Applying task-based approach inside the English class with a group of 4th graders

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A Dios por estar siempre en cada uno de los pasos que he dado en mi vida.

A mi madre Luz Celia Basto Murcia, por quererme, empujarme, arriarme, aconsejarme consentirme y hacerme quien soy.

A mi profesora Astrid Ramírez, quien me apoyó en el desarrollo de esta pasantía y siempre me alentó y orientó a llevarla a feliz término.
Abstract

This internship took place in Heladia Mejia IED. The main point of this intervention was to support the English classes and to build English skills according to the level in which students were (4th grade). Along the intervention, I found that the emotional component in these kids was a major subject regarding the English language learning/teaching as they had a serious amount of misconceptions and bias due to feeble experiences they had with previous English teachers inside the classroom. This misconception presented a challenge in the implementation of the internship, however, love, understanding, resolve and a clear set of rules proved useful making little but massively meaningful changes in their insight regarding learning, and more determining regarding the learning of English. Happy kids make happy classes, happy classes account for a safe learning environment, reduce behavior issues and build interest for learning.
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Introduction.

This document has an objective to present the results from the internship intervention made at Heladia Mejia I.E.D as requirement to opt for the title of Bachelor of Foreign Languages with Emphasis in English. Along the duration of the internship (390 hours) I firmly executed all my tasks and assignments under the parameters established by Distrital University and with all the policies established and enforced by the Heladia Mejia I.E.D and the Distrital Secretary of Education.

In this document, the objectives, goals and achievements executed will be presented in a precise manner according to the activities, workshops and evaluations implemented at the Heladia Mejia I.E.D with the objective to achieve and fulfill the work plan approved by my tutor Professor Astrid Ramirez Valencia and the academic tutor 4th grade Teacher Angelica Maria

This document will describe how was the implementation carried out, the issues faced along the internship and the resolution given to each of them as well as the outcome achieved. It will also present the theory that was taken into consideration for the implementation of this internship, as well as the conclusions reached and recommendations for further students who might have the chance to work at Heladia Mejia I.E.D

I have to say that this experience was greatly enriching as working with this group of kids gave me a different insight and built a different approach in terms of teaching primary kids, which I was reluctant to, as most of my teaching experience has been built around teaching teens, the insight I have now regarding teaching kids has been broaden, thanks to this internship.
Objectives

Main objective

- To build a stronger learning process in the English classes using the Task-Based approach.

Secondary objectives

- To use the task-based approach and describe the process carried out with the 4th graders to help them set the basis to a stronger learning process.

Goals

- Change the students’ perception of the English class by showing them that English is fun and creating a safe environment where they want to work towards their learning.
Theoretical framework

This internship has been enclosed within the parameters of the task-based approach, as I considered it allowed students to grasp easier the contents of what was taught, also allowed them to practice within the classroom and gave them the opportunity to link the knowledge with their daily lives.

To continue I will support my theoretical framework under the definition that, Nunan provides of the main concept that must be considered, which is the concept of task.

David Nunan in his book starts by telling apart the different types of tasks, drawing a basic distinction between what he calls real-world or target tasks, and pedagogical tasks: target tasks, as the name implies, refer to uses of language in the world beyond the classroom; pedagogical tasks are those that occur in the classroom. (Nunan 2004; 11) I implemented the pedagogical tasks as they aimed for what I wanted to achieve, as the students needed to start getting used to the language in a safe environment, that in my opinion can only be provided by the school.

Long (1985: 89 Cited by Nunan; 2004) frames his approach to task-based language teaching in terms of target tasks, arguing that a target task is:

*A piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward. Thus, examples of tasks include painting a fence, dressing a child, filling out a form, buying a pair of shoes, making an airline reservation, borrowing a library book, taking a driving test, typing a letter,*
weighing a patient, sorting letters, making a hotel reservation, writing a cheque, finding a street
destination and helping someone across a road. In other words, by ‘task’ is meant the hundred
and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play and in between.

So basically, a task according to this, is to be able to perform in a situation having the tools and
the knowledge to do it. However, Nunan goes further when defining tasks inside the classroom,
or pedagogical tasks as he defines those:

“When they are transformed from the real world to the classroom, tasks become pedagogical in
nature”.

Here is a definition of a pedagogical task:

“. . . a pedagogical task is any classroom activity which asks you to rehearse real world tasks. In
consequence, a task must let you integrate all language skills, and it must contain micro and
macro language functions that help you negotiate meaning. While language exercises and
communicative activities provide practice with controlled linguistic elements, in pedagogical
tasks there is an outcome that involves making the right choices to get a product. These tasks are
also composed of elements that help you create language. In addition, they must promote the use
of rehearsal tasks and activation tasks (rehearsal rationale, activation rationale)” (Rivera,
2015)
This definition provides a better perspective of the author’s pedagogical perspective. Tasks definition points towards what the students will be able to do in the classroom rather than outside of it, emphasizing the importance of having a non-linguistic outcome.

Breen (1987: 23 Cited by Nunan; 2004) offers another definition of a pedagogical task:

“... any structured language learning endeavor which has an objective, appropriate content, a specified working procedure, and a range of outcomes for those who undertake the task. ‘Task’ is therefore assumed to refer to a range of work plans, which have the overall purposes of facilitating language learning – from the simple and brief exercise type, to more complex and lengthy activities such as group problem solving or simulations and decision-making.”

I used this definition inside this theoretical framework because it sums up the type of work done inside the classroom and the goals that were set for the students at the beginning of the internship, to offer the students the possibility to have a chance at English by executing simple tasks such as filling in the blanks, guiding them towards more complex activities as creating short conversations, and/or answering random questions. I believe that each task provided within the classroom and with the support of the workshops guided them one step closer towards the achievement.

The task-based approach aims at providing opportunities for learners to experiment with and explore both spoken and written language through learning activities, which are designed to engage learners in the authentic, practical and functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Learners are encouraged to activate and use whatever language they already have in
the process of completing a task. The use of tasks will also give a clear and purposeful context for the teaching and learning of grammar and other language features as well as skills. … All in all, the role of task-based learning is to stimulate a natural desire in learners to improve their language competence by challenging them to complete meaningful tasks. (CDC 1999: 41)

Tasks in this internship work were divided into several steps following these criteria:

“Task designers, they suggest, should take into consideration the following elements:

- Content: the subject matter to be taught.
- Materials: the things that learners can observe/manipulate.
- Activities: the things that learners and teachers will be doing during a lesson.
- Goals: the teachers’ general aims for the task (these are much more general and vague than objectives).
- Students: their abilities, needs and interests are important.
- Social community: the class as a whole and its sense of ‘groupness’. (Shavelson and Stern 1981: 478 Cited by Nunan 2004)”

First thing to do was to provide students with a meaningful input of the content by means of using materials such as: whiteboard, markers, flashcards, experiences, pictures, internet colors, papers, etc. that they would be able to use accordingly, when provided with activities such as the workshops created for them. Once done this, the students were provided and informed about the tasks and the purpose this tasks had for them and their learning process, tasks were written on top
of the board, so they were aware of the objective of the class, and the goal of the task working towards the achievement of the objective, each class they knew what tasks were going to be assigned for them and the purpose of those tasks, students were also informed that they could perform their tasks, when necessary, by asking for assistance from one of their peers, as the whole group was able to provide support when needed, stating very clear that support and having someone do my job are two completely different things.

There are many different types of tasks to be used within the classroom, taking into consideration what Nunan wrote in his book and the different sources and types of tasks shown and explained there, I considered that the most suitable ones in regards the group’s characteristics were these ones:

**Task types**

There are as many different task types as there have been people who have written on task-based language teaching. In this section, I will neither explain them all, nor do have the space to deal with them, and will recur to the explanations given by Nunan in his book (2004) which I took as support for this framework.

“One of the earliest curricular applications of Task Based Language Teaching to appear in the literature was the Bangalore project. In this project, three principal task types are used: information gap, reasoning gap, and opinion gap.
1. Information-gap activity, which involves a transfer of given information from one person to another – or from one form to another, or from one place to another – generally calling for the decoding or encoding of information from or into language. One example is pair work in which each member of the pair has a part of the total information (for example an incomplete picture) and attempts to convey it verbally to the other. Another example is completing a tabular representation with information available in a given piece of text. The activity often involves selection of relevant information as well, and learners may have to meet criteria of completeness and correctness in making the transfer.

This was allowed inside the classroom and framed within the classroom rules as the students were able to share information regarding the tasks assigned, so they were able to complete successfully and correctly the tasks assigned, pointing out that the goal of completing the tasks was learning something new from them.

2. Reasoning-gap activity: which involves deriving some new information from given information through processes of inference, deduction, practical reasoning, or a perception of relationships or patterns. One example is working out a teacher’s timetable based on given class timetables. Another is deciding what course of action is best (for example cheapest or quickest) for a given purpose and within given constraints. The activity necessarily involves comprehending and conveying information, as an information-gap activity, but the information to be conveyed is not identical with that initially comprehended. There is a piece of reasoning which connects the two.
3. Opinion-gap activity, which involves identifying and articulating a personal preference, feeling, or attitude in response to a given situation. One example is story completion; another is taking part in the discussion of a social issue. The activity may involve using factual information and formulating arguments to justify one’s opinion, but there is no objective procedure for demonstrating outcomes as right or wrong, and no reason to expect the same outcome from different individuals or on different occasions. (Prabhu 1987: 46–7)"

A different set of tasks and activity types was proposed by Pattinson (1987; Cited by Nunan, 2004), who sets out seven task and activity types:

**Questions and answers:**

These activities are based on the notion of creating an information gap by letting learners make a personal and secret choice from a list of language items which all fit into a given frame (e.g. the location of a person or object). The aim is for learners to discover their classmates’ secret choice. This activity can be used to practice almost any structure, function or notion.

**Dialogues and role-plays**

These can be wholly scripted or wholly improvised. However, ‘If learners are given some choice of what to say, and if there is a clear aim to be achieved by what they say in their role plays, they may participate more willingly and learn more thoroughly than when they are told to simply repeat a given dialogue in pairs’. Matching activities Here, the task for the learner is to
recognize matching items, or to complete pairs or sets. 'Bingo', 'Happy families' and 'Split dialogues' (where learners match given phrases) are examples of matching activities.

Communication strategies:

These are activities designed to encourage learners to practice communication strategies such as paraphrasing, borrowing or inventing words, using gesture, asking for feedback and simplifying.

Pictures and picture stories:

Many communication activities can be stimulated through the use of pictures (e.g. spot the difference, memory test, sequencing pictures to tell a story).

Puzzles and problems:

Once again, there are many different types of puzzles and problems. These require learners to ‘make guesses, draw on their general knowledge and personal experience, use their imagination and test their powers of logical reasoning’.

Discussions and decisions:

These require the learner to collect and share information to reach a decision (e.g. to decide which items from a list are essential to have on a desert island).
More recently, Richards (2001: 162) has proposed the following typology of pedagogical tasks:

- **Jigsaw tasks**: these tasks involve learners in combining different pieces of information to form a whole (e.g. three individuals or groups may have three different parts of a story and have to piece the story together).

- **Information-gap tasks**: these are tasks in which one student or group of students has one set of information and another student or group has a complementary set of information. They must negotiate and find out what the other party’s information is in order to complete an activity.

- **Problem-solving tasks**: Students are given a problem and a set of information. They must arrive at a solution to the problem. There is generally a single resolution of the outcome.

- **Decision-making tasks**: Students are given a problem for which there are several possible outcomes and they must choose one through negotiation and discussion.

- **Opinion exchange tasks**: Learners engage in discussion and exchange of ideas. They do not need to reach agreement.

All these typologies are based on an analysis of communicative language use. An alternative method of classifying tasks is to group them according to the strategies underpinning them.
The following scheme proposes five different strategy types: cognitive, interpersonal, linguistic, affective and creative.

**COGNITIVE**

Classifying: Putting things that are similar together in groups Example: Study a list of names and classify them into male and female

Predicting: Predicting what is to come in the learning process Example: Look at the unit title and objectives and predict what will be learned

Inducing: Looking for patterns and regularities Example: Study a conversation and discover the rule for forming the simple past tense

Taking notes: Writing down the important information in a text in your own words

Concept mapping: Showing the main ideas in a text in the form of a map

Inferencing: Using what you know to learn something new

Discriminating: Distinguishing between the main idea and supporting information

Diagramming: Using information from a text to label a diagram
INTERPERSONAL

Co-operating: Sharing ideas and learning with other students Example: Work in small groups to read a text and complete a table

Role Playing: Pretending to be somebody else and using the language for the situation you are in. Example: You are a reporter. Use the information from the reading to interview the writer

LINGUISTIC

Conversational: Using expressions to start conversations and PATTERNS keep them going Example: Match formulaic expressions to situations

Practicing: Doing controlled exercises to improve knowledge and skills Example: Listen to a conversation, and practice it with a partner

Using context: Using the surrounding context to guess the meaning of an unknown word, phrase, or concept

Summarizing: Picking out and presenting the major points in a text in summary form

Selective Listening: Listening for key information without trying to understand every word. Example: Listen to a conversation and identify the number of speakers
Skimming: Reading quickly to get a general idea of a text. Example: Decide if a text is a newspaper article, a letter or an advertisement

AFFECTIVE

Personalizing: Learners share their own opinions, feelings and ideas about a subject. Example: Read a letter from a friend in need and give advice

Self – evaluating: Thinking about how well you did on a learning task, and rating yourself on a scale

Reflecting: Thinking about ways you learn best

CREATIVE

Brainstorming: Thinking of as many new words and ideas as one can Example: Work in a group and think of as many occupations as you can (Nunan 1999)

One of the articles I consulted offered a fresher view in regards of the types of tasks which I wanted to review here; Fatemeh, Alireza and Zohreh (2014) propose the following:
“A task-based lesson goes far beyond a single task and incorporates a sequence of several overlapping tasks that back up one another. These fall into several classifications. From one perspective, tasks can be real world tasks and pedagogical tasks. In a broader sense tasks, according to (Richards and Rogers, 2002: 234) can be:

1. One way or two-way tasks in terms of exchange of information and ideas
2. Convergent or divergent tasks based on similarity of the final goal or goals
3. Single or multiple possible outcomes
4. Concrete or abstract language based on the use of concrete or abstract language
5. Simple or complex processing based on cognitive processing
6. Simple or complex language
7. Reaching based or not reality based”

From a more limited and traditional perspective, classes can be introduced in the form of listing, ordering and sorting, comparing, problem solving, sharing personal experiences and creative tasks. These include jigsaw tasks, information gap, tasks, opinion exchange tasks, decision making task and problem-solving tasks. Tasks can be categorized based on skill, whether it requires speaking, writing, reading or listening. Text genre is another issue of importance. Also, tasks vary according to the level of information processing which they demand. Yet another factor can be the interlocutors (participants in the task). Theme and topic of the task are other factors. Finally, contextual support which is provided by the class materials as well as linguistic features of the tasks must be taken into consideration.
Willis introduces three levels of representing real world. These can be based on level of meaning in which meaning is produced based on its use in real world. In the second level, which is called “level of discourse” learners are supposed to recognize the discourse and act according.

Finally, in “level of activity” learners take part in activities which represent real life and call for exploiting whatever language they know. These can be looked upon from a different angle too.” “Target tasks” which reproduce discourse activities which are normally observed in daily interactions. The other group is ”facilitating tasks” which pave the way for the former group i.e. “target tasks”. Real world tasks can be in several ways. For instance, in EAP approached (English for academic purposes) and ESP (English for specific purposes) learners are equipped with what they will encounter in real world together with the skills they need in real situations. These two can greatly benefit from jigsaw tasks, role play activities and prediction tasks (for EAP reading).

Another perspective can be tasks which are centered on everyday English. These can include conversation, storytelling, discussion, etc. learners’ attention must be raised regarding the link between the task and real-life activity. However, learners should be given the choice for the topics of discussions. Another case for this perspective can be electronic communication in writing and reading, in a sequence of mails. However, some other tasks, though real world in nature is that they sometimes involve real world meaning and discourse, can be called “artificial tasks” because they do not reflect the real world in which learners want to use English. For instance, describing or recalling objects or asking partner to clarify what has been said are used as this type. Like real world tasks, pedagogic tasks are essential to any TBLT classroom. These
are naturally derived from and designed and sequenced to lead to target tasks. These tasks are graded according to their level of complexity”.

According to all these tasks types definitions, the ones I chose to go with were the ones proposed by Pattinson (1987) and revised by Nunan (2004). I selected them from the literature in order to create the workshops for the students, because these offered several types of activities that were enclosed on what the students wanted from the English class, as this activities and tasks were easy to create and to transform into something fun and dynamic, these tasks types also allowed me to aim and reach the goals planned for every topic I worked with them. However, this does not mean that I discarded de facto, the proposals made by Fatemeh, Alireza and Zohreh, or the proposal listed by Richards, as all these proposals have lots of things in common, still I felt that even though Pattinson’s is the oldest, it guided me better to achieve what I intended with this group of kids and the needs they had.

The roles within the classroom

At the very beginning of this internship, the roles within the classroom were very traditionalistic, as the problems that the class experienced with the previous teachers did represent an issue; students were used to sit and listen to the teacher, and by the nature of the group, this was not the best approach that could be used to work with them, they were full of energy and had short attention span due to the size of the class (35 students from the beginning of the internship, until the break week in October, 31 students after that.) I will provide further insight on this topic after the theoretical framework.
To make clear what the roles within the classroom were, I will refer to the literature I read as support.

“Teacher and learner roles

‘Role’ refers to the part that learners and teachers are expected to play in carrying out learning tasks as well as the social and interpersonal relationships between the participants. In this section, I will look first at learner roles and then at teacher roles.

In their comprehensive analysis of approaches and methods in language teaching, Richards and Rodgers (1986) devote considerable attention to learner and teacher roles. They point out that a method (and, in our case, a task) will reflect assumptions about the contributions that learners can make to the learning process. The following definitions are based on the analysis carried out by Richards and Rodgers.

It is not necessary to have a detailed knowledge of these various methods to see the rich array of learner roles that they entail. These include:

- The learner is a passive recipient of outside stimuli
- The learner is an interactor and negotiator who is capable of giving as well as taking
- The learner is a listener and performer who has little control over the content of learning
- The learner is involved in a process of personal growth
- The learner is involved in a social activity, and the social and interpersonal roles of the learner cannot be divorced from psychological learning processes
• The learner must take responsibility for his or her own learning, developing autonomy and skills in learning-how-to-learn. (Nunan, 2004; 64,65)

According to this definition given by Nunan (2004), the role of the students at the beginning of the implementation was passive, as the characteristic of the class, in size and level of language pointed them towards this type of role, I tried on my own to guide them towards the natural approach, however the difficulties they experienced due to the lack of the sufficient language, attention span, size of the class and previous experiences, moved them towards a passive role at the beginning of the class, which in time changed towards a more active role, where they were starting to understand the role they had in their own process, empowering them, and motivating them inside the class.

The role I assumed as English teacher was basically enclosed in these three characteristics as defined by Breen and Candlin (1980, then revised by Nunan 2004) “the teacher has three main roles in the communicative classroom. The first is to act as a facilitator of the communicative process, the second is to act as a participant, and the third is to act as an observer and learner.”

From the get-go I had a role that allowed students little interaction, this was in part provoked from the students’ previous experiences, as they were not willing to open and participate, construct and learn, I had to gain their trust, so they were progressively becoming more open to the class and the activities I proposed. Once I felt that their approach towards the class was more open and participative, I assumed a less active role inside the class, still I provided the students with all the input that they required to perform the tasks given, sometimes I struggled as the class
had a very short attention span, however I got to know them and found that they were easily attracted to images, body language and jokes. (yes, jokes within the classroom that gave them something to fix on their minds and remember the concepts that I was teaching them).

By the end of the internship I experienced a change in the role I had assumed at the beginning, as the students were more active in their learning process, I still had to guide them and provide them the input necessary, but they were a lot more empowered in the development of the tasks, I felt like they were more independent than at the beginning, they still had a way to go, but changes were experienced in the position They and I assumed inside the classroom.

**Evaluation process.**

“Task-based language teaching presents challenges in all areas of the curriculum. This is particularly so in the area of assessment. Traditional, language-based curricula provide a convenient basis for the assessment specialist whose point of departure in developing assessment instruments is to provide a representative sampling of the grammar, vocabulary and phonological features of the language. These are then assessed, usually through some indirect form of assessment. While it is always possible to continue using traditional methods to assess students who are learning through task-based teaching, this violates a key curriculum principle, which is that assessment should reflect what has been taught. Aligning this principle with TBLT makes direct assessment inevitable.

(Willis and Willis, 2001).”
I consider of a massive importance to establish a difference between the concepts of evaluation and assessment, I strongly believe that evaluation is the part of the process where teachers get to “evaluate” the outcome of the process that has been carried out, however this cannot be untied from the assessment, as this is the process us teachers must do to ensure that students achieve the goals proposed for them, assessment and evaluation in my concept are two terms, that go along inside the classroom, and provide the students with the tools to identify and understand the progress that is being made in their learning.

For Nunan, ‘evaluation’ is: a broad, general set of procedures involving the collection and interpretation of information for curricular decision-making. This information will generally include data on what learners can and cannot do in the language. Procedures for collecting this learner data are referred to as ‘assessment’. Assessment is thus a subset of evaluation. Testing is one form of assessment. It includes the more formal collection of data on learner performance. In other words, assessment subsumes testing and is, in turn, subsumed by evaluation. (Nunan, 2004)

Evaluation can be done at any moment in the process, and it gives you the possibility of evaluating any aspect of the curriculum. Always when planning the classes based on the curriculum, teachers must consider the tools provided by the curriculum to assess and evaluate the steps and collect data (grades)

According to Nunan (2004) Evaluation can take place at any time, and any aspect of the curriculum can be evaluated. At the beginning of the curriculum planning process, for example,
the curriculum developer might design a needs assessment instrument for collecting data. This instrument could be evaluated by, for instance, subjecting it to peer review.

These definitions given by Nunan, go hand in hand with my own definition of evaluation and assessment, I still differ with the fact that students can be evaluated at any moment, as the evaluation as I perceive it, has to be the point where students prove themselves what they have learnt, and show the others what they have achieved along the process. Assessment must be the tool to provide feedback for both parties, as the through the continuous measuring and review, teachers and students are able to provide each other, insight on how the process is going, so when it comes to evaluation, the results are as expected.

Gronlund (1981) according to Nunan (2004), argues that assessment measures need to satisfy three types of validity. These are content validity, criterion-related validity and construct validity, which are summarized in the following table. Each presents challenge to the assessment of learner performance in task-based language teaching.

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<th>Type</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<td>Content Validity</td>
<td>How well does the sample of tasks represent the domain of tasks to be measured?</td>
<td>Compare the test tasks to the test specifications describing the task domain into consideration</td>
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Criterion related validity

How well does test performance predict future performance or estimate current performance on some valued measures other than the test itself?

Compare test scores with another measure of performance obtained later (for prediction) or with another measure of performance obtained concurrently (for estimating present status)

Construct validity

How can test performance be described psychologically?

Experimentally determine what factors influence score on the test

The evaluation process consisted basically of the achievement of the goals established at the beginning of every session, which were assessed via role plays, completion of the workshops, random questions session, and following the goal achievement indicators established in every workshop. Students received feedback every time I detected they were having progresses or experiencing difficulties to ensure that they had the tools to continue making progresses or to be able to overcome the difficulties they were having in their learning process.

I followed Gronlund’s criteria for validity of the assessment as much as possible, connecting and evaluating students’ performance in the four skills, in a way they and I had the possibility to see more accurately the parts in which they were performing flawlessly, and the parts were
improvements had to be made. They were surprised, as they were not used to this type of evaluation that gave them the possibility to work on mistakes and errors and improve them.

I evaluated them monthly and assessed them weekly, however due to time issues and school requirements there were 3 weeks in which I could not assess them properly and the evaluation experienced issues. Still I assessed all the classes we had, so they felt the process they were doing was not being pointless, and that nothing was left to waste, that this was a serious process and that the implementation, and their effort had a real impact in their learning. They had the chance to express their feelings towards the class, and in the survey I ran later, they noticed that they were having improvements towards the learning of the language.

**Intervention analysis.**

During the time I worked with this group of kids (4th graders) they were open to have me as their English teacher, as their previous experiences with English teachers in the school were bad (as they and their head room teacher told me), they did not see the English class as something meaningful and useful, because as they told me straightaway from the beginning they were used to fill worksheets, to draw, and to repeat from dawn to dusk the same topics.

I tried to connect with them from day one, being nice and approachable, but firm and straightforward, trying to win their confidence without knowing the background, and the previous experiences they had, I found kids that were reluctant and did not wanted to be part of the class, kids that rejected the fact that I was speaking to them in English at all times, and also
kids that wanted to test my patience and endurance, but along the process and as the classes were developing, they began to engage in the tasks as they found the classes interesting and safe, kids were becoming more and more engaged in class, task based activities proved good enough for them as having them busy with a goal gave them motivation towards the class, participation rose considerably, still there were some kids who were thinking of me as a “bad experience to be” because they continued to argue that all English teachers are mean and will always be.

I believe that was the biggest challenge I had with them, since they had behavior issues and bad experiences with previous teachers, engaging them with the class and the purpose of it, was challenging, however I consider that I achieved the objective that was set for every week, as the participation, engagement and use of the language provided grew as they perceived in me, in my performance as teacher and in the classroom a safe place to study.

There needs to be a safe classroom environment, so that students sense they can speak their minds. However, safety is not the only consideration. When students move out of their comfort zone to what Pat Griffin refers to as "our learning edge," they can expand understanding, take in a new perspective, and stretch their awareness. Students' internal reactions to class activities and classmates—feelings of annoyance, anger, anxiety, surprise, confusion, or defensiveness—may be signs that their way of thinking about things is being challenged. (Griffin, 1997 as found in https://www.ode.state.or.us/opportunities/grants/nclb/title_iii/11creating-a-safe-and-engaging-classroom-climate.pdf Date not available.)

I ran a couple surveys that account for that, I decided to run them as the class was struggling at the beginning, like I have said before, and I wanted to know what I could do to improve the
quality of the class for everyone, which seemed a hard task to accomplish for a class with 35 students.

The questions I asked them are in the following charts:

Question #1

![Chart showing responses to the question: Do you like the new English class?](chart.png)

When asked this question students shown their reluctance to the English class, as they were highly impacted from their previous experiences, which according to them, were bad, teachers who lacked the patience to deal with them, teachers who were not prepared to work with the students, teachers who had verbal issues when addressing the students, therefore the students were forewarned about what to expect from an English teacher, however this warning they had was completely biased due to the wrongdoings and bad experiences they had regarding English classes and English teachers. Well Prepared teachers or experienced teachers know that the way we behave in our classroom will reflect in our students and in the way they learn, express, behave and speak to us and to each other, “teachers’ attitudes can help or hurt student
motivation, achievement and well-being. Recent studies found that negative teacher attitudes can impair academic achievement and increase students' psychological disorders and physical symptoms of stress. Teachers who use humiliation or sarcasm can leave a child feeling belittled. Discipline by fear and intimidation can be harmful to the student's future success. Also, teachers who are harsh in their display of authority or are indifferent towards their students or lessons can leave a lingering feeling of negativity with the student. (Marroquin, 2018)

These questions were asked during the second week, I asked them to raise their hands only if they considered that their answer was yes, and what I found was that they were still frustrated from the previous experiences they had, and this was badly reflecting over the performance in the classes, as well as the attention they were giving to those. Negative teacher attitudes can also damage students’ psychological well-being. According to a 2001 study by Florin Sava, published in the International Journal for Teaching and Teacher Education, teachers’ use of humiliation, fear and intimidation can cause students to develop habit disorders, shyness, withdrawal and anxiety. Also reviewing documents, magazines and thesis works, I was able to find that this was beyond the mere understanding of a bad experience, because “the pupils saw negatively perceived teachers as a source of their own demotivation and reported developing negative attitudes towards the particular subject taught by the teacher. Additionally, psychosomatic complaints due to a particular teacher are strongly related to pupils’ perceptions of their teachers” (Sava, 2001) This meant that I was not only dealing with the fact of teaching them English and engaging them into the learning of the topics proposed, but also with the fact that, I was responsible for changing the perception they had towards English teachers. However, up to
this point I had in my favor the activities I had done so far, as the students liked the first two I did with them during the first week, and they were receptive, reluctant but receptive.

Question #2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked this question, as can be seen in the graphic, the class was divided as there were students that were enjoying the activities I was doing with them, moreover, half of the class was still hesitant and reluctant to be open, as they wanted not to have an experience like the ones they already had. My biggest challenge at this point was to change their mindset towards something prone to learn. And the literature review I did suggested that this was not an easy task.
When I considered this question into the survey, I had in mind the idea that the student must feel happy with the environment inside the class, and with what they are doing and feel happy in general terms, “we can foster effective learning and transform the experience of our students every day by harnessing the power of emotions (Young, 2014). this type of comfortability gives them a different point of view and I strongly believe that happiness is an indicator of the safety that students feel inside the classroom, and this safety is fundamental in the field of English language teaching, as it is vital for the students to develop skills in the target language. ”Students often reported that happiness, or positive feelings like enjoyment or fun, supported their schoolwork”(Schiller & Hinton, 2015) It was evident that students were enjoying the approach I was giving the classes, because the answers to this question were very positive, having 27 (77%) students saying that they were feeling happy with the way classes were developing, which was a massive responsibility as I could not let them down with the expectation and the feeling they had, and also I had to work with the remaining 8 students who were still not feeling safe and
totally happy inside the classroom, to meet their expectations and making them feel happy and safe.

Question #4

At this point, so early in the implementation of the internship the results of this question went as expected, as this was only the second week of the implementation and as it had developed, the results were predictable.

Taking that information as starting point, I continued with the input activities following the line of the ones I did on the first week, games, puzzles, colorings and jokes, they around the 5th week I noticed that students had forgotten about their previous considerations regarding the bad experiences and were giving my classes a go, they were a lot more active and engaged in the classes, they wanted to be a part of the task, they wanted to do the activities, due to this I had to prepare more material and plan for longer classes as the kids were so engaged that they were cooperating in order to achieve the tasks easier and faster, to receive recognition and appraisal
from me, I had to make sure that everybody was working to achieve the tasks assigned, and not pretending or even worse, having only a kid doing all the job. I could review and notice that they were being honest about the development of the tasks, because they noticed that I was going to double check all the tasks once completed. I saw this reflected in what Hsu mentioned in her thesis work to which I found a close relationship with what was happening in my classroom: "lots of communication within the groups" and this phenomenon seemed to indicate 'success amongst members' active participation in communication with a strong sense of 'group cohesion.' In order to achieve the desired team outcome, the teacher told her pupils it was required for each to answer her question within the team. In so doing, the sense of "positive interdependence" indeed enhances group outcome based on members' joint efforts rather than individuals acting in” (Hsu, 2007.) This positive interdependence that Hsu mentioned, was proving successful inside the classroom and among the students as they were looking up to each other in order to accomplish the tasks and to receive the appraisal from my part. Still, I had to deal with behavior issues, there were 2 kids that had issues focusing on the task given and were trying to divert the attention from what was being done to whatever they wanted to do, thankfully the homeroom teacher was very supportive in this matter, helping me to keep these kids under control when possible, speaking to their parents and applying the “Manual de Convivencia” when necessary, however this two kids claimed that my classes were not fun and catchy enough for them, they even claimed that I was even worse than the previous teachers. Speaking to the homeroom teacher about these kids and the claims they did, I found out that they were the kids that gave every other teacher a hard time, and in every class, they claimed about the same, as no teacher seemed to be good, fun or attractive to them.
Having this into consideration I tried speaking with them and their parents to see what could be done, to improve their experience inside the classroom, and to solve an issue that was giving me lots of headaches.

After speaking to them and their parents, they told me that they wanted to have a more representative role inside the classroom, to which I assured them that it was possible for that to happen, as long as their behavior and class participation increased in a positive way, so I could justify that role inside the class with the rest of the group. This happened partially, but the students improved considerably their behavior and participation, so I considered giving them roles, as marker holder and board cleaner, according to Wolfe (2006) classroom jobs have the added benefit of giving students important responsibilities and ownership in the classroom, which seemed to fulfill their demands, and by doing this completing my part of the agreement we did when speaking to their parents. Around week 12, I started considering to re-run the survey to find out if there was any progress in relation to the first weeks.

By the time I wanted to re-run the survey I had to face some difficulties in regards to the amount of kids that were going to be asked, as there were 4 kids less than in the first classes, Two of them were retired from the school as their family was from Venezuela and they were looking forward to move to Ecuador (they are siblings), one got badly ill and was hospitalized, I did not have any further information about the causes of his illness, but the kids told me that, He was in a very bad condition, and the last one was expelled for behavior issues. I double checked with my Tutor to see if the survey would be valid or if I had to find a different tool. After discussing it with my tutor, she suggested that these kids should be accounted into the survey as unaccounted, so the data could be valid. Almost all of the remaining kids were completely happy of having
me in their classes and they were expectant for the English class, to the point that there was a day in which I got sick and could not attend the class, and the next day they were complaining because they were ready to have their English class and I never showed up.

After discussing it with my tutor, I decided to run again the same questions I did on week two, I did this survey on week twelve, in order to check on the progresses the classes, the students and I had experienced.

Question #1

The hands raised this time were a lot more positive towards the classes and the teacher, which was shown on the development of the workshops and in the classes, once I asked this question everybody was raising their hands as they felt that the class and the evaluation process were flowing smoothly and the students were happy with the development of the classes I was doing, also it is positive to notice that the behavior issues dropped tremendously inside the English class as the kids were having fun inside them, so they were more focused in the classes and
workshops. At this point it is also important to notice that the behavior issues drop can also be connected to the expelling of this one student I previously spoke about.

Question #2

This question proved that all students were happy and engaged with the tasks that were provided to them in the classes, as I previously talk about, they were excited, absorbed and happy regarding the classes and the task-based approach, the development of the classes, the way I had to deal with them, and the way I connected with them. I was glad that I could make an impact in these kids learning process and lives in such short period of time.

Later while researching for documents to support my internship report, I found that there was a research carried out by Researchers at Research Schools International partnered with administrators, teachers, and students at St Andrew’s Episcopal School and The Center for Transformative Teaching & Learning to study happiness and academic achievement, this
research provide a massive insight into what happiness could do for students inside the classroom, in this research they found that “Students often reported that happiness, or positive feelings like enjoyment or fun, supported their schoolwork…” Also, that according to students’ experiences and sharing they found that “relationships are fundamental to students’ happiness” which was the objective that I had set from the beginning, as I strongly believe that a warm relationship between teacher and students is key to achieve any goals proposed inside the classroom.

Question #3

This question reinforces the results from the previous one, as the kids were tremendously happy with their classes and the way these were developed, also they expressed that they felt highly comfortable having a teacher that was not yelling at them, that was doing actual class, and who was not rude to them, I explained them that, even though that has to be the normal behavior from a teacher every single day, they had done their share by working, collaborating and behaving,
and that if they wanted to never have this type of inconveniences again they must behave inside the classroom, and that even if they did not behave, no teacher was allowed to use rudeness towards them, no matter how mean they could be, emphasizing that their behavior was fundamental to have nice classes.

Question #4

This result however was unexpected. As the other questions shown a different parameter, I was expecting this question to follow that parameter, but that was not achieved. I asked the students that claimed not having learnt anything new, what was the reason they had to say that, some of them claimed to know already all the topics that were supposed to be covered, because their parents send them to English courses outside of the school, some of them (6) mentioned having
been taught the topics covered, in previous years, and some others claimed that they had no skills
development in English, even though their performance inside the classroom was greatly good.
Conclusions

I found that this group of kids had had several bad experiences regarding English teaching and English teachers, which conditioned their position towards the English class and the learning of the language, they were extremely reluctant to participating, to perform and even to behave inside the class. As I mentioned before they were victims of teachers who did not wanted to perform properly, who did not care about them and their learning process.

The role of the teacher here was pretty important as the kids looked up to the person rather than to the class itself. The way I engaged with them was fundamental in the development of the classes and the internship.

For me was a shocking experience at the beginning as I had never had a group of kids so scarred by the previous experiences, so unlucky to have more than one teacher of this kind, so predisposed towards what the next teacher and class could be, it was a really enriching experience in every way I look up to it, as I have never had any experience with primary kids, moreover this kids had taught me more than I expected, I have learnt that the person that stands in front of them, cannot be separated from the teacher, instead they should be fused procuring the greater good, that in this case is the well-being of the kids inside the classroom. This experience also taught me that choosing teaching as your life time occupation has to be something done from the bottom of your heart, has to be an honest choice, and has to be a matter of utmost importance, this kids were so hurt by the teachers that teaching them, had to be moved to the
second place, I felt that it was necessary to recover this kids and to prove them that they are worthy and that they deserve respect.

It was also a learning process for me, I learned lots of things from these kids, from the school, from the environment, from their context, from everything I could find in the class and in the school, everything was a useful tool to improve my practices as a teacher and also it made an impact in my life, as a human being.

Focusing on the Task based approach also allowed me to learn a new way of dealing with my students in the future, this has proven to be useful when the process has to begin from scratch and can be merged with other approaches in order to make an especially meaningful experience for students when learning a foreign language.

With kids of this types of schools (public schools) it is very important to define a set of rules very strict and to follow them at all times, as they are more inclined to have behavior issues, from my experience as teacher in private schools I have noticed that. However, as I got to know them I understood that this is one way of dealing with the behavior issues inside the classroom, connecting with them in various ways, showing them that you are a person that transcends the classroom, helps building a strong respect towards the person and the teacher.
Recommendations for further internships

My recommendations for the students that are willing to go and have an internship there at Heladia Mejia I.E.D are the following.

1. Be as nice as you can, but be twice as strict and demanding, the kids here need to learn about limits and authority and you are essential to that.

2. Be the best you can be at everything, they will look up to you in every way, you will be the model they have to follow, or maybe the model they want to follow.

3. Be always on time, the time in this school is an immensely valuable asset, you need to squeeze every second as much as you can.

4. Be open to listen to the students, they have stories to tell, and they want to be heard, there are stories that may seem harsh and massively sad, still do not allow them to get into your emotionality as they will try to manipulate you to get what they want.

5. Kids here are extremely emotional, so be wary of the language you use with them and the language you use around them.
6. Use the teachers to get support; they will always be willing to give you a helping hand. No matter how small the issue may seem, ask them to support you, their experience is invaluable.

7. Parents are always attentive, get in touch with them at all times, especially if you have to praise their kids, the impact that has inside the families is quite big. Be patient with them and be mindful of the words you use when giving them cold feedback about their kids.

8. Be prepared, have everything ready, readiness is noticeable and if these kids notice that you hesitate even a little, they will take advantage of it.

9. Keep several plans and activities handy you may need them at any time.

10. Plan in advance, bearing in mind the school activities as there are plenty of them, and if you are not prepared for this, your classes and progression will become a mess.
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