

**DISEÑO INSTRUCCIONAL EN EFLT. DESAFÍO E INNOVACIÓN EN LA  
ENSEÑANZA Y APRENDIZAJE DEL INGLÉS.**

**INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN IN EFLT. A CHALLENGE AND AN  
INNOVATION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH.**

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**ABSTRACT**

Many instructional design (ID) methods are elaborated to encompass diverse learning problems in different spheres of human activity. Thus, English Language teaching requires innovations and the conscientious application of ID theories; therefore, it is the purpose of this paper to share important issues on ID, which may lead to the redesign of English classes with the application of action/classroom research, one of its cornerstones, which may bring about progress, improvements and facilitation of English learning. The procedures used were the analysis, interpretation, and design of different scientific materials related with the application of ID principles, teaching/learning strategies, students' profiles, and criteria of CEFR, which may lead to achieving satisfaction of the students' needs in the different educational sub-systems of Ecuador.

**Keywords:** Instructional Design, EFLT

**RESUMEN**

Muchos métodos de diseños instruccionales (DI) son desarrollados como respuesta a los problemas que se generan en las diferentes esferas de la actividad humana, por lo que es objetivo del presente trabajo socializar importantes aspectos del DI en la enseñanza del idioma inglés, lo cual conlleva al rediseño de las clases con la aplicación del método investigación – acción – aula; uno de sus pilares que promueven progreso y facilitación en su aprendizaje. Los procedimientos aplicados fueron: el análisis, interpretación y diseño de diferentes materiales científicos relacionados con la aplicación de los principios del DI, estrategias de enseñanza- aprendizaje, caracterización de los alumnos y criterios del MCRE, los cuales alcanzan niveles de satisfacción de los alumnos en los diferentes subsistemas educativos del Ecuador.

**Palabras claves:** Diseño Instrucciona, EFLT



## I. INTRODUCTION

Today, Instructional Design (ID) has become indispensable in professional development, due to the speedy evolution of teaching and learning, which need to cope with the incessant transformations of science and technology. Consequently, students need to learn complex cognitive skills and transfer them to a varying set of complex real-world settings and contexts. In these different worlds, ideas about “how to help people learn better” lead to different answers to the two basic questions of ID: “what to teach?” and “how to teach it?” (Van Merriënboer, Seel, & Kirschner, 2002).

ID approaches can be applied in all fields and situations that deal with education and training, including school settings, technical training, professional training, collaboration with human resources in developing professionals in industrial and qualified organizations, higher education and university settings, as well as distance and life-long learning situations – using all, old and new kinds of media and telecommunications .

ID has developed into a broad profession with many connections to other professions and activities, including personnel and project management. Undoubtedly, Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) and more particularly (EFLT) form part of the fields of application of ID. Therefore, it is the aim of this paper to socialize the fundamental issues of ID in EFLT and its scientific contribution to improving learning and teaching.

## DEVELOPMENT

What sort of knowledge of these conditions is needed in order to design instruction?

Gagné, R. (2005) affirms that ID should depart, based on knowledge of the conditions of human learning. While Brown, D.(2004), when analyzing principles of language learning, coincides with this same assertion and suggests that foreign language learning must initiate on human learning variables, particularly on the characteristics of the learners, like: age, linguistic heritage, socioeconomic characteristics, sociocultural context, levels of education, among others. For instance, it is not the same teaching a second /foreign language to children, adolescents, or adults. Their psychological characteristics are different and thus their linguistic behaviour. This variable is very important at the time of designing language instructions.

Ausubel, D. P., Novak, J. D., & Hanesian, H. (1978) agree that learners possess certain qualities that relate to instruction—for example, they are able to hear orally delivered communications and to read printed information on a page. Each of these common qualities

varies in degree from learner to learner—one person may be able to read pages of printed text rapidly, whereas another reads slowly and haltingly.

Regardless of variations in degree, the characteristics of concern to instructional design are those that affect the entire information-processing chain of learning. These are qualities that may pertain to sensory input, to the internal processing, storage, and retrieval of information, and finally to the organization of learner's responses.

There are characteristics that are born with the individual or genetically determined, for instance, the capacity to retain information in the memory, which is essential for EFLT. The number of items that can be "held in mind" at any one time is shown by the immediate memory span of seven plus or minus two. The speed with which previously learned concepts can be retrieved and identified may be measured by requiring individuals. The ID principles of repetition and reinforcement play an important methodological role in language retention and packing in the memory.

There are internal processes that are underlined by contemporary theories of learning. These processes bring about several successive stages in the transformation of information on its way to storage in the long-term memory. The purpose of instruction is, then, to arrange external events that support these internal learning processes. An act of learning is greatly influenced by previously learned material retrieved from the learner's memory.

These ID issues form part of the primary nature of human learning, which is sensorial. The first channels that receive the initial content of learning are the senses. For that reason, in EFLT teachers/ designers must find out the learners' preferential channels for learning. That is, whether they are: auditory, visual, kinaesthetic, musical, analytical, holistic, etc. and then do a quantitative/qualitative analysis that may approach the characteristics of the group as a whole. This means, reducing the great diversity of individual learner characteristics to a number small enough to make EFLT instructional planning feasible.

Yet, there are other characteristics, which are not innate and could be modified by the action of well- designed instruction that may render in improvement of English language learning. Among them, we can talk of intellectual skills, cognitive and metacognitive instructions, affective elements, among others, that could help learners overcome their learning deficiencies.

The effects of prior learning on new learning is seen in the acquiring of verbal information,

intellectual skills, cognitive strategies, attitudes, and motor skills. These varieties of learned capabilities and the conditions for their learning constitute the basis for English language instructional planning. Derived from these principles is the rationale for a set of practical procedures for the design of language instruction.

In EFLT developing intellectual skills is of paramount importance, because they range from elementary language skills such as encoding a simple message or deciphering a short text to composing or decomposing a text in more complex advanced language structures of superior level. Another example occurs in demonstrating the rule of using pronouns in the objective case following a preposition, etc. Learning an intellectual skill means learning how to do something of an intellectual sort.

Another example of an intellectual skill may be given here. A student of the English language learns at some point in his studies what a metaphor is. More specifically, if his instruction is adequate, he learns to use a metaphor. This skill, then, has the function of becoming a component of further learning. That is to say, the skill of using a metaphor now may contribute to the learning of more complex intellectual skills, such as writing illustrative sentences, describing scenes and events, and composing essays or poems.

Likewise, verbal information becomes transcendental in EFLT because learners need to communicate using the forms language, which are constantly incorporated to their learning system if they want to succeed. In their memories are stored many commonly used items of information such as, phonological rules, grammatical patterns, pertinent word forming processes with their correspondent meanings which may change depending on the linguistic situation or context. Vocabulary, like: the names of months, days of the week, letters, numerals, towns, cities, states, countries, family members, and so on.

Finding out whether students have learned some particular facts or some particular organized items of information is a matter of observing whether they can communicate them. The simplest way to do this is to ask for a statement of the information either orally or in writing. Cognitive Strategy is manifested in using an image link to learn a foreign English equivalent to a Spanish word or vice versa, or rearranging a verbally stated problem by working backward or decomposing a sentence or text to understand its grammatical structure. Using images as links or connect words in the learning of foreign-language vocabulary (Atkinson, 1975).

Motor skills must also be taken into account in dealing with ID in EFLT since learners should be instructed to accommodate correctly their organs of speech to articulate correctly the

vowels, consonants and the suprasegmental features. Besides, motor skills help, to produce the facial expressions that form part of the nonverbal or body language that accompany a given message depending on the linguistic situation they are in.

Attitude is part of the affective domain that is part of the EFLT process. The effect of an attitude is to amplify an individual's positive or negative reaction toward some person, thing, or situation. Language classes are often expected to establish socially approved attitudes such as respect for other people, cooperativeness, personal responsibility, as well as positive attitudes toward knowledge and learning, and an attitude of self-efficacy.

There is a dialectical relationship among learning- teaching- instruction. Teachers-researchers can teach a foreign language like English successfully if, among other things, they know something about that intricate web of variables that are spun together to affect how and why one learns or fails to learn a second language or foreign language.

English language instruction must be planned carefully with a personalized attention, if it is to be effective. In detail, of course, a teacher may not have much time to plan instruction on a moment-to-moment basis. Each new event of the classroom requires one or more decisions on the part of a teacher. Thus, instruction is usually planned, which means that it is designed in some systematic way.

Despite varying moment-to-moment decisions, a teacher follows the plan of a lesson design. The lesson is part of the larger design involved in the presentation of a topic (a course segment), and this topic in turn makes up part of a still more comprehensive design of the course or curriculum.

One important phase at the time of combining internal and external conditions of learning in EFLT is the application of the five essential steps for a good ID, which emerges from the standard basic model for almost all Instructional Design that is ADDIE model. It is referenced in several documents proposing standard design processes, such as in (IEEE 2001) and (AskERIC 1999).

**ADDIE** stands for - **Analyze - Design - Develop - Implement - Evaluate**. This model presents a general and generic structure for Instructional Design and, as it is said, is used as a backbone for a great number of models that add to it further specification and some particular methods for the single phases.

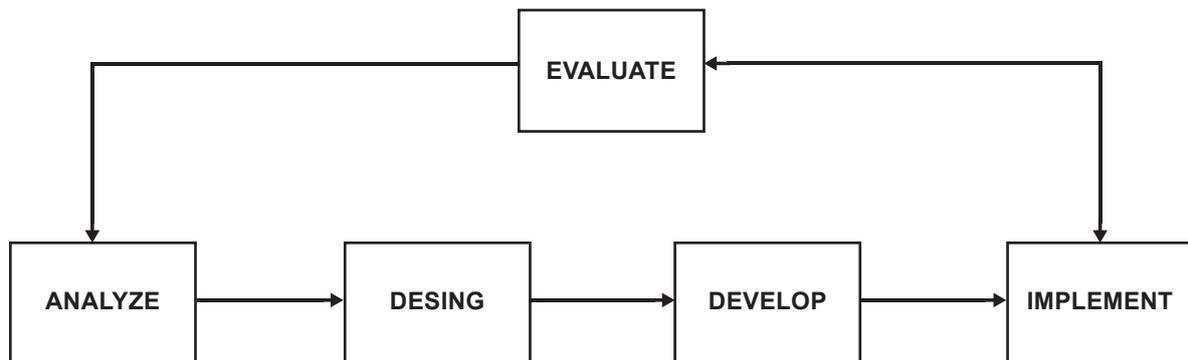


Figure 1: ADDIE Model taken from Reigeluth, C. M. (1993)

Let's rethink this ADDIE model in terms of EFLT.

### A. - Analyze

The analysis stage consists of gathering information about the learners, their learning characteristics, styles, the nature of learners (age, previous knowledge, previous learning experience, attitude toward learning), verbal abilities, etc. Besides, the learning context, as in the case of Ecuador, it is not the same for a student who lives in Quito than another one who lives in the Sierra or that belongs to an ethnic community (Awa, Shuar, Kichwa, etc).

The teacher must plan his/her classes taking into account the socioeconomic and cultural heritage of the learners. The learning context also includes location, accessibility, facilities, time schedule, material conditions of the school, whether it is a public or private school or if it is in a rural or urban area, etc.

Additionally the teacher must have flexibility in teaching, that is, learners' backgrounds, learning pace, and ability to take on different tasks that may vary, so it's important to be able to adapt to individual students. motives for learning the language. That is, intrinsic and extrinsic motives.

### B.-Design

The design stage considers first the analysis of the content to be taught and its division into chunks, or sub-topics. According to a selected strategy, the actual lesson planning should be developed: what content should be presented in what form, and through what activity. The teacher, after a placement assessment should decide the learning proficiency level the student belongs. If applied the CEFR, he /she must determine if it is level A1-A2 (Basic); B1-B2

(Independent) or C1-C2 (Proficient/Competent) to decide the task sequences to design, the preliminary content that must be taken into account and the types of teaching/learning strategies.

Also in this stage, the delivery media and technology (classroom, asynchronous Web site, videoconference, VHS videotape, etc.) and the learning materials are selected. By these decisions, several constraints come into play: the delivery media and the learning materials are in fact often not selected, rather given by the specific situation.

Moreover, the resources available to actually get everything ready should be considered: feasibility is a part of design. The teacher-designer's art is matching and rearranging the three elements of design (content, strategy and media) into an organic whole, suitable to the environmental characteristics emerged in the analysis phase. The media and technology design give innovation and stimulate learning, when well selected, attending to learners' characteristics, and must necessarily lead to more enjoyable classes, with long lasting results. Additionally, it should be considered in this stage, the expected learning activity, and the learning goals. The English teacher must know what the needs of the learners are, "What do they like about studying languages?" or, "What do they usually get frustrated about when they try to improve their speaking skills?" And when he/she does, to grasp students' learning processes better and find out the most suitable techniques to enhance their learning experience.

### **C.-Develop**

The development stage is the thorough evolution and completion of the design phase: it is the process of creation and testing of the learning experience in all its components. This means arranging the selected materials to the teaching strategy, integrate them in activities and expositions, eventually develop new materials and finally rehearse (when possible, test) the outcomes, i.e. the educational environment. English Lesson planning previews all the necessary conditions to guarantee success.

Embracing reflective teaching can also help with this. Creating engaging and attractive materials is key, not only for students to enjoy their English language study process, but also to facilitate learning. After all, reading a colourful infographic is more appealing than a bunch of paragraphs. In most cases, the teacher will have to come up with creative ideas or be able to create visual contents for the lessons. It may sometimes be challenging to get new ideas, materials, and tools, so he/she'll have to be able to find solutions or even innovative ways to

improve the courses.

## **D.- Implement**

ADDIE defines the implementation stage as the actual performing of the learning experience. It is interesting as the actual learning experience is often encountered in other models as external to the design process, as something that happens afterwards. As it will see, the implementation is taken over by testing and review. The idea here is that the real educational environment is ready and used, with all the contextual variables that may influence it (the weather, the learner's mood, classroom material conditions, etc.), and this is the input experience for the next stage. This new installment is aimed at ensuring that the specifications and objectives of the design phase are consistently met for the improvement of English language learning.

## **E.- Evaluate**

The Evaluation stage makes the model cyclic. It includes the evaluation of an educational environment, which is a different form of the evaluation in contrast with that of the learners, as it concerns the instruction as such. They are both complementary and of paramount importance for decision-making. The outcomes of evaluation have important repercussion or washback effects in the learners' proficiency, in the family, in the community and in the Ecuadorian society. Therefore, they should be well-designed taking into account the goals, aims of Education in general and the learning objectives of EFLT in particular.

The English language tests should be consistent, transparent, and valid. They could be systematic if the teacher constantly evaluates the students' progress in class. If so, these language instruments form part of the so-called formative evaluation, which have great repercussion in the educative transformation of the learners.

Teachers should warn learners about their deficiencies on time and help them to correct them taking into account the student's characteristics. On the other hand, if the tests are applied at the end of a period, to picture the results achieved at that moment and provide a mark that should be reported or credited then we have summative evaluation.

Both, formative and summative evaluations are dialectically complementary in EFLT. In terms of ID tenets, it is recommendable, to apply authentic evaluations in which students feel they are performing language tasks very much alike to actual real life situations, and thus teachers

would be more creative. Bloom's taxonomy (1956) helps to organize thinking skills from an elementary level to a more complex and creative one.

Bloom pointed out "...So, it's incredibly important that we use creativity into the classroom, that we allow teachers the time and the freedom to develop, and to focus on higher order thinking skills, such as creating, and evaluating, rather than getting stuck with the lower skills of just understanding and remembering".

### THINKING SKILL HIERARCHY



See figure 2: It shows thinking skill hierarchy based on Bloom's taxonomy (1956).

It is absolutely necessary, that English language teachers, as well as the national Educational system, being more open to new innovations, possibilities, taking risks, chances, new approaches to meet the needs of the learners and revolutionize EFLT in alignment with new outcomes of science, technology and in general human progress.

The simple consideration that evaluation is a core part of the design process means that the teacher/designer, during the previous stages, should consider that it would take place. Therefore, he/she would dispose elements for its effective execution, such as indicators or rubrics for learner's satisfaction (e.g. included in the test or a specific wrap-up of the online forum interaction, etc.).

English language tests, as part of the assessment/evaluation should mirror the actual teaching-learning process and respect the principle "test what you teach and the way you

teach “ , otherwise the Washback effects could be totally negative or deceiving.

Which is the role of CEFR in ID for EFLT?

CEFR is useful for EFLT at designing ID projects that may help students improve their learning and accomplish the objectives of communicating with more efficiency. It provides:

- a common standardised basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, classroom language tasks, etc.
- descriptions that cover the cultural context in which language is set,
- levels of proficiency, which allow learners’ progress to be measured at each stage of learning and on a life-long basis.

In Ecuador, CEFR provides an intercultural approach, which is a central objective of language education to promote a favourable development of the learner’s whole personality and sense of identity in response to the enriching experience of otherness in language and culture.

**CEFR descriptions for the elaboration of ID, requires that there is:**

- A harmonious relation among their language skills components.
- the identification of students’ needs;
- the determination of objectives;
- the definition of content;
- the selection or creation of material;
- the teaching and learning methods employed;
- evaluation, testing, and assessment.

All these requirements are aligned with the stages of a good model of ID and its principles. Therefore, the English language teacher/ designer must observe them and must constantly revise his/her language procedures to satisfy the learners’ needs through the application of scientific tools of action /classroom research that may allow him/her to be innovative and creative.

The learning tasks should always be accompanied by instructions of various types and

complexities, and the CEFR pays special attention to carefully designed instructions. Thus, it is an aim of ID projects to promote effective English language teaching, with efficient and appealing instructions that must translate into promoting learner involvement and motivation.

The sequencing instructions are encountered at several levels of curriculum and course design, and the issues are different among levels. However, the matter of effective sequences of instruction is closely related to the matter of course organization that is from the top /downward, going from general to more specific objectives, and utilizing the functional relationships among the types of learning. (Gagné, 2004)

The ultimate goal of ID in EFLT, with the support of CEFR and its band descriptors, is to produce effective instructions for language learning. When this goal is accomplished, it generally results in a lesson or set of lessons that may be delivered either by a teacher or by mediated materials. Teachers may design sequences of lessons in advance to be "ready", since they are able to improvise some of the details as the lesson progresses. This gives the teacher, flexibility to redesign or to adjust procedures to the instructional situation and to responses of the learners (Briggs, Gustafson, and Tillman, 1991).

ID in EFLT should be supported with classroom research, which shares many features and scientific procedures with action research. English language teachers must adapt and recreate constantly the tasks to meet the students' needs and their learning problems by applying scientific tools that may provide solid scientific answers to the many language problems the students may face. It also has important characteristics as the flexibility in the phases of the process favouring the classroom- problem solutions, careful analysis and interaction of all participants in the teaching-learning process; interpretative outcomes rather than explanatory ones; besides, it facilitates intensive drilling and places the teacher as professional researcher.

English language issues could be investigated further, apply actions, observe and control the changes /outcomes for further actions; determining steps for action research project (planning, acting, observing, reflecting and re-planning). In terms of ID, action/classroom research is an active reflective research process that permits to implement innovations in the teaching-learning process of foreign languages.

A different approach is provided by the CEFR for Languages in the XXI century. It is an action-oriented approach, which represents a shift away from syllabuses based on a linear progression through language structures, or a predetermined set of notions and functions, towards syllabuses based on needs analysis, oriented towards real-life tasks and constructed around purposefully selected notions and functions. This promotes a proficiency perspective

guided by 'Can do' descriptors.

Investigating the teaching-learning process of English as a foreign language in schools in Ecuador constitutes an instrument for teachers to reflect on pedagogical reality in order to increase self-understanding of their activity, and the conditions under which they are working. It remarks the importance of action/classroom research as a tool for professional development as well, which is at the same time a corner stone of ID.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

- English Foreign Language (EFL) teachers should meet important issues of ID that will help them redesign and innovate plans for facing the challenges of learning as instructional designers of language, taking into account the criteria of the CEFR, but adapted to the sociocultural and multiethnic contexts of Ecuador.
- The use of the five classical stages of ID (analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation) leads EFL teachers to improve, with more creativity, their communicative language teaching and thus satisfy the learning needs of their students.
- Action/Classroom research constitutes an important tool in the hands of EFL teachers, who seek to clarify and solve practical teaching issues and language problems through a scientific frame, paving the way for the elaboration of a systematic updated ID.

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