# DIDACTICAL DIAGNOSTICS OF THE PROCESS TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOR STUDENTS OF TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES

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*Abstract: This article reports an action-research project aimed at designing, applying, and assessing a didactic sequence for teaching English as a foreign language in students of technical universities. The article comprises the context, reasons that justified the research, theoretical support, methodology, and results, analyzed through descriptive statistics. The findings suggest that the didactic proposal was easy to use for the teacher, understandable for the students, and appropriate for the students' proficiency level due to its emphasis on the oral skills. It was concluded that didactic material should follow the pacing of the teachers' academic work and has to be closely linked to the reality of teachers and students.*

*Key words: Didactics, didactic sequence, English as foreign language, primary school*

# ДИДАКТИЧЕСКАЯ ДИАГНОСТИКА ПРОЦЕССА ОБУЧЕНИЯ АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ СТУДЕНТОВ ТЕХНИЧЕСКИХ ВУЗОВ

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*Аннотация: В данной статье описывается исследовательский проект, направленный на разработку, применение и оценку дидактической последовательности преподавания английского языка как иностранного студентам технических университетов. Статья содержит контекст, причины, обосновавшие исследование, теоретическую поддержку, методологию и результаты, проанализированные с помощью описательной статистики. Полученные данные свидетельствуют о том, что дидактическое предложение было легко использовать для учителя, понятно для учащихся и соответствовало уровню их знаний из-за акцента на устных навыках. Был сделан вывод, что дидактический материал должен соответствовать темпу академической работы учителей и должен быть тесно связан с реальностью учителей и учеников.*

*Ключевые слова: дидактика, дидактическая последовательность, английский как иностранный, начальная школа.*

# TEXNIK UNIVERSITET TALABLARI UCHUN INGLIZ TILINI O‘QITISH DIDAKTIK JARAYONI DIAGNOSTIKASI.

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*ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o'qitishning didaktik ketma-ketligini loyihalash, qo'llash va baholashga qaratilgan harakat-tadqiqot loyihasi haqida xabar berilgan. Maqolada kontekst, tadqiqotni asoslagan sabablar, nazariy ta'minot, metodologiya va natijalar tavsiflovchi statistik ma'lumotlar orqali tahlil qilingan. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, didaktik taklif o'qituvchi uchun qulay, o'quvchilar uchun tushunarli va og'zaki nutqqa urg'u berilgani uchun o'quvchilarning bilim darajasiga mos keladi. Didaktik material o'qituvchilarning o'quv ishlarining tezligiga mos kelishi va o'qituvchi va talabalarning haqiqati bilan chambarchas bog'liq bo'lishi kerak degan xulosaga keldi.*

*Kalit so'zlar: Didaktika, didaktik ketma-ketlik, ingliz tili chet tili sifatida, boshlang'ich maktab.*

Development of Didactic Materials for EFL Curriculum, syllabus, didactic unit, and lesson plan are other concepts supporting the design of DM for EFL. The set of criteria, study plans, programs, methodologies, and processes that contribute to the integral formation and the construction of cultural, national, regional, and local identity, including the human, academic, and physical resources necessary to put into practice the educative policies and to carry out the institutional education project. (p. 23)1. In this definition, curriculum is not only the set of contents, methodologies, and teaching principles and goals, but also the whole educative component that constitutes the academic process. Another concept that shows this close relation between curriculum and its influence on the overall educative practices is Braslavsky's (2005). She linked curriculum to the educational foundations, contents, processes, and outcomes, implying permanent connections between the goals of education and everyday learning experiences, their pacing in relation to the amount of time available for classroom learning experiences, characteristics of teaching institutions in relation to their methods, resources for learning and teaching, evaluation, and teachers' profiles. Braslavsky (2005) centers her concept on the relationship of educative philosophy, contents, and sequence of the study plans with the particular contexts where the pedagogical practices are carried out, all of them in service of a specific approach and method to be adopted in the teaching process. The difference between Braslavsky's (2005) concept and the one in the Colombian General Education Law (MEN, 1994) is that the former creates or establishes distance regarding the relation between education and cultural identity, and does not list the resources that may comprise a curriculum (human, academic, and material).

The concept of the Colombian General Education Law lists these elements and considers them to be important to develop the national identity. Thus, this research fostered the definition of the Ministry of National Education for its breadth and elements related to the development of the educative process. In the design proposed here, syllabus, didactic unit, and lesson plan are understood as elements of the curriculum, the syllabus containing didactic units and these comprising lesson plans. In turn, syllabus is the process of specifying and ordering the contents of a course, which follows the curriculum that involves the philosophy, purposes, design, and implementation of the entire educative program (Graves, 1996). For White (1988), syllabus refers to the contents or topics that define the curriculum. Dubin and Olshtain (1997) propose that syllabus is a common place where the curriculum philosophy has the chance to move into more detail in a progressive way, arriving at the specific objectives on the operational levels of

teaching. Graves (1996), White (1988), and Dubin and Olshtain (1997) share the conception of the syllabus as the ordered way teachers present their course contents following a precise methodological approach in terms of detailed objectives and class activities. In other words, syllabus is the second step in the progression of developing DM, curriculum being the first. Syllabus materializes the how-to-do, and how-to-carry-out a particular perspective about language education. Third in the scale of development of DM for EFL is the concept of the didactic unit.

The didactic unit is the set of teaching and learning units of a syllabus, every single topic that develops a same content (Matencio, 2009). For Antúnez (1993), a didactic unit is the intervention of all the elements that affect the teaching-learning process with an inner methodological coherence and a determined period. A didactic unit organizes the processes of language learning and provides teachers with a tool to guide their methodology and to focus their efforts on an aim towards a feasible and measurable goal in a clear frame of time (Antúnez, 1993; Matencio, 2009). This is the perspective here adopted for didactic unit: the set of inner time-and-content divisions of a syllabus, which point at a precise teaching objective and help to make real what teachers have in mind to teach. The last concept supporting the design of the DS is lesson plan. Bailey and Nunan (1996) compare a lesson plan to a map where teachers describe what they expect from a lesson. A lesson is understood in this article as a unit of instruction shorter than a didactic or thematic unit, a small thematic/didactic unit corresponding to a short period of time—usually one or two hours—in which one single lesson or class occurs. This lesson plan is commonly composed of elements that can be controlled by the teacher; they include the content and sequence of information to be developed, the frequency and time for the activities, the materials to be used, and, most important, the students' quality and quantity of participation, especially in the case of a student-centered curriculum. This research assumed the concept of lesson plan as the DM design element closest to the classroom reality. A lesson plan embeds the class activities and what teachers plan to do with their students following a brief, one-single-session unit. Lesson plans go framed within a syllabus, which is part of a curriculum that guides the general academic process. While the curriculum belongs to the general realm of the educational philosophy, and the syllabus fits into the particular sphere of the institutional educational organization, the lesson plan is the teacher's materialization of what he or she thinks about what to teach, how to teach, and when to teach. A lesson plan gives the order and the aim to keep in every class or lesson. In sum, this proposal was supported by theoretical categories which work in function of two major aspects: didactics of EFL teaching, and EFL materials development. During the design stage (seven months), a DS consisting of three didactic units was designed. In light of some theoretical approaches in language didactics and second language acquisition (SLA), the DM was developed taking into account the learners' and teacher's needs, observations, talks with the teacher and the students, and journaling. During the application stage (three months) continuous evaluation was done through observation and journaling of the experiences in the classroom. Evaluation led to continuous readjustment of the proposal. To evaluate the application of the proposal, the researchers collected information regarding the students' advances, their performance in the activities and workshops, and the impact of the didactic elements used in the lessons. Then, a test (oral and written comprehension and oral production) was applied. The results were analyzed in

terms of the impact of the proposal on the students' learning. The DS consisted of three fundamental stages to teach EFL to elementary level learners: input, activities, and interaction. The structure of the lessons comprised three stages: First, the students received input (examples and explanations) about the use of some communicative functions in their daily life; then, songs were used to follow the topics, communicative functions, vocabulary, and structures and recall the students' background knowledge. The songs were complemented with dynamic activities of speaking in which the students had to interact using the structures and the key elements studied in classroom. Second, listening activities, total physical response (TPR) exercises, and oral examples with visual aids such as flashcards and memory cards were used. This stage began with the implementation of activities related to the new vocabulary and it was then applied in communicative situations through role plays. After that, the teacher told a story and invited the students to comment and answer questions about what they had just listened. In addition, role play and speaking exercises were carried out. During the third part of the lesson, didactic games were used as a judic way to improve the input the students had just received; also, to reinforce it, they interacted in communicative situations to get the necessary functions, expressions, vocabulary, and pronunciation according to their level. There was an application workshop at the end of each lesson. The units dealt with communicative situations that offered the opportunity to study the topics in terms of communicative competences, structures, and vocabulary to be worked through songs, examples, oral exercises, and application workshops in class. According to the participants, the use of the DS played a relevant role in the learning process. The results showed that the didactic units were comprehensible and could be completed in the class time. This allowed the students to do their activities and to reflect with the teacher's help on their own context out of the university.

To sum up, the results demonstrated that the proposed DM accomplished its purpose by fulfilling the design requisites because the activities were comprehensible, they could be totally developed during the classes, and they were also at the level of the students' linguistic and cognitive development. As proof, most of the students accomplished the workshops understanding what they were asked to do, they also did it in the time established by the teacher, and they developed the exercises correctly. It was also evidenced that the students did their work with enthusiasm and interest, showing curiosity during all the activities and questioning constantly. In this aspect, the most important element was the development and use of the foreign language outside the classroom.

This study yielded a series of conclusions divided into three main axes corresponding to its objectives: pedagogical impact on the teacher and her students, assessment of the DM, and students' performance. First, the pedagogical impact that this proposal had on the teacher and her students can be seen in what they stated about the experience. The teacher supplemented her materials, reinforced the school curricular bases for EFL, and recognized the need of aligning the teaching to the particular social and pedagogical conditions of the group. The researcher reported increased comprehension and interest, corroborated by the time they took to advance and their accurate development of the activities. Second, it was reaffirmed that, to be effective, curriculum and materials development must take into consideration the particularities of the specific learning and teaching situations, like the linguistic and communicative development of

the students, their ease to be understood—written material, instructions, and activities—controllability by the teacher, possibility of collective or individual usage, adaptability to the context, openness to modification, and promotion of intertextual work with other DM (A. Guerrero, 2009).

Additionally, the students' performance was improved: their oral skills bettered and the final assessment showed that most students reached the objectives sought. In conclusion, this proposal fulfilled its purposes and was useful for the public school where it was carried out, supplying a DS to teach EFL in a first grade and providing curricular guidelines with pedagogic and didactic bases that can be extrapolated to other grades. It had a positive impact on students—as a tool to learn English—and on their teacher—as a help to teach according to current linguistics policies and EFL didactic trends—which allowed them to use the communicative approach to teaching language. Finally, it is necessary to acknowledge some limitations of this study. The causes of the failure of some students in the application of the proposal need to be traced further. Three major causes are hypothesized in connection to failure: lack of help at home with their school activities, poor time-on-task at school, and lack of contact with the target language outside of the school. These factors contribute to a negative result in the students' general academic performance. Furthermore, the relations among ease of use, time invested, and task completion remain to be studied.

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