

## **The English teaching-learning process from an experience-centered pedagogical perspective**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Teaching English with a formative character from the experience is a complex process in tourism sector which constitutes the objective of this work as part of a doctoral research. The sample used has a heterogeneous character made up of thirty-seven students from all the basic specialties studied at Villa Clara Tourism Training Center. A qualitative approach is assumed using systematization as the guiding method, in addition to the use of theoretical and empirical methods such as observation, in-depth interviews, document analysis and the triangulation of sources and data to determine regularities of the investigative process.

**Keywords:** Formation; Language teaching; English language; Tourism.

### **Introduction**

Tourism is constantly diversifying its product given its economic, social and cultural importance in different countries, however, current global economic, social, health and environmental problems make it more vulnerable.

By 2020, the number of international tourist arrivals worldwide is expected to increase to almost 1.6 billion. 600 million, but the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) estimates that it could decrease due to the COVID-19 pandemic (between 20% and 30%) compared to the growth (between 3% and 4%) expected at the beginning of

January of the same year, which is why the challenge today is to lead the economic and social recovery of nations for which it requires the support of all, under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) approved by the United Nations General Assembly in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015), among them, it is valid to mention SDG # 4 on the Quality of Education.

In Cuba, likewise, the rapid recovery of the tourism sector in the current scenarios prevails. It is necessary to reaffirm the commitment to the Guidelines issued by the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC, 2017), specifically #208 on the policy to be followed. This establishes the need to continue increasing the competitiveness of the destination, in tourism markets, enhancing the training of human resources.

To achieve quality education and train human resources the country has the national center coordinating and regulating the process in accordance with international standards and committed to the Cuban ideological political model, the Tourism Training Center (CCT), as a budgeted unit of the Office of the Delegate of the Ministry of Tourism (Mintur) in each province (Mintur, 2016).

The CCT in Villa Clara province works together with the Mintur Office in the sector's development strategies. Relevant to this doctoral research is the development of political-ideological work, the formation and training of its human capital prioritizing language improvement and technical-professional preparation as a master strategy in the entities. The center's Political and Ideological Work Strategy is derived from this strategy, which organizes the events developed by the Martiana and Che and Fidel Chairs and other activities that contribute to it.

There is a Code of Ethics for students that includes the main political-ideological and moral-ethical values to be formed and developed in them in the teaching-educational process, which reaffirms their commitment to the country's policy.

It is necessary to clarify that in the CCTs it is not only pertinent the language and professional training, but it is also necessary to train professionals who, besides being trained, correspond coherently with the Cuban society, and from this idea derives the guiding objective; to develop ethical and moral values in the students of the CCT of Villa Clara from the English class.

Systemic activities were developed from the English class with all the specialties that are trained in that center, that is why the sample has a heterogeneous character, composed of 37 students of diverse specialties. The approach adopted was qualitative and the guiding method was the systematization of experiences.

## **Development**

Several investigations have been carried out regarding the teaching-learning process; however, the analysis of the state of the art in the tourism sector suggests the need to pay more attention to it from the contextualized educational practice, with a view to the formation of a professional in tune with the ethical and moral values of Cuban society.

The problematic situation corroborates that the students who enter the CCT do so under economic motives in the constant search for better salaries or simply to work in the tourism sector, they do not have the attitudes towards the model of the tourism professional that the school trains, and they do not have command of the basic English language for the performance of this professional in training, and the ethical and moral values are also manifested in modes of action not in tune with the professional that is needed in the tourism sector.

It should be noted that in the CCT different specialties are studied; fundamentally it covers the training for the employment of the basic profiles. In the Study Plan, they receive a series of subjects whose programs are elaborated by professional competences, must with their integrated action, pay tribute to the Code of Ethics mentioned above. Among them, the English language has a double function; to teach the language and to train the tourism professional, however, in practice it loses its formative part as we have already mentioned.

In spite of some valuable attempts, to achieve the formation of a professional in tune with the ethical and moral values, reflected in the Code of Ethics of the students, it has not been sufficiently systematized.

In the center, from the English subject, some contributions have been made to insert the thematic as: the coordination of activities with the Documentation Center, the orientation of works on representative figures of the history, museums and hotels of the province, and the preparation of support materials for teaching.

Currently, the tourism sector has the challenge of guiding the economic and social recovery of nations, which requires changes in tourism education through the training of students in the Tourism Training Centers (CCT).

These centers organize and guide the whole process of education and training in each

province of the country in its pedagogical context and they are vital for the tourism sector since they ensure the level of capacity for development, quality of service and efficiency, in accordance with current international standards and with a high commitment to the Cuban ideological political model.

The Manual of Procedures and Functions for the Branch School and the CCTs (Mintur, 2015), defines the policies of this type of educational institution, its levels of subordination, social purpose, legal basis, as well as its level of participation in services, its relationship with professional improvement and the updating of its faculty. These are teaching institutions approved by the Mintur (Mintur, 2015), according to the decree Law that regulates training in the country, subordinated to the minister's delegates in the different territories where they are located.

They are governed by the norms established by the Cuban State and Government regarding the preparation and improvement of cadres and their reserves, and the training of workers, respectively, as well as the regulations established by the Central State Administration Agencies (OACE) and the Mintur.

The essential social purpose of these centers is to continuously prepare, update, recycle and train active workers according to the requirements of the tourism entities, to qualify new entrants in technical professions in accordance with the entry procedures established by the Mintur and to participate in accordance with the procedures established in the preparation and improvement of cadres and their reserves.

The general and specific objectives for this type of center (Mintur, 2015) establish the need to promote and develop the work with the entities that make up the Tourism System attending to the Policy of Preparation, Formation and Training of Human Capital. Likewise, it establishes to deepen the ethical, professional, cultural and political values that contribute to important results in the transforming endeavor of the current Cuban tourism sector, adjusted to the ethical principles of society. In addition, to create the need for the systematic use of new technologies, innovation and creativity as a function of the mandatory continuous learning (Mintur, 2015).

The CCT of Villa Clara offers a product of training and development of human capital for the Tourism System, characterized by firm revolutionary convictions, professionalism and integral culture, managing the activity of science and technological innovation, with a faculty in constant development, linked to institutions of recognized prestige, in a natural, healthy environment with attractive historical-cultural values.

The center mainly covers the training of basic profiles, specialties that make up part of the sample used in the research (Professional Cook, Baker-Restaurateur, Gastronomic Clerk, Commercial Clerk, Receptionist, Room Waiter, Tourist Guide and Tourist Animator; CP, PR, DG, DC, RH, CH, GT and AT) and develops courses for the intermediate and higher levels of management of the human resources pyramid: Salon Captain, Maître, Chef de Partie, Chef, Front Desk Manager, Floor Supervisor, Housekeeper and Brigade Leader for Stores.

When consulting the scientific literature in contributions by Ramírez (2016), the author refers that one of the achievements of the center is the leading role of the students in the activities of their educational programs together with the guiding teacher and the pedagogical team. These programs include teaching and extracurricular activities and links with the community, which demonstrates the need to systematically emphasize the training of students.

At present, the training of students is of vital importance to ensure that they assume an active and transforming attitude in the face of the difficulties that arise in society. Likewise, it is necessary to train professionals who respond to the demands of the tourism sector and to the challenges imposed by Cuban society today.

Several authors (Marcelo, 1995; Zabalsa, 2004 and Lubalo. 2013 (Cited by Velazco. 2011 and López, 2016) have made great contributions in the international field regarding the topic, which constitute a reference for research. These consider relevant the active role of the human being in the training process linked to development to achieve the objectives proposed by education.

Development, according to Kursanov's criteria, (1976) (Cited by Velazco, 2011, p.39) to which the authors of this research are affiliated, is understood as the movement in a certain direction, in an ascending line, which constitutes the main trend in development, which does not exclude, however, regressive processes in a descending line; in development, internal trends and the radical change of the nature of phenomena, the negation of the old and the affirmation of the new, which gives it a dialectical contradictory character.

For Collado, Medina and Pupo (2012), in socialist/communist Pedagogy, formation is the totality of vital knowledge and power, and of the norms of human acting and behavior, as they are realized by society in a historical epoch. Therefore, it is a relationship that arises from the activity of man with respect to spiritual achievements, to the ideal realm of social development and also to the material wealth that individuals

obtain through training.

In this sense, the authors share the position of Álvarez de Zayas (1999) (Cited by López, 2016, p.26) on training, who defines it as "a totalizing process whose objective is to prepare man as a social being, which brings together in one unit the educational, developmental and instructive processes". This author (Cited by Velazco, 2011) refers that Development is a category used as a function of education and is closely linked to training and constitutes, according to the aforementioned author, a process of physical, psychic and social maturation, which encompasses all quantitative changes of congenital and acquired properties.

On the other hand, Horruitiner (2008) and Álvarez de Zayas (1999) (Cited by López, 2016) refer that for training, three essential dimensions that lead to an integral general training must be taken into account. Namely: the instructive, since without instruction there is no training; the developmental, which implies the development of professional competencies to ensure successful work performance; and the educational, since the system of educational influences exerted on the individual, society, family and school must be present.

In Cuba, the aim of the Cuban educational policy is the comprehensive general education of students from a dialectical-materialist position that responds to the interests of the country's policy whose essential core should be in the formation of moral values, so that they can integrate into the society in which they live and contribute to its development and improvement. In the Guidelines of the Economic and Social Policy of the Party and the Revolution (PCC, 2017), the need to give continuity to the improvement of education and raise the quality and rigor of the educational teaching process is raised. (Guidelines #132 and #133).

Assuming in the tourism sector, the training process of students taking into account the three dimensions and the development in ascending line without excluding the regressive processes in descending line, allows the link of students with the work environment, the community and the entities where they perform pre-professional practices.

Likewise, feelings of belonging and efficient learning are fostered in order to achieve the general comprehensive training required of them as graduates and future professionals to face the changes generated in the sector.

In Cuba, as part of the general comprehensive training of students, the teaching and learning of the English language is conceived at all educational levels. The CCT of

Villa Clara is no stranger to this situation since it is governed by the regulations of the Ministry of Higher Education (MHE) and includes, in the same way, the study of the English language in the curriculum of the Basic Specialties as mentioned in the introduction. In order to provide a solution to the demands of the sector, it includes the linguistic improvement of workers as part of the development strategy in the entities with a view to offering a quality service.

In the CCT of Villa Clara, during the training process, a series of basic subjects are included in the Study Plan for all specialties, which should contribute in an integrated manner to the Code of Ethics, mentioned in the introduction, in the search for a technically and professionally prepared tourism professional in tune with the ethical and moral values of the country. Among the subjects, we can mention Society, culture and tourism, and English language.

English language is the longest subject, which allows the teacher to interact with the students for a long period of time. It is a requirement to receive and pass all the language levels required for the specialties at the beginning of the course in order to continue with the subjects included in the Study Plan.

The Political and Ideological Work Strategy contains all the activities carried out in the center; whether it is the participation in the events of the Martian Chairs, Che and Fidel, planned visits to museums in the province or the scheduled morning and afternoon classes in which the role of the guiding teacher and the English teacher is crucial to guarantee the participation of the students.

In addition, the educational meetings are an important space where the students' study behavior and participation in the activities organized by the center are analyzed in the presence of the teaching staff, including the English language teacher.

Therefore, the CCT of Villa Clara will only be able to fulfill its formative mission to the extent that the teaching-learning process guarantees the formation of the Basic Specialties, which implies the unity of the instructive, educational and developmental aspects so that its graduates respond to the demands of the tourism sector in tune with the interests of the country's policy.

The teaching-learning process (TLP), as part of the pedagogical process, needs a constant look on the part of pedagogues to conduct it appropriately, since it is through it that new generations are systematically trained which imposes to analyze it from the point of view of Pedagogy and Didactics.

The most current conceptions conceive it as an integrated whole in which the leading role of the student stands out and in this sense, the authors are affiliated to the definition offered by Collective of authors (2002) where it is described as a school pedagogical process that has the essential characteristics of this one, but is distinguished by being more systematic, planned, directed and specific because the teacher-student interrelation becomes a much more direct didactic action, whose only purpose is the integral development of the personality of the students.

To assume it in this way is to integrate the cognitive and the affective, the instructional and the educational, as essential psychological and pedagogical requirements; in which the unity between instruction, teaching, learning, education and development is expressed.

The ASP is characterized by its systemic, procedural, bilateral, dialectical and legal nature and is made up of traditionally recognized non-personal categories or components (objective, content, method, medium, forms of organization and evaluation) as mediating elements of the relationships between the personal components (student, teacher, group) and the relationships established between them and is based on a developmental education, which implies intentional communication and activity (Gonzalez and Reinoso, 2002).

Taking into account the above criteria, in order to achieve the general comprehensive education of students, it is necessary to conceive a developmental ASP.

Developmental ASP is understood according to the contributions of Zilberstein, Portela and Macpherson (2000) (cited by Velazco, 2011, p. 25) to which the authors are affiliated:

The essential mediating channel for the appropriation of knowledge, skills, norms of emotional relationships, behavior and values, bequeathed by humanity, which are expressed in the teaching content, in close connection with the rest of the teaching and extracurricular activities carried out by the students.

Similarly, the contributions of (González and Reinoso, 2002) are relevant when he states that the developmental Teaching-Learning Process should be that which constitutes a system where both Teaching and Learning, as subsystems, are based on a developmental Education, which implies an intentional communication and activity, whose didactic action generates learning strategies for the development of an integral and self-determined personality of the learner, within the framework of the school as a social institution that transmits culture.



In Cuba, in order to achieve a developmental ASP, work is done under Vigotzky's (1987) Historical-Cultural Approach, which based on the learning theory of the same name contemplates the Zone of Proximal Development (ZDP) as a basic concept and defines it as the distance between the actual level of development determined by the ability to independently solve a problem and the level of potential development determined through the resolution of a problem under the guidance of an adult or in collaboration with a more capable partner (Gonzalez and Reinoso, 2002).

The present research is affiliated to the conception of the teaching-learning process developed by the followers of the Historical-Cultural Approach and L. S, Vigotsky (1989) (Cited by Díaz, 2015) who conceive it as a socialization process in which the student is inserted as object and subject of his learning, assuming an active and responsible position in his formation process, of configuration of his internal world, as creator and at the same time depository of cultural patterns historically constructed by humanity.

This approach (Cited by Díaz, 2015) proposes to develop an integral man because his training is directed not only to his instrumental preparation (knowledge and skills), but also to find solutions to the needs of his context, committed to certain socially established modes of behavior, values, attitudes, affections, which he can acquire in the process of social communication, of interaction through the educational teaching process, in the concrete conditions of its realization.

Given this reality, from the triangulation of sources and data, it has been possible to corroborate that if motivational elements are inserted into the English class with a formative approach, the expected results are superior because they allow the student to delve into local elements of their territory from problematic approaches that previously lacked significance, In addition, spaces for knowledge construction and knowledge exchanges are generated, where initially the search was in Spanish and then in English, developing in the sample language skills with a formative, cognitive and affective character from the experience with the tourist object.

The systematization of experiences allowed the main author to incorporate to the English class system elements that typify the Cuban environment in its highest expression, taking into account the basic specialties of the students, as well as the study of representative figures, the history of hotels and places of interest to visit in Villa Clara province. Likewise, other didactic elements were incorporated, such as the use of

songs, games, traditional dances and Cuban music, which resulted in support materials for the different specialties included in the sample.

These aspects gave rise to the incorporation of other resources for the classes from the creativity of the groups according to the specialties, showing a greater mastery of English for specific purposes, but with ideological, historical and cultural nuances, in other words, in tune with the professional that the center aspires to train.

In order to achieve the developmental ASP, didactic principles must be taken into account for the adequate direction of the pedagogical process and to educate the personality in our social-historical reality, with a flexible and systemic character such as:

*Linking theory with practice.* It allows promoting that in the dialectic unity theory - practice, they consciously appropriate theoretical generalizations that allow them to "operate" with concepts, laws, establish links and relationships; all of which will favor that learning acquires meaning and sense for them. Theoretical and practical knowledge is conceived as a dialectical unit, based on the link between teaching and life, which means giving scientific answers to life questions.

*Direct observation in teaching.* This principle is based on the pedagogical laws of the theory of psychological cognition, emphasizes the sensory in order to counteract the tendency to a partially rational conduct of teaching. It states that all the learners' senses, perceptions and clear ideas should be exercised, which is extremely important for learning a foreign language in a non-natural context where a favorable environment is needed during the development of the ASP.

*Affordability.* This principle requires that teaching should be comprehensible and possible according to the individual characteristics of the learners. On the basis of this principle, the scientific level of teaching and group and individual learning are determined, which does not mean simplifying teaching, but adapting it to the peculiarities of the group.

*Soundness of knowledge.* The essence of this principle lies in the fact that the teaching process should consider the systematic struggle against forgetting, as a normal psychic process. The assimilation of knowledge by students is incomplete if students are unable to demonstrate the results achieved in a stable manner over a more or less long period of time to be used in practice.

*Consciousness and independent activity of students.* Emphasizes the need for students to internalize knowledge and develop skills that allow them to work independently with group support, which can be achieved from the implementation of truly meaningful tasks that motivate them both from a personal and professional point of view.

*Attention to individual differences within the collective character of the teaching-educational process.* In order to achieve personality development through teaching, the psychic and physical qualities of the students, their individual characteristics must be taken into account; however, it is necessary to take advantage of all the potentialities that result from the joint activity of the students within the collective, since it favors interaction among its members, a socialist attitude towards work and learning, as well as mutual help and open criticism in the collective.

Assuming these principles in the PEA developed in the CCT of Villa Clara allowed the elaboration of systemic activities of formative character oriented towards the incorporation of the different subjects that compose the curricular map so as to contribute to the formation of the basic specialties demanded by the tourist activity, but with a formative character.

## **Conclusions**

The process of teaching and learning English in the CCT must be endowed with a systemic approach, with a developmental character where the content of the class is imbued with experiential, cognitive and motivational elements from the tourist object in the construction of knowledge both idiomatic, historical and cultural with a holistic and integrated vision.