SI= Spoken Interaction SP= Spoken Production
W= Writing

Procedures:

After being part of the classes and getting vocabulary and structures, students need to develop an integrated mini project related to the themes covered so far. To accomplish this requirement and considering all the stages that should be followed, the following activity is proposed.

Let's recall the stages of the integrated mini project:

- a. Participating to negotiate (PN):* Brainstorming, discussing, negotiating, making decisions, and selecting the work strategies and resources. After each week's lesson, learners identify which learning activities completed that week could be adapted for use in their chosen Integrated Project. In this stage learners create teams or pairs to draft their first ideas.
- b. Thinking for planning (TP):* Planning and creating, outlining, and finding information collaboratively about the language content and strategies.
- c. Acting out for completing responsible actions (AO):* Completing the product, rehearsing, practicing the Integrated Project presentation.

d. *Responding and sharing (RS)*: Delivering the Integrated Project, in pairs or groups, and promoting self/co-assessment. Plenty of activities could be adapted for this final stage like: role playing, presentations, plays, interactions outside the class, videos, discussions, round tables, debates and so on.

1. The whole class watches the video
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6flseKzzH0m> **(PN)**
2. The class reacts to the video by giving their input based on the video. **(PN)**
 - a. Each student has the opportunity to share what they think.
3. The class will be divided in groups of 4-5 students.
 - a. There will be several topics and each one will be assigned to a group.
 - i. Types of jobs that are available online.
 - ii. Benefits of Work from Home.
 - iii. Disadvantages of Working from home.
 - iv. Financial gain or loss?
 - v. How can I avoid burnout?
 - vi. Why Working from home isn't suited for everyone?
4. After the students gather the information, they will give a short presentation of it to the class.
 - a. There will be a discussion at the end of each little topic.
 - b. Students will share their thoughts regarding WFM.
5. Students must gather and write down a short argument on "how to fix":
 - a. How can I avoid burnout?

b. Why Working from home isn't suited for everyone?

6. **As these students are in 10th grade, they are just a few years away from graduation, the knowledge and ability about WFH jobs will come in handy, as this category will continue to be important in a short/mid-term period of time. (COVID – 19 epidemics changed everything; multiple companies changed their policies in order to adapt to the situation. WFH is a very useful and valuable option.)

5.2 Workshops

5.2.1 Workshop # 1

Title: “From Integrated Projects to Real Life: Beyond the classrooms” Face to face version

Audience: English Teachers/trainers/coaches

Time: 2 hours and 30 minutes

Materials:

Location:

Chronogram-agenda

Introduction:

Teaching a language is extremely challenging. It has to do with regulations, strategies, materials, population, evaluation, location, purposes, methods and so many other variables. The implementation of Integrated Projects at the end of each unit is mandatory for those who work under any modality regulated by the Ministry of Education of Costa Rica (MEP). Following that parameter, it has been quite interesting and motivating to discover that in the formation of new English teachers and trainings of the teachers who are currently working for MEP there is a gap in terms of acknowledging and applying integrated projects while teaching English. Implementing a well-organized integrated project deals with stages, time, students' role, teacher's role, linguistics skills, usefulness (socially and educationally), and reasons to develop any topic that calls students' interest. This workshop is planned to be educational and entertaining by means of sharing experiences and applying new activities and technology.

Besides, it is one of the goals of this workshop to make teacher realize the social scope that integrated mini projects could have. The workshop will have two versions: face to face attendance and virtual attendance.

Purpose of the Workshop:

The application of this workshop comes after investigating about the use of integrated mini projects. After reading from many different sources, it is evidenced that there is an enormous difference between applying a mini project properly and just take it as a requirement. The main idea of this training session is to provide a space to learn about this excellent teaching-learning tool by stating its advantages, stages, and giving access to great examples of mini projects. At the end of this session, teacher will be clarified about general aspects, implementation, and structure of integrated mini projects.

General Objective:

- To train English teachers in the implementation of integrated mini projects following all **the regulations and structure according to MEP's syllabus.**

Specific objective:

- Establish the advantages of using mini projects in the teaching-learning process of a second language.
- Recognize the structure and requirements of integrated mini projects following MEP's syllabus,
- Provide material and knowledge to create mini projects based on the scenarios and themes establish in MEP's syllabus according to each educational level.

Activity #1 General Ice Breaker: The wind blows for those who !!!

Materials: Facilitator and interaction

Time: 10 minutes

Procedure:

There is one facilitator, and all the other ones are participants. The participants will be told to walk around the facility and the facilitator will say a phrase like "The wind blows for those who come from San Carlos" in that moment the participants who come from San Carlos will stop

walking and crouch according to their possibilities, then, they will share something about San Carlos. The action will be repeated using other phrases like: The wind blows for those who work in a high school.... The wind blows for those who speak a third languageThe wind blows for those who have a pet. The phrase will be stated at least six times to create an open channel to communicate and to give the facilitator some information about the participants.

Activity #2 Ice Breaker related to topic: Did you know that... ?

Materials: Spin wheel / questions or characteristics / facilitator

Time: 10 minutes

Procedure:

Participants will get involve in a game call Did you know .. ? The total amount of participants will be divided in 3 groups. Each group will choose a leader to represent them. The leader will spin a wheel of fortune. The wheel will have some characteristics of integrated mini projects. If one member of the group knows about the chosen characteristics and provides a brief description of it, they will get 100 points, if no one knows no point will be assigned. Each characteristic will be one topic to develop through the training.

Activity #3: The Big bang theory.

Materials: Prezi presentation / video beam or tv screen / facilitators / questions from the audience/MEP's syllabus

Time: 1 hour and a half (with an active break every 30 minutes)

Procedure:

The facilitators will share some theoretical aspects about integrated mini projects using a prezzi interactive presentation. The presentation will include teachers' and students' role / syllabus support / regulations / time management / stages / examples / guidelines / check list / formative evaluation and feedback to students/ tips and recommendations.

Participants are totally allowed to make comments / questions / share experiences / provide suggestions while the facilitator are presenting the information.

Activity #4 Caught red-handed**Materials:** Check list / MEP's syllabus / cardboard / markers / internet access**Time:** 30 min

Procedure:

Participants will get some materials to create their own integrated mini project. The whole group will be divided in sub-groups of 4 or 5 members. Each team will get access to the current syllabus according to the modality (liceo / técnico / bilingüe – sección bilingüe), cycle (1st – 2nd – 3rd cycle or diversified) that they have decided to work on. Teams will complete a check list to make sure they have accomplished all the requirements of the task.

Teams will select a grade, term, unit, scenario, theme to create a complete integrated mini project. Facilitators will monitor the progress and provide clarification while the teams are completing the task.

Once the task is done, two members of each team will present the result. Participants from other teams will provide feedback. To complete this part group number one will get feedback from group number two, group number two get feedback from group number three, group number four will get feedback from group number three, and finally group number one four will get feedback from group number one.

AGENDA

Activity	Description abstracts	Materials	Time
Contextualization	Motivation to develop the workshop		5min
The wind blows for those who!!!	Play to create a healthy and open work environment		10 min
Did you know that...?	Diagnose the prior knowledge of participants	Spin wheel/questions	10min
The Big bang theory.	Theory/examples/regulations/time/ Everything about integrated mini projects	Presentation/video beam/ MEP's syllabus	1 1/2 hour

Caught red-handed	Create an authentic Integrated Mini Project	Check list / MEP's syllabus / cardboard / markers / internet access	30min
Closure	Final comments and further information		10 minutes

5.2.2 Workshop # 2

Title: "From Integrated Projects to Real Life: Beyond the classrooms" Virtual Version

Audience: English Teachers/trainers/coaches

Time: 2 hours and 30 minutes

Materials:

Location:

Chronogram-agenda

Introduction:

Teaching a language is extremely challenging. It has to do with regulations, strategies, materials, population, evaluation, location, purposes, methods and so many other variables. The implementation of Integrated Projects at the end of each unit is mandatory for those who work under any modality regulated by the Ministry of Education of Costa Rica (MEP). Following that parameter, it has been quite interesting and motivating to discover that in the formation of new English teachers and trainings of the teachers who are currently working for MEP there is a gap in terms of acknowledging and applying integrated projects while teaching English.

Implementing a well-organized integrated project deals with stages, time, students' role, teacher's role, linguistics skills, usefulness (socially and educationally), and reasons to develop any topic that calls students' interest. This workshop is planned to be educational and entertaining by means of sharing experiences and applying new activities and technology.

Besides, it is one of the goals of this workshop to make teacher realize the social scope that integrated mini projects could have. The workshop will have two versions: face to face

attendance and virtual attendance. This is the virtual version and will take place by Microsoft Teams.

Purpose of the Workshop:

The application of this workshop comes after investigating about the use of integrated mini projects. After reading from many different sources, it is evidenced that there is an enormous difference between applying a mini project properly and just take it as a requirement. The main idea of this training session is to provide a space to learn about this excellent teaching-learning tool by stating its advantages, stages, and giving access to great examples of mini projects. At the end of this session, teacher will be clarified about general aspects, implementation, and structure of integrated mini projects.

General Objective:

- To train English teachers in the implementation of integrated mini projects following all the regulations and structure according to MEP's syllabus.

Specific objective:

- Establish the advantages of using mini projects in the teaching-learning process of a second language.
- Recognize the structure and requirements of integrated mini projects following MEP's syllabus,
- Provide material and knowledge to create mini projects based on the scenarios and themes establish in MEP's syllabus according to each educational level.


Activity #1 General Ice Breaker: The wind blows for those who !!!

Materials: Facilitator and interaction

Time: 10 minutes

Procedure:

There is one facilitator, and all the other ones are participants. The participants will be told to electronically raise their hand when the facilitator says a phrase like "The wind blows for those who were born in San Carlos" in that moment the participants who were born in San

Carlos will use the , then, they will share something about San Carlos. The action will be repeated using other phrases like: The wind blows for those who work in a high school The wind blows for those who speak a third language.....The wind blows for those who have a pet. The phrase will be stated at least six times to create an open channel to communicate and to give the facilitator some information about the participants.

Activity #2 Ice Breaker related to topic: Did you know that... ?

Materials: Spin wheel / questions or characteristics / facilitator

Time: 10 minutes

Procedure:

Participants will get involve in a game call Did you know that .. ? The total amount of participants will be divided in 3 groups. Each group will choose a leader to represent them. The leader will electronically spin a wheel of fortune. The wheel will have some characteristics of integrated mini projects. If one member of the group knows about the chosen characteristics and provides a brief description of it, they will get 100 points, if no one knows no point will be assigned. Each characteristic will be one topic to develop through the training.

Activity #3: The Big bang theory.

Materials: Prezi presentation / video beam or tv screen / facilitators / questions from the audience/MEP's syllabus

Time: 1 hour and a half (with an active break every 30 minutes)

Procedure:

The facilitators will share some theoretical aspects about integrated mini projects using a prezzi interactive presentation. The presentation will include teachers' and students' role / syllabus support / regulations / time management / stages / examples / guidelines / check list / formative evaluation and feedback to students/ tips and recommendations. Participants are totally allowed to make comments / questions / share experiences / provide suggestions while the facilitator are presenting the information by means of the chat and by opening their mic.

Activity #4 Caught red-handed

Materials: Check list / MEP's syllabus / cardboard / markers / internet access

Time: 30 min

Procedure:

Participants will get some materials to create their own integrated mini project. The whole group will be divided in sub-groups of 4 or 5 members using the room feature of Microsoft Teams. Each team will get access to the current syllabus according to the modality (liceo / técnico / bilingüe – sección bilingüe), cycle (1st – 2nd – 3rd cycle or diversified) that they have decided to work on. Teams will complete a check list to make sure they have accomplished all the requirements of the task.

Teams will select a grade, term, unit, scenario, theme to create a complete integrated mini project. Facilitators will monitor the progress and provide clarification while the teams are completing the task.

Once the task is done, two members of each team will present the result. Participants from other teams will provide feedback. To complete this part group number one will get feedback from group number two, group number two get feedback from group number three, group number four will get feedback from group number three, and finally group number one four will get feedback from group number one.

Final activity:

Facilitators will provide a final comment to conclude with the workshop. Participants will complete an evaluation of the workshop to improve it. They will complete a Microsoft Forms online.

AGENDA

Activity	Description abstracts	Materials	Time
Contextualization	Motivation to develop the workshop		5min
The wind blows for those who!!!	Play to create a healthy and open work environment		10 min
Did you know that...?	Diagnose the prior knowledge of participants	Spin wheel/questions	10min

The Big bang theory.	Theory/examples/regulations/time/ Everything about integrated mini projects	Presentation/video beam/ MEP's syllabus	1 ¹ / ₂ hour
Caught red-handed	Create an authentic Integrated Mini Project	Check list / MEP's syllabus / cardboard / markers / internet access	30min
Closure	Final comments and further information/evaluation	Microsoft Forms	10 minutes

CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Conclusions

After conducting the investigation and completing all the stages, the knowledge about integrated mini projects has considerably increased. Once the authors of this paper have put all the pieces together, the puzzle is finally solved. There is a clear understanding of how integrated mini projects works, there is a theoretical support based on authors that enhance the level of liability of the information, advantages of its use have been stated, investigations and results have been added in order to demonstrate the efficiency of integrated mini projects, and some others conclusions will be portrays as follow:

- The use of new methodology like the project-based learning is gaining place and it is transforming the way teachers are giving their classes. The official teaching method in Costa Rica to teach languages is the Action Oriented Approach and there is a well-established connection between this method and the integrated projects.
- In light of the theory and based on some authors, integrated mini projects have plenty of advantages. It connects the classroom with the social reality that students face every day, besides, students might experience extra motivation to work on tasks like these because the evaluation will not affect their final score, in addition, the development of soft skills through the implementation of integrated mini projects is linked to the formation of new citizen proposed by MEP, furthermore, the possibility to use a multi-skill approach give to students the chance to decide they way they will present the results of the projects as well as take advantage of any gift or ability or preference they might have.
- In this paper, there is a wide description of integrated mini project. This will guide and encourage teachers to create innovate mini projects. The structure, stages, tips, time, and other information about integrated mini projects have been organized with the intention of creating an easy and trustful source of information.
- In terms of innovation and motivation, many authors have agreed that there is an association between the use of technology and motivation to increase students' interest and participation. By implementing mini projects students are allowed to use a variety of technological tools to gather information, to present the results, to analyze data, and to make these type of tasks more interesting.
- Teacher's role and student's role have changed compared to the traditional ones. The teacher takes a secondary role meanwhile students become more active participants of their own learning process. Students are responsible of selecting to what extent they

want to take the mini project regarding social impact, further information, use of technology in the process, and decision making once the results are presented.

CHAPTER VII

RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Recommendations

Regarding future researches, it is recommended to use reliable sources of investigation in order to support the theory or any other element that needs reinforcement. It is one limitation of this paper the lack of contact with other primary sources like teachers or students because of the national emergency of Covid-19, that is why it is highly suggested to triangulate the information and conducting a different investigation in terms of methodology and instruments to collect data using this one as a basis.

Talking about ULATINA, it is advised to follow up some of the final papers that students have created to obtain their licenciatura degree. Plenty of topics are quite relevant in order to write scientific articles and also to give more chances to students to share their knowledge in some of the courses of the English teaching career by means of being invited to give a speech or to be part of a workshop for example.

Related to MEP authorities, it is suggested to open more spaces like trainings or even materials that are easily accessed and understood by teachers regarding integrated mini projects. Integrated mini projects have demonstrated to be effective, and they have been well accepted by teachers and students, so it is time to take advantage of these type of tasks and take them to the next level.

In terms of teachers, to keep updated is a must, so, look for information, ask about new regulations, train yourself to use new apps and technology, since all those aspects are related somehow to the implementation and innovation of integrated mini projects.

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