

Exploring Situated Learning Experiences in Higher Education: A Study on Institutional Platforms for English Language Teaching in Mexico

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ABSTRACT

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This study explores the situated learning experiences in higher education, focusing on the use of institutional platforms for English language teaching in Mexico. The aim of the study is to examine the effectiveness and impact of these platforms on the learning outcomes of students in higher education. The research methodology involves qualitative analysis, including interviews and observations, to gather data on the experiences of students and educators using educational platforms for English language instruction. The findings of the study contribute to a deeper understanding of the potential of these platforms in enhancing language learning in higher education settings. The study's implications can inform educational institutions and instructors in designing effective language teaching strategies using educational platforms, ultimately improving the quality of English language education in Mexico's higher education system.

1. Introduction.

In recent years, educational software has transformed the landscape of education, offering new avenues for improving learning and teaching practices. Specifically, the use of institutional platforms tailored for English language teaching has gained significant recognition and adoption within higher education institutions. These platforms provide a digital infrastructure that supports the implementation of innovative methodologies, such as situated learning, which emphasizes the application of knowledge in real-life contexts with the guidance of teachers.

This study aims to explore the situated learning experiences facilitated by institutional platforms used in English language teaching in higher education context of Mexico. Situated learning, as a pedagogical approach, recognizes the importance of contextualized learning, where students engage in authentic and meaningful tasks that reflect real-world applications of the knowledge they acquire. By utilizing institutional platforms, educators can create interactive and immersive learning environments that promote active participation and deep understanding.

The introduction sets the foundation for the research, underscoring the significance of educational platforms and their potential impact on student learning outcomes. The adoption of situated learning methodology through these platforms holds promise for enhancing the effectiveness of English language teaching in higher education settings. By investigating the experiences of learners and educators using these

platforms, the study aims to shed light on the benefits, challenges, and implications of implementing situated learning in the Mexican higher education landscape.

The subsequent sections, including the literature review, methodology, results, and discussion, will provide a comprehensive examination of the topic. The literature review will delve into existing research and theoretical frameworks, exploring the conceptual underpinnings of educational platforms, situated learning, and English language teaching in higher education. The methodology section will outline the research design, participant selection criteria, data collection methods, and analytical techniques employed to gather insights into the situated learning experiences within the institutional platform context.

Through the analysis of data, the study will present findings and engage in discussions regarding the effectiveness and impact of institutional platforms for English language teaching. The results will offer valuable insights into the learners' engagement, knowledge application, collaboration, and the overall effectiveness of the situated learning approach in the specific context of higher education in Mexico.

The conclusion will summarize the key findings, highlight their implications, and provide recommendations for educational practitioners, policymakers, and researchers. The study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge, informing educational practices, and encouraging further exploration of situated learning within institutional platforms for English language teaching in higher education.

By conducting this research, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of the situated learning experiences facilitated by institutional platforms in the context of English language teaching in higher education. Ultimately, we hope that the findings of this study will pave the way for improved pedagogical approaches, enhanced student engagement, and enriched learning outcomes in the field of English language instruction in Mexico's higher education system. This section should be concise and define the background and significance of the research by considering the relevant literature, particularly the most recent publications. When preparing the introduction, please bear in mind that some readers will not be experts in your field of research.

2. Literature Review.

In recent years, the use of new technologies has revolutionized the teaching and learning process, promoting interaction between teachers and students, and facilitating the flow of information (Obaya, 2003). ICTs have been found to foster social relationships, cooperative learning, the development of new skills, knowledge construction, and the enhancement of creativity, communication, and reasoning abilities.

To personalize learning and accommodate different learning styles and paces, educational software has emerged as an innovative tool (Abarzúa & Cerda, 2011, as cited in Rojas, Gómez, & García, 2013). It enables students to engage in various interactions and appreciates diversity in the classroom by considering individual learning rhythms and styles. Digital literacy and inclusive education play crucial roles in

leveraging educational technologies, empowering students to work at their own pace and enhancing their learning experience. Therefore, this article focuses on the implementation of institutional platforms for English language teaching by National Geographic, as a guide and knowledge management tool to enhance students' performance in foreign language learning within the framework of situated learning.

Notably, the use of educational platforms benefits not only students but also teachers. They provide access to updated tools and didactic resources that can augment teaching practices, enabling instructors to personalize instruction and enhance student engagement and motivation (Díaz, 2018). Situated learning, based on the work of Lave and Wenger (1991), emphasizes placing students in relevant and meaningful contexts where they can interact with the real world and apply what they learn authentically. Learning is most effective when integrated into meaningful experiences and practices (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989).

Situated learning is grounded in socio-constructivist theory, which posits that learning is an active and collaborative process occurring within a social environment (Vygotsky, 1978). It places the student at the center of the learning process, providing an environment where they can interact with knowledge and apply it in real-life situations (Herrington & Oliver, 1995). Teaching in this approach focuses on creating authentic learning experiences that foster students' reflection and construction of knowledge (Wenger, 1998). Students are actively involved in problem-solving and the application of knowledge to authentic situations (Jonassen, Peck, & Wilson, 1999).

To ensure effective implementation of situated learning, it is essential to consider students' characteristics and needs and adapt the methodology to the teaching of foreign languages using specialized educational platforms like MyELT. Integrating this methodology into language teaching through educational platforms allows students to apply their knowledge and skills in meaningful contexts, thereby enhancing their language learning and proficiency.

The situated learning model highlights the close connection between knowledge and the situation in which it is learned and used (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). Context and culture are integral elements in understanding the learning process, and the field of educational technology based on situated learning aims to develop effective learning environments that consider these elements (Santos, 2000).

While the adoption of educational platforms and digital tools has increased, it is important to acknowledge that not all students have equal access to the internet and technological resources. Nonetheless, many schools, particularly in urban areas, are incorporating these resources to complement traditional face-to-face teaching. The virtualization of learning, especially in higher education, has become a recurring task for institutions, catering to various cognitive skills and language learning (López & Hernández, 2016). However, concerns have been raised about the potential dehumanization of the educational process and the socio-economic barriers that may limit access to technology and internet connectivity (Vera, 2018).

Despite these challenges, the incorporation of virtual education in higher education is an imminent reality. Educational institutions at all levels have had to transform their delivery methods with the support of digital resources. This modern era has brought to light opportunities and challenges in the education

system. Some sectors lack knowledge regarding the use of educational platforms and digital tools, while others fear the potential diminishment of human presence in the educational process.

Educational platforms can play a vital role in promoting situated learning by providing virtual environments where students can apply and develop their skills in real-life situations. They offer multimedia and collaborative resources that foster interactive project work and problem-solving.

According to Akyol and Garrison (2011), the use of educational platforms in the context of situated learning can enhance motivation, participation, and satisfaction among students, ultimately improving their performance compared to traditional teaching methods.

Effectively implementing situated learning requires a cultural shift and ongoing exploration of innovative approaches by educational institutions and government authorities to improve higher education and prepare students for the workforce. This section is dedicated to the significant literature resources that contributed to the research. The author should survey scholarly articles, books and other sources relevant to the area of research, providing a description, summary, and critical evaluation of each work.

3. Methodology

This study, titled "Exploring Situated Learning Experiences in Higher Education: A Study on Institutional Platforms for English Language Teaching in Mexico," is conducted at the Benemerita Universidad Autonoma de Puebla (BUAP), specifically focusing on groups within the Lengua Extranjera de Formacion General Universitaria (Foreign Language for General University Education) class. The primary objective of this study is to explore and collect the experiences of 27 students who are actively working with the institutional platforms Virtual Horizon, Moodle, or Blackboard for their English language learning within the context of BUAP.

3.1 Participants:

The participants of this study consist of 27 , 15 men and 12 women students who are currently enrolled in the Lengua Extranjera de Formacion General Universitaria class at the Benemerita Universidad Autonoma de Puebla. These students have experience working with institutional platforms, specifically Virtual Horizon, Moodle, or Blackboard, for their English language learning. The study aims to gather insights and perspectives directly from the students regarding their experiences with these platforms and their perceptions of situated learning.

3.2 Data Collection:

To collect data for this study, an online questionnaire survey will be utilized as the primary data collection instrument. The questionnaire will be designed and implemented using a suitable online platform,

such as Google Forms. The questionnaire will consist of items that are based on relevant literature and previous studies conducted in the field. It will be structured to elicit information about the participants' experiences with the institutional platforms and their perceptions of situated learning within the English language learning context.

3.3 Justification for Questionnaire:

The questionnaire is selected as the preferred data collection instrument for this study due to its appropriateness in capturing subjective experiences and perceptions of the participants. As highlighted by Creswell (2013), questionnaires are effective tools for gathering self-reported data, enabling participants to express their thoughts, opinions, and experiences in a structured manner. Additionally, questionnaires offer the advantage of being convenient and efficient for collecting data from a large number of participants, as emphasized by Bryman (2016).

3.4 Procedure:

The study followed the subsequent procedure:

- **Participant Recruitment:** All 27 students enrolled in the foreign language class at BUAP were invited to participate voluntarily in the study. They received detailed information about the research objectives and the purpose of the online questionnaire.
- **Online Questionnaire Administration:** The questionnaire was distributed to the participants through email or other online communication channels. Clear instructions were provided to ensure participants understood how to complete the questionnaire accurately. The importance of providing honest and detailed responses was emphasized.
- **Data Collection:** Participants were given a specified timeframe to complete the questionnaire. The collected data was stored securely and treated with utmost confidentiality.
- **Data Analysis:** The responses obtained from the questionnaire were subjected to qualitative and quantitative analysis. The qualitative analysis involved thematic coding and identification of patterns and trends in the participants' experiences. Quantitative analysis included descriptive statistics to summarize the participants' responses and identify any significant associations between variables.
- **Ethical Considerations:** The study adhered to ethical principles, ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of participants' information. Informed consent was obtained from participants prior to their participation, and they had the option to withdraw from the study at any time.
- **Expected Outcomes:** This study aimed to provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the experiences of students working with Virtual Horizon, Moodle, or Blackboard institutional platforms for English language learning in the Lengua Extranjera de Formacion General Universitaria class at BUAP. The

findings offered valuable insights into the effectiveness of these platforms in facilitating situated learning experiences and informed future improvements in English language teaching practices within the institution.

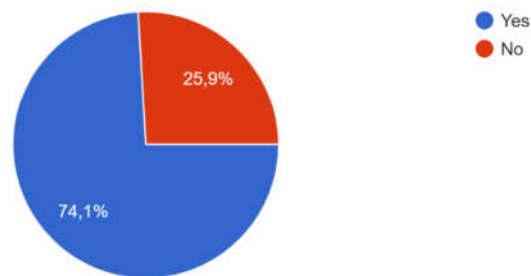
- **Limitations:** It was important to acknowledge the potential limitations of this study, which included its specific focus on BUAP, the relatively small sample size, and the reliance on self-reported data. These limitations were taken into consideration when interpreting the findings, and efforts were made to provide context-specific recommendations and suggestions based on the study's outcomes.

4. Results and Discussion.

According to the information collected through the instrument titled "Questionnaire on the experience of learning English in higher education through institutional platforms and complementary and situated learning strategies the following results were obtained. In the initial results, it was observed that the students had interacted with institutional platforms before; more than 70% of the students were already familiar with institutional platforms. This indicates a relatively high level of familiarity and experience with these platforms among the student population surveyed. This prior knowledge and experience could potentially influence their perceptions and experiences with the platforms, as well as their suggestions for improvements. It also provides a context for interpreting their responses regarding the challenges faced and the effectiveness of the platforms in facilitating situated learning experiences. It would be interesting to further explore how this prior experience correlates with the students' perceived challenges, preferences, and suggestions for improvement.

Graphic 1.

Have you used institutional platforms for English Language Teaching during your course?
27 respuestas

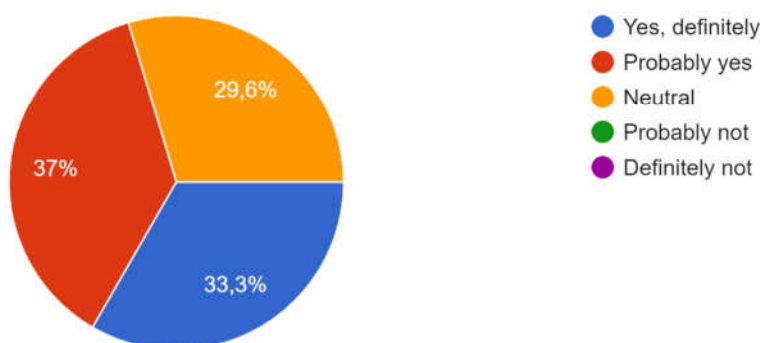


The analysis of the data collected on the different approaches to teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) suggests that there is a wide variety of opinions and preferences among students. They mention that more integrated activities are required to have a better learning experience, since there is a lack of situated strategies among their classes.

Graphic 2.

Would you recommend incorporating more situated learning activities into the English curriculum in higher education institutions in Mexico?

27 respuestas



The graphic highlights a clear trend towards incorporating more situated learning strategies into higher education curricula. Therefore, it is necessary to design and adapt meaningful activities for students in the classroom using institutional platforms. According to the results, these activities could include face-to-face workshops, group discussions, practical projects, and others. The table showcasing the students' responses provides an overview of their preferences and complementary learning needs. It is essential to consider these preferences and needs when designing and adapting activities to ensure they are effective, engaging, and supportive of the students' learning process. Ultimately, the goal is to create a learning environment that fosters active participation, collaboration, and meaningful application of knowledge, which are all key elements of situated learning.

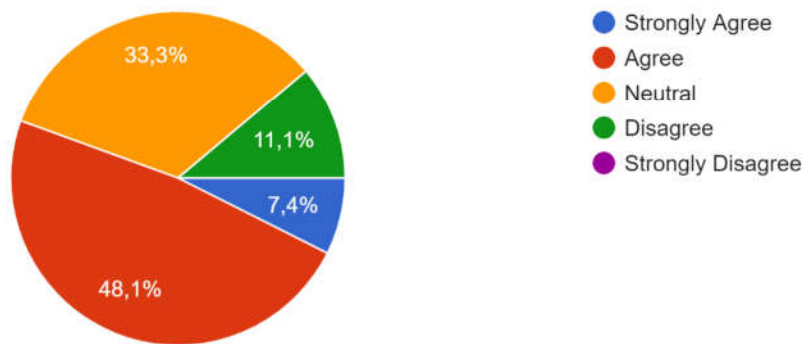
The participants provided a variety of responses regarding their experiences with situated learning and the use of institutional platforms in their English course. Some find it helpful to learn dynamically through songs, recreational activities, conversations, videos, games, and interactive quizzes. Others suggest integrating didactic materials, such as apps where questions or keywords are answered quickly and recommend listening to many audios in English. Some participants expressed their struggle with the language, finding it very complicated and boring, which led them to leave private courses.

There are also suggestions for more tests to adapt to each student's learning needs, clearer audios, and having instructions in Spanish for advanced English books. A few participants mentioned that the platforms used for language practice are quite interactive, but the experiences vary, with some finding it sometimes boring but sometimes interesting. Some participants did not provide any comments or suggestions, indicating no idea or preference not to comment. Overall, there is a mix of positive and negative experiences, and various suggestions for improvement.

Regarding the use of platforms for teaching English, there are differing opinions among students. Some suggest the platform is effective for improving reading comprehension, listening, and speaking skills, and writing abilities in English, as evidenced by a study conducted by the Universidad Nacional de Colombia (2021).

Do you feel that the institutional platforms (Blackboard, moodle etc.)available for English Language Teaching in Mexico provide adequate support for situated learning?

27 respuestas



Graphic 3.

The graph displays students' responses regarding their interaction with institutional platforms and situated activities. According to the graph, more than 80% of students said they think that institutional platforms are adequate for incorporating situated learning activities. This is a significant majority, indicating that most students feel that the current institutional platforms are suitable for implementing situated learning strategies. This positive response suggests that the platforms are, for the most part, effectively designed and user-friendly, enabling students to engage in situated learning activities. However, it is important to consider

the remaining 20% of students who may have encountered challenges or feel that the platforms are not entirely adequate. Understanding their concerns and addressing any limitations or challenges they have experienced is crucial for further improving the platforms and ensuring they are accessible and effective for all students.

Considering the previous graph, it is essential to highlight that the efficacy of each English teaching approach depends on the learning objective and the student's needs. For instance, if the goal is to improve oral comprehension, interacting with native English speakers might be the most effective option. If the aim is to enhance reading comprehension, specialized educational platforms might be more effective. Furthermore, the teaching approaches can complement each other to provide a more comprehensive and effective learning experience.

4. Challenges and Limitations.

The responses indicate that participants face various challenges during situated learning experiences in their English courses. One of the most common challenges mentioned is the struggle to speak the language correctly and fluently. Participants mentioned feeling shame and disconnecting from the language, struggling with writing during exams, facing new vocabulary, expressions, or grammatical forms, and having difficulty expressing ideas fluently orally. Some also mentioned the challenge of making long speeches without writing them down first, talking in front of classmates, and communicating with people who often do not understand what they are saying.

Another common challenge is boredom and lack of understanding, with one participant mentioning the difficulty of not getting bored during classes when they do not understand anything. Other challenges include not understanding the language fluently, classes with many students, not understanding the context in movies, expanding vocabulary, lack of familiarity with the vocabulary, time spent inside the classroom, and changing words or lack of vocabulary. A few participants mentioned not having any challenges or did not provide any response.

Overall, the challenges faced by participants during situated learning experiences in their English courses are multifaceted, involving language proficiency, communication skills, classroom environment, and personal limitations. These challenges highlight the need for more personalized and supportive approaches to teaching English, including smaller class sizes, more interactive and engaging activities, better support for language development, and more opportunities for practice and feedback.

The approaches to teaching English as a foreign language are varied, and each has its pros and cons. Students have different learning preferences and needs, and educators must consider these factors when selecting the right teaching methodology.

Institutional platforms might be a more effective option for improving reading comprehension, listening, and speaking skills, and writing abilities in English. However, platform use might not be suitable for all students due to its high cost and lack of social and cultural interaction. Hence, it is crucial to evaluate

individual student needs and choose the right teaching approach to achieve meaningful and effective EFL learning.

The new technologies also offer various resources for educators, including teaching and assessment materials. Educators can customize resources according to their students' needs and abilities. Additionally, such platforms use machine learning technology to provide instant feedback to students about their performance in activities and projects.

Although using educational platforms has proven to be an effective approach for teaching EFL in higher education, it also faces challenges and limitations. One of the challenges is platform accessibility, as it requires an internet connection and electronic devices. This can be an obstacle for some students, especially those without access to high-speed technology or electronic devices.

Another challenge is the need for adequate training for educators to use the platform and situated learning methodology effectively. Teachers must be familiar with the platform and able to create and adapt customized projects for students. Ongoing training and support might be necessary to help educators effectively use digital resources in their teaching. Plus, customizing projects may demand more time and resources, especially if managing large groups of students, posing a challenge for those educators with time and resource constraints in higher education.

Using educational platforms and the situated learning methodology is an innovative approach for teaching EFL in higher education. The platforms' use has proven effective in improving students' reading comprehension, listening and speaking skills, and writing capabilities.

5. Conclusions.

After analyzing the data obtained from this study, several significant conclusions can be drawn about the English learning experience in higher education through institutional platforms and complementary activities.

The results indicate that most students consider the platforms a useful tool for learning English, offering a plethora of resources and activities to enhance linguistic skills. Moreover, students highly value the platform's accessibility and flexibility, allowing them to adjust to their schedules and study paces.

Following the data analysis from the study, it was concluded that project customization and immediate feedback are key aspects that increase student motivation and improve knowledge retention. Yet, this approach also faces challenges and limitations, such as the need for adequate educator training and the potential demand for time and resources for project customization.

It was also observed that combining situated learning to reinforce knowledge acquired through educational platforms is a promising approach for teaching English as a second language in higher education. This strategy enables students to apply what they have learned in real-life situations, possibly leading to more meaningful and lasting learning. It is crucial to emphasize that this implementation requires careful planning and proper curriculum integration to ensure learning objectives are effectively met.

Students found it immensely beneficial to reinforce platform-acquired learnings in class through situated learning activities, allowing them to apply what they learned on the platform in real-life situations. Thus, integrating specialized English teaching platforms into the learning methodology is recommended to provide students with a more comprehensive and enriching experience.

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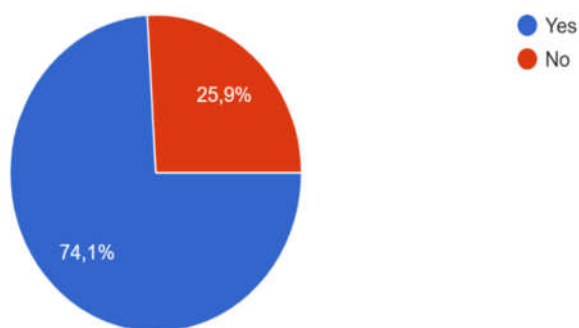
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Appendix.

Graphic 1.

Have you used institutional platforms for English Language Teaching during your course?

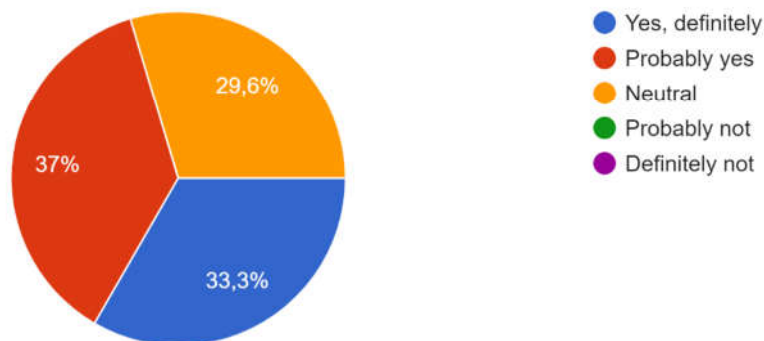
27 respuestas



Graphic 2.

Would you recommend incorporating more situated learning activities into the English curriculum in higher education institutions in Mexico?

27 respuestas



Graphic 3.

Do you feel that the institutional platforms (Blackboard, moodle etc.)available for English Language Teaching in Mexico provide adequate support for situated learning?

27 respuestas

