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Students' Experiences of Studying English After Not Using a Textbook as a Primary Resource: A Narrative Inquiry Study

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Resumen

Este estudio explora cómo perciben los estudiantes los cambios en las prácticas docentes y las experiencias de aprendizaje tras la transición de un enfoque centrado en el libro de texto a otro sin libro de texto en un centro de idiomas de EFL. Esta investigación pretendía determinar en profundidad el alcance de estos cambios percibidos, evaluar la idoneidad de los recursos utilizados por los profesores e identificar los retos y las oportunidades que encontraron los estudiantes. Los investigadores utilizaron un enfoque cualitativo, incorporando veinte horas lectivas de observación junto con diarios de reflexión detallados y realizando posteriormente ocho entrevistas narrativas. Para analizar los datos se utilizó el análisis temático deductivo, apoyado por el programa MAXQDA. Los resultados revelan que la ausencia de un libro de texto animó a los profesores a incorporar materiales más auténticos y variados, mejorando el compromiso de los estudiantes y el uso práctico de la lengua. No obstante, los estudiantes tuvieron que hacer frente a dificultades para adaptarse a clases menos estructuradas, como la gestión de las distracciones y la falta de coherencia en la calidad del material. Aunque se enfrentaron a varias dificultades, informaron de un número significativo de mayores oportunidades para la creatividad y la participación activa, este estudio pone de relieve la importancia de equilibrar diversos recursos con prácticas de enseñanza estructuradas para garantizar experiencias de aprendizaje eficaces. Los conocimientos adquiridos pueden orientar a educadores e instituciones en la aplicación de enfoques flexibles y centrados en el estudiante, al tiempo que se abordan los retos asociados a las metodologías de enseñanza no tradicionales.

Palabras claves: Prácticas de enseñanza EFL, Aprendizaje sin libro, Investigación narrativa, Percepciones de los estudiantes.

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Abstract

This study explores how students perceive the changes in teaching practices and learning experiences after transitioning from a textbook-centered approach to one without a textbook in an EFL language center. This research sought to thoroughly determine the extent of these perceived changes, to evaluate the suitability of resources used by teachers and to identify challenges and opportunities students encountered. Researchers used a qualitative approach, incorporating twenty class hours of observation together with detailed reflective journals and subsequently conducting eight narrative interviews. Deductive thematic analysis, supported by MAXQDA software, was used to analyze the data. The findings reveal that the absence of a textbook encouraged teachers to incorporate more authentic and varied materials, enhancing student engagement and practical language use. Nevertheless, students faced challenges in adapting to less structured lessons, including difficulties with managing distractions, as well as inconsistencies in material quality. Although they faced several difficulties, they reported a meaningful number of increased opportunities for creativity and active participation This study highlights the importance of balancing diverse resources with structured teaching practices to ensure effective learning experiences. The insights gained can guide educators and institutions in implementing flexible, student-centered approaches while addressing challenges associated with non-traditional teaching methodologies.

Keywords: EFL teaching practices, Learning without textbooks, Narrative inquiry, Student perceptions.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Research Context

In both, traditional and contemporary classrooms, textbooks have been considered essential tools for delivering and structuring educational content for many years. Textbooks provide a structured educational program for teachers and students alike, offering different explanations and activities that somehow facilitate language learning. Therefore, using textbooks to structure the curriculum has become a standard practice to teach a second language. In fact, the absence of an appropriate textbook during English lessons is often regarded as incomplete (Bedoya, 2019). In Ecuador, where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL), the textbook has long been the fundamental principle of language education. Hence, having a well-structured textbook helps teachers to follow a clear plan for their lessons and students through the process of learning. Moreover, taking into consideration that in countries such as Ecuador, the exposure to the language outside the classrooms is minimal, the textbook becomes not only a learning tool for students, but also a teaching tool for educators.

However, there is a growing awareness that textbooks may not always align with the specific needs and cultural contexts of the students. The limitations of this material are becoming more evident, as Molina and Alfaro (2019) mention, textbooks usually contain activities and content that are not adapted to the reality of the class. These materials, often imported or adapted from other contexts, may not reflect the linguistic realities or cultural diversity of Ecuadorian classrooms. As a result, students may struggle to engage with the content and will eventually feel disconnected from their own reality and everyday experiences. Education is evolving worldwide, and modern pedagogical approaches are gaining popularity among educators. The use of technology, authentic material, realia, among others, are currently replacing the textbook in some educational contexts. The role of textbooks in English learning continues to be debated due to their mixed benefits and limitations.

The integration of technology into the classroom has brought significant changes to education. Educators have had to learn how to use online platforms, educational apps and digital resources in order to meet the diverse needs of their students. This shift often requires educators to use new methodologies and engage in the creation of dynamic and customized teaching material, emphasizing creativity and interaction. In Ecuador, these changes have accelerated in recent years, driven by the need to engage students more effectively and prepare them for a technology-driven world (Solano et al., 2017). By moving away from textbooks, teachers must explore alternative and innovative ways to deliver their lessons, fostering opportunities to create more relevant and engaging educational experiences. This adaptation for students who are accustomed to using a textbook comes accompanied by uncertainty. While some students might benefit from this change, some will have a hard time getting accustomed to the new resources replacing the textbook.

1.2. Problem Statement

In the language center of a higher education institution, significant changes have been implemented in the current methodology. Books, which have traditionally served as the primary instrument for imparting knowledge to students, have now been eliminated from use by the authorities. The use of books to learn English has been a controversial topic among experts. Some authors highlight the negative aspects of the use of this teaching tool such as Molina and Alfaro (2019), who mentioned that the constant use of books for teaching can lead teachers to become reliant on them, sometimes at the expense of incorporating inventiveness and originality into their lessons. However, authors such as Yunus et al. (2024) explain that the use of a textbook changes the role of the teacher into a facilitator. Thus, the textbook material already includes the necessary information for students to put into practice their cognitive and linguistic skills, reducing the working load of the teacher. Whether the use of books has positive

or negative effects, Language Center teachers are now seeking alternative tools for creating academic material.

According to the Language Center Director, the university authorities have considered that the elevated cost of books has become an obstacle to learning. Nonetheless, the main reason behind this decision was that nowadays there are a variety of free resources and platforms available for teachers to create their own material, he held (P. Siguenza, *personal communication,* May 7th 2024). As a result of this disposition, teachers had to look for different ways to innovate their English lessons. The most common way was using the resources available on the campus of the university, which are usually the ones within the presentation hardware such as projectors, computers, and interactive whiteboards. This came accompanied by the use of presentation software tools such as Canva, Google Slides, etc. Furthermore, based on the researchers' observations, a variety of students' attitudes, including uncertainty, were identified as a result of this change. This uncertainty was expected, as participants had been using the textbook to learn English for an extended period of time.

Simu (2019) affirms that the absence of a textbook is thought to leave teachers without guidance since they offer exercises, homework, and tests, which usually have clear specifications in how and when to use them. In general, having a methodology, strategy, or activity in the class used inappropriately could generate negative feelings in the students such as boredom and discouragement. According to the research of Kruk et al. (2021), excessive levels of boredom and disengagement from classroom tasks may be the outcome of factors such as monotony, repetitiveness, and lacking variation of challenges. As previously stated, teachers in the language center have been making use of different technological resources due to this change. Nonetheless, according to Cervera et al. (2010), while technological advancements offer significant benefits, we should not assume that these new tools alone would enhance student

learning. These resources impact learning methods, but they are merely tools that can be utilized effectively or ineffectively, and by themselves, they do not guarantee changes in the educational process.

1.3. Importance of the Study

The research on students' experiences of studying English after not using a textbook as a primary resource holds significant importance in contemporary educational settings. Analyzing the new teaching methods that instructors at the language center had adopted after moving away from traditional textbooks is essential, since it provides insights into the effectiveness and creativity of such approaches. From the beginning, English textbooks have been the backbone of the Language Center's curriculum at the University. Therefore, understanding how students are responding to these changes is crucial, especially considering the aforementioned long-standing reliance on textbooks.

The necessity to explore the challenges and opportunities in the classroom after changing the textbook is vital, deeming that the main objective of the language center is to provide students with the adequate competencies and the adequate level of English previous to graduation. According to Krishnapatria (2021), knowing the challenges and opportunities allow to innovate the curriculum and make it better prepared for the students' needs. Recognizing the challenges that students face while adapting to this new methodology can provide antecedents to further research or institutes that intend to stop using the textbook as the main teaching tool. Additionally, exploring the opportunities that this change offers to students let the researchers highlight which are the main advantages and strong points of view.

Due to the main change that the language center faces with respect to the main teaching tool, it is important to know how students perceive the alternative resources adapted by the teachers. Educators are the ones who look for innovative options to base their English lessons

on, in such a way that it is possible to ensure active and appropriate learning of the language. However, it can be challenging, since developing learners' skills can be difficult when students are exposed to different kinds of learning resources (Rao, 2019). It is crucial to understand the different perspectives that can be presented by students since it is in the learners whose correct teaching of the language is reflected. Those positive, negative or neutral perspectives bring deeper insights regarding the alternative resources used in English lessons which are replacing the textbook as the main teaching tool.

Main Research Question

- How do students perceive the changes in teaching practices when a textbook is not used as the main resource?

Sub-Questions

- How appropriate do students find the alternative resources used by teachers in EFL classes in place of a textbook?
- What challenges and opportunities do students experience when learning English without a textbook as the main resource?

General Objective

- To determine to what extent students, perceive the changes of the teaching practices as a consequence of not using a textbook.

Specific Objectives

- To evaluate how students perceive the appropriateness of the resources used by the teachers during their EFL classes.
- To determine the challenges and opportunities that students experience when learning English without the use of a textbook as the main resource.

2. Literature Review

This study's theoretical framework is built on a detailed exploration of key aspects related to teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It starts by reviewing earlier research that has looked into the role of textbooks and other resources in language education, offering insights into how teaching methods have evolved over time. The framework then explores the teaching English process, highlighting the methodologies and strategies that support effective language instruction. In addition, a critical analysis of the use of textbooks in English teaching is explored, making emphasis on the role, advantages, and limitations in EFL classrooms. To contextualize the move away from textbooks, the framework incorporates the use of innovative authentic materials, which emphasize real-world language use and cultural relevance, as well as the integration of technology in EFL classrooms, showing how modern language education has been transformed by this approach. Together, these elements provide a concise theoretical foundation for understanding students' experiences and perceptions of studying English without a textbook as the primary resource.

2.1. Previous Studies

Acosta and Cajas (2018) investigated the teaching resources used in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) within Ecuadorian EFL classrooms. The participants for this quantitative study were 65 teachers of selected Ecuadorian universities, focusing on the resources that the educators use to teach English skills. The study found that teachers frequently relied on group activities and on textbook-based resources, such as audio material and worksheets provided on them. However, there was limited focus on resources to practice pronunciation and interactive tasks. Although the resources helped to develop some communicative skills, the study found that relying on foreign textbook material created

several drawbacks. This reliance restricted teachers' ability to adapt the lessons to the culture and needs of typical Ecuadorian classrooms. However, a limitation of the study is that it has relied on survey data from teachers without observation and leaving aside the students' perspectives. This limits the insight into how these resources and methods actually impact students and their learning experience.

This 2018 study remains relevant because research on this topic in Ecuador is limited, and it directly aligns with our thesis focus. The research of Acosta and Cajas is related to our study as it examines the use of teaching resources in EFL classrooms, especially the reliance on textbooks in most Ecuadorian universities. The study highlights the potential limitations of textbook dependency such as the limited opportunities for teachers to meet the diverse needs of Ecuadorian classrooms. The findings of Acosta and Cajas support our study by showing the need for alternative teaching strategies and materials that are better aligned with the students' backgrounds. While Acosta and Cajas focus on the prevalence and implications of textbook use, our research delves into the learning experience shaped by the absence of textbooks, providing a complementary perspective. This connection enriches our study by demonstrating how the choice of the teaching resources influences the classroom dynamics and outcomes.

Afzal (2023) investigated university teachers' perceptions of using non-textbook resources in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. This quantitative study was carried out at Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University with 21 experienced English teachers using an online questionnaire. The main objective of the study was to examine the different perceptions of teachers on the role and impact of non-textbook resources to teach English. The results indicated that teachers found non-textbook resources beneficial for enhancing engagement, increasing motivation, and improving the learning language skills of the students. The participants also reported that the use of non-textbook materials somehow

broke classroom monotony and provided extra language practice. Nonetheless, a limitation of this study is that it relies on the perception of teachers. The data collected was through an online questionnaire without any direct classroom observation or in-depth interviews. Even though the study provides valuable insights, it may not capture completely the practical effects of non-textbooks resources in practice.

The research of Afzal (2023) is related to our study as it explores the benefits and impact of using non-textbook resources in EFL classrooms, similar to our focus on studying English without a textbook. The findings of the study confirm the potential of non-textbook material to enhance the engagement, motivation, and language development of the students. This statement supports our study, as the Language Center of the university is no longer working with textbooks, and alternative resources are now shaping the learning experiences and the classroom environment. Afzal highlights teachers' perspectives on the supplementary materials; this works aligns with our study by emphasizing the flexibility and adaptability that non-textbooks resources can bring to the class. Moreover, Afzal's research establishes a basis for examining how these resources influence the outcomes of the students in an environment without traditional textbooks. This research also reinforces the importance of understanding resource choice in order to create an engaging environment that takes into account the diverse needs of the students.

Lin (2019), explored the different perceptions of undergraduate students regarding the use of new alternatives to the use of traditional textbooks, seeing open educational resources as variants. This qualitative study involved 46 undergraduate students who participated in surveys and 29 of them in two focus groups. The results demonstrated that the participants tend to appreciate open educational resources (OER) basically, since they are cheaper than traditional textbooks, they can find them easily on the web since the materials are flexible to find. Furthermore, these materials enable learners to use

technological resources to innovate their learning process through active learning. However, the specific-course context is a limitation of the study since, the main focus is an OER classroom where students already are used to the implementation of technology and their perceptions may not represent students' perception in a traditional classroom where the book is used as the main tool.

This study is of great importance for the development of our research since it reflects the different perspectives and experiences on the part of the students regarding the use of new materials or resources for learning. This study is aligned with ours, since it reveals similar characteristics to those of our study in relation to the secondary objectives. This highlights the understanding of the students' perspectives on the changes presented in terms of the methodology used for learning the Second Language in Higher education. It also provides deeper insights and a detailed understanding of certain aspects of moving away from the textbook and how students can develop skills by adapting new resources in the learning process using new tools. Furthermore, a key similarity of this research to our study is that it focuses on understanding students' adaptability when they stop approaching the traditional textbook for their lessons. Additionally, this study emphasized and explored the appropriateness and effectiveness of these alternative open educational resources, and the challenges encountered in the learning process.

2.2 Learning Theory

Constructivism points out that learners actively build their own knowledge by interacting with the environment and based on their previous experiences (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Particularly, this theory has been used throughout decades, and in recent years, it continues to be tested to foster different skills, such as writing (Al-Ghazo & Al-Zoubi, 2018), listening (Sulistyowati, 2019), vocabulary acquisition (Aravind & Bhuvaneswari, 2023), and critical thinking (Fatemeh et al., 2020), among others. Most of these studies have achieved

their purpose to different extents. This learning theory has emphasized the active involvement of the students in the learning process rather than only receiving information. As mentioned by Nagowah and Nagowha (2009):

> The principle is that the learners start with a complex problem and work out to discover the basic skills required to solve the problem. This method of learning involves cooperative learning, experimentation, open-ended problems, and real-life scenarios in which the learners discover learning on their own through active involvement with concepts and principles (Bruner et al., 1956). The role of the instructors hence changes from teachers who give didactic lectures to cover a particular lesson, to facilitators who help the learners to get their own understanding of the content (Rhodes & Bellamy, 1999). Facilitators motivate their students to find solutions by exploring, collaborating, inventing, and experimenting. (p. 281)

Students can build their knowledge together with peers, teachers, and the environment through active participation and engagement. Through this cooperative approach, learners can form new knowledge and shape their understanding. Thus, by constructing their own knowledge, students are able to personalize their learning experiences, making them unique and relevant for their lives.

This research is framed within constructivism, since this specific learning theory is directly aligned with the experience of the students who are now involuntarily learning English without a textbook. As pointed out before, constructivism confirms that knowledge is built through interactions with peers and teachers rather than just receiving information. Without the textbook, which used to work as a guide, students construct their knowledge through collaborative activities, real- life contexts and social interactions that makes learning more relevant for them. In the context of this study, students are encouraged to engage with the new material in different ways, for them to connect their existing knowledge

with previous experiences. With constructivism being the basis of this study, it is possible to examine how the learners adapt to this new flexible, learner-centered approach to language learning.

2.3 The Teaching English Process

Teaching English has evolved significantly over the decades, adapting to numerous pedagogical approaches and technological advancements (Qutub et al., 2023). According to A1-Ghasab (2022), "To teach effectively, the teacher must use different teaching methods in communicating information and knowledge to learners" (p.513). This means, adapting teaching methods to fulfill the different needs of learners, by applying a variety of approaches to ensure understanding. Learning contexts, including cultural background, available resources and the role of English in the community, influence the way English is taught (Tatlı et al., 2023). For instance, in some regions, English is primarily taught for academic or professional purposes, with the main focus being formal language skills. In other contexts, the focus might be on conversational fluency or traveling purposes. These specific factors, together with the available resources, can shape and influence how educators teach and how students learn. Despite these differences, there is enough evidence of common ways of teaching English that have been or continue to be used, across various parts of the world.

Traditionally, English teaching heavily relied on textbooks; in some contexts, such tools have been used for decades within education (Naqibullah et al., 2021). As a matter of fact, in countries such as Ecuador, Colombia, and Chile, where English is learned as a foreign language, the use of an English Textbook remains a common tool used in the methodology among teachers and institutions (Soto & Cevallos, 2021). Textbooks often work as the backbone of the curriculum, providing organization that includes grammar, vocabulary and a variety of activities designed to practice the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and

writing. In regions with limited access to supplementary material or technology, textbooks may serve as a needed tool for facilitating language teaching. The textbook is a common tool used in many different countries and has been a topic of ongoing debate among some authors (Syed et al., 2019; Lodhi et al., 2019; Simu, 2019). This material in Ecuador is usually acquired from a foreign country and, as stated by Acosta and Cajas (2018), the materials often fail to align with the reality of the Ecuadorian classroom.

On the contrary, the modern trend of teaching English is more student-centered and makes the learning experience more adequate for learners. With the rise of digital tools and online learning platforms, the way of teaching English has evolved, offering more interactive and personalized learning. In fact, Sharipovna (2023) affirms that by using different approaches together with technology "with the proliferation of tablets and smartphones, the textbook is believed to disappear in a few years" (p.183). This suggests that, as technology becomes more integrated into education, the traditional textbook may no longer be necessary. In addition, Haleem et al. (2022) mentioned that "With smartphones and other wireless technology devices becoming popular among the general public, it only makes sense that schools and educational institutions make efficient use of them by putting technology in the classroom" (p. 275). By integrating technology, educators can create more engaging and interactive lessons aligning teaching methods with the digital habits of modern learners. As a result, flexible and interactive learning experiences will emerge, which will be aligned with the different individuals' needs and learning styles.

2.4 Textbooks in English Teaching

Textbooks are frequently utilized by most educational institutions for the learning process, their use is often aligned with the learning outcomes established in the curriculum (Sakoikoi et al., 2024). They play a central role in the classroom since it serves as the primary tool for organizing and shaping the lessons. It guides both teacher and students

through the learning process, often dictating what is taught and learned. The use of this resource has been common in language teaching for many years, as Simu (2019) affirms:

> Anyone and everyone who has ever been in school has come in contact with textbooks. Many would agree that textbooks are one of the most essential and integral parts of the language learning process and the most important tool which can be utilized by teachers and students. While individual experiences with textbooks may differ substantially, in general not many people would imagine school, language teaching or learning without a textbook acting like a centerpiece on the dinner table, and the teacher as the chef preparing and presenting every course. (p.1)

Textbooks have had a universal role in Education, but particularly in language teaching where they act as a principal guide for the classroom development. Individuals' experiences with textbooks may vary for better or worse, but despite this, people have become so accustomed to using one that it's difficult to envision language teaching without them. This suggests that students who have been using a textbook for years to learn English may experience some different reactions if they are suddenly expected to learn without them.

This widely used resource comes accompanied with several advantages and disadvantages as every educational material. Indeed, textbooks facilitate the teaching process based on the curriculum according to different authors (Mithans & Grmek, 2020, Hung Lau et al., 2018, Naqibullah et al., 2021). One of the major benefits of textbooks is the structure they provide, working as a guide and offering logical progression of the lessons. Bedoya (2019) mentioned that "Teachers, on the other hand, can also save time and effort in preparing for the lessons, activities and even lesson evaluations through the use of a textbook in the classroom" (p.971). It is well known that this resource not only benefits students but also teachers providing pre-design activities, lesson plans and evaluation

materials. This allows educators to focus more on delivering the content and addressing the students' needs, rather than spending a certain amount of time on creating material and resources from scratch. Additionally, the textbook works as a clear studying material for students, offering them a single space with the necessary information.

Nonetheless, a significant drawback is that some educators may rely only on the textbook content, leading aside creativity; and therefore, overlooking interesting topics for their students (Mithans & Grmek, 2020). Textbooks can often lead to monotony in the classroom, since they provide all the necessary resources and activities, which causes teachers to solely rely on them, limiting their creativity. Regardless of whether the text offers opportunities or disadvantages, students are often required to purchase this resource which is usually expensive. According to Appedu et al. (2021), the cost of textbooks frequently influences students' academic behaviors, with many opting to skip purchases. This financial burden can lead to students buying used textbooks, sharing materials, or using illegal printed books which are less expensive. Taking into consideration the background of the students of a public institution, it is well known that some of them do not have enough economical resources to buy a textbook, being that a significant drawback in learning.

2.5 Innovative Authentic Material

Authentic material has been a very discussed topic in lately research such as (Namaziandost et al., 2021, Sukmawan et al., 2021, Ji et al., 2019, O'rinbekovna, 2024) who argue in their research that the implementation of this resource can help in many areas such as reading comprehension, listening comprehension, writing, and motivation. As mentioned by Tira Nur Fitria (2022) the idea behind authentic material is that the material to be used needs to be based on actual language and content that had been said by a real person. Certainly, the idea that the teacher creates their own material for the class sounds like an appealing option, the teacher can adapt this material to their students as he is in charge of

recognizing the needs of their students. Nonetheless, some previously mentioned researchers commented that this is not always true, the material seems to be adapted for the whole class since bringing material to practice a skill takes time and resources, and trying to adapt it more to very specific students is very complicated for the teacher.

The material can be adapted for a class with paper news, magazines, cartoons, comics, radio, textbooks, and even TV shows. However, many researchers have had the need to innovate in these materials and resources used in class since nowadays, all students are prone to have cell phones and make use of them in class. It is easier for the teacher to implement websites, blogs, podcasts, social media content, and infographics since creating material is also a skill teachers use (Setyowati, L., & Sukmawan, S, 2019). The innovation in authentic material is an ongoing research topic that has been shown in various studies to be successful and offers many advantages as well as disadvantages. (Tira Nur Fitria, 2022). In order to innovate in authentic material a number of pre-requisites are solicited such as: all students need to have a smart device, material focus, language competencies, and the teacher needs to have capacities with the use of technology. This is a reality that rarely matches with the condition of many institutions, especially from Ecuador, since many institutions are public and have limited resources.

2.6 Technology in EFL Classrooms

The integration of technology in English as Second Language (ESL) classrooms has revolutionized traditional teaching methods. According to Pazila et al. (2019), “Technology has transformed the field of education, lower and higher education, which has a great impact on the field of English” (p.3206). This means that thanks to the different applications of technology in the area of English, it has been possible to change the way in which education is delivered and experienced by students and the different levels of education. Technology has been increasingly used to create innovative and motivating learning environments to

guarantee dynamic and flexible learning of the second language. However, there are many contexts or academic backgrounds during the learning process, so technology as a resource must be properly implemented in order to ensure an appropriate EFL classroom (Pheng et al., 2021). The role of technology and the internet has been influential in generating learning and teaching in EFL classes. Alamri (2021) underscores that:

> The Internet has caused a significant change in teachers' perspective in a way that the teaching tools offered through the Internet are increasingly becoming more reliable. Nowadays, the Internet is attaining enormous popularity in second and foreign language teaching, and more educators and learners are embracing it. (p 36)

This statement highlights how teachers perceive the role of the Internet positively, certainly, the use of technology has gained popularity and acceptance within second and foreign language teaching. Teachers consider online resources as reliable and essential tools to ensure adequate teaching, as well as to enhance students' learning, by implementing; interactive websites, online worksheets, and the use of software presentations. Particularly, when it comes to planning English lessons, presentation software such as PowerPoint, Canva, Prezi and Google Slides often play a crucial role. Each presentation software has its own features that make them different and a wide range of interactive activities. Thus, teachers can have a wide variety of resources at their disposal, when educating their students and adapting their material depending on the level of the students and the topic of the lesson (Katayev, 2022).

The implementation of technology has brought benefits for engaging and effective teaching and learning in English classrooms (Pazila et al., 2019). However, technology comes with several technological problems, sometimes it might take a long time to get used to these tools due to the vast number of resources they can offer (Osipovskaya & Burdovskaya, 2019). This means that teachers and students will have to adjust to

implementing these resources and also knowing how to use them. Abdurahmonov et al. (2020), states “The teachers who use ICT in their classroom need to effectively incorporate the technology and smart devices” (p.132). This reflects the idea that some educators may lack the knowledge of how to implement these resources causing frustration and lack of confidence to handle such situations. Teachers need to possess the necessary skills and confidence to use technology efficiently ensuring they align with students’ needs in the classroom. Effective incorporation of these resources requires thoughtful planning and alignment with pedagogical goals to maximize its educational benefits.

In summary, the literature highlights the English teaching process, emphasizing the role that textbooks have had in the classroom. While traditional textbooks provide structure and consistency, their limitations have prompted the exploration of innovative authentic materials that cater to diverse learning needs. Moreover, advancements in technology have significantly impacted EFL classrooms, offering dynamic and interactive tools that enhance engagement and language acquisition. These insights provide a strong foundation for the present study, which seeks to examine students’ experiences learning English without relying on textbooks as the primary resource, underscoring the importance of adaptable and learner-centered approaches in modern education. As this study analyses the perceptions of previous experiences, it is important to deconstruct the type of research and steps to be carried out subsequently.

3. Methodology

3.1. Type of Research

This study employed a qualitative research methodology to delve into the participants' perceptions and experiences. According to Yin (2015), qualitative research involves gathering and analyzing non-numerical data like text, video, or audio to understand people’s experiences, perceptions, and opinions. Furthermore, the essence of qualitative research methodology lies in

collecting data through observation, interviews, and focus groups, as stated by Mohajan (2018). Thus, qualitative research aims to provide rich and detailed insights into specific phenomena by exploring diverse perspectives and factors (Yin, 2015). This methodology was selected in the current research due to its suitability for exploring students' opinions, insights, and experiences in depth which is aligned to the research questions in the document.

3.2. Research Method

Due to the nature of the present study, a narrative inquiry methodology was employed. According to Almeida et al. (2024) the nature of the narrative inquiry approach enables researchers to gather rich data from personal experiences. Additionally, Creswell and Poth (2016) mention that "narrative stories are gathered through many different forms of data, such as through interviews that may be the primary form of data collection but also through observations, documents, pictures, and other sources of qualitative data" (p.69). Furthermore, "the focus of narrative inquiry is not only valorizing individuals' experience, but it is also an exploration of the social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives within which individual's experiences were, and are, constituted, shaped, expressed and enacted" (Clandinin, 2013, as mentioned in Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 67). The role of the researcher in this methodology works as a facilitator, listener, and storyteller. Due to the distinctive characteristics of the narrative inquiry, this methodology enabled researchers to achieve a comprehensive exploration of the individuals' stories, while revealing patterns and themes that might not have been evident through other methodologies.

3.3. Thematic Analysis

The present study employed Thematic Analysis (TA) to analyze qualitative data collected from participants. TA was selected because of its flexibility for identifying and reporting patterns and themes within qualitative data (Finlay, 2021). Furthermore, according to Terry et al. (2017), its flexibility permits the researcher to analyze a wide range of data types collected

with different research tools, such as interviews, focus group discussions, diaries, etc. Additionally, Terry et al. (2019) mention that TA "has the potential to answer different research questions. TA can address questions about, and be used to describe, the "lived experiences" of particular social groups" (p.850). Therefore, by aligning with the goal of thematic analysis in the research—which, according to Sundler et al. (2019), is to achieve a deep understanding of patterns and themes derived from the meanings inherent in data from lived experiences—the researchers successfully fulfilled the research objectives.

3.4. Maxqda

MAXQDA software is a tool that works in the analysis of information (Rädiker & Kuckartz, 2019). This tool can codify mixed information in quantitative and qualitative information, and it has plenty of benefits. It analyses the information with shared pages that allow the researcher to compare information and look for specific comments. In addition, this page provides graphics of the information which is also useful for the interpretation (Guetterman & James, 2023). The use of this tool was crucial for this study since researchers based the analysis of the data on the MAXQDA software. Certainly, researchers uploaded the transcription of the eight interviews (see Appendix 1) and the fifteen reflective journals (see Appendix 2) in order to facilitate the analysis of the written data. Thus, researchers framed the information within the codes previously created with the deductive analysis. The frequency of the codes was provided along with the graphics of the same data, subsequently, researchers could interpret the information provided by the software.

3.5. Techniques and instruments for data collection

3.5.1. The Observation

Observation seems to be a reliable tool at the moment of selecting a qualitative approach since by employing observational techniques, it is possible to understand the environment in which the class took place, in that way, many perspectives and points of view are gained (Otero-

Saborido et al., 2024). Furthermore, the role of the researcher during the observation tends to be passive, so there was no kind of interaction with the participants, in order to avoid manipulating the observation or shaping the behavior of the group (Qaddo, 2019). The researchers planned to observe a selected English course for five weeks, to notice how the teacher has adapted his classes to this new methodology without the textbook. Nonetheless, observation by itself can sometimes not be enough, that is the reason why researchers tend to use a specific instrument to note down what is being observed.

3.5.2. Reflective Journals

According to Ortlipp (2008), reflective journals allow researchers to examine their personal assumptions and to clarify any belief or perception. The different reflections made, aimed to gather different points of view from the researchers, where the opinions and perspectives were naturally different. Reflective journals give the research the opportunity to go deep in the analysis of what the researcher can see and perceive during the observation stage (see Appendix 2). Thanks to the development of this instrument the study obtained deeper insights. Essentially, this instrument provided the researchers a clear understanding about how the English lessons at the Language Center are getting adapted. A total of fifteen weekly journals were completed based on five sessions of observation, each observation had a duration of 4 hours due to the intensive classes.

3.5.3. Interviews

Interviews are an appropriate instrument when there is the need of gathering in-depth data into individuals' perspectives, opinions, experiences, and emotions (Easwaramoorthy & Zarinpoush, 2006). Interviews are a viable tool for collecting detailed and relevant information of the participants, ideal for understanding experiences and perceptions. Researchers must be genuinely open to unexpected responses and willing to seek further insights from participants

about the subject being studied. Understanding the participant's viewpoint is crucial to this method, both for grasping its purpose and for conducting successful interviews. This instrument was selected in the study since it helped the researchers to obtain deep information on the experiences of the students studying English without a textbook (see Appendix 4). According to Anderson and Kirkpatrick (2015), "Researchers using narrative interview techniques do not set out with a fixed agenda; rather, they tend to let the interviewee control the direction, content, and pace of the interview" (p. 14).

Based on the previous information researchers randomly selected 8 participants for this study, all of whom had signed the consent letter (see Appendix 7). In this way, researchers proceeded to schedule the meeting for interviewing the students, certainly, the appropriate option for everyone was to interview the participants within the class hours. The researchers asked for permission from the teacher to get students out of the class for approximately 30 to 40 minutes. That process was followed, and interviews were carried out, each varying in content due to the unique nature of the procedure. Nonetheless, the question-guide worked incredibly as a support, a lot of questions were derived from the guide and the expected time was accomplished. In total, eight in-depth narrative interviews were conducted in Spanish with eight participants—five in person and two via Zoom. Researchers did not schedule more interviews since the information gathered was insightful and conclusive.

3.6. Participants

A total of twenty-nine university students, aged between 20 to 28, of a higher education institution took part in the present narrative inquiry study. The number of female participants overpasses the number of male participants, counting twenty-four females and five males in the course. The participants were in the 4th level of English and they were selected for this study since they accomplished the requirements. To illustrate, this group had previously used the textbook as their primary resource for learning English for two semesters before discontinuing

its use and transitioning to alternative materials. For the interview process, eight students of the twenty-nine were randomly selected. Ethical considerations were prioritized, and the researchers obtained permission from the language center director and the teacher in charge of the class (see Appendix 5). All participants were informed about the objectives and purpose of the research study and were also given the opportunity to ask questions before signing the consent letter (see Appendix 6). By signing the letter, they granted the researchers permission to observe and conduct interviews in case they were selected.

3.7. Phases in Narrative Inquiry Research

1. Identify the purpose and focus of the study

This study aims to explore the students' experiences of studying English without a textbook as the primary teaching resource. By using a narrative inquiry methodology, the research focuses on understanding how students perceive, adapt and navigate to this sudden change in the methodology in the Language Center.

2. Select Participants

For the selection of the participants some essential characteristics were considered. The first key factor was selecting a group of students who have had the chance to study English in the language center while the textbook was still used. This ensured that the participants had experienced the shift to learning without a textbook. The second factor was the willingness of the participants to be a part of the research. It was essential to ensure that they were interested and comfortable while being observed and sharing their experiences.

3. Collect Data

In this study, data was collected through observations which allowed the researchers to have a clear idea about the varied reactions and attitudes of the participants during the lessons. Moreover, based on the three different perspectives gathered by the researchers. The reflective journals were completed to back up the observation and go deep in the

analysis of the different reactions of the participants. Additionally, eight interviews were developed to understand the experiences of the participants.

4. Analyze Data

After gathering the evidence for the study, the data was analyzed through categorization for the reflective journal and thematic analysis for the interviews. These techniques were used to identify recurring patterns, unique experiences and perspectives. The data was coded inductively starting with the excerpts, grouping them into themes and finally developing codes.

5. Restoring

The participants' stories were reconstructed into narratives, balancing their authentic voices with the research focus. The narratives were carefully structured to reflect both individual experiences and shared themes, highlighting the richness and complexity of their experiences.

6. Report Findings

The final step is to report the findings of the research to illustrate the participants' experiences. The results were presented in Figures which contained the different themes and codes found on the analysis of the interviews and the reflective journals.

4. Findings and Discussions

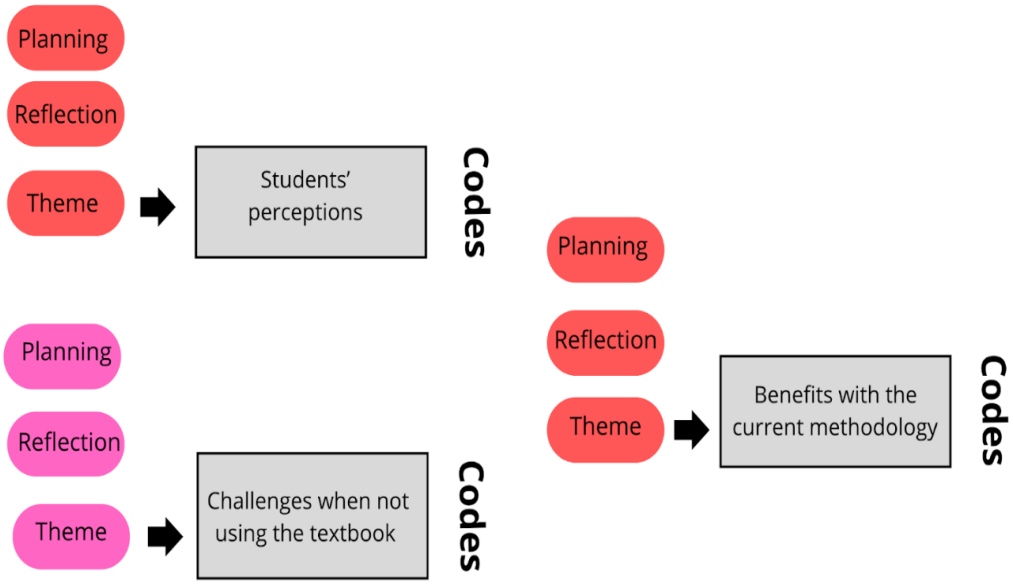
4.1. Interviews

It is important to emphasize the participants' willingness to respond to the interviews, sharing their different perspectives, experiences, and allowing their classroom to be observed during the English lessons. There were assigned acronyms to ensure the identity of the eight

interviewees. Interview 1 = AN, Interview 2= VC, Interview3= MO, Interview 4= SA, Interview 5= AA, Interview 6= EV, Interview 7= JA and Interview 8= CG.

Figure 1

Data processing



Note. The deductive data processing steps, showing how planning, reflection, and themes lead to the main themes.

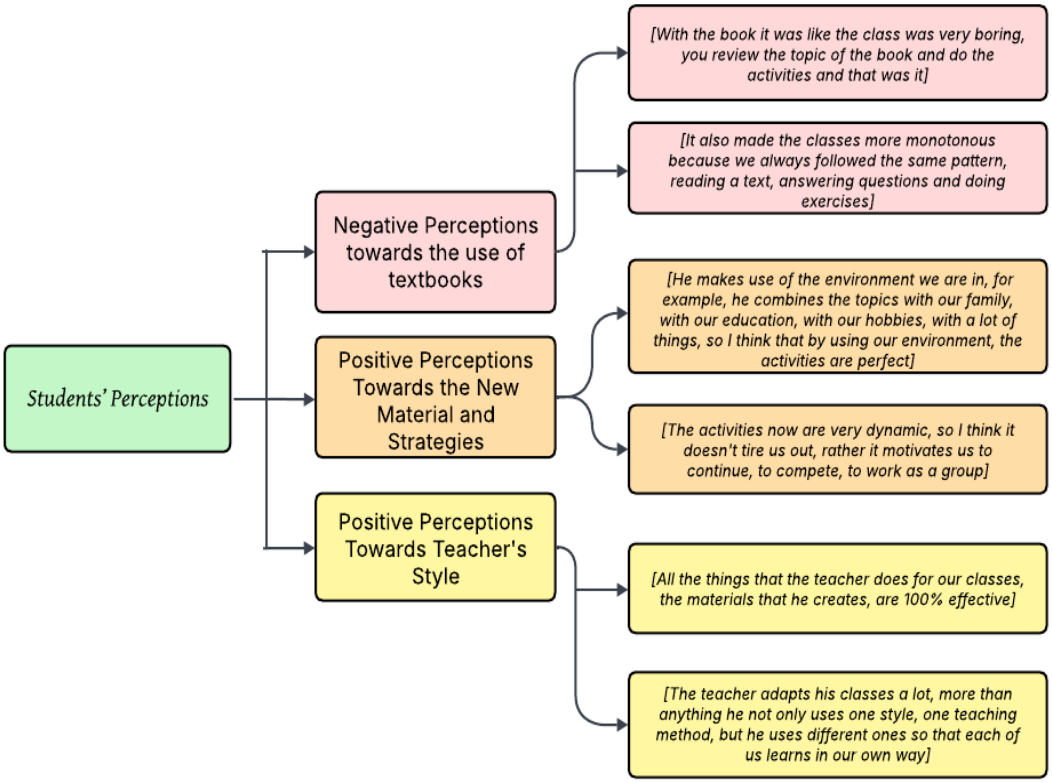
As shown in figure 1, in order to analyze the collected data, three overarching themes were settled: 1) Students' Perceptions, 2) Challenges when not using the textbook, and 3) Benefits with the new methodology. To create these themes, researchers made use of a deductive analysis to look for precise information that responds to the pre-established research questions. The deductive process differs from the rest since this approach may take as a basis the theory and research questions (Stephens, 2018). The themes were thoroughly alienated with the objectives of this study and also took a strong influence from the literature review.

4.2.Participants perceptions

Different perceptions of the participants were identified by the researchers throughout the analysis of their responses, shedding light on their varied experiences and attitudes towards textbooks, the new teaching materials, strategies, and teaching styles.

Figure 2

Students' Perceptions



Note. Students' different perceptions of the use of the new academic material and textbooks.

Concerning the students' perceptions, Figure 2 displays the varied insight of participants into the use of the new resources and the textbooks. Students expressed dissatisfaction with textbooks, describing them as monotonous and limiting classroom engagement. In contrast, the new materials and strategies were praised for being dynamic and motivational, fostering active participation and collaboration. Additionally, participants highlighted the teacher's adaptable

approach, emphasizing the use of diverse methods tailored to individual learning needs, which they perceived as highly effective.

The use of textbooks to teach English is perceived to have had a negative impact for students. All participants mentioned some potential drawbacks of this resource, such as the tendency to create monotony. Repeated comments also emphasized the textbook's inability to adapt to the diverse needs of students. SA referred to this situation as follows:

> *También hacía que las clases fueran un poco más monótonas porque casi siempre seguíamos el mismo esquema, leer un texto, responder preguntas y hacer ejercicios. Ahora sin el libro las clases son mucho más dinámicas. [It also made the classes more monotonous because we almost always followed the same pattern, reading a text, answering questions and doing exercises. Now without the book the classes are much more dynamic]*

Reinforcing what SA mentioned, CG affirms that,

> *Es que en las otras clases eran muy tradicionales, o sea, era como que solo escuchan al profe y ya, y eso es lo que dice el profe y está bien, pero no reforzamos conocimiento, entonces yo creo que está mejor así sin un libro. [In the other classes they were very traditional, that is, it was like they just listened to the teacher and that's it, and that's what the teacher says and that's fine, but we don't reinforce knowledge, so I think it's better that way without a book]*

Based on what SA and CG mentioned, it can be argued that the use of the textbook contributed to a sense of monotony in the classroom, as lessons usually followed a repetitive structure of fulfilling the pre-established activities. This statement is related to the study of Acosta and Cajas (2018), who mentioned that textbooks often fail to cater to the diverse needs of the learners, resulting in monotonous and inflexible classroom practices. Consequently, the

uniform approach can limit the variety and flexibility of classroom practices, making the learning experience less engaging for students. In contrast the absence of the textbook, appears to have brought more variety and engagement to the classes, making them more dynamic as shown in EV's excerpt.

> *He hablado con mis compañeras y en cierto punto concordamos con lo mismo, estamos creo que satisfechas con las actividades, con los juegos, las plataformas que el profe ocupa, estamos satisfechas porque sí ha habido un gran avance en nuestro aprendizaje. [I have talked with my classmates and to a certain extent we agree with the same thing, we are satisfied with the activities, the games, the platforms that the teacher uses, we are satisfied because there has been a great advance in our learning]*

The participant and her classmates express a collective positive perception of the teaching methods being implemented. They are pleased with the use of different activities, games, and platforms introduced by the teacher, suggesting that these resources are effective and engaging. In addition, EV mentions an improvement in their learning process, indicating that these methods are considered effective for academic success. As concluded by Lin (2019), participants tend to appreciate the open educational resources thanks to their flexibility and different dynamics. The flexibility and variety that these resources offer is aligned with the students' needs, offering them the opportunity to engage with the content in ways that feel personalized and adaptable. To reinforce what EV affirms, SA mentions that,

> *Las actividades que el docente implementa dentro de sus horas de clases son más dinámicas y variadas y hace que no sigamos un mismo ritmo de un libro, estar siguiendo tales instrucciones, entonces hace que nosotros mismos implementemos nuevas estrategias para realizar una actividad o llegar a un punto específico. [The activities that the teacher implements within their class hours are more dynamic and varied and makes us not follow the same rhythm of a book, to be following some*

instructions, then makes us implement new strategies to perform an activity or reach a specific point]

And JA, reinforces by saying

Cuando en cambio sin usar el libro, como que tenemos chance de hacer juegos, de ver diapositivas, videos, imágenes, llama más, capta más nuestra atención, entonces es mucho más motivante. [When instead, without using the book, we have the chance to play games, to see slides, videos, images, it calls more, it captures our attention more, so it is much more motivating.]

SA and JA affirm that the activities implemented by the teacher during class hours are more dynamic and varied compared to the structure of following a textbook. This approach encourages students to develop and apply new strategies to complete tasks or reach specific goals. In the study of Bhat. et al, (2021) is mentioned that "Diversity is inevitable in every walk-of-life, and rightly in the learning process" (p.1). This highlights the importance of recognizing and valuing individual differences within educational settings. With these adapted materials, it can be argued that the teacher is fostering a more inclusive and engaging learning environment, tailoring activities to meet the diverse needs and interests of the students. In another section, the participants mentioned that they like the new activities that the teacher is implementing, therefore having a positive perception, as mentioned by VC,

está utilizando varios juegos, varias dinámicas, porque una clase de inglés no sólo se trata pararse al frente y hablar acerca de inglés, también debe haber una motivación, tanto del estudiante y, tanto al docente hacia el estudiante, haciendo con dinámicas juegos para que los estudiantes no se sientan aburridos. [he is using various games, various dynamics, because an English class is not only about standing in front and talking about English, there must also be a motivation, both from the student and from

the teacher to the student, playing games with dynamics so that the students do not feel bored]

When the institution stopped using the textbook as the main tool, the work-charge fell completely into the teacher. Participants explained that the variety of activities, based on different tools and platforms increased the motivation. As mentioned by Filgona et al. (2020), the role of the teacher in creating a supportive environment increases motivation and opportunities.

This demonstrates that the effort of the teacher in designing diverse lessons can have a positive effect on student engagement and learning outcomes, something that was not as easily achievable when the textbook was the primary resource. Additionally, Acosta and Cajas (2018) suggest that the ability of teachers to create personalized and relevant material according to the context of the students, contributes to the learning acquisition.

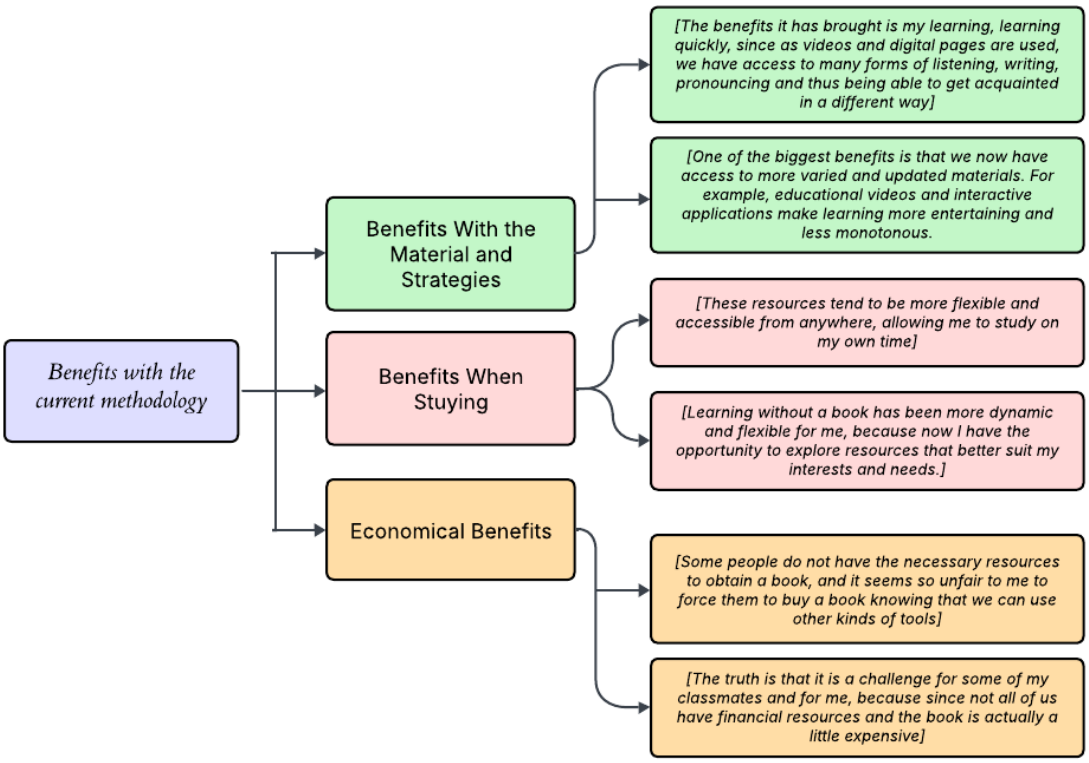
4.3. Benefits with the New Material and Strategies.

The analysis of the results revealed several benefits that students have found at the moment to learn English with the new methodology and strategies. The frequency of specific codes revealed that these benefits were primarily linked to the innovative materials and teaching strategies employed.

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Figure 3

Benefits with the current methodology



Note. Students' perceived benefits associated with the current methodology.

Based on the data presented in figure 3, it can be inferred that during classes participants recognized different assets or aspects they considered imperative for learning. These included the variety and adaptability of materials and strategies, the flexibility in study methods that allowed independent learning, and the reduction of economic burdens typically associated with purchasing textbooks. Participants highlighted how digital resources made learning more dynamic, interactive, and accessible, contributing to a personalized and engaging educational experience.

A lot of advantages regarding the use of material were identified by the participants, a recurrent aspect mentioned was about the implementation of technology in different areas.

Students emphasized that the use of audiovisual material, interactive apps, colorful slides, make learning more efficient and engaging, bringing with it different perceptions, as AA states:

> *Los beneficios que ha traído es mi aprendizaje, el aprender de manera rápida, ya que como se usa vídeos, páginas digitales, eso, entonces uno mediante los vídeos puede, salen muchas formas de lo que es el escuchar, el escribir, el pronunciar y así poder familiarizarnos de diferente manera. [The benefits it has brought is my learning, learning in a fast way, since we use videos, digital pages, and so on, then through the videos we can learn many ways of listening, writing, pronouncing, and so we can familiarize ourselves in a different way]*

To reinforce what AA mentioned, MO states:

Entonces, esas alternativas, digamos, como que sí enganchan y también se aprende, porque se puede hacer varias veces y eso permite que se pueda como que entender de mejor manera. [So, these alternatives, let's say, they are engaging and you also learn, because you can do it several times and that allows you to understand it in a better way]

Certainly, the use of different materials has brought with it positive responses from most of the students. Participants recognized that the integration of technology supports not only faster but also more varied forms of learning. This approach offers multiple opportunities for students to grasp complex concepts at their own pace, fostering both comprehension and retention. The personalized nature of these methods appears to strengthen student engagement and autonomy, enhancing their overall educational experiences. Importantly, a curious aspect that participants highlighted was the good perception towards the interactions during group activities. SA mentions:

> *Sobre todo, me ha ayudado muchísimo la confianza, ya que debido a que ya no utilizamos un libro dentro de clases, la mayoría de trabajos los hacemos en grupo, entonces me hace convivir más con otras personas, entonces ahí es cuando*

compartimos diferentes ideas, diferentes opiniones, entonces es lo que hace crecer sobre todo la motivación o la confianza en uno mismo. [Above all, confidence has helped me a lot, since we no longer use a book in class, most of the work is done in groups, so it makes me live more with other people, so that is when we share different ideas, different opinions, so that is what makes motivation and self-confidence grow]

To reinforce what SA mentioned, EV stated:

A mí siempre me ha gustado como tal aprender y estudiar en grupo, entonces es mejor, en mi caso es mejor así porque ya no entiendo algo, le pregunto a mi compañera que sí lo sabe, entonces entre todos orientamos nuestras dudas y aprendemos de mejor manera. [I have always liked to learn and study in a group, so it is better, in my case it is better this way because I don't understand something, I ask my classmate who does know it, then we can all orient our doubts and learn in a better way]

Collaborative work fosters inter-personal skills and fair interaction in a respectful environment (Mattessich & Johnson, 2018). Analyzing the comments helped deduce that creating an engaging environment supported by well-designed materials can foster students' enthusiasm and motivation to learn English. Similarly, something that is important to mention is the adaptation along with the feedback of the teacher. Students have stated that this aspect makes learning easier by removing negative feelings from the environment. As EV states:

Yo creo que sí, depende, el profe, como que, de acuerdo a los exámenes como tal que vimos, ya ve cuáles son nuestras fallas y ha sabido seleccionar, creo que bien las actividades, de acuerdo a nuestro ritmo. [I think that yes, it depends, the teacher, as if, according to the exams we saw, he already sees what our faults are and has been able to select, I think,that well, the activities, according to our rhythm]

To reinforce what EV mentioned, JA states:

> *Hay cosas en las que nosotros, puntuales, que la mayoría nos habíamos confundido, entonces él trató de retroalimentar eso, usó eso para podernos dar una nueva clase y que el aprendizaje hizo un poco más efectivo. [There are things that we, punctually, that most of us had been confused about, so he tried to feed that back, he used that to give us a new class and that learning became a little more effective*

Adapting material to the class is an exceptional benefit since the teacher adapts activities, feedback, and gives supportive classes for students who need it, when they need it. Consequently, teachers are able to know their students more deeply by creating their own material and interacting. As Acosta and Cajas (2018) mention, teachers have the opportunity to engage students through eye contact, prodding, and feedback. To conclude, students also perceived a great benefit for them and the institution, which is the economical factor, as SA states:

> *comprar ese libro era un desafío enorme, grande, sobre todo porque el precio no era nada accesible y nosotros como estudiantes, bueno, desde mi punto de vista como estudiante, hay muchas otras prioridades en las que debo gastar mi dinero, como transporte, comida o incluso otros materiales para otras materias. [Buying that book was a huge, huge challenge, especially because the price was not at all affordable and we as students, well, from my point of view as a student, there are many other priorities where I have to spend my money, like transportation, food or even other materials for other subjects]*

Students felt a sense of relief upon discovering they would no longer need to spend money on textbooks. To be more precise, many students recognized that buying the textbook as a waste of money due to the scarce use given to the book in classes. As highlighted by Martin et al, (2017), educational institutions should prioritize accessible alternatives to traditional resources to promote inclusive learning environments. A lot of aspects can be considered when

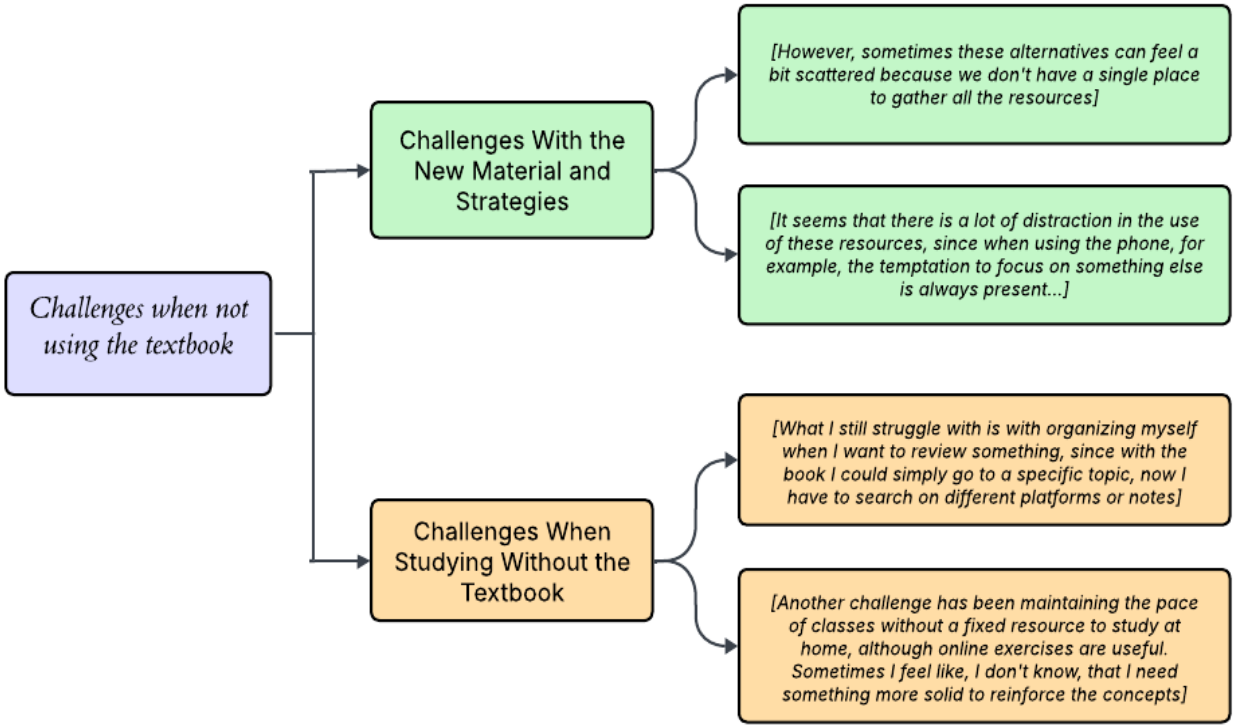
changing methodology and considering the economical background of students must be crucial for an institution.

4.4.Challenges with the New Methodology

During the analysis of the participants' responses, several challenges associated with the new methodology were identified. The shift away from textbooks brought many benefits and positive perceptions, but it also introduced some difficulties. These challenges show that the use of innovative teaching strategies may encounter obstacles as any other educational material.

Figure 4

Challenges when not using the textbook



Note. Students' perceived challenges associated with the current methodology.

Based on the data presented in figure 4, it is evident that students face some challenges when adapting to alternative resources in the absence of textbooks. The data highlights issues

such as disorganization, distractions, and difficulties with study practices due to the absence of the textbook.

Some potential drawbacks with the current methodology were identified by the researchers. Factors such as distraction and technological issues were mentioned by the majority of the participants. As stated by MO,

> *creo que, en este sentido, o sea, sí ha sido como que existe mucha distracción dentro del uso de estos recursos, puesto que, al estar usando el teléfono, por ejemplo, siempre está ahí como presente la tentación de meterle a otra cosa, de entrar a ver el mensaje que me llegue en WhatsApp, por ejemplo, o quizás un comentario que me hicieron en TikTok, cosas así. [I think that in this sense, I mean, it has been like there is a lot of distraction in the use of these resources, since while using the phone, for example, there is always the temptation to go to something else, to check the message I received on WhatsApp, for example, or maybe a comment I received on TikTok, things like that]*

Distraction when using technology appears to be a challenge of this new methodology. The use of cellphones for an English lesson can lead to temptations to check and answer messages or to enter social media. The authors Kay and Benzimra (2017), concluded that students tend to get easily distracted when using their cellphones to complete an activity. This suggests that while technology can offer valuable learning opportunities, it also carries the risk of students diverting their attention from the task at hand, which could undermine the effectiveness of the lesson. To reinforce what MO mentioned, EV says,

> *más que todo, los celulares y, sobre todo, los compañeros que tenemos al lado, es una gran distracción, el estar ahí con el celular, ya llega un mensaje, otro mensaje, entonces, ya se distrae. [more than anything else, the cell phones and, specially, the*

colleagues next to us, it is a great distraction, being there with the cell phone, a message arrives, another message arrives, then, it is already a distraction]

Technology can create some distractions that might reduce the effectiveness of the learning experience. As specified by Cervera et al. (2010), the technological resources can shape the learning experience, but they can be utilized effectively or ineffectively. If not properly managed, these resources could shift the focus away from the intended educational goals. Technological issues also have been reported by the participants, which is expected in technology-driven settings. It is stated that the internet connection, an essential tool for this approach, can have many inspected problems, as SA mentions,

Aun así, no todas las herramientas tecnológicas son igual de útiles. Algunas plataformas que hemos utilizado, por ejemplo, en clase a veces son un poco confusas o lentas, lo que puede ser frustrante para mí y para mis compañeros. Por ejemplo, cuando se requiere acceso a internet y hay problemas con la conexión, eso interrumpe el flujo de la clase y hace que perdamos bastante tiempo. [Still, not all technology tools are equally useful. Some platforms that we have used, for example, in class are sometimes a bit confusing or slow, which can be frustrating for me and my classmates. For example, when internet access is required and there are problems with the connection, it disrupts the flow of the class and causes us to lose quite a bit of time]

MO also makes emphasis about this situation by saying,

también algunas plataformas que requieren una conexión a internet, pienso que a veces puede ser, este, inefectivas a veces, ya que no siempre es accesible para todos los estudiantes, entonces eso pienso que es poco inefectivo, porque las actividades que dependen completamente de la tecnología, a veces limitan la participación cuando hay problemas técnicos, como que se va el internet, no tienen internet y eso, entonces por eso. [also some platforms that require an internet connection, I think that sometimes it

can be, this, ineffective sometimes, because it is not always accessible to all students, so I think it is not very effective, because the activities that depend entirely on technology, sometimes limit participation when there are technical problems, like the internet goes down, they don't have internet and so on, so that's why]

Participants reflected some frustration caused by slow, confusing platforms or unstable internet connection. These issues disrupt the flow of lessons and limit participation, while losing valuable time. In the book of Selwyn (2022), it is stated some problems with technology in education, common challenges include connectivity problems, lack of proper training, and difficulties in integrating technology into traditional teaching methods. If not managed effectively, it can lead to a loss of interest, emphasizing the teachers' role in addressing these challenges.

In another section, participants reported difficulties at the moment to study without the textbook, emphasizing that the lack of a structure made it challenging to reinforce their knowledge. AN reported that,

el mayor reto para mí ha sido organizar mi estudio personal sin la guía que tenía, porque sería independiente en cierto punto, porque antes ya el libro nos proporcionaba los ejercicios y lo que teníamos que hacer, mientras que ahora este con los recursos tenía que buscarlos a veces por mi cuenta y así como no tenía eso físico. [the biggest challenge for me has been to organize my personal study without the guide that I had, because it would be independent at a certain point, because before the book already provided us with the exercises and what we had to do, while now this one with the resources I had to look for them sometimes on my own and so as I didn't have that physical]

To reinforce what AN mentioned, SA affirms that,

> *Sin embargo, reconozco que hay momentos en los que extraño la estructura del libro, especialmente cuando quiero, no sé, repasar algo de forma más ordenada. [However, I admit that there are times when I miss the structure of the book, especially when I want to, I don't know, go through something in a more orderly fashion]*

VC also talks about it,

> *Sin utilizar el texto, pues la verdad, hay muchos retos de por medio, porque prácticamente en el libro usted se puede sentar prácticamente en una mesa y abrir el libro y decir, aquí está todo. [Without using the text, well, the truth is, there are many challenges involved, because practically in the book you can practically sit at a table and open the book and say, here is everything]*

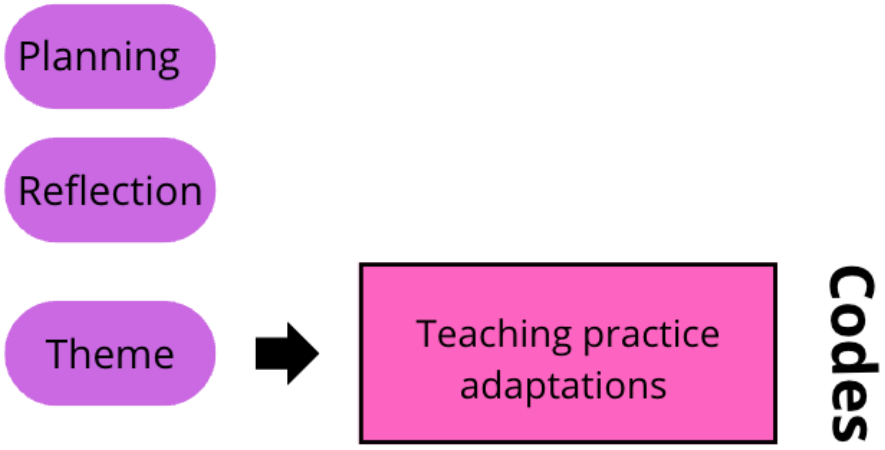
The participants recognized that they struggled to find a sense of direction and organization since they were accustomed to having a clear guide of learning. This absence of a clear structure affects the ability of the students to engage effectively with the content, especially if they want to study. Moreover, without the familiar framework provided by textbooks, students may feel uncertain about how to prioritize or approach the material.

4.5. Reflective Journals

The researchers conducted a five-week observation period, during which they completed a personal reflective journal. In order to simplify the data analysis process, the researchers are identified as follows: Marlon Arichabala = Researcher1 , Brian Arevalo = Researcher 2, Domenica Ruiz = Researcher 3.

Figure 5

Data Processing



Note. The deductive data processing steps, showing how planning, reflection, and themes lead to the major theme.

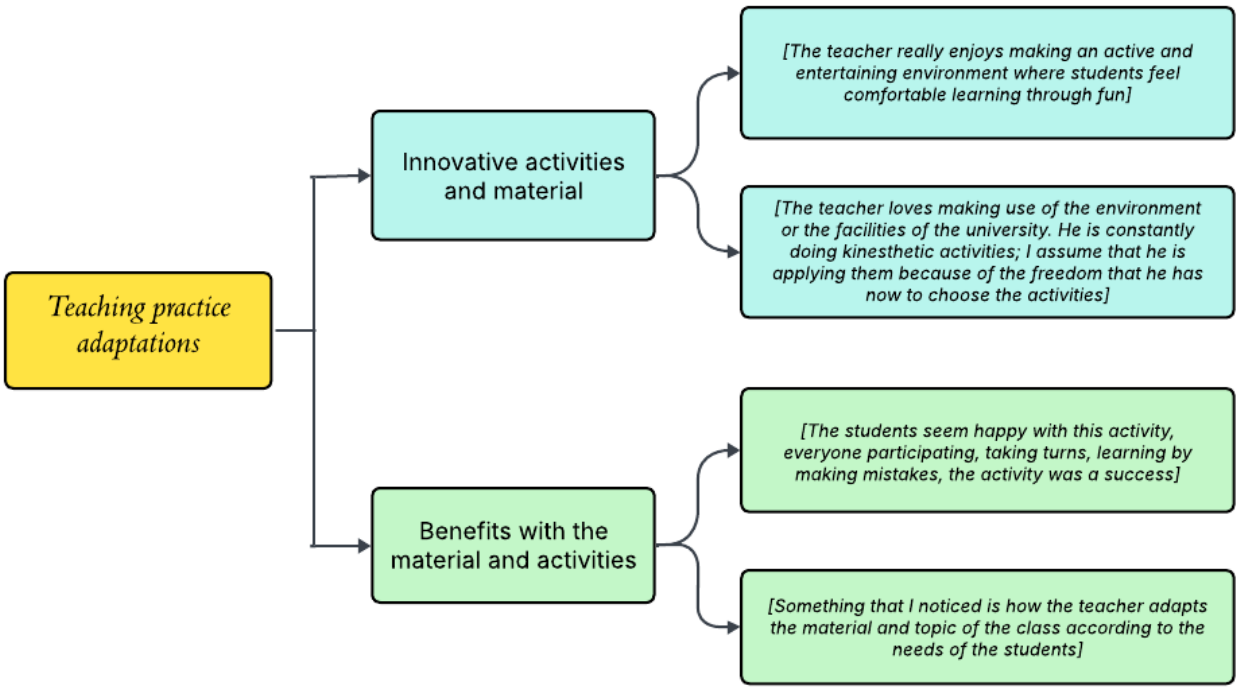
As illustrated in Figure 5; to analyze the data collected in the reflective journals, a deductive thematic analysis was carried out by the researchers. For the reflective journals one main theme was established; 1) Teaching practice adaptations, which had two main codes.

4.5.1. Teaching Practice Adaptations

During the observational process, the researchers identified the different adaptations made by the teacher as a result of the change in the methodology.

Figure 6

Teaching practice adaptations



Note. Codes derived from the main theme, emphasizing innovative activities and materials as well as their benefits.

By analyzing the reflective journals, researchers 1, 2 and 3 identified and documented the innovative activities and materials used by the teacher. Another important finding identified was the benefits students experienced from using these materials and activities.

As previously stated, the discontinuation of textbooks prompted teachers to explore alternative methods to meet the diverse students' needs. These different options mostly were connected with technology, as researcher 1 noted down.

The next activities were also done or carried out thanks to the technology: group game with (jeopardy), QR code to complete a virtual activity, questions in a powerpoint presentation, and to finish, students completed an exit ticket activity in their notebooks, which was displayed on the presentation. [Las siguientes actividades también se hicieron o llevaron a cabo gracias a la tecnología: juego en grupo con (jeopardy), código QR para completar una actividad virtual, preguntas en una presentación de powerpoint, y para finalizar, los alumnos

completaron una actividad de exit ticket en sus cuadernos, que se mostraba en la presentación]

Researcher 3 also wrote that,

> *The next activity was the HANGMAN, an online game available on the internet. The teacher was asking everyone, one by one, to participate and to get involved with the activity*

Activities were also carried out using the cellphone, as the Researcher 2 reported,

> *There were many activities on the cell phone such as word wall games, image description, and completing sentences.*

Teachers had to quickly look for options to innovate their classes and to create their own material, with technology proving to be a valuable resource in supporting their journey. As mentioned by Mooers (2020), technology enhances engagement and offers multiple learning opportunities to students. The successful integration of technology depends on how well teachers can leverage it to meet diverse learning needs and maintain students' interest.While technology was mostly used during the different lessons, other options were also identified, as noted by researcher 1

> *The teacher is adapting the different resources to meet the diverse needs of the Ecuadorian classrooms. He is bringing printed material and providing students with clear templates for some activities, this saves time and allows students to work confidently.*

The same Researcher noticed that,

> *The students were doing the interviews to the other classmates, they seemed shy but engaged, they were outside and running and asking, this was a good kinesthetic activity*

To reinforce what researcher 1 mentioned, researcher 2 describes another activity

> *They were taking photos of dogs, trees, doors, of themselves, etc. They were really engaged with this activity, they were running, laughing and having a good time while taking the photos and writing sentences.*

Researcher 3 also described a different activity,

> *This activity was different from the rest, the teacher had a backpack full of different stuff (realia).*

The observed variety in teaching methods and activities, including the use of printed materials, kinesthetic activities and the use of realia, shows how the teacher is effectively addressing the diverse needs of the students. By employing innovative strategies, the teacher is creating a dynamic and inclusive learning environment, as well as providing multiple ways of engagement. In another session, some benefits with these materials based on the researcher's observation were identified. Researcher 1 wrote about this situation,

> *I immediately noticed positive behavior among the students, they seemed really engaged with the activities, always participating, asking questions and discussing with their classmates to select the correct answer.*

Researcher 2 also stated that

> *The teacher looked more prepared and confident with the materials. The students did not lose interest in the class. The fact that they are asking questions demonstrates interest with the class and with the language.*

And Researcher 3 noticed an important statement.

> *Something that I noticed is how the teacher adapts the material and topic of the class according to the needs of the students.*

These materials not only enhance student engagement but also support diverse learning styles. As mentioned in the study of Osborne (2019), “Growing evidence base suggests that well-designed learning environments can enhance learning for students” (p.3) . By combining adaptive materials, engaging activities and technology the teacher is creating a supportive learning environment. This approach encourages students to actively participate, to ask questions and to not lose attention to the class.

5. Conclusions

This narrative research study indicates that implementing new activities and materials in place of a textbook has positively impacted students at this Ecuadorian higher education institution. The participants showed negative perceptions towards the use of textbooks to learn English, as they found this resource monotonous and not aligned with their needs and realities. Additionally, the participants highlighted that the alternative resources such as kinesthetic activities, realia, and innovative material, fostered greater engagement and it addressed their individual needs in a better way. Moving away from textbooks allowed for more authentic and dynamic learning experiences, which participants found motivating and relevant to their realities. This shift underscored the importance of flexible and innovative material for English language instruction. It can be concluded that the use of non-textbooks materials can contribute to a more engaging and effective language learning environment.

While the use of these alternative resources has its advantages, the participants mentioned some potential drawbacks, most of them related with the use of technology. Firstly, because most of the new activities are technology-based, distraction has become an issue for some participants. A challenge to maintain focus due to the availability of social media or any other digital distraction impacted their overall learning experience. This highlights the importance of finding a balance between utilizing technology for educational purposes and minimizing potential distractions. Secondly, participants struggled to organize their study routines, as they were accustomed to having all the necessary information consolidated in a single resource, in this case, the textbook. While they expressed satisfaction with the provided materials, the absence of a clear structure posed challenges that could impact their learning process.

Finally, it can be concluded that moving away from traditional textbooks in this higher Education Institution has been perceived by students as largely beneficial. The adaptation of

classes to their needs and the implementation of diverse, dynamic activities have significantly enriched their learning experience. This shift has allowed for greater flexibility, enabling students to explore diverse resources and develop more independent learning skills, with many expressing a preference for these new approaches. Nonetheless, the sudden change of the instrument has certainly had effects on students, leaving a sense of bewilderment in the class atmosphere. This change has been treated with different instruments and strategies such as gamification, kinesthetic activities, and realia. The constant use of the textbook can be framed as traditional, so giving the step of changing tools can be considered beneficial for the institution. Certainly, this change appears to have fostered greater engagement and enriched learning experiences for many students.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study it is recommended to take in consideration the innovative materials and activities to encourage students' participation during EFL lessons, addressing different learning needs.

- It is recommended to inspire teachers to keep exploring alternative methods such as kinesthetic activities, the use of realia and interactive technology, which have proved their efficiency to develop dynamic, active and inclusive English lessons which ensure the increase of students' motivation and participation.
- To maximize effectiveness in students' learning and teaching process, the language Center should consider developing workshops related to technology, methodologies and strategies to ensure learning, where both students and teachers take advantage of the training.
- Language Center needs to address challenges in the syllabus, in order to explain a clear structure of the unit lessons, as well as teachers should focus on following the same.

- Future studies could examine the perspectives of teachers on adapting their teaching strategies without relying on textbooks and could provide deeper insights into the challenges and benefits of this approach.
- It would be valuable to have a quantitative perspective that reinforces the results and adds a broader prospect on the efficacy of the methodology with numerical information.
- It would be beneficial to extend this research to other classrooms, teachers, and participants to determine if the results are consistent or similar.
- This study would serve as the cornerstone for institutions who are seeking to move away from traditional textbooks and to innovate their methodology. In that way teachers can ensure the adequate language learning process for students avoiding monotony during EFL lessons.

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8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Transcriptions of Interviews Analyzed Using MAXQDA

Link:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JDDF9JKpECfhJhmyBJ23WbFJ1cpW3v0n/view?usp=sharing

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Appendix 2: Reflective Journals Analyzed Using MAXQDA

Link:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-GXB295CWuznxkMlViuWJqUarNrh-ewQ/view?usp=sharing

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Appendix 3: Reflective Journals Template

Researcher:

Reflective Journal

Date: 00/00/0000

Observation Context:
(Provide a brief overview of the setting and participants involved. For example, the specific activity observed, the time, and any key details about the group.)

Description of Observation:
(Describe in detail what you observed. Include the behaviors, interactions, or key events related to your thesis topic)

Personal Reflection:

- **Initial Thoughts/Feelings:**
  (What were your first reactions to what you observed? How did the situation make you feel?)
- **Challenges Faced:**
  (Identify any difficulties you experienced, either in observing or understanding what was happening. This could also include any bias you feel you may have introduced.)
- **Insights Gained:**
  (Write about what you learned from the observation. Did anything surprise you? Did it confirm or challenge your expectations? How do these observations inform your understanding of the students' experiences?)

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Appendix 4 : Questions of the narrative interviews

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Narrative Interviews

Hola, muchas gracias por aceptar participar en esta entrevista. Mi nombre es [Researcher], y estoy realizando este estudio como parte de mi tesis para entender las experiencias de los estudiantes que aprenden inglés sin el uso de un libro de texto como recurso principal.

El propósito de esta entrevista es conocer tus percepciones, los retos que has enfrentado y las oportunidades que has encontrado en este nuevo enfoque de aprendizaje. Tu perspectiva es muy importante y ayudará a identificar tanto los beneficios como las áreas que se pueden mejorar.

Quiero recordarte que esta conversación es completamente confidencial. Tus respuestas serán utilizadas únicamente para este estudio y no se compartirán con nadie de manera que puedan identificarte. También puedes optar por no responder alguna pregunta o finalizar la entrevista en cualquier momento sin problema.

Con tu permiso, grabaré esta entrevista para asegurarme de captar correctamente todo lo que compartas. ¿Estás de acuerdo con que grabe la sesión?

Nuevamente, muchas gracias por tu tiempo y disposición. Si estás listo/a, podemos comenzar con las preguntas.

¿Te gustaría ajustar algo o agregar algún detalle?

¿Cómo te encuentras el día de hoy?

¿Cuánto tiempo has estado estudiando inglés?

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Narrative Interviews

- *¿Cómo te sentiste cuando te enteraste que ya no utilizarían el libro como una herramienta primaria para aprender inglés?*
- *Desde tu punto de vista, ¿consideras que el costo del libro representaba un desafío para algunos estudiantes? ¿En algún momento sentiste que fue un desafío para ti?*
- *¿Qué otras alternativas está utilizando tu profesor en vez del libro?*
- *¿Puedes contarme si el no utilizar un libro afectó tu motivación y participación en clases? ¿Cómo lo viviste?*
- *¿Qué retos específicos has enfrentado mientras aprendes inglés sin utilizar el texto como herramienta principal?*
- *¿Qué oportunidades o beneficios concretos has encontrado al usar recursos alternativos en vez de un libro para aprender inglés?*
- *¿Qué opinas sobre el uso de tecnología y materiales auténticos en tus clases de inglés? ¿Tienes algún ejemplo de cómo han sido útiles o no?*
- *¿Puedes mencionar alguna herramienta o material relacionado con la tecnología que te haya resultado especialmente efectivo o inefectivo? ¿Por qué?*
- *¿Qué cambios has notado respecto al compromiso y atencion de tus compañeros con la clase mientras se usan los recursos alternativos?*
- *¿Puedes comparar tu experiencia aprendiendo sin libro a tus previas experiencias cuando el libro era usado? ¿Cuál prefieres? ¿Por que?*
- *¿Tienes alguna sugerencia basada en tus experiencias para mejorar las nuevas metodologías de enseñanza de inglés que no usan el libro como herramienta principal?*
- *¿Puedes contarme si estás satisfecho con tu progreso en el aprendizaje de inglés sin el uso de un libro? ¿Qué eventos o aspectos contribuyen a tu satisfacción o insatisfacción?*

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Appendix 5: Letter of consent from the director of the language center and Letter of Consent from the teacher in charge of the Class

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1M2PLvmGrLVr-dOE85tM03trUH9Ax4WPJ/view?usp=sharing

Appendix 6: Letter of consent from the participants for the observation

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ia-rCIIo4NYTVqHuBuZiev7WUkK5gmlQ/view?usp=sharing

Appendix 7: Letter of consent from the participants for the interviews

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YfDA95Bbf1E1hKoOZfODZ-aix91J7K4I/view?usp=sharing