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## **Breaking the mold: a university case study of successful english language online teaching without textbooks**

Rompiendo el molde: un estudio de caso universitario acerca del éxito de la enseñanza de inglés en línea sin utilizar libros de texto

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### **Abstract**

This case study examines the viability of teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) online synchronously without textbooks. Likewise, a pilot course conducted from May to September at the Language Institute from Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas (UFA-ESPE) in Ecuador assessed this approach. The current research aimed to investigate the feasibility of this textbook-free, synchronously online ESL teaching method. Employing a one-group, post-test only design, with a qualitative approach and a descriptive scope, the study assessed student engagement, learning outcomes, and promising benefits. Of twenty-one students who agreed to be part of this study in the super intensive course, fourteen approved successfully a mock A2 Key exam, demonstrating potential results. The course fostered a dynamic and learner-centered environment, suggesting alternative approaches for online ESL education without utilizing textbooks. However, limitations like sample size and the absence of a control group suggest further research for conclusive evidence.


*Keywords:* case study, online learning, student engagement, learning outcomes, feasibility

### **Resumen**

El presente es un estudio de caso que examina la viabilidad de la enseñanza de inglés como segunda lengua por sus siglas en inglés (ESL) en línea de forma sincrónica prescindiendo de los libros de texto. Para ello, se implementó un curso piloto de mayo a septiembre en el Instituto de Idiomas de la Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas (UFA-ESPE) en Ecuador. La investigación tuvo como objetivo investigar la factibilidad de este método de enseñanza de ESL en línea, sin libros de texto y de manera sincrónica. Utilizando un diseño de grupo único, solo posprueba, con un enfoque cualitativo-descriptivo, el estudio evaluó la participación de estudiantes, los resultados de aprendizaje y los posibles beneficios. Participaron veintiún estudiantes matriculados en el curso super intensivo, catorce de los cuales aprobaron con éxito una simulación de examen A2 key, lo que demuestra resultados prometedores. El curso se basó en crear un entorno dinámico y centrado en los

estudiantes, sugiriendo enfoques alternativos para la educación ESL en línea. Sin embargo, limitaciones como el tamaño de la muestra y la ausencia de un grupo de control sugiere estudios adicionales para obtener resultados concluyentes.

*Palabras clave:* estudio de caso, aprendizaje en línea, participación estudiantil, resultados de aprendizaje, factibilidad

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## INTRODUCTION

The increasingly interconnected world demands clear communication, highlighting the limitations of traditional, textbook-driven ESL approaches (Skjelsvik, 2023). These rigid structures often fail to equip students with adaptable language skills due to their one-size-fits-all nature. Recognizing this need, a pilot online ESL course, "Super Intensive," was developed at a university's Language Institute. This project explored the potential of blended learning (b-learning) as an alternative. Blended learning is an educational approach that combines traditional face-to-face classroom instruction with online and digital learning experiences. It integrates the benefits of both in-person and virtual environments, allowing students to engage with course material, teachers, and peers through various formats. This approach provides flexibility in how and when students learn, often enabling personalized learning experiences and promoting greater collaboration and interactivity.

According to Cozart et al. (2021), blended learning empowers ESL learners through flexibility, allowing them to study at their own pace and revisit topics. B-learning platforms cater to individual needs through interactive exercises and diverse online resources like discussion forums and video conferencing, encouraging a richer and more communicative learning experience.

The Super Intensive course challenged traditional textbook-based learning by becoming an online synchronous program with a student-centered approach. The course content, meticulously organized into units and lessons, was carefully aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) while leveraging the university's Google Suite subscription. This eliminated the need for expensive textbooks, providing students with a completely free course which is always a viable alternative for public university students in our country. The focus on real-world content, creatively developed by the pilot course main tutor, ensured a customized learning experience.

In fact, in the field of English language teaching (ELT), textbooks have long been considered indispensable tools for educators. Hence, most educators are accustomed to teaching languages using traditional textbooks. Typically, textbooks dictate both the content and methodology of language instruction. Furthermore, students often struggle with outdated information. This approach is often ineffective since students have diverse learning styles and preferences. Factors such as the students' environment, climate, living conditions, and even age must be considered to tailor the learning experience effectively. About this, Getie (2020) claims that the attitudes of students towards learning English as a foreign language are influenced by a variety of factors, including their motivation, learning environment, and cultural background. Intrinsic motivation, such as personal interests in the language and its culture, play a significant role in shaping positive attitudes. Extrinsic factors, like academic requirements and future career prospects, also impact students' enthusiasm. The learning environment, including the quality of teaching, classroom dynamics, and availability of resources, can either improve or hinder students' engagement. Additionally, cultural attitudes towards English and the students' previous experiences with the language contribute to their overall disposition. Supportive family and social networking sites can further encourage a positive attitude, while negative past experiences or lack of support may lead to resistance or apathy towards acquiring the language. Although publishers aim to create generalized and updated content, the teacher is the best judge of how to address the unique learning needs of their learners.

Specifically, the research examines whether students found the course more stimulating and their learning outcomes, measured by assessments and projects, improved, or remained comparable to those achieved in textbook-based courses. Analyzing these factors, along with student feedback, would provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of this alternative approach.

Finally, this case study offers valuable insights for educators seeking to implement alternative strategies in their online English language courses. The findings can serve as a roadmap or starting

point for developing or adapting existing curricula to incorporate custom-made materials and readily available online resources. Breaking the mold of traditional textbook-based instruction opens doors for a more dynamic and student-centered learning experience, potentially revolutionizing online English language education.

### **General Objective**

- To investigate the feasibility of teaching ESL online synchronously without relying on traditional textbooks.

### **Specific Objectives**

- To implement interactive teaching methods that encourage students' participation in the learning process.
- To design activities that require students to use critical thinking and problem solving in real practices.
- To customize lessons by using diverse online resources to cater to individual student needs and interests, thereby enhancing the online learning experience.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

A review of existing literature reveals a growing recognition of the shortcomings associated with traditional textbook-based approaches to English language teaching. While textbooks offer structure and coherence to language instruction, they often fail to address the individual learning styles and preferences of students. Moreover, reliance on standardized materials may stifle creativity and innovation in the classroom. Alternative teaching methods, such as task-based learning and content-based instruction, have emerged as viable alternatives to traditional textbook-driven approaches, offering greater flexibility and adaptability to diverse learner needs.

### **The Limitations of Textbooks in Capturing the Dynamics of Language and Culture**

Textbooks remain a cornerstone of education, providing structured content and a common foundation for teachers and students. However, they can be susceptible to criticism for neglecting the dynamic aspects of language, particularly the influence of culture on communication. Textbooks might prioritize grammar rules and vocabulary over the social cues and contexts that shape how we use language effectively in different situations. This can create a gap between what students learn and the practicalities of intercultural communication.

While Banaruee et al. (1998) acknowledge the value of textbooks in language learning, they also highlight a potential drawback. In cultures like Iran, where respect for tradition is strong, textbooks designed for beginners by official institutions might not consider the impact of cultural differences on students. These institutions may lack awareness of how cultural variations can influence both learning and communication. Nevertheless, the challenges posed by cultural discrepancies in textbooks are not the only obstacles in language instruction.

### **Action Research and Creative Teaching Strategies as ways to improve learning**

Educators have increasingly turned to innovative methodologies such as action research to enhance the teaching process. This approach is particularly beneficial in addressing the declining interest among learners, which often arises from the exclusive reliance on textbooks throughout entire course programs. By adopting action research, teachers can develop more engaging and contextually relevant methods to convey meaning, thereby sustaining students' motivation and improving language acquisition outcomes. Pokhrel (2022) states that, by eschewing traditional textbooks, educators can

explore alternative, dynamic methods such as experiential learning, digital resources, and interactive activities that cater to diverse learning styles. He uses the action research approach to adapt his strategies based on real-time feedback and observations, promoting a more invigorating and pertinent learning environment, ensuring that the instructional methods evolve in response to the students' needs and the ever-changing educational landscape.

Exploring alternative teaching methods and materials, particularly those that take education outside the traditional classroom setting, offers numerous benefits. Outdoor learning environments, such as nature parks, museums, and community centers, provide students with hands-on, experiential learning opportunities that can intensify interest and solidify knowledge. These settings allow for the practical application of theoretical concepts, raising a deeper understanding and appreciation of the subject matter. Furthermore, teaching outside the classroom can support diverse learning styles, accommodate kinesthetic learners, and encourage collaboration and critical thinking. Waite (2020) claims that by integrating real-world experiences into the curriculum, educators can create more dynamic and effective learning experiences that inspire curiosity and a lifelong passion for learning. The author also includes the word 'freedom' to describe how teachers and students feel when engaging in outdoor practices without being tied to specific materials for teaching a second language.

### **Blended Learning: A Comprehensive Approach to Modern English Education**

It is common for teachers to use alternative tools instead of textbooks to convey meaning. One of these alternatives is B-learning, or blended learning, which offers a dynamic and versatile approach to English teaching that transcends the limitations of traditional textbooks. In this model, educators seamlessly integrate digital tools, interactive platforms, and face-to-face instruction to create a rich, engaging learning environment. Instead of relying on static, predetermined content, students access a variety of multimedia resources, such as videos, podcasts, and online articles, which address the needs of diverse learners as ensuring content remains current. This method encourages active participation, as learners can be part of real-time discussions, collaborate on projects via digital platforms, and receive immediate feedback through online quizzes and interactive exercises. In addition, the incorporation of authentic language use through digital media allows students to experience English as it is naturally spoken and written, improving their practical communication skills. By capitalizing on technology, teachers can also tailor their instruction to meet individual student needs, track progress with sophisticated learning management systems, and provide personalized support, making the learning process more efficient and effective. Overall, b-learning in English education without textbooks promotes a more interactive, flexible, and student-centered approach, leading to a deeper understanding and greater fluency in the language.

According to Cozart et al. (2021), it is imperative to reconceptualize English learning materials to move beyond the sole reliance on textbooks, instead harnessing technology to develop innovative resources that align with contemporary educational needs. This shift is driven by the preferences of students, who often express a reluctance to purchase textbooks and, when they do, rarely utilize them to their full potential. By harnessing the power of digital tools, educators can create compelling, dynamic content that not only addresses diverse learning styles but also provides a more flexible and interactive learning experience. This approach reduces the financial burden on students and intensifies their overall involvement and comprehension, ensuring a more effective and personalized educational journey. Also, it can be said that Blended learning (b-learning) and online ESL (English as a Second Language) learning share a common goal of enhancing language acquisition through the integration of digital tools and traditional methods. In the context of ESL, this approach allows students to benefit from direct interaction with instructors and peers in a physical or virtual classroom, while also employing the advantages of online resources, such as interactive exercises, multimedia content, and language apps. Online ESL learning, when incorporated into a blended learning model, provides opportunities for

students to practice language skills at their own pace, access a wider range of materials, and receive immediate feedback. This combination supports a more holistic and effective language learning process, accommodating different learning styles and schedules, and ultimately leading to better outcomes in English proficiency.

### **The Impact and Challenges of Online ESL Learning**

Online ESL (English as a Second Language) learning has transformed the way non-native speakers acquire English proficiency, offering flexibility and accessibility that traditional classroom settings often lack. Through virtual classrooms, learners can connect with skilled instructors and peers from around the world, allowing for a diverse exchange of cultural perspectives. Online platforms provide a wealth of resources, including interactive exercises, multimedia content, and real-time feedback, accommodating different learning styles and paces. Thus, the use of technology in online ESL courses—such as video conferencing, language apps, and discussion forums—facilitates immersive and engaging language practice. Nevertheless, online learning also presents challenges, such as the need for self-discipline, reliable internet access, and potential feelings of isolation. Despite these hurdles, the adaptability and comprehensive nature of online ESL programs make them an invaluable tool for language learners aiming to achieve fluency and confidence in English. The strategy of prompting students for their opinions and ideas during e-learning is highly effective for increasing participation. This approach motivates active participation, cultivates a sense of involvement, and helps students feel that their contributions are valued. By soliciting students' thoughts, lecturers create a more interactive and dynamic learning environment, which can counteract the potential isolation of e-learning. This strategy also promotes critical thinking and helps students develop their communication skills. Furthermore, it allows lecturers to gauge students' understanding and address any misconceptions in real time. Overall, prompting for opinions and ideas is a practical method to enhance student participation and enrich the e-learning experience. (Fauzi et al., 2022).

### **Apps and Exposure**

Another way to demonstrate that learners can acquire language skills without relying solely on textbooks is using free apps, which can be effectively combined with out-of-school exposure. These apps offer interactive and engaging methods for practicing language skills, and when used alongside real-world experiences, they provide a comprehensive approach to language learning. In the words of De Wilde et al. (2020), studies examining the effects of out-of-school exposure on language learning highlight the significant role that diverse, real-world experiences play in enhancing language acquisition. Activities such as reading, watching television (with and without subtitles), listening to music, gaming, and using social media provide authentic and engaging contexts for learners to practice and develop their language skills. These forms of exposure can complement formal education by offering practical, everyday usage of the language, thus improving comprehension, vocabulary, and cultural understanding. For instance, watching television with subtitles can reinforce listening skills and aid in the recognition of spoken words, while reading books or articles can expand vocabulary and improve grammar. Gaming and social media use often involve interactive and immersive environments that encourage active communication and spontaneous use of the language. These activities not only make learning more enjoyable but help learners internalize the language more effectively. Consequently, incorporating out-of-school exposure into language learning strategies can significantly enhance the overall learning experience and outcomes. On the other hand, it is important to consider that free apps for learning English have revolutionized the way language learners can improve their skills, making high-quality education accessible to a wider audience. These apps offer a range of interactive features designed to enhance vocabulary, grammar, listening, speaking, and reading skills. Popular apps like Duolingo, Memrise, and Babbel use gamification to make learning fun and engaging, incorporating quizzes, flashcards, and challenges to motivate users. Additionally, apps like HelloTalk

and Tandem connect learners with native speakers for real-time conversation practice, promoting authentic language use and cultural exchange. Other apps, such as BBC Learning English and British Council's LearnEnglish, provide multimedia resources including videos, podcasts, and articles tailored to different proficiency levels. Many of these apps also offer personalized learning plans, progress tracking, and instant feedback, enabling learners to study at their own pace and monitor their improvement. By integrating these free apps with traditional study methods and real-world practice, learners can achieve a well-rounded and effective English language education.

### **Beyond the Textbook**

ESL and non-textbook utilization as Pokhrel (2021) establish, when teachers are given the freedom to use a variety of teaching resources based on their creativity or the specific needs of their lesson plans, they can significantly enhance student achievement. The absence of a rigid textbook framework allows educators to adapt their teaching methods to better suit students' interests and learning styles, making lessons more appealing and effective. Without the pressure to simply cover textbook content, teachers can focus on ensuring that students truly understand and retain the material. This flexibility increases the use of diverse and authentic resources, which can make learning more relevant and impactful. Overall, granting teachers the autonomy to design their lessons can lead to more meaningful and personalized educational experiences for students.

### **Case presentation**

This case study examines the practicability of implementing a textbook-free, synchronous online ESL teaching method. Conducted at the Language Institute of Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas (UFA-ESPE) in Quito-Ecuador from May to September, the pilot course involved twenty-one students enrolled in a super-intensive program. The study employed a one-group, post-test only design with a qualitative approach to assess student participation, learning results, and potential benefits of this creative teaching method.

Fourteen students successfully completed a mock A2 Key exam, indicating encouraging results. The study's participants were predominantly from eighteen to twenty-two years old and hailed from different regions of Ecuador including Tulcan, Quito and the coastal area. Most students were taking the course to achieve required English levels for their career and for personal interests. While the study did not delve into the specific psychological factors influencing student learning, it did consider the broader educational context, including the students' prior language learning experiences and their attitudes towards technology-mediated instruction as well as tailoring activities to meet their individual needs and interests.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology for this research was focused on a one-group, post-test only design, with a qualitative approach and a descriptive scope. The target population was formed by twenty-seven students aged 18 - 22. Since the universe was small, the sample was equal to the number of individuals. The students mentioned had the following inclusion criteria to be part of this research.

Students enrolled in the first level English super intensive program (4 levels along one semester from May to September at the UFA-ESPE Language Institute).

University students who were informed about the pilot course and accepted to take part.

Therefore, the target population was formed as the table below shows:

**Table 1**

### Population

Super Intensive course	Students who attended the whole course	Students who dropped out	Total
I-IV	21	6	27
	77.78%	22.22%	100%

**Source:** Direct research.

This study aimed to maximize the potential of delivering synchronous online ESL courses without relying on textbooks. The pilot course, designed and implemented at Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas (UFA-ESPE) through its Language Institute in Ecuador, replaced textbooks with interactive methods and a wealth of free online resources. To ensure a dynamic and relevant learning experience, the course materials were creatively developed in-house by the main tutor, utilizing a variety of authentic sources and multimedia resources. This innovative approach contributed to a more interactive and student-centered learning environment.

The course's aim was to prepare students for the A2 key mock exam, as well as improving productive and receptive skills aligning its content with the MCER frameworks for A1 and A2 levels along a semester.

The pilot course employed a super-intensive format (course dictated at Language Institute- UFA-ESPE), consisting of 4 daily hours from Monday to Thursday. Each day was divided into three sections: Formal online classes (2 hours) led by the "main tutor," these synchronous sessions delivered core content and language skills such as reading, vocabulary, listening, use of language, and writing. Asynchronous activities (1 hour) students independently completed online activities assigned to reinforce what was covered in the formal classes. The course content directly addressed student interests, incorporating topics that emerged from student feedback and comments. Conversational classes (1 hour) facilitated by a "conversational tutor" who was a different teacher from the main tutor. This session focused on developing spoken skills through interactive exercises. A "monitoring tutor" provided additional support by contacting students with absences, lagging progress, or low engagement. This was key to provide students with motivation during the pilot course.

### RESULTS

The population that went through the whole course, actively participated. Firstly, students fulfilled the requirements mentioned above in the inclusion criteria. Secondly, they were informed about the pilot course they would take part in, such as: the teaching methods included interactive lectures, group discussions, role-plays, and project-based assignments. Finally, assessment was conducted through a combination of quizzes, presentations, and portfolio evaluations, allowing for comprehensive evaluation of student learning outcomes.

In like manner, the course employed synchronous communication through Google Meet, capitalizing on the university's existing subscription to Google Suite applications like Google Forms, jamboard, classroom, drive, as the main. Moreover, several free online applications were utilized to promote intellectual development: liveworksheets, nearpod, quizlet, kahoot, classmarker, flipgrid, quizizz, among others.

Additionally, this study had as a sample 21 ESL students. Interestingly, after an initial enrollment of 27, seven opted out due to family or personal reasons. As a matter of fact, to gauge the effectiveness of the textbook-free approach, all students participated in two assessments. The first exam (Exam 1) was a standardized test based on the traditional textbook used at the institute. The second exam (Exam 2)

was designed by the main tutor and focused on the same skills (listening, use of language, reading, and writing) but drew content from the course's diverse resources. Notably, students performed better on Exam 2. This suggests that formal assessments can be effective without relying solely on rigid textbooks, potentially indicating a more transferable grasp of the material.

Here is a view on a sample:

**Table 2**

*Exam 1 and exam 2 results*

SKILL Section	Exam 1 (Textbook-based)	Exam 2 (Custom Materials)	Improvement (%)
Listening	42.52%	78.19%	35.67%
Use of language	76.52%	87.05%	10.53%
Reading	86.33%	90.81%	4.48%
Writing	56.52%	71.76%	15.24%

**Source:** Direct research.

The analysis of exam scores revealed a significant improvement in student performance on Exam 2, which utilized custom learning materials designed by the main tutor. Average scores across all skill sections (listening, use of language, reading, and writing) showed a notable increase compared to Exam 1, which relied on a traditional textbook. This is particularly evident in the listening and writing sections, where average scores jumped by 35.67% and 15.24%, respectively. The improvement in use of language skills was also positive (10.53%), while reading scores maintained a high level with a slight increase (4.48%). These findings suggest that the use of custom materials, likely tailored to address student needs and interests, may have played a significant role in enhancing student learning outcomes across a range of English language skills.

**Table 3**

*Students' approving the level results*

	Number of students	Percentages
Passed	14	66.67%
Dropped	6	0
Failed	7	33.33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Direct research.

This course involved twenty-one students, with data collected through observations, student reflections, and course materials analysis. The findings suggested a positive learning experience for students, with amplified participation and a sense of community fostered by the collaborative activities. Student reflections highlighted the relevance and authenticity of the course materials, which facilitated deeper understanding of the language.

**Table 4**

*Students' approving A2 key mock results.*

	Number of students	Percentages
Passed	14	66.67%
Failed	7	33.33%
Total	21	100%

**Source:** Direct research.

To gauge students' progress towards the A2 Key level (according to the CEFR), a mock exam was administered at the end of the course. The results indicated that 14 out of 21 students achieved a passing grade. Given the challenging nature of an international exam such as the A2 Key, these outcomes are indicative of the pilot course's effectiveness.

It can be established that the course objective was fulfilled with excellent results. 14 students passed the A2 Key mock, and all the students approved the level, demonstrating a strong grasp of the language skills required at the level.

An optional post-course survey was administered to all 21 students, with 18 students choosing to participate with the following results:

**Table 5**

*Student' reflections about learning skills. Mention something important you have learned during this course*

	N of students	Percentage
Speaking	16	88.89%
Reading	14	77.78%
Writing	13	72.22%
Vocabulary	18	100%
Use of language	18	100%

**Source:** Direct research.

The analysis of language skills revealed an average performance of 84.72%. Speaking had the highest performance with 88.89%, followed by Reading (77.78) and Writing (72.22%). Notably, Vocabulary and Use of Language skills scored consistently high at 100%. This table indicates strong foundational language skills.

**Table 6**

*Students' perceptions about working under this modality*

	N of ss	Percentages
Good	18	100%
Uneven	0	0%
Bad	0	0%
Total	18	100%

**Source:** Direct research.

The course evaluation summary based on feelings suggests a universally positive experience among participants (N=18) during the course. All participants indicated feeling “Good” about the course modality, with no reports of feeling “Uneven” or “Bad.”

**Table 7**

*Students’ perceptions. Would you like to keep studying under this current method?*

	<b>N of ss</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
Yes	14	77.8%
No	0	0%
Maybe	4	22.2%
Total	18	100%

**Source:** Direct research.

The overwhelming majority 77.8% expressing a positive response suggests the current method is well-received by students. The presence of some “Maybe” responses 22.2% indicates there might be room for open-ended question format to gain deeper understanding of students’ perception. It is also noteworthy that no student chose the “No” option, suggesting a favorable overall sentiment about the project.

**Table 8**

*Effectiveness of the pilot course. How would you grade this course? from 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest!*

	<b>Percentages</b>
5 Really Satisfactory	70%
4 Satisfactory	27.8%
3 Kind of satisfactory	0%
2 Little satisfactory	0%
1 Nothing satisfactory	0%
Total	100%

**Source:** Direct research.

The post-course survey using a 5-point Likert scale (5= highest satisfaction) yielded strong quantitative results, aligning with the qualitative feedback received. A significant majority of students (72.25%) rated the course as “Really Satisfactory,” and nearly all remaining students (27.8%) rated it as “Satisfactory.” This corresponds with the predominantly positive open-ended comments, where 15 out of 18 students expressed satisfaction and appreciation for the course. Students specifically praised the teaching team and emphasized their learning gains and gratitude.

Open-ended question to see the level of satisfaction about the course. Would you like to make a comment, suggestion or even complaint?

Fifteen out of eighteen students provided optional feedback at the end of the course. This was highly positive, with many students expressing their satisfaction and appreciation. Students’ feedback consistently lauded the teaching team, acknowledged their substantial learning progress, and expressed sincere gratitude. This positive feedback suggests that the pilot course successfully met student needs and expectations.

## Implementation

Students were pre-informed about how the course would be developed. Factors like transparency, motivation and organization were key as participants were introduced to the innovative approach of using custom-made learning materials for the course. Likewise, the course demonstrated effectiveness as students got involved with the dynamic and interactive activities and increased participation, along the course.

Given this assumption, the pilot course was implemented over a semester-long period, with weekly sessions held on Google Meet. To nurture a dynamic and interactive environment, the course incorporated activities such as online discussions, based on topics that could enhance learners positively according to their needs and comments, role-playing scenarios, with real daily activities, and collaborative projects using free online tools like padlet, flipgrid, jamboard, and nearpod.

As a result, this experience emphasized the capacity of custom-made materials to accomplish these project objectives. In addition, the course's success in developing content and activities for a motivated group of learners suggests that student center approach and high motivation may be a crucial determinant of effective learning.

## DISCUSSION

The success of this case study shows the promise of alternative approaches to English language teaching that prioritize learner autonomy and authentic communication. By ditching textbooks in favor of customized materials, educators can create more personalized and meaningful learning experiences for students. Teachers can now take advantage of WhatsApp to create a group chat for addressing students' questions, sharing documents, audio, and pictures, which can help students' understanding and knowledge. (Sari et Safitri, 2023)

Similarly, educators are constantly seeking new ways to help students achieve their second-language learning goals. While countless articles and books explore various techniques, studies like this one break the mold by exploring and applying innovative approaches. That is the case of the study about smart environments combined with creativity mentioned by Huh and Lee (2000) where teachers and students are led to leave their comfort zones to create new ways of learning. This study dares to challenge traditional methods, demonstrating that even unconventional ideas can lead to successful outcomes - a testament to the power of passionate educators.

This study case, which explored alternative learning materials focused on students' needs, showed positive results. Learners using customized materials demonstrated strong performance, finding a need for a curriculum that is more flexible, and learner centered. Also, the findings in this study stress the importance of adapting pedagogical practices to embrace such innovation. Teacher training can also play an important role in this shift by incorporating methods that motivate exploration of alternative approaches, moving beyond traditional, one-size-fits-all models.

This study has evidenced such remarkable success that 14 out of 21 students passed the A2 Key mock exam, and all of them successfully completed the pilot program, the super intensive course. These outcomes collectively confirm the efficacy of this approach.

To confirm these findings and assess the generalizability of the approach, future research with a larger and more diverse population would be beneficial. Besides, this study suggests further studies to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the approach's impact, including long-term knowledge retention; future studies could incorporate follow-up assessments after a longer period. Students who completed the survey expressed high satisfaction and a desire for further courses of this nature.

Finally, the absence of a control group using traditional textbooks makes it challenging to isolate the impact of the alternative materials on student achievement. A similar study with a control group could draw more definitive conclusions in future research helping educators have several resources to make ESL learning promising.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

To conclude, the pilot course conducted at UFA-ESPE, using a one-group, post-test only design, with a qualitative approach and a descriptive scope was successful. This represents a significant departure from traditional textbook-driven approaches, achieving beneficial results and opening the door for new research studies.

These findings permitted to have the following conclusions:

Students utilizing custom-made materials and innovative pedagogical techniques, demonstrated robust performance, highlighting the potential of this approach to cultivate a more dynamic and student-centered learning environment.

The pilot's course success underscores the importance of flexibility, creativity, and adaptability in responding to the evolving needs of language learners. Moving forward, further research with a larger, controlled group may be necessary to definitely confirm these findings.

Furthermore, exploring the long-term impact of this approach on student retention and its applicability to diverse learning contexts and language levels would be valuable areas for future investigation.

As educators continue to explore new frontiers in language education, it is imperative to embrace innovative approaches. These may empower students to become confident and proficient communicators in an increasingly interconnected world.

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