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ABSTRACT

This project is about the integration of skills through the use of Avatars, specifically through the use of Vokis within an EFL class. The work contains three main parts, divided into five chapters:

The first part analyzes the problems and situations that led to propose new technological resources such as avatars as possible solutions. Moreover, this part refers to the reasons which justify this work and the objectives to be reached.

The second part introduces the development of the theoretical framework that supports the theme. Topics such as the new roles in education, advantages and disadvantages of educating with technology, and the term *educational technology* itself, are all involved with the basic concept of ICT in education as the starting point. The last part, educational technology, leads to technological resources where Avatar and Voki categories originate. To conclude, since our topic is focused on technological activities based on drills and repetition to work with language skills, topics such as the integration of skills and Behaviorism are also dealt with.

Finally, the third part establishes the practical part of this investigation. It is focused on the elaboration of lesson plans based on the integration of skills achieved by the aid of Vokis, as well as the results and recommendations evoked from this application.

Keywords: Integration of skills, Avatar, Voki, roles, technology, education, Behaviorism, lesson plan.

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FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA, LETRAS YCIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN

CARRERA DE LENGUA Y LITERATURA INGLESA

"ICT: Creation of Avatars to Integrate Skills in an EFL Classroom"

Tesina previa a la obtención del Título de Licenciada en Ciencias de la Educación en la Especialización de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa.

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Cuenca-Ecuador

2012

Universidad de Cuenca

AUTHORSHIP

The ideas, thoughts, and points of view

expressed in this project are of exclusive

responsibility of its authors.

…… ……

Adriana Ulloa M. *Tania Ureña G.*

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to five marvelous people:

To my parents, Angel and Julia, who have unconditionally supported me to overcome the bad and good moments of my life, and who have been my inspiration and strength to achieve this work with success.

To my three dear sisters, Nelly, Maria Eugenia, and Lorena who with their patience and understanding have become my best friends and confidants during the development of this work.

Adriana Ulloa M.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my dear parents because they believed in me and motivated me morally as well as materially, giving me worthy examples of hard work and dedication. I can see now my goal has been reached because of them. They were always supporting me in the most difficult moments of my career. My self-respect was what made me determine to complete my project. This goes for you, my dear parents, for what you are worth. I admire your strength and what you have done for me.

.

Tania Ureña G.

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From the deepest part of our heart, we would like to give our thanks to GOD, for giving us the opportunity to live and to study. Also, we would like to express our sincere thanks to our dignified tutor, Mst. Catalina Astudillo, who with her wise knowledge knew how to guide us in the elaboration of this present work and led us to fulfil this project.

At the same time to the University of Cuenca, Faculty of Philosophy English Language School that has allowed us to learn and study in order to accomplish our proposed goals.

INTRODUCTION

Since nowadays humanity is going through a technological era, a new world of educative possibilities is arising. The development of the language as well as the technology pushes us into a new vision of English -considerate as a Lingua Franca. Therefore, the learning of English is becoming day after day mandatory

and in order to acquire it, it is quite necessary to work in the development of the four skills (listening, reading, writing and reading) to communicate real messages.

With this research work, the readers will have the opportunity to know and understand what Educational Technology is, what its assets, liabilities, and roles in education are. Likewise, the study includes a brief overview on the technological resources used in Education and a description on Avatars and how they are employed for educational purposes.

Similarly, this proposal will integrate most of the skills in an English lesson from the perspective of the Behaviorism as an educational technological theory.

Finally, readers may also appreciate the outcomes obtained from the Vokis application in the tenth grade of “Sindicato de Choferes de Cuenca” High School, and how the pupils achieved a significant improvement in the development of their English skills. The Vokis application can be found by visiting the blog at this web address: **http://avatars-voki-virtualclass.blogspot.com.**

Chapter I: THE PROBLEM

1.1 TOPIC

ICT: Creation of Avatars to Integrate Skills in an EFL Classroom

1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

In this day and age, new technologies, hereinafter ICT (Information and Communication Technologies), are changing our ways: our ways to work, our ways to communicate, our ways to entertain, and above all our ways to learn and to teach. Hence, as our society is involved in all of these changes, inventions, transformations, and advances, the field of education cannot remain untouched. Without a doubt, this new world of possibilities should be used by those who are in charge of the teaching-learning process with the purpose of innovating and enhancing the educative practice. The implementation and application of those technological tools into the educational process is justified not only because these have of their capacity to update and improve it, but also because previous educational experiences tell us that there are some problematic circumstances and facts faced by the students which also validate and support the use of new technology.

The first problem consists of the perception that English classes are boring and old-fashioned. The monotonous lessons and activities do not allow the pupils to be motivated or interested, to have fun, or to be encouraged in the EFL class. In addition, lessons are mechanical and repetitive, and although technology offers lots of sorts of teaching material, activities, and tasks, traditional teaching involving the use of typical didactic tools such as the blackboard and the textbook is still practiced.

Even though at the present time, ICTs have become a useful, new, and even in vogue tool, a considerable number of teachers still do not make use of them. At present, many teachers' attitudes towards technology are still hesitant. The fact that some teachers do not like or do not feel comfortable enough with these up-to-date devices is a challenging hurdle within the educational boundaries. The problem centers on the fact that not every teacher accepts these changes, or believes in their application, since they do not think that virtual tools can be useful and efficient. However, according to the article "The Advantages of Using

Technology in Second Language Education," there have been some background studies which have confirmed technology's positive effects on language learning. Studies such as Al-Jarf (2004), Hertel (2003), Cooper (2001), etc., have produced lots of encouraging results. Furthermore, many professionals show themselves cautious of, conservative with, and even over-protective of their subjects, and few are the more adventurous.

Similarly, in addition to the drawbacks of traditional English classes and the teachers' negative perceptions, or ever outright rejection, of technology, the fact that techniques that are generally used are limited and ineffective is another troublesome concern. Students are not generally engaged in their own learning since the teachers do not provide them the necessary opportunities to learn by themselves, to explore, or to try by themselves. They all need newer and more varied activities, and tools to improve their learning in a more enjoyable and engaging manner. Moreover, the presentation and practice of the knowledge is still too controlled by the educators. Teachers are forgetting that pupils need to be freer in learning experiences. In other words, students need extra, and above all fresh, tasks, chores, and instruments to enhance their learning; the same ones which can be provided through the use of technological devices.

Finally, students' shyness is another motive for using ICT. As a common situation in the classrooms, it is found that the students are shy at the moment of either speaking in public or interacting with others in the target language. It is clear that students often have problems with their confidence and do not want to go to the board to talk in front of their classmates. Evidently the opportunities to enhance those weaknesses must be provided. Self-confidence needs to be strengthened, and teachers should make a greater effort in assisting students to express or convey their ideas, thoughts, doubts, and questions as well. Through the use of new technologies, it is expected that learners feel freer and more comfortable, and that little by little they overcome their fear of speaking.

Consequently, technological alternatives that help represent the students´ place momentously can be a helpful solution.

As previously mentioned, it is understood that most students do not like to express their thoughts or ideas in front of their peers; it is also known, however, that they do like to create their own alternate personalities, or fictional characters which express their ideas instead of them. Hence, a technological mean such as a graphic representation, an Avatar, can be an ideal option. The advantages offered by this technological device are many; however, their assistance in allowing the students to feel less afraid of making mistakes, to correct their slips, and especially to learn and overcome those errors and slips, is one of the most important characteristics and assets of applying ICT, specifically Avatars, to educational settings.

In conclusion, despite the fact that the difficulties presented in an English class can represent negative conditions for the teaching-learning process, these same difficulties can serve as worthy reasons to apply ICT. After what we have seen, it is clear that these technologies help overcome numerous kinds of obstacles. Since the new activities and tools offered by these up-to-date devices, such as Avatars, for example, help to engage the students in a more motivating, dynamic, enjoyable, and involving teaching-learning process, the necessity of at least exploring with them is undeniable. As Jorge Moutafián said, “Reflection as an adult community about our practices is a viable way to overcome this situation that limits our practice” (1).

1.3 JUSTIFICATION

Because in recent years the rise and development of new technologies has opened up a whole new world of possibilities for all sorts of processes, the field of education cannot ignore the use of these new means and resources as

possible sources of innovation and progress in teaching. Indeed, technology is becoming more prevalent in classrooms all around the world.

The diversity of the 21st-century classroom is constantly creating new challenges for both educators and students. Hence a teacher must be aware that today's society is immersed in the development of technology that is making strides. Due to the fact that education cannot be isolated from this reality, today's tutors must make their best effort to mature and use new, useful, and engaging means to teach and learn through the use of innovative technologies, adopting at the same time the role of innovators, idea generators, and facilitators. Pupils, on the other hand, must be designers, problem solvers, publishers, and broadcasters; in other words, they must be challenged. It is essential to let the students be creative, instill in them curiosity, and inspire them to be involved in their own learning.

We selected this topic because we are convinced that the task of teaching involves innovation and advance, as well as the introduction of every possible means and tool to facilitate and promote better and innovative ways of teaching. From there, educators should be able to use and apply the technology in their practice, and thus realize the full potential that technology offers to improve and carry out more effective teaching. Moreover, as today's students need to be engaged in their own learning, the necessity of more numerous and varied activities cannot be denied. In the same manner, we intend to demonstrate that the uses of new technologies, such as avatars, in English learning encourage and motivate students, in addition to creating new and better educational settings. Additionally, it is important for educators to recognize that new technologies are everywhere, and that they represent new and refurbished channels of conveying information and mastering knowledge.

Prior to our real investigation, and in order to strengthen it, it was necessary to carry out certain activities; namely, an interview with an expert, as well as a

questionnaire survey applied to a group of students. From the interview, we confirmed that avatars are animated images or fictional characters that can be used as an EFL resource. According to the expert's experience, avatars can improve pronunciation or the speaking skill, and they can be used for introducing a new topic since they can help to present a lesson by making the students feel interested in the subject. Characteristics such as the usefulness, attraction, and engagement for the students advocate their positive use. Additionally, it is easier to tell a story or to create listening material by using avatars in a lesson because the students feel excited about, motivated by, and attracted to their use, and as a consequence of their application the pupils can be really involved in the teaching-learning process.

Furthermore, after the analysis of the pool results, the following outcomes were revealed. First, the students approve of the application of ICTs in their classes. They think that by implementing devices such as projectors, internet, smart boards, and media players, the teaching-learning process would be better, more interesting, faster, and easier. Second, students find that English classes are still old-fashioned because the teachers rarely or never use new gadgets for their lessons. So, the need of being up-to-date in regards to ICTs is undeniable. Finally, as the students are also constantly involved with technology for the development of their educative tasks, most of students at least have some knowledge about the use of technological devices. As a result, this topic can be very useful and interesting for the students as well as for the teachers.

Last but not least, it should be emphasized that we are teaching to the new digital generation; thus do we, as future teachers, have to look beyond the classroom walls and see what awaits our students. Through the accurate use and application of avatars, students will have the opportunity to be involved in a much more meaningful lesson, improve and integrate some of the skills needed for the acquisition of a target language, and have the chance to learn by

themselves, work independently, and improve their self-confidence. Consequently, the use of tools or devices provided by new technologies will allow the educators to spread knowledge in a more active, efficient, and above all, a much more attractive and interesting way for students. We are convinced that “tomorrow’s future is in the hands of today’s students” (Norman).

1.4 OBJECTIVES

General Objective

To integrate certain English skills through the use of Avatars in the tenth grade of “Sindicato de Choferes de Cuenca” High School.

Specific Objectives

- To establish a definition and a description of Avatars
- To find out how Avatars are used for educational purposes
- To develop activities for one unit which integrate as many skills as possible into an English lesson through the use of one specific type of Avatar: the Voki
- To analyze the outcomes obtained from the Avatar’s application in an EFL classroom

Chapter II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Because in recent years the development of new technologies has opened up a whole new world of possibilities for all sorts of processes, the educational field cannot ignore the use of these new means and resources as possible sources of

innovation and progress in teaching. Indeed, technology is becoming more popular in classrooms all around the world, and that is why the educational system needs to incorporate new technological devices within the school room in order to make the teaching-learning process superior and more attractive.

The following literature review will focus on three main aspects: implications of using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in educational settings, the importance of the integration of skills, and the Behaviorism as an educational technological theory.

2.1 ICT IN EDUCATION

The 21st century has introduced an entirely unknown and unspecified future. Mankind is entering a new digital era that will make people face challenges they have not been prepared for yet. Also, due to the fact that new generations are growing up with technology and getting familiar with it, humanity now deals with a varied, globalized, and complex media. The way people obtain information, investigate, and associate with people all over the globe has been amazingly transfigured by computer technologies .That is the reason that educational institutions and educators must be conscious of the importance of enhancing their technological devices in order to boost their pupils' attention and curiosity.

Victoria L. Tinio defines ICT as a "diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate, and to create, disseminate, store, and manage information".

From this concept, it can be ascertained that the use of technology in current classrooms converts the lesson into a more accurate and engaging environment than traditional ones. New means and patterns of communication and cooperation can be introduced since the work atmosphere is altered for both students and teachers. Technology then, encourages the main actors of the educational system, and prepares them for their future roles in society.

2.1.1 New Roles in Education

Undoubtedly, societies all over the world are changing and with them the main roles of the human elements which participate in the teaching-learning process. It is a technological perspective which proposes to develop a society where everyone can create, access, use, and share information and knowledge in order to acquire people's full potential and improve their quality of life in a sustainable manner.

According to Julio Cabero Almenara, flexible and adaptable roles are ensued by this new technological environment. Terms such as self-learner, team member, and knowledge manager are applied to the students' new roles. The self-learner is a student who selects his/her own real-world projects and identifies possible solutions. In this way, students help determining the content of the curriculum. The team member is actively involved in advance educational projects. There is both shared and individual responsibility for the success of the project. The third role is the knowledge manager, and it is, perhaps, one of the most often associated with the use of technology. The focus of this role is on the development of knowledge products such as reports, research studies, or multimedia presentations that solve a real world problem. In this manner, although teachers retain many of their traditional roles, namely as class leader or director, they now are negotiating multiple new roles in classrooms. The new teachers' roles are, for instance, designer, trainer, collaborator, team coordinator, creator, and evaluator of knowledge. Each role is associated with specific activities and is made possible by the use of technology (267-76).

In summary, teaching in this new digital generation involves looking beyond the classroom walls and seeing what awaits our students. Times have changed, but teachers will not be replaced by technology. However, if they do not use technology, the possibility that they are replaced by those who do is inevitable. Furthermore, it is quite important to recognize that "tomorrow's future is in the

hands of today's students" (Norman); hence, the necessity to provide them with the essential and basic tools and environments to become critical and autonomous beings is plain.

2.1.2 Assets and Liabilities of Educational Technology

Technology is universal and can make our existence easier and more comfortable; however, in other cases it can cause threats and dependencies. Technology is the future for the educational system; therefore, it is necessary to recognize what the advantages are as well as the disadvantages that technology offers us.

Amongst the advantages provided by ICTs are the following:

- Technology facilitates the updating of educational material.
- It confirms the interaction between the teacher and the student, since educators have begun to see themselves as partners in learning with students; there is an improved climate with more interaction and cooperative work.
- Technology provides the chance to teach and learn anytime and anywhere since instructors and students have a great deal of access to the knowledge.
- It determines the different types of students (multiple intelligences and students with low attention spans, for example) through which their progress can be reviewed.
- Technology allows the establishment of the four key components to learning: "engagement, participation in groups, frequent interaction and [right] feedback, and connection to real world's experts" (Staff).
- Technology removes obstacles, allowing the students to acquire an important competitive advantage for today's computerized and globalized society.

- Finally, new technologies “allow students to have more control over their own learning, to think analytically and critically, and to work collaboratively” (Kosakowski).

On the other hand, according to Samali, technology can also have a negative impact on students’ learning; this can be summarized in the subsequent way.

- Technology can be a very useful tool, but in other cases a source of failure for both the teacher and the student, since it is mandatory to have good training in and knowledge of technology in order to teach and learn by its use.
- Technology takes up students’ time that might otherwise be used for doing homework or studying.
- Technology provides accurate as well as inaccurate information, and it is difficult to make a distinction between these.
- Technology fosters isolation because it separates people from family and friends.
- Finally, technology presents other negative issues, such as pornography and distracting games. Those addictions directly affect students’ education because they take their concentration away from their daily studies and healthier entertainments.

Although it is important to consider these negative factors, the advantages discussed regarding ICTs still outweigh the disadvantages. Computer technology is a positive supplement to bridge the gap between education and the technological world in which we live. Computer-assisted technologies in schools offer scholars better access to information, an avid motivation to learn, a jump-start on marketable job skills, and an enhanced quality of class work.

2.1.3 Educational Technology

Educational Technology is not simple technology but complex combinations of hardware and software. This term, Educational Technology, can be defined as the application of devices in educational settings that broaden our capabilities to process and understand our environments. As stated before, it enhances instruction and fosters learning outcomes through the participation of people, machines, and processes in which the knowledge is creatively applied and involving (Aziz).

Technology may employ any combination of audio channels, computer code, data, graphics, video, and text. While technology applications are often characterized in terms of their most evident hardware feature, from the point of view of education, it is the nature of the instruction provided that is significant rather than the equipment.

2.1.3.1 Technological Resources in Education

The fast creation and implementation of technological resources in educative settings is causing both educators and pupils make both effective and often unfit use of their school's media resources. Thus it is imperative to explain that educational technologies include a variety of devices which can be categorized into four basic uses: tutorial, exploratory, application, and communication.

Tutorial uses are those in which the technology does the teaching. The system controls what material will be presented to the scholar through a lecture or workbook. It includes expository learning (the system delivers information); demonstration (the system displays a phenomenon); and practice (the system needs the student to solve problems, respond to questions, or engage in some other process).

Exploratory uses of technology are those in which the student is free to roam around the information presented in the medium. It may endorse finding or guided discovery approaches to help students learn information, knowledge,

facts, concepts, or procedures. Exploratory uses also include reference applications, such as CD-ROM encyclopedias, in which the student controls the learning.

Application uses are those in which technology help students in the educational process by providing them with tools to facilitate writing tasks, analysis of data, and other uses. This category contains database management programs, graphing software, desktop publishing systems, and video recording and editing equipment.

Communication uses are those that allow students and teachers to send and receive messages and information to one another through networks or other technologies. Interactive distance learning via satellite (the Internet), computer and modem, cable links, or other technologies constitute another example of communication uses.

Many are the technological means that can be classified within those categories; however, the device in which we will focus on belongs to the application group. Thus the focus of our work will now shift to a new and helpful technological resource known as Avatars.

2.1.3.2 Avatars

Today, the educative process involves not only new types of teaching but also new types of learning, yet these ones can be carried out by the means of a new technological tool called Avatar.

An Avatar is a graphic representation. It adopts or represents the shape of diverse characters that are either real or fictitious. An Avatar comes in two forms: a two and a three-dimensional. Its two-dimensional form can be present

as an icon in internet forums or other online communities, and its three-dimensional form can appear as a graphical representations or a character in games or virtual worlds.

According to Mike King, the uses are varied. Avatars allow the creation of a story or the presentation of content. They can be a representation of a fictional or a real life personage who describes journeys, presents a discourse, or introduces a topic. Recording “natural voiceovers” accompanied by music or other secondary sounds, using programs such as Crazy Talk, is also permitted when using Avatars. The integration of multiple narratives, expressed by many characters in the development of one lesson, is possible with Avatars like MASH. Moreover, the explanation of terms, request of instructions or commands in regards to learning tasks, and content reinforcement can be performed with the use of an Avatar. Finally, a PowerPoint presentation can include the forementioned tools, and that incorporation can be presented at the same time by means of “an interactive projection display” like the Smart Board” (Fitzpatrick).

These interactive characters can suggest a variety of opportunities regarding online experiences, and the ways that they can be used vary according to their type. Thus, as stated by King, some common Avatars that can be used for educational purposes are the following:

Crazy Talk - Facial and 2D Animation

Famous people from history come alive as amusing, talking characters. An original and exceptional digital story with personal descriptions and narratives can be designed, developed, and told by the students through Crazy Talk. Collaborative projects through team work can be carried out. For instance, some students can be in charge of the writing part, while others direct the sound

features. One more group can do the voiceover, and finally all of the pupils can work together in the storyboard.

iClone

An interactive lesson to create digital storytelling with unique 3D movie features can be generated through this type of software. Characters taken from history can bring content expression to the lesson design. Thus educators in charge of history can explain their subject using the real characters involved in the past with a 3D characterization. These can describe their travels, explorations, scientific investigations or achievements, etc.

M.A.S.H. Resource: (Microsoft Agent Character)

In order to add more expression to a presentation by featuring character animation, this resource can be used. This is how it works: after the characters are created, they have to be saved and hyperlinked to the MASH file into PowerPoint. Then when the character starts talking, the words are transcribed into a text within a text bubble above the Avatar. That text bubble is a script helper, and this will aid the students in strengthening reading and listening skills, elaborating directional commands, and reviewing content.

GoAnimate

Learners can make up an “animated flash production using cartoon” characters through the use of this web-based tool (King). GoAnimate is a free source software application that allows students to use cartoon characters, mix audio tracks, create background, choose themes, and generate and publish imaginative and vivacious works. In addition, the templates provided by this tool

permit project makers the creation and edition of speech bubbles, character addition, animation prolongation, the addition of extra scenes, the change of characters' facial movements, and the addition of sound tracks. As a final point, GoAnimate provides the chance to review, edit, send a link to, or post the final animated product after this has been saved in a specific account.

Oddcast

This type of software allows the user´s facial image to be added to any existing scene –either from a film, sport episode, or TV spot. A world of original and imaginative ideas and opportunities can be achieved through this program. As well, this advanced technological tool allows users to be part of their favorite clips or television ads. Thus users can be accompanied by famous people, be with well-known sportspeople, do extreme activities, or execute deeds like a superhero according to the picture or video chosen.

Voki

This is a useful tool that allows the creation of well-animated talking characters, from people to animals. This type of Avatar allows students to create a personalized character that speaks either by adding a written text or recording a message. A Voki can be used for educators to introduce a course or topics. It can be very useful when instructing those who are more audio/visual learners. Also, a Voki can be very beneficial for involving shy students and getting them *talking* in a fun and engaging way (Dyer).

In summary, there is a wide range of Avatars that can be incorporated into innovative lessons. These technological tools may be valuable since they have the capacity to make the learning content delivery different.

Now, in terms of the present project objectives, the authors will concentrate on one kind of Avatar: Voki, which will be developed below.

2.1.3.2.1 Voki

The word Voki comes from two words: “Vox” meaning voice in Latin and “Loki” meaning a prankster character in Norse Mythology. Thus:

Vox + Loki = Voki

“A Voki is a talking voice character, a computer-generated version of oneself. The more generic term for a Voki is a speaking avatar, a digital representation of a person or being” (Dyer). It is a fun free tool that allows users to generate their own personal Avatar and give it a voice.

It is an effective language tool since it enables students to express themselves, communicate, and interact with their peers. It encourages the pupils to participate, enhances message comprehension, and presents technology in a fun way. Moreover, as regards EFL learning, it allows the students to “use the speaking Avatar to practice and listen to their speech. They may use the computerized voice first then record their own voice when they fell more comfortable. Writing, reading and pronunciation are all practiced” (Otway).

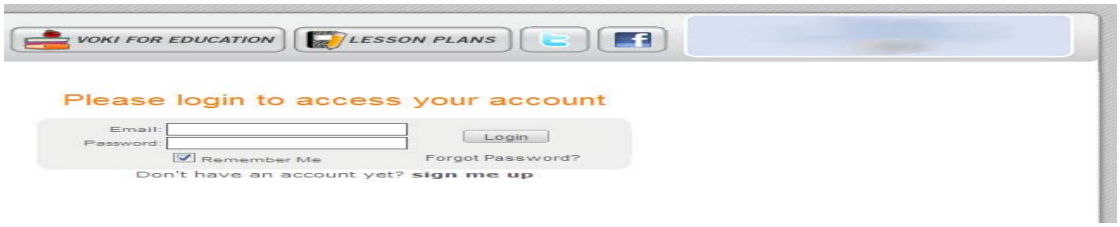
In addition, Voki is a speaking avatar which permits users to choose from an extensive collection of characters (animals, anime-type characters, etc.) and in which they have the chance to personalize their characters with different hair styles, clothing options, accessories, and other characteristics. There is the chance to choose a stage and a backdrop behind the character. The character chosen is brought to life when it speaks. The voice feature is given by just typing a message and clicking on the “voice” button to reproduce the written text, and there is also the possibility of recording one’s own voice message, via phone or microphone. As can be imagined, it is fun to watch how this type of Avatar says what one as it moves its mouth.

How to create a Voki

Making your own Voki is relatively simple, and can be accomplished by following the subsequent steps.

Step 1:

Log in at *www.voki.com* or create a user account. You will need a working email address to create an account.



Step 2

Press the **Create** button on the Menu bar.

Step 3

Select in the option **Customize Your Character**.

Look through the different characters until you find the one you want.

Step 4

Once you select a character, you can change their hair by clicking the **Hair** tab under **Head**.

Step 5

Click on the **Clothing** Tab to select what your character will wear and the **Bling** Tab to select accessories.

Step 6

Click on **Done** when you have finished.

Step 7

If you want to add text, click in the **blue** area and type what you want your Voki to say.

- You can play it back after you type your text by clicking the **Play** button.
- You can select your language.
- You can select a voice style and gender.

When finished select **Done**

* If you decide to add voice instead of text, click the microphone icon, and use the following steps.

- Next, click on **Allow** and **Close**.

- Click the **Record** button to start

When finished, click on the **Stop** button

- Click on the **Play** button to hear what you recorded.

- If you like what you recorded, click on **Save**.

- Click**Done**.

Step 8

Click on **Backgrounds** to select a background or to use your own picture

Step 9

Click on **Players** to select the frame.

Then select a color.

Then click on **Done.**

Step 10

Adjust the character coloring using the **Color** tab.

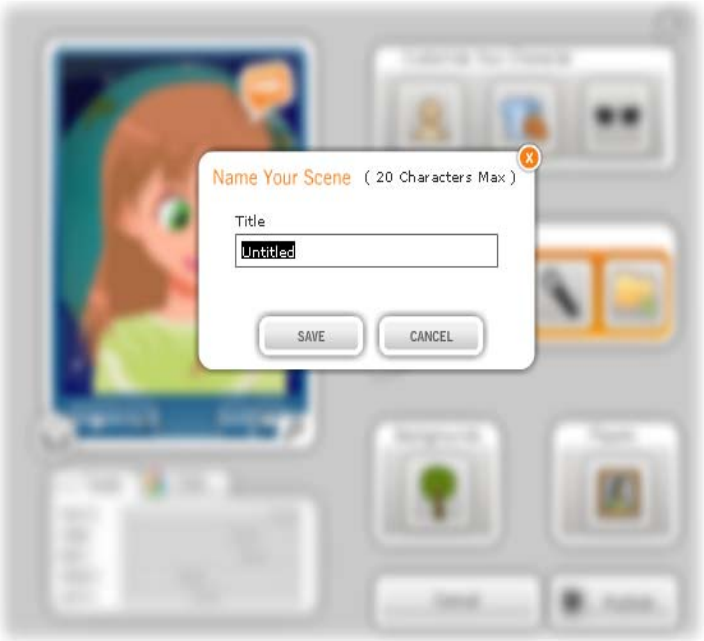
- You can use this to adjust the color of the mouth, eyes, skin, and hair.

- Click on each to change.

Step 11

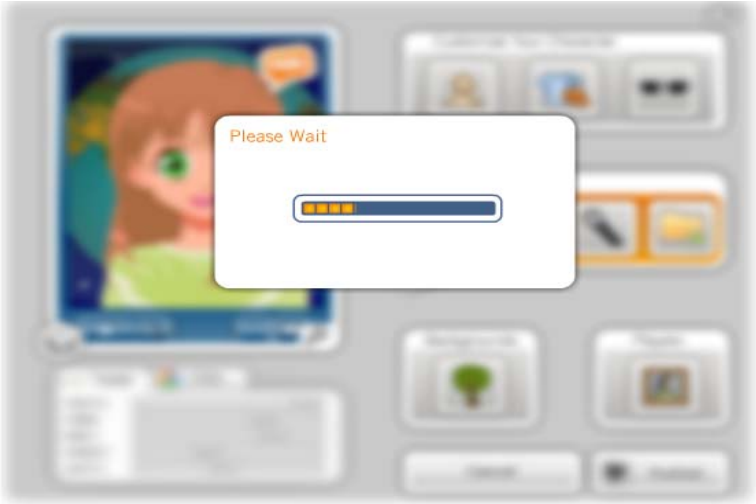
Click on **Tweak** to change size of certain characteristics.

When you have finished creating your Voki, click on **Publish**.



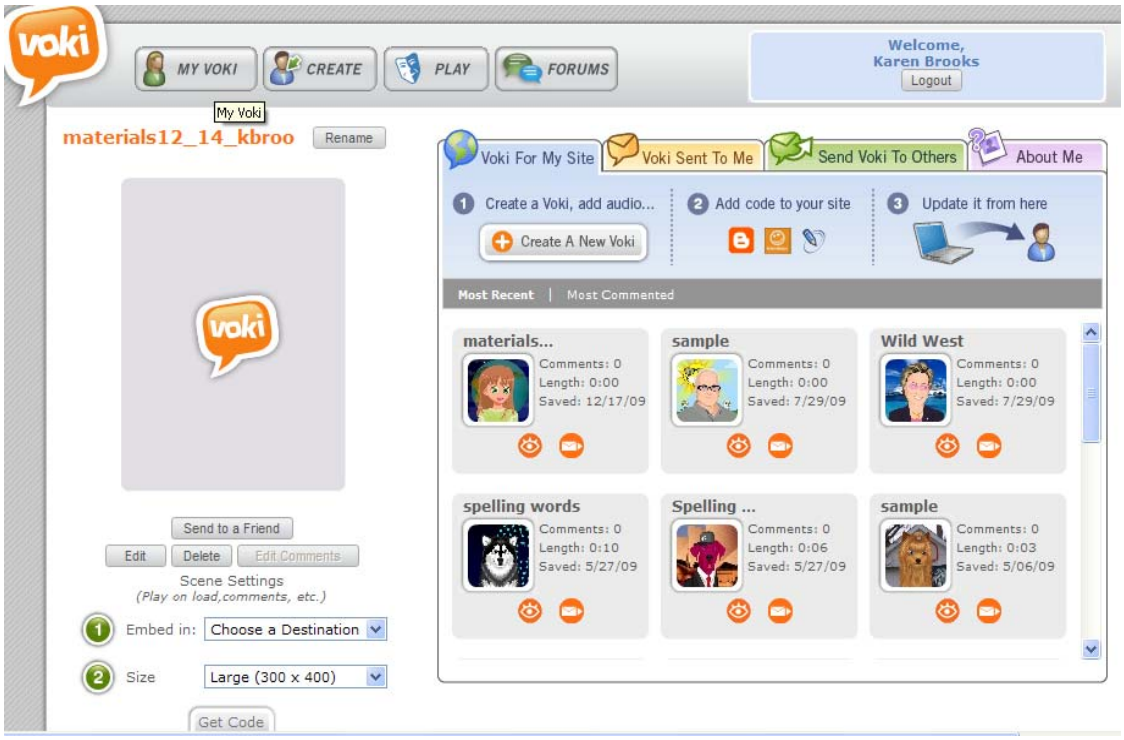
- Write the **title** or **name** of your Voki
- Click on **Save**

If you did it correctly you will see the following transition screen.



Step 12

Finally, click on **My Voki** to see whether your Voki has been saved or to edit it.



2.2 INTEGRATION OF SKILLS

Formerly, receptive and productive skills were frequently practiced in isolation within the language study programs. Contemplating the development of skills not as separate things but as a whole is now considered to be correct, and it rests upon the fact this contributes significantly towards a more authentic and motivating teaching and learning environment. The strong need for listening, writing, speaking, and reading language is unquestionable, and as stated by Renee Ybarra and Tim Green, the more language practice provided the better for the students. Hence, the aims, the purposes, and the examples presented for integrating skills in the language acquisition process are important elements to consider.

The principle goal or objective behind the integration of skills is the communicative competence achievement. As the communicative ability is one of the main aims when teaching and learning a language, it is expected that the student will ultimately be able to receive and produce messages with enough fluency and accuracy to be understood within a certain context. However; to carry out this difficult task, the integration of skills is mandatory. When teaching a language, the presentation or training of grammatical structures or vocabulary is not enough to provide meaning. Therefore, it is necessary to offer a context. This context can be delivered in a variety of ways, by use of “texts, oral passages and situations” (Almarza 21); that is to say, by incorporating the four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Furthermore, skills integration is one of the major concerns for language teaching and learning because it not only benefits the improvement and acquisition of the communicative ability, but it also aids the educational process in a variety of ways. First, according to Miguel A. Almarza, the integration of language skills helps make the students change their passive roles to productive ones (23). Second, this combination introduces the learners to a far-reaching learning process. In other words, by integrating skills, the students are placed in

a broader teaching and learning environment. The educational process itself becomes more rewarding and worthwhile.

The sense of providing a meaning and a purpose to the learner is another motive for working on skills integration (Almarza 25); that is to say, the learned and practiced content turns palpable and tangible for the pupils. Another asset this interrelation presents is the perspective of taking the language not as separated pieces but as a whole. Finally, the development and practicing of one skill can spring from or provide material for another skill. In other words, the material used in one activity serves or expands the progress of another one.

The instances in which the integration of skills are applied to achieve communicative competence and the samples in which the useful and linking character of these skills are showed are numerous. For example, in order to afford an activity based on comprehension, listening and reading skills can be worked together, or to provide a task based on composition, both speaking and writing can be linked. Likewise, in an application with a communicational purpose, listening and speaking skills can be combined (Almarza 27). This task-dependency can work in a lot of ways; nonetheless, the important matter is –as stated before- to focus on dependence and interrelation to enhance a multiple and mutual development. Thus for instance, activities that develop the writing skill can foster structures and expressions acquired by reading or speaking. Writing attempts can also help practice previous or posterior reading or listening material. Listening and writing can be exercised at the same time by means of dictation or note-taking procedures. Making predictions before what is going to be heard can combine and increase speaking, writing, and listening skills. Above and beyond those activities, having practice on reading tasks can support speaking, writing, or listening tasks during or after it. As an example, while reading aloud, listening can be experienced, or after reading, activities such as discussion and summarizing can be done. In addition, the information presented

through reading places the students in contact with a real context, yet it indirectly fosters writing abilities in the learner as well (Almarza 34). In this way, the writing competence can be developed in a subconscious way, making the student a better writer.

In conclusion, the importance of integrating skills can be justified in many ways. The significance behind the approach of integrating the practice of the four skills in the language classroom rests upon the idea of putting the students "closer to the way we [real people] do things in real life" (Almarza 40). In other words, since the pursued language acquisition aim is to achieve a productive characteristic rather than a receptive one in the students, "language skills cannot be learnt in isolation" (25).

2.3 BEHAVIORISM AS AN EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGICAL THEORY

Today, in order to achieve meaningful and successful learning through the implementation of educational technology into curricula, the necessity of reflecting upon a learning theory is mandatory. Various models can be singled out as a starting point to bring about educative work with technology; nevertheless, the learning theory which seems to be the most appropriate for the subsequent research purposes is related to the Behaviorism. Therefore, the analysis of assumptions such as its concept and characteristics, background, new perspectives or insights, and finally the instances in which this theory is being applied in terms of educational technology is important to revise.

To start, the term *Behaviorism*, coined by John B. Watson, is a theory of learning that is based on a stimulus-responseprocess. According to this theory, a person's "behaviors are acquired through conditioning" (Cherry, "What is Behaviorism?") or produced by this person's "response to stimuli" (Cain et al.). This school advocates that behaviors can be observable, measurable as well as molded by the responses given to these stimuli. Nonetheless, the response to

those can be also strengthened by means of either rewards or punishments, or "positive or negative feedback" (Cain et al.) with the purpose of obtaining changes in the behavior. Consequently, this theory has three main assumptions which explain the learning process: first, a change in behavior defines learning; second, behavior is shaped by the environment, and finally, the principles of "contiguity and reinforcement" are essential to achieve the pursued behavior (Cain et al.).

For behaviorists, learning is the acquisition of a new behavior through conditioning, and this process can be of two types: classical or operant. The first behavioral method is related to the case of Pavlov's dog experiment, "in which a naturally occurring stimulus is paired with a response" (Cherry, "What is Behaviorism?"). In this method, however, a neutral stimulus is always presented before the natural stimulus (both are paired) until eventually the response is evoked only with the presentation of the neutral stimulus. On the other hand, operant conditioning is produced through a process of association between a behavior and either a reward or a punishment (Nylén 7).

Throughout history, Behaviorism had a variety of supporters and theorists; however; this movement initially began with the Russian Ivan Pavlov's investigation. His work led him to find out about the link between behavior and conditioned associations (classical conditioning). Later the American psychologist John B. Watson founded this theory as a movement advocating that "behavior is a physiological reaction to environmental stimuli" ("Behaviorism"). B.F. Skinner then developed the concept of operant conditioning known also as Radical Behaviorism, which refers to the way behavior can result in either reward or punishment (Cherry, "The Rise of Behaviorism" 3). Afterward, the works and investigations of people like Edward Thorndike, Tolman, Guthrie, and Clark Hull contributed to the underlying assumptions about the learning process as well. The rise and progress of this

learning perspective was roughly between the early 1900s and 1980s, and had its days of glory in the 1950s; however, nowadays, in the beginnings of the twenty first century with its ever-increasing rise and development of technology, it still impacts education when looking at educational technology as a theme.

In the present day, since there are many who no longer believe that Behaviorism is feasible for the modern time, constructivist theory is advocated as the main and predominant tendency for applying technological devices into educational settings. Nonetheless, in order make Behaviorism viable for the current century, a new tendency or perspective is being developed. Thus concepts and principles have been altered and enlarged to avoid the uselessness and futility of this movement. Zuriff explains this phenomenon in the following manner: “Behaviorism is a living program, and as such it is evolving, changing, becoming more diversified, and is turning into… a large family [Behaviorism: old and new perspectives], which cannot do something else but accepting the diversity and heterogeneity within it” (qtd. in Peña 130). According to Telmo Peña, some concepts have evolved in regards to their meanings even though they are directly related to former Behaviorism. Thus the concepts of stimulus and response as well as the concept of learning linked exclusively to conditioning have made a shift, and the equivalence between learning and conditioning now goes further (129). For instance, the term stimulus has been amplified, and now this can be seen as a structured and organized event. Indeed, “authors such as Gibson prefer to talk about ‘stimulation’ rather than stimulus” (qtd. in Peña 129). Moreover, for thinkers like Schoenfeld and Farmer, Behaviorism is no longer associated with a particular and expected response but with a set of answers (qtd. in Peña 129).

Subsequently, besides the new implications and perceptions of the Behaviorist theory, there are various instances and examples that show and reveal the link between Behaviorism and technology. For instance, according to Andrea K.

Ebert an orientation towards a Behaviorist model can be noticed when any software has instructional features or when an instruction is computer-assisted." Other illustrations, for Shield, are "drill and practice tutorials, with individual instructions and feedback drill and practice" (qtd. in Ebert). Another example of Behaviorism's current trend is when working on skill- based approaches. Tasks of this type clearly show the operant conditioning aspect of Behaviorism since the exercises not only lead the learning a step at a time but also provide learners with positive as well as negative reinforcement. Correspondingly, the positive reinforcement is showed through encouraging comments or keys when the tasks have been satisfactorily completed, and the negative reinforcement is provided when exact instructions and keystrokes are asked to follow and make, respectively, for passing to next learning objective (Ebert). A last practical application advocated by Luka Lugari´c and other authors establishes that as the learning process in programmed instruction is acquired through doing, having practiced, and through testing and committing mistakes, setting aside what is happening in the learners' cognitive structures, the Behaviorist stream can be clearly perceived (1). In conclusion, when any type of technological device is based on or shows features such as drills, task repetition, encouraging messages, step by step process, or keys for passing levels or stages, it can be stated that Behaviorism stands as the hidden governing method.

In summary, it is important to understand and to select an underpinning theory of teaching when discussing ICT in an educational context. Its definitions, implications, development throughout time, fresh or different perceptions and visions, as well as the examples in which this learning model is used, are essential when it comes to making the educative process more meaningful through these technological tools. In this case the outlining learning theory characterized by the close relation between a stimulus and a response is Behaviorism. Finally, even though these days other learning theories, such as constructivism, are most likely to be applied, some academics are pointing

towards a new Behaviorist perspective, which is being developed through fresh viewpoints and ideas with the aim of making the old Behaviorist theory viable for the current era.

Chapter III: METHODOLOGY

3.1 BASIC METHODOLOGY

The deductive/descriptive method was used as the basic methodology to carry out our research. In order to obtain and develop the material for the research, an extensive bibliography was collected and analyzed, in addition to virtual materials. Avatars were chosen as a core around which the planning and preparation of five English lessons using a Voki was carried out. Moreover, there was an analysis of the information obtained during and after the research. A survey, applied to the tenth grade students of the "Sindicato de Choferes" High School to evaluate the application of Voki, finished the study.

3.2 DATA-COLLECTION AND DATA-PROCESSING PLANNING

3.2.1 Voki Lesson Plans

In order to make this project applicable, the creation and application of five lesson plans with Vokis was devised. Each of these lesson plans makes a review of the topics and grammar points presented in the lessons from the Unit Six of the textbook *Our World through English 3.* They describe about what needs to be done with the students and indicate the lesson objectives. The materials required, the class duration, and tasks are also explained.

Voki Lesson Plan 1

Lesson Title: The Voki Project

Grade: Tenth Grade

Description:

The students will learn to create and use a Voki for delivering their own stories.

Objectives: Students will

1. Learn how to use a Voki

2. Remember the use of simple present tense

Integrated Skills: Writing and Listening

Materials:

1. blackboard
2. markers
3. notebooks
4. dictionary
5. A computer lab (a computer for each student)
6. Voki.com (Example: http://www.voki.com/)

Class Duration: 60 minutes

Activities:

This lesson is focused on creating and introducing a Voki, and using it to make up stories and review the appropriate vocabulary and grammatical structures of the simple present tense.

Task 1:

1. Students create a Voki account, customize the Voki (hair color, eyes, t-shirt, etc.) and save it.

2. Then they write a description between 50 and 80 words to introduce themselves.

Task 2

Students type their stories in their Voki accounts.

Task 3

Students correct their spelling mistakes in their writings by listening what the Voki speaks.

Universidad de Cuenca

Voki Lesson Plan 2

Lesson Title: Ecuador and other American Countries

Grade: Tenth Grade

Description:

The teacher gives the students an Internet article about the foundation of Cuenca. The students read it and answer questions about it. Finally, the students write a short composition and use Vokis to tell the history of the city.

Objectives: Students will

1. Practice vocabulary

2. Remember recently reviewed grammar structures (passive voice in past tense)

3. Use a Voki

Integrated Skills: reading and writing

Materials:

1. blackboard
2. handouts
3. markers
4. textbook
5. dictionary
6. a computer lab (a computer for each student)
7. Voki.com (Example: http://www.voki.com/)

Class Duration: 120 minutes

Activities:

This lesson is focused on reviewing grammatical structures using information from an article in order to perform a writing task.

Task 1:

After the teacher provides a Foundation of Cuenca article, the students will read it.

Task 2:

Both the teacher and the students answer information questions about the reading.

Task 3:

The students, based on the answers, will write a short composition about the Foundation of Cuenca.

Universidad de Cuenca

Voki Lesson Plan 3

Lesson Title: Some countries in the Andean region

Grade: Tenth Grade

Description:

The students, in groups, will write statements, using the comparative and superlative forms of short adjectives, which will be recorded into a Voki. Later, the class will listen to the sentences, and they will correct them with the teacher's help.

Objectives: Students will

1. Work on comparative and superlative constructions.

2. Use a Voki

Integrated Skills: writing and listening

Materials:

1. blackboard
2. markers
3. textbook
4. a computer lab (a computer for each student)
5. Voki.com (Example: http://www.voki.com/)

Class Duration: 60 minutes

Activities:

This lesson is focused on revising the comparative and superlative structures with short adjectives using the textbooks and Vokis.

Task 1:

Based on the charts and tables provided by the textbook, the students, in groups, will write comparative and superlative sentences about the area, population, oil production, and race of three of the Andean countries.

Task 2:

Then the groups will create a Voki to record their sentences.

Task 3:

The teacher will choose three Vokis. The students as a class will listen to the sentences presented by the three Vokis. Moreover, after each listening, the teacher will encourage the students to repeat the sentence they heard. The sentences will be written on the board in order to check them.

Universidad de Cuenca

Voki Lesson Plan 4

Lesson Title: South American Countries

Grade: Tenth Grade

Description:

After the teacher sends a Voki that will express information about two South American countries, the students will complete a table. Later, based on the data the students got from the listening, they will construct comparative and superlative sentences for the teacher.

Objectives: Students will

1. Work on comparative and superlative constructions.

2. Use a Voki

Integrated Skills: listening, writing, and speaking

Materials:

1. blackboard
2. markers
3. textbook
4. sheets of paper
5. a computer lab (a computer for each student)
6. Voki.com (Example: http://www.voki.com/)

Class Duration: 120 minutes

Activities:

Task 1:

The teacher creates a text with information about two South American countries. Then he/she will send it to the students' accounts by using a Voki.

Task 2:

When the students receive the teacher's Voki in their mail accounts, they will listen and complete a table. The data of the table will be checked by the teacher and the class in order to confirm the correct information.

Task 3:

With the data, the students will produce sentences orally.

Universidad de Cuenca

Voki Lesson Plan 5

Lesson Title: Traditional Dress

Grade: Tenth Grade

Description:

The teacher will provide an incomplete text to the students. They will read it and fill the blank spaces by listening to a Voki. Then, after the pupils investigate on the internet about any traditional dress in South America, they will write a short composition about it and tell it using a Voki too.

Objectives: Students will

1. Use new vocabulary

2. Practice the simple present tense.

Integrated Skills: listening, reading and writing

Materials:

1. sheets of paper
2. blackboard
3. markers
4. pen/pencil
5. a computer lab (a computer for each student)
6. Voki.com (Example: http://www.voki.com/)

Class Duration: 60 minutes

Activities:

This lesson is focused on revising vocabulary related to clothes and developing reading and writing skills.

Task 1:

The teacher creates a Voki which contains the complete information of a reading titled

“Traditional Mexican Dress” and she/he will send it to his/her students.

Task 2:

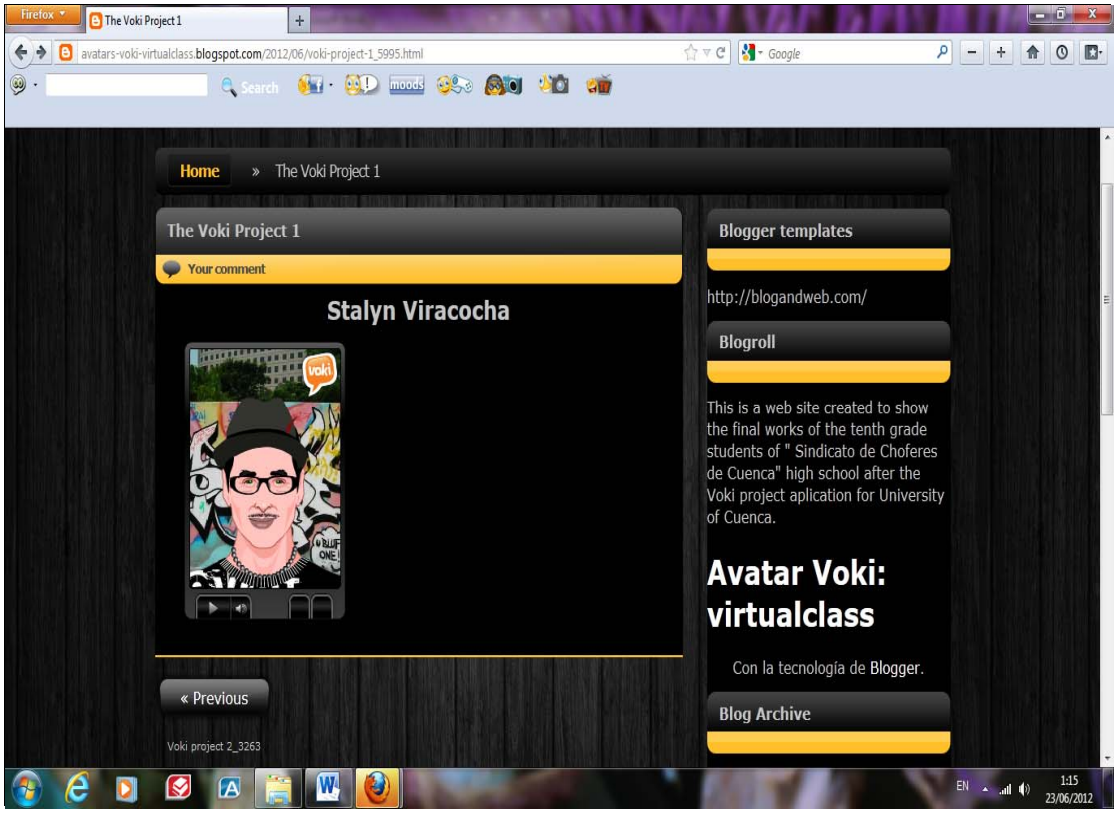
After the students receive a sheet of paper with incomplete information, they will listen to the teacher’s Voki and complete the blank spaces.

Task 3:

For homework, the students will write a short description about a traditional dress of any American country. Finally, the students use a Voki to describe their paragraph.

3.2.2 Voki Lesson Plans: Blog

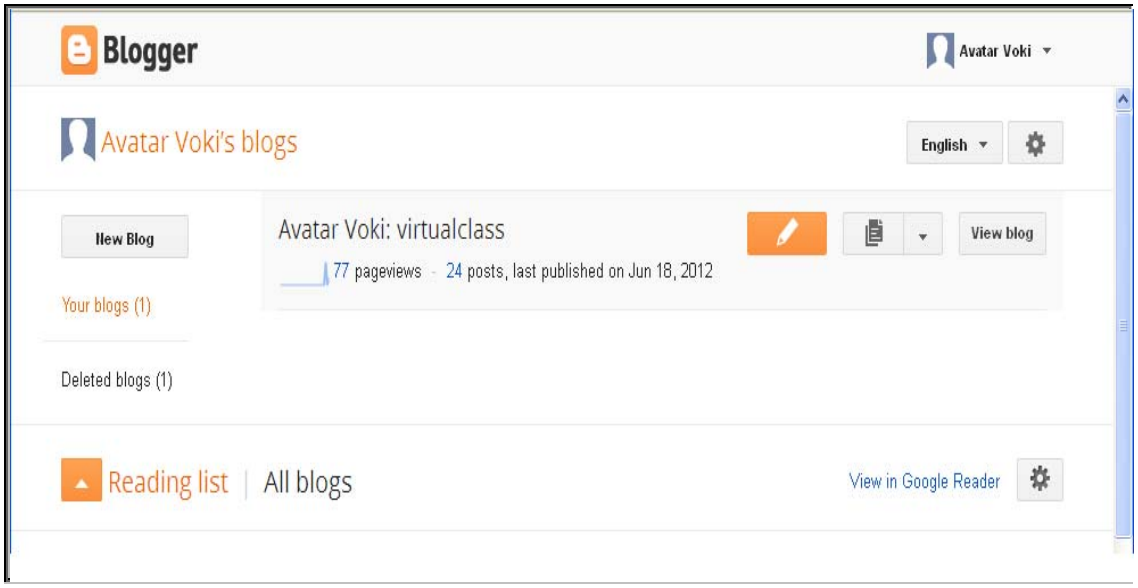
Since the students as well as the teacher created numerous Vokis after the development of each lesson plan, it was necessary the creation of a blog on the internet on the purpose to join and show those final works.



The blog presents six entries: one entry per lesson (in total five), and one more entry as a presentation. Each blog entry has the name of the corresponding lesson. It publishes some of the students' work, but not all of it. It generally presents the best five Vokis per lesson; however, the number depends on the tasks as stated in the plan. For instance, some lessons require that the students create a Voki, but in others the teacher is the one who does it. Thus, the amount of works published is 23 in total: five Vokis for the first lesson, five for the second one, five for the third one, two for the fourth lesson, and 6 for the last one. Each

student's Voki is headlined by the pupil's name and can be seen by clicking on **Play**.

The blog can be found on the Internet with the name of **Avatar Voki: virtualclass** or with this web address: **avatars-voki-virtualclass.blogspot.com**.



3.2.3 Voki Survey

Following the application of the lesson plans with Vokis, a survey was carried out. The purpose was to find out if the Vokis application helped students as a learning resource for integrating skills in an EFL classroom or not.

The survey was applied to 30 male and female students in the tenth grade of the "Sindicato de Choferes de Cuenca" private High School, on the purpose of recollecting information related to the Vokis application and use.

The poll consisted of ten questions of nine questions in which eight were closed and one was open.

Prior to the survey, it was necessary to talk to the principal in order to apply it. After obtaining the permission, we proceeded to apply the survey. Thus then, the students were informed about the purpose as well as the instructions for it. Furthermore, because the English level of students was low, after reading the questions in English, they were translated into Spanish for a better understanding.

Finally, the poll evoked lots of interesting results, the same which will be analyzed in a subsequent part.

Chapter IV: RESULTS: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 VOKI LESSON PLANS: SCORES AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

The application of the Voki lesson plans with the students of the tenth level of the "Sindicato de Choferes de Cuenca" High School took place between the dates of May 28th to June 8th, with the purpose of performing activities through the use of Vokis which integrated as many language skills as possible.

Prior to the application, the students were taken to the computer lab. Guidelines and steps were shown in order to familiarize them with Vokis and their use.

From then on, after the revision of a class planning using the textbook *Our World through English 3*, a Voki lesson was carried out. When the lesson required, the creation of a Voki as a way to reinforce the content was given to the students as homework.

After each project or class activity completed in class, grades were given, and there was also a quiz at the end of the unit to verify outcomes.

The following table shows the students' grades before and after the Voki application. The first two columns correspond to the grades which include the class activities and homework, and the quiz for the unit number five without Voki application. In the same way, the two other columns show the grades from unit number six. They include the class activities and homework and the quiz too, but with Voki application.

Finally, the last part of the table contains the course average and the percent of performance, which facilitated the tabulation of general results in the subsequent analysis.

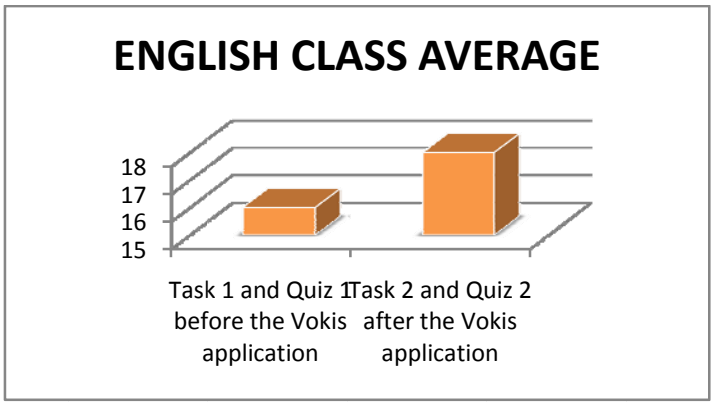
Universidad de Cuenca

"SINDICATO DE CHOFERES DE CUENCA" HIGH SCHOOL								
ACHIEVEMENT REPORT					SCHOOL YEAR: 2011-2012.			
SUBJECT:English					*TEACHER: Adriana Ulloa*			
CLASS: Tenth Grade (2)					*SECTION: Basic Education*			
Nº	LIST	ACHIEVEMENT THIRD QUARTER						OBSERVATIONS
		TASKS	QUIZ	AVER.	TASKS	QUIZ	AVER.	
1	*AREVALO MORALES PAULINA DEL CISNE*	15	15	15	18	18	18	
2	*BALLA SANCHEZ FABIAN BERNARDO*	16	15	16	18	18	18	
3	*BRAVO CASTRO ANTONI MOISES*	17	16	17	17	18	18	
4	*CAJILEMA CRIOLLO JAIRO ANDRES*	14	16	15	18	17	18	
5	*DURAN PADILLA DIEGO XAVIER*	20	17	19	20	20	20	
6	*ESPINOZA MEJIA CLAUDIO DANIEL*	15	13	14	18	17	18	
7	*GORDILLO PEÑALOZA ROMEL ISMAEL*	18	14	16	17	16	17	
8	*GUANULIQUE ALVARADO BRYAM DANILO*	20	18	19	20	20	20	
9	*GUARQUILA BRAVO PAUL ALEXANDER*	17	14	16	18	17	18	
10	*GUARQUILA ORTEGA JONNATHAN MANUEL*	19	17	18	19	18	19	
11	*INGA AYAVACA KARINA ESTEFANIA*	16	15	16	20	19	20	
12	*JUELA MORA JONNATHAN JOSUE*	17	15	16	20	18	19	
13	*MARQUEZ MOROCHO HENRY MAURICIO*	19	20	20	20	19	20	
14	*MOPOSITA SUIN LEONARDO JAVIER*	17	16	17	20	19	20	
15	*MOREIRA QUIÑONEZ WILLINGTON OMAR*	17	15	16	20	18	19	
16	*MOROCHO LALVAY OSCAR DIEGO*	15	14	15	19	16	18	
17	*ORTEGA PAUCAY JOHNNY ANDRES*	16	14	15	18	15	17	
18	*ORTIZ SANCHEZ BRYAM FERNANDO*	13	13	13	17	15	16	
19	*RAMON NIEVES CHRISTIAN RODRIGO*	16	14	15	18	17	18	
20	*SACAQUIRIN CORTEZ BRIAN SANTIAGO*	17	15	16	17	16	17	
21	*SIMBAÑA RAZO DAVID ALEXANDER*	14	14	14	17	16	17	
22	*SUCUZHANAY ESPINOZA ERICK ANDRES*	14	15	15	18	17	18	
23	*TACURI GUAMAN ANDRES MARCELO*	14	16	15	19	18	19	
24	*TENEMPAGUAY BACULIMA BRYAM PAUL*	15	16	16	17	18	18	
25	*TENESACA FAICAN DARWIN FABIAN*	17	17	17	18	18	18	
26	*VERGARA CAMBISACA EDISSON JAVIER*	18	16	17	19	18	19	
27	*VILLA LEON JUAN ANDRES*	15	14	15	17	15	16	
28	*VIRACOCHA ORTEGA STALIN FERNANDO*	18	17	18	20	20	20	
29	*YUNGA LOJA GABRIELA ELIZABETH*	15	15	15	19	17	18	
30	*YUNGA SICHIQUE JOSE ANDRES*	14	16	15	19	17	18	
31	*ZHUNIO PELAEZ ANDRES ALEXANDER*	14	15	15	19	16	18	
ENGLISH CLASS AVERAGE		**16**	**15**	**16**	**19**	**17**	**18**	
PERCENT OF PERFORMANCE				**79%**			**90%**	
DATE		11/06/2012						

4.1.1 Analysis

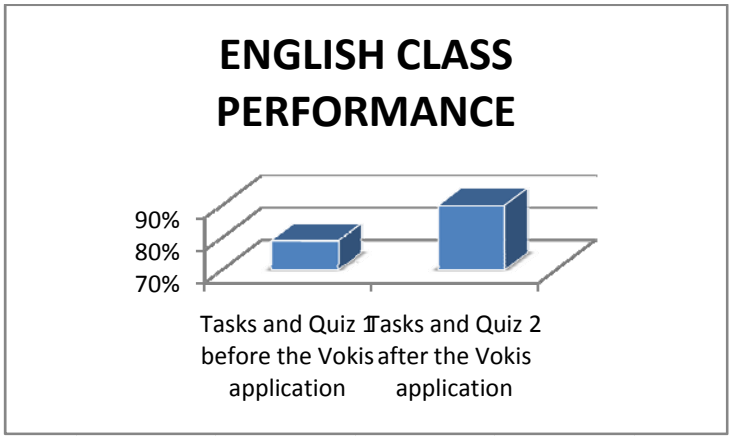
The following graph refers to the English class average which represents the class performance corresponding to the third trimester of the school year of the students in the tenth grade of the "Sindicato de Choferes de Cuenca" High School. It shows the class grades equivalent to tasks (class activity and homework), and a quiz before the Vokis application, and another for tasks and a quiz after the Vokis application.

GRAPH 1



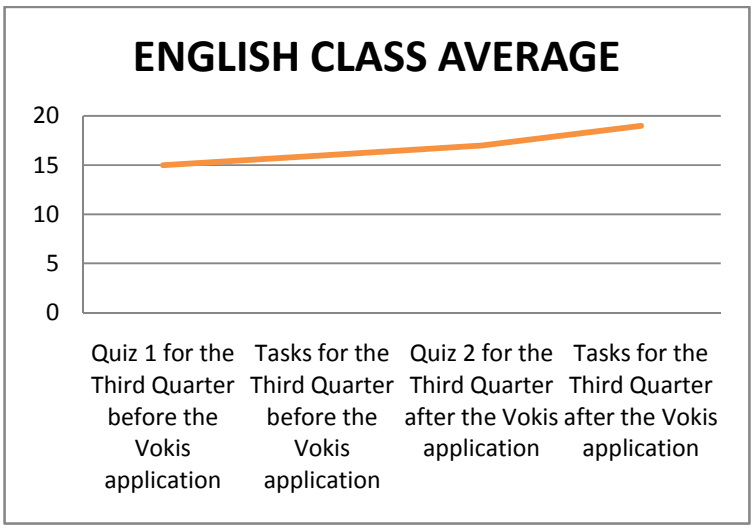
According to this graph, the English class average obtained before the Vokis application was 16. On the other hand, this same class average changed to 18 after the Vokis application.

GRAPH 2



Similarly, this graph contains the class average before and after the Vokis application, but this time it refers to the class performance grades. Thus the average of tasks and quiz 1 before Vokis application was 79%, and the average of tasks and quiz 2 after Vokis application was 90%.

GRAPH 3



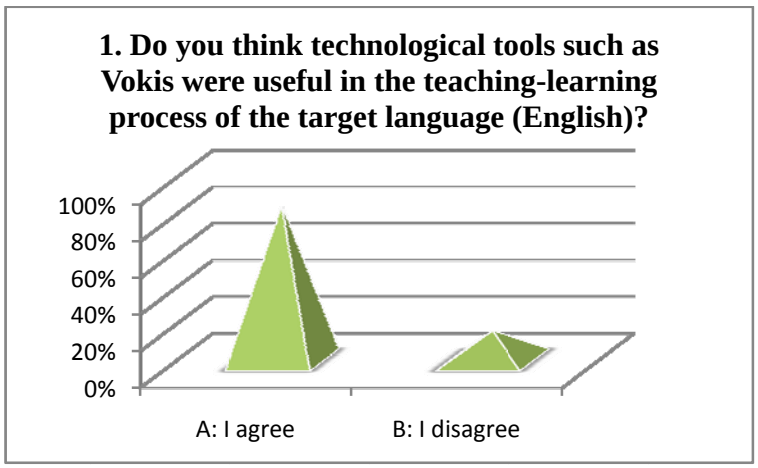
The above graph also represents the class average. It contains four grades corresponding to the partials of the third trimester taken individually. The first two grades belong to a quiz 1 and tasks before Vokis, and the last two are for a quiz 2 and tasks after the Vokis application. As it can be seen, a line shows the progress throughout the development of the third trimester. The first partial with an average grade of 15 changed to 16 in the second partial. Then the improvement continues when the grade of the third partial, 17, which turned into 19 in the last partial.

As a final conclusion, after the analysis of the performance in terms of the average grades of the students, the general outcome obtained was that the average grade for tasks and quizzes corresponding to the third quarter increased when Vokis were used.

4.2 RESULTS OF THE SURVEY WITH THE VOKIS APPLICATION

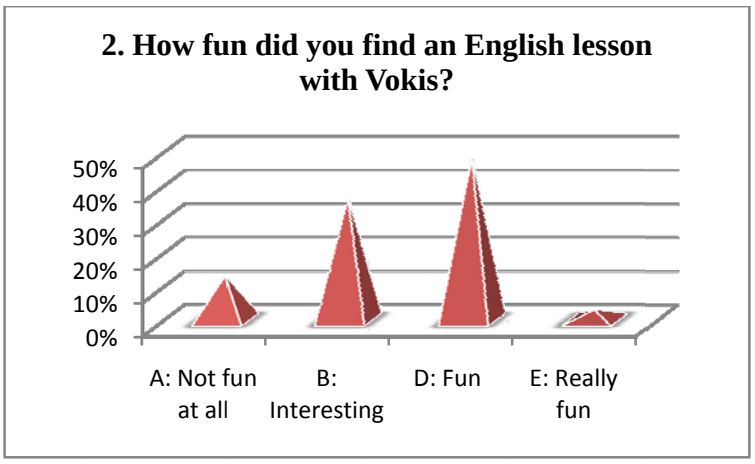
4.2.1 Analysis

GRAPH 4



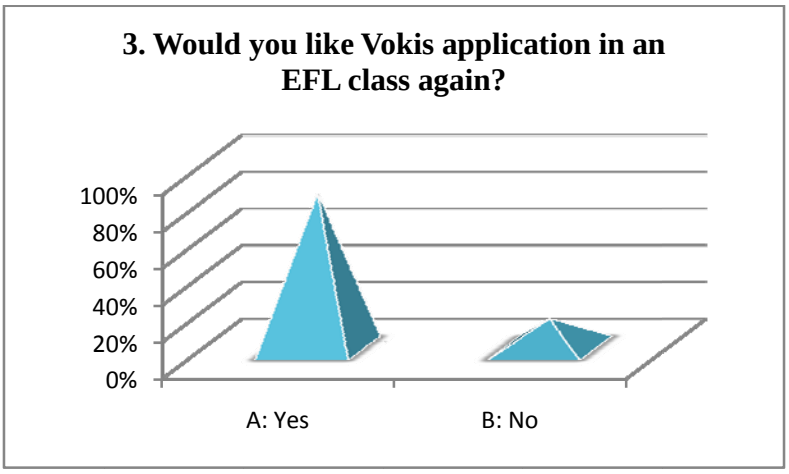
From this graph, it can be seen that most of the students, 84%, agreed that the Vokis application is useful in the teaching-learning process of the target language; and only 16% of them disagreed at this question.

GRAPH 5



As the data show, 13% of the students agreed that English lessons with Vokis were not fun at all since they were a little boring and stressful. 36% of them considered they were interesting because they learnt how to use Vokis. Furthermore, 16% said that they were fun, while 32% indicated that they were really fun because the English lessons were useful, amusing and motivating.

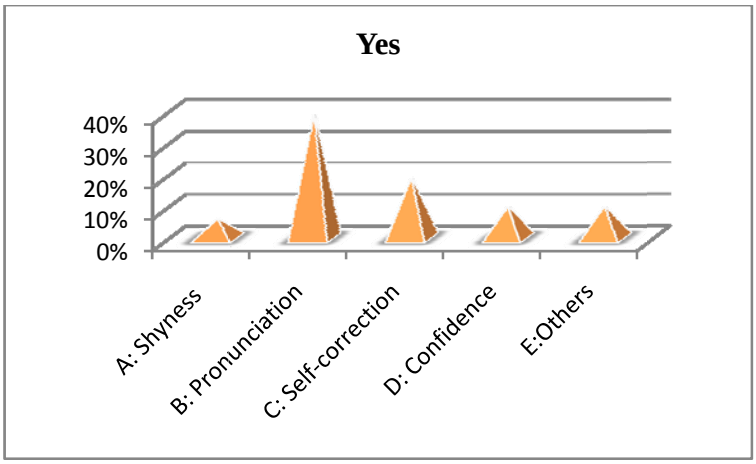
GRAPH 6



The survey revealed that 84% of the students would like the Vokis application in an EFL class again. Only 16% of them gave a negative answer.

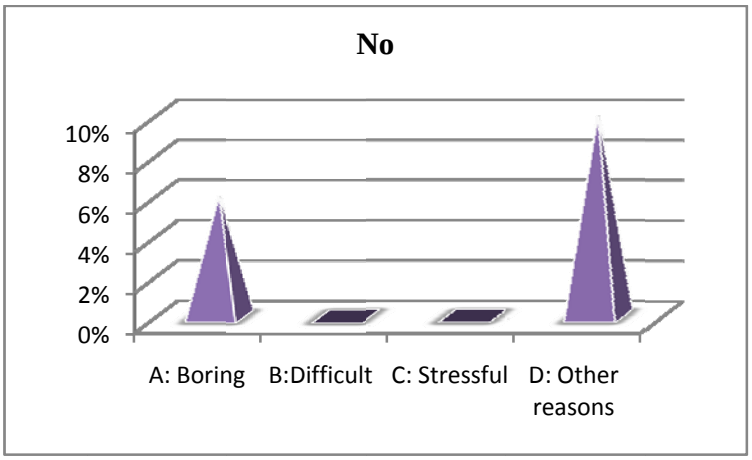
In this same question the students were asked to choose the reasons which justify their choice for their positive or negative answer, giving as a result the following interpretation.

GRAPH 7



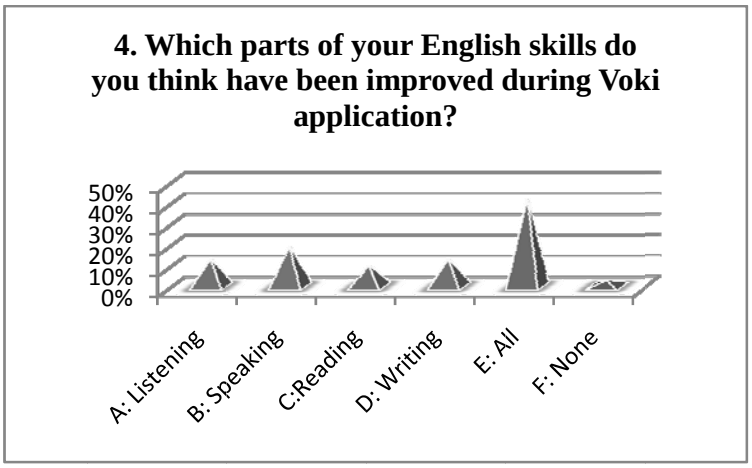
From these graph it can be seen that 6% of the students said that the Vokis application had helped them to lose their shyness or their fear to speak, and 39% of them agreed that it aided them in improving their pronunciation. In addition, 19% stated that this application was useful for their own self-correction since they had the chance to correct themselves when they are writing. Finally, 10% of the students indicated that the Vokis application was positive because it contributed to increase their confidence when learning. 10% stated that this application was good for other reasons.

GRAPH 8



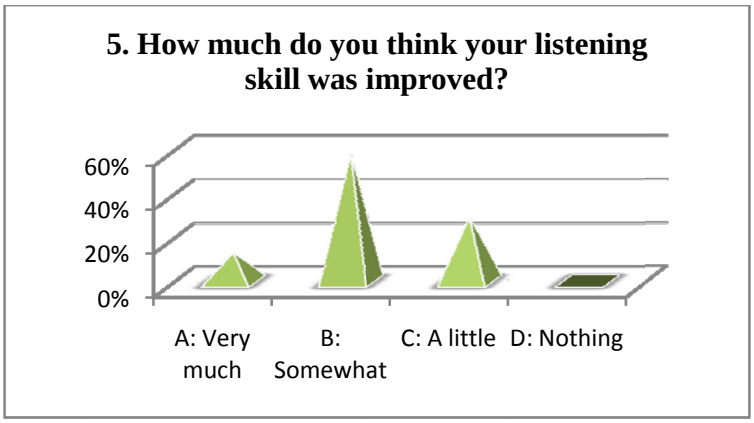
On the other hand, 6% percent of the students observed that the Vokis application was boring, but none indicated that it was difficult or stressful. Finally, 10% concluded that they would not like this application because of other reasons.

GRAPH 9



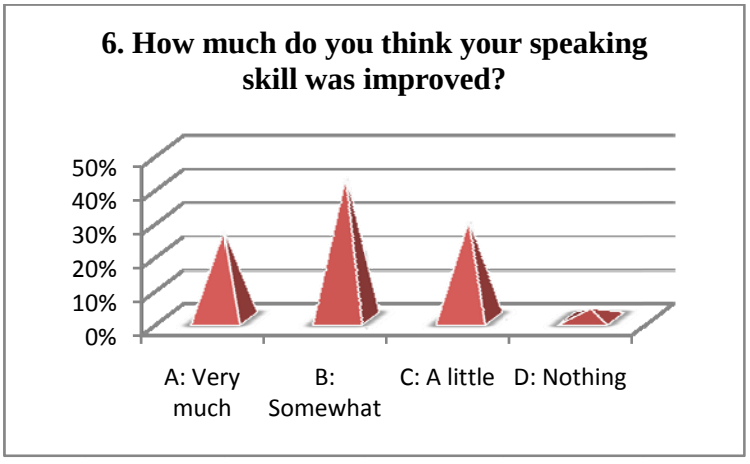
The students had to think and reflect about the language skills they improved by the Vokis application. 13% of the students agreed that their listening skill improved with this application; 19% of them stated that there was an improvement in their speaking skill, and 10% indicated that the reading skill was enhanced. Likewise, 13% of the interviewed pupils indicated that Vokis contributed to reinforce their writing skill. Finally, 42% confirmed that all the skills were improved through the use of Vokis, and just 3% of them testified that none of the skills were improved.

GRAPH 10



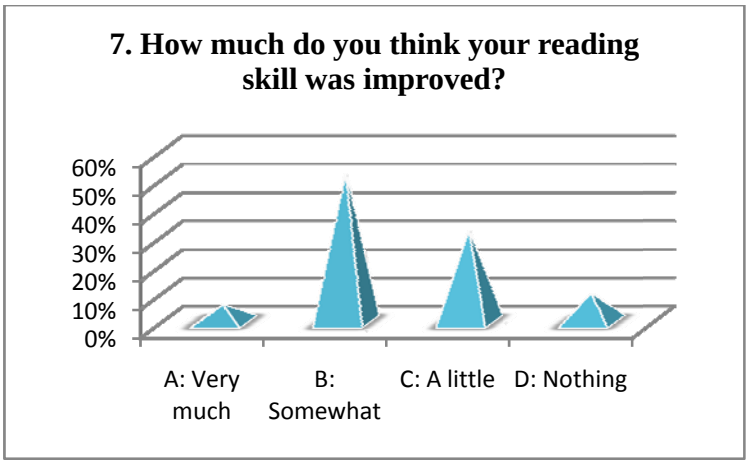
Thirteen percent of the students agreed that their listening skill improved a lot. The "somewhat" option had 58%, and the "a little" option had a 29%. Finally, no student stated that his/her listening skill had not improved at all.

GRAPH 11



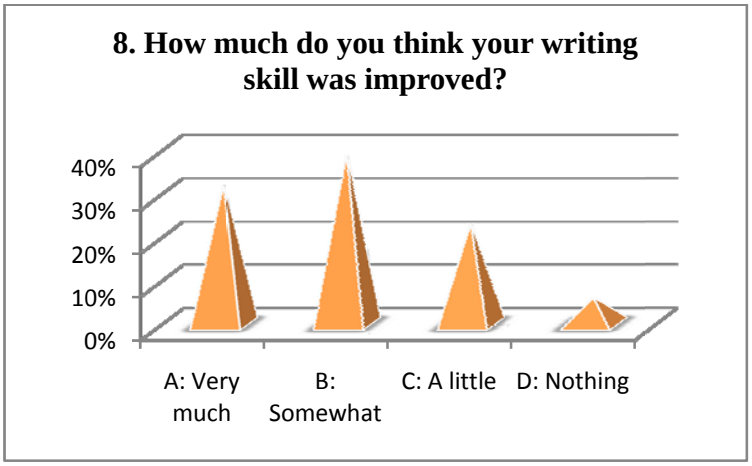
An improvement in the speaking skill was represented as follows: "very much" with 26%, "somewhat" with 42%, "a little" with 29%, and "nothing" with 3%.

GRAPH 12



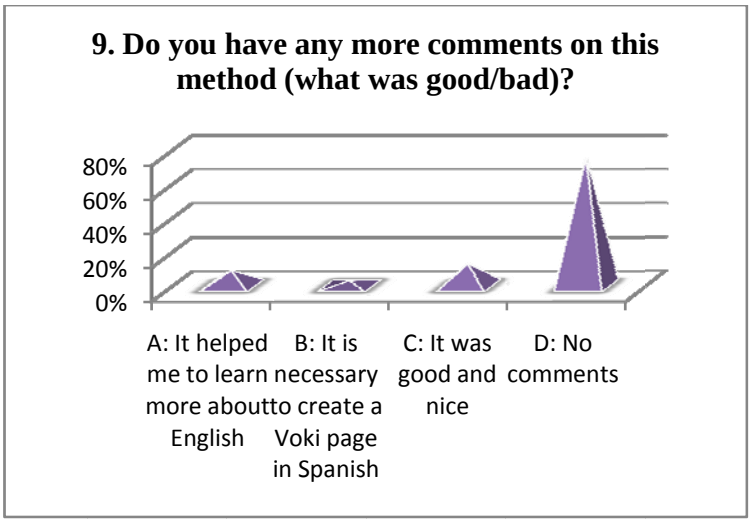
The responses for this question were “very much” with 6%, “somewhat” with 52%, “a little” with 32%, and “nothing” with 10%.

GRAPH 13



The question about writing skills evoked the following outcomes: “very much” with 32%, “somewhat” with 39%, “a little” with 23%, and "nothing” with 6%.

GRAPH 14



The results obtained in the graph shows that the Vokis application helped the students to learn English (9%) since they facilitated the pupils to read, listen, write and speak in English. Also, 3% of them indicate that it would be a good idea if there was a Voki page in Spanish because this page has been designed just in English. Thus, it is a little bit complicated for the students to understand what the steps or instructions to create a Voki are. Additionally, 13% said that Vokis were a good and nice method since the students had the opportunity to learn and enjoy the English lessons as a kind of aid if they wanted to practice the language. Finally, 75% did not give any comment.

As a conclusion, after the analysis of the survey results, we were able to determine the following outcomes. First, most of students thought that technological tools such as Vokis were useful in the teaching-learning process of the target language. Second, more than half of the class found English lessons with Vokis were good and fun because they help the students to learn while they enjoy the lessons. Third, in general students will like this Vokis application again because of two main reasons: pronunciation and self-correction. By the means of Vokis, students were able to improve or at least to know how words were

spoken, and they also were able to correct themselves in either speaking or writing. Contrastively, two students out of thirty learners indicated that Vokis were boring. A considerable amount of learners refrained from making any comments about a new Vokis application. Another outcome revealed that a considerable part of the students thought that all language skills were improved somewhat through the Vokis application. Nonetheless, based on the data, it can be established that writing was the skill that was improved the most, followed by the skills of speaking and listening. Finally, most of the students did not express more comments about this method, and the ones who did it indicated that the whole process was amusing and enjoyable.

Chapter V: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

As a result of our research, we conclude the following points:

- Half this study has been complemented with the publication of a blog entitled *Avatar Voki: Virtualclass*. This blog contains the tasks that were developed by the students after the application of the Voki lesson plans. The results of the whole study can be clearly seen at this web site.
- Our project was valuable and applicable because after the application of our Voki project, there was an increase in the level of performance of the students. They improved their writing in a significant way, as well as listening and speaking skills. The learners were able to define their goals, make design decisions, and evaluate their progress.
- As the task of teaching-learning process involves innovation, upgrade, and introduction of all possible means and tools that facilitate and promote better and innovate ways of teaching work, the implementation and use of technological resources such as Vokis can be the key way to carry out that duty.
- Teaching with technology, and specifically through the use of Avatars, helped to improve understanding since it helped the students practice concepts more effectively.
- Avatars, in general, are used for creating and providing new learning styles by the means of either real or fictional but personalized speaking characters.
- Through Vokis application, it was possible to save time and effort and to make lessons interesting, motivating and fun.
- Vokis usage allowed students to think about information, make choices, and execute skills more effectively when compared with the typical teacher-led lessons.

- A Voki is used to help students with their shyness, with their fear of speaking; nonetheless, the same should be used to encourage them to speak later on.
- Throughout the development of our project we were able to firmly establish that technological resources can turn into useful and powerful tools in regards to the teaching-learning process of the target language. Thus using technology, avatars, and vokis is possible: “Educate, Engage, [and]Enjoy” (“Introducing: Voki Classroom”).
- Finally, despite the advantages that the use of technology for educational purposes offers, we are conscious that technology is changing all the time. Hence our project about Avatars is viable and applicable now, but it could soon become outdated, as well.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following suggestions can be made as a result of our research and application:

- Teachers must not lose the opportunities that technology offers. The wide range of resources is endless, and all of them should be used to provide original material for the teaching-learning process.
- Teachers must develop a helpful educational tool that fits into their curricula to use in their own classrooms.
- Teachers have to keep in mind that the development and implementation of new technology promote collaboration, creativity, and interaction among their students.
- It is essential that school principals give EFL teachers their full support as regards technology actualization and implementation.
- It is imperative that teachers have the chance to access to the Internet in their schools in order to prepare and plan lessons.

- It is necessary to use and apply technology in an educational practice, and thus realize the full potential that technology offers in order to enhance and carry out more effective teaching, and to encourage, motivate, and develop new and improved educational settings.
- The classes or lessons that are developed by the means of technological resources must be well prepared and organized to avoid failure since technology can be either an aid but also a threat.
- Teachers must constantly promote their knowledge in regard to technology.
- Technology teacher must learn to analyze and criticize their ways. They must constantly reflect about what and why they do what they do. It is necessary a reflection to start improving their practice.
- Teacher cannot deny the world is changing because of technology, and therefore, these changes must be considered as a help for the educative practice.
- Technology can offer a varied range of fresh and valuable tools and resources to improve the teaching-learning process; however, as educators, it is up to us, to select, organize, and apply them in our lessons.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Voki Lesson Plan 2

Foundation of Cuenca

Cuenca is founded by the Spanish Gil Ramírez Dávalos, on April 12, 1557.

Santa Ana de los Ríos de Cuenca is located in the valley of Guapondelig, which means flowery field. It has spring weather because the temperature is 15to 18 degrees on average. Being in the Andes, it is at an altitude of2530 meters over sea level on December 2, 1999.

Cuenca is declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

History

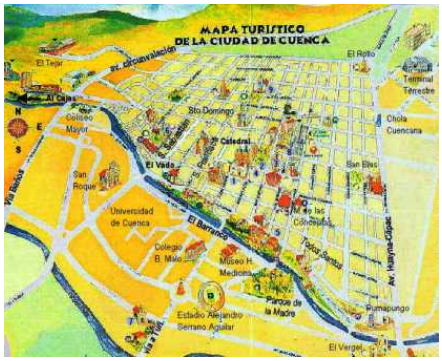
The plains of what is now the city of Cuenca, before the Spanish arrived, are inhabited by theIncas, who conquered the Cañarisin times of Tupac Yupanqui.

During the Incas time, the city of "Tomebamba" is built, and it has an area of about forty acres.

In this city, the temple of Viracocha god and Temple of the Sun, Coricancha, are highlighted.

Universidad de Cuenca

On April 12, 1557, Don Gil Ramírez Dávalos,bypersonal request of the Viceroy of Peru, Don Andres Hurtado de Mendoza, founds the city of Cuenca to the northwest of the destroyed city of Tomebamba, in the plain of Paucarbamba.



The site for the foundation is carefully chosen. Therefore, a vast plain watered byf our beautiful rivers with mild climate and great fertility is selected.

In colonial times, Cuenca is highlighted in the area of culture, and beautiful anonymous Works in painting, sculpture, carving and crafts are admired. It is also mastered the secrets of sculpture, jewelry, casting, wood work and architecture.

The independence of the city of Cuenca is on November 3, 1820.

Source: “Fundación de Cuenca.” *Efemérides del Ecuador*. N.p, n.d. Web. Jun 5. 2012.

Questions

- When was Cuenca founded?
- Who founded Cuenca city?
- Where was Cuenca founded?
- Describe how the place selected looked like
- In which area was Cuenca city highlighted during colonial times?
- When was Cuenca declared a UNESCO WorldHeritageSite?
- When was Cuenca independent from the Spanish chain?

APPENDIX 2

Voki Lesson Plan 4

Table to complete

	Argentina	**Chile**
area of country	2,766,889 sq km	
length of country		
population		92% mestizo 2% European
capital city		
capital city's population		
altitude of capital		
year capital was founded		
average temperature of capital		

Universidad de Cuenca

APPENDIX 3

Voki Lesson Plan 5

Traditional Mexican dress

Traditionally in Mexico, women wear blouses and skirts with embroidered details. They usually wear a cape and a shawl. They also wear pretty well elaborated garments. On the other hand, men wear pants and shirts accompanied with boots and big Mexican hats. They sometimes wear trousers and add a cape called a "serape" to their styles.

Traditionally in Mexico, _____ wear _____ and _____ with embroidered details. They usually wear _____ and a shawl. They also _____ pretty well elaborated _____. On the other hand, _____ wear_____ and _____ accompanied with _____ and big Mexican_____. They sometimes wear trousers and add a cape called a "serape" to their styles.

APPENDIX 4

Voki Survey

On the purpose of collecting some data, a questionnaire about Voki application about its influence over language skills was devised. Correspondingly, the questions and their options were the following:

1. Do you think technological tools such as Vokis were useful in the teaching-learning process of the target language (English)?

A. I agree

B. I disagree

2. How fun did you find an English lesson with Vokis?

A. Not fun at all

B. Okay

C. Quite fun

D. Fun

E. Really fun

3. Would you like Vokis application in an EFL class again?

A. Yes

B. No

Why?

If **YES**, because it helped me most with

A. shyness (fear to speak)

B. pronunciation

C. self-correction (when writing)

D. confidence (when learning)

E. others

If **NO**, because it was

A. boring

B. too difficult

C. stressful

D. other reasons

4. Which parts of your English skills do you think have been improved during Voki application?

A. Listening

B. Speaking

C. Reading

D. Writing

E. All

F. None

5. How much do you think your listening skill was improved?

A. Very much

B. Somewhat

C. A little

D. Nothing

6. How much do you think your speaking skill was improved?

A. Very much

B. Somewhat

C. A little

D. Nothing

7. How much do you think your reading skill was improved?

A. Very much

B. Somewhat

C. A little

D. Nothing

8. How much do you think your writing skill was improved?

A. Very much

B. Somewhat

C. A little

D. Nothing

9. Do you have any more comments on this method (what was good/bad)?

APPENDIX 5

UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

The following survey has as its purpose to find out if Voki application served as a new educative tool when integrating skills in an EFL classroom.

1. Do you think technological tools such as Vokis were useful in the teaching-learning process of the target language (English)?

A. I agree
B. I disagree

2. How fun did you find an English lesson with Vokis?

A. Not fun at all
B. Okay
C. Quite fun
D. Fun
E. Really fun

3. Would you like Vokis application in an EFL class again?

A. Yes
B. No

Why?

If **YES**, because it helped me most with

A. shyness (fear to speak)
B. pronunciation
C. self-correction (when writing)
D. confidence (when learning)
E. others

If **NO**, because it was

A. boring
B. too difficult
C. stressful
D. other reasons

4. Which parts of your English skills do you think have been improved during Vokis application?

A. Listening
B. Speaking
C. Reading
D. Writing
E. All
F. None

5. How much do you think your listening skill was improved?

A. Very much
B. Somewhat
C. A little
D. Nothing

6. How much do you think your speaking skill was improved?

A. Very much
B. Somewhat
C. A little
D. Nothing

7. How much do you think your reading skill was improved?

A. Very much
B. Somewhat
C. A little
D. Nothing

8. How much do you think your writing skill was improved?

A. Very much
B. Somewhat
C. A little
D. Nothing

9. Do you have any more comments on this method (what was good/bad)?

Si es bueno porque nos enseñes a leer, escribir y pronunciar.

THANKS FOR YOUR COLABORATION

UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

The following survey has as its purpose to find out if Voki application served as a new educative tool when integrating skills in an EFL classroom.

1. Do you think technological tools such as Vokis were useful in the teaching-learning process of the target language (English)?

A. I agree

B. I disagree

2. How fun did you find an English lesson with Vokis?

A. Not fun at all

B. Okay

C. Quite fun

D. Fun

E. Really fun

3. Would you like Vokis application in an EFL class again?

A. Yes

B. No

Why?

If **YES**, because it helped me most with

A. shyness (fear to speak)

B. pronunciation

C. self-correction (when writing)

D. confidence (when learning)

E. others

If **NO**, because it was

A. boring

B. too difficult

C. stressful

D. other reasons

4. Which parts of your English skills do you think have been improved during Vokis application?

A. Listening
B. Speaking
C. Reading
D. Writing
E. All
F. None

5. How much do you think your listening skill was improved?

A. Very much
B. Somewhat
C. A little
D. Nothing

6. How much do you think your speaking skill was improved?

A. Very much
B. Somewhat
C. A little
D. Nothing

7. How much do you think your reading skill was improved?

A. Very much
B. Somewhat
C. A little
D. Nothing

8. How much do you think your writing skill was improved?

A. Very much
B. Somewhat
C. A little
D. Nothing

9. Do you have any more comments on this method (what was good/bad)?

Es bueno porque podemos manejar el ingles

THANKS FOR YOUR COLABORATION

UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

The following survey has as its purpose to find out if Voki application served as a new educative tool when integrating skills in an EFL classroom.

1. Do you think technological tools such as Vokis were useful in the teaching-learning process of the target language (English)?

A. I agree

B. I disagree

2. How fun did you find an English lesson with Vokis?

A. Not fun at all

B. Okay

C. Quite fun

D. Fun

E. Really fun

3. Would you like Vokis application in an EFL class again?

A. Yes

B. No

Why?

If **YES**, because it helped me most with

A. shyness (fear to speak)

B. pronunciation

C. self-correction (when writing)

D. confidence (when learning)

E. others

If **NO**, because it was

A. boring

B. too difficult

C. stressful

D. other reasons

4. Which parts of your English skills do you think have been improved during Vokis application?

A. Listening
B. Speaking
C. Reading
D. Writing
E. All
F. None

5. How much do you think your listening skill was improved?

A. Very much
B. Somewhat
C. A little
D. Nothing

6. How much do you think your speaking skill was improved?

A. Very much
B. Somewhat
C. A little
D. Nothing

7. How much do you think your reading skill w[illegible]mproved?

A. Very much
B. Somewhat
C. A little
D. Nothing

8. How much do you think your writing skill was improved?

A. Very much
B. Somewhat
C. A little
D. Nothing

9. Do you have any more comments on this method (what was good/bad)?

.....

.....

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THANKS FOR YOUR COLABORATION

APPENDIX 8

Students in the tenth grade “2”of “Sindicato de Choferes” High School during the survey