

MENDIVE



REVISTA DE EDUCACIÓN

Translated from the original in Spanish

Original article

Methodological strategy to mitigate the COVID from the real English use perspective

Estrategia metodológica para la mitigación de la COVID desde el uso real del inglés

Estratégia metodológica para a mitigação do COVID a partir do uso real do inglês

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Received: July 02nd, 2021.

Approved: December 02nd, 2021.

ABSTRACT

In eleventh months of a pandemic, traditional teaching methods have changed university students in Cuba are now called to social work. The objective of the article is to present a methodological strategy of community intervention from the real English use approach to raise awareness in the surrounding community of the University of Pinar del Río, about what it is and how to prevent COVID-19. An ethnographic, descriptive and proactive diagnosis was carried out, where from the diagnosis the strategy based on the transdisciplinary between community and environmental education and the teaching of English from a sociocultural approach is formulated. The strategy proposes a system of activities based on socio-cultural animation in its socio-community aspect. "The Line" is presented as an example of communicative, interactive and sociocultural activity.

Keywords: transdisciplinary; environmental education; community education; English Language teaching; COVID-19.

RESUMEN

En once meses de una pandemia los métodos tradicionales de la enseñanza han cambiado; los universitarios en Cuba ahora están llamados al trabajo social. El objetivo del artículo radica en presentar una estrategia metodológica basada en la educación comunitaria desde el uso real del inglés para concientizar a la comunidad circundante a la Universidad de Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca" sobre qué es y cómo prevenir la COVID-19. Se realizó una investigación de tipo etnográfica, diagnóstico descriptivo y propositiva, donde a partir del diagnóstico se formula la estrategia basada en la transdisciplina entre educación comunitaria, ambiental y la enseñanza del inglés desde un enfoque sociocultural. La estrategia propone un sistema de actividades basado en la animación sociocultural en su vertiente sociocomunitaria. "La Cola" se presenta

como ejemplo de actividad comunicativa, interactiva y sociocultural.

Palabras clave: transdisciplina; educación ambiental; educación comunitaria; enseñanza de la Lengua Inglesa, COVID-19.

RESUMO

Em onze meses de pandemia, os métodos tradicionais de ensino mudaram; estudantes universitários em Cuba agora são chamados para o trabalho social. O objetivo do artigo é apresentar uma estratégia metodológica baseada na educação comunitária a partir do uso real do inglês para conscientizar a comunidade do entorno da Universidade de Pinar del Río "Hermandades Saíz Montes de Oca" sobre o que é e como prevenir o COVID - 19. Foi realizado um diagnóstico etnográfico, descritivo e proativo, onde a partir do diagnóstico é formulada a estratégia baseada na transdisciplinaridade entre educação comunitária, educação ambiental e o ensino de inglês a partir de uma abordagem sociocultural. A estratégia propõe um sistema de atividades baseado na animação sociocultural na sua vertente sociocomunitária. "La Cola" é apresentado como um exemplo de atividade comunicativa, interativa e sociocultural.

Palavras-chave: transdisciplinaridade; Educação ambiental; educação comunitária; Ensino de Língua Inglesa, COVID-19.

INTRODUCTION

The month of March 2020 became a month that Latin America and Cuba, in particular, will not be able to forget due to the suspension of classes as a direct consequence of the quarantine to be protected by COVID-19; Added to this, the scarce culture and technological resources

available to the Teaching-Learning Process in this region. The collective panic, the stress generated by confinement and the role of educational institutions in the use of technological tools to create improvised virtual learning environments, leads to rethinking the way and the way in which the school educates in times of crisis.

A learning context marks the new reality; students are called to social work to preserve traditions, inform and assist in promoting the culture of communities as #quedateencasa prevails in social consciousness. Hence the leading role of the universities at the forefront of the COVID mitigation campaign, with the aim of strengthening the union between the school-community-family spheres, involving government entities.

Under the critical and reflective gaze of the administrative management of education, it is necessary to generate an academic approach that allows an approach to the way and form in which educational institutions and social organizations make use of the social communication methods used for community education.

Social organizations are the reflection of the actions of the communities from different spheres: culture, Environment, community development, among others. They establish and defend their links with local authorities in order to achieve the objective they pursue, which, in a global way, is to achieve the integral formation of the personality of the subjects under their actions.

The mass media, for their part, constitute a source of great influence in the socialization of the different situations that society presents at a regional, national or international level, and provides information on the situations that arise, so it provides different perceptions of the reality in which one lives, which directly or indirectly affects individuals.

Community education is basically promotional and normalizing participation, that is, its priority objective will be to create and promote the necessary conditions for the autonomous action of the communities and for the self-determination of social action. The educational function, its institutions and agents must be considered as instruments and means at the service of putting into operation motivation, involvement, participation, self-organization and citizen self-management, as elements that allow people to advance in the solution of their own problems.

Due to the aforementioned, the authors consider important the familiarization with the concepts of environmental education: "it is an educational trend that seeks the involvement of students and teachers in the teaching-learning process in order to raise awareness about the preservation of the environment." (Al-Naqbi and Alshannag, 2018, p. 5).

A reflection on the connection between the words environmental education and community education would allow us to ask why, when and for what reason this relationship has been established. The answers to these questions would be based on the acquisition of knowledge, development of habits and skills in the formation of values for sustainable development, in the relationship between the human being, nature and society, as a base pillar in the education of the communities in relation to pandemics such as those facing in these times.

The formation of the human being is closely related to its reality, both from its historical and socioeconomic context; in that case, the assimilation and objectification of social content is directly proportional to the influences they receive there. In times of pandemic, in the opinion of the authors, it is the linking of both sciences, community and environmental education, in order to achieve

prevention of its effects in health, psychological and economic terms.

Framed in the premise of community development, a new concept is collected in the pedagogical literature, that of community education. According to Brizuela *et al.* (2015), community education is that behavior of the population to the fulfillment of social goals, through a coherent system of actions where social factors are incorporated in order to achieve educational objectives and social well-being.

Through community education, an attempt is made to interrelate, integrate and globalize training actions with the rest of the interventions not programmed by educational institutions, under the aspiration and commitment to help and contribute to the promotion, optimization and training of community human resources.

Likewise, community education aims to create higher levels of equal opportunities, with a view to achieving free, active, responsible, supportive and cooperative involvement in the population; a training framed within the same process of socio-community animation, not only understood from purely welfare objectives or the simple consumption of educational activities and services.

According to Andarcio *et al.* (2021), community development is presented to a large extent as a genuinely educational and social learning process that calls for the approach of a community education under two coordinates: animation and training. The whole process of community education demands the figure of an educational agent who plans and manages the educational action from the approaches of social and community promotion.

For their part, educational strategies for the participatory implementation of the student in issues related to environmental factors

have been the subject of studies worldwide, as well as educational strategies. In perspective, the following methodological proposals are presented:

Trans discipline in environmental education: according to Mitchell and Moore (2015) has developed a systemic framework that involves a set of steps and has been approached in social and educational media, showing the contribution to training and research in the field of environmental education. According to these authors, trans discipline is perceived as "an emancipator, argumentative project, which is also oriented towards research" (p. 20); It is evidenced, in his research carried out in Canada, that the pedagogical methodology of trans discipline focuses on solving problems or proposing possible solutions, and works based on the active research of students, where not only solutions are promoted, but also proposals are promoted for its implementation, taking into account the role of actors beyond the academy, that is, taking into consideration local knowledge.

Educational strategy projected towards the community: some studies and approaches have allowed university education, as the main function in the structure of the strategic plan of each university, to focus on the locality and maintain social projections. The strategy starts from the premise that local environmental problems must be educated and solved (Andrews *et al.*, 2002). This strategy maintains direct contact with the learners and the community, in order to devise strategies that can provide a solution to current problems; the fact of working together or analyzing whether the collaboration of other actors if it is necessary, is considered (Andrews *op. cit.*).

Community-based environmental education incorporates public participation, social marketing, environmental education, and right-to-know strategies. Measures that contribute to the effectiveness of volunteer activities also include community-based

environmental education goals and incorporate a behavior change or policy change goal.

In particular, the actual use of the English Language is defined by Vigil *et al.* (2020) as the English that native speakers actually use with their friends, their family and their working colleagues. According to Vigil, it is the common English of every day, the one that is used constantly. It includes phrases of daily communication such as slang, idiomatic expressions, cultural references, filler words, natural rhythm of English, jokes, double meanings, contractions, among other forms. It refers to that English that is rarely found in textbooks, which have been designed from the grammatical approach to learning the language. On the other hand, task-based learning is a method for teaching foreign languages where the teacher guides the tasks and then carries out the analysis with a holistic approach. This plays an important role in the training of competent professionals, as far as foreign languages are concerned.

Foundations for Task-Based Interactive Language Teaching

The key ideas for task-based interactive language teaching are as follows:

- Interactive, intercultural and communicative competence become the objectives of language teaching (Vigil *et al.*, 2021).
- Communication is socially constructed in the interactive process (Acosta *et al.*, 2019).
- Language learning occurs in social interaction (Vygotsky, 1975).
- Social interaction is the primary mechanism of mental recognition (Vygotsky, 1975. *The social and active character of human psyche*).
- Language is meaning; it is a negotiation of meaning (Acosta, *op. cit.*).

- Learners need to be emotionally motivated to interact when they learn (Richards, 2005).
- People learn the language by interacting with it (Vigil and Acosta, 2019).
- Accuracy and fluency are goals of interactive language teaching.

On the other hand, the task itself provides all the conditions for learning: the problem, the solution, the objectives to be achieved, the content to be learned, the methods and instruments to be used, what and how to evaluate, the learning strategies and the procedures. Interactive task-based teaching provides learners with opportunities to interact with information, practice the language, and use it naturally and spontaneously. In addition, it creates in the learners a state of integrity, meaning and meaning in a real context. The task makes possible the union between reflection and action, theory and practice, precision and fluency, grammatical knowledge of the language and usage. There are information gaps, sustained code- and message-focused discourse, as well as the information gap.

An interactive task is more than just a mechanical grammar exercise. From our point of view, it implies:

- The development of communicative, interactive and intercultural competence.
- The formation of human values in students.
- Humanism: learning to love and be loved.
- Reflection on structure, meaning and use.
- Creating interactions with meaning and purpose.
- Learning about culture and language.
- The unity of the cognitive and the affective.
- The contextualization of language in culture.
- Responsibility in learning.

- The diversity of techniques, tasks and procedures.
- Cooperative work, in pairs and individually.
- The constant updating of the contents.

With the premise of the transmission of the cultural heritage as the guiding objective of education, priority is established from the mode of action of the competent professional of foreign languages as a defender of community development and protector of their traditions. The linking theory-practice, instruction-education, constitute the bases that justify the transdisciplinary nature of the work of the foreign language teacher, which is manifested in the pedagogical process as an intercultural communicator and responsible for directing the educational process aimed at the integral formation of the personality and the coordination, from the school, of the educational influences of the family and the community.

In this way, the objective of this article is to present a methodological strategy based on environmental education from the actual use of English to raise awareness in the surrounding community of the University of Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca" about what it is and how to prevent COVID-19. It is based on the trans discipline between community education, environmental education and the teaching of English as a foreign language from a sociocultural approach.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodological proposal of sociocultural animation was chosen in its socio-community aspect, since animation, as an educational methodology, is congruent with the principles and methodological requirements of community development indicated up to here and also constitutes a methodological

intervention strategy effective dialogue to trigger and promote mechanisms and processes of community participation and self-organization. The theory and praxis of group dynamics are assumed and it enables the use and optimization of existing community resources, or the creation of new ones.

Type of research: this is a mixed, ethnographic, diagnostic-descriptive and propositional *type of research*. It is mixed because not only is it part of the objective essence of the problem, but it also takes it to its significance. It is ethnographic because it allows research activists to make an approach to the descriptive nature of the problem, studying the characterization of a social group, its values, its beliefs, its motivations, its desires, its forms of social interaction in order to understand the meaning of the actions of some actors and get to build knowledge. It is diagnostic-descriptive, based on the identification of the features that characterize the problem and their interrelation as constituent elements of a controversial phenomenology. Finally, it is of a propositional type because the research culminates with the formulation of a proposal aimed at solving the identified problem.

From the strategy, four phases are identified for the implementation of a community intervention, interrelated, interdependent and even, in some moments, simultaneous:

- Definition of the shared conceptual bases.
- Diagnosis and description.
- Community survey for the diagnosis of environmental awareness.
- Design of an intervention strategy.

Each of these phases is endowed in turn with different moments, as well as their corresponding techniques and activities, with a marked formative nature promoted by development agents, university students, who will gradually modify their degree and

format of incidence from a ownership and very active and direct presence at the beginning, until an own intervention of advice, monitoring and facilitation as greater maturity and autonomy are acquired.

The universe is made up of a total of 678 residents of the district # 81, "Álvaro Barba" district, Pinar del Río and 12 activists from the Education Foreign Languages career of said University. It was decided to use the non-probabilistic sample type of criterion type, based on the linguistic abilities of the individuals and the disposition towards work. With a significant sample size $n = 70$, made up of a total of 70 residents and 12 activists. Among the same 37 men (45.12%) and 33 women (40.24%), with ages between: 19-25 (24.39%), 32-40 (30.6%), 42-53 (45.15%) and 63% with a university degree, the rest with a Bachelor or Technical-Professional Education.

RESULTS

Diagnosis and description of environmental education and interest in learning the English language

A survey was conducted with a total of 70 residents in three moments, considering the size of the sample and the objective conditions. The instrument had both mattress and content questions. It was prepared in Spanish, although it is linked to English by the linguistic aspect.

In general, all respondents report having knowledge about what is understood by environmental protection and in particular its aspect in times of pandemic. In the same way, they propose to have both interest and disposition in favor of the care of the Environment. However, when asked to specify the actions carried out in pursuit of the preservation of the Environment, only 32% could answer positively. The need and

motivation are high, mainly when it is linked to the learning of the English language, but the knowledge is not extensive in the transversal axis of Environment, or so 92% of the respondents refer.

35% of the residents recognize the existence of activist groups, which function regularly. 50% are not clear about its composition, 25% have carried out environmental education activities and 80% of those surveyed do not consider it as a dimension of general education. From the analysis it was derived that only 25% are related to issues related to environmental education. The level of information is insufficient. Only 15% acknowledge having received information and preparation in environmental education. There is no clear conception of the Environment concept, reflected in the fact that it is considered, for the most part, only its natural appearance. 60% believed that environmental education is achieved, fundamentally, with the development of Natural Sciences programs or with actions related to this area. It is significant that the most recognized environmental problems are those related to pollution (37.5%); only 5% recognize poverty as an environmental problem and none recognized epidemics as one. There is no clarity regarding the incorporation, from an environmental perspective, of the main content related to health and sexuality. 76% consider that environmental education should not integrate these aspects.

When asked about the importance of learning the English language, 100% of the neighbors highlight the need and importance of learning it, but they report not knowing an effective way or the tools at their disposal. The common misconception is that learning about the system leads to proficiency in speaking. Doing speech is a more difficult task than learning about grammar, pronunciation, meaning, and word formation.

The needs and motivations for learning the language are latent in the neighborhood. The key lies in presenting an effective method that encourages developer learning based on a communicative, interactive and sociocultural approach; at the same time, it creates a psychology of success that supports the use of new technologies, establishes connectivity guidelines with the world and with the learner, and fosters space for reflection and social interaction with the language.

Methodological intervention strategy

This case is about a methodological strategy with actions aimed at raising community awareness about what COVID-19 is, how to identify it and prevent its spread, based on the trans disciplinarily between community education, environmental education and the teaching of English as a foreign language as a resource for learning.

For its part, the real use of English as a trend in language teaching is reflected in the actions that include the use of daily communication phrases, idiomatic phrases, slangs and acronyms, stories taken from real sources, jokes, natural rhythm and other unalterable samples of its original source that show a link between everyday life and language.

The strategy was created from a foundation in the theory of value formation, as well as the data provided by the diagnosis and survey. Through the modeling method, the integration levels that make up the strategy were devised.

Basic actions of the strategy:

- Exploration of the interests, needs and educational, linguistic, psychological and cultural potential of the neighbors.
- Elaboration of materials and interactive learning tasks that

respond to the needs of the neighbors.

- Use of materials and tasks in the community.
- Assessment of the use of materials and tasks in order to specify their cognitive and affective impact on neighbors.

Some complementary actions of the strategy:

- Use of the community as a cultural center in its educational dimension.
- Familiarization of the neighbors with a new sociocultural context through reference to films, series, novels, poems and literary works.
- Preparation of teaching materials with interactive activities and summaries of understandable texts.
- Use of short stories and poems to introduce topics, communicative functions, grammar and vocabulary.
- Promotion of the writing of poems and short stories.
- Seek help, inform and coordinate actions with the relevant institutions to achieve their cooperation.
- Create a video to project and discuss in the community, where it will be explained what COVID-19 is, how to identify it and prevent its spread, and neighbors will be encouraged to become aware of the implications that this disease brings and the possible ways to eradicate them based on the experiences of other communities, ending with a call for transformative action.
- Create small educational workshops with a maximum duration of 15 minutes, with the aim of promoting reflection on both the impact of COVID-19 and the actual use of the language, through interactive activities in the English language.
- Door to door, it consists of the socialization of brochures that show the statistics and updated information

of the pandemic both at the global and national level; in which some examples of the use of the English language are presented.

- Educate the community through community, participatory, learning and cultural events. Made on important dates with the help of the residents of the community. Its objective is none other than to attract attention in a different, more creative and original way, allowing the neighbors a healthy development in the environment included.

"The Prophylactic queue." Example of interactive activity

Learning English as a foreign language needs greater attention in the structure of the linguistic system, as well as in communicative practice. "The Prophylactics queue" is a task based on the original model by Hadfield (1990) and modified by Vigil *et al.* (2020).

The queue task has the following objectives:

- Contextualize the structure of the English language from an environmental culture.
- Orally share information on prophylactic measures for the prevention of COVID-19.
- Strengthen values of environmental protection, humanism and cooperation.

Instructions for mediators:

- The activity begins by providing a context where the communication will be recreated. Example: a group of prophylactic measures against the spread of COVID-19 was in a queue to buy tickets to a musical of the Social band. Suddenly, a storm arrived and the prophylactic measures took refuge. When the storm stopped, the

prophylactic measures tried to form the queue, but they did not remember exactly where they were, they needed to ask others who they were and what they were doing in the queue in order to identify who was in front and who was behind him or her.

- The participants are given cards with the prophylactic measure to be interpreted and information about it.
- A small model of dialogue is offered to follow.
- About five minutes later, the mediator asks the trainees to form the queue.

The goal of the task is to rebuild it as it was originally. To do this, the participants will have to move around the classroom established in the community; looking for the information they need about who was in front and behind to form the queue.

Instructions for participants:

- Brainstorm prophylactic measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- The prophylactic measure to be represented is selected and the proposed information is read. Examples of cards:

You're **Mask**, the first in the line. You're the nightmare of COVID-19iots. You're saying how important it's not to touch the mask when wearing it. **Soap** is behind you, he's talking about the best way to wash your hands.

You're **Soap**, the COVID-19Killer, the most effective way. You're talking about the best way to wash your hands. **Mask** is ahead of you and **Hand Sanitizer** is behind you.

- Share the information with your colleagues, asking and answering about the prophylactic measures of both (Yes or No questions and content questions).

- Walk around the venue asking for the prophylactic measure ahead and behind you in the queue. You can follow this model:

A: Excuse me Sir. Are you Mask?

B: No, Madame.

A: Thank you, Sir.

A: Excuse me, are you Hand Sanitizer?

B: Yes, I am.

A: Were you listening to Poe's poem: Annabel Lee?

B: Yes, I was.

A: So, I am behind you in the line.

- Let's order the tail (the tail is formed). The queue then becomes a circle to facilitate intensive oral communication practice between the participants and the mediator.

The task facilitates learning with a strong cognitive, communicative, humanistic and cultural base, offering opportunities to the learner to use the language in solving problems that require focusing attention, both on the meaning and on the linguistic forms. The oral tasks that make up the queue are varied. All aimed at the development of oral skills.

DISCUSSION

Environmental education, based on the above, requires a transdisciplinary approach with a holistic perspective that thus responds to the demands of a reality that does not admit the fragmentation of study objects imposed by special disciplines. Due to this,

human life and the objective reality of which it is a part include multiple aspects, essentially interrelated and interdependent, which respond to the democratic idea of culture, of participatory citizenship with an ethical framework of cooperation and solidarity, according to the criteria of cultural democracy.

Through the diagnostic-investigative work it was possible to verify different difficulties taken into consideration for the elaboration of the strategy. Such difficulties consist of: the lack of adequate preparation to undertake the contemporary demands of environmental education for sustainable development systematically and scientifically; the lack of a contextualized work that directs the instructive and educational professional performance from the community, to the international level of environmental events, and the lack of an integrative and transdisciplinary work, which is carried out very limitedly and without addressing the theoretical-practical links necessary at work.

The subject is placed as a producer of knowledge in the reflection of himself and his reality, to generate conscious changes in the individual and in his social context. Its maximum aspiration is to achieve a permanent development of the community and of the critical conscience of its inhabitants through the real use of English; This leads to highlighting that social reality is not only made up of material objects and concrete facts, but also by perception and collective imaginations, bringing popular knowledge and scientific knowledge closer together until they become a common structural change. Environmental education, viewed from the mainstream, must sensitize, raise awareness in all areas by resorting to the formation of values, in the development of environmental conservation attitudes and skills.

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Conflict of interest:

Authors declare not to have any conflicts of interest.

Authors' Contribution:

The authors have participated in the writing of the work and analysis of the documents.



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