

# MENDIVE



## REVISTA DE EDUCACIÓN

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### Original article

## Blended English Learning at the University in Pandemic Times

### Aprendizaje Híbrido del inglés en la Universidad en tiempos de pandemia

### Aprendizagem Híbrida de Inglês na Universidade em tempos de pandemia

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### ABSTRACT

COVID-19 has imposed conditions that require distance education in the teaching of foreign languages, assisted with digital technology and face-to-face classes. In language teaching, the aspiration to achieve hybrid learning and inverted classes is focused today in favor of motivation and efficiency in learning. From this challenge, in the Foreign Languages Career of the University of Pinar del Río, a research has been developed during 2020 and 2021 in order to elaborate the digitized didactic materials that digitized distance education requires, with hybrid learning and inverted classes. To process and collect information, theoretical and empirical methods such as modeling, documentary analysis, and observation of learning, experimentation, and interview and group debate were used, in addition to the self-reflection technique. Results were obtained in the elaboration of digitized products such as texts, tasks and learning strategies, using stories, songs, poems, cultural and pedagogical speeches, etc.; all with strong educational, communicative, cultural and humanistic content. The results appear in a digital book for students and teachers. In these moments of the second outbreak of the Coronavirus, the materials developed for the teaching of English in the third year of the Career are fully applied through the Moodle platform, WhatsApp, computers and cell phones. Favorable opinions have been obtained from students and teachers in terms of quality of learning, motivation, accessibility, creativity, cultural and pedagogical values.

**Keywords:** distance education; technology; English teaching; hybrid learning; and inverted classrooms.

### RESUMEN

La COVID-19 ha impuesto condiciones que exigen la educación a distancia en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras, asistida con la tecnología digital y clases presenciales.

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En la enseñanza de lenguas, hoy se focaliza la aspiración de lograr Aprendizajes Híbridos y Aula Invertida en favor de la motivación y la eficiencia en el aprendizaje. Desde este reto, en la carrera de Lenguas Extranjeras de la Universidad de Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca" se ha desarrollado durante el 2020 y 2021 una investigación con el fin de elaborar los materiales didácticos que requiere la educación a distancia digitalizada, con Aprendizajes Híbridos y Aula Invertidas. Para procesar y recoger información se utilizaron métodos del nivel teórico y empírico como la modelación, el análisis documental, la observación al aprendizaje, la experimentación, la entrevista y el debate grupal, además de la técnica de autorreflexión. Se obtuvieron resultados en la elaboración de productos digitalizados como textos, tareas y estrategias de aprendizaje, utilizando cuentos, historias, canciones, poemas, discursos culturales y pedagógicos, etcétera; todos con fuerte contenido educativo, comunicativo, cultural y humanista. Los resultados aparecen en un libro digital para estudiantes y profesores. En estos momentos de segundo rebrote del coronavirus, se aplican totalmente los materiales elaborados para la enseñanza del inglés en tercer año de la carrera a través de la plataforma Moodle, WhatsApp, las computadoras y los celulares. Se han obtenido opiniones favorables de estudiantes y profesores en términos de calidad del aprendizaje, motivación, accesibilidad, creatividad y valores culturales y pedagógicos.

**Palabras claves:** educación a distancia; tecnología; enseñanza del inglés; Aprendizaje Híbrido; Aulas Invertidas.

## RESUMO

A COVID-19 impôs condições que exigem educação a distância no ensino de línguas estrangeiras, assistida com tecnologia digital e aulas presenciais. No ensino de línguas, hoje concentra-se a aspiração de alcançar

Aprendizagem Híbrida e Sala de Aula Invertida em prol da motivação e eficiência na aprendizagem. A partir deste desafio, na carreira de Línguas Estrangeiras da Universidade de Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca" foi realizada uma investigação durante 2020 e 2021 para preparar os materiais didáticos que a educação a distância digitalizada exige, com Hybrid Aprendizagem e Sala de Aula Invertida. Para processar e coletar as informações, foram utilizados métodos teóricos e empíricos, como modelagem, análise documental, observação do aprendizado, experimentação, entrevista e discussão em grupo, além da técnica de autorreflexão. Obtiveram-se resultados na elaboração de produtos digitalizados como textos, tarefas e estratégias de aprendizagem, utilizando contos, histórias, canções, poemas, discursos culturais e pedagógicos, etc.; todos com forte conteúdo educacional, comunicativo, cultural e humanístico. Os resultados aparecem em um livro digital para alunos e professores. Nesses momentos do segundo surto do coronavírus, os materiais desenvolvidos para o ensino de inglês no terceiro ano da licenciatura são integralmente aplicados por meio da plataforma Moodle, WhatsApp, computadores e celulares. Obtiveram-se opiniões favoráveis de alunos e professores em termos de qualidade de aprendizagem, motivação, acessibilidade, criatividade e valores culturais e pedagógicos.

**Palavras-chave:** educação a distância; tecnologia; ensino de inglês; Aprendizagem Híbrida; Aulas Invertidas.

## INTRODUCTION

Education, and with it the teaching of English, has suffered the blows of these times. Universities have not been able to offer face-to-face classes from March 2020 to today, and

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the wait continues. However, the difficult prevailing conditions and the benefits of digital technology have triggered creativity in education and the teaching of foreign languages.

The rational use of technology is an essential support in learning English in the 21st century, with students of this century who live quickly and contemporaneously in an era of technology and digitization. This new learner has immense possibilities to learn the foreign language in various scenarios, enriched in recent times with digital technology, through the internet, web pages, emails, digitized courses, mobile devices and a variety of digital platforms. Fortunately, the strongest theory in this regard is the unity between learning in the classroom and learning outside the classroom, accelerated by Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

Today the scientific community of English teaching in Pinar del Río is already debating new issues coming from the new times, among them: how to use technology for learning and teaching English? how to facilitate distance education? How to achieve Hybrid Learning and the Flipped Classroom? And how can we be creative students and teachers in the midst of current limitations? Likewise, the benefits received by learners of the English language are evident, if one considers that all the skills and components of the language can be heard and visualized through digital platforms. The visual offer presented by the Internet in English through films of culture and language is attractive, as well as the possibilities it offers for the development of listening and reading comprehension, oral and written production; as well as opportunities for students to interact with the environment and reflect on the language system and its use in real communications, on real topics, with real people.

Technology ensures active social life from home, a condition imposed by the pandemic.

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The Internet already allows communication with the entire world from home, work, commerce, and now, with handheld mobile devices; thus, contributing to the improvement of professionals and the learning of the whole family.

New technologies are transforming our world, and teachers must be ready to integrate these technologies in the classroom, taking into account that students have grown up playing on computers, watching videos on *YouTube* and reading digital books (Buran A., Evseeva A. 2015).

Distance education has been related to creativity in the digital age, accelerated by the times of COVID-19. Therefore, it is not surprising that it is today one of the pillars of British pedagogy for language teaching. Thus, creativity is related to Hybrid Learning (*Blended Learning*), from various channels that combine digital with traditional, and the Inverted Classroom (*Flipped Classroom*), which brings the outside world into focus by combining learning outside the classroom, technology, and learning inside the classroom. It is worth clarifying that *Blended Learning* and *Flipped Classrooms* are not completely new terms, as some think, due to the strength they have gained in some developed countries.

*B-learning* is an abbreviation for *Blended Learning*, and is transcribed into Spanish in keywords such as "combined training", "mixed learning" or "multiple scenarios", and its meaning accounts for academic scenarios where face-to-face activities are combined with *E-learning*, which is understood as a integrated modality of electronic learning (Parra-Herrera, 2008), cited by Hugo Semanate-Quiñonez, Anlly Upegui-Valencia, María Upegui-Valencia (2022) in *Blended Learning, advances and trends in higher education: an approach to the literature* (p.48).

In these terms, teachers are encouraged to share learning materials with students, in the form of documents, *PowerPoint presentations*, videos, etc., before the actual time of the class; this allows the students to read and try to understand it by themselves, offering the teacher the opportunity during the class for each student to participate in the explanation of the class and gain a better understanding (ShahadatHossain K., BenadjihOiriddine A., 2021, p. 2).

In this way, we can go beyond the classroom without necessarily leaving our seats, the worlds of learning inside and outside the classroom are mixed in what is often called Hybrid Learning; maintaining the idea that the hybrid is that the teacher and students work with an interconnected network of books, activities and digital resources (either with *online materials* or with *apps*). In this scenario, class work is supported, or introduced, practiced and reviewed *online*. The two-way relationship between the classroom and the outside world is called the Flipped Classroom. So, they are two closely related concepts, to the point that some prefer to use only Hybrid Learning, assuming that it includes the Flipped Classroom.

"It is a characteristic of contemporaneity to transform and link information technologies, the use of computer tools in the mixed training methodology allows students to develop a higher sense of autonomy, since it is their responsibility to make the decision to learn to through the platforms arranged by the teacher" (Hugo Semanate -Quiñonez, AnllyUpegui-Valencia, María Upequi-Valencia (2022) in: *BlendedLearning, advances and trends in higher education: an approach to the literature*, p. 47).

Hybrid Learning happens when students access the digital world; It is an education model that proposes face-to-face teaching with online instruction, thus creating a flexible training model that is in line with the new times, since the Pandemic brought with it a

need for preventive isolation of the actors who participate in the training processes. , and institutions have turned exclusively to virtual learning, when before they did it mainly in face-to-face spaces (Hugo Semanate- Quiñonez, AnllyUpegui-Valencia, María Upequi-Valencia (2022) in: *BlendedLearning, advances and trends in higher education: an approach to the literature*, p. 48).

In the case of Cuban education, two strategies are used: face-to-face and virtual, taking the best of them at all times. The idea of Hybrid Learning is for the teacher and students to work with the interconnected mix of books, activities, classroom presentations, and digital resources inside and outside the classroom. In this scenario, class work is supported *online* with the Internet, either for review, practice or review of content.

Hybrid Learning is a pedagogical model that raises the need to transfer part of the Teaching-Learning Process outside the classroom, in order to use class time for the development of more complex cognitive processes that favor meaningful learning. The Flipped Learning Network (RAI) describes it as a pedagogical approach in which direct instruction moves from the dimension of group learning to the dimension of individual learning, transforming the remaining group space into a dynamic and interactive learning environment, in in which the facilitator guides the students in the application of the concepts and in their creative involvement with the content of the course. Specifically, the Flipped Classroom or flipped learning (*FlippedLearning*) is an expression that can literally be understood as turning learning around or learning backwards. This term serves to define a new pedagogical strategy or teaching method based on the flipped *learning methodology*: tasks that were previously done at home are now done in class and vice versa. It is a pedagogical approach in which direct instruction takes place outside the classroom and face-to-face time is used to develop meaningful and

personalized learning activities (Aycart Carrasco, 2019).

In the Flipped Classroom, the student focuses on their learning at home and not on the lesson itself, and occurs through interaction and active learning, since it consists of assigning students' texts, videos or additional content to review outside of class.

Students work at home with recorded or filmed material to complete assignments. It is a hybrid or mixed learning modality. The Flipped Classroom offers the opportunity to make better use of face-to-face class time, as students have already worked at home with digitized materials. Class time is for practicing and developing skills according to the students' real weaknesses: checking what they know, communicative practice based on real weaknesses and needs. In this way, the class is moved from the classroom to the outside world without the students moving from their seats. It's called "reversed" because the class is flipped and the agents take on new roles; the student becomes the protagonist of the learning process and acquires an active, participatory, autonomous, communicative and collaborative role.

In Pinar del Río, a month after the arrival of COVID-19 in Cuba, the design and implementation of remote English teaching began, with face-to-face classes at intervals, when the epidemiological situation allowed it. Likewise, on March 15, 2021, the new annual course began under the same modality. This pedagogical practice of distance education, based on digital technology, Hybrid Learning and the Flipped Classroom, would show the immediate appearance of three limitations:

a) There was no high and abundant technology, but at least more than 95% of students and teachers had cell phones and could use the Moodle platform for free.

b) For many professors and students, the full management of technology continued to be a challenge; as Maley, A. (2015) says, many teachers refuse educational technology because they do not want to learn to use it, and clarifies that modern technology must be incorporated into education, but without excluding those who do not have access to it.

c) There were no basic teaching materials for distance education from existing technology.

The Foreign Languages degree in Cuban universities has the essential function of training English teachers for the various levels and types of schools. The Comprehensive Practice Program of the English Language V, for third-year students of said career, indicates as an objective: to promote the development of communication skills of teachers in training in third year, which allows them to use the language in their activity of study, in their professional development and, fundamentally, to teach the new generations; In addition to contributing to functional linguistic efficiency and the ability to build and reconstruct new knowledge, which means developing in students the knowledge, habits and skills to understand and produce oral and written texts on every day and professional issues .

It is in this context that an investigation is undertaken for the improvement of distance and face-to-face English teaching in the third year of the Foreign Languages career at the University of Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca", with the objective of creation of didactic materials from the use of digital technologies in Hybrid Learning and Flipped Classrooms, which facilitate better levels of development of communicative, interactive and intercultural competence in undergraduate students.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This section contains the description of the materials and methods used during the research and preparation of the article. In addition, it explains how the development of scientific products was carried out: texts, tasks and teaching procedures.

### Research context

By the beginning of 2021, groups of English teachers and students from Pinar del Río were already joining events offered by the Association of Pedagogues of Cuba in its chapter of English Language Specialists (APC-ELI), sponsored by the British Council. Thus, the following conferences took place:

"Creativity in the teaching of foreign languages", December 10 and 11, 2020, International Event, held in the province of Pinar del Río on January 26-28. "Application of creativity in the Teaching of Foreign Languages", International Event held on February 25, 26 and 27. Likewise, the teachers prepared study guides for distance learning English, wrote articles, held methodological meetings *online*, or in person when the pandemic situation allowed. Likewise, messages were constantly sent via WhatsApp in groups created for that purpose or privately, about professional and personal matters. This increased digital communication between teachers, from home, for professional pedagogical development in times of corona virus.

The didactic materials developed were put into practice with the aim of achieving Hybrid Learning and the Flipped Classroom, supported by existing digital technology. To do this, a wide international and national bibliography was explored, the essential components of the theoretical and methodological design of the research were determined, a diagnosis was made to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the educational context affected by COVID-19

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and, finally, proceeded to the elaboration of the materials and their implementation.

The distance education proposal combined with the face-to-face class, supported by digital technology to achieve Hybrid Learning and Flipped Classrooms, was used with a group of third-year students, from April to October 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. 19, from their homes. Subsequently, they were validated, experimentally, during a brief period of eight face-to-face classes in October of the same year, at a time when the corona virus was normal. The results are collected and analyzed for the construction of the final research document. During their learning, the students used cell phones and computers; likewise, those with internet or intranet reviewed didactic materials of the subject uploaded to the Moodle platform, available to teachers and students, free of charge.

### Methods used

A series of theoretical-level research methods were used to process information, including: systematization, the systemic method, the logical-deductive method, and the modeling method. The latter was necessary for the construction of digital products from the preconceived idea of the qualities of the scientific product and its objectives for which they were created. The modeling method was essential for the elaboration of digitized products, mounted on various platforms and placed in the hands of students via Moodle, *WhatsApp*, portable memories, computers and cell phones. (Vigil Garcia, PA *et al.* , 2020).

Likewise, empirical methods were used to obtain information and the use of triangulation of sources. They were the following:

- Documentary analysis of the third-year programs, the methodological orientations and the textbook of the

*Integral Practice of the English Language V and VI.* Valuable was the analysis of the notes taken in the two international events of the APC ELI sponsored by the British Council, held *online*, in which the authors participated. These notes expanded knowledge about key concepts such as educational technology, Hybrid Learning, Flipped Classrooms, connected learning, among others.

- The interview with third-year teachers and students made it possible to explore knowledge about distance education, the use of digital technology, Hybrid Learning and the Flipped Classroom, and to corroborate information obtained through other research methods. Likewise, it was used to confirm or refute information about the value of the scientific products created and their impact on students, once they were put into practice.
- The observation of face-to-face classes and the monitoring of distance learning made it easier to measure and assess the impacts of the scientific products created by teachers for the improvement of distance and face-to-face learning. Feedback with students through oral and written digital communication was useful in monitoring distance learning.

The experimental method includes an entire learning process from home or other scenarios outside the classroom, in which students solve communicative tasks individually (or in small groups), with the support of technological resources and the assistance of the teacher. distance. On the other hand, the experimentation method also occurred during two weeks of face-to-face classes in October 2020, at a time when things were back to normal. During the face-to-face classes it was possible to review and communicative practice of content learned outside the classroom in previous stages. In this way, the application of the digital

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products, the strategies and the learning tasks created happened inside and outside the classroom. In both cases, some strategies emerged spontaneously, which shows that the learning process is planned, but also has not inconsiderable outbreaks of spontaneity.

Two group debates were held, with teachers and students, which led to the collection of information about the current state of the problem in the diagnostic stage of the research, and the second stage after the experiments, at the end of the course. Its objective was to obtain information about the experiment in terms of the use of technology, learning inside and outside the classroom, motivation and, above all, the development of skills: communicative, interactive and intercultural.

The self-reflection technique favored obtaining personal information from students about education outside and inside the classroom, with assisted technology and tutoring. It was applied at the end of face-to-face classes.

The methods used fulfilled their function; however, the limitations of the measures imposed by COVID-19, such as isolation and the reduction of transportation, reduced the opportunities for a closer approach to the learning process carried out by the student at home or in other settings.

## RESULTS

The results of the research include those of the diagnosis made to know the current situation of distance education in times of pandemic, as well as the digital products, teaching procedures, tasks and learning strategies developed to achieve Hybrid Learning and the Flipped Classroom with strong support of digital technology. Here are some samples:

## Results of the diagnosis to the teaching of English

The methods of documentary analysis, learning observation, interviews with students and teachers reveal that third-year students of the Foreign Languages career have the following characteristics:

a) They have a medium development of communicative competence in accordance with the level of B1 in which they are.

b) They present a low level of English learning culture, permeated by the bad methods used in previous years. This is reflected in false ideas about what language is and how it works; communication and learning strategies; the focus on the linguistic system, rather than the actual use of English; use of technology as a learning resource; general culture to understand the use of English in various situations; and positively the existence of a satisfactory level of motivation for learning English.

On the other hand, the classes show the following qualities: good linguistic and methodological level of the teachers; fixed methodological structure of the class: presentation, practice and use; poor level of use of technology by teachers; acceptable level of student participation in the classroom.

The official materials for the teaching of English show: emphasis on the communicative, not on the interactive and cultural; balance between the linguistic and the communicative; insufficient vision of the use of technologies as a learning resource; insufficient reference to Hybrid Learning and the Flipped Classroom; as well as an adequate conception of motivation as an objective and product.

From this situation, the authors assumed the design and execution of distance education, in its relationship with Hybrid Learning and the Flipped Classroom, as a resource for

motivation and improvement of student learning outcomes in terms of communicative skills, interactive and intercultural.

## Objectives and strategies of digitized products

The digitized products prepared for distance and face-to-face education based on technology, in the third year of the Foreign Languages degree, are aimed at the development and achievement of the following objectives and communication and learning strategies:

**General objectives:** have opportunities to develop oral and written skills in English; use communication and learning strategies; focus on actual English usage rather than English grammar; acquire a strong culture of teaching and learning English; develop communicative, interactive and intercultural skills; and to be better citizens through the formation of values and the acquisition of culture.

**Communication and learning strategies:** learning to use digital technology to learn language and culture; focus on the actual use of English rather than the English of books; learn both outside the classroom and inside it; being well connected with the world and oneself with English; use the psychology of success as a way to enjoy learning English; listen before speaking and read before writing; listen to and use storytelling instead of single sentences; study individually, in pairs and in small groups; listen to songs in English, analyze them and sing them; react linguistically to what is heard or read; analyze and reason about the structure of the language and its use; practice repeating significant elements in your inner thought; use semantic maps to show understanding and remember facts; be cooperative with others; develop cultural understanding; listen and control the internal dialogue; as well as receive and send messages in English.

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## Digitized products made

a) Elaboration of a didactic material, in the form of a book, entitled: *Interactive English for B1-B2 University Students*, by the authors Rodolfo Acosta, Nery Calvet and José Alfonso. It contains the digital products for distance and face-to-face education of English in the third year through Hybrid Learning and the Flipped Classroom. Its contents are directed towards the development of communicative, interactive and intercultural skills. Therefore, the focus is on communication and linguistic skills, social interaction and reflection, learning to learn and teach, and the relationship between language and culture. Likewise, the structure of each teaching unit includes nine phases: *Listening comprehension, Vocabulary, Grammar, Speaking, Reading and Writing; Social Interaction, Real English Use, Learn to Learn and Teach, and Culture.*

The didactic material contains 10 teaching units, written in English that cover the necessary contents to achieve levels B1 and B2, according to the Common European Framework, assigned to third year in the Comprehensive Practice Program of the English Language V. Each one of the 10 units contains at the beginning a table of contents with the unit number, communication skills and functions, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and cultural elements. The knowledge areas cover topics such as literature, culture, art, history, geopolitics, love, music, the Environment, cities, natural disasters, countries, the world today, the coronavirus pandemic and informal English. Topics have been selected based on students' personal and social communication needs.

b) Songs that students like and carry an aesthetically beautiful and educational message: *Angel in the Morning*, by Juice Newton (Lyrics) Low MP4; *Different World Feat*, by Sofia Carson, K-321 & CORSAC (Lyric Video) MP4; *Endless Love*, by Lionel Richie & Diana Ross. Love Lyrics. wbem; *Hello*, by

Lionel Richie (Truly-The Love songs); *My heart will go on*, by Celine Dion; *Private Dancer*, by Tina Turner (Billboard top 100 of 1985); *We Are the World*, by USA for Africa (ballads in English).

c) Famous poems such as: "10 Things I Hate about You", which appears in the 1999 American romantic comedy film of the same name. Students should search the internet for the why of the poem: who says it to whom, with what intention and in what situation (Wen.m.wikipedia.org); and the poem, "A Change is Gonna Come" by Sam Cooke (mysteriously murdered), recited by Maya Angelou (1928-2014), or Sam himself (1931-1964). Check Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wEBlaM0mKV4>

Various tasks are reserved for the poems, from comprehensive analysis, reciting it in public, and explaining its significance in the fight against discrimination and racism. In addition, an idea is extracted from it to say it alone (*chanting*) at home, and later, in chorus in face-to-face learning. The idea is: "A change's gonna come. Oh yes it will".

d) Speeches in English with cultural, communicative and educational values: "We Are All History", by Viola Davis. *English Speeches*; "How to Face Fear", by Will Smith. "Good Manners" Chichen Productions USA Professor. English Master.

e) Pedagogical conversation related to the teaching of the real use of English, "You are not the Problem", by AJ Hoge and his team, in San Francisco, California (Effortless English Post cast). Others topics of same type and source are: "Connect with English", "English Learning Psychology" and "You Need Emotions to Learn English".

f) Films, photos, shows and documentaries such as the internationally famous iconic images known as "The Vulture and the Little Girl", a vulture about to eat an abandoned

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little girl in South Sudan, photographed by Kevin Carter. The photo won the Photography. In 1994, a few months later, at the age of 33, Carter would die of suicide by carbon monoxide poisoning. Equally shocking is the photo and video "The girl burned with napalm", who ran naked from the bombing during the Vietnam War; he was 9 years old and lived in the village of Trang Bang, north of Saigon. He underwent 17 skin graft operations, later he would study in Havana (Morales, J., 2018). In both cases, the main tasks assigned are open questions that allow third-year students to develop fully in the English language.

Added to this is the film *Gandhi*, a biographical film based on the life of Mahatma Gandhi, the leader of the Indian independence movement of non-violence and non-cooperation in the period of 1982. It has an understandable Hindi English with a rhythm appropriate for third-year students. Example of phrases taken from the film: *There are more people than yesterday. Oh gosh! let me go I've got it. I've read a great deal about you. Does that surprise you? Not anymore. What are you doing? They are going to cut the electricity.*

The assigned tasks are divided into groups, according to the degree of difficulty and the potential of the students. Thus, all students will watch the movie at home. Some of them will select small dialogues that they will be able to dramatize later in face-to-face classes; others will extract ideas from the film, while the more advanced ones will make critical comments.

g) The recording of stories (storytellings) has become a common procedure among teachers (Herrera, I., Acosta, R., Pérez, A., 2021), including stories made by themselves, which have been created digital display. On the stories, teachers create tasks that allow the practice of questions and answers, personalization, focus on pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar, as well as the use

of oral and written skills, which are the core of the learning objectives. Homework and stories have been mounted on digitization. Example of stories:

### **The Rock and the Horse**

Will you tell me a story, Daddy? I'll tell you the story of the rock and the horse.

"One early Sunday morning, a boy was climbing up a mountain. He saw a man near a big rock. In the afternoon, when the boy was coming back home, he looked around to see the rock. It was not there anymore, instead there was a horse. Then, the boy asked the man, "How did you know there was a horse inside the rock?"

The tasks assigned in both stories are: listening, to understand the message and the parameters of the context; comprehensive reading and analysis of the text; narration of the story in different people, times and speech and elaboration of small stories like these.

h) "A Day's Wait" is a short story written in English by Ernest Hemingway published in his 1933 collection of short stories *Winner Take Nothing*, portraying a boy's reaction to becoming ill. Assigned homework assignments are various for different students: comprehensive analysis of the text; recorded dramatization of the conversation between father and son; narration in the third person of the conversation, and explanation of the phrases that cause emotion in the reader. These tasks are discussed by students in face-to-face classes.

"Guernica" is a famous painting by Pablo Picasso, painted in Paris between the months of May and June 1937, whose title refers to the bombing of Guernica, which occurred on April 26 of that year, during the Spanish Civil War. The painting is in the "Reina Sofia" National Art Center Museum. The tasks assigned for the house consist of: analyzing the significance of the work, describing the

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painting in detail, narrating in what context Picasso paints the painting. These tasks are reviewed in class.

i) *The "Dirty" Ann and Nature* is a descriptive text about *Anita la Sucia* and her relationship with nature. It was prepared by the authors of the article and, in turn, third-year research professors. The text is digitally written in English, recorded and supported with digital images of the Amazon on fire (*The Amazon Fires, 2019*). The ideas expressed in the description can be seen in the images. This is the text:

#### *The "Dirty" Ann and Nature*

Hello everyone. Today is Tuesday. July 1st 2019. Do you know me, dear kids? Well, I hate introducing myself, but never mind. This is a special occasion. I will tell you who I am.

I am Ann, but people call me "Dirty" Ann. I am 15 years old. I have dark eyes. I live in a little tent in the woods, in the Amazon. I live alone. I am a strange girl, you know. I do not like to eat cakes and pies, and I do not like to take a bath either. There is only one school in the woods, you know, but I never go. I hate schools. I do not like to read, to write, or to study. I do not have electricity and television. I hate films, series and News. I do not have cells and computers either. In fact, I do not like modern life.

I like nature. I love to sing and dance in the woods. I like to hear the music of the wind and the singing of birds and the sound of the stream. I like to sit down under the huge green trees and aunts going up and down. I like to drink fresh mineral water and to wash my face and brush my teeth in the river. I take breakfast, lunch and dinner at any time. I always go to bed before the night and wake up before the sun comes. My face is always dirty and my gray long hair is always unclean and untidy. I am a mess!

*Translated from the original in Spanish*

<https://mendive.upr.edu.cu/index.php/MendiveUPR/article/view/2480>

It is good to live in the woods. However, it is dangerous. Do you know why, friends? I will tell you why next time. For now, let me tell you one thing. I want to change! I need a change. Tomorrow, I'll change to be a better girl! Let's keep walking, friends!

Support tasks for digitized work for remote text analysis:

#### **Listen to the story and answer:**

Who tells the story? To whom does she tell the story? What is the story about? What Ann's likes and dislikes.

#### **Listen to the story again and say:**

Ann's nickname. Whom Ann lives with. The number of schools in the woods. What Ann loves? What Ann hates. What Ann doesn't like.

#### **Listen and read the story again after the speaker, and later alone, just to learn to read orally**

**Read the story in silence and say:** the number of paragraphs. The function of paragraphs 1 and 4. Why Ann likes to live alone. What the conclusion of the story is.

**Answer these questions:** Why is Ann a strange girl? Why is Ann unclean and a mess? Would you like to be as Ann is? What life does Ann prefer? Would you like to change? What do you expect Ann to tell next time?

The main tasks assigned for the house are: to carry out the integral analysis of the text, to narrate the text in the third person, to describe *the "Dirty" Ann and Nature*. These tasks are reviewed in class.

One of the most important results is the social impact of the research on professors of the Foreign Languages course at the University of Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca".

Today, most students and teachers recognize the role of distance education, with the support of digital technology, for the transformation of teaching through Hybrid Learning and Flipped Classrooms as a requirement of the current context created by COVID-19 and as a contribution of the progress experienced by the teaching of English in Cuba.

## DISCUSSION

The didactic material is a magnificent methodological guide, as it contains all the digital scientific products elaborated for the improvement of the teaching of English in the third year, through distance and face-to-face education; faithfully responds to the research objectives and contains all the essential components that facilitate learning outside and inside the classroom, with assisted technology. The sequence of methodological stages for each didactic unit is attractive, as it ensures the movement from reflexive social interaction in understanding to interaction in the real use of English, from oral skills to written skills, while focusing strategically an adequate balance between the components of the language and communication skills.

The emphasis on the real use of English (Acosta, R. and Vigil, PA 2019), learning to learn and teach, and the treatment of culture through learning the English language, are clearly new, particularly because they are intertwined in communication, interaction and interculturality. Timely is also the table of contents that becomes a guiding and motivating basis for learning. Interesting is the choice of cross-cutting themes, based on the needs of the students, known through the diagnosis. The integrative and global approach of skills and components used is worthwhile, without excluding essential elements of language and communication. Globalization is expressed in the interaction and functions of language, without atomizing

it with the detailed study of its structural particles.

The contents of the didactic material are dense, as they cover a diversity of topics, interactions, vocabulary and grammar for a demanding third year in terms of individual responsibility for learning, objectives and type of student. This is a reaction to the rhythm of other texts that have been used with a slow progression, which demotivates the students of the 21st century, for whom the textbook is only a means, among so many technological resources that they have at their disposal to learn the English language, thanks to the internet. This reveals the principle of essentiality for distance education, and communicativeness in learning a language.

The teaching material contains texts and tasks that ensure a high degree of interaction, reflection and interculturality of the student in learning the English language. Texts and tasks are communicative, interactive, socializing and cultural; In this way, they facilitate significant, affective and motivating learning. Opportunities are offered for students to listen, speak, read and write, through oral and written texts, contextualized in the cultures of the foreign language and the mother tongue.

The offer of texts and tasks that are offered in the Didactic Material for students and their professional training is attractive and essential. The selection and elaboration of the contents ensures deep emotions of the students through highly affective visual texts such as the poems: "A Change's Gonna Come", "10 Things I Hate from You" or "Annabel Lee", by Edgar Allan Poe. Hemingway's story is deeply moving, while the students sympathize and feel as their own the sufferings of the father who feels his sick son; The same happens with the thousands of people killed and infected by Sars-Cov-2 and the deterioration of the Environment in the lung of the world: The Amazon. Students also get excited and feel happy when they see a

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song by Marc Anthony, Beyoncé or Justin Bieber. Likewise, they suffer pain when viewing the famous images of the stories about the vulture and the girl and the Napalm girl.

The digitized songs, poems and speeches are unique samples of the real use of English, as they reveal its authentic structure and functioning, comprehensively develop oral and written skills, as well as understanding of cultural, historical and scientific contexts. In particular, they move students with positive emotions charged with beauty and love.

From home, or in class, students can read, watch and listen to famous speeches, conversations, songs, books; and view great classics of universal literature such as: Charles Chaplin, Charles Dickens, Jack London, Alice Walker, Edgar Allan Poe or Mark Twain.

Movies, photos, *shows* and documentaries with strong educational content have been carefully selected considering their communicative richness, their adjustment to the zone of proximal development of third year students and their high educational content. They are stories that provoke deep emotions in students, which lead to the formation of attitudes and values.

Creativity has been reborn under the new pandemic conditions and digital change has accelerated; It is important to conduct teaching, not only with conferences, videos, capsules, articles, books or others, but it is also necessary to implement didactic strategies that attract attention and stimulate dynamic, creative and leading research and participation of students (Vialart Vida, 2020). Some colleges and universities have had to use new hybrid learning paths based on various channels that combine digital resources with traditional ones. The flipped classroom is already reaching a great outside world through the combination of Hybrid

Learning, outside and inside the classroom, with the magical support of digital technology.

These learnings are achieved in the task "A Day's Wait". Thus, *input* and *intake* occur essentially at home through the student's interaction with the content, through listening and written comprehension, while *output* is externalized through oral and written expression in the classroom. Likewise, learning could take the reverse direction; that is, oral and reading comprehension in the classroom and communicative production at a distance. This idea demonstrates the principle of flexibility of distance education, as the flipped class can travel from outside to inside, prepare at home to come to the classroom to demonstrate what has been learned through intense communicative practice; or vice versa, listening and reading comprehension in class to go home to communicate using what has been learned in class.

The themes of *Guernica* and *the "Dirty" Ann and Nature* are transversal; the first because it is a symbol of one of the bloodiest civil wars in history, and the second because it expresses love for the nature of the Amazon Environment, the so-called lung of the world. Due to their symbolism, these themes reveal the principle of essentiality in distance education due to its cultural, historical and environmental value. The revision of the tasks in the face-to-face class makes it a communicative practice of the real use of English.

The learning-to-learn and teaching paradigm is present throughout the Distance Teaching-Learning Process with assisted technology. However, there are special moments prepared for third year, which focus on how to learn and how to teach, while developing oral and written skills in students. These moments occur with L. J. Hoge's series of conversations. They offer a unique opportunity to update the methodology of teaching the English language, through the real use of English. The English used at the

auditions is an excellent model of formal English, with occasional elements of the informal register. Students hear and see the speaker speaking as if they are interacting with him.

For his part, the teacher can digitally write the conversation so that the students can read it, once they have listened to it several times. This allows the integration of skills and a broader participation of the students, while incorporating those who have the greatest difficulties in understanding authentic oral discourses. To this it is added the contribution offered by the talks to a new culture of language learning (Acosta and Gómez, 2017), the benefits that students receive learning with digital technologies, advanced methodological ideas about learning and teaching languages and the comments in English derived from it.

The digital products proposal presented in the results has the virtue that it offers students opportunities to establish connections and see relationships between things that generate ideas and justify creative thinking. It is worth encouraging young people to establish relationships between home and school, as well as interdisciplinary relationships. Likewise, students establish connections between present and past learning, between experiences in class and outside of it, between ideas learned in different sources such as books or the internet. They also establish relationships between English and their language and culture, between skills in different tasks.

The ideas and tasks suggested in the results reveal advances in the use of technology under the communicative approach, group work, the psychology of success, the focus on the real use of English, the student's general culture, communication strategies and learning, and the interactive and cultural conception of what language is and how it is learned. New techniques based on digital technology appear to bring the world closer to

the student through virtuality and digitization. In addition, students can talk about the feelings and emotions presented through digital images, and the teacher can take on the role of facilitator who poses activities that promote communication. In this way, the social aspect is considered as an essential factor and students have the freedom to choose what to say and how to say it. In this way they achieve the authentic use of the language in hybrid communicative learning and in inverted communicative classes.

However, in times of corona virus, remote learning at home has shown its limits, with parents and children sitting around a single table, sharing a single computer. Technology also divides and increases the differences between those who have and those who have not, between digital immigrants and natives. Not everyone has access to this high and rich technology, due to cost or not having the time to learn how to use it.

Obviously, the pandemic has imposed new needs among human beings, which have generated changes in lifestyles. It is shown; once again, that creativity is necessary for survival. Also, like our ancestors, rock painters, we continue to blow the spark of creativity and humanity, seeking to connect with each other.

The proposal of digitized products for the Hybrid Learning of English in the third year of the Foreign Languages career is faithfully based on the theories of interaction with input information through listening and reading comprehension, fortified with the visualization provided by technology. Likewise, the reflective mental interaction occurs with the structure of the language system and its use in communication and, finally, the student's interaction through monitoring and feedback with his own linguistic production, which he carries out through oral and written expression and it visualizes thanks to technology. This process is mediated by the affective filter of each student, who builds

ideas and uses the language depending on their needs, feelings and emotions. There are these qualities the ones that distinguish us as human beings.

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The authors declare not to have any interest conflicts.

### **Authors contribution**

The authors have participated in the writing, revision, updating of the bibliographic sources of the article.



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