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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

School of Modern Languages

Action Research as a tool for English Language Teaching syllabus
design within the context of a university in Western Mexico
by

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the ELT curriculum design and development process within a context, where English language is a compulsory subject across the undergraduate curriculum at University in Western Mexico. The study has adopted an four stage Action Research (AR) model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988).

The research is predominantly qualitative aiming to produce a rich description of the research participants and their environment. The main data sources were interviews with the participants. They were supplemented with a survey, two language tests, diaries and documents from the research site.

The findings of the study suggest that the use of AR as a tool for ELT curriculum design had a positive impact over areas such as syllabus design, teaching content and materials. The use of AR also helped to understand that the ELT syllabus design process must be underpinned by a systematic collection of data to make informed decisions, making a language course effective and efficient as a means of encouraging learning. Participants understood that AR creates knowledge based on enquiries conducted within specific and often practical contexts, and not necessarily in theoretical inputs generated by experts. Findings also showed that language teachers need to be aware of the complexities they face when deciding to conduct a process to innovate the language syllabus. To know about the experience of a group of language teachers participating in an AR cycle, reflecting about their practice, taking decisions, taking action and reflecting again about the impact of their actions over their work can encourage other language teachers from the same context or others to replicate the project and produce their own results. Data also shows the challenges that practitioners face when using AR to develop and design an ELT syllabus.

The study concludes that AR can be used as a tool to improve the ELT syllabus design process conducted within a Higher Education Institution, where decision making tend to be centralised.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Fernando Manuel Peralta Castro

declare that the thesis entitled

Action Research as a tool for English Language Teaching syllabus design within the context of a university in Western Mexico

and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- none of this work has been published before submission

Signed:

Date:.....

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ABBREVIATIONS USED

AR	AR
BEC	Business English Certificate
CBLT	Competency-Based Language Teaching
ELT	English Language Teaching
HRM	Human Resource Manager
LT	Language Teacher
NA	Needs Analysis
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
OPT	Oxford Placement Test
PNIEB	Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica
PSA	Present Situational Analysis
PUI	Programa Universitario de Inglés
SAC	Self Access Centre
SBCD	School Based Curriculum Development
SEP	Secretaría de Educación Pública
TBL	Task Based Learning
TSA	Target Situational Analysis
UC	University of Colima
UEP	University English Programme

Chapter One: The problematic situation and the action plan

1.1 Introduction

AR has been used to gain understanding of problematic social situations and their possible causes, and to enhance the practices within those situations (Burns, 2005). Reflective enquiry is undertaken by practitioners to gain understanding of the problem (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988). Scholars claim that AR is an alternative option for practitioners, teachers, and not necessarily specialists in the field of research, to get involved in research activities (Adelman, 1993; McNiff, 2013; Jefferson, 2014; Mertler, 2014). Substantial evidence of curriculum improvement through AR has been fully shared (Kirkgöz, 2008; Shawer, 2010; Banegas, 2011). Nason and Whitty (2007) used AR to improve their own practices as project directors, curriculum developers and teacher educators. AR research has been used for program renewal and instructional development (Carver and Klein, 2013). Bat and Fasoli (2013) provide an example of how AR can be used as a curriculum design device.

The cases above indicate that the development of curriculum can be accomplished with the participation of practitioners, and also suggest that the conduction of AR could lead to curriculum improvement. Therefore, this study aims to use AR as a tool for ELT syllabus design within the context of a university in Western Mexico. The conduction of this investigation is an opportunity to learn about the effects that the implementation of AR can produce change upon the ELT syllabus design and development process. This study has adopted an AR model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) to enhance the syllabus. The AR model explained in detail in chapter four contains four stages:

- To develop a plan of critically informed action to improve what is already happening, [found in chapter one]
- To implement the plan,
- To observe the effects of the critically informed action in the context in which it occurs,
- To reflect on these effects as the basis for further planning, subsequent critically informed action and so on

The first phase of the model critically evaluates the social situation to recognise constrains in order to implement an action plan. Therefore, this chapter provides an overview of the present situation of ELT in Mexico, starting with a discussion of ELT at three levels of the Mexican educational system, basic, lower secondary and upper secondary. This is followed by a brief description of the inclusion of English as a

foreign language in higher education. Then, the problematic situation of the UC ELT syllabus is explained. The evaluation of the situation informed the action plan to improve the practices of the situation.

For the implementation of the action plan, an analysis of the syllabus was carried out, together with the conduction of several Needs Analyses, as well as the improvement of the syllabus. All three actions are described in detailed in chapter six.

Chapter seven analyses the effects of the implementation of the action plan. It provides details of how the syllabus improved on the basis of NA findings. This chapter closely relates to the third phase of the AR model.

The fourth step of the model is developed in chapter eight and nine. Within these two chapters a careful reflection is made about the process of syllabus improvement through AR. Discussions are held concerning the suitability of employing NA to improve the syllabus, and the possibility that practitioners participate in AR projects.

First of all, the chapter discusses the situation concerning the ELT in Mexico, including a description of the inclusion of English as a foreign language in higher education. Secondly, the problematic situation of the UC ELT syllabus is explained, followed by a rationale of the study, the aims, and research questions. Next, the structure of the thesis is presented. Finally, a summary and conclusions are provided.

1.2 English, the main foreign language taught in Mexico

English language is at this time, the main foreign language taught within the educational system in Mexico as it is part of the curriculum of both lower secondary and upper secondary education (Davies, 2009). Moreover, after a curriculum reform in basic education system in 2008, and following the recommendations of the Organisation for the Economic Cooperation and Development (OCDE) indicating that educational systems are to prepare students in order for them to face the new challenges of a globalized world, in which contact among multiple languages and cultures is increasingly common (SEP, 2011). Therefore, the Secretariat of basic education acknowledged the need to include English as a subject in the curriculum of preschool and elementary education, as well as to make the necessary changes to the English subject curriculum in secondary school.

In order to carry out the actions that enable the articulation of English teaching, the Secretariat of Public Education has implemented the national English programme in basic education (NEPBE or *PNIEB: Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica*) from which syllabuses for the three levels of basic education are derived. Such syllabuses are based on the alignment and standardization of national and international standards, the selection of criteria for teacher training, the establishment of guidelines for the design and evaluation of educational materials, as well as for the certification of English language proficiency (SEP, 2010). All these components closely align with an educational model based on competencies which according to SEP (2011) ‘corresponds to the development of needs of Mexico in the XXI century’ (p. 24).

While the conceptualization of competencies and standards have been part of the terminology in documents of different countries for decades (Takayama, 2013), they are fairly new in Mexico. They were recently introduced with the comprehensive reform of basic education issued by the Mexican government as stated in the main document: ‘The 2011 study plan for basic education is the main document that states the competencies for life, the completion profile, curriculum standards and the expected learning outcomes, which altogether make up the students’ educational trajectory’ (SEP, 2011, p. 25).

Sayer and Ramírez Romero (2013) suggest that NEPBE ‘has transformed the landscape of English teaching in Mexico (...) [as it] represents the largest expansion of English language education in the country’s history’ (p.1). Sayer and Ban also maintain that NEPBE offers Mexican children develop other competencies that go beyond linguistic gains such as: ‘reinforces learning across other subject areas, connects [Mexican] students to migrant family members, serves multiple communicative functions in everyday life, and fosters intercultural awareness’ (p.1).

English classes in the public secondary schools in Mexico, where most students study English for three years, have generally been regarded as rather deficient. But according to Sayer and Ramírez Romero (2013) with the arrival of the NEPBE, public school students will have the opportunity of developing communicative competencies in the language, something that was reserved only for those students who could afford private studies. However, because NEPBE is a national project, and Mexico is a large, multicultural and multidimensional country, it faces very serious challenges. For

instance Sayer et al. (2013) indicate that the ability of qualified classroom teachers to cope with the implementation of the NEPBE across the whole Mexican republic is limited. Therefore, there is an imperative to focus on teacher training. As Sayer et al. recommend '(...) what is needed is for states to develop a carefully-designed and sustained program of on-going teacher training that responds to the professional development needs of their teachers' (p.2). There have risen problems in regards to the design, development and distribution of textbooks and educational materials as well. Besides the problems concerning distribution, Castro (2013) found major issues in regards the content of the textbooks. The researcher found that the books contained 'an overwhelming quantity of linguistic knowledge that was not aligned with the NEPBE' (p.1). Also, the majority of the tasks and activities were grammar oriented, and there was no evidence of tasks which fostered the development of communicative competencies. In addition, Mendoza and Puón (2013) report that what they call 'non-academic aspects' (p. 1), such as administrative issues like teachers' wages, working conditions, adequate facilities, teaching resources, equipment and language teacher specialization 'have neglected the successful implementation of the program' (p. 1). The researchers also consider that misconceptions around the nature of the NEPBE also hinder its appropriate achievement.

1.3 ELT in Mexican universities

The standpoint adopted by the Secretariat of Public Education regarding the teaching and learning of English at other educational levels in Mexico (post-secondary and higher education) aligns with the report issued by UNESCO (2009), which explicitly recommends the teaching of second languages, giving particular emphasis to the learning of English as the 'dominant language of scientific communication' (p. iv). For example the Education Sector Programme (Programa Sectorial de Educación) suggests to 'encourage the teaching of at least one second language (mainly English) as part of the study plans, and encourage its inclusion as a requirement for graduation' (SEP, 2007, p. 45). Although there is not a national English programme, as in basic education, several Mexican universities have incorporated English as a compulsory subject across their curriculum. The aim of their language courses is that students develop a good working command of English so that they have increased access to updated information to be able to be hired by multinational organizations, whose lingua franca is English, to

be able to participate in international conferences, and to travel abroad to take postgraduate courses (Davies, 2008).

In most universities English courses start at a false beginner level and the great majority of the students are in beginner, elementary and lower intermediate courses (Davies, 2008). The way they organize language teaching varies from one institution to another. Many require all students to finish a given number of English courses, usually with no reliable evaluation of their level of proficiency at the end. Some require their students to pass an English proficiency test to be able to graduate, which is the case of the UC. Unfortunately, there is still remarkably little research in the field of ELT in regards to institutions of Higher Education in Mexico, but some scholars have suggested that the results of ELT in the Mexican public education system in general, and in public state universities in particular, are 'indeed generally extremely poor' (Davies, 2009, p. 1). According to Mora Vazquez et al., (2013) there are two main distinct lines of thought on the failure of the ELT field. Technical work, 'inappropriate preparation of English language teachers and the use of inadequate engage teaching methodologies inside the classroom' (p. 3), and socio-political issues. For instance, unequal social conditions, or political decisions put above other interests or needs, such as the appointment of officials or staff members, who not only affect the learning and teaching of a foreign language, but also other key subjects of the curriculum such as math and reading. It is likely that there are other local factors that affect the proper development of the field, for instance culture. It is a fact that any of these factors, or a mixture of them could lead to the lack of success in ELT programmes. As Mora et al., (2013) suggest situations in different countries in Latin America, concerning technical work and sociopolitical issues 'have negative consequences for the status and identity of the ELT field' (p.4).

In Mexico the Secretariat of Public Education recommends adopting a competency-based approach to education (SEP, 2011). However, there is a tradition of Mexican institutions to provide courses in English for general purposes (Davis, 2008), which implies that in most cases language teaching gives priority to how the text of language follows the sequencing of grammar points throughout a text, and there is an attempt to teach grammar in an organized and systematic way.

As stated above, no national English language curriculum for Higher Education exists; therefore each university organizes its own, and in the case of the UC it arises from an

institutional policy, which states that ‘(...) a key element of the process is the acquisition of foreign languages; therefore, foreign language teaching programmes will be created at all educational levels (...)’ (Universidad de Colima, 2010, p. 46).

1.4 The problematic situation of the University English Programme (UEP) syllabus

An issue with the UEP ELT syllabus is that it suggests the intervention of specialists (Graves, 2008). UC authorities decided that English language should be a compulsory subject, and should be taught across the curriculum of the University.

The language syllabus of the UC started to develop at the end of the eighties, when the idea of creating a language teaching center at the UC to provide language education to the university community started to emerge (Peralta Castro, 2015). In those days, the UC underwent a process of internationalization, as Mexico was becoming a member of the North American Free Trade Agreement. A key component of the internationalization strategy was the rise of English as the dominant language of communication around the world, incorporated as a compulsory subject across the undergraduate curriculum, in the belief that its addition would not only enhance the policy of internationalization, but would also allow university students to become fluent English language users and, therefore, potential actors in the world of today. Including English in the wider undergraduate curriculum was a clear response to the UC’s new policies on globalization.

Experienced teachers were appointed to design a syllabus, photocopied materials taken from textbooks. Consequently, two projects, which later became Bachelor Degree dissertations and aimed to develop an English language syllabus, were carried out. The first one OPT-PATHWAYS, was a guide for students who studied English in the Self Access Centres (SACs). It was based on the Oxford Placement Test (OPT).

The OPT involves a carefully selected range of those structures consistently found in course books and examinations at elementary, intermediate and advanced levels (...) Each question in the OPT tests a specific grammatical item. The items are classified and ordered according to a conventional order of difficulty, so as to have lists of items from easiest to most difficult (...) Each pathway has a different topic and contains information about where to find the OPT topic tested (source, unit or chapter, part, page) in order to study it. The references were taken from a set of 35 sources (grammar books, text books, computer programmes, videos) (Rodriguez Reyes and Ortega Aguilar, 1997, p. 18-19).

Although the pathways were originally conceived to be followed only by attendees to the SACs, language teachers also used them as a language syllabus. Pathways never became the official English language syllabus, but they were supposed to be a key source of reference to plan and develop language lessons. A second project linked to the pathways was what the authors, (Espindola Sánchez et al., 1998), called: ‘The official University of Colima basic English syllabus’. The syllabus consisted of the relationships and functions of grammar contained in three different textbook series (Interchange, Spectrum and East-West). For an approximate period of four years, this was the official language syllabus for teaching English at the UC. In 2002 a charter was issued that established the organizational structure of the new University English Program (UEP), (known in Spanish as PUI, Programa Universitario de Inglés) and the English language officially became a compulsory subject in all undergraduate programmes.

The language instruction was organised into courses with 5 levels of proficiency, from ‘Beginner’ to ‘Advanced’ (B1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference), which became part of every undergraduate programme in the institution. English classes were distributed with a frequency and intensity of 3 hours per week in most of the undergraduate programmes, though in some cases this has begun to change. The syllabus for each level (1-5) contained a list of vocabulary, grammar, and functional items organised into units, with each level to be taught within a single semester, and it was based on a course book (the ‘Matters’ series). This syllabus was included in the wider curriculum document of all academic programmes in undergraduate education of the UC, and teachers through instruction, implement the prescribed syllabus.

It is important to highlight that the whole Mexican educational system in general and the UC in particular, has made every effort to provide students with opportunities to develop their English language skills. Examples of these efforts include the allocation of infrastructure for the learning of English, as well as the provision of funding for the payment of wages of language teachers. Additionally, English language teachers have had some pre-service teacher training since most of the teachers hired graduate from the UC school of foreign languages and hold a BA degree in ELT. Once hired, teachers are provided with support to obtain international certificates such as COTE or ICALT, FCE,

CAE, or IELTS (Peláez Carmona, 2008). Since the charter, there has not been an official statement about possible innovations. As a result the language teachers have been making decisions regarding the most suitable teaching materials for their teaching context, and they have adopted ESP course books in accordance with the field of study of the learners; this implies that those course books have become the new English language syllabus.

Within the approach to ELT syllabus the UC has adopted, there seems to be a gap between institutional English language teaching policy and classroom implementation, as different people perform roles. For instance, UC authorities decide the teaching of English must be integrated across the undergraduate curriculum. Syllabus designers decide on the organization of the courses as well as the content of the syllabus. Whilst teachers and learners are the recipients and implementers of decisions previously made. This approach to curriculum design falls within what Graves (2008) has called the specialist approach to curriculum.

In the specialist approach, the potential for mismatch is great because each different group of people performs different curriculum functions, uses different discourses, and produces different curriculum products. (...) by putting the classroom at the end of the chain of decisions, it positions teachers –and learners- as recipients and implementers of received wisdom, rather than decision-makers in their own right. (...) there is usually no room for valuation of the curriculum once it is implemented in the classroom (p. 150-151).

Instead of prescribing a syllabus to be implemented by teachers, it should be necessary to develop a principled project to collect and decode data, necessary to achieve a more profound understanding of the educational context within the UC, and to establish institutional principles for ELT syllabus development across the UC. It seems that the circumstances in which learners would use the language at university, or later on, in their professional lives, were not completely specified. The aims and outcomes of language teaching and learning were not clearly defined, and the reasons for including English as part of the curriculum were not certain. The UC's ELT curriculum falls within the description provided by Davies (2008) about the Mexican institutions of Higher Education that provide English courses. Davies claims that their courses 'are overwhelmingly courses in English for general purposes' (p.80).

The problematic situation described above concerning the UC ELT syllabus, requires developing an action plan that suggests activities to enhance the practices within this

situation. Therefore, the following section explains in detail what the action plan consists of.

1.5 Rationale of the study

For some time, language teaching was regarded as a field exclusively related to applied linguistics (Richards and Rodgers, 1986). During the last century, much of the motivation for changes in approaches to language teaching emerged from changes in teaching methods (Richards, 2001). In addition, over the last few decades there has been an increasing understanding that in the process of language teaching and learning several other factors intervene. Some of these factors include learners' opinions and beliefs (Oxford, 1990), learners' own motivation to learn (Griffiths, 2008), their language knowledge and lacks (Jordan, 1997), their communicative needs in regards to the target situation (Chambers, 1980), and the contextual factors that reveal particular features of a teaching context, which on occasion are ignored, but frequently define the outcome of a language course (Tudor, 2003). In sum, curriculum development is a comprehensive process.

In Mexico, as in many parts of the world, people dedicate large amounts of time and energy to the task of mastering the English language. At the UC teachers spend a lot of time planning language lessons, preparing teaching materials, and teaching their lessons. But, what educational principles are these activities based on? Whose interests do they serve? Can our practices be improved through looking at them to check whether they are as we feel they should be? While this study does not attempt to offer definite answers to these questions and concerns, it is hoped that through investigating the development of ELT syllabus through AR useful contributions can be made to the debate and evidence offered, which shed light on the complexities of language curriculum development and AR.

The language curriculum development process can be based on the assumption that decisions about methodology and output are determined by the content of instruction (Finney, 2002). A second assumption is centered in the selection of teaching activities, teaching techniques and methods (Richards, 2013). A third one starts with a careful statement of the desired results or outcomes; also known as an ends-means approach as seen in the work of Tyler (1949) and Taba (1962).

Previous evaluations of each of the three approaches have shown that adhering to an extreme view of any one of the three would be counterproductive. Each approach has supporters who can quote examples of their effective employment (Clark, 1987). Howatt (1984) explains that in the history of language teaching there have been different views that come and go in different settings and different moments, according to the belief system of the moment. Any approach embraces elements of content, communicative learning outcomes and tasks. The difference is in how they arrange and prioritize them and the emphasis given to each of them; according to the purpose for which they were designed (Clark, 1987).

The postulation underlying this study is that there is no best or worst ELT teaching approach, and that structural, functional, standards or tasks might each work well in different circumstances. It would seem that it is necessary to work towards a better understanding of the whole range of approaches available in order to know how each is likely to operate, and to be qualified to theorize from practice, and practice what is theorized (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). Additionally, to work towards an approach derived from activities located at the school level, this study recommends an approach which takes into account the local knowledge and understanding of a particular group of stakeholders (teachers, learners, potential employers, and policy makers) pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context. An approach which relies on local knowledge to identify problems, find solutions, and try them out to see what works and what does not in their specific context and to generate their own knowledge grounded in practice; this process of generation and pursuit of knowledge should be led by inquiry and reflection (Kumaravadivelu, 2001; Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

AR has been successfully used to encourage reflection upon problematic situations that arise in the normal course of educational institutions. Devoting time for reflection upon curriculum issues has helped to improvement (Nason and Whitty, 2007; Carver and Klein, 2013; and Bat and Fasoli, 2013).

According to McNiff and Whitehead (2010, p. 11) 'In AR, [taking action] is usually to conduct an experiment in which variables are manipulated to check whether it is possible to establish a cause-effect relationship.' In particular, this research aims to establish an AR model to develop an ELT syllabus within a context where there has been little empirical research concerning this field. This is in keeping with the purpose

of beginning ‘a process of improvement in learning, with a view of influencing thinking and behaviour’ (p. 11). The setting of a model will produce empirical evidence to suggest the potential advantages or disadvantage of developing an ELT syllabus through AR.

My interest in this subject comes from a variety of sources. First of all, from my experience as a language teacher in Mexico, which began for me the process of becoming aware of the dimensions within the language curriculum and the significance it can have over learning. I realised that decisions about the ELT curriculum were not based on the needs emerging from the school, but from decisions made at the top of the institutions. However, these decisions did not usually have a successful effect over learning.

Secondly, from research I conducted in order to identify the point of view of former students of the computer school at the UC about the language content of the syllabus. This investigation allowed me to understand the state of affairs of the language syllabus at my university.

I learned, among other things, that there are factors that do not necessarily have to do with languages aspects, such as grammar or vocabulary, which affect the learning process, such as the learners’ beliefs and opinion, as well as the target situation where the language will be used. I also realised that what I actually wanted to do was to improve and change the existing syllabus, but I had to involve other teachers in the process.

However, I felt I had only skimmed the surface of the problem and desired to continue the research. My desire was to improve the situation, and to follow a syllabus which was centred on the needs of the school, and not necessarily prescribed from the top.

I realised I still had not come to an adequate understanding of all the factors that intervene in the language syllabus design process, as well as a suitable research approach, which implied the involvement of participants in the process of syllabus design, as the process usually followed was top-down. This led to the interest of this PhD thesis.

Over the course of the PhD my ideas for curriculum design were further problematised. The conceptual framework set up by Skilbeck (1982) and adopted by Clark (1987), in

which educational value systems representing specific socio-political and philosophical beliefs are translated into language curriculum. The stand taken by White (1988) advocating the idea that the issues faced by anyone concerned with developing and introducing a new language syllabus are not only questions of content, but rather educational and managerial issues. The interesting ideas shared by Richards (2001) and Nation and Macalister (2010) showing the process involved in developing, implementing, and evaluating language curriculums. The valuable support provided by Nunan (1988) distinguishing between curriculum and syllabus. The detailed explanation of Breen (1987a; 1987b) making sense of the alternatives and changes in syllabus design. The concept of SCBD developed by Skilbeck (1984) and Marsh et al. (1990), suggesting that decisions about teaching and learning should be made at the school level. As well as the AR approach advocating the process of inquiring, understanding, taking action and improving the social context where people work (Burns, 2005; Adelman, 1993; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988; McNiff and Whitehead, 2010). The result was an understanding that I was having reservations concerning the ELT syllabus used at my university and my interests in improving it grew. I also became aware that my research was taking the form of an AR study; therefore, I, together with my supervisor decided that a valuable approach to this study in particular was AR. I realised that the study of the ELT curriculum process through AR was appropriate to fill a PhD thesis.

1.6 Aim of the research

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the process of improvement of the UEP syllabus through AR within a context, where English language is a compulsory subject across the undergraduate curriculum at University in Western Mexico, and to offer empirical evidence emerging from the research. The aim is formulated in the research questions and the sub-questions presented below.

1. How was the AR process of guiding teachers in the change of syllabus?
 - What course of action was taken to improve the syllabus?
 - What amendments did the UEP syllabus suffer?
2. How did the process of improvement of the syllabus occur?
 - How engaged were language teachers?
 - How did the syllabus improve on the basis of NA?
 - How did they become aware of new knowledge?

Answers to the first question will contribute to a better comprehension of how AR can change an ELT syllabus, designed and developed within a context where decision making is centralised. Answers to the questions will also provide data that reveals how data gathered at the school level can cause change in syllabus. Within the implementation of the school based syllabus, potential challenges will appear which can be of use in further AR projects.

Answers to the second question will provide information about the degree of involvement of a group of language teachers within the project. Data will also reveal how NA can contribute to syllabus change, as well as how it generates knowledge grounded in practice.

1.7 Structure of the thesis

Chapter one develops the first phase of the AR cycle. It evaluates the problematics of the UC ELT curriculum and develops and action plan to improve the practices.

Chapter two offers a characterization of some of the most prominent ELT approaches whereby we are informed where most of the ideas of design and development of language curriculums have come from, and that they may effectively operate in different settings, but they do not have universal application due to local constraints.

Chapter three discusses School Based Curriculum Development (SBCD) as a strategy within the field of curriculum development, which advocates curriculum decision-making determined at school level. Another approach discussed in chapter three is Needs Analysis (NA); how NA serves for the purpose of SBCD, and how it involves practitioners in the decision making process.

Chapter four examines theories and empirical studies concerning AR, and its relation with curriculum development. The chapter evaluates the work of distinguished scholars in the development of AR, and analyses three key AR elements: AR can be conducted by practitioners, AR may help improve the work environment, and AR generates knowledge. The Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) AR model is described, as well as the reasons why it was selected.

Chapter five begins with a discussion of the AR design; it then moves to a more focused presentation of the questions considered in this investigation and the methodology chosen to address them. It contains a description of the setting, participants, and

research instruments, as well as the limitations of this investigation. The chapter also explains how participants were informed about the features of the project, and also provides the measures of trustworthiness adopted in this research.

Chapter six presents a detailed analysis of the UEP syllabus which is followed by an in-depth explanation of the data collected through different NAs, needs in the context of educational situations and workplace, learners' language strengths and weaknesses and learners' beliefs about their own learning. Then, a detailed analysis of the new syllabus is shown, including a description of the information teachers used to design the new syllabus. Finally, an evaluation of the new syllabus design process, supported on the perception of the language teachers.

Chapter seven begins with the analysis of the participation of the teachers in the project, on the understanding that their contribution was essential to the research. Next, an analysis of the process of syllabus improvement on the basis of NA is done. Finally, an explanation of how teachers gained new knowledge is offered. The analysis is supported with insights into participants' experiences, opinions, and beliefs.

Chapter eight presents the interpretation of the findings and how they fit into the larger task of answering the research questions. It explains how AR helped to improve the syllabus, as well as the importance of NA in the process of the syllabus enhance. The chapter also discusses the possible challenges teachers could face when doing syllabus design. It also discusses the participation of practitioners, and language teachers in AR, and how knowledge is gained. It finally explains possible drawbacks teachers can face when conducting AR.

Chapter nine offers an in-depth discussion on the findings emerging from the fieldwork, revealing interesting information on the use of AR as a tool for ELT syllabus design and development. This is followed by an explanation of the limitations of the study, and ideas for further research. The chapter also explains the main limitations and contributions of the research.

1.8 Summary and conclusions

AR has been used to evaluate problematic situations within different fields of work, and how through reflection practitioners have gained understanding, and have improved the practices within those situations. Within the area of education AR has been successfully employed for the improvement of the curriculum by teachers, and not necessarily by

specialists in the field of research. This investigation uses the AR model suggested by (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988), where the first phase of the model includes the evaluation of the situation to recognise constraints.

As a first step towards following the AR model, this study presents an overview of the present situation of ELT in Mexico. The overview includes a discussion of the Mexican ELT curriculum of both lower secondary and upper secondary education, and provides details of the inclusion of English into the basic education curriculum. It also offers an explanation about the addition of ELT to the undergraduate curriculums of Higher Education Institutions, which includes the UC.

This leads to the description of the problematic situation this study aims to improve namely that the UC ELT syllabus suggests the intervention of specialists defining from the top what is to be taught and prescribing how 'teachers through instruction, [should] implement the plan' (Graves, 2008, p. 149). However there are several studies which suggest that educational policies created by specialists, provided to be implemented in the classroom have failed (de Segovia and Hardison, 2009).

Therefore, a school based model to design and develop the UEP syllabus is suggested. The model adopts an approach based on decisions made at school level, using data provided by local participants. The information is used to improve the syllabus. Next, a rationale of the study is provided, followed by the aims and research questions of the study. Finally, the structure of the thesis is presented.

To sum up, this chapter explains what is and how is developed the first phase of the AR model used to improve the ELT syllabus within the context of the UC, Mexico, which consists of developing a plan of critically informed action to improve what is already happening.

The following three chapters provide a theoretical discussion about three essential domains related to ELT approach.

Chapter Two: English Language Teaching syllabuses and the specialist approach to curriculum design

2.1 Introduction

Chapter one reported that several Mexican universities have incorporated English as a compulsory subject across their curriculum and traditionally provide courses in English for general purposes (Davis, 2008). This implies that in most cases the teaching of the language gives priority to teaching grammar in an organized and systematic way.

UC is one example of such situation. The teaching of English arose from an institutional policy, which states that ‘(...) a key element of the process is the acquisition of foreign languages; therefore, foreign language teaching programmes will be created at all educational levels (...)’ (Universidad de Colima, 2010, p. 46). Thus, language instruction follows a syllabus which contains a list of vocabulary, grammar, and functional items organised into units. The UC’s ELT model falls on the one hand within the description provided by Davies (2008) about Mexican institutions of higher education claiming that their courses ‘are overwhelmingly courses in English for general purposes’ (p.80); and on the other within what Graves (2008) has called ‘the specialist approach to curriculum’ (p. 149), [where], ‘a different group of people performs different curriculum functions, uses different discourses, and produces different curriculum products’ (p. 150-151).

Most of the people who originally set up English courses in universities and the teachers who first taught them came from a structural tradition, grammar teaching, for language teaching (Davies, 2008); many teachers find it familiar as they have probably learnt a language on the basis of this type of model, and many language learners have been successful in learning a foreign language having been taught in the same way (Breen, 1987). Despite its apparent success, the structural approach to language teaching has been the cause of a large amount of criticism.

Other emergent approaches include the concept of function, meaning and communication, where the study of grammar focuses on the use of language rather than on its form itself. Moreover the goals of education are not defined in terms of particular ends or products, but in terms of the processes and procedures by which the individual develops understanding and awareness and creates possibilities for future learning.

Evaluations of each of the approaches such as, structural, communicative outcomes and tasks, have shown that adhering entirely to an extreme view of any one of the three would be counterproductive (Clark, 1987). Each approach has supporters who can quote examples of their effectiveness (Patel, 1962; Wilkins, 1973; Yalden, 1987; Prabhu, 1987; Long, and Crookes, 1992). All of the approaches embrace elements of content, functions and tasks. The difference between them is to be found in how they arrange and prioritize them and the emphasis given to each of them; according to the purpose for which they were designed. Different methodological emphases achieve different sorts of results, but no one approach can be given full credit for achieving all the results that may be desired.

The postulation underlying this study is that there is no best or worst ELT approach (Kumaravadivelu, 1994), and that structural, functional, standards or tasks might each work well, but in different circumstances. The critical evaluation made of the three models in this chapter will allow this investigation to better appreciate the whole range of approaches available in order to know how each one is likely to operate.

A criticism made of the three approaches is that none of them are derived from school experience and experimentation, they are not adapted to the context of the school; as they have been directed at school teachers and cannot be realised in the form they were originally conceived by the theorizers (Nunan, 1991). Most of the time they have been formed as part of institutional policies, which is true in the case of the UC, and their implementation in educational institutions has usually been centralised, but centralised decisions do not always produce the expected results, a probable reason for failure is a hierarchical approach to curriculum (Glasgow, 2014). A different approach would appear to depend less on policy directives and more on curriculum design and development activities which are integrated at school level.

As stated earlier the main ELT approach employed in this research context has been the structural model, and this chapter makes a critical evaluation of it. It also evaluates the other two models: one based on communicative learning outcomes, and the other based on tasks. This evaluation allows the researcher and readers to have a rational and critical understanding of the main ELT approaches used during recent decades, and to know how they usually function. It also aims to inform about the school based syllabus proposed for this particular research context. The evaluation of the approach is

illustrated with empirical cases, which help to give a better understanding of the model under discussion.

Additionally, the chapter discusses the most important aspects of the specialist approach to an ELT curriculum. Arguments against this approach are also put forward. The concept of a specialist approach to a curriculum is illustrated with the analysis of different empirical studies. On the one hand this enables understanding of the scope and dimension of the concept, and on the other hand identifies the sort of approach adopted in the research context. The distinction between curriculum and syllabus are meant to clarify what the researcher is referring to when using these concepts throughout the development of the thesis.

2.2 Defining curriculum and syllabus

The concept of curriculum is something which has been in dispute. Curriculum has been defined as a method of accountability, the learning content of a school programme, or even a course outline (Kelly, 1977; Krahnke, 1987; White, 1988; Nunan, 1988). Thus it is appropriate to establish some common ground concepts to clarify what they stand for.

2.2.1 Curriculum

Nunan (1988, p. 159) claims that curriculum are ‘principles and procedures for planning, implementation, evaluation, and management of an educational programme’. Stenhouse (1975, p. 4) claims that a curriculum is ‘an attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal’. Curriculum ‘(...) is a specific, tangible subject that is always tied to decision making within institutions’ (Null, 2011, p. 1). Curriculum issues are addressed ‘through thoughtful inquiry into *curriculum*’ (Null, 2011, p. 5), and not through making questions on particular fields of study, or ‘by looking at the skills that employers want their workers to possess’ (p. 5).

Kelly (1989) and Richards (2001) provide definitions of curriculum and curriculum development that are in accordance with this study; as they advocate the broad dimension that curriculum has, and help to explain that curriculum is a comprehensive area of education, which encompasses several aspects of the field.

Kelly (1989) states that the curriculum

must offer much more than a statement about the knowledge-content or merely the subjects which schooling is to ‘teach’ or transmit or ‘deliver’. It must go far

beyond this to an explanation, and indeed a justification, of the purposes of such transmission and an exploration of the effects that exposure to such knowledge and such subjects is likely to have, or is intended to have (...) (p. 4).

On the other hand Richards (2001, p. 2) points out:

Curriculum development focuses on determining what knowledge, skills, and values students learn in schools, what experiences should be provided to bring about intended learning outcomes, and how teaching and learning in schools or educational systems can be planned, measured, and evaluated. Language curriculum development refers to the field of applied linguistics that addresses these issues.

Curriculum and syllabus are two terms that are often used interchangeably (Ullmann, 1982). But, due to the proportion and complexity of the concept, and for the purpose of this research the terms curriculum and syllabus should be differentiated as a way of making clear when referring to one term or the other throughout the text.

2.2.2 Syllabus

A syllabus is 'more specific and more concrete than a curriculum, and a curriculum may contain a number of syllabi. For example, (...) the overall curriculum of a full-time intensive language teaching program may include three or more specific skill-area syllabi at any one time' (Krahnke, 1987, p. 2). Thus, a syllabus is 'more localised and based on accounts and records of what actually happens at classroom level' (Nunan, 1988, p. 3). Dubin and Olshtain (1986, p. 35) also claim that 'A syllabus is a more detailed and operational statement of teaching and learning elements'. For instance, 'the syllabus for a speaking course might specify the kinds of oral skills that will be taught and practiced during the course, the functions, topics, or other aspects of conversation that will be taught, and the order in which they will appear in the course' (Richards, 2001, p. 2). McDonough and Shaw (1993) advocate that a syllabus has direct implications over the design and selection of material and tests, the planning of individual lessons and the management of the classroom itself.

Literature explains and describes the parts of curriculum and syllabus sometimes as two things alike. For example, White (1998) argues that a curriculum can be designed from three different points of view. The first view shows a concern with objectives and content. The second adds methods to the model. The methods are the means by which the ends, the objectives are to be achieved. The third perspective adds a fourth and final elements, evaluation. On the other hand, Breen (2001) claims that a syllabus is made up

of four elements: aims, content, methodology and evaluation; which are the same elements that White makes reference as parts of a curriculum. Whereas, Nation and Macalister (2010) illustrate the curriculum with two circles, one inside the other. The outer circle is composed by principles, environment and needs; while the inner circle is formed by goals in its centre, content and sequencing, format and presentation, and finally monitoring and assessing. The elements of the inner circle are similar to the elements presented by White and Breen above. The only missing element of the model suggested by Nation and Macalister is methodology. Nunan (1998) suggests that a language syllabus should contain some basic components such as content, goals, objectives as well as a clear definition of the type of syllabus to design; product or content oriented, for example, which will determine the teaching methodology to be followed. Nunan does not make any reference to evaluation. According to Dubin and Olshtain (1986) a language syllabus should be integrated by objectives, language content, and methodology. Dubin and Olshtain suggest that a syllabus should be clear about the organization of the content that best suits to the particular institution's objectives.

The characteristics of the parts of a syllabus will depend on the syllabus type; Breen (2001) suggest that there are four main syllabus types: Formal, functional, task-based, and process. For example, the content of a formal syllabus will be mainly forms, systems and rules of grammar, vocabulary, phonology, its shape might be lineal and may follow a presentation, practice and production methodology.

Nunan (1998) divides the syllabuses into product and process oriented. Product-oriented syllabuses are those in which the focus is on the knowledge and skills, which learners should gain as a result of instruction, while process syllabuses are those which focus on the learning experiencing themselves.

Wilkins (1976) makes a distinction between synthetic and analytic types of syllabuses. A synthetic syllabus is one in which the different parts of language are taught independently and progressively. Here, the acquisition is a process of addition of parts until the whole structure of language has been put together. On the other hand, analytic syllabuses are organized in terms of the purpose for which people intend to learn the language and the kinds of language performance that are necessary to fulfill those objectives.

White (1988) identifies two types of syllabuses, Type A and Type B. A is related with what should be learned. They settle objectives and pre-determine the language by dividing it into small, isolated units. They are product-oriented, so they evaluate the outcomes in terms of mastery of the language. All synthetic syllabi are synonym of Type A syllabi. Type B syllabi, on the other hand, are concerned with how the language is learned and how this language is integrated with learners' knowledge. The different parts of the syllabus appear from a process of negotiation between learners and teachers; they are oriented toward the process and evaluation criteria are set by the own learners. Even though there are differences between procedural, process and task-based, they are considered Type B.

The following sections provide a detailed discussion on the value system and rationale behind the syllabus types described above. Sections 2.3, and 2.4 are to hold in-depth discussions on the principles underlying the synthetic, product oriented, or Type A syllabus; whilst section 2.5 evaluates those ideas underpinning Type B syllabus or process oriented.

2.3 Structural syllabus

According to Skilbeck (1982) curriculum as a body of knowledge is perhaps one of the most prevailing and durable one, because it has influenced the development of curriculum for a very long time.

This model has been the dominant philosophy underlying the history of the Western educational system for centuries, derived from theories of knowledge going back to Aristotle and Plato. Its attraction lies in the fact that most people when challenged, would have fairly define ideas of what they consider as essential to a 'good' education (...) (Finney, 2002).

The chief aim of the approach is to master intellectually the content of particular subject areas. One theorist who understood the curriculum as a frame of content was Professor Ralph Tyler. In his oft-cited book, *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*; Tyler (1949, p. 44) suggests different forms of starting learning objectives; one of them was related to 'listing topics, concepts, generalizations, or other elements of content that are to be dealt with in the course or courses'. Together with behavioural objectives, Tyler also proposed content as a focal point for drafting the learning objectives of a course.

A language teaching method representative of this approach is the well-known grammar translation. Originally, grammar translation favored the mastering of grammar rules in order to translate texts into and out of the target language (Richards and Rogers, 1986).

The grammar translation method gradually changed to structural methods, including other language aspects like vocabulary and phonology embedded into graduated and sequenced text, which learners were required to go through and consciously understand the rules underlying sentence construction (Clark, 1987). Structural language teaching can be found in many published teaching materials, and its presence can still be appreciated today (Cook, 2008). Structural language teaching employs syllabuses which follow the sequencing of language aspects, grammar and vocabulary, throughout a text, attempting to teach them in an organized and systematic way.

From this perspective, language learning is lineal and happens in sequence, starting with a first stage focus on input, teaching and output (Richards, and Rodgers, 1986). Structural language teaching's most representative teaching method is the Presentation Practice Production (PPP) model, 'an approach to teaching language items which follows a sequence of presentation of the item, practice, of the item and then production (i.e. use) of the item' (Tomlinson, 2011, p. xv).

Breen (1987) claims that a point in favour of a formal structural syllabus is that many teachers find it familiar as they have probably learnt a language on the basis of this type of model, and many language learners have been successful in learning a foreign language having been taught in the same way. Another justification is the fact that presenting the content to learners in a systematic way gives them the opportunity to create new sentences or deduce the meanings of new words.

Understanding language as a system of rules and categories allows for the analysis of those rules and categories, which can be incorporated into a plan for teaching; this would be another advantage of the model. Hedge (2000) emphasizes that focusing on form allows learners to pay attention to and to notice specific linguistic features; it also helps to associate learners' own knowledge with new knowledge. The relevance of output practice is related to Swain's Comprehensible Output Hypothesis, which advocates that learners learn to speak as long as they are forced to practice in class (Swain, 1985; Swain, 1995; Swain, 2005). On the other hand, the systematical organization of language and teaching materials apparently generates a feeling of

security in the learners' mind, which promotes a positive attitude to learning (Sánchez, 2001).

The systematic organization of language teaching content also has its disadvantages. For example, grammar teaching was originally conceived as a self-study method suited to 'highly educated men and women [and] not well-suited to the capabilities of younger school pupils and, (...) inappropriate for group-teaching in classrooms' (Howatt, 1984, p. 131); thus, the implementation of a self-study method in a group-teaching context obstructed 'the development of modern language teaching for generations' (White, 1988, p. 8). Lewis (1996) believes that structure is not the core of communicative use, and therefore teaching and learning the language lineally is pointless. Woodward (1993) and Scrivener (1994) argue that breaking the language up into parts avoids a more comprehensive coverage of the linguistic elements that shape the language.

The structural syllabus has been severely criticized for its emphasis on accuracy and correctness; as risk-taking is an important ingredient of learning; as well as for its dissociation with real life communication (Willis, 1993). In addition, Nunan (1998) considers that the lineal model of language acquisition is inconsistent with what is observed as learners go about the process of acquiring another language. A structural syllabus increases accountability as it offers '(...) clean and tangible goals, precise syllabuses, and a conforming itemizable basis for the evaluation of effectiveness' (Skehan, 1998, p. 94); in addition according to Scrivener (1994) teaching options are reduced to one single method, leaving no space for exploring more teaching possibilities. It also centres the attention on teachers as they lead the course of the lesson, not allowing learners make decisions about their own learning (Willis, 1996). Structural lessons generate a mismatch between the structure and its use in a real situation, as Bernadette Ho (1981) puts it:

In the structural syllabus, the textbook writer or teacher is given a form and left to 'create' a situation to realise the form in use (form-situation-use). Theoretically, it ought to be an ideal form-situation-use model. But in practice, this is not always the case. There could be a mismatch between form and situation; consequently, the learner is baffled by its use (p. 326).

Additionally, learners find no motivation to practice the structure in the classroom, after being presented it by the teacher.

Grammar teaching in the foreign language classroom has constituted an important debate issue for the last fifty years, and ‘No other issue so preoccupied theorists and practitioners as the grammar debate (...)’ (Thornbury, 1999, p. 14). Linguistic theories and methodologies change over time, but the presence of grammar remains. An example of which is the case of English language syllabuses in Singapore, where despite the changes in syllabus design over the last four decades, ‘grammar has remained a significant component (...).The difference between the syllabuses, if any, often lies in how grammar is presented and how it is taught’ (Lim, 2002, p. 81).

There are positions both in favour and against grammar teaching. The role of grammar has been addressed by a number of linguistic theories and methodologies; most study cases have addressed the matter from the perspectives of psycholinguistics (Swain, 1985; Scrivener, 1994; Swain, 1995; Swain, 2005), linguistics (Harmer, 1996; Lewis, 1996), and pedagogy (Ur, 1996; Sánchez, 2001); but very few from the field of curriculum design.

Patel (1962) argues that the structural syllabus was employed in India in the 1960s, where it seemed to be generally well accepted by teachers. Patel revealed the results of a seminar on the teaching of English in High Schools, where English teaching specialists and educational administrators from all over India discussed the use of structural syllabuses over a decade in India. Attendees at the seminar came to this conclusion:

Structural syllabuses have met with a favourable reception at the hands of English teachers all over India (...) Experience in India has revealed that, in the hands of a teacher appropriately trained, a structural syllabus can be an effective tool for teaching English (p. 146).

Tickoo (1962) on the other hand suggests that the conception of structuralism in language teaching in India was mistrusted, as it ‘inevitably [had to] lead to less effective teaching’ (p. 175). Tickoo sustains the argument that the term structural approach, commonly used by specialists at the universities, in training colleges, and schools in India was wrongly regarded as a ‘two-word answer to all the problems of English teaching’ (p. 176). Tickoo did not deny the contributions the structural approach had made to the teaching of English in India, but also recognized that the teaching of English is a complex task that could not be simply addressed.

There is extensive literature on the subject of teaching and learning grammar produced in the field of second language acquisition which deals with topics such as explicit and

implicit, deductive and inductive grammar teaching or focus on form or meaning (Krashen, 1982; White, 1989; Swain, 1995; Ellis, 1997; Skehan, 1998; Mitchell and Myles, 1998; Hawkins, 2001). However there is presently limited literature focused on teaching and learning grammar in the field of curriculum.

2.4 Functional syllabus

Structural syllabuses lacked emphasis on practical everyday communication; the development of everyday communication did not necessarily matter (Bloor, 2004). Therefore, new concepts of grammar emerged which included the concept of function, meaning and communication, where the study of grammar had to focus on the use of language rather than on the form itself. 'Thus, grammatical knowledge was performance, rather than competence, and grammar was considered as a sub-skill to be learned as procedural knowledge (doing rather than just knowing)' (López Rama and Luque Agulló, 2012, p. 179). A radical shift from using traditional concepts of grammar and vocabulary, to describe language to an analysis of the communicative meanings that learners would need in order to express themselves, and to understand effectively took place (Wilkins, 1973).

A work published by Wilkins (1976) which showed how language could be categorized on the basis of notions such as quantity, location and time, and functions such as making offers and apologizing was used by the Council of Europe to draw up a communicative language syllabus, which specified the communicative functions an adult learner would need in order to communicate effectively at a given level of competence (van Ek, 1973). The project attempted to provide description of communicative functions as the main content of syllabuses, and also to establish guiding principles of learning and teaching which helped learners to achieve different language proficiency levels (Barnett, 1980). The work of the Council of Europe tended to focus on syllabus specifications, rather than on methodology, on the question of what should be taught rather than on how it should be taught (Quinn, 1984); on this point, Breen (1987) agrees by arguing that the main goal of the Council was to define a method of selecting and organizing language teaching and content. This resulted in what is known as the functional syllabus.

Bernadette Ho (1981) claims that there is no major difference between a structural and a functional syllabus; as, for example, both are organised into list form: one of lexical and

grammatical items, and the other of functions, the structural syllabus begins with a given form; whilst the functional syllabus begins with a given function; they both reduce language into definable units (Farghal, 1993). In the structural syllabus the textbook writer or teacher has to create an appropriate situation to realise the form in use; while in the functional, the textbook writer or teacher has to create an appropriate situation to realise the function in use.

The main purpose of the functional syllabus was to foster communicative competence, but according to Barnett (1980) it did not necessarily lead to that, as issues such as methodology and learners' input were not solved.

Brumfit (1979) rejects the idea that the functional syllabus promotes communicative competence just by providing a description of the language. If this were the case, a structural syllabus would also produce communicative competence. As Brumfit states 'A linguist's description, whether syntactic or functional, cannot in itself provide the basis for a syllabus designed to teach not *what* but *how to do*' (p. 113). Another issue is that descriptions do not help a learner to operate in situations which are constantly fluid and negotiable during a conversation, while it is also unable to anticipate all the precise needs of the learner.

During a period of contrast between the structural and functional syllabuses new proposals emerged, which combined both approaches. Shaw (1982); Estaire, (1982); Swan (1985) made a proposal for integrating structural and functional syllabuses as a way of searching for improvement in language teaching. Shaw (1982) presents an article to describe a project in syllabus design at the British Institute, Madrid, where the adoption of a functional approach and the use of grammar text books produced a new syllabus. According to Shaw the design of the alternative syllabus should be in a spiral design where aspects of grammar and functions are introduced according to the needs and English level of the learners; as Shaw states

I would argue that a syllabus should take account of both types of knowledge, though either may predominate according to the needs of the student (English for specific purposes or general English, for example), to the convictions of the syllabus- developers, and, to some extent, to the level of proficiency (i.e. elementary or advanced). (p, 84)

The product of the blend resulted in a core list of grammatical items or functions used during a year of tests, with the plan to apply the same model thereafter. Communicative

Language Learning and drama techniques were introduced involving free communicative activities, which led to the presentation of items in a sequence different from that found in most course books. Estaire (1982) maintains that the fact that there were the same final examinations forced teachers to follow both syllabuses, which led to the standardization of first year work. Estaire also claims that the blended syllabus enriched the work of teachers as they taught grammar in combination with communicative tasks, which helped learners practice the language. Estaire argues that the project helped to prove on the one hand that grammar and function can go together, and on the other that course books can be used to support syllabuses, meaning the course book is not the syllabus of the course.

Swan (1985) advocates that a sensible approach to language teaching is likely to include lessons which contain structures, vocabulary, functions, situations, pronunciation, productive and receptive skills, and several other kinds of components. 'Designing a language course involves reconciling a large number of different and often conflicting priorities, and it is of little use to take one aspect of the language and to use this systematically as a framework for the whole of one's teaching'. (p. 81).

As stated earlier, the communicative language syllabus drawn up by the Council of Europe attempted to provide a description of language functions as the main content of syllabus, and also guiding principles of learning and teaching which helped learners achieve different language proficiency levels. To define functions and content a series of steps led by an analysis of communicative needs were followed. This such methodology is based on the work of Tyler (1949) and Taba (1962). An example of this is the overview of the course designer's task following outline drawing on the steps proposed by Taba presented by Dubin and Olshtain (1986). Other scholars by the end of the 1980s also followed this model.

Yalden (1987) suggests the setting of a framework to design language courses. The framework has to be based on the needs analysis of the learners to know their background, their learning styles and preferences, as well as their language needs. Johnson (1989) discusses the process as a coherent approach through a framework which consists of four stages: curriculum implementation, ends/means specification, programme implementation, and classroom implementation. Examples of coherent approach to language curriculum development have been documented (Brown, 1995; Markee, 1997). Brown presents an approach that views language teaching and language

curriculum development as ‘a dynamic system of interrelated elements’ (p.v). Brown’s proposal on language curriculum development focuses on six elements: NA, goals and objectives, testing materials, teaching and evaluation. Markee provides a set of principles required to understand the range of factors that affect the design, implementation, and maintenance of curriculum innovation.

Graves (1996) describes a framework, (needs assessment, determining goals and objectives, conceptualizing content, selecting and developing materials and activities, evaluation, consideration of resources and constraints) illustrated with teacher accounts of how they plan, teach, and evaluate. Richards (2001) explains fundamental issues and practices in language curriculum development including: NA, planning goals and outcomes, course planning, teaching, materials development and evaluation.

Critics argue that the specification of communicative learning outcomes is linked to an effective view of education, that is, one based on the assumption that the most efficient means to an end is justified. They run the danger, therefore, of turning teaching into a technical and almost mechanical exercise of converting statement of needs into objectives and that in the process the broader goals of teaching and learning to improve meaningful and worthwhile learning experiences are forgotten (Richards, 2013).

According to Tumposky (1982) critics of an end-means approach to curriculum argue that in many cases the approach is adopted without an in-depth evaluation of their own reasons for doing so or without a review of the literature, and without considering the possible shortcomings of such a rigid definition. Duchastel and Merrill (1973) examined the possible facilitative effects of communicative behavioural objectives to students. They found that the presence of objectives facilitated learning only in certain instances, implying that there is little empirical data to support that objectives facilitate learning or teaching. Another common objection is that behavioural objectives have become a one-size-fits-all solution, which makes them unsuited to different styles of learning and teaching (Tumposky, 1982).

Findley and Nathan (1980) point out language teachers’ criticisms of pre-specified objectives and the impact they could have on teaching, as true-to-life teaching situations consist of learning outcomes not previously set when the objectives were originally formulated. Pre-specified objectives, therefore, disregard the multiplicity and inter-

relatedness of goals as well as validity of goals which emerge during instruction. Another argument against is that some goals of education are difficult if not impossible to be specified in behavioural terms. Critics of behavioural objectives hold that they have constraining effects on methodology and the roles of both teachers and learners. They believe that behavioural objectives restrict creativity and innovation by imposing a rigid style of teaching.

Despite this criticism, communicative learning outcomes used appropriately can bring tangible gains to the learning process. Examples of curriculum development based on learning outcomes have been documented (Storey, 2007; Kirkgöz, 2009; Incecay and Incecay, 2010; Noori and Mazdayasna, 2014). Storey (2007) presents results from an exploratory case study of curriculum development processes at three Japanese universities influenced by 'The Action Plan to cultivate Japanese with English abilities' (p. 86) (Japanese government plan which sought to develop the English abilities of Japanese people). Storey analyzed the process undertaken by the universities during a period of five years. Findings revealed that the curriculum development process undertaken at the three participating universities showed similarities to those predicted by theory-based models of curriculum design proposed by (Brown, 1995; Richards, 2001).

The three universities carried out actions in different categories such as needs and situation analysis, setting objectives, assessment/testing, planning/organization of courses/syllabuses, selection and development of materials and planning for effective teaching and evaluation. The study found that the Action Plan to develop 'Japanese with English abilities,' which was introduced by the Ministry of Education in 2003, had had little effect on language curriculum development. Key insights from the study were formulated into guidelines for curriculum developers, the most important being the value of appropriate needs and situation analysis followed by appropriate objective setting, which should, then, lead to the development of a university wide English language education policy.

Richards (2013) claims that product or ends-means approaches to curriculum have evolved to teaching methodologies more related to a process approach such have adopted needs analysis to determine the kinds of language tasks needed to

carry out in the classroom. Support comes from Van de Branden (2012, p. 134) who suggests that

The design of task-based syllabi preferably starts with an analysis of the students' needs (...) a concrete description of the kinds of tasks students will face in the real world (...). The description, then, serves as the basis for the design and sequencing to tasks in the syllabus.

It is worth noting how a teaching methodology such as Task Based Learning, identified with the process approach to curriculum development (Willis and Willis, 2007; Long, 2014), has adopted procedures characteristic of the backward approach. Starting with the identification of target tasks through NA, and following with the design of classroom tasks, application of TBL methodology, identification of language and other demands of the tasks, and follow up language work (Van de Branden, 2012).

2.5 Task-based syllabus

An ELT curriculum based on tasks is influenced by the ideas of progressive or new education (Oelkers, 1998; Lenhart, 2001). Progressive education stresses the implementation of learning experiences from which learners can learn by their own efforts (Clark, 1987). The goals of education are not defined in terms of particular ends or products, but in terms of the processes and procedures by which the individual develops understanding and awareness and creates possibilities for future learning. Content, then, is based on principles derived from research into learning development and the overall purposes of education process, which allow the formulation of objectives related to the procedural principles (Finney, 2002).

Language syllabuses derived from these concepts are procedural, process and Task Based Language Teaching. According to Long, and Crookes (1992) they are alternatives to the structural and the functional, as their rationale is not underpinned by an analysis of language or language use, but for some conception of task. They involve no preselection or organization of language aspects, grammar, vocabulary, phonology or functions. Learning outcomes are set after a process of joint decision making according to the needs and interests of the learners, as a course evolves. They emphasize the process of learning rather than the subject matter, and assess accomplishment in relationship to learners' criteria for success.

2.5.1 Procedural

The procedural syllabus is associated with the work of Prabhu (1987) in India. Prabhu believes that learners should be given plenty of time, opportunities and options to develop comprehension, before demanding any language production. Prabhu recognizes that language form is acquired when the learner's attention is focused on meaning through the employment of tasks, defined as 'An activity which required learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought (...)' (p.24). Prabhu had been unsuccessfully trying to teaching English to children following a structural syllabus. This 'led him to produce a sequence of classroom activities which are felt, by a process of trial, error, and classroom 'hunch', to work effectively' (Brumfit, 1984, p. 233).

Changes were not only implemented on the structure of the teaching plans, moving from a structural to a task based syllabus, but also on the fundamental principle of language teaching. The project 'was based on the precept that language form can be learnt in the classroom entirely through a focus on meaning, and that grammar construction by the learner is an unconscious process' (Beretta, 1990, p. 321). One thing that distinguishes the procedural model from the process model and TBLT is that it shares a characteristic with structural and functional syllabus; as in the procedural syllabus teachers predetermine tasks learners will carry out before meeting with learners. In other words, teachers select the target tasks learners will eventually do; after that, negotiations take place in the classroom based on the preselected tasks. The aim of the preselected task is to some sort of piloting of the task, and see if it is difficult for the class, before learners work on it (Long, and Crookes, 1992).

Despite encouraging innovation, the proposal had its critics. Brumfit (1984) emphasizes that teachers other than Prabhu tended to revert to the teaching of language aspects, and teaching materials did not seem to be very different from the ones used to teach grammar structures, which is understandable as the project was not conclusive but suggestive. Another problem Brumfit claims is that it is difficult to demonstrate if there is difference in terms of attainment in English between students who have been taught with the procedural syllabus and others who have received ordinary instruction in their respective classrooms. Beretta and Davies (1985) conducted an evaluation of the project and concluded that they were not able to make any firm statement about the effectiveness of the method at latter stages of learning. However, they found the results

positive, in the sense that grammar construction could ‘take place through a focus on meaning alone’ (p. 126).

Long and Crookes (1992) claim that the content of a procedural syllabus for a given group of learners is not specified unless an objective evaluation, relevant to the learners’ needs is conducted. Additionally, they consider that grading task difficulty and sequencing tasks both appear to be arbitrary processes; therefore criteria for selection should be necessary, which is not offered. Finally, Long and Crookes think that it is not clear how to include grammar in the method.

2.5.2 Process

A second task-based approach to course design is the process syllabus (Breen and Candlin, 1980; Breen, 1987). The process syllabus main teaching focus is also on tasks; it emphasizes social and problem-solving, fostering learners’ needs and preferences in terms of learning style and interests, over teaching as the transmission of a preselected and predigested knowledge model (Long, and Crookes, 1992). The most significant feature for the model is that the process is considered as a fundamental element when deciding on their development; whilst for the structural model its principal reason for decision taking is content (White, 1988). Structural and functional concepts of language teaching represent what is to be achieved, while process plans represent how something is done (Breen, 1987).

Richards (2013) refers to the process model as the central design in language teaching. He claims that the central design emerged as a response to instructional design that rejected the need for pre-determined syllabuses or learning outcomes and were built instead around specifications of classroom activities. Methodologies are the starting point in course planning and content is chosen in accordance with the methodology rather than the other way around. As Hedge (2000, p. 359) expresses it, ‘ the question has become not so much on what basis to create a list of items to be taught as how to create an optimal environment to facilitate the processes through which language is learned’. Instead of designing the syllabus in advance; it is ‘ (...) produced retrospectively through the methodology that results from explicit negotiations with learners about their needs and wishes’ (Wette, 2010, p. 137).

Breen and Candlin (1980) advocate that the most important element of learning is the learner and learning processes and preferences, not the language or language learning process. Both claim that learning should be and can only be the product of negotiation, which eventually may result in learning. There is a key element which characterizes a process syllabus, besides the employment of tasks, and this is the element of negotiation of the cognitive and communicative procedures applied to existing and new knowledge. This process of negotiation is more like a common selection, an agreement between learners and teachers, from all possible teaching and learning options available (Candlin, 1987).

To follow a process syllabus Breen (1984) proposes a graded model, with sets of options at four levels, the final selection is left for users to decide on. Negotiations between teachers and learners consist of: 1) making general decisions on classroom language learning; 2) establishing different options to make decisions (learner alone, learner-learner, learner-teacher); 3) establishing learning and teaching modes (lecture, group work, pair work); 4) selecting tasks from a collection ready to be used by learners. Finally, formative assessment procedures are provided aiming to test decision making in terms of language learning, learning modes, and task selection.

Advantages of syllabus negotiation have been reported (Boomer et al., 1992; Breen and Littlejohn, 2000; Huang, 2006). Studies report that syllabus negotiation contributes to meeting the learners' needs and wants, enhancing motivation increasing learners' involvement in learning, improving their confidence, helping to develop responsibility and autonomy, improving learning and building up mutual understanding among learners. For ÖZTÜRK (2013) a negotiated syllabus has advantages for both teachers and learners. Teachers have the opportunity to play a different role to the traditional role of teachers which is an authoritarian one, and to play a more supportive and guiding one. By becoming aware of those topics which attract the attention of the learners, they can prepare more fruitful lessons.

On the other hand, learners become actively involved in negotiating the purposes, content, management and means of assessment. Students set their own goals and become highly motivated to achieve these goals, which can also be a solution for the demotivated students in these programs. Nation and Mcalister (2010) suggest that

involving the learners in shaping the syllabus has strong effect on motivation, satisfaction, and commitment to the course.

Nguyen (2011) reports on a study into the feasibility of syllabus negotiation in a class at a university in Vietnam; qualitative results revealed that negotiating the syllabus encouraged learners to take more initiative and responsibility in their own learning and learn from their fellow students. It also stimulated their creativity, created a comfortable atmosphere in class, increased the interaction among the participants, and developed better mutual understanding, particularly between the teacher and students. Gholam-Reza (2013) reports on the results of a quantitative experiment which attempted to reveal the effects of negotiation syllabus on both writing ability and writing self-efficacy based on data gathered following the instruction of Iranian EFL adult learners. The study revealed that skill acquisition (writing ability) was more significantly affected in light of the implementation rather than the self-efficacy trait.

For Littlewood (2009) one considerable threat for the process oriented teaching is that it can become an instrument of control when processes are taken to be the outcomes of learning. Like the previous syllabuses we discussed, structural and functional, they are outcome oriented. But these outcomes are now process outcomes rather than content outcomes. This implies that an innovative proposal, which aims to foster learners' abilities helping them to make decisions about their own learning, and which aims to lead teachers to explore methodological innovations in domains such as process writing, project work, task-based and other forms of experimental learning, is guided from outside (e.g. government appointees). Instead of those directly involved in the pedagogical process and its original intention is shifted to the point of saying that some outcomes are more desirable than others, so that learning should be guided towards them with the desire of empowering students for their future lives.

Different views are held about the process syllabus. For instance Kouraogo (1987) and White (1988) challenge the formal field evaluation the syllabus has. Kouraogo and White also believe that the role the syllabus cast in teachers and learners is impractical and unrealistic in some cases; as the redistribution of power and authority in the classroom would be unaccepted in some situations. The idea of creating a bank of tasks in many contexts and teaching situations seems to be an impossible thing to do; especially, when the access to teaching resources in those contexts may be scarce.

Clarke (1991) claims that even though the concept of negotiation is extremely valuable, involving full learner participation would for all practical purposes be unworkable in any other circumstances than with a very small group or in a one to one situation. Both learners and teachers would have considerable difficulty in operating such an extreme negotiated model; as the extent to which learners are able to involve themselves in decisions concerning syllabus content, the materials to be used, the methodology to be employed, and the testing and assessment devices, will very much depend upon their cultural norms and their state of cognitive development.

To this, Freire and Faundez (1989) add that learners in many parts of the world are often uneasy with the notion of negotiation and dialogue, seeing it as a sign of weakness on the part of their teachers. Holliday (1994b) reports how one group of Egyptian students saw a junior lecturer's preference for the discovery method of teaching as indicative of her lack of qualification as a 'real teacher'. McDevitt (2004) reports on a project attempting to introduce a project based, collaborative approach to the learning of English to a group of post-graduates from the College of Arts in Iran. Learners were gradually introduced into process teaching; they were trained in identifying and analysing their own language production.

Thus, they were encouraged to discuss their language problems, to check the work of their peers, and to assess not only their own contributions but also those of others. McDevitt indicates that the project was not a complete success as some learners never saw the point of some of the learning activities, and felt frustrated trying to mould their defective English into an acceptable form. Nguyen (2011) presents the results of a study in to the feasibility of syllabus negotiation in a class at a university in Vietnam. Nguyen indicates that shyness and passiveness of learners when conducting negotiation led to problems as the negotiation process became uneven.

A second problematic aspect the author encountered was the use of English in negotiation; as some learners had difficulties expressing ideas in English, which might be the reason for the passiveness of some of the students. An additional finding was that some learners felt discouraged by the idea of reflection, which is crucial to an effective shared decision-making process. The amount of self and peer assessment was also problematic, as it made the students feel unhappy. It was also difficult for the students to come to a consensus when negotiating, owing to a difference in ideas.

2.5.3 Task-Based Language Teaching

A third approach to course design which takes tasks as the unit of analysis is task-based language teaching. In opposition to the view of language learning, which advocates the premise that learners acquire one target language item at a time, sequentially, step by step; Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) assumes that language students do not learn in the order the language is presented to them, regardless how cautiously it is organized; they do not learn one thing perfectly, one item at a time, but numerous things simultaneously and imperfectly (Nunan, 1998). Errors are not necessarily the result of bad learning, but are of the natural process of interlanguage forms gradually moving towards target forms (Ellis, 1994).

Tasks provide a vehicle for the presentation of appropriate target language samples to learners. TBLT may be very effective within an English for Specific Purpose approach, in which a major aim is to train learners to perform specific authentic (real world) tasks. Tasks could also form part of a general English approach if one is able to identify target tasks performed by the learner in the world outside the classroom (Nunan, 1989). To accomplish such an aim, it is necessary to conduct a needs analysis to identify those real-world target tasks learners will undertake. Once target tasks have been identified, the next step is to classify them into task types, which are the basis for pedagogic tasks used by teachers and students in the classroom (Long and Crookes, 1992).

Shabani and Ghasemi (2014) report on the advantages of TBLT after conducting an investigation on the impact of TBLT and CBLT on reading comprehension of Iranian intermediate ESP learners. Shabani and Ghasemi indicate that those Iranian intermediate ESP learners who were taught reading comprehension through TBLT outperformed those learners who were taught reading comprehension through CBLT. The results were achieved thanks to the communicative competence learners develop when focusing on meaning, as well as the different phases the TBLT method has. Learners use the language to achieve the purpose of the task. The feedback provided by learners generates a more relaxing and less threatening condition for learning a foreign language.

Zhang and Hung (2013) conducted a classroom based case study to investigate the viability and impacts of implementing TBLT into College English Teaching in a large class in Taiwan. Although the challenge of implementing TBLT into large classes is real, the results of the study show that participants of the experimental group had similar or better learning attainments compared with those who were given teaching treatments based on the

traditional instruction (control group). This was demonstrated by the impact of TBLT on learners' oral English performance, as well as their better learning motivation and attitudes than those receiving the traditional teaching.

The danger of a task-based approach to teaching is that learners might be encouraged to prioritize a focus on meaning over a focus on form, and thus be led to use fluent unchallenging or inaccurate language; because language does not have to be well-formed in order to be meaningful (Foster, 1999b). Other criticisms of TBLT come from Bruton (2002) who argues that communicative tasks with monolingual learners lead to uneven oral development and that tasks that fail to provide adequate linguistic support are inappropriate for beginners.

Another concern is that the raw data from meaning-focus tasks and their related listening and reading materials may be structurally or lexically limited, and in the absence of linguistic syllabus, coverage of the language's structures will be inadequate (Klapper, 2003). Ellis and Hedge (1993) claim that not only should a language teaching course include opportunities for using the language to communicate, but also to elicit learners' conscious attention to grammar aspects with the expectancy 'they learn what it is that they have ultimately to master' (p. 6). Additionally, Willis (1997) points out that though language performance will improve with exposure and with the chance to use meaningful language, formal instruction can make the natural acquisition process more effective. Rutherford (1987) adds that exposure to meaningful input alone, although necessary, is not enough for learning grammar, and that for effective learning students need to focus on language form.

Teachers face a number of practical difficulties in implementing TBLT. These practical problems will need to be addressed if TBLT is to be made to work in actual classrooms. Jeon and Hahn (2006) explore EFL teacher's perceptions of TBLT in a Korean secondary school context. The overall findings of the survey show that the majority of respondents have a higher level of understanding of TBLT concepts, but that some negative views exist on implementing TBLT, which do not necessarily lead to the actual use of tasks in the classroom, due to their disciplinary problems in using TBLT, confidence, difficulty in assessing learners' task-based performance, and because large classes need more time and preparation in TBLT.

Carless (1998) examines the implementation of TBLT in the context of Hong Kong's target-oriented curriculum in elementary schools. Carless collected data from three native-speaking Cantonese teachers concluding that TBLT was not working effectively in this teaching context; overall the teachers demonstrated a poor understanding of what a task was and that, as a result, the tasks they employed resulted in practice rather than genuine communication; many of the tasks resulted in no linguistic activities. Carless also found that during the development of the tasks students used their mother tongue a lot; there were also challenges with discipline.

Ellis (2009) claims that TBLT is not compatible with educational systems which place the emphasis on the learning of knowledge rather than the development of skills. TBLT is based on a different system of beliefs and values from a structural syllabus for example; therefore in some teaching contexts TBLT cannot be easily implemented.

The questions to answer are: Which is the best model? Which is the best approach for designing an ELT curriculum?

2.6 There is no worst or best approach

Previous evaluations of each of the three approaches have shown that adhering to an extreme view of any one of the three would be counterproductive. Each approach has supporters who can quote examples of their effective employment. At present, they might also work in some situations. Howatt (1984) explains that in the history of language teaching there have been different views which come and go in different settings and different moments, according to the belief system of the moment. Richards (2013) illustrates this idea with his definition of one curriculum approach called backward design. Richards states that the backward approach is a well-established tradition of careful statement of the desired results or outcomes, which has '(...) re-emerged as a prominent curriculum development approach in language teaching' (p.20).

Any model embraces elements of content, communicative learning outcomes and tasks. The difference is to be found in the importance given to each of them; according to the purpose for which it will be used. The case studies quoted earlier have shown that different methodological emphases achieve different sorts of results, but that no one approach can get full credit for achieving all the results that may be desired. A structural approach highlights a conscious acquisition of grammar and vocabulary expecting learners to produce sentences on the basis of rules, but not an ability to communicate in real life. A functional approach promotes the production of certain communicative functions in

particular situations, but not in others. Focusing on meaning rather than form could lead to certain fluency, but perhaps not to a good level of accuracy (Clark, 1987).

The belief underpinning this study is that each approach might work well but in different settings. It would seem that what it is necessary to work towards is a better understanding of the whole range of approaches available, in order to know how each is likely to operate, and to be qualified to theorize from practice and practice what it is theorized (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). Working towards a better understanding of the whole range of approaches seems to be essential.

Any approach not derived from school experience and experimentation, cannot be in line with the reality of the school; as they have been directed at school teachers and cannot be realised in the form they were originally conceived by the theorizers (Nunan, 1991). Generally they have been part of institutional policies (de Segovia and Hardison, 2009) and their implementation in educational institutions has often been centralised. But there is literature which suggests that centralised decisions do not always produce the expected results, a probable reason for this failure is a hierarchical approach to curriculum (Underwood, 2012; Atai and Mazlu 2013; Glasgow, 2014), also known as specialist approach (Graves, 2008).

2.7 The specialist approach to the ELT curriculum

Approaching the language curriculum hierarchically is similar to approaching the curriculum from a specialist approach, defining what is to be taught from the top and ‘teachers through instruction, implement the plan’ (Graves, 2008, p. 149). This approach to curriculum is also centrally based (Gopinathan, 2006). According to Graves an example of specialist approach has been provided by Johnson (1989). Johnson’s framework of curriculum development contains four key elements, which can also be known as stages or domains: curriculum planning, specification of ends and means, programme implementation and classroom implementation.

The framework suggests the intervention of specialists for each domain who are responsible for generating all the necessary data to be used as the input to feed into the next stage of the process. As a consequence, specialists responsible for the curriculum planning, policy makers, ‘(...) determine the overall aims of the curriculum and are influenced to varying degrees by special interest groups who are able to bring pressures to bear’ (p. 3). At the next stage, syllabus writers use the policy statements to design the

syllabus. Following this stage are the material writers, and the teacher trainers; in the last domain classroom implementation, teachers and learners, through their actions implement the received curriculum.

Johnson claims that this approach to curriculum is ‘coherent as it emphasizes the interdependence of the [domains] and the need for mutually consistent and complementary decision making throughout the process of development and evaluation’ (p. xi). However, there is literature which suggests that educational policies created by specialists, provided to be implemented in the classroom have failed. de Segovia and Hardison (2009) report the findings of an empirical study in Thailand which investigated the policy behind and implementation of the reform in English teaching following Johnson’s (1989) decision-making framework for a coherent curriculum. The reform mandated a transition from teacher to learner centred instruction for all subjects including English. The results of the study revealed that

Policy statements tend to be utopian; therefore, it is not too surprising that the shift from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach did not evolve smoothly. It required an understanding of the language learning process in order to establish attainable goals and compatible methodology. This must be done in view of constraints on achievement including the lack of contact with the target language outside the classroom. Programme implementation involved additional obstacles, including the lack of sufficient teacher training, resources, mentoring support, and the cost of further education for in-service teachers. (...) The learners’ lack of interest in learning English and perception of its lack of values were not conducive to building coherent curriculum based on a learners-centred philosophy (de Segovia and Hardison, 2009, p. 161).

One of the main issues of Johnson’s approach is that there is discrepancy between what the policy states, specialists, and the reality of the teaching context. It is difficult to believe that a policy will be effectively implemented just because it was issued by a country’s ministry of education.

Another similar case to that of de Segovia and Hardison's is the one presented by O’Sullivan (2002) who gives details of the results of a three-year research study in Namibia. The researcher investigated the implications of the reform policies for English

language teaching developed by the ministry of education. The policy stated that subject in senior primary should be taught in English. Functional English syllabuses were also developed. Some other principles in regards to English language teaching were also stated to be implemented in the classroom such as, learner-centred and communicative approaches to ELT, pair and group work and so on. The researcher reports that the reforms were significantly beyond the capacity of the teachers participating in the research; as evidence provides a number of both subjective and objective factors rooted in the classroom, which inhibited the effective implementation of the reforms.

One big issue regarding ELT reforms in countries where English is not the native language is that policy makers tend to import approaches, principles, methods, materials which were conceived for BANA countries (Britain, Australasia, and North America), where the teaching of English language is mainly instrumentally (Holliday, 1994b), but it is not possible for such conceptions to have universal application due to local constraints (Ahmad and Sajjad, 2011). Nunan (2003) presents the results of an investigation into the place of English in the curriculum in several countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The study indicates that the emergence of English as a global language is having a considerable impact on policies and practices in all countries surveyed. However, it also reveals significant problems, for instance: teachers are inadequately trained in language teaching methodology, teachers' own language skills are poor, classrooms realities do not meet curriculum rhetoric, and students do not have sufficient exposure to English in instructional contexts. Research is needed on the English language requirements of workers in workplaces and occupations. The study demonstrates that simple ELT policies embedded into the curriculum of a country, or an educational institution does not necessarily guaranteed successful language learning and teaching.

One of the problems with the specialist approach to the language curriculum is that there is a mismatch between the domains, policy makers, syllabus designers, teachers and learners as they perform different curriculum functions, use different discourse, and produce different curriculum products (Graves, 2008). This can be frequently observed when ministries of education incorporate the teaching of English into the national curriculum, as Yulia (2014) illustrates in the evaluation of the English language teaching in junior high school in the Indonesian province of Yogyakarta.

English language programs have been mandated by the Indonesian ministry for national education. English has been the first foreign language to be taught in Indonesia. In the last decade an English language communicative competence curriculum was issued and the government required all schools in Indonesia to begin implementing it. The results of the evaluation showed that whilst the vision and mission of the government in respect of ELT in Indonesian high schools was clearly outlined, the disjuncture between the distinct level and the individual schools resulted in role confusion among distinct staff and individual schools.

Results confirmed that there was mismatch between the groups of people performing the curriculum function, as the education officers did not give serious appraisal to the implementation of the curriculum. There was a great lack of monitoring and supervision. Teacher's limited capacity in the teaching of English was also a major finding. Due to the pressure to prepare students for the national examination, most teachers ignored the notion of communicative competence.

Another similar case was documented by Gunal and Engin-Demir (2012) who give details of the results of a study conducted in Turkey revealing the perceptions of teachers about the implementation of the new English language curriculum for primary school as part of the changes conducted in educational field. The innovation conducted in the primary school curriculum was theoretically based on learner-centredness, constructivist approach and multiple intelligences theory.

A number of perceptions revealed by the language teachers confirm that the decision making process taking place at high levels of the educational system, are not necessarily successfully implemented in the classroom. Here are some examples: None of the teachers perceived the curriculum in terms of its constructivist nature. Few teachers regarded this change as introducing alternative assessment. The content of the syllabus was considered as inappropriate or ineffective in terms of the level and the interests of the students. Teachers also felt it was overloaded.

Cases like the ones commented on earlier have also been investigated in Nigeria, Ebo (1980); Japan, Sano et al. (1984); Stewart (2009); Underwood (2012); Glasgow (2014); Malaysia, Goh (1999); Brazil, Holmes and Celani (2006); Argentina, Zappa-Hollman (2007); Philippines, Waters and Vilches (2008); Libya, Orafi and Borg (2009); China,

Li (2010); Chen et al., (2014); Pakistan Ahmad and Khan (2011); Iran, Atai and Mazlum (2013).

This approach to curriculum design falls within what Graves (2008) has called ‘the specialist approach to curriculum’ (p. 149), or ‘centrally based curriculum development’ (Gopinathan, 2006, p. 97). According to Graves the specialist approach generates different kinds of problems:

In the specialist approach, the potential for mismatch is great because each different group of people performs different curriculum functions, uses different discourses, and produces different curriculum products. (...) by putting the classroom at the end of the chain of decisions, it positions teachers –and learners- as recipients and implementers of received wisdom, rather than decision-makers in their own right. (...) there is usually no room for valuation of the curriculum once it is implemented in the classroom. (p. 150-151).

According to Stenhouse (1975) the separation between the people, the process and the products generates a gap between the teaching language policy issued and the attempt to operationalize them. This was clearly demonstrated in the empirical studies examined earlier.

2.8 A school based approach to syllabus design

A school based approach to syllabus design would appear to depend less on policy directives and more on curriculum design and development activities which are located at the school level. An approach which takes into account the local knowledge and understanding of a particular group of stakeholders (teachers, learners, potential employers policy makers) pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context. An approach which empowers teachers with the knowledge, skill, attitude, and autonomy necessary to devise for themselves a systematic, coherent and relevant syllabus that is informed by theories and experiences of the ELT field. Meanwhile it should rely mostly on context-sensitive local knowledge to identify problems, find solutions, and try them out to see what works and what does not in their specific context and to generate their own knowledge grounded in practice; this process of generation and pursuit of knowledge should be led by inquiry and reflection (Kumaravadivelu, 2001; Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Therefore it is necessary to develop an approach, which allows practitioners get involved in the decision making. The following chapter will critically evaluate the school based approach to syllabus design.

2.9 Summary and conclusion

This chapter has offered a characterization of some of the most prominent ELT models. Such characterization helped to inform as to where most of the ideas to design and develop language curriculums have come from. The first reviewed model, ELT on the basis of language content, advocates the teaching and learning of the language based on the systematic and rule-based nature of the foreign language. The principle behind this model is that learners produce the language correctly and accurately after following a syllabus which is ‘organised in ways that, as directly as is feasible, reflect the organization of ‘logic’ inherent in the language itself’ (Breen, 1987; p. 85).

This model clearly conforms to the description of a syllabus more than the description of a curriculum, as decisions about teaching follow from content. For a second model the main aim of learning a foreign language is not to accumulate aspects of various systems of the language, but knowledge about how to use the language in appropriate ways in order to achieve particular purposes at particular targets. That is why a prime concern for the development of the curriculum is to analyse the language in use as well as the target context where the language will be used.

A widely used example of backward design is CBLT, included in the curriculum policies for the whole Mexican educational system (SEP, 2007; SEP 2011). Arguments for and against CBLT are given. A third examined model stresses the implementation of tasks to create learning possibilities through processes and procedures by which the individual develops understanding and awareness about the language. Tasks are the main element of a syllabus; tasks represent the means by which learners use the language to communicate and learn.

The position adopted in this investigation is that structural, communicative functions or tasks may effectively operate in different settings; therefore there is no best or worst ELT model. Any of them is derived from school experience and experimentation, they are imported models conceived for BANA countries (Britain, Australasia, and North America), where the teaching of English language is mainly instrumentally (Holliday, 1994a), but it is not possible for such conceptions to have universal application due to local constraints (Ahmad and Sajjad, 2011).

Generally they have been part of institutional policies and their implementation in educational institutions has usually been centralised, where curriculum decisions are

centrally made and vertically disseminated throughout institutions. One of the problems with the specialist approach to language curriculum is that there is a mismatch between the domains, policy makers, syllabus designers, teachers, and learners as they perform different curriculum functions, use different discourse, and producing different curriculum products (Graves, 2008).

This view of curriculum design and development matches the characteristics of the UC English programme. The opposite of the specialist approach is an alternative ELT curriculum model based on faculty's needs. A model in which decisions about the curriculum are more context based, which allows learners, potential employers and language teachers take part in the curriculum decision making. The theoretical basis of the model is School Based Curriculum Development. Chapter three discusses the model in full detail.

Chapter Three: An ELT syllabus based on faculty's needs

3.1 Introduction

After critically evaluating the three approaches, chapter two makes different claims: there is no best or worst ELT approach. Structural, functional, or tasks might each work well but in different circumstances, and any of the three approaches evaluated embraces elements of content, communicative learning outcomes and tasks; following an extreme view of any one of the three would be counterproductive (Clark, 1987). No one single approach can get full credit for achieving all the results that may be desired, and if such results are obtained in the form they were originally conceived by the theorizers, they are not derived from school experience, but in many cases models have been hierarchically implemented by policy makers in educational institutions (Kumaravadivelu, 2001; Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Top-down implementation produces a gap between stakeholders (policy makers, administrators, language teachers, students) as each performs different curriculum roles, uses different discourses, and produces different curriculum outcomes; leaving the school at the end of the decision chain (Graves, 2008).

We have now understood that the implementation of one or the other of the approaches does not offer a complete and effective solution to ELT problems in educational institutions, as it is not possible to strictly follow the approaches' underlying philosophy, because '(...) no single explanation for learning, and no unitary view of the contributions of language learners will account for what they must grapple with on a daily basis' (Larsen-Freeman, 1991a, p. 269). Therefore, we have learnt that the search for solutions will not necessarily come from external research and theories, but from research based on local knowledge emerging from innovative practices based on school (Skilberck, 1984). Therefore, appropriate to design and develop an ELT syllabus which depends more on activities that are targeted at the school's level; a syllabus which shares the decision making with the teaching context represented by language teachers, learners and local potential employers, creating a syllabus that represents the needs of the faculty. In this approach, a syllabus should enhance language teachers' professional development to devise for themselves a syllabus based on sound theories and experiences in ELT field. Such syllabus should encourage to rely on local knowledge to identify problems, find solutions, and test them in order to see what does and doesn't work in the specific context and generate their own knowledge grounded in practice. To

reach such an ambitious goal, it is necessary to employ a strategy within the field of curriculum development which advocates curriculum decision-making determined by individual schools and teachers.

A method to determine the particulars of the context is NA (Ahmadian and Rad, 2014). NA is critically evaluated to have an objective point of view of this area which could help gather data that satisfies the language learning requirements of students within the context of the particular institution.

Therefore, chapter three begins by defining school based curriculum development and stating the reasons for the emergence of this trend. It also reports the results of different studies implementing SBCD. Critical evaluation of the field is also provided, illustrated by different case studies. In addition, some empirical studies in the ELT field concerning SBCD are also presented, followed by challenges and problems found in SBCD supported by study cases. Additionally, a discussion on NA is held, understanding that NA can help gather data based on school needs. This is followed by a look at the idea that AR is a tool for SBCD, as a way of leading the reader to chapter four in which AR is examined in detail.

3.2 School Based Curriculum Development

Sabar (1989) claims that the 1970s witnessed the emergence of social changes such as democratisation and increasing teaching professionalisation, encouraging the growth of SBCD and leading to the acceptance of the legitimacy of teacher and school participation in curriculum development. Skilberck (1984) maintains that SBCD is underpinned by four main elements: 1) participation and management of public life including schools, 2) discontent with centralised curriculum policy, 3) schools as ecological organisations with self-determining powers to respond to teaching context needs, including sponsors, learners, and teachers, and 4) professional knowledge and skills in curriculum development.

Sabar (1989) suggests that SBCD started in response to the limitations of centralised curriculum in the late 1950s for the ‘teacher-proof’ curriculum (As the term teacher-proof suggests, the aim was to minimize the teacher’s control on curriculum development by creating a firm relationship among educational objectives, curriculum content, and assessment tools (Eryaman and Riedler, 2010) disseminated to schools for passive enactment barely improved the quality of education. The term SCBD has been

defined in various ways and for different purposes. Skilbeck (1984) explains SBCD as perfectly internal and ecological to the organization, and his explanation highlights features such as common decisions made by teachers and students. Bezzina (1991) maintains that collaboration is a key feature of SBCD:

SBCD is a collaborative effort which should not be confused with the individual efforts of teachers or administrators operating outside the boundaries of a collaborative accepted framework (p. 40)

SBCD does not necessarily involve the generation of a completely new curriculum. Bezzina (1991) thinks that SBCD can involve at least three processes: creating new curriculum, adapting existing curriculum; and even adopting an existing curriculum unchanged. The latter is still considered SBCD as long as it is the result of collaborative decision making.

The concept school-based connotes that decisions about teaching and learning should be made at the school level. If school-based is added to curriculum development, it means that stakeholders such as teachers and learners should be included in the decision making associated with the design and development of the curriculum, such as planning, designing, producing, implementing, and evaluating (Skilbeck, 1984).

Accordingly SBCD is the opposite to specialist approach to curriculum, and advocates the participation of teachers in the design and development of curriculum materials within a particular school (Marsh et al., 1990). SBCD can be seen as a response to hierarchical or centrally based curriculum development. SBCD advocates that centrally based curriculum developers do not take into account the different needs of students and teachers in a particular teaching context. Top-down modes of curriculum development ignore classroom teachers and provide them with little incentive, involvement, and job satisfaction. SBCD advocates argue that a centrally based curriculum does not take into account those key elements characteristic of the context, which in many occasions represent the diverse needs of students and teachers, and hinder the success of any curriculum improvement initiative (Marsh, 2009).

In SBCD teachers, as curriculum developers, play a predominant role as they do not only apply the knowledge gained by expertise, but generate their own theories supported by their experience and practice. This is vital as they know the classroom

situations better than anybody and can thereby make a unique contribution to the success of the curriculum (Al-Daami and Stanley, 1998).

Ebbutt and Elliott (1985) in Keiny (1993) claim that the generation of knowledge emerging from the teachers' experience of the context contributes to their professional status, giving them the role of curriculum developers, an idea that contrasts with the traditional top-down schema in which teachers play the role of implementers of the ideas of external curriculum developers and researchers, as generators of disciplinary knowledge, respectively. The creation of knowledge is the product of a process of reflection upon their practical experience (Schon, 1983). The generation of knowledge emerges from practice, eventually becoming curriculum theories that differ from those held by curriculum design experts (Keiny, 1993). For example, Leijen et al., (2014) introduce a guided reflection procedure to support student teachers in developing knowledge based on their practical experiences and linking this with theoretical knowledge at a university in Estonia. The guided reflection procedure consisted of three stages during which student teachers video recorded part of a lesson that they taught, reviewed two key moments of the recording, positive and negative, orally reflected upon the recording, and finally produced an individual written assignment. The researchers found that those student teachers with pedagogical experience from different practicums were prepared to carry out the reflection and stated that the guided reflection procedure supported the development of their knowledge. However, students without previous teaching practice experienced difficulties with guided reflection procedure and usually failed to point out benefits of this procedure.

Real progress in education can be made without the teacher involvement in curriculum development (Olson, 1977). Suggestions concerning a shift in focus from curriculum development to teacher education to enhance the role of the teacher in curriculum design and development are made (Sabar and Shariri, 1980). Furthermore, research on the importance of teacher participation and involvement in the process of curriculum planning and development revealed that: The teacher is perceived as a 'central and as an active agent, able to combine procedures suggested by external designers with the situational realities as he perceives them' (Olson, 1977, p. 62). Connelly and Ben-Perez (1980) provide the rationale for teacher participation in curriculum planning and development and state: 'Because of their involvement in classroom situations, the role

of the teacher is crucial for discovering the apparent gaps and bringing about change or improvement. Teachers have intimate knowledge of learners, classroom and school milieu. This knowledge allows teachers to point out weaknesses [and] shortcomings (...)’ (p. 54). Different case studies have shown this. For instance, Xu (2009) describes a project based on a school-university collaborative effort to build teachers’ practical, personal, reflective experience, and understanding of the new school based curriculum development. The SBCD initiative is related to a national Chinese curriculum reform in which the role of teachers has become an important theme in government official documents. There was broad agreement on the active involvement of teachers within the reform; however the central issue was its implementation. Instead of doing the traditional top-down training courses for teachers to familiarise themselves with the national curriculum; as proposed by government policy makers, a collaborative bottom-up project was run, which encouraged teachers to reflect critically on their practice as a first stage in enabling them to embrace curriculum reform in their personal professional development. Despite the complex process of assimilating the new concepts of active teacher and learner role in learning, which caused disorientation in teachers, not knowing how best to go about achieving the required changes in their role and in their teaching practice, ‘(...) teachers began not only to make new sense of their own situation, but also to appreciate the benefits of increased collaboration. Central to this was the manner in which the participating teachers kept reflecting action: the national curriculum had become more student-centred, and thus more significantly school-based.’ (p. 63).

Similarly, WAN and WONG (2006) evaluated the extent to which teacher engagement in curriculum decision making processes within a school-based structure of curriculum development in a local Hong Kong primary school led to teacher learning, and to expand the understanding of underlying principles in implementing curriculum changes in schools from student perspectives. The core element of the project was a planning, implementation and reflection model, in which a team of teachers reviewed, planned and designed a lesson or a unit of learning in collaborative meetings, then one of the teachers carried out the planned innovation lesson and subsequently the team conducted a reflection meeting. According to WAN and WONG this sequence has several advantages: it creates opportunities for collaboration, it locates changes pedagogy based on the teaching subject, it adopts a problem solving and critical approach, and finally

the change becomes an open venture, therefore school knowledge becomes a plethora of possibilities that are open to challenge, rather than a group of definite subjects merely imposed by external agents for professional deliberation at school sites (Harris, 2004).

The trend towards decentralization was primarily based on the assumption that teachers' involvement in curriculum decision-making would enhance their level of professionalism and result in more relevant teacher autonomy, professionalization and pursuit of curriculum better designed to meet the diverse needs of pupils and communities (Chun, 1999; Law et al., 2010). Likewise, Li (2006) emphasizes that the trend toward decentralization was primarily based on the assumption that teacher involvement in curriculum development would enhance their level of professionalism and result in more relevant and workable curriculum innovations. Stenhouse (1975) argues that SBCD has a status equal to a process of teacher personal professional development. Empirical studies support this claim (Power et al., 2012; Hardman and A-Rahman, 2014). Hardman et al. (2015) reports on the findings of a pilot school-based professional development programme for Tanzanian primary school teachers. The study set out to investigate the effectiveness and efficiency of the pilot programme in changing pedagogical practices. It was found that the school-based pilot scheme was having a significant impact on the teaching and learning practices of the teachers who had received training. Similarly, the project showed that school-based curriculum professional development building on existing systems and structures, and supported by experienced teachers, helped teachers to explore their own beliefs and classroom practices explore alternative pedagogic approaches, and ensure that teacher education was part of a broader capacity development strategy that supported different stakeholders. One of the findings was that a move away from ad hoc provision to a more systematic, long-term and sustainable approach, in which the teacher is increasingly involved in his or her ongoing professional development, working with other teachers at the school level, and in which other actors play critical supporting roles, will do much to enhance the capacity of teachers to deliver quality education.

3.3 SBCD in ELT

Literature about ELT SBCD is scanty only a few scholars have reported findings. Power et al. (2012) report the results of a study in Bangladesh, where a project was conducted to improve the quality of English language teaching and hence the achievement of students in their language learning. After introducing a school based teacher

development pilot programme in primary and secondary schools; evidence demonstrates that the project was capable of producing stimulating and sustained changes in classroom practice through a suitable combination of professional development activities such as significant increases in the use of target language, with more English being spoken by both teachers and students. The data also shows significant increases in relation to students talk time. Talandis Jr and Stout (2014) report a collaborative year-long project conducted at a private Japanese university to help students taking mandatory English classes speak more fluently. The intervention was a new syllabus featuring personalized topics, greater levels of L1 support, direct instruction of pragmatic strategies, and frequent assessment of spoken English. Results indicated that by the end of the year, student conversations appeared more fluent and accurate. According to Talandis Jr and Stout the project exemplifies an AR- based approach as it aims to bring about change and improvement in practice.

Banegas (2011) reports on a project he conducted to reform the EFL curriculum in Argentina. Secondary school language teachers from the province of Chubut felt uneasy about the EFL curriculum, thinking that it was time for participatory change. The curriculum that they were then following had been designed by a single specialist, a local experienced teacher, for other teachers to implement. This top-down approach in curriculum design was the main cause for teachers' uneasiness. One of the teachers' main concerns was that they did not understand the curriculum and consequently found bringing it to life in their practices extremely challenging as they felt the curriculum was unfamiliar to them. Teachers observed a gap between the official subject based curriculum and the observed curriculum in their classrooms. After several reflection meetings over a period of two years the new EFL curriculum was implemented and distributed among schools to obtain opinions from other teachers in Chubut. After drafting and revising it was presented as the EFL curriculum in the province. According to Banegas the curriculum was the result of teachers' concerns not only with educational policies and curriculum design, but also with their own in-service professional development.

Most of the ELT SBCD cases found in literature tended to involve language teachers investigating their own practice (Thorne and Qiang, 1996; Rainey, 2000; Wyatt, 2011; Fareh and Saeed, 2011), teacher professional development (Xu, 2009; Law et al., 2010),

the innovation of the language syllabus (Talandis Jr and Stout, 2014), or the introduction of an AR (AR) component into an existing graduate foreign language teaching methodology course for language teachers (Crookes and Chandler, 2001). In all these cases, AR was employed as a tool to conduct the projects.

3.4 Challenges and problems found in SBCD

Fostering the participation of teachers in curriculum development demands professional development opportunities; professional development programs and activities, on the other hand, must enable teachers to understand what is expected of them when becoming involved in curriculum development activities (Gopinathan, 2006). The idea of involving teachers in curriculum enactment involves many challenges and teachers encounter various problems while designing the curriculum, related to the conditions established for the design process, and a lack of the knowledge and skills needed to carry out collaborative design processes (Huizinga et al., 2014).

The tenets of SBCD, that curriculum design and development activities should be located at school level, can also become centralised policies of a country's ministry of education or of an education system (Beattie and Thiessen, 1997; Al-Daami and Stanley, 1998; Xu and Wong, 2011), especially in countries where the education system is highly centralised. Such is the case of Hong Kong, where according to Chun (1999), SBCD was introduced into the Hong Kong education system in 1988. Chun reports that the aims of the project were to meet the needs of pupils and schools as well as to improve the overall strategy of curriculum development, however the scheme was highly centralised and resulted in the education department's maintaining control of the process and products of the scheme. In addition to keeping the old centralised system, other points also emerged: for example, there was little focus on pupils' needs and teachers worked in isolation. The project was incorporated into the organizational cultures prevailing in the schools, which did not necessarily create benefits associated with SBCD. A similar case happened in Thailand where Nutravong (2002) examined school based curriculum decision making in the early stages of educational decentralization. Nutravong found that one of the main problems was the lack of adequate and clear information to enable the school educators to understand the SBCD ideologies and their new roles when carrying out their decision making responsibilities. Teachers were not adequately prepared to tackle changing the curriculum, which

hindered their input to curriculum decision making. This problem is also reported in the study of McColskey et al. (1998) who claim that in many cases, school members are not sufficiently equipped to be involved in shared decision making. According to McColskey et al., a majority of teachers were negative about the extent to which they understood their new roles and responsibilities. Nutravong (2002) also reported that top-down management was another significant problem. Thailand's bureaucratic system made it difficult for schools to be empowered in centrally driven school and curriculum reform because traditional authority blocks any new distribution of power implied under decentralization. An additional issue that Nutravong found was that shared decision making at school was unsuccessful, as decisions tended to be an individual activity rather than a means of creating school wide teamwork. The bureaucracy of the school limited the degree to which people were involved in decision making and thus did not encourage shared leadership.

As illustrated earlier, SBCD promotes the professional development of teachers, but those who have participated in SBCD have also encountered numerous problems. Empirical studies have shown that teachers experience great pressure when adopting the role of curriculum developers as they are not always adequately trained to undertake curriculum design tasks (Hannay, 1990; Cocklin, Simpson, and Stacey, 1995; Key, 2000). Additionally, when the curriculum development process is limited to school-based, without any external intervention, similar issues could appear. In addition to that, in some cases teachers would not have the practical experience to design and develop a curriculum, which could prove counterproductive (Gopinathan, 2006).

Time is a crucial barrier to teacher involvement. Chan et al. (1997) conducted an empirical study of school-based management in Hong Kong and revealed that the great majority of teachers involved in the investigation were worried about the amount of time spent in meetings and about the workload attached to the involvement in an SBCD project.

It was stated earlier that in SBCD decisions about teaching and learning should be made at school level. Therefore, decisions on curriculum should include teachers and learners as well as those key elements characteristic of the context, which, on many occasions, represent the diverse needs of students and teachers, and hinder the success of any curriculum improvement initiative (Marsh, 2009). As a method to come up with the

particulars of the context, NAs can be conducted (Ahmadian and Rad, 2014). It is reasonable to critically evaluate NAs in order to have an objective point of view about this evaluation method.

3.5 NA: a useful tool in the search for curriculum improvement

NA is the starting point to decide the aims, the method, the content and the assessment strategies of a language course (Munby, 1978; Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Krahnke, 1987; Nunan, 1988; Seedhouse, 1995; Jordan, 1997; Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998; Iwai et al., 1999). Iwai et al. (1999) define NA as ‘ (...) the activities that are involved in collecting information that will serve as the basis for developing a curriculum that will meet the needs of a particular group of students’ (p. 6), whilst Weddel et al. (1997) suggest that needs assessment ‘is a tool that examines, from the perspective of the learner’ what he or she needs from the language course (linguistic components, skills to develop, methods) to function as a competent language user in a given context’ (p.2). Brown (2006) defines NA on the same terms as Iwai et al. and Weddel et al., but Brown provides a more comprehensive definition by adding elements such as subjective and objective needs, as well as context. Brown (2006, p. 102) suggests that ‘Needs analysis is the systematic collection and analysis of all subjective and objective information necessary to define and validate defensible curriculum purpose that satisfy the language learning requirements of students within the context of the particular institutions that influence the learning and teaching situation’.

Since its origins NA has rapidly developed and systems of classification have emerged. For example Hutchinson and Waters (1987) make a useful division of learners’ needs into necessities (what the learner has to know to function effectively), lacks (what the learner knows and does not know already) and wants (what the learner think they need). Attempting to classify needs Berwick (1989) and Brindley (1989) search other options on the professional context of learning. For instance, Berwick examines felt needs and perceived needs, where the learners from an inside perspective examine themselves as professional learners together with their professional context for learning. Brindley’s taxonomy also includes subjective and objective needs. The former is based on facts provided from the outside, whilst subjective needs the perspective of the learner as individual. Brindley also distinguish between those needs concerned with the methodology and the products of a class.

What these examples show is that NA is a complicated process, involving the concerns and interests of different stakeholders who can have multiple perspectives resulting in a multitude of objectives and desired outcomes for the course, some of which may be contradictory (Huhta et al., 2013).

Another element which defines the complex attribute of NA is that it can be conducted at different levels, the micro, the meso and the macro (Robinson, 1991). Micro level needs are those that emerge from the learner. The broader setting of the workplace (or the institution providing education) is considered at the meso-level. This level is related to organizational outcomes, (companies, educational institutions, or government agencies). The needs of society are the third level of Robinson's view. At the macro-level are the needs of society. Needs at this level are related to questions of general importance to language in education planning, such as What languages should be known, learned and taught at all? What is the objective in language teaching or learning? or What methodology and what materials are employed over what duration? (Huhta, et al., 2013).

NA has gone through many stages (Songhori, 2008), with the publication of Munby (1978) *Communicative Syllabus Design*, situations and functions were set within the frame of NA. In this book, Munby introduced Communicative Needs Processor (CNP), which is the basis of Munby's approach to NA. Based on Munby's work, Chambers (1980) introduced the term Target Situation Analysis (TSA).

3.5.1 Communicative language NA

Examples of studies which investigate the communicative needs that learners have regarding the target situation have shown the relevance Target Situational Analysis (TSA) has over language teaching and learning (Cameron, 1998; Prince, 1984; Gass, 2012). Srabua (2007) for example conducted a TSA to investigate to what extent hotel public relations officers needed English in their professions, as well as the English skills most of them needed for doing their work in Thailand. The investigation revealed that writing and speaking skills were those most-used by the officers, with writing being the most highly used, since officers needed to write a variety of accurate and appropriate namely, business letters, e-mail messages, and press releases. The findings of the investigation gave the researcher the opportunity to provide a list of suggestions for

tourism schools in Thailand about the specific aspects of English to be integrated into their language syllabi, which could warrant higher quality language study programs.

TSA moved towards placing the learners' purposes in the central position within the framework of NA (Songhori, 2008); as TSA was not mainly concerned with investigating discrete language items of grammar and vocabulary (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998). The aim of TSA is to find data which reveals what the learner needs to know in order to function effectively in the target working environment. TSA turns out to be vital to find out what English learners need to know in order to be competent language users within the target working environment, especially in countries where multinationals establish outsourcing centres (Graddol, 2006).

Investigating learners' strengths and weaknesses in language knowledge and skills, or learners' language proficiency, known as Present Situation Analysis (PSA), is a common NA method related to the TSA (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998). West (1994) and Jordan (1997) claim that between a target situational analysis (TSA) and a PSA there is a language knowledge and skills gap; and through analysis, researchers can gather the appropriate data to serve as the basis for developing language courses to fill it. 'The gap between [TSA and PSA] can be referred to as learners' lacks' (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987, p. 55-56), and Allwright and Allwright (1977) have defined it as deficiency analysis. The PSA can be carried out by means of established placement tests Powers and Stansfield (1985); Paltridge (1992); Wozniak (2010). The following three examples show the use of language tests to identify learners' lacks. Wozniak (2010) assessed the language needs of French mountain guides at the French Skiing and Mountaineering School. The study included a foreign language exam, a questionnaire survey, and an unstructured interview. The findings helped the institution assess the relationship between 'language needs and language teaching, more particularly as only domain experts' (p. 250). Paltridge (1992) also contributes to the idea of administering the English for Academic Purposes placement test in order to identify language learners' performance. The test also aimed to 'provide the basis for an introduction to a communication-focus and learning-centred classroom' (p. 263). In the same line, Baltra (1977) periodically assessed a group of Chilean learner teacher trainees by means of different procedures, such as '(...) mechanical presented version of spoken language, [as well as] (...) visuals; written foreign language; written mother tongue (...) spoken

foreign language’ (p. 50-51). The researcher concluded that assessment helped decide ‘which students could continue their training as teachers of English’ (p. 52). However, ‘the background information, e.g. years of learning English, level of education, etc., about learners can also provide us with enough information about their present abilities which can thus be predicted to some extent’ (Songhori, 2008, p. 10).

Prince (1984) claims that administering tests is very common in academic settings, but workplace courses present other variables, because the language teaching approach for occupational purpose courses is not only goal-oriented, but process-oriented as well; therefore it is necessary to use different techniques. Cowling (2007) illustrates this with the results of an investigation at a large Japanese industrial firm. The researcher carried out an investigation, where he not only found the language features to be included in the language syllabus, but also other needs (time constraints, cultural differences, students’ experiences in the target language), which allowed him to first design a distinctive tailored syllabus and then deliver a successful language course. With this, Cowling demonstrates that the use of ‘multiple sources and multiple methods in the data gathering stage and [the use of] triangulation in order to validate results’ (p. 426), could reveal more reliable data to serve as the basis for the design of a syllabus. Therefore, the analysis of the language features needed to communicate in a target situation ‘will alone clearly be insufficient’ to determine the different needs a target group has (Long, 2005, p. 2).

Conducting a TSA per-se, or as Chambers (1980, p. 29) defines it as ‘the establishment of communicative needs and their relations, resulting from an analysis of the communication in the target situation’, would give only a limited view of reality. Perhaps the main weakness of TSA is that it considerably narrows the potential of analysis by mainly focusing on the knowledge of the language. Thus one single approach to needs analysis is not enough to understand the heterogeneous circumstances that surround a language teaching situation. As Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) suggest the aim of a need analysis is to

know learners as people, as language users and as language learners; to know how language learning and skills learning can be maximized for a given learner group; finally, to know the target situations and learning environment such that we can interpret the data appropriately (p.126).

The ultimate goal of NA analysis is to gather information in order to design or innovate a syllabus to enhance learning; therefore, it is critical to ask if the gap between the target and the present situation should only be filled with content, language knowledge and skills.

Research has divulged that language learning is an activity related to several disciplines, for instance: linguistics, sociology, sociolinguistics, psychology, psycholinguistics, education (Stern, 1983; Hedge, 2000; Candlin and Mercer, 2001). Consequently, it should be regarded as a multi-factorial phenomenon, and a mere linguistic approach of the teaching target situation seems to be very simplistic, and will only reveal a partial view of the situation. For that reason, it is appropriate to explore other approaches so as to set out a position regarding the most suitable one according to the context. Key participants of learning and teaching are learners, thus taking their opinions into consideration before making any decisions about teaching sounds sensible, especially if the approach to curriculum design is school-based.

3.5.2 Learners' preferred learning strategies and their beliefs

The findings of research studies in the field of language learning strategies have revealed that those learners who approach cognitive and metacognitive behaviours differently obtain more successful results (Wenden, 1986; Chamot, 1987; Naiman et. al, 1996) Chamot, 2004; Chamot, 2005; Abhakorn, 2008). The employment of strategies also helps less successful language learners improve their performance (Griffith, 2004; Zare, 2012). The employment of strategies can be done through strategy analysis which investigates 'behaviors or actions (...) learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed, and enjoyable' (Oxford, 1989, p. 235). Learning strategies are 'Activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own language learning' Griffiths (2008, p. 87) or as Oxford (1990) claims

Learning strategies are steps taken by students to enhance their own learning. Strategies are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence. Appropriate language learning strategies result in improved proficiency and greater self-confidence (p.1).

Different case studies have employed learning strategies as a method of helping language learners increase their learning efficiency (Kouraogo, 1993; Yang, 1999;

Yilmaz, 2010; Ungureanu and Georgescu, 2012). Bruen (2001) found out that the more proficient students use a greater number of language learning strategies in a more structured and purposeful manner, and apply them to a wider range of situations and tasks; this result was found during a study the researcher conducted with 100 second year students of German. Likewise, Pearson (1988) carried out a project that revealed that successful Japanese speakers of English use specific strategies to learn and communicate. The study identified the conditions under which men on long-term job assignments used English and characterize in general terms their lifestyles while living and working outside Japan. Research findings made known the relevance of global strategies, in which learners create practice opportunities with native speakers.

Research on language learning strategies has discovered that making learners aware of the use of effective strategies and helping learners to implement them effectively could enhance learning. Like strategies, beliefs underpinning the choice of learning strategy to use could also become an influential factor for success or failure during learning, meaning that what learners believe about language learning in general, or language learning strategies in particular might influence learners' performance.

Support for this theory comes from Peackon (1999, p. 247) who states that 'Foreign language learning is almost certainly the subject of many firm beliefs and convictions (...) around the world, and these beliefs almost certainly affect language learning'. In addition Horwitz (1987, p. 120) pointed out that 'students' beliefs about language learning is an important step toward understanding the etiology of learning strategies'. Mori (1999, p. 378) also reported that 'what students consider to be an effective strategy significantly influences their use of strategies'. And Horwitz (1999, p. 557) added that 'Understanding learner beliefs about language learning is essential to understand learner strategies and planning appropriate language instruction'. Horwitz (1999) found that EFL learners and foreign language learners in the U.S. had different beliefs about their motivation for language learning. The EFL learners learned English because of instrumental motivation while foreign language learners learned the target language because of integrative motivation. Similarly, Vibulphol, (2004) conducted an study to investigate beliefs about language learning of pre-service EFL teachers in Thailand, among all the results the researcher found that the majority of the participants responded that the main reasons why they wanted to learn English was because they wanted to have friends from other countries, and learn about English speakers, integrative

motivation. Respondents also mentioned that they wanted to learn English because it was important for communication, for higher education, for information access and for job opportunity, instrumental motivation. Dörnyei (2001) has claimed that learners with high motivation are likely to do better in language learning than those with low motivation.

Different studies including Peackon (1999); Ariogul et al. (2009); Trinder (2013) have shown how language learning is affected by learners' beliefs as shown in a report based on the responses from an ESL group to an iconic instrument to assess students' beliefs about language learning, Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), (Horwitz, 1987). The Likert-scale questionnaire assessed beliefs about language learning in four different areas: foreign language attitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning, and language learning strategies. The researcher made some revealing findings at some revealing conclusions:

erroneous beliefs about language learning lead to less effective language learning strategies (...) knowledge of student belief systems may be particularly useful [to] confront erroneous beliefs with new information (...) a systematic assessment of student beliefs would greatly facilitate learning (...) just as the assessment of the linguistic background (p. 126-127).

The inventory, BALLI, edited on two future occasions, resulted in two new versions of the instrument (Vibulphol, 2004), and has been implemented in several studies (Mantle-Bromley, 1995; Yang, 1999; Amuzie and Winke, 2009).

Using their own instruments other researchers have investigated the topic with similar results. For example, Mori (1999) found significant correlation between beliefs and achievement in her study of American college students studying Japanese. The researcher administered a questionnaire to assess beliefs about language learning in six different areas: difficulty, analytical approach, risk taking, avoidance of ambiguity, easiness, and reliance on L1. The investigator discovered that, even at a modest level, on a statistical basis beliefs were significantly related to achievement. She also reported that

- a) learners who consider a target language easy are more likely to outperform those who view it as being difficult.
- b) students who accept multiple, ambiguous answers are more likely to better understand course materials than those who seek unambiguous clear-cut answers.

c) students who generally believe that the ability to learn is innately fixed tend to attain lower proficiency in a foreign language. (p. 398-399)

Other findings strictly related to the learning of Kanji, the Japanese character writing system, were also presented.

Another illustrative study conducted by Trinder (2013) at the Vienna University of Economics and Business revealed that students from a specific area of study, such as Economics and Business, have more in common than their choice of discipline. For instance, they were highly tolerant of ambiguity and willing to communicate; since having an introverted or shy personality could interfere with communication. A second assessment area was the impact of new teaching context on conceptions of learning, approaches, and strategies, considering that in many Austrian universities international students outnumber native ones. In this respect in particular respondents' notions on how languages are best learnt stress the benefits of exposure to the target language, ideally in immersion settings, and learning through oral communication' (p. 9). A third variable the study focused on was the differences between more and less successful students. Students expressed their understanding of the key aspects for successful language learning, for example: 'achieving their aims, adopting an active approach and adapting their preferred learning style to suit the occasion (...); whereas unsuccessful students reacted with disillusionment and the adoption of minimalistic surface approaches' (p. 9).

Language learning strategies can help language learners learn (Skehan, 1989). However, Kellerman (1991) argues that language learning strategies are irrelevant as learners have already developed strategic competence in their mother tongue that can be applicable to the learning of the second language. Rees-Miller (1993) has criticised the claims made concerning the connection between the use of language learning strategies and language learning success. Rees-Miller referred to different interventions and maintained that the relationship between strategy awareness and L2 learning success had not been demonstrated, that few strategies were transferable beyond a specific task, and that not all strategy users seemed to become good L2 learners. A major concern Rees-Miller has about strategy research is the lack of clarity in the definition of what a strategy actually is. Rees-Miller claims that:

Even the cognitive learning strategies, such as seeking meaning, using deduction, inferencing, or monitoring, are defined so broadly that it is

questionable whether they can be specified in terms of observable, specific, universal behaviours that could be taught to or assessed in students (p. 681).

In addition, Skehan (1989) emphasizes that language learning strategies can also help less successful learners progress more quickly. But, Steven McDonough claims within an interview conducted by Alasdair (2006) that a limitation of training learners is concerned with the idea that learners are trained to work independently, leading to the question of whether they are autonomous or not, as they are deliberately trained to operate '(...) those things the teacher's trained them to do rather than taking off on their own' (p. 65). Another limitation is that training learners in learning strategies '(...) takes time away from the actual language teaching' (p. 64), as part of the classroom time has to be spent on instructions given in L1.

Woodrow (2005) points out that classifying strategies into three types, cognitive, metacognitive, and social, can be relevant to a particular context, but it is highly likely that the same classification is not applicable to different groups of learners; as learners from different context tend to be different in several aspects. In this respect Locastro (1994) adds that transferability of large and general learner strategy inventories is not feasible across sociocultural domains and therefore it leads to invalidity of the results and conclusions.

Bearing in mind that SBCD advocates the inclusion of language learners' opinions into the decision making associated with the design and development of curriculum (Skilbeck, 1984), and having considered the earlier discussion on language learning strategies which suggests that making learners aware of the use of effective strategies, and helping learners to implement them effectively could enhance their learning in particular contexts (Oxford, 1990), and that beliefs underpinning the choice of learning strategy to use could also become an influential factor for success or failure during learning (Horwitz, 1999), it seems appropriate to conduct research activities which shed light on the topic in relation to this particular research context; however, before conducting any research activities in this or another area it is advisable to be familiar with those local factors that could influence the teaching and learning of language, especially if the position adopted is SBCD. Therefore, it is appropriate to gather information about the conditions related to the context. This activity can be conducted through a means analysis.

3.5.3 Means Analysis

Means analysis, also known as ecological approach (West, 1994; Tudor, 2003), is the investigation that reveals particular features of a teaching context, which, on occasion, are ignored by stakeholders but frequently define the outcome of a language course (Pennycook, 1998). These features relate to context culture and beliefs, educational policies, accessibility to resources (timetable, class size, furniture, facilities, learning materials), political decisions, social and economic conditions, historical events, and other aspects of the target situation influencing the life of participants involved in the language learning and teaching process (Breen, 1985; Markee, 1986; Holliday, 1994b; Hyde, 1994). Holliday (1995) argues that contextual factors should be included in the language curriculums since they ‘change the nature of language use’ (p.117). Pennycook (1998) also advocates that there is a need to see ‘English language teaching as located in the domain of popular culture as much as in the domain of applied linguistics’ (p. 162).

Concerning training in teaching methodologies and local context, Bax (2003, p. 283) affirms that

any training course should therefore make it a priority to teach not only methodology but also a heightened awareness of contextual factors, and an ability to deal with them -in fact, to put consideration of the context first and only then consider the teaching approach. (...) This will include an understanding of individual students and their learning needs, wants, styles and strategies (...) as well as the course book, local conditions, the classroom culture, school culture, national culture (...) (ibid., p. 285)

In summary, means analysis aims to widen the scope of the investigation by including in the language curriculum not only the study of the language or the adoption of an internationally renowned language teaching methodology, but also individual characteristics of the teaching context to make the language teaching process more meaningful, flexible, friendly, and achievable for the participants in the target situation, and therefore improve language learning. Reviewing different articles, it was found that there is a strong posture that advocates local teaching practices, and in a certain way discards some top-down language teaching methods which are presented as a panacea for resolving almost all language teaching and learning problems.

For example, Bax (2003) argues that CLT has become a sort of one-size-fits-all method which has ‘neglected one key aspect of language teaching-namely the context in which it takes place’ (p. 278), and it seems that the method has become the only solution to

teaching problems; putting context in second place. Holliday (1994a) claims that methods such as CLT were originally conceived in BANA countries, where the teaching of English language is mainly instrumentally oriented; therefore classroom methodologies attempt to 'suit the precise needs of language learners [of this exclusive context]' (p. 4). Ahmad and Sajjad (2011) also state that native Anglophone writers lead the ELT community in research for innovations and improvements in teaching English and their findings tend to be universal; but 'it is not possible for such studies to have universal application' (p. 1766) due to local constraints. Continuing with CLT Sano et al (1984) present the case of a secondary school in Japan, where the concept of communicative competence (an ability to use the language appropriately) needed to be redefined to match the goals of their own teaching context, which see the learning of English as an element of the curriculum aiming to form integral citizens, rather than seeing communication competence as a simple utilitarian communication tool. This belief encouraged Japanese teachers to organize a research group attempting 'to find a method of teaching English which would be effective and appropriate in Japan (...) and different from that of communicative language teaching developing in Europe' (p.170). The efforts of the group resulted in a manifesto in which they captured their local vision of what communicative competence was; building on the principle that 'for most of [their] learners, English [was] not and [would] never be an instrument to do something with' (p. 170).

Another illustrative example is presented by Le Ha (2004) who provides a comprehensive literature review to demonstrate commonly held beliefs about both Eastern language learners and teachers. The author states that some local pedagogical practices may be perceived as outdated by Western teaching principles, but not for local teachers who 'use a variety of pedagogical approaches which take account of the cultural context of the classroom' (p. 50), such as telling learners how they should or should not behave in certain circumstances and situations; a practice, the author suggests, that might be judged as imposing in the eyes of external judgment, but not in local eyes; thus, the fact that local teachers implement teaching practices different from the ones used in Western countries does not mean that they have a teaching deficit. 'There are many ways to reach the target, but one cannot claim that one person's way is better than the others, because each way has to conform with its culture and environment' (p. 52).

Similarly, trying to determine the effects of learner-centred education in the contexts of developing countries, Schweisfurth (2011) reviewed 72 articles in which the researcher found very similar results: limited teacher capacity since they have not experienced learner-centred education personally, and restricted classroom resources. A significant finding was the fact that teaching and learning are interpreted differently in different contexts and perhaps '[learner-centred education] is ultimately a 'western' construct inappropriate for application in all societies and classroom' (p.425).

Issues concerning ELT arise not only at classroom level, but also as part of the educational policies of a whole country. For instance, Ubahakwe (1980) reviewed the ELT situation in Nigeria, and, according to the researcher, the country is experiencing ambivalence towards the use of English; it seems that, even when English has been the colonizing language in the country and is nowadays an international tool of communication, its status, role and use have been affected by different contextual factors, for example: socio-cultural activities, government and political initiatives, research and educational activities, that have moved the language from 'the upper limit of a second home language to the lower limit of a second foreign language' (p. 162). It seems remarkable that the aspects that have modified the natural course of English teaching and learning in Nigeria are local events, not necessarily related to the study of the language from a linguistic domain but from contextual one.

Another paper that sheds light on the topic is one written by Holmes and Celani (2006) in which they present a discussion about a national project known as the Brazilian ESP project. The authors describe how after 25 years in existence the project has succeeded. According to them, a determining condition that allowed the project to prevail was 'the way it developed methodologies based upon 'local knowledge' rather than simply importing the 'universal' approaches to ESP methodology' (p. 110). A key element of the progression of the project was the analysis of the social context to determine the need to be met in the classroom. Since the project was to be implemented in public universities across the country, 'attempting to teach the four skills or to concentrate primarily on the spoken language would be unfeasible given the general lack of infrastructure, class size, frequency of instruction (...)' (Alba Celani, 2008, p. 421).

The choice was made to adopt an ESP approach that met the needs of this particular educational context, and that was academic reading. As Alba Celani points out

Teaching reading with some degree of success is possible in the conditions normally found in the majority of schools; it is desirable because, if properly put into practice by well-prepared teachers, it can become both an enjoyable and a meaningful learning experience (p. 421).

Conducting means analysis seems to be appropriate within the context of SBCD. However, it is also suitable to review some critical views concerning NA, which can help guide this study towards a more objective position.

3.6 Limitations of NA

NA is a complex process due to several reasons: the researcher needs to know about the different approaches to NA, the researcher needs to know about data gathering techniques, the researcher needs to know the fieldwork, the researcher needs to make decisions about the most suitable approaches to be employed, the data analysis process is challenging, and applying the data gathered to the course syllabus with is difficult.

As stated in chapter three there has been little research on NA to suggest generalizable findings or principles about appropriate NA methodology (Long, 2005). Even though there were findings or principles about appropriate NA methodology, the researcher still had to face many complexities presented by the research context itself. Therefore, the researcher should have a theoretical knowledge about the different NA approaches as well as the different data gathering techniques that can be employed. Having this theoretical knowledge will allow the researcher to make much more informed decisions about the sort of research methods to follow according to the context and the situation being researched. That knowledge can also allow the researcher to modify or adapt the original course of the investigation if new challenges emerge. New challenges or issues could derive from data revealed by participants or unexpected events arising from the context. The more theoretical repertoire the researcher has in the field the better.

The data gathering stage is also challenging as it should provide adequate information to set the objectives of the course. Therefore, it is necessary to collect the type and quantity of data suitable to the aims of the process.

Criticisms of NA and its applicability to language teaching have come from West (1994) who has examined several areas where different limitations have been identified. One of the most fundamental is the lack of awareness of the existence of NA as a tool in

course design. West also claims that there is little information on the validity or reliability of the instruments used and the results obtained (Woodrow, 2005). Although most of the NA literature emerged from the ESP field, its procedures have been constantly employed for the planning of general English courses (Rixon, 1992). NA may be restricted as the analysis can result in precise needs or ends; in this regard Young (2000) emphasizes that NA is restricted as it is assumed even before the analysis, 'whatever else their needs, learners of English language require communicative and interactive teaching and learning environment'. However, many learners might not have those needs. On the contrary Dubin and Olshtain (1986) claim that NA is not limiting enough as 'an assessment of individual needs could result in multiple course objectives' (p.102).

Benesch (1996) claims that a NA approach to language teaching is mostly descriptive, which 'aims to fit students into the status quo by teaching them to make their behavior and language appropriate'; instead, Benesch suggests that language lessons ' (...) can be agencies for social change' (p. 736), where learners have the possibility to express and make known their cultural beliefs, learning situations, social and political opinions on controversial topics, and lessons provide spaces to create connections between learners and their daily lives (Benesch, 2009). Additionally, language courses should give learners the opportunity to negotiate the curriculum (Benesch, 2001), as a way of 'promoting participation in decisions affecting their academic lives' (Benesch, 1999, p. 325).

Language learners differ from one another along different dimensions, offering contrasts not just in their language proficiency, but also in their aims, interests, behaviours, beliefs, points of view, values, and educational backgrounds (Hyland and Hamp-Lyons, 2002). Given the variation in needs, providing language teaching using general English programmes and materials may run the risk of failure (Long, 2005). Therefore, it is wise to investigate the specific needs of each particular group of stakeholders (teachers, learners, potential employers, policy makers, others) pursuing a precise set of goals within a certain institutional context with regard to language teaching and learning. Given such a broad range of phenomena, analyzing learners' language knowledge and skills alone will clearly be insufficient. Thus, it seems

reasonable to conduct different analyses to gather different types of information, taken from diverse sources through various methods.

The concept of SBCD is directly related to AR. As Elliott (1997) points out AR emerged as a tool for school-based curriculum in the 1960s, which attempted to innovate a curriculum which was more relevant and met the needs of students. Through the use of cyclical process proposed by AR, teachers are able to reflect upon their everyday practice and improve their work; in this way they contribute to the construction of a curriculum that is more focused on the demands of their teaching context. Gopinathan (2006) maintains that advocates of AR and SBCD assert that having the responsibility to develop and implement the curriculum is crucial to the professional identity of teachers. SBCD is thus mainly a way to develop teachers' professional competence and empower them (Xu, 2009; Sales et al., 2011; Gao and Chow, 2012, Zohrabi, 2014). In addition, through the use of AR as a tool for SBCD, teachers, and not necessarily experts in the field of research, are able to undertake the research (Adelman, 1993). Additionally, Carver and Klein (2013) comment that AR is a useful tool for supporting continuous improvement in teaching programmes. Also, AR is a tool to create knowledge grounded in practice (McNiff, 2013). Chapter four examines several theoretical concepts of AR and empirical studies.

3.7 Summary and conclusions

The chapter discusses SBCD as a strategy within the field of curriculum development which advocates curriculum decision-making determined by individual schools and teachers starting from the centrally based view. Thus, SBCD is the opposite of the hierarchical or centrally based curriculum, as it promotes the involvement of teachers and students in its design and development. SBCD advocates argue that centrally based curriculum do not take into account those key elements characteristic of the context, which on many occasions represent the diverse needs of students and teachers, and hinder the success of any curriculum improvement initiatives.

Some limitations of SBCD are also examined; for instance, SBCD can become a centralised policy, too, a top-down decision imposed by a government agency. In addition, empirical studies show that teachers who have adopted the role of curriculum developers experience great challenges especially when they are not adequately trained. Some case studies have shown that SBCD has produced positive results in ELT situations, improving the quality of English language teaching and hence student

achievement in their language learning or the content of the language syllabus. Other cases report language teachers investigating their own practice within the field of professional development. A distinctive characteristic of them is that they employ AR as a tool to conduct the projects. Approaches to NA are examined in close detail identifying important points and key features, as well as some of their limitations. NA seems to be a useful tool to gather data, a key step in the search of ELT SBCD. A tool for school based curriculum change tied to the goal of creating curriculum more meaningful and relevant to the learning context is AR (Elliott, 1991). Therefore, chapter four examines it in full detail.

Chapter Four: Action Research, a useful tool to design and develop the ELT curriculum

4.1 Introduction

The position established in chapter three was that the specialist approach to Curriculum Design produces a gap between different dimensions within the decision-making process. One of the main issues with this is that there is a discrepancy between what the policy states, specialists, and the reality of the teaching context. It is difficult to believe that a policy will be effectively implemented just because it was issued by a group of specialists. Numerous case studies (Zappa-Hollman, 2007; Waters and Vilches, 2008; Orafi and Borg, 2009) have demonstrated that ELT policies inserted into the curriculum of an educational system do not automatically assure positive language learning and teaching results, as they are usually beyond the system at the school level. This means that there might be different factors or elements influencing the effective implementation of the curriculum; such as teachers, trainers, learners, staff, resources, facilities, but also culture, politics, and beliefs.

SBCD is directly related to AR (Elliott, 1997). AR is a useful tool which encourages reflection upon teachers' everyday practices and work improvement, in this way they contribute to the construction of a curriculum much more focus on the demands of the teaching context. Different authors have recommended models for the AR process (Hendricks, 2013; Stringer, 2014; Mertler, 2014). For the reason that it is to some extent dynamic, the variety of models look a bit different from one another, but have a common element: AR models all begin with an inquiry.

This study has adopted a model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). Kemmis and McTaggart suggest a model with four stages which can follow a spiral path, and can be repeated according to the scope purposes, and outcomes of the research (Burns, 2005):

- To develop a plan of critically informed actions to make improvements,
- To act to implement the plan,
- To observe the effects of the critically informed action in the context in which it occurs,
- To reflect on these effects as the basis for further planning, subsequent critically informed action and so on, through a succession of stages (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988, p. 10).

The reason behind the decision to follow this model obeys the fact that the model agrees with the research environment as well as the experience the researcher has around that field (Somekh, 2006).

The chapter begins by giving details about the work of distinguished scholars in the development of AR; followed by critique and a number of challenges and limitations. To respond to the main points of criticism, three key elements of AR are presented and illustrated with study cases. The three elements presented will serve as a foundation for the data collection and analysis phases of this study. AR can be conducted by practitioners, AR may help improve the work environment, and AR generates knowledge. They are followed by several empirical studies which illustrate how curriculum development has benefitted from AR.

4.2 Overview of AR

AR is about inquiring, understanding, taking action and improving the social context where people work. As Feldman (2007), Altrichther, et al. (2008) support AR is a method used to understand and to improve practice, and as a way to generate knowledge.

McNiff and Whitehead (2010, p. 19) also state that AR is ‘a process that helps you as practitioner to develop a deep understanding of what you are doing as an insider researcher, so it has both a personal and social aim’. McNiff (2013, p. 23) affirms that ‘AR is a name given to a particular way of looking at your practice to check whether it is as you feel it should be (...) If you feel your practice needs action in some way, you will be able to take action to improve it, and produce evidence to show how the practice has improved.’

According to Burns (2005) AR is seen as a method used to generate ‘meaning and understanding in problematic social situations and improving the quality of human interactions and practices within those situations’ (p. 57). AR is a methodology that encourages teachers to ask questions about theory and practice and to evaluate their teaching through systematic inquiry (Cabaroglu, 2014).

Stringer (1999, p. 17) defines AR as

a collaborative approach to inquiry or investigate that provides people with the means to take systematic action to resolve specific problems. This approach to research favours consensual and participatory procedures that enable people (a)

to investigate systematically their problems and issues, (b) to formulate powerful and sophisticated accounts of their situations, and (c) to devise plans to deal with the problems at hand.

AR is a form of collective reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out' (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988, p. 6)

Although definitions of AR vary, there are some typical features associated with it, which are summarized by (Burns, 1999) as follows:

1. AR is contextual, small-scale and localized it identifies and investigates problems within a specific situation.
2. It is evaluative and reflective as it aims to bring about change and improvement in practice.
3. It is participatory as it provides for collaborative investigation by teams of colleagues, practitioners and researches.
4. Changes in practice are based on the collection of information by means or data which provide the impetus for change (p.30)

All the above definitions coincide in key elements of AR: AR identifies a problematic situation which needs to be solved within a work environment. Reflective inquiry needs to be conducted by practitioners across the AR process. Through inquiry practitioners understand the problematic situation and the possible causes of the problem. Action is taken in order to improve the initial problem that has been found.

Burns (2005) claims that the modern seeds of AR in educational contexts can be found in the work of (Dewey, 1929). Dewey's arguments against the separation of theory and practice were profoundly influential in educational enquiry in the first part of the 20th century.

AR was tested within the industry field, but it has also had impact on other areas of society such as education (Jefferson, 2014). Kurt Lewin is often cited as the creator of the term AR. A deeply held belief of Lewin was that democratic workplaces foster employees who retain possession of their work, which raises both confidence and efficiency (Hendricks, 2013). Lewin proved that through AR the development of social relationships of groups and between groups to sustain communication and cooperation was possible (Adelman, 1993).

His idea of improving social formation by involving participants in a cyclical process of fact finding, planning, exploratory action and valuation was an alternative way of approaching research (Somekh and Zeichner, 2009). Exploring social issues such as discrimination against minority groups, Lewin proposes AR as an extension of a further step from field experiments and a laboratory (Maksimovic, 2010). Adelman (1993) explains that AR was used to overtake systematic inquiry for participants to reach greater effectiveness through democratic participation, providing opportunities to ordinary people to participate in collective research on common troubles through discussion, decision, and action.

According to Somekh and Zeichner (2009) Stephen Corey, a leading voice for promoting AR in education in the USA, conducted different projects to improve the work environment within schools across the United States. Identifying solutions often required teachers to work with other teachers in the school, making AR a cooperative endeavour. This led to the development of the method known as cooperative/collaborative AR (Jefferson, 2014). Cooperative AR 'encourage participants to share common problems and to work cooperatively as a research community to examine their existing assumptions, values and beliefs within the sociopolitical cultures of the institutions in which they work' (Burns, 1999, p. 13).

Corey advised teachers to research their own work in order to improve it. Before that, the only researchers were the proficient outsiders who objectively researched social situations. But Corey believed teachers should research their own work scientifically therefore they could assess their choices and decisions, amend and modify their plans, and so the cycle would continue. Corey maintained teachers' research to a cooperative activity which would support democratic values (Cunningham, 1999).

During this time Lawrence Stenhouse initiated the teacher-as-researcher movement in the United Kingdom (Jefferson, 2014). His work with curriculum development focused on working with teachers as researchers. A key principle was to prepare teachers to conduct case studies in their classrooms with the purpose of improving their practice and eventually influencing educational policy. Stenhouse (1981) emphasizes

(...) classrooms are the ideal laboratories for the testing of educational theory. From the point of view of the researcher whose interest lies in naturalistic observation, the teacher is a potential participant observer in classrooms and

schools. From whatever standpoint we view research, we must find it difficult to deny the teacher is surrounded by rich research opportunities (p.9-10).

Stenhouse believed that teachers could take responsibility for themselves and their actions, thus by adopting a research posture, they were able to emancipate themselves from the controlled situation they could find themselves in. Stenhouse assumed that teachers could assess their situation. By doing so they would be involved in meaningful professional development and become more autonomous in their decisions on their own practice (Stenhouse, 1983). Stenhouse asserted: ‘The essence of emancipation as I conceive it is intellectual, moral and spiritual autonomy which we recognise when we eschew paternalism and the role of authority and hold ourselves obliged to appeal to judgment (p. 163)’.

John Elliott, a colleague of Stenhouse, extended and transformed the concept of the teacher-researcher (Elliott, 1991). The reason for AR was to enhance students’ education, based on the assumption that any attempt to introduce change into an educational context should be underpinned by

generations of theory from attempts to change practice in the school. Theory derived from practice and constituted a set of abstractions from it. Elliott asserted that (...) theories were implicit in all practices, and theorizing consisted of articulating those ‘tacit theories’ and subjecting them to critique in free and open professional discourse (p.6)

Senior staff in a school conducted AR on their own roles as managers facilitating the classroom AR of their colleagues. Elliott’s thoughts about educational change through AR have contributed to develop a sound theory of teacher professional knowledge and teacher professional development through AR (Elliott, 2007).

Stenhouse also believed that professional literature was barely worth writing if teachers were incapable of testing it. Stenhouse’s viewpoint was that both researchers and teachers had to examine it. Stenhouse’s point of view was that researchers had to make research meaningful; and consequently, incorporating educational research into the practitioners’ work environment was essential (Stenhouse, 1981).

Lawrence Stenhouse also influenced the work of several scholars at Deakin University in Australia in the late 1970s. The implementation of AR was influenced by political context in which much curriculum work was being done around issues of educational equity. Researchers worked on school-based projects based on Lewin’s spiral of

planning, taking action, observing and reflecting as core elements to improve educational understanding and practice, as well as their contexts (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988).

After working on a historical study on the field of AR Noffke (2009) provides three dimensions which AR can have: professional, personal and political. AR has been seen as one way to enhance the professional quality and status of professions. One part dealing with the personal dimension of AR is the idea that AR has an impact on the personal growth and development of those who engage with it. AR has been connected with social problems which are related to politics such as the development of collaborative process, locally developed curriculum, democratic processes in schools. Other dimensions of politics which have been linked with AR are gender and racial equity as well as feminism. Somekh and Zeichner (2009) comment that Noffke's work is crucial in establishing the wide range of the AR territory.

McNiff (2013) published an updated edition of the book: AR: Principles and Practice, where the author introduces new ideas about the changes in the last decade that have influenced the field of AR. A major shift the author mentions is related to the forms of knowledge. In this regard, McNiff recognises that AR has become a preferred methodology for professions and disciplines, on the understanding that practitioners need to build an evidence base to show the validity of what they are doing as competent researchers.

The author also claims that in these days it is becoming normal and, in some cases expected that academics study their practices; something that was not common 20 years ago. McNiff asserts that

Significant features are that the academics regard their practice not as simply communicating subject matter, but also as accepting pedagogical and epistemic responsibility for their work; and not only about teaching, but more about inspiring a mindset towards life and lifelong learning by practitioners across the profession (p. 5).

The recognition of the value of practical knowledge instead of the dominant conceptual, abstract forms of knowing, as well as the fact that many people working in formal academic setting implement AR, have placed AR in a similar position to 'dominant abstract forms of theory' (p. 4).

4.3 Models of AR

Several scholars have suggested models for AR process. Due to AR is an ongoing process, the models seem to be different, but essentially all they have similar components. For instance, all AR models begin with a central problem or topic about current practice, followed by the collection and systematization of data. At the end action is taken and serves as support for the beginning of a new cycle. Some models appear to be simpler than others; the complexity and simplicity of models can be observed in the examples below (Mertler, 2009).

4.3.1 Stringer's

The approach to action research presented by Stringer (2007) is based on the fact that that every day knowledge inherent in practitioners is more valuable than knowledge derived from top-down administrative policies and procedures. In Stringer's view, action research therefore seeks to give voice to ordinary, competent and experienced people who usually are not taken into account when making decisions about their work environment. Stringer emphasizes that action research seeks to reveal and represent people's experience, providing accounts that enable others to interpret issues and events in their daily lives (Stringer, 2007). Stringer's model of action research is a collaborative approach to inquiry or investigation that provides people with the means to take systematic action to solve specific problems. Stringer provides a basic action research routine that provides a simple powerful framework: look, think, act that enables people to commence their inquiries in a straight ward manner and build detail into procedures as the complexity of issues increases.

Stringer (2004, p. 10) emphasizes, 'Although action research has much in common with the regular problem-solving and planning processes used by educators in the course of their daily classroom and school work, its strength lies in its systematic execution of carefully articulated processes of inquiry.'

The model: look, think, act is repeated in an ongoing mode, allows the researcher follow an ongoing processes of teaching and learning. The model can trail a lineal setup to show that stages of the research are repetitive over and over. Stringer (2007) argues that as practitioners follow the model they discover details of their daily work as they follow a process of observation, reflection and action. At the completion of each set of

activities, they will review (look again), reflect (reanalyze), and re-act (modify their actions).

4.3.2 Kurt Lewin's

Kurt Lewin is often referred to as the originator of AR. As a psychologist, Lewin was very interested in helping minority groups to claim for independence, equality, and cooperation through AR. Lewin encouraged minority groups to fight against forces of exploration and colonialization. Lewin supported the use of social science as a way of solving social conflicts. Lewin followed a process where problem identification and how to proceed was done within groups. After investigation of these problems the group makes decisions, monitoring and keeping note of the consequences. Regular reviews of progress follow. The group would decide on when a particular plan or strategy had been exhausted and fulfilled, come to nothing, and would bring to these discussions newly perceived problems (Adelman, 1993).

Lewin followed a model that has been lately identified with a cycle of AR, it consists of an evaluation of the action giving the planners a chance to learn the strengths and weaknesses, so informing the next step and contributing to a basis for overall modification of the planned change followed by review and interaction of this overall cycle (Lewin, 1945). Lewin was clear that AR could inform social planning and action.

4.3.3 Calhoun's

Calhoun (1994) presents a five step AR model which he calls Action Research Cycle, as a way to gather data and make decisions about learners at an educational institution. Calhoun develops what he calls routines guided by movements through the AR model, which follow five phases starting at the observation of a problem of collective interest followed by the collection, organization and interpretation of on-site data related to the area of interest. Next, action is taken based on the gathered data. The phases overlap naturally, and steps are constantly retraced and revised before or while going forward again. According to Calhoun the process is repeated and can serve as formative evaluation of initiatives at institutions.

4.3.4 Participatory Action Research's

Another AR model traced back to Lewin is Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR was implemented by Bachmann (2001) with the idea of closing the gap between theory and practice in the field of agriculture. Bachmann explored ways of bringing science

and practice together, and he found that PAR was a valuable way to do it. Bachmann adopted AR Lewin presented in spiral steps, which comprises planning, action and evaluation of that action. Insights into complex situations are gained, which gradually build up with each step. The research process is determined by stages of information gathering, planning of actions, evaluation of those actions and re-planning for a new cycle in the light of the insights that were obtained in the previous cycle of the spiral. After re-planning the process continues in a new cycle with modified actions and evaluations.

4.3.5 Riel's

Riel's (2007) progressive problem solving through AR model takes the participant through four steps in each cycle: planning, taking action, collecting evidence and reflecting. Riel claims that AR provides a path of learning from and through one's practice by working a series of reflective stages that facilitate the development of progressive problem solving. Over time, action researchers develop a deep understanding of the ways in which a variety of social and environmental forces interact to create complex patterns. Since these forces are dynamic, AR is a process of living one's theory into practice or taking a living and learning stance to teaching.

4.3.6 Piggot-Irvine's

Piggot-Irvine (2002) presents an AR model which involves interactive research process; this interactive process consists of cycles of reflection on action, learning about action, and then new informed action, which is then the subject of reflection. The model also involves experimental learning cycles. Within the cycles, questions and reflections concerning experience or action are taken place, leading to observation and to the gain of new knowledge, which is tested in new situations. A new concrete experience then occurs, followed by another cycle of learning.

Understanding, enhancement and change of a particular event or situation is the main goal of these learning cycles. The model focuses on research carried out within the organization of the participants themselves. According to Piggot-Irvine (2002) the model aims to reduce the differences between theory and practice by practitioners carrying out an investigation on their own practice.

It probably does not matter the model each researcher follow; as they have several things in common. They undertake inquiry based on a problem, investigation, analysis

and interpretation of data, and action that feeds the beginning of a new cycle. Researchers engaged in AR often find themselves repeating some of the steps several times or perhaps doing in different order (Mertler, 2009). Generally speaking, the action research process followed in this study is composed of a four-stage procedure (Kemmis and MacTaggart, 1998), which will be explained in detail in the following section.

4.3.7 Kemmis and McTaggart's

Although more complex and extended descriptions of the steps in AR have been proposed above, the most widely known model is that of Kemmis and MacTaggart (1998) (Burns, 2005). According to them, AR occurs through a dynamic and complementary process, which consists of focus essential moments:

- develop a plan of critically informed action to improve what is already happening
- act to implement the plan
- observe the effects of the critically informed action in the context in which it occurs
- reflect on these effects as the basis for further planning, subsequent critically informed action and so on, through a succession of stages (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1998 p. 10)

To develop a plan involves exploring methods which could lead into improvements by making certain actions. Action and observation are two steps that could go together, as the moment of observation can take place whilst action is also occurring. Reflection also takes place during the action; the purpose of this stage is to grasp the meaning of all data, often with the assistance of conceptual framework derived from the literature (Maxwell, 2003).

Despite the contribution the model has made to AR, it also faces criticism. McNiff and Whitehead (2002) claim that the model is unable to deal with spontaneity and untidiness, and it seems that it goes in linear sequence, which is not the way the things usually happen. Elliot (1991) for example suggests that the model gives the idea that the sequence of procedures was fixed in advance, and that the whole AR process was not complex and messy. Hopkins (2008) also criticizes the model claiming that prescriptive models could be dangerous as they hinder the freedom and openness of open courses of action. McNiff (2013) finds the model overmuch methodical, and suggests that it can impede creativity and spontaneity; in addition to obstructing a critical point of view on the part of teachers.

In spite of the criticism centred on the model I believe it is a model that could produce positive results within the research context; as the participants of the project do not have experience in regards to AR, and the phases of the model seem to move straightforward, which is easy to explain and easy for the teachers to understand. One of the criticisms made of the model is that it implies that an uncritical application of a perspective system of research is required on the part of the teachers (McNiff, 1988). But both during the planning and the reflection phases, the model provides opportunities for participants to express their beliefs and opinions about their work. Therefore, the model provides opportunities for the practitioners to take part in the curriculum development process as well as to suggest improvements.

4.4 Critiques of AR

One of the main risks of understanding AR as an educational policy is that the institutional policy makers or managers may want to maintain control, which would make this a centralised initiative (Chun, 1999).

Perhaps one of the principal arguments against AR is that it should be left for specialists who have the training and capacity to utilize it effectively (Burns, 2005). Jarvis (1981) emphasizes that AR is without academic reputation, and should therefore be left to academic specialists who have the experience and aptitude. According to Burns (2005) AR:

has not developed sound procedures, techniques and methodologies, [it] is small-scale and therefore not generalizable (has low external validity), [it] shows low control of the research environment and therefore cannot contribute to causal theories of teaching and learning, [it] exhibits string personal involvement on the part of participants and therefore is overly subjective and anecdotal, [it] is not reported in a form that conforms to a recognizable scientific genre (p.67).

Elliott and Sarland (1995) provide a list with several criticisms of teacher research related to ‘the dominance of description over analysis in many accounts [and] the tendency in many accounts to adopt a narrowly technicity stance to the problems of pedagogical change’ (p. 373). Other arguments also raise concern about the quality of the research being conducted. For instance Foster (1999a) criticizes the reports written by teachers engaged in the Teacher Research Grant Pilot Scheme and evidenced that some of the reports looked more like personal descriptions of, or justifications for, their own practice; or explanations of their attempts to improve pupil achievement.

Foster found problems with validity because 'in nearly all the reports insufficient evidence is presented to support key claims(...) there are significant doubts about the validity of evidence actually presented (...) causal claims (...) are central to at least 10 of the projects , but in most they are unconvincing' (p. 388). According to Hodgkinson (1957) teachers as well as other stakeholders like administrators, and supervisors lack familiarity with the basic techniques of research.

AR presents different challenges and limitations. For example teachers do not understand what it is, or they do not seem familiar with it. Also, funding and workload can be limitations. Halai (2011) presents a study to illustrate how teachers became action researchers. After analyzing twenty AR theses written by Pakistani MED students, the research found AR was 'complex and messy' (p. 201).

According to Halai the most challenging situation for teachers was the fact that they needed to understand what AR was, but at the same time they were grappling with the improvement of practice and change in the classroom. One of the ideas difficult to assimilate was that that AR is seen as a cyclic process where it is expected that one process follows another, but '(...) the cycle did not mean that linear steps have to be followed, (...) in action cycles there were continuous small cycles within' (p. 205).

Simonsen (2009) claims that conducting AR projects can lead to challenges. AR projects must be initiated, established and carried out before you have empirical data for your research. One has to prioritize, allocate the needed resources for the AR project. All of this is time consuming (Crookes and Chandler, 2001), which makes it very challenging, especially for teachers whose schedules are already overloaded from teaching, who are usually not granted time to do the research (Block, 2000).

The challenges that AR presents are not only related to the lack of familiarity, or the capacity of participants to conduct it, but also to financial issues. Involving teachers in AR usually requires teachers to participate in meetings '(...) during school hours to discuss their research, then the problem becomes financial as well as temporal, as substitute teachers must be hired. Again the quality of present education is diminished' (Hodgkinson, 1957, p. 142). Gebhard (2005) pointed out that focusing on the solution of problems might limit the potential of teachers to explore other possibilities. 'Although the AR process makes sense and is certainly worth doing, we can go beyond this

process by exploring a variety of other avenues to awareness outside the problem-posing one AR' (p. 64).

AR does not necessarily lead to change (Cain and Milovic, 2010). This was confirmed by Haggarty and Postlethwaite (2003) who claimed that a group of teachers involved in AR did not clearly understand the relation between AR and change, in other words; the new knowledge gained and 'classroom practice were separated - they had not altered or even confirmed their practice as a result of their new understanding who were conducting AR did not necessarily AR limited understanding' (p. 435).

Dissemination of educational AR has also been problematic. The group reported in Haggarty and Postlethwaite disseminated their findings within the school, but the researchers report that this was 'rather ad hoc' (p. 435), partly because teachers preferred to focus on the process of changing their own practice, rather than changing other people's practice. Also, although their own change in understanding and practice had taken place through engagement in ideas over a significant amount of time, 'they assumed that other teachers' practice would change simply by being given the results of that process' (p. 436).

Besides the challenges and limitations presented above there are further arguments against AR that should be addressed. For example Hammersley (2004) suggests that frequently in AR the value of research is associated with an instrumentalist view as well as 'the only legitimate kind of educational inquiry' (p.156).

Inquiry certainly emerges from a problem, and is concerned with resolving it Hammersley asserts, the value of knowledge does not only derive from the solution to practical problems, but also from 'its own right in solving intellectual problems, and perhaps even in stimulating new ones' (p. 170). According to Hammersley in Greek thinking *praxis* and *theoria* are treated as different ways of life; therefore to link research to action would be to confuse two different ways of life, 'as well as betray the higher nature of *theoria*' (p. 168).

Borg (2010) provides a critical analysis of language teacher research, and found that:

Many inspiring examples of language teachers engaging in research are available (together, of course, with methodologically-flawed examples and instances of pseudo-academic inquiry masquerading as teacher research); overall, though,

there are whole populations of language teachers worldwide whose understandings of teacher, at best, are that it is something that might be done to them by others. It is likely, too, that there are many other teachers who, despite a genuine interest in becoming research-engaged, find it difficult to translate this interest into practical and sustainable action (p. 421).

Concerning teacher research in language teaching, Dörnyei's (2007, p. 191) view is that 'there is one big problem with AR: there is too little of it'. The lack of engagement might be probably encouraged by several challenges teachers must face when involving in AR projects. Making reference of AR Block (2000, p. 138) claims that 'the entire enterprise is strong in theory but very difficult to carry out in practice'. According to Block, it is because in most teaching contexts teachers receive no compensation for the extra work that engaging in research involves. Additionally Block feels that the lack of impact on the field of the results of AR discourages teachers from engaging in it. Regarding quality Ellis (2010, p. 189) says that 'the methodological limitations that are evident in much teacher-research may make its findings of little value to the academe'.

It is useful to consider what features of AR might be extended to respond to the main points of criticism listed above. Therefore, three main areas of AR rise to investigations of empirical cases, and will serve as a foundation for the data collection and analysis phases of this study: 1. AR process can be conducted by practitioners to develop understanding about ELT syllabus design process (Mills, 2014; Mertler, 2014). 2. AR generates knowledge grounded in practice (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010; Wilson, 2013). 3. AR can help to improve the curriculum (Burns, 2010; McNiff, 2013). These three key features of AR will be explored, supported by the examination of several case studies.

4.5 AR can be conducted by teachers to develop understanding about syllabus design

Adelman (1993) claims that through AR participants are able to undertake systematic inquiry in search of greater effectiveness through democratic participation. Somekh and Zeichner (2009) define Lewin's work as an alternative to the norms of decontextualized research focusing on improving social formation by involving practitioners in a cyclical process of fact finding, planning, exploratory action, and researchers to further social change. One of Lewin's beliefs was that democratic workplaces foster employees who gain possession of their work, while enhancing both morale and productivity (Hendricks, 2013).

For Glassman et al., (2012) AR is a form of social inquiry through which members of social groups interact with one another, engage in open dialogue about their intergroup relationships, and collectively participate in a learning process to create social change within their communities. As stated above AR was tested within the industry field, but it has also had impact on other areas of society such as education (Jefferson, 2014).

AR has become increasingly popular around the world as a form of professional learning, specifically in education. One of the reasons why teachers started to participate as researchers was because traditional educational researchers have a tendency to impose abstract research findings on schools and teachers with little or no attention paid to local variation (Anderson, 2002). As Mertler (2014, p. 14) reports 'I believe that, due to this continued imposition of more traditional research findings, there is a real need for the increased practice of teacher-initiated, classroom-based AR'.

The process goes through ontological moments in which practitioners critique their practice, recognise what it is good and build on strengths, as well as understand what needs attention and take action to improve it (McNiff, 2013). Producing insights about their own teaching practice is through a process of developing lessons or assessing students learning with careful consideration of education theory, existing research, and practical experience, along with the analysis of the lesson's effect on student learning (Parson and Brown, 2002).

According to McNiff and Whitehead (2010) AR has become increasingly popular around the world as a professional learning tool for practitioners. It has also been recognized as a model for professional growth. Furlong and Salisbury (2005) found that taking part in AR often led to teachers becoming more confident and knowledgeable, collecting and using evidence, and learning about their own learning. Some educational researchers claim that teachers who conduct AR are better informed about their field (Bennett, 1993).

The participation of teachers and even students in AR has been widely documented. Wang and Zhang (2014) report on a collaborative AR project carried out by a group of university researches with a group of senior secondary school English teachers in an attempt to promote teacher autonomy in the Chinese context. By joining the project, teachers were able to move beyond their routine teaching and critically reflect on their practice, which enhanced their understanding of educational context, making them more

active participants of the reform. The main impact of the project on teachers includes their changes of views about students as ways of working with other colleagues.

Halai (2011) describes a case study conducted by the Ministry of Education in Pakistan aiming to develop understanding of how teachers become action researchers. Within the research results, researchers found that teachers who engaged in the AR found that there were many benefits to be obtained from this process; it provided them with opportunity to gain an understanding of conducting research in their own classroom, to become aware of the ways they can study and change their own practice. Hong and Lawrence (2011) present insights gained from a review of eighty AR projects completed by classroom teachers. The gathered data revealed AR impacted on literacy instruction, something which teachers had struggled with.

Thorne and Qiang (1996) report on the implementation and development of an AR project in the Sino-British MA in English programme at Beijing Normal University. What researchers found was that trainee teachers who participated in AR usually demonstrated a strong desire to actively seek change. Also they discovered that teachers are better equipped to consciously reflect on the problems of their particular situation and on the applicability of the theories they have learned.

Although teachers' participation in research has been the target of criticism, their participation generates practical knowledge different from that found in literature; as it is knowledge created within the field of work (Whitehead, 2009).

4.6 AR generates knowledge grounded in practice

McNiff (2013) claims that traditional scientific and social scientific researchers usually see knowledge as a single or detached element found in literature. 'Knowledge therefore becomes separated from the people who create it' (p. 28). According to Johnson (2008) there is a gap between what researchers find and report as a result of their investigations, and what really happens within the field of work. For instance, what occurs every single day in school classrooms, or teacher's points of view, the teaching-learning process, or the practical challenges are not often reflected in research findings.

Support comes from Whitehead (2009) who received responses from a group of local teachers he had been working with, after presenting them with a research report about local curriculum development based on current theories. Whitehead explained to the teachers what they had been doing regarding curriculum innovation, teaching and

learning process, and evaluation. Teachers agreed the report might be satisfactory to Whitehead's academic colleagues, 'but they could not see themselves in the report. They could not recognise the explanation in terms of the explanations they gave for their practice in working to improve their pupil's learning' (p. 91).

Whitehead (2008) claims that it is a misapprehension to think that the disciplines of education, individually or in combination, could explain sufficiently an individual's educational influence in their own learning and in the learning of others. Hirst (1983) argues that many of the educational theory's operational principles '(...) will be of their nature generalizations from practical experience and have as theory justification the results of individual activities and practice' (p. 18).

This argument has a resonance with what Johnson (2008) acknowledges about AR in the way that AR creates knowledge based on enquiries conducted within specific and often practical contexts. Somekh (2006) also recognizes that knowledge that is produced through AR 'in collaboration with practitioners is grounded in practice (...)' (p.94). In addition Crawford (1995) introduces the concept of actionable knowledge which is defined as knowledge that can 'change professional practice or social institutions through the active and transformative participation of those working within a particular setting' (p. 239). Sexton and Lu (2009) suggest that actionable knowledge is produced in 'nature and is generated by, and for, a particular social setting' (p. 686).

According to Elliot (1989) developing self-reflection about teaching experiences can turn an AR process into an exercise in 'ideological deconstruction' (p. 3). This means that the teachers' experiences of class research can be grounded in trying to facilitate their professional development and not in theoretical inputs by teaching experts. Support comes from Ahmad and Sajjad, (2011) who state that native Anglophone writers lead the ELT community in research for innovations and improvements in teaching English and their findings tend to be universal; but 'it is not possible for such studies to have universal application' (p. 1766) due to local constraints.

Sano et al., (1984) present a case in which participants gained knowledge after adapting the CLT concept into their own needs and contexts. The efforts of a group of Japanese teachers resulted in a manifesto where they captured their local vision of what communicative competence was; building on the principle that 'for most of [their] learners, English [was] not and [would] never be an instrument to do something with'

(p.170). The knowledge generated through the research conducted by the Japanese teachers agrees with what McNiff (2013) believes about the knowledge produced by AR. McNiff thinks that '(...) knowledge is never static or complete; it is in constant state of development as new understandings emerge' (p. 28).

The emergence of new knowledge was reported by McDonough (2006) during the conduction of AR at the University of Illinois in the Division of English as an International Language. The study investigated whether carrying out AR as part of a graduate seminar affected the professional development of graduate teaching assistants who were teaching in foreign and second language departments. Findings reveal that through a process of inquiry participants gain knowledge in three different areas: their conception of research, which broad at the end of the semester, their appreciation for peer collaboration and the application of knowledge obtained by doing AR to improve their L2 teaching practice.

Wyatt (2011) also reports on a teacher education course run by a British university for the local Ministry of Education in a Middle Eastern country, where AR was a key component. The researcher was interested in finding out what teachers achieved through AR and potential benefits emerging from engaging in AR. As a result of the enquiry some grounded knowledge came to light. For instance, teachers were able to address important concerns that related to the contexts they worked in, they engaged in behaviours that helped others, and they disseminated their research.

Additionally, participants believed that AR helped improve their work environment, and aided them to develop their research skills.

4.7 AR can help improve the work environment

It has been repeatedly mentioned above that one of the main reasons why AR projects are undertaken is because they help improve the work environment of participants. This has been confirmed by several scholars. Glassman et al. (2012) suggest that AR is essentially a social-education-based intervention for communities dealing with difficult, deep-rooted problems. Carr and Kemmis (1986) also claim that AR is seen as a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices.

McTaggart (1994) mentions that a distinctive feature of participatory AR is that those affected by planned changes have the primary responsibility for deciding on courses of critically informed action which seem likely to lead to improvement. Meyer (2000) maintains that AR's strength lies in its focus on generating solutions to practical problems. Winter and Munn-Giddings (2002) state that action research represents the study of social situations carried out by those involved in that situation in order to improve both their practice and the quality of their understanding.

Somekh (2006) affirms that participating teachers could improve their own practices and contribute to the larger educational system. Carver and Klein (2013) comment that AR is a useful tool for supporting continuous improvement in teaching programmes. Borko et al. (2007) point out that through AR unique opportunities for reflection and improvement of the practice are created.

AR offers opportunities for teacher learning. In Johnson and Button (2000) study, teachers noticed the links between their own learning and the learning of their students, affirming that the principles of good learning that they used with their own students applied to their own classroom by using AR, they began to appreciate their own ability to increase knowledge through their own projects.

Several case studies confirm that AR is the motivation for changes in teaching. Yuan and Lee (2014) document a case where Chinese teachers felt dissatisfied with the quality of teaching and learning in their classroom. This motivated them to participate in an AR project to solve these problems and 'improve the effectiveness of their teaching' (p. 3). After observing the students' classroom behavior and interviewing some students about their learning needs, and different moments of reflection. Teachers began to implement actions to solve the problems found, and with this contribute to their professional growth through AR.

Cabaroglu (2014) reports on a case study which explored the impact of AR on Turkish English language teacher candidates' self-efficacy beliefs. After attending a 14-week course, where an inquiry-based approach to learning and teaching was adopted aiming to help prospective teachers understand and improve their classroom practice. According to Cabaroglu participants experienced growth in teaching efficacies, increased self-awareness, improved problem-solving skills and enhanced autonomous learning.

Talandis Jr and Stout (2014) describe an AR project conducted with students at a Japanese university during a school year. The researchers faced different problems concerning the Japanese students' conversation skills. Thus, their primary aim was to help them improve their speaking skills via an intervention, developing a syllabus featuring spoken interaction around social topics, pair practice activities, and frequent oral assessment. Through three cycles of enquiry, researchers evaluated their intervention aiming to understand how it could help them address the problem.

Talandis Jr and Stout stated that not only did the AR project help students become aware that conversing in English was possible, but it also helped the researchers to develop into more reflective teachers 'guided by the multiple perspectives that collected data could provide' (p. 21).

Schatz (1992) presents a case in which the faculty members of the University of Innsbruck (Austria) improved their teaching by becoming more reflective about what was occurring in the interaction between the students and the teacher. This happened after a senate commission was established at the University to deal with the issue relating to the lack of value lectures placed on their activities in the classroom. The study was based on previous findings showing that university staff was generally motivated to improve their teaching competences even though their main interest laid in their disciplinary fields of scientific research.

In summary, AR participants are able to undertake systematic inquiry in the search of a learning process to create social change within their communities. AR often leads to teachers becoming more confident and knowledgeable, collecting and using evidence, and learning about their own learning. Teachers who conduct AR are better informed about their field. AR can be conducted by practitioners and not only by researchers whose research findings leave a gap between what they find and report as a result of their investigations, and what really happens within the field of work.

On the other hand, AR creates knowledge based on enquiries and grounded in practice conducted within specific and often practical contexts. As a result of all this AR is seen as a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in order to improve their practices, generate solutions to practical problems, and benefit the curriculum.

4.8 Syllabus design can benefit from AR

According to AR has been used to improve curriculum (McKernan, 1991). Several scholars have provided evidence of curriculum improvement through AR (Nason and Whitty, 2007; Carver and Klein, 2013; Bat and Fasoli, 2013).

Nason and Whitty (2007) included AR as an essential component of the learning and care provisions for children under five curriculum development in the province of New Brunswick in Canada. They included AR because they believed it could help them improve their own practices as project directors, curriculum developers and teacher educators.

Carver and Klein (2013) conducted an AR project to examine the content and outcomes of their own university-based principal preparation program, and they found that AR was a functional strategy for program renewal and instructional development, as the systematic collection of data and the application of findings ‘supports transformed practice innovation and continued inquiry’ (p. 174).

Bat and Fasoli (2013) provide an example of how AR used as a curriculum design device can enlighten an approach to education and training. The project was undertaken through a VET programme at the Bachelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education in Northern Territory of Australia. An AR framework (plan, act, observe, reflect) was applied to the curriculum, from the design of the whole curriculum, to the content, activities and tasks ‘embedded within the curriculum that learners engage with as they progress through a series of workbooks’ (p. 60). They do not provide an evaluation on the use of the framework to develop the curriculum, as they stated ‘what remains to be seen (...) is whether or not (...) AR approach to curriculum development can make a contribution to building a strong Indigenous early childhood workforce in remote communities in the Northern Territory of Australia’ (p. 69).

As Nason and Whitty (2007) illustrate by creating a tailored curriculum which served for home and centre-based childcare for both English and French members of a Canadian community. To this end they included AR as an essential component of curriculum development. Nason and Whitty claimed that by entering a process of inquiry they understood their own professional practice better, which was then eventually improved.

AR promotes professional development and teacher autonomy leading to curriculum improvement (Thorne and Qiang, 1996; Sales et al., 2011; Katsarou and Tsafos, 2013). As Banegas (2011) stated during the writing up of a new curriculum, developed through AR, as part of an educational reform in Argentina: 'We realised that through this curriculum we could become more independent, more creative and more responsible as the curriculum was the product of our own thinking and work' (p.425).

Cain and Milovic (2010) also reported in an article the advantages of developing a curriculum through an AR project developed by advisers from the Education and Teacher Training Agency in Croatia. The paper reports different conclusions which suggest that the project succeeded by various means. First the advisers understood the concept of AR, which according to Cain and Milovic, was necessary for them to communicate with teachers and heads of schools. Advisers together with teachers in schools followed methodologies which allowed them to gather and analyze data related to their own practical contexts, which led to teaching practice improvement.

Thorne and Qiang (1996) noted a number of changes in the trainee teachers participating in an AR project in the Sino-British MA in English programme at Beijing Normal University. They found out that trainee teachers felt 'more confident about what to teach, how to teach, and why to teach in such a way' (p. 259). They also learned how to conduct AR projects and their language lessons started to include a greater variety of activities. The implemented changes by the group of trainee teachers enhanced the quality of teaching as Thorne and Qiang said learners 'reported feeling a great deal more confident in speaking English' (p. 260).

(Wang and Zhang, 2014) state that 'finding ways to support teacher research for developing autonomy is vital to sustain the continuity of the curriculum reform'. Therefore, actively involving teachers in initiating and carrying out research in their own schools and classrooms has the potential to promote teacher autonomy and it is also closely connected to curriculum improvement (Anderson, et al., 1994; Allen, et al., 1995).

There is literature to support the idea that, not only did AR provide the professionals with an opportunity to research, reflect upon and change their everyday practice, but also to accomplish it while developing collaborative competence (Lawson, 2003; Avgitidou, 2009; Slam, 2014). These scholars provide evidence to confirm that there are

benefits for using AR as a professional development strategy to enhance many of the interpersonal collaboration competencies.

Additionally, collaborative curriculum development offers advantages, for instance it 'has considerable potential as a vehicle for teacher enhancement (...), offers opportunities for interaction and exchange of ideas (...)' (Reys, et al., 1997, p. 258), it also improves the quality of curriculum and represents a powerful means for teachers' professional development (Deketelaere and Kelchtermans, 1996). In addition, an improved curriculum could result in positive changes in classroom practice leading to better learning outcomes as reported by Li and Ni (2011) after examining the impact of curriculum reform on teaching practice in primary mathematics in China.

The examination of the different study cases above indicate that the development of curriculum can be accomplished with the participation of key stakeholders, such as teachers, administrators and other members of staff. The cases also suggest that the conduction of AR could also lead to curriculum improvement. Although it is not explicitly mentioned that there is knowledge generated after going through a process of inquiry and improvement, it is implicit that participants became aware and learned new knowledge which allowed them enhance different activities they are involved in in their work environments.

In summary, AR has had positive effects on teachers' understanding, practice and morale, with consequent benefits for learners. AR has allowed participants to play key roles in the development of research projects. It has also allowed institutions, many of them educational, to improve in different areas, including curriculum. It has also contributed to generate comprehensive knowledge about the current situation, which has provided an input into the institution's decision-making process.

AR also faces challenges, limitations and criticism. Therefore, it is advisable to examine literature which has been written specifically on potential challenges, limitations and on criticism about AR, to see if the basis of those claims is sound and whether they apply or are relevant to my own context or situation, since it helps to understand the research problem from a broader perspective. Despite the volume of claims presented above, a number of critiques of AR have been put forward.

4.9 Summary and conclusions

SBCD is regarded as an alternative response to centralised or specialist curriculum. SBCD depends more on decisions taken at the school level and less on decisions previously agreed at the top of an educational system. AR has been an excellent vehicle to foster SBCD. Empirical studies (Fareh and Saeed, 2011; Bhushan, 2013) have illustrated that AR fosters teachers' reflection upon their everyday work in the search for a curriculum more focused on the demands of their school's needs. This research establishes an AR model to observe the development of a framework to design and develop an ELT curriculum within a context where decision making has been centralised.

This chapter begins with the analysis of the work of leading scholars in the development of AR. The psychologist, Kurt Lewin, recognized as a referent of the AR movement, believed that ordinary people could democratically participate through a spiralling process that includes reflection and inquiry with an emphasis on improving work environments and dealing with social norms (Jefferson, 2014).

AR started in the field of industry, but quickly expanded to other fields such as education, where it underwent a prolific evolution. The involvement of teachers in the solving of common problems turned AR into a cooperative endeavour and the teacher-as-researcher movement, promoted by Lawrence Stenhouse, prepared teachers to conduct case studies in their classrooms with the purpose of improving their practice. The work of Stenhouse influenced educational institutions to conduct AR to help understand the existing situation and to improve the current practice (Stenhouse, 1980).

Criticisms about AR are reviewed, for instance, the fact that research is frequently associated with an instrumentalist view with the main purpose of solving problems, or the fact that in AR inquiry is only seen as the means by which problems are solved (Hammersley, 2004).

Another main criticism made of AR is that practitioners, such as teachers are not trained for conducting research, which affects the quality and the rigour of research (Foster, 1999a). Finally, there are different challenges and limitations that AR have presented, such as the idea that AR is complex and messy, time consuming, and not in all cases teachers identify the relationship between AR and change in their work environment (Halai, 2011).

Three key theoretical concepts of AR are examined with the purpose of informing this study. AR foster the participation of people (teachers) who are not researchers, AR leads to work environment improvement and AR promote the production of sound knowledge. The evaluation of claims made by scholars is illustrated with the analysis of several empirical studies, which broaden understanding and serve as a foundation for the data collection and analysis phases of the study. Several more empirical studies on the area of curriculum development through AR are also examined.

Theorists and empirical studies claim that AR is an alternative option for practitioners (teachers), and not necessarily specialists in the field of research, to get involved in research activities (Adelman, 1993; McNiff, 2013; Jefferson, 2014; Mertler, 2014). The use of AR to improve curriculum has also been widely documented (Burchell, 2000; Nason and Whitty, 2007; Kirkgöz, 2008; Shawer, 2010; Banegas, 2011).

In summary, there exists a body of literature which supports the idea that AR has had positive effects upon different areas of education such as curriculum improvement (McKernan, 1991; Holloway and Long, 1998; Mcdonough, 2006; Atay, 2008; Geyer, 2008); West, 2011). Scholars in the area of AR have claimed that this alternative approach provides practitioners, teachers for example, with opportunities for conducting projects which contribute to the improvement of their work environment, and also encourage reflection, which ultimately can produce knowledge of the existing situation (Schratz, 1992; Whitehead, 2009; Wyatt, 2011; Talandis Jr and Stout, 2014; Salm, 2014).

In a sense then, AR, like any other field of knowledge, is in the process of development since no finite understanding of the concept is possible, and it is limited by lack of empirical evidence. Further research is needed to discover if the different features of AR can be observable while developing an ELT curriculum within the context of a Western university in Mexico. Furthermore, empirical evidence will contribute to the understanding of this alternative form of doing research, and probably suggest possible routes of development. It is to the task of gathering such data that this thesis now turns.

Chapter Five: Methodology

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research approach selected to investigate the process of improvement of the UEP syllabus. The first phase of this model includes a plan of critically informed action to improve what is already happening, presented in chapter one. The next step of the model consists of the implementation of the action plan. With that purpose in mind, a syllabus design process has been proposed, which on the one hand, depends more on activities performed within the schools, and on the other correlates the decision making with the teaching context represented by language teachers, learners, and regional potential employers; thus, proposing a syllabus that adheres more closely to the needs of the school. The third and the fourth steps consist of the observation and reflection upon the effects of the implementation of the action plan.

The research approach chosen is predominantly qualitative in terms of its emphasis on ‘practice, participation/collaboration, reflection, interpretation, and, often, emancipation; this approach puts it squarely in opposition to positivist social research’ (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995, p. 29). Furthermore, it should be added that given that AR is likely to involve participants’ reflections, attitudes, beliefs, points of view, quantification may be difficult or inappropriate. More appropriate is an attempt to produce a description which results in a detailed characterization of how the UEP syllabus can be improved through AR, how practitioners get involved, and what knowledge is produced throughout the process.

Syllabus design through AR is as yet a relatively unexplored concept in empirical investigation within the context of Mexico. As a result, the research process should adapt to the educational situations and circumstances of the participants and to the particular social, cultural and political exigencies that motivate and surround them (Burns, 2005). As Edge (2001, p. 3) suggests ‘responses to issues in specific contexts will arise most usefully from those contexts; they can rarely, with success, be imported from outside and applied’.

Qualitative research aims to comprehend the subject of study through the exploration, analysis, and observation of 'persons' lives, lived experiences, behaviors, emotions, and feelings as well as about organizational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena (...)' (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984; Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 11). Hence, it is unlikely that other research methods allow action researchers understand the contextual reality as qualitative methods do (Dörnyei, 2007). Qualitative methods are usually employed when doing AR, and there are strong similarities between qualitative and AR. In both qualitative and AR, researchers frequently analyze their own postulations because they are active participants in the context that they study. Interviews and observations are two research methods frequently employed by action researchers to gather data for example.

However, there are some differences between a qualitative AR study conducted to change a syllabus, and a qualitative investigation of curriculum change. Qualitative researcher's main goal is to represent and describe in detail the settings that they study. They are particularly concerned about mingling with the settings that they investigate and about avoiding changing natural interactions and outcomes. Action researchers do not have to mingle with the setting because they are already active practitioners in the work field. Another difference is that action researchers gather both quantitative and qualitative data, as long as it helps them identify what works is good information to meet the purpose of the investigation (Lodico, Spaulding, Voegtle, 2010).

In addition, AR studies are not done on or with participants; AR is designed, carried out, and integrated by the participants in partnership with the researchers (Stringer, 1999). AR is an alternative process in which researchers and practitioners act together in the context of an identified problem to discover an effect positive change within a mutually acceptable ethical framework (Lingard, Albert and Levinson 2014). In AR collaboration among people is important. The power relations among participants are alike; each person contributes, and each person has something to say. The ideas and suggestions of each person should be listened to, reflected on, and respected (Silverman, 2004). Whilst, collaboration in a qualitative investigation of curriculum change is not essential, as it is qualitative research, the investigation focuses more on the criterion of the researcher. From a qualitative investigation perspective, researchers focus on capturing what has existed out there in the world and presenting it objectively, but their aim is not to

understand participants' actions and to improve practice together with them while research is being undertaken (Postholm, 2011).

Additionally, Burns (2005) advocates that opposite to basic and applied studies; AR adopts a clearly interventionist approach investigating issues of practical and local importance. Also, action researchers employ the results of the study to produce change and improve practices. Both change and improvement are two features that distinguish AR from other research types, where the main focus is more likely the development of generalizable theoretical knowledge that can be applied to the social situation. As Burns (2005) claims the idea of change and improvement represents a difference from other forms of research where the main focus is on issues related to theory (Crookes, 2003) and 'the applications recommended are typically made from a generalized rather than localized standpoint' (p. 60).

AR offers practitioners possibilities for understanding curriculum from a comprehensive perspective, as it is the local concerns and problems of the research, allowing them to address curriculum issues through thoughtful inquiry (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Aspland, et al., 1996; Burchell, 2000; Nason and Whitty, 2007; Bat and Fasoli, 2013; Zohrabi, 2014). All these features come together to make AR an appropriate approach to conduct research, which allows change and improvement within the context of a higher education institution, particularly within the context of a single faculty, the faculty of Economics.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the AR design; it then moves to a more focused presentation of the questions considered in this investigation and the methodology chosen to address them. There will be a description of the setting, participants, and research instruments, as well as the limitations of this investigation. The chapter also explains how participants were informed about the features of the project, and also provides the measures of trustworthiness adopted in this research. It must be noted that the number of participants and the particular features of the context where the research was conducted limited the extent to which any findings can be generalized. However, it is hoped that the research provides enough data to serve as a base for initiating new investigations into this field.

5.2 The AR design

AR offers practitioners possibilities for understanding curriculum from a comprehensive perspective, as it is the local concerns and problems of the research, allowing them to address curriculum issues through thoughtful inquiry (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Aspland, et al., 1996; Burchell, 2000; Nason and Whitty, 2007; Bat and Fasoli, 2013; Zohrabi, 2014). AR seeks to provide practitioners with the support and resources to do things in ways that will fit their own cultural context and their own lifestyles, allowing them and not only experts determine the nature and operation of the things that affect their lives (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003). Due to AR is an ongoing process, the models seem to be different, but essentially all they have similar components.

This study followed a model with four stages suggested by (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988). Despite criticism centred on the model discussed in chapter four, it provides opportunities for the practitioners to take part in the curriculum development process as well as to suggest improvements. It is done in naturally occurring contexts attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin, and Lincoln, 2000, p. 3).

The first step of the model employed consists of developing a plan of critically informed actions to make improvements. For this stage, the researcher's experience in the field work was vital, as his knowledge about the condition of the UEP syllabus of the UC was key to understand in detailed the problematic situation, which in addition was critically informed by other language teachers. Because this stage requires the researcher to comprehend the subject of study through the exploration, analysis, and observation of persons' lives, lived experiences, behaviors, emotions, and feelings as well as about organizational functioning (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984; Strauss and Corbin 1998); research techniques allowing participants express their beliefs, attitudes, and opinions about the UEP syllabus were entirely appropriate. Thus, it is unlikely that other research methods allow action researchers understand the contextual reality as qualitative methods do (Dörnyei, 2007).

The following step of the AR model consists of the implementation of the plan. NA is an approach used to provide information that helps achieve greater understanding at a school level (Brown, 2006). NA has incorporated into its development various research methods to investigate the needs of stakeholders, policy makers, methodologists,

material writers, teacher trainers, teachers and learners (Hewings, 2002; Master, 2005; Paltridge and Starfield, 2011; Gollin-Kies, 2014). Gollin-Kies (2014) reports that after researching articles published between 2003 and 2012 in *English for Specific Purposes Journal* and the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* he found that the research methods were ‘overwhelmingly qualitative with an emphasis on analysis of written discourse (particularly corpus-based) ‘ (p. 27).

Several studies in the field of ELT curriculum employ NA to identify useful information giving rise to conclusions and supporting decision making for setting objectives; a large number of them have focused on research into different cases connected to one or two NA approaches at the most (Cowling, 2007; Kassim and Ali, 2010; Wozniak, 2010; Evans and Morrison, 2011; Ahmad and Sajjad, 2011; Cargill, O’Connor, and Li, 2012; Ungureanu and Georgescu, 2012; Trinder, 2013; Gea-Valor, et al., 2014; Staples, 2015), but empirical studies which present multiple needs analyses are scarce. In addition, several scholars suggest employing NA as the starting point of curriculum design (Taba, 1962; Dubin and Olshtain, 1986; Yalden, 1987; Johnson, 1989; Brown, 1995; Markee, 1997; Richards, 2001); but none of them suggest NA as part of SBCD. The distinctive NA characteristic is that it systematically collects the information necessary to define and validate a defensible curriculum purpose that satisfies the language learning requirements of a specific setting (Brown, 2006) and serves the purpose of SBCD as it involves practitioners in the decision making process. NA has gone through many stages (Songhori, 2008), and the employment of particular research methods results from each specific context. Therefore, the implementation of NA is not predetermined or fixed, it can start at different moments, employing different methods and involving different participants (Huhta et al., 2013). One common approach to NA is the analysis of learners’ communicative language needs. In this regard, Srabua (2007) claims that the analysis of learners’ communicative language needs concerning the target situation has shown that it helps gather appropriate data to serve as the basis for developing successful language courses. Chapter three reported that a recurring means of investigating learners’ communicative needs, what learners know or do not know about the language, has been language tests (Wozniak, 2010). However, Prince (1984) claims that the language teaching approach for occupational purpose courses is not only goal-oriented, but process-oriented as well; therefore it is necessary to use different techniques. Consequently, the analysis of the language features needed to communicate

in a target situation ‘will alone clearly be insufficient’ (Long, 2005, p. 2) to determine the different needs a target group has. Thus one single approach to needs analysis is not enough to understand the range of circumstances that surround a language teaching situation at the school level. Another technique that would be suited to finding out about the target situation is interviews with participants, potential employers, to gain an insight into their perspectives on the needs of the target situation as illustrated by Cowling (2007) in chapter three where reference is made to the results of an investigation into the language needs at a large Japanese industrial firm.

NA attempts to document the design and development process through the knowledge and views of local participants, since retaining a merely linguistic approach to the teaching target situation seems to be very simplistic and will only reveal a partial view of the situation (Cowling, 2007). For that reason, it is appropriate to explore other approaches to establish a position regarding the most suitable one for the context. For example, considering the beliefs and opinions of language learners, strategic participants of learning and teaching, and taking their opinions into account accordingly before making any decisions about teaching appears reasonable, especially if the approach to curriculum design is school-based, as learners’ beliefs about language learning might influence their performance. This has been acknowledged by (Mori, 1999; Ariogul et al., 2009; Trinder, 2013). The means by which the beliefs and opinions of language learners is gathered is through a questionnaire.

Investigating particular characteristics of the teaching context influencing the life of participants such as to resources, institutional politics, social and economic conditions is also necessary as these factors could define the outcomes of a language course (Holliday, 1995). This was shown by Le Ha (2004) by demonstrating that even though local pedagogical practices may seem odd in the eyes of Western teaching principles, they take account of the cultural context of the classroom. The investigation of the context can be through, and also thorough interviews with members of the school and of course language teachers. Interviews could provide a good description of the context, as well as their opinions and beliefs the teaching situation; as interviews are ‘(...) means of pure information transfer’ (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 409).

Both to observe the effects of the critically informed action, and to reflect on these effects it is to understand practitioners’ beliefs and attitudes the process of design of a

new language syllabus, as well as their reflections upon their participation in the whole AR process. Therefore, to gain the greatest understanding of the situation more in-depth descriptions are probably suitable. Thus, qualitative methods enabling teachers express a more complete range of accounts of the syllabus design process are most appropriate to this task. This type of description is most likely to the beliefs and opinions of practitioners about the possible process of improvement they go through.

All these features come together to make AR an appropriate approach to conduct research which allows change and improvement within the context of a higher education institution, particularly within the context of a single faculty, Economics.

Having explained that AR aims to gain the most understanding of the situation, it seems correct to employ research techniques which help gather data from practitioners show to extent it has led to improvement and change, has involved them in the improvement process and, has fostered the generation of knowledge grounded in practice. It is now possible to move onto a presentation of the particular techniques will be employed in this phase of the investigation.

5.3 Research questions

The aim of this study was to investigate the process of improvement of the UEP syllabus through AR. This resulted in the formulation of research questions given below which formed a guide to the study.

1. How was the AR process of guiding teachers in the change of syllabus?
 - What course of action was taken to improve the syllabus?
 - What amendments did the UEP syllabus suffer?
2. How did the process of improvement of the syllabus occur?
 - How engaged were language teachers?
 - How did the syllabus improve on the basis of NA?
 - How did they become aware of new knowledge?

The questions above aim to explore the participants' perception about their involvement in the decision-making process, syllabus improvement, and the generation of knowledge. This may result in a description of AR for these participants and its meaning for the design and development of school-based ELT syllabuses.

5.4 Research context

The context chosen to undertake the research was Mexico. As made clear in chapter one, English language is now, the main foreign language taught within the educational system in Mexico as it is part of the curriculum of lower secondary, upper secondary education, some higher education institutions. The educational level chosen to conduct the research was higher education, it is the most favourable environment for the researcher as it is his natural teaching context, and it is the context where he works.

The subjects chosen for this study were undergraduate Economics, International Trade and Finance learners who belong to the faculty of Economics at the University of Colima. The faculty of Economics was chosen as it has a long-established history of teaching languages, as well as many other faculties at the UC. Many of the skills and learning tasks undertaken on the courses reflect more general academic English skills and so the context can be classified more specifically as English for academic purposes.

The general population of learners enrolled at the Economics faculty of the university, from which the participants were drawn, must study English as a foreign language during their four years of university studies, four years. All the students have studied English before coming to the university as previously stated; children in Mexico start studying English in lower secondary and continue in upper secondary. Furthermore, the students must take an English examination as an entry requirement to the faculty.

Language teachers were selected for their relevant experience of the teaching situation. They shared important knowledge of the teaching situation, which contributed to maximizing what can be learnt throughout the study, it was an homogeneous group (Miles and Huberman, 1994) are Mexicans have a BA in English from the UC.

5.5 Participants

5.5.1 Learners

As stated above, the general population of learners enrolled at the faculty of Economy, from which the student participants were drawn, must study English as a foreign language during their university studies last four years. All of the students have studied English before coming to the university. Some of the learners enrolled in the faculty have attended private schools so their level of English is relatively high compared to the level of English taught at schools belonging to the public system of education in Mexico.

The primary selection of student participants in the study was based on the records the faculty had of the students' performance on the entry test; the strengths and weaknesses of the learners about language knowledge. In other words they were purposeful or purposive selected (Dörnyei, 2007). This is what Hutchinson and Waters (1987) refer to as 'lacks' (p. 55), what the learner knows or doesn't know. One of the most viable method to find out is a language test (Powers and Stansfield, 1985; Paltridge, 1992; Wozniak, 2010).

5.5.2 Potential employers

Both the questionnaire and the test reveal data concerning learners' beliefs about their language learning, and learners' language knowledge and skills. Collecting data provided by learners is, without doubt, evidence of participation in curriculum development on the part of learners (Sabar, 1989). An ELT curriculum is also the type of need determined by the 'demands of the target situation, that is, what the learner has to know to function effectively in the target situation' (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987, p. 55). The concept of target situation is something of an umbrella term, but for this investigation the concept of the target situation is the workplace or educational institution (Huhta et al., 2013), and an analysis of the target situation is defined in chapter three as 'the establishment of communicative needs and their relations, resulting from an analysis of the communication in the target situation' (Chambers, 1980, p. 29).

Particularly, in the case of this investigation the institution clearly established the needs: learners needed to pass the BEC. But there were no communicative needs defined for the workplace. Apparently, those needs are never taken into consideration as there is no supporting documentation which says so; there is no official documentation within the faculty that provides information. Literature provides examples of studies which have conducted target situational analysis, and shed light on methods to investigate the communicative needs (West, 1984; Cowling, 2007; Holliday, 1995; Gass, 2012). Research methods employed are varied. For this research, the study of the target situation the English language knowledge requirements, international companies established in the state of Colima set for the applicants. The state of Colima in Mexico where the UC is located does not have a large number of international companies, but it does have that can benchmark-potential graduate learners from the areas of Finance, International Business and Economics could join. The researcher interviewed the Human Resource Managers of two companies, who mentioned what they required from

graduate learners with regard to English language. The most convenient method for the participants was a personal interview.

5.5.3 Language teachers

The involvement of teachers in the decision making process was one of the main reasons SBCD emerged (Eggleston, 1980; Skilbeck, 1984). Chapter three discussed the relevance of participation in the process of curriculum development, implying that it is almost unavoidable task in SBCD (Moon, 2007; Mouraz, et al., 2013).

The group of teachers was selected based on their ability to provide rich and varied insights into the research problem under investigation. In other words they were purposeful or purposive selected (Dörnyei, 2007). Language teachers were selected due to their relevant experience of the teaching situation. They shared important knowledge of the teaching situation, which contributed to maximizing what can be learnt throughout the study. It was a homogeneous group (Miles and Huberman, 1994) of Mexican teachers who have a BA in English from the UC. The range from 6-9 up to 42 hours allocated to one or more faculties or even campuses of the UC. Besides their main activity, teaching, they also must attend meetings, attend programmed training, and other activities specified in institutional regulations. They teach at different faculties having to move from one to during their working day. In addition, during a day they may have to plan and teach lessons for two to all five different levels of proficiency courses. They are committed to in evaluation processes, certification of their English proficiency level by international examination, and certification of their ELT skills. Among other duties, they also participate in the organization of groups and time tables at the faculties they are attached to. Language teachers had the greatest participation in the study; during the NA phase, they shared their knowledge about the existing of the English programme within the faculty of Economics. This is vital as teachers know the teaching context better than anybody and can thereby make a unique contribution (Al-Daami and Stanley, 1998). They provided value data concerning the internal realities of the teaching context, which helped gain understanding of how within the setting the issues surrounding the role of ELT (Holliday, 1995).

It is important to say that teachers played a predominant role during the research; they participated at different moments of the process. First, they evaluated the EUP syllabus; secondly, they designed the new syllabus, and finally they evaluated the process of improvement. The main reason they played a central role was because the chief aim of

the study was to involve them in the decision making, an activity that they have not been included in; therefore, one of the interests of the investigation was to find out if teachers could get involved in AR. The study does involve other participants, students, and employers, in one part of the project, during the NA, but it is not its interest to implicate them in the evaluation.

5.5.4 Head of faculty

The head of the faculty represented the institutional context where the study took place. Within the institution there are resources and stakeholders into consideration, because frequently resources depend on the willingness of key stakeholders or interest groups, and the needs are only significant if they are appreciated as such key interest groups (Holliday, 1995). It would thus have been pointless for the analysis to recommend, for example, the participation of language teachers during different sessions, or the participation of learners answering a questionnaire or the test, or the research having access to the results of the language pre-test, no matter how important for the study the researcher perceived this to be, if the head of the faculty, did not consider this sufficiently important to allow teachers participate. The participants are not therefore just people who provide data about learners' language strengths and weaknesses, or about the communicative language learners' need to operate in the target situation, or the opinion of the learners about their own learning, but also those who have an institutional understanding of the situation.

Ethnography provides an appropriate paradigm to interpret the world of potential employers, stakeholders such as language teachers and head of the faculty through the observation of their daily lives within their natural settings (Ritchie, 2003; Jackson II et al, 2007). Ethnography elicit insiders' point of view since they have a critical position, knowledge, and experience of the subject of research (Ramani et al, 1988); of the ample possibilities of methods commonly identified with ethnography, a personal interview was the method best suited both to the research participants and the aims of the research.

5.6 Data gathering methods

The data gathering methods employed in the study were personal and group interviews, a questionnaire, a language test, and a research diary. The Interviews with language

teachers were conducted in three different moments of the study. There were one personal interview and two group interviews. The first interview lasted an hour and thirteen minutes. The other two interviews lasted one hour and twenty-seven minutes, and one hour and thirty-two minutes respectively. The interview with the employer took fifty-eight minutes and with the head of the faculty forty-five. All the interviews were conducted in different moments and dates, according to the agenda of the participants. The first interview of the study was done to the head of the faculty during late May 2013. The first personal interview with teachers was throughout the month of June and early July 2013. The interview with the employer was originally arranged for early August, but it was really conducted in late September due to his agenda. The second interview with the language teachers, the first group interview was conducted the first week of January 2014, and the third one was conducted the last week of March 2014.

The official BEC preliminary test lasts two hours seventeen minutes. But the exam administered to the learners was a practice test, and did not include the speaking section; therefore, the exam only lasted two hours six minutes. The faculty administers the test through the English language teaching academy as an entry requirement; therefore, the researcher only was given the papers with the answers. The test was administered during the first week of July 2013.

Students took between fifteen to twenty minutes to answer the questionnaire. It was administered the second week of July 2013.

5.6.1 Interviews

Interviews are suitable techniques to gain an insight into the practitioners' collective reflective enquiry taken place during the improvement of the syllabus. Interviews have been commonly employed research method, and a growing presence in applied linguistics (Block, 2000; Harklan, 2011; Mann, 2011). Quality interviews encourage respondents to develop their own ideas, feelings, insights, expectations or attitudes and so with greater richness and spontaneity (Oppenheim, 1992).

Interviews can in-depth personal data, clarify motivations and attitudes, and understanding of personal views in such a way that is hard to achieve through surveys, or from observation (Richards, 2003).

Interviews have the capacity of provoking interviewees freely express what they believe about the matter involved, and of encouraging ‘(...) respondents to develop their own ideas, feelings, insights, expectations or attitudes and in so with greater richness and spontaneity’ (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 81). It is this unique characteristic of interviews, to put across thoughts and ideas, that makes them so distinctive from other data gathering methods; they give the participants the opportunity to communicate their point of view of the world in which they live (Cohen et al, 2011). Interviews are widely used in AR empirical studies to provide ethnographic information about participants and contexts (Wyatt, 2011; Dehnad and Nasser, 2013; Salm, 2014; Savasci, 2014). Interviews can be used to provide different viewpoints on situations or add to the explanations of AR projects (Schatz, 1992; Melrose, 2001).

Group interviews are economical way to gather a relatively large amount of qualitative data. This type of interview allows greater group interaction between participants and the interviewer, and ‘ (...) can yield high quality data as it can create a synergistic environment that results in a deep and insightful discussion’ (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 144). The way the researcher conducts the interview is by asking a general question to the group and then responses from participants (McDonough and McDonough, 1997). The interviews for this study were conducted during the participants’ working sessions, therefore a group interview was the most appropriate method to gather data, as according to Dörnyei they are ideal when there are time constraints.

A common approach to conduct an interview is the personal interview the interviewer asks questions and records the answers from only one participant in the study at a time. help researchers to obtain more in depth and detailed information; because interviewees have the opportunity to speak at length (Silverman, 2004).

There are different interview types which are employed according to the demands of the research objectives. Semi structural interview for example, make reference to a framework of the areas to be covered during the development of the. The direction in which the conversation moves the structure of the questions is left to the interviewers’ Within each topic, the interviewers are free to conduct the interview as they think fit, to the questions they consider appropriate (Corbetta, 2003). The reason why this type of interview was chosen was because it gives both the interviewer and the interviewee ample freedom to go into details, while at the same time ensuring that all the necessary

information collected (McDonough and McDonough, 1997), and it is precisely the detailed characterization of how an ELT syllabus can be improved through AR this investigation is concerned. Interviews can be conducted personally or in groups according to the purpose of the investigation or the needs of the participants.

A key element that helps the researcher complete the proposed action is the interview schedule (Opie, 2004). The interview schedule helps the researcher concentrate on topics that are essential to investigate, ensure consistency, and continue on target during the interview (Jacob and Furgerson, 2012). 'In fact, the term can be employed to refer to the brief list of memory prompts of areas to be covered' across interviews especially unstructured ones (Tavakoli, 2012, p. 297).

To generate the questions the interview schedule, one can easily adopt that Tavakoli (2012) suggests during the generation of item pool in questionnaires; to draw on different sources for example: informal interviews, note taking, learners' assignments. source that can be drawn on is literature, and adopt or adapt instruments that have been previously used. A fourth source that could be added is the accumulated experience the designer has the context and about the research problem. For this study three different interview schedules, one to interview language teachers and potential employers. Both previous experience and knowledge about the research context helped design useful schedules. However, not only the researcher experience and knowledge influenced the design, but also literature. In the particular case of the schedule used to interview potential employers, was adapted from one suggested by Hutchinson and Waters (1987)

McDonough and McDonough (1997, p.186) and Wallace (1998, p. 148) state that there are three ways in which interview data can be recorded. Writing notes after the interview is not an easy method, since it is to remember accurately all the details given by the interviewee - it is not 'a reliable method as most of our forgetting occurs shortly after the event' (Wallace, 1998). Note-taking during the interview helps the interviewer capture more information. However, it may 'distract the attention' of both the interviewer and the interviewee, thus it was decided not to use it. Audio recording helped capture detailed aspects of the interviewee's point of view that neither note-taking nor simple recall would probably do. Heritage (1984, p. 238) suggests that the procedure of recording and interviews has the following advantages

it helps to correct the natural limitations of our memories

it allows more thorough examination of what people say;
it permits repeated examinations of the interviewees' answers;
it allows the data to be reused in other ways from those intended by the original researcher—for example, in the light of new theoretical ideas or analytic strategies.

Although the process of recording, transcribing and analysing the data is time consuming, it was worthwhile to capture and retrieve the most valuable data.

One evident limitation with interviews is that any findings reported here are restricted to the research context of this investigation. Sometimes interviewees provided information with little relevance to the aims of the investigation, a fact that was rectified by the intervention of the interviewer refocusing the attention of the respondent to the topic of the interview.

5.6.2 Research reports

During the investigation three research reports were written. They were produced approximately every month, starting at the end of the second month of fieldwork. They included a summary of the data collection and early analyses. The reports also contained plans for future research activities and changes to the initial plan. They were discussed with the researcher's supervisor who provided feedback. The supervisor was an outside source not familiar with the research context, which provided an objective outside perspective on the research process.

5.6.3 Documents

In this study different document such as course materials, lists of language content, national and university policies about ELT were. These printed documents become an excellent source of information the research context; providing additional information that might not possible from the fieldwork (Corbetta, 2003).

5.6.4 Research diary

Over the investigation the researcher a diary including all the details emerging from the research process, as well as feelings and opinions about it. The diary helped the researcher document the developments in the action and in thinking and theorizing. It also help record his own perceptions changed over time and how he used new learning to help make sense of a situation (Mcniff and Whitehead, 2010).

5.6.5 Language test

The test the faculty administers is the BEC (Business English Certificate) preliminary sample papers (the official test). It is administered through the English language teaching department of the UC. Even the department is not an authorized Cambridge English examination centre, they followed a formal protocol an authentic examination procedure.

A second BEC practice test (posttest) was administered to learners after completion of one (four-month course, equivalent to 60 hours of instruction approximately) of language teaching to measure their achievement and the effectiveness of the new syllabus.

The BEC is targeted to learners who want to have a business-related English language qualification, and it is set at level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The formal certification contains four different parts: reading, listening, writing, and speaking; but the department only takes three parts into account, speaking section is omitted; because there are not enough examiners to examine this section. The sample paper for BEC Preliminary is an institutional goal of the faculty of Economics learners to complete the formal certification as a way of helping learners to have an advantage in the jobs market and more choice if they want to work or study abroad.

The results of the test reveal the objective side of the learners' needs, but learners also have something to say, therefore learners' perceived necessities, lacks and wants cannot be ignored (Hutchinson and Waters, 1984), especially if the approach to curriculum is school-based; hence taking their opinions into consideration before making any decisions about teaching and learning appears reasonable. Literature (Zare, 2012; Trinder, 2013) shows that finding out about learners' preferred ways to learn, in other words asking them about the learning strategies they commonly employ to learn could 'make language learning more successful' (Oxford, 1989, p. 235). If learners are capable of identifying the methods they employ to learn, they also regulate their own language learning (Griffiths, 2008). Research on language learning strategies has discovered that making learners aware of the use of effective strategies, and facilitating learners to implement them efficiently could enhance their learning (Yilmaz, 2010; Ungureanu and Georgescu, 2012). Like strategies, beliefs underpinning learning

strategies could also become an influential factor success or failure during learning, which means that what learners believe about language learning in general, or language learning strategies in particular might influence their performance (Peackon, 1999). The method used to collect learners' opinion and beliefs was a questionnaire. Questionnaires have been commonly used in other cases to gather data about learners' opinions and beliefs (Horwitz, 1987; Mantle-Bromley, 1995; Yang, 1999; Amuzie and Winke, 2009).

5.6.6 Questionnaire

The questionnaire is a data gathering instrument, with items asking about a variety of specialized pieces of information or giving several answer choices for the informant to select from in which the researcher is interested (Brown, 2001; Gray, 2014; Jupp, 2006). 'This makes the questionnaire the most data collection device and particularly suited for quantitative, statistical analysis' (Dörnyei, 2002, p. 14). As Oppenheim (1992) suggests the questionnaire's function is to measure. Its popularity is based on the fact that easy to design and to collect large amount of data (Cohen et al., 2011). Additionally, 'if the questionnaire is well constructed, processing the data can also be fast and relatively straightforward (Dörnyei, 2002, p. 6). Support comes from Foddy (1993, p. 1) who argues that questionnaires are 'widely accepted as a cost-efficient (and sometimes the only) way, of gathering information about past and experiences, private actions and motives, and beliefs'.

A well-known instrument to assess students' beliefs about language learning is Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), (Horwitz, 1987). The Likert-scale questionnaire assesses beliefs about language learning in four different areas: foreign language attitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning, and language learning strategies. There have been two new versions of the questionnaire and several researchers have employed it in their investigations significant data for their research, other researchers have developed their own (Mori, 1999).

The questionnaire employed in this investigation included four sections: section one asked questions about personal beliefs the language learning process, their motivations to learn, the teacher and their role in the learning process. Section two aimed to find out which aspects of language they felt they needed most help or practice with. Section three sought to discover their preferred ways of learning English, and section four investigated their English learning background. Sections one, two and three of the questionnaire a likert-scale as 'the method is simple, versatile, and reliable' (Dörnyei,

2010, p. 27). Because section four intended to collect learners' background information, it was necessary to modify the format to a multiple choice one. design the questionnaire several questionnaires were reviewed (Zughoul and Hussein, 1985; Chia et al., 1999; Spratt, 1999; Yang and Lau, 2003; Amuzie and Winke, 2009; Xhaferi and Xhaferi, 2011; Lavasani and Faryadres, 2011; Mehrdad, 2012; Trinder, 2013) the items that most met the needs of the study were adopted and adapted.

The main limitation of the questionnaire, on the other hand, is the fact that the items need to be simple and straightforward to be understood by everybody (Dörnyei, 2007), therefore items may have different meanings for different respondents. The simplicity of items does not allow investigating deeply into an issue. In the particular case of this study, the use of the questionnaire was justified by the fact that it allowed the researcher to collect a huge amount of data in short time, especially during a term where students had a very tight schedule. Aiming to design an efficient questionnaire, the researcher validated it in different forms.

5.7 Data analysis

Given the interpretative and emergent nature of the data gathered in this study, qualitative approaches to analysis were most suitable. The method employed to analyse the interviews was a traditional text analysis method (TTA), rather than a computerized text analysis system (CTA). Advantages of CTA have been widely discussed in the literature. They include: ability to deal with large amounts of qualitative data, reducing the amount of time needed from manual handling tasks, increased flexibility and thoroughness in handling data, providing for more rigorous analysis of data, and providing a more visible audit trail data analysis (St John and Jonson, 2000). However, the nature of qualitative research in terms of the volume and complexity of unstructured data and the way in which findings and theory emerge from the data makes software packages, developed to manage and analyse such data difficult to become familiar with and use adequately (Roberts and Wilson, 2002).

While CTA methods have apparently made it more efficient for researchers to store and analyse data, many of them continue to advocate the use of manual analysis techniques, which is the case of this investigation because of the following reasons.

First, the data size of this investigation does not warrant the employment of a CTA method, as CTA methods are commonly used with large quantities of data. Second, it is more probable that the researcher will continue to analyse further data employing the TTA method than the CTA, because the institution where he works does not have access to this software. Third, the researcher has little data coding experience, thus employing a TTA method can help him learn, as the TTA method can be perfected with use as a coder gains coding experience. TTA allowed the researcher interpret meaning from data, something that CTA cannot do. For example, concerning feelings or emotions, or also to understand words or expressions, which are not in the same language that the software was programmed. Another reason for employing a TTA method is that the method can help the researcher perfect his or her ability to combine categories and can have better ideas of how to best organise data.

The process of analysing data was as follows. Immediately after each interview the researcher listened to the recording of the interview and made initial notes concerning the content of the interview and other relevant features. This was to record first impressions while the interview was still fresh in the researcher's memory.

One way of helping analysis and data collection is through early coding of the data to begin the process of describing, structuring and interpreting the data. Beginning the coding process with a first impression of the data helped in preventing the researcher from getting lost in data, from wasting valuable time, and to be able to interpret the data clearly. One way of adding analysis and data collection is through early coding of the data to begin the process of describing, structuring and interpreting the data (Gray, 2004), others (Richards, 2003) suggest letting the codes emerge from the data. Prior codes offer an initial focus to coding and also relate the coding process to the research aims and questions. The use of emergent codes, on the opposite, allows flexibility in the research process, enabling the researcher to find out topics that he might not have thought about it. In this case, the interview scheme helped classify the data and kept focus on the research objective. Although the scheme helped the researcher to enter the interview with some sort of provisional codes as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), the fluidity and freedom of oral communication made it difficult to sort data (Richards, 2003), therefore it was necessary to read the transcriptions several times.

Both ways prior and emergent codes are useful, thus the approach to coding adopted was a mix method. Prior codes helped to clarify the types of data being gathered. However, this needed to be balanced with keeping the research open to new information emerging from the ground.

Therefore, after conducting the interviews and transcribing the data, the researcher read the transcriptions several times to obtain a general sense of the data, those passages relevant to the topic of the study were highlighted using the priori codes derived from different sources, for instance the experience of the researcher in the work field regarding the problematic situation, the research questions, as well as the knowledge of the researcher about the different topics concerning approaches to syllabus design, language syllabus, AR, SBCD. The first time the researcher read, he was looking for information under the following topics:

- Opinions of the teachers about the features of the old syllabus (type, characteristics of the syllabus, likes/dislikes)
- The syllabus design approach followed by the institution
- The type of English required in the institution
- The features of the English required in the target situation (skills, people to use the language with, situations)

Additionally, after a close reading to the transcripts other codes were established which were distinct from but related to the initial topics. These topics were related to:

- Perceptions of the teachers about the UEP syllabus
- Perceptions of the teachers about the syllabus design process, NA and the design of the new syllabus
- Perceptions of the teachers about the AR process

These codes emerged from the data due to the occurrence and scope to which they were distinguished by the participants. These emergent codes became a very significant part of the findings, as they revealed reflections of the teachers upon both the syllabus design and action research process.

During the first close reading the number of codes extended as the interviews were analysed. The emerging topics were related to particular issues of the interviewees most

of them related to their work status, but it was noticed that the information provided by one teacher or the other did not connect. Thus it was decided to pay attention to those areas that overlapped, and to drop those which were not relevant to the current research. For example, teachers' opinions about the AR process and the NA process.

Throughout the coding process the codes were revised for consistency across the different interviews, in relation to the types of data that were contained within each code, and in accordance with the definitions of each code. Finally, the researcher ended with 40 codes related to the interviews (see appendix 11).

Some extracts from the participants' interviews are presented in the results based on the codes. These extracts are examples of the type of data contained within a code, and as critical incidents that offer insight into the behaviour, beliefs or values of the participants. The extracts also allow presentation of the participants' views in their own words.

Some of the negative effects found with the use of the TTA method were that the analysis is challenging and time-consuming, and it can take several weeks. It is also tedious and frustrating, thus it is advisable to take breaks from the work to be refresh and alert. Another problem found was that coding is not a precise science. Sometimes information cannot easily appear; therefore, the researcher needs time to formulate and wait for ideas to emerge, or to listen to the recordings repeatedly or to reread the transcripts. This may also happen because the method choice may not be working, thus there might be necessary to modify. Another limitation of the TTA method is that the researcher may infer information from what they read based on what is actually written, which can turn into incorrect categorization.

To deal with these negative effects the researcher should organise a framework for qualitative analysis. Thus a researcher should foster the habit of organization. Properly organised information, dating and labelling all incoming data, keeping multiple digital and had copies as backup for example, can help the researcher save a lot of time and reduce the stress level. Because coding data is challenging and time consuming researches need to create an environment and schedule which enable them to sustain extended periods of time demanding their complete concentration. It is necessary to keep in mind that coding data is uncertain, thus it is necessary to be persistent and flexible to be able to work with data emerging from the field, and to adjust to those not

foreseen situations. It is important for the researcher to remain close to and deeply rooted to the data, but it is also important that he is creative and to keep in mind that the incoming data is huge and provides a wide range of possibilities to produce new data (Saldaña, 2008).

5.8 Ethics and risks

Tavakoli (2012, p. 198) describes ethics as ‘guidelines or sets of principles for good professional practice, which serve to advise and steer researchers as they conduct their work’. Indeed, the guidelines help researchers carry out their research ‘in a moral and responsible way’ (Burns, 2010, p. 34), which implies informing and explaining participants the features of the project. Regarding this project, the risk to both participants and researcher were not serious. The activities the participants were expected to take part in, interviews, questionnaires, tests did not present any risk. Anonymity was protected for the participants with pseudonyms used throughout this research and any related reports. The research was conducted with explicit written consent the participants.

5.9 The role of the researcher

According to Noffke (2009) in AR the researcher exercises some power over other participants, whether to grades, reports, allowance. However, in situations where the collaborative partnership occurs in a group of teachers where one is also a researcher, as it was the researcher’s personal experience, it may be claimed that originally there may be no issues of power or authority since the researcher is also part of the institution in which the project is taking place. Besides that, the relation of the investigator with the faculty of Economics was as an external researcher. It is true that he also belongs to the ELT programme of the UC, as a result he is also a language teacher, but he has never participated as a teacher in that faculty. However, he knew all the language teachers who work in the faculty because they belong to the same programme. But he does not teach English to the students in that faculty. Therefore, he cannot neither exercise any sort of power over students, nor over teachers, since he did not have authority over them.

As an action researcher, he stood with and alongside the group of teachers, not outside as an objective observer or external consultant. His role as researcher and teacher provided a unique possibility to explore the social and cultural context in which

teaching is delivered. The active involvement of the researcher was not a threat, but something that produced more insight.

Although most of the decisions about the study were taken as a group, which implied that teacher participants were critically involved in the decision making process, the project continued to be a research, which implied that participants' involvement was on a voluntary basis, and it was made clear that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Their involvement in the research, or choosing to withdraw from it, was not related to their continuity in their job.

5.10 Validity

Qualitative research validity needs different criteria also employed in quantitative research. Even though in qualitative based research a single interpretation is rejected, it is still required to establish validity standards (Denzin and Lincoln, 1988; Cohen et al., 2011). Lincoln and Guba (1985) provide four measures of trustworthiness qualitative research: truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. Truth value refers to the fact that the data is rich and reflects participant's knowledge. Credibility is the strategy that is implemented to provide truth value to qualitative research. This entails the researcher's prolonged engagement with the field. Sandelowski (2000) argues that a qualitative study is credible when it represents such accurate description or interpretation of human experiences that others can immediately recognise the description. In this study the following strategies for credibility were used:

Field experience: The researcher has 16 years of experience in the English language teaching facility where the study was conducted, which indicates knowledge of the field.

Referential adequacy: The researcher designed an interview schedule which was discussed with a UC academic advisor, the head of the English department, two experienced teachers as well as the researcher's supervisor.

The questionnaire was given to language teachers to their opinions in terms of the layout, the number of items, the wording of the instructions and items; they gave feedback all aspects, administered to a group of students the school of education who voluntarily agreed to participate proving feedback the time it took them to complete it, the clarity of the instructions, the wording of the items, and the layout.

Reflexivity: The researcher used a field journal to reflect his behavior and experience.

Triangulation: The researcher used two methods to check the results to be more confident.

Member checking: The researcher used a tape recorder to capture interviews verbatim. The researcher continuously checked information gathered with the informants to confirm it. The researcher conducted a literature review to link findings with previous research.

Applicability as a measure refers to being able to utilize results of the research in similar contexts with similar participants, also known as transferability, the relevance of the research to other contexts. To allow transferability, the researcher should provide sufficient detail of the context of the field work for the reader to be able to decide whether the prevailing environment is similar to another situation with which he or she is familiar and whether the findings can justifiably be applied to the other setting (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

By providing a detailed description of the methodology followed to conduct this investigation, the criterion of consistency would appear to be met; as the description allows readers to follow the research methodology and come to similar conclusions.

Neutrality refers to the research being free from research bias. Lincoln and Guba (1985) shift the emphasis of neutrality from the researcher to the data. Neutrality can be achieved when truth value and applicability are established. Neutrality can be assured when an expert, the supervisor, look at the standards of the research, when triangulation is used, and when the researcher keeps a research journal.

5.11 Methodology limitations

The most remarkable limitation of the methodology adopted here is perhaps generalizability because of the small number of participants and the particular setting of the study. Richards (2003) suggests that what might be relevant to one particular research setting, might not be the same for other contexts; therefore for qualitative research more suitable concepts than generalization are those of transferability or resonance, which means that qualitative research can be relevant to other settings by providing great details of the investigation conducted to lead to the researchers' understanding thus they can apply it in their own contexts (Richards, 2003). This

investigation attempts to make relevant this research to other contexts by providing detailed descriptions of all the research activities, as well as all the process followed to gather data, design a syllabus and analyse its parts. Moreover, as members of the UEP, the teacher participants in the study can be viewed as part of a group of teachers who have extensive experience and success with language syllabus design based in school needs. They may therefore share features with other teachers in other schools of the UC. However, any generalisations to other groups of language teachers, for example, teachers who are not interested in participating in a process of syllabus design, will be more limited.

Another limitation is related to the fact that the researcher is a member of the ELT department of the UC, which could have influenced the teachers' responses to provide answers which were more positive or a less critical point of view.

One more limitation is related to the fact that throughout the stage of reflection about the new syllabus, the only opinion taken into consideration was the opinion of the teachers and the perceptions of the learners were not listened. Even when from the beginning of the study, the idea that the main participants of the investigation were the teachers, the perceptions of the students about the new syllabus could have revealed interesting facts about the research topic. However, there was a special interest that evaluation of the syllabus was based only on the perception of the teachers; as they have hardly ever been involved in the process of syllabus design within the institution.

The time period of the study can also become a limitation as improvement processes usually take longer than one semester. Therefore, other areas of potential improvement, as no research activity will be conducted to find more data reveals possible improvements. The use of certain research instruments can also limit the collection of data, as no instrument can gather all the necessary information. However, the fact that other instruments are also used can result in a broader picture.

5.12 Summary and conclusions

This chapter presented the research methodology employed to evaluate the UEP syllabus of the UC, following an AR model. AR involves participants' reflections about a problematic situation, it was appropriate to try to produce an in-depth description of the process followed to design a school based ELT syllabus. Through the data provided by different research techniques, the chapter also aimed to gain perceptions of the

participants concerning the use of the AR model to introduce amendments to the syllabus.

Conducting a qualitative investigation of curriculum change was not suitable, as the aim of this study was not only to generate understanding of the situation, but to develop solutions to a problem identified within the researcher's social environment. Thus conducting an AR project was more appropriate. The research activities of the study implied that the researcher adopted a clearly interventionist approach investigating issues of practical and local importance. Moreover, the researcher and practitioners acted together in the context of the identified problem, the UEP syllabus, instead of doing the investigation on participants.

The chapter presented the research questions, and the methodology chosen to address them, followed by the description of the setting, participants, and research instruments, as well as the limitations of this investigation.

It must be noted that the limited number of participants and the individual nature of the opinions about potential improvements, for example: language syllabus, teaching and learning, or possible knowledge production will limit the extent to which any findings can be universal. However, it is hoped that such individual situations may be revealed by other readers and researchers in other higher education contexts where English has been included as a subject across the curriculum.

Chapter Six: The process of syllabus change through Action Research

6.1 Introduction

On the opposite side of the specialist approach to curriculum is SBCD, which advocates that centrally based curriculum developers do not consider the different needs of students and teachers in a particular teaching context. Top-down modes of curriculum development ignore classroom teachers and provide them with little incentive, involvement, and job satisfaction. SBCD advocates argue that centrally based curriculums do not take into account those key elements characteristic of the context, which in many occasions represent the diverse needs of students and teachers, and hinder the success of any curriculum improvement initiative (Marsh, 2009). SBCD is directly related to Action Research (Elliott, 1997), a useful tool which encourages reflection upon teachers' everyday practices and work improvement, in this way they contribute to the construction of a curriculum much more focused on the demands of the teaching context.

This chapter presents the process of syllabus change through AR. Overall, the data presented here, within certain limitations, offers insights into participants' experiences, opinions and beliefs, addressing the research question below.

How was the AR process of guiding teachers in the change of syllabus?

- What course of action was taken to improve the syllabus?
- What amendments did the UEP syllabus suffer?

The chapter indicates how these results relate to the research questions. The analysis is supported by some extracts taken from interviews, tables, figures, and earlier theoretical discussions to assist these participants in deepening the understanding of the employment of AR to improve the syllabus within this context. This involves a re-examination of the premise that, practitioners can be involved in AR to improve UEP syllabus, and to create knowledge grounded in practice.

The approach chosen for this study was largely qualitative; since surveys, interviews and questionnaires are the most used methods; the results of a language test were also analyzed.

First of all, the chapter presents a description of the data analysis process. Secondly, a detailed analysis of the UEP syllabus is provided followed by in depth explanation of the data collected through different NAs, needs in the context of educational situations and workplace, learners' language strengths and weaknesses, learners' beliefs about their own learning. Then, a detailed analysis of the new syllabus is shown, including a description of the information teachers used to design the new syllabus. Finally, an evaluation of the process followed to design the new syllabus, supported on the perception of the language teachers.

6.2 Data analysis

To analyse both the results of a language test and a questionnaire the software programme EXCEL was used. The main interest in analyzing the results of the test was to find out what the language learners' strengths and weaknesses concerning their language knowledge and skills. To put it briefly, the value of the results of the language test was that it revealed those language aspects of vocabulary, grammar and skills in which learners were weak, to incorporate them into the syllabus. Therefore, to find out the arithmetical mean of the results of the language test was valuable to identify what part of the test, listening, reading or writing, students did better or worse, and what aspects of the language and skills of each part students needed to improve. Therefore, a more in-depth statistical analysis was not necessary.

Similarly, to find out the arithmetical mean of the results of the questionnaire was enough to identify the opinion of the students about their own language learning. The aim of the questionnaire was to establish the average of students who agreed or disagreed with the items given about their motivations to learn, as well as to make decisions about teaching materials, activities, tasks that could be added in their language course. In this case as before a more in-depth statistical analysis was unnecessary too.

Another side of the research had to do with the opinions of key stateholders regarding the teaching and learning of the English language within the teaching context and the target situation; it suggested that qualitative approaches to gather and analyse data were most appropriate, particularly interviews as the objective of this part of the research was largely exploratory involving the examination of feelings and attitudes (Gray, 2014). Most important, it was expected that data analysis helped identify emerging topics or areas of interest or even new areas which needed further research.

Two more interviews were recorded with the group of teachers. The average interview length was 1 hour 20 minutes. The interviews were semi-structured, which means the researcher followed an interview schedule with a set of questions preconceived in advance (McDonough and McDonough, 1997). Several more questions followed by participants' answers were also asked. The first interview took place after the results of the NA were presented to the language teachers; these results were used to feed into the syllabus they must design between teaching terms. The aim of the interview was to gather information about the participants' feelings and opinions concerning the process of syllabus design based on data derived from the school needs. The second interview was undertaken after a four-month teaching period. The aim of the interview was to gather data regarding the teachers' experiences, attitudes, and impressions in participating in the project.

A partial interview transcription was followed by decisions on what to include, as it was not necessary to transcribe everything, since the content of responses was the most important data to transcribe. Different elements such as the researcher's experience in the field, the literature review, the field work experience, as well as the aim and research questions gave the researcher a clear idea of what data was necessary to analyse. Thanks to the elements previously mentioned a considerable amount of analysis had already taken place before beginning the actual coding process.

6.3 Analysis of the University English Program (UEP) syllabus

The analysis of the UEP syllabus is informed in literature about the features a syllabus provided by several authors in chapter two (Dubin and Olshtain, 1986; Nunan, 1998; White, 1998; Breen, 2001.; Nation and Macalister, 2010). The scholars agree that a syllabus is a detailed and operational statement of teaching and learning elements, a plan of what is to be achieved through teaching and learning. These scholars also agree that a syllabus is made up of basic elements such as goals and objectives, sequenced content, teaching methodology, and evaluation. Appendix 8 shows a sample of the syllabus included in the wider curriculum document of all academic programmes in undergraduate education designed by the UEP. The syllabus contains a list of vocabulary, grammar, and functional items organised into units, with each level to be taught within a single semester, and it was based on a course book (the 'Matters' series). The syllabus does not set clear goals and objectives, a clear methodology approach, or evaluation activities.

The UEP is not clear about the reason students are learning. It seems that the main purpose of the syllabus is that students learn the grammar, vocabulary and functions included in the list for no obvious reasons. One of the problems about this is that students might not find any motivation to learn because the goal is not clear. If the syllabus is just centred on the learning of grammar, vocabulary or functions the aspirations and motivations of learners might be adjusted accordingly; they may lose interest in learning and turn their efforts to studying with the aim of passing exams, and at the end students could not be certain what they are able to do with the language they learnt. It is expected that a language syllabus contains language items, grammar vocabulary or functions; however, objectives must be considered.

Even though the setting of objectives has come under criticism (Rowntree, 1981), setting learning objectives serves a number of useful purposes; for example, it enables the teacher to evaluate what has been learned. It means that learners know what they are supposed to be learning and what is expected of them. It provides a constant means of feedback and on-going evaluation for both teacher and learner; and it also helps learners set and evaluate their own performance.

The lack of clear objectives affects not only students, but teachers as well as they follow a syllabus which does not clearly indicate what and how teachers have to teach. The fact that the syllabus does not settle clear objectives, but was centred on language items only gives rise to elements of uncertainty among language teachers. The lack of clear objectives might result in confusion and lack of security about teaching performance; as the main goal is that students learn language items. The lack of clarity raises the possibility that teachers unilaterally decide about the outcome of the syllabus. The fact that teachers act on their own initiative to carry out improvement in their lessons is positive, but, ideally, improvement should result from institutional rather than personal effort. Hence, for the existence of institutional effort everybody should be certain about what goals to be achieved.

The UEP syllabus' language items follow a sequence that involves a linear development, which is based on the idea that learners acquire one item, grammar or functions, at a time, and that they should demonstrate their mastery of one thing before moving on to the next. But according to Nunan (1998) students do not acquire language step by step in a linear model; on the opposite, language learning depends on the

connection of different elements such as absenteeism, learners with different styles and speeds of learning, which make '(...) a learner's mastery of a particular language item unstable, appearing to increase and decrease at different times during the learning process' (p. 101). Another main problem of a linear development is that it can be assumed that once item has been presented in a lesson, it has been learned and does not need focused revision (Nation and Macalister, 2010).

The evaluation under the approach of the EUP syllabus is concerned with the administration of grammar, functions and vocabulary exams during different terms of the semestre, with the aim of giving students a mark to move from one semestre to the next.

The objective of the lessons is to ensure learners master the language content of the syllabus through the study of rules and sentence construction. The UEP syllabus requires learners to go through, and consciously understand, the rules underlying sentence construction; language learning is linear and sequential, starting with a first stage focus on input, teaching and output (Richards, and Rodgers, 1986). A representative teaching method of this approach is the Presentation Practice Production (PPP) model, 'an approach to teaching language items which follows a sequence of presentation of the item, practice of the item and production (i.e. use) of the item' (Tomlinson, 2011, p. xv).

As discussed in chapter two this type of syllabus has advantages and disadvantages. One of the main advantages is that teachers find it familiar as they have probably learnt a language on the basis of this type of syllabus, and many language learners have been successful in learning a foreign language having been taught in the same way. Hedge (2000) emphasizes that focusing on form, grammar or functions, allows learners to pay attention to and to notice specific linguistic features; it also helps to associate learners' own knowledge with new knowledge. Some of the disadvantages are that structure is not the core of communicative use, and therefore teaching and learning the language linearly is pointless (Lewis, 1996). Whereas Woodward (1993) and Scrivener (1994) argue that breaking the language up into parts avoids a more comprehensive coverage of the linguistic elements that shape the language. Other critical remarks are related to its emphasis on accuracy and correctness, as well as its dissociation from real life communication (Willis, 1993). In addition, Nunan (1998) considers that the linear

model of language acquisition is inconsistent with what is observed as learners go about the process of acquiring another language.

The UEP syllabus is not derived from school experience and experimentation; it is not in line with the reality of the school; as it has been directed at school teachers and cannot be realised in the form that was originally conceived by the top decision makers. During the interview teachers repeatedly commented that the syllabus did not meet the needs of their students for different reasons, for example there was too much content to study in one semestre. Not only the content, but also the selection of the items did not meet the needs of the learners, as apparently, part of the grammar items were already known by some of the learners. An institutional policy that had to be implemented was that learners had to take an international business test four semestres after starting college. But this was not possible to do because not all learners were ready, there were not teaching materials and teachers did not feel confident, because they did not know the exam. The following comment was made by a teacher:

The thing about the administration of the BEC exam was something included in the plan of the school. But that was something that never happened as students were never prepared for that purpose, there were not teaching materials to prepare the students for taking the test, and we did not feel confident to teach those classes because we did not know the materials. (Appendix 10, RQ3, RESPONDENT, LT3)

Both the use of the UEP syllabus and the inclusion of content related to business English, with the aim of passing an international exam were objectives coming from the top, and did not include the opinion of the teachers who knew the classroom situations and learners' needs. This approach to syllabus deign is linked with a specialist approach defining from the top what is to be taught and teachers through instruction, implement the plan (Graves, 2008). Chapter three discusses that centralised decisions do not always produce the expected results, a probable reason for failure is a hierarchical approach to curriculum (Underwood, 2012; Atai and Mazlu 2013; Glasgow, 2014). The separation between people, the development of the syllabus and the products generate a gap between the teaching language policy issued and the attempt to operationalize it (Stenhouse, 1975).

There is no doubt that the UC has made every effort to provide students with opportunities to develop their English language skills. Examples of these efforts include the allocation of infrastructure for the learning of English, as well as the provision of funding for the payment of wages of language teachers. It has appointed experienced teachers to design and develop an English language syllabus, which indicates what and how English has to be taught. However, based on the evaluation of the syllabus, and on the opinions of the language teachers, the UEP syllabus is basically a table of language items, and does not clearly specify other important parts such as objectives, teaching methodology or an evaluation system. According to the description of the syllabus types provided in chapter two the UEP syllabus matches with any of the following type: product-oriented, type A, formal, or synthetic. Finally, according to the design process, the UEP syllabus followed a specialist approach. Table 6.1 below summarizes the different characteristics of the UEP syllabus.

Parts of the Syllabus	Does the UEP syllabus contain these parts?	
	NO	YES
Objectives	X	
Content		X
Methodology	X	
Evaluation	X	
Sequence of the syllabus	Linear development	
Syllabus type	Description	
Formal	Represent a primary concern with a language learner's knowledge. It gives priority to how the text of language is realised and organised (in speech or writing).	
Product-oriented	Are those in which the focus is on the knowledge and skills, which learners should gain as a result of instruction.	
Type A	Are related with what should be learned. They settle objectives and pre-determine the language by dividing it into small, isolated units.	
Synthetic	Are those in which the different parts of language are taught independently and progressively. The acquisition is a process of addition of parts until the whole structure of language has been put together.	
Approach to syllabus design	Description	
Specialist	In the specialist approach, the potential for mismatch is	

	<p>great because each different group of people performs different curriculum functions, uses different discourses, and produces different curriculum products. (...) by putting the classroom at the end of the chain of decisions, it positions teachers –and learners- as recipients and implementers of received wisdom, rather than decision-makers in their own right. (...) there is usually no room for evaluation of the curriculum once it is implemented in the classroom. (Graves, 2008, p. 150-151)</p>
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Table 6.1 Characteristics of the UEP syllabus

A different approach to syllabus design would appear to depend less on policy directives and more on syllabus design and development activities which are located at the school level; considering the local knowledge and understanding of practitioners, language teachers, and students, who pursue a set of goals within a particular context.

As stated in chapter three Robinson (1991) views needs in three levels: the micro, meso and macro. The approach in this study pays attention to micro-level and meso-level needs. Micro level needs are those that emerge from the learner. The broader setting of the workplace is considered at the meso-level. This level is related to organizational outcomes, (companies, educational institutions, or government agencies), for it is from the researcher’s investigation into these two levels of needs that the product of the NA derives.

At the micro-level three analyses were conducted: present situation, strategy and subjective and at the meso-level, target situational analysis: needs in the context of the educational institution, and of the workplace.

6.4 Meso-level analysis

6.4.1 Needs in the context of the educational institution

Chapter three indicates that several scholars such as, West (1994); Tudor (2003); Breen (1985); Markee (1986); Holliday (1994b); Hyde (1994); and Holliday (1995) suggest to investigate features of the teaching context as they directly influence the life of participants involved in the language learning and teaching process. Therefore, the first data gathered was about the educational institution.

6.4.1.1 English as part of the faculty’s curriculum

Chapter one reports that a charter issued in 2002 indicated that the English language became a compulsory subject in all undergraduate programmes at the UC. According to

the charter, the main goal is to help students to gain proficiency in the language to enable them to:

- use English as a tool for communication
- successfully take and perform in international professional exams
- have access to updated information in English in their areas of study
- participate in international mobility programmes

The faculty of Economics adopted these institutional policies into its curriculum plan which states that:

‘Learners in their first and second year in university will no longer study general English; instead they will prepare to take the Business English Certificate’. (Faculty of Economics’ curriculum plan)

From establishing the new English language teaching policies on the curriculum plan of the faculty of Economics; English language teaching went from a general English teaching approach to English for Specific Purposes, with special emphasis on the preparation for the Business English Certificate. Besides the change in the approach, which was from general to specific, the number of English teaching hours changed from three to six, and the number of semesters of English study was cut from eight to four. Thus, learners had to study English six hours a week during their first two academic years, four semesters.

Another element of change added to the curriculum plan was the promotion of teaching content of different subject areas (Finance, Economics and International Business) through English. The aim of including this new component into the curriculum was to convert the faculty of Economics of the UC into a point of reference among other State Universities in Mexico, and to contribute with the UC’s internationalization policies. As stated in the extract below:

‘Using English as a medium of instruction in different subject areas can help us to become a point of reference among other State Universities that offer similar programmes to ours; besides that if we successfully manage to teach some classes of different content areas in English, we will be able to establish formal agreements with universities from English spoken countries such as Canada; therefore we can offer double degree programmes’. (Faculty of Economics’ curriculum plan)

Chapter three report an NA study conducted by Holliday (1995) for an oil company. Holliday claims that contextual factors from institutional to methodological, should be seen as factors in curriculum design, and not as constraints on a purer curriculum based on language needs alone; otherwise, the curriculum resulting from the analysis is not 'realistic' (p.126). In sum, taking the contextual factors into consideration contributes to design a curriculum centred on school needs.

Teachers are key participants in the process of SBCD. They full well know the local context and all those elements and factors that go into it.

6.4.1.2 Needs in the context of the workplace

Chapter three claims that Target Situational Analysis assists the researcher in establishing the learners' communicative needs resulting from an analysis of the communication in the target situation (Chambers, 1980); or as Yalden (1987) puts it the analysis to the target situation reveals the language knowledge and skills needed for communication. In the search of the learners' communicative needs, the researcher interviewed the human resource managers (HRM) of two companies, who suggested possible English language knowledge and skills they required from graduate learners. The collection and analysis of the information produced the following: English is a hiring requirement, employees' needed language knowledge and skills, working situations in which English is used, people employers use English with, how the language is used.

6.4.1.3 English is a requirement of the workplace

Both managers revealed that English was a job entry requirement, and candidates had to include an English certificate in their résumé indicating their language proficiency. One of the interviewees also said that besides the language certificate contained in their résumé, candidates also had to take a language test, which included writing, listening and speaking sections. Both managers remarked that the knowledge of English language was a factor which was decisive in the company's decision to employ the applicant; as stated in the following extract:

'In our company English is a decisive factor in the decision to choose an employee; there can be many capable graduates, but then that number greatly declines after evaluating their English language abilities. Thus, they can be very skilled in their area of expertise, but if they do not know English they are

competing on unequal conditions, and it is very probable that they are excluded'. (See Appendix 1, RQ1, HRM1, English translation)

HRM 2 pointed out that English was not only an influential aspect to recruitment, but also to get a promotion, or to travel to other countries for training. He stated that all employees were constantly invited to take the language test known as TOEIC to renew their knowledge and skills. The following comment was made by the manager:

'The training and professional development department continuously invites employees to participate in different training activities, and one of this consists of either preparing for taking the TOEIC test or only taking it for a first time or a second in case the certificate has expired'. (Appendix 1, RQ2, HRM2 English translation)

HRM 2 revealed that it was necessary to encourage employees to be up to date on English because the organization was not located in an English speaking country; thus they needed to be ready to use the language at any moment and in different situations.

As stated earlier, both managers revealed that English was a job entry requirement, and candidates had to include an English certificate in their résumé indicating their language proficiency, which apparently was obvious data, as both managers represented a multinational company, but it was necessary that managers revealed it to the researcher as part of objective evidence for the study. This led to investigate more accurate information which showed what aspects of the language learners needed to know, in which situations they would use the language, and how they would use it. This information would reveal what the learners have to know and have to do in order to function effectively in the target situation (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987).

6.4.1.4 Situations in which English is used

Both managers revealed that situations where English was mainly used were moments in which employees had to read information about different areas of the company. They also said that the information could be written in different formats as well, and with different purposes; as the managers stated:

'In the large majority of cases English is used to read different types of text for different purposes, for example a press release of the company, instructions to

follow a new process, emails sent by colleagues from other countries’. (See Appendix 1, RQ3, HRM1-I, English translation)

‘The situations in which we use English most frequently are when we read operating manuals, emails, information shared in forums or chats, and short texts the company publishes in a magazine’. (See Appendix 1, RQ3, HRM2-I, English translation)

The managers also mentioned that besides the reading of different documents employees usually interacted in a written form through emails, chats or forums. One of them said that occasionally they had to participate in video conferences held by workers located in other companies mainly from the United States. Both commented that very rarely people from other countries like India or the United States visited their companies to exchange experiences; as stated below:

‘Very infrequently we are visited by coworkers from other companies located in other countries to exchange experiences of what we call successful practices’. (Appendix 1, RQ3, HRM2-II, English translation)

‘Occasionally, some of us have to participate in video conferences led by personnel from the United States. In rare cases, colleagues from abroad come to visit the company and we have to solve issues or requests or simply help them with anything they need’. (Appendix 1, RQ3, HRM1-II, English translation)

One of the managers pointed out that depending on the language proficiency and the position of the employees in the company they could sometimes travel to other English speaking countries for training or to participate in working teams where they exchanged experiences, presented and discussed relevant information, analysed and solved different issues; as stated below:

‘Depending on their English abilities some employees are appointed to go to other countries to receive training in specific fields or in the implementation of new procedures, systems or techniques; also to take part in inter-institutional working groups to improve current practices’. (Appendix 1, RQ4, HRM1, English translation)

The interviewees clearly defined that, even when written communication was predominant, employees sometimes needed to carry out talks with coworkers from other nations, and emphatically stressed that their command of the language could become a key factor of improvement in their professional lives.

Chapter four states that examples of studies which investigate the communicative needs learners have regarding the target working environment have shown the relevance TSA has over language teaching and learning. Such as Srabua (2007) who reported the English language knowledge and skills the hotel public relations officers needed for doing their work in Thailand. The findings of the investigations provided a list of suggestions for tourism schools in Thailand about the specific aspects of English to be integrated into their language syllabi, which could warrant higher quality language study programs. Also Gass (2012) investigated the language needs Thai nurses had to effectively communicate in English with native speaker tourists who required to go into hospital. The TSA allow the researcher to find out what the skills most needed for the nurses' job were, the type of information they usually deal with, as well as the situations where the language was used.

6.4.1.5 How the language is used

The situations described above also revealed the language ability most frequently used, the most common channels in which the language goes through and the types of texts or discourse employed. Clearly, reading is the language ability employees use most often, followed by writing, then listening and speaking. Electronic means are undoubtedly the most common channels of communication and the types of texts most frequently read are technical documents related to information of different departments of the company. HRM 1 highlighted that graduates with good marks were always well appreciated, but even average graduates ones with a very good command of English were in many cases hired first, as the extract below illustrates:

‘I would like to remark something: a very good command of English can be an *opening door to the international labour market for graduate learners with average marks; the company accepts the responsibility to train them*’. (Appendix 1, RQ1, HRM2, English translation)

The quotation above suggests that this company has a strong preference for those employees who have a very good level of English. This seems logical as most global companies have English as their lingua franca; therefore the language they

communicate through is English. Moreover, the company takes the responsibility of training their employees, most of the times the language used to conduct training in English.

As revealed by the data provided by the employers Target Situational Analysis (TSA) also helps the researcher find information about the language ability most frequently used within the workplace, as well as the most common channels in which it goes through. This is also shown in the study of Srabua (2007) mentioned above; the information gathered revealed that writing and speaking skills were those most used by the Thai officers, with writing being the most highly used, since officers needed to write a variety of accurate and appropriate namely, business letters, e-mail messages, and press releases.

TSA becomes paramount especially if a researcher wants to find out what English business learners need to know in order to be a competent language user within a multinational working environment; 'Because multinationals establish outsourcing centres in several countries as part of their global risk management' (Graddol, 2006, p. 36), and Mexico is not the exception.

The information about the needs in the context of the workplace shown above was shared with the language teachers in the form of a table (see appendix 12). The information was sorted into the following: English is a hiring requirement, working situations in which English is used, and people employees use English with, how the language is used. The information was a point of reference for the teachers concerning the knowledge and skills learners need to know to successfully perform in the target situation.

6.5 Micro-level analysis

6.5.1 Learners' language knowledge and skills

To find out about learners' strengths and weaknesses in language knowledge is commonly frequent in NA. For this, the sources of information are students themselves. This is usually carried out by means of language tests. Chapter three gives an account of different studies which used language tests to identify learners' language lacks. In all three cases, the test together with other research activities helped to make decisions about instruction, for example the learning outcomes, the content, and teaching

methodology. Wozniak (2010) assessed the language needs of French mountain guides at the French Skiing and Mountaineering School. The study included a foreign language exam, a questionnaire survey, and an unstructured interview. The findings helped the institution assess the relationship between ‘language needs and language teaching, more particularly as only domain experts’ (p. 250). Paltridge (1992) also contributes to the idea of administering the English for Academic Purposes placement test in order to identify language learners’ performance. In the same line, Baltra (1977) periodically assessed a group of Chilean learner teacher trainees by means of different procedures, such as ‘(...) mechanical presented version of spoken language, [as well as] (...) visuals; written foreign language; written mother tongue (...) spoken foreign language’ (p. 50-51).

As the main purpose of this analysis is to determine students’ performance in terms of a defined behavioural domain, then the best method is a criterion-referenced approach to assessment, since it will reveal the extent to which learners have achieved their communicative purposes (Brindley, 1989 in Paltridge, 1992). Criterion-referenced approach to assessment ‘(...) is used to identify an individual’s status with respect to a previously established standard of performance (...)’ (Dziuban and Vickery, 1973, p. 483).

This section focuses on the analysis the researcher did of the results of a language test, with the intent to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the sample group in regards to language knowledge and skills. What Hutchinson and Waters (1987) have called learners’ lacks, or Allwright and Allwright (1977) refer as deficiency analysis. The language test used was a practice preliminary test of business English (BEC).

The complete and official BEC Preliminary consists of four tests: reading, writing, listening, and speaking (as it is known the test is only administered by official centers). What the faculty of Economics did was to administer a practice test, which contained only three sections reading, writing, and listening.

For the purpose of this research the practice test was administered to this group totals 90 marks. Each skill (reading, writing, and listening) is weighted 30 marks. Passing grades are Pass with Merit and Pass. The minimum successful performance in order to achieve a Pass corresponds to about 65% of the total marks. Narrow Fail and Fail are failing grades. Table 7.2 shows the performance achieved on the BEC Preliminary practice test.

Table 6.2: Grades achieved by learners in the BEC Preliminary practice test (N=127)

Grade	Frequency	Percent
Pass with Merit	1	.7
Pass	21	16.6
Narrow Fail	48	37.8
Fail	57	44.9

Even though table 6.1 above reveals the position learners are in before an international test such as BEC, this research's real interest is only to find out what their strengths and weaknesses are in regards to English language knowledge and skills. Figure 6.1 shows the learners' performance on each of the three tests: reading, writing and listening.

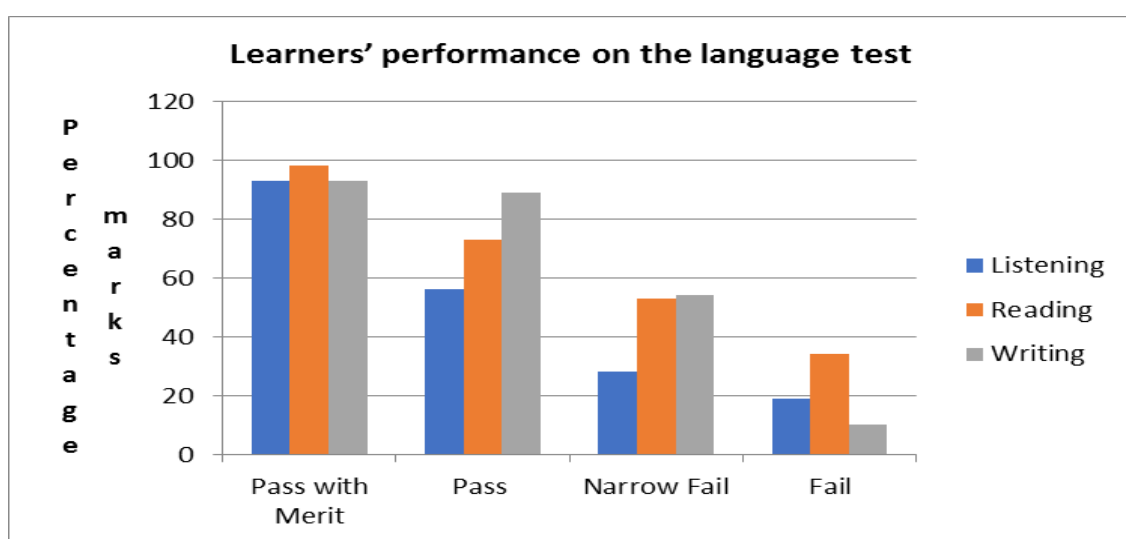


Figure 6.1: Learners' performance on the language test (N=127).

Figure 6.1 reveals that students' strongest area is writing, followed by reading, while their weakest area is listening. Data shows those areas in which learners need to make progress on. The value of the results of the language test is that it objectively reveals areas of opportunity which can be incorporated into the language syllabus.

The following section shows a detailed analysis of the listening, reading and writing tests, of the BEC. The data was presented to the language teachers for them to make decisions about the objectives, teaching content and activities they should integrate into their syllabuses.

6.5.1.1 Results of the listening test

The listening test consists of four parts with 30 questions, which take the form of two multiple choice tasks and two note completion tasks. The texts are audio-recordings based on a variety of sources including interviews, telephone calls, face-to-face

conversations and documentary features. They are all business-related, and are selected to test a wide range of listening skills and strategies.

As stated before, the listening test was the test where learners obtained the poorest results. Figure 6.2 below shows the results of the test. The secondary horizontal axis shows the students, whose name has been omitted, but a number has been given instead. The percentage is shown in the primary vertical axis; marks on the secondary vertical axis. The results are presented in three groups: A, students who passed, B, who narrowly failed, and C, students who failed. One student, who passed with merit, was omitted from the analysis.

The results of the other two tests, reading and writing, are presented later in the same manner as in figure 6.3 and 6.4 below.

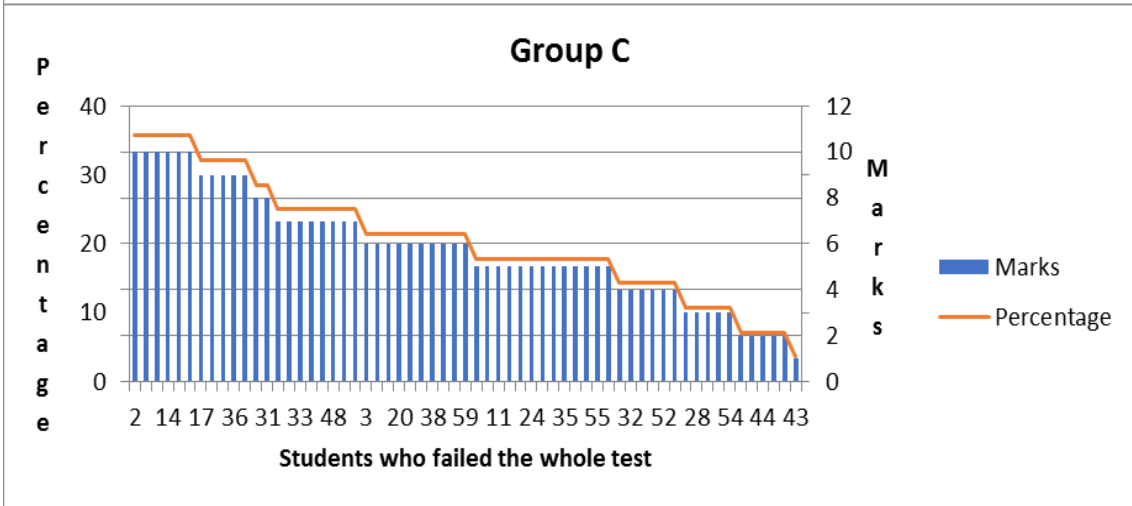
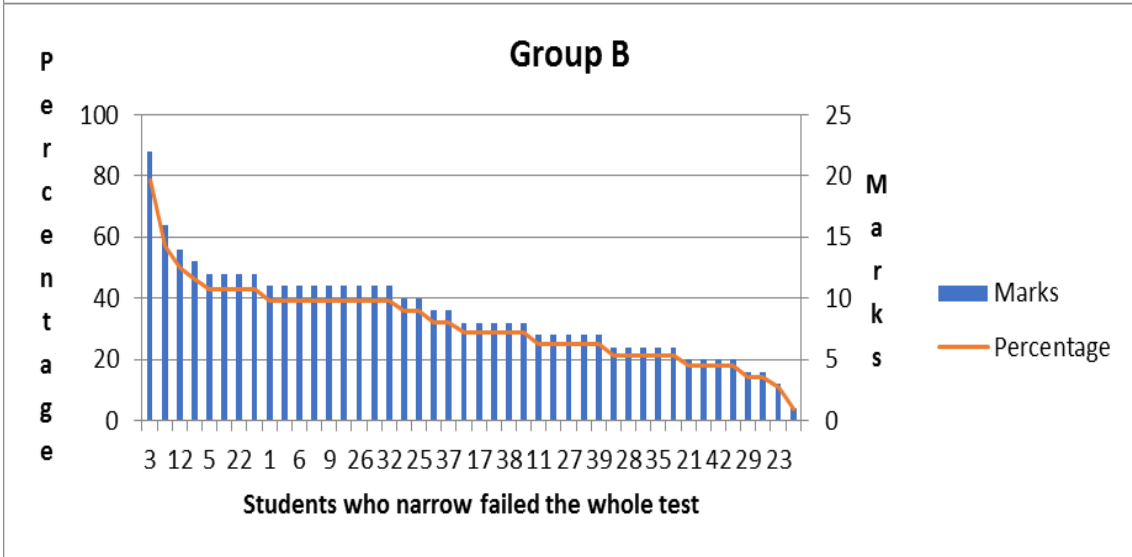
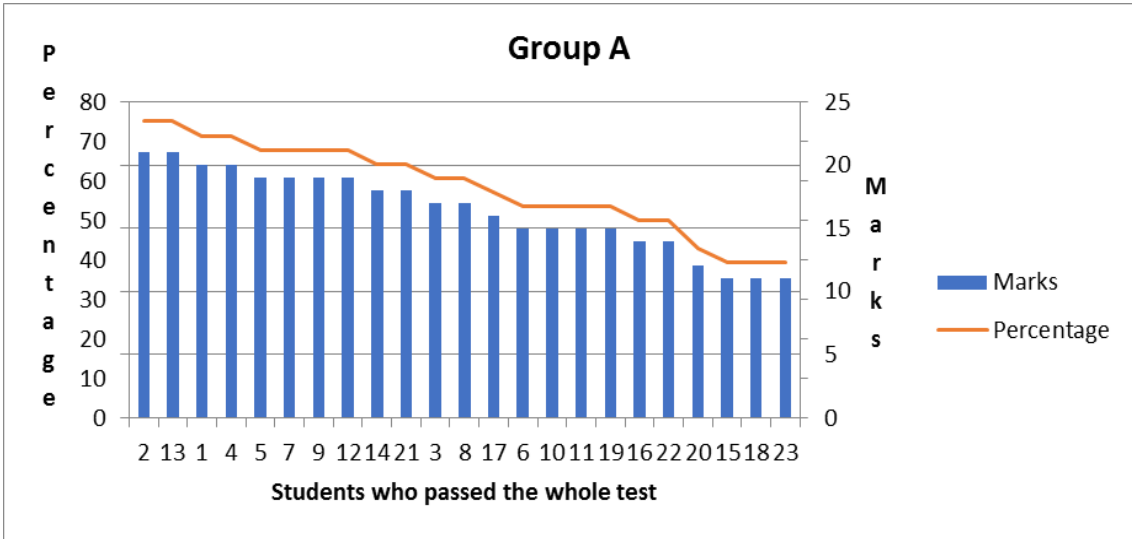


Figure 6.2 Results of the listening test of groups A, B and C.

Group A's figure, students who passed the whole test, shows that 18 students failed the listening test, because the minimum successful performance in order to achieve a passing mark corresponds to 65%. More than half of the students failed. From group B,

students who narrow failed, only one student passed. The rest of them, 43, failed, whereas all students from group C, 61, all failed.

The fact that 121 students failed the listening test means that their understanding of spoken English is limited, or in some cases extremely limited. More specifically, their ability to listen for specific information and for gist is low or really low.

An analysis of each of the parts of the listening test provides a clearer idea of what aspects students need to study or develop more. Appendix 13 presents the description of what students are being tested on throughout the four parts of the test. This information provides a clear idea of the students' performance in the test.

Figure 6.3 below shows the results of the test in each of its parts, 1, 2, 3 and 4. The figure shows how the performance of the students declines in part 2 and 3; more evidently in 2.

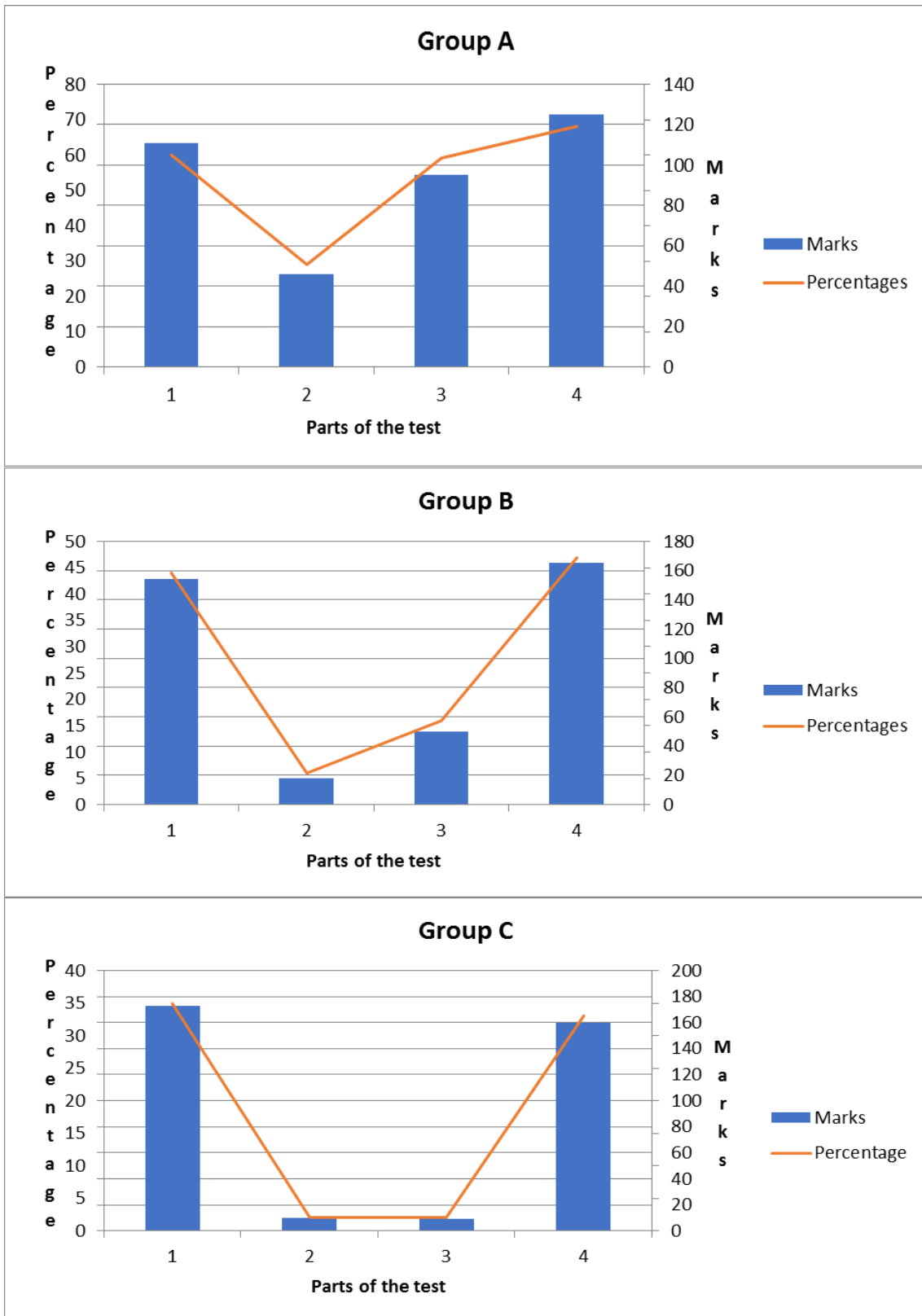


Figure 6.3 Results of the listening test by parts

It is remarkable that in the three groups, A, B and C, parts two and three of the test are the ones where the poorest results were obtained. Group A, the group of students who

passed the test, got 29% in part 2 and 59% in 3, group B obtained 6% and 16%, whereas group C got 2% and 2%.

A special feature of parts 2 and 3, is that students have to listen and to fill in gaps, which implies that filling gaps, taking notes or to write while listening is taking place is even more complicated for them than to listen and chose the options given, which is the case of part 1 and 4. A serious shortcoming is related to part 2, as in this section students of the three groups scored low, what this means is that these students have to regularly practice with numbers and with names that are spelled out. Teachers should collect as much listening material as possible that is suitably paced and of appropriate length. A bank of authentic material will provide practice for students, or to make use of specially designed materials for their level.

6.5.1.2 Results of the reading test

The reading test consists of seven parts with 45 questions, which take the form of two multiple matching tasks, four multiple choice tasks, and a form-filling or note completion task. The texts are all business-related and are selected to test a wide range of reading skills and strategies.

The reading test was the second test with the lowest results. Figure 6.4 below shows the results of the test.

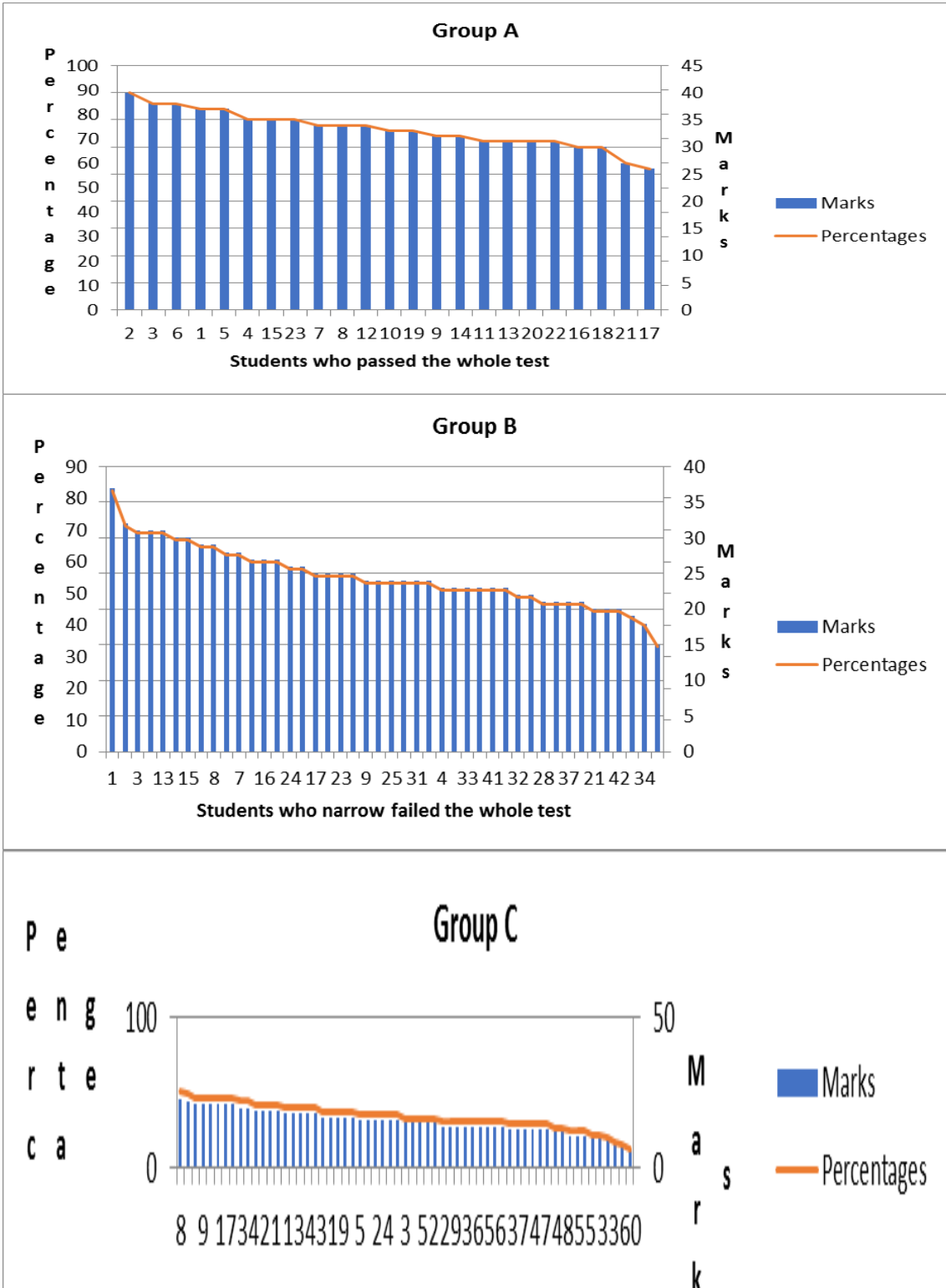


Figure 6.4 Results of the reading test of groups A, B and C.

Group A's figure, students who passed the test, shows that 2 students failed the reading test, as they scored below 65% of the total marks. From group B, students who narrowly failed the test, shows that 2 students failed the reading test, as they scored below 65% of the total marks.

failed, 7 students got a passing mark and 37 got a mark below 65%. All students from group C, 62, failed.

101 students failed the reading test; this shows a rather low ability to understand short real –world messages, grammar, and text structure, to read for details, to interpret visual information, to locate detailed factual information, to read for gist and specific information. Appendix 14 presents the description of what students are being tested on throughout the seven parts of the test.

Figure 6.5 below shows the results of the test in each of its parts, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. The figure shows that the behavior of the results in the seven parts is quite similar in the three groups. They show a declining performance from part 1 to part 2, then the numbers start to rise to reach the highest point in part 6, and then the marks decline again in part 7.



Figure 6.5 Results of the reading test by parts

As stated before, the behavior of the results in the reading test is similar in the three groups of students. This may imply that the reading areas where students have less problem with are on the one hand their grammatical accuracy, and on the other their understanding of text structure. They also have fewer problems with understanding short real-world notices, and messages. However, they might find problems identifying and interpreting meaning.

Transferring information to complete a form accurately, as well as reading for gist and specific information is not a major weakness group A has, but in those two parts both group B and C got a percentage below a passing grade. The part where all students performed poorly was 2. They have problems with detailed comprehension, with matching questions with an appropriate part of the text, and with the use of skimming and scanning skills.

Based on the evidence provided by the results, one might infer that if students study the content and develop the skills provided in appendix 14, they could improve their performance on the reading test. For instance, the teacher could include into their syllabuses a wide range of notices and short texts taken from business settings as well as text types that are divided into lists, headings or categories. They could also expose students to real-world tasks that require interpretation of what different parts of a text mean, and of graphic data using authentic sources. Teachers could also provide practice in improving reading speed and the parts of a text. Students should also practise with grammatical and structural aspects of the language, how to extract relevant information from texts, how to fill forms, and how to complete notes.

6.5.1.3 Results of the writing test

For the writing section learners are asked to produce two pieces of writing of 30 to 40 words, and 60 to 80 words respectively. For part 1, assessment is based on achievement of task, which consists of writing a note, message, memo or email. For part 2, learners are asked to write a piece of business correspondence to someone outside the company; assessment is based on achievement of task, range of accuracy of vocabulary and grammatical structures, organization, content and appropriateness of register and format. Both parts 1 and 2 are weighted 30 marks, 10 marks for the first and 20 for the second.

The writing test was the test where students got the best marks. Figure 6.6 below shows the results of the three groups.

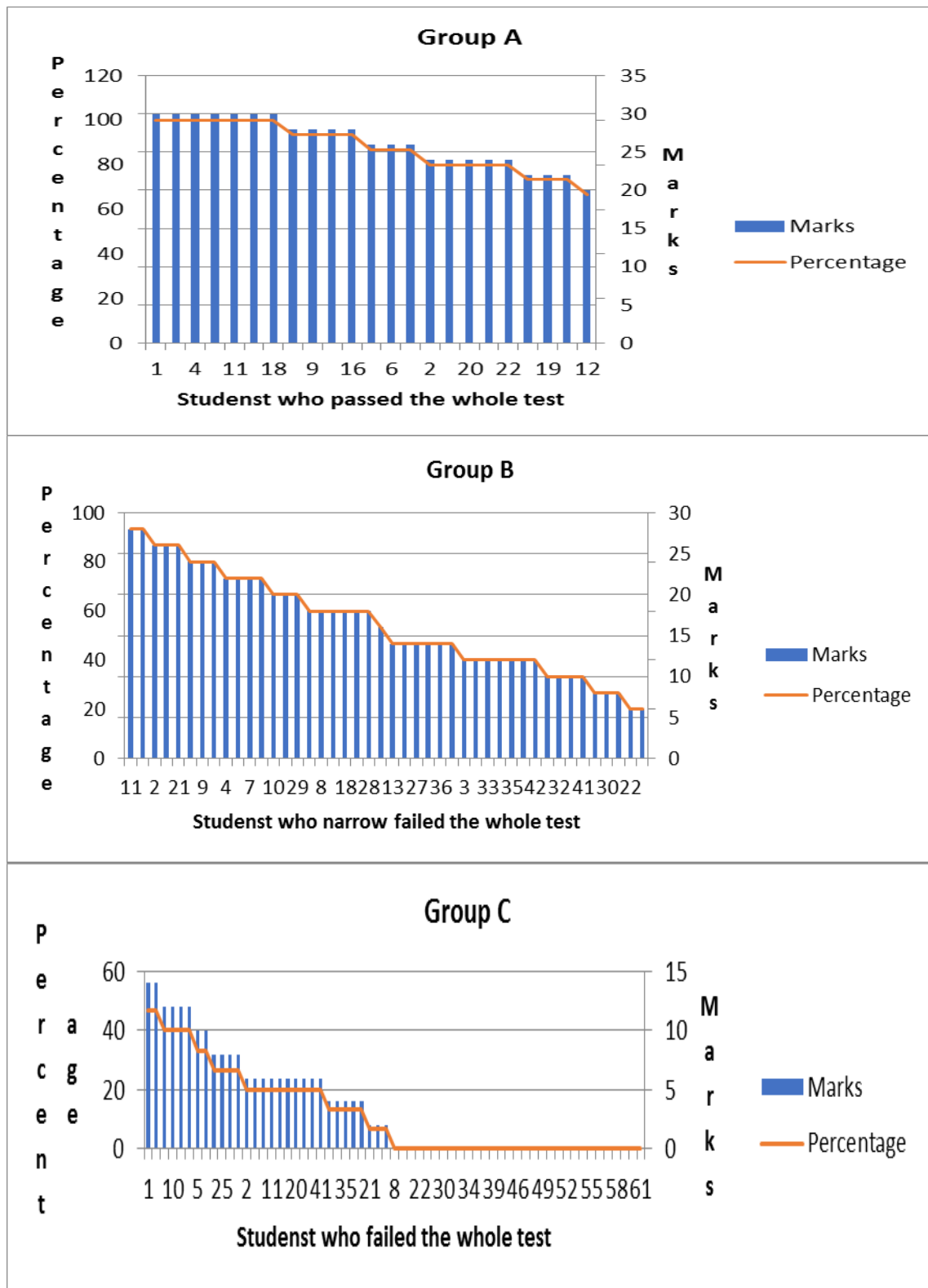


Figure 6.6 Results of the writing test of groups A, B and C.

None of the group A's students failed the writing test, all of them got a mark above the 65%. 15 of the students of the group who narrowly failed the test, group B, also passed and 29 scored below the 65% required to pass, which means that they produced irrelevant texts that communicate simple ideas, using basic vocabulary and simple grammatical forms. Sometimes their errors hinder meaning. All of the students of group C failed the test. A remarkable situation with this group is that 32 of them did not complete the writing test, therefore their mark was zero.

A detailed analysis of the two parts of the test provided clearer information about the students' performance on the written test. Appendix 15 shows what type of texts students are requested to produce.

Figure 6.7 below shows the results of the test in each of its two parts. The figure shows the parts of the test where students produced relevant written texts that communicate ideas properly. In addition, it also shows the parts of the test where students produced irrelevant tasks with errors that obstruct meaning.

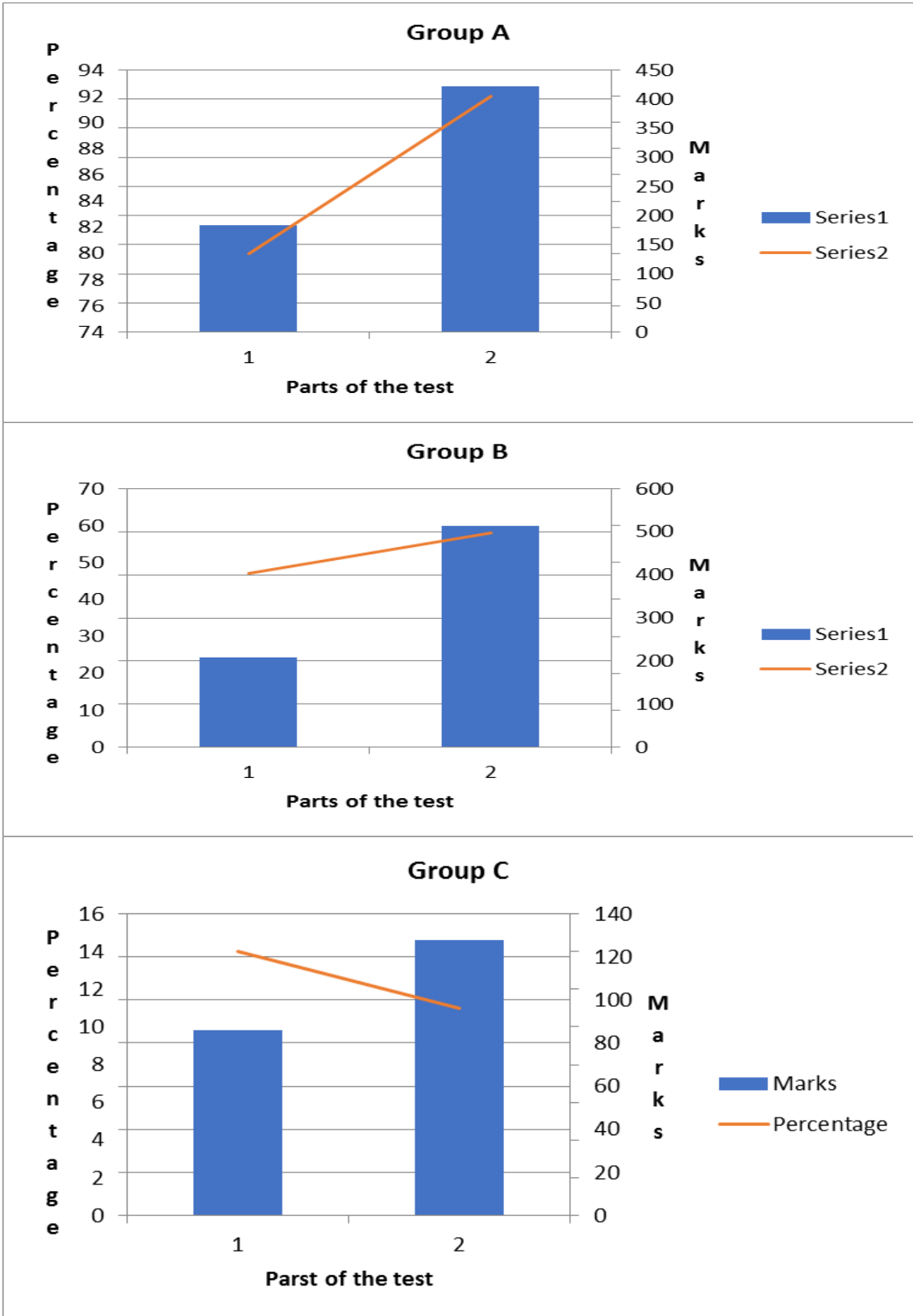


Figure 6.7 Results of the writing test by parts

All students of group A and some who narrow failed, produced well organised, coherent and relevant texts, which communicative task in generally suitable ways, using grammar and vocabulary appropriately.

Students of group B produced irrelevant and misinterpreted written tasks. They communicated their ideas in a very simple way using simple grammatical forms with a good degree of control. Although errors were noticeable, meaning could still be determined.

Some students of group C were able to produce something; however their texts did not inform the target reader properly, they used simple grammatical forms with some degree of control, and sometimes their errors obstructed meaning. They used basic vocabulary reasonably appropriately, but they misinterpreted the task.

To help students improve on the writing test, teachers could expose them to ask them to write a variety of authentic business correspondence. Therefore they can understand how to structure their own text, parts of the text and the language to use.

6.6 Learners' beliefs

Chapter three reports that research on language teaching and learning has discovered that learners' believe about their own learning could become an influential factor for success or failure during learning; this means that their beliefs might influence their performance (Peackon, 1999). In addition, Mori (1999, p. 378) also state that 'what students consider to be an effective strategy significantly influences their use of strategies'. (Horwitz , 1999, p. 557) says that 'Understanding learner beliefs about language learning is essential to understand learner strategies and planning appropriate language instruction'. Different studies described in chapter three (Peackon, 1999; Ariogul et al., 2009; Trinder, 2013) reveal how language learning is affected by learners' beliefs.

Different study cases presented in chapter three also demonstrate that the implementation of learning strategies as a method of helping language learners enhance their learning efficiency (Kouraogo, 1993; Yang, 1999; Yilmaz, 2010; Ungureanu and Georgescu, 2012). Bruen (2001) found out that the more proficient students use more language learning strategies in a more structured and purposeful manner, and apply them to a wider range of situations and tasks; this happened during a study the researcher conducted with 100 second year students of German.

Considering that study strategy selection and beliefs affect the process of language learning, it seemed appropriate to take them into consideration when making school based decisions on curriculum design. Therefore a questionnaire of strategy and beliefs was administered to the learners to find out what they believed about their own learning and the sort of learning strategies they prefer.

6.6.1 Questionnaire of beliefs

The researcher administered a questionnaire (see appendix 2) to the students who answered the language test. The questionnaire was written in Spanish; it contained 52 items and was divided into three sections: beliefs about language learning, language learning needs, and preferred ways of learning. It contained closed-ended items in the form of a Likert scale.

Sections one and three had six responses which go from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Section two had six responses, too; but in this case the options went from not at all to very much. A number from 1 to 6 to each response option for scoring purposes was assigned, where 1 was strongly disagree and 6 was strongly agree, in sections one and three; whereas for section two, 1 meant not at all and 6 meant very much.

The sections below show the results of the questionnaire. In order to provide a detailed description, the results were compiled in tables and organised in three sections. Each table was divided in three groups, A, B, C, the same groups used to show the results of the language test earlier, Pass, Narrow Fail, and Fail. The numbers in the boxes are expressed as a percentage of the total. Table 6.2 below shows the results of section one related to the respondents' personal beliefs about the language learning, and their motivations to learn.

Section one																		
Items	Pass (A)						Narrow fail (B)						Fail (C)					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. English is a difficult language to be learned.	14	50	7	0	7	21	24	49	14	8	0	3	9	33	24	15	18	2
2. Learning English is important to me because I want to study in other countries.	0	0	0	14	21	64	0	0	0	5	22	73	0	0	2	7	22	69
3. I feel able to take up subjects taught through English.	0	0	7	7	29	57	3	3	19	11	38	27	5	18	18	27	15	15
4. My knowledge of English is a decisive factor for my university studies.	0	7	0	0	7	86	0	0	0	0	11	89	0	4	0	2	24	69
5. My knowledge of English is a decisive factor for my professional life.	0	0	0	0	7	93	0	0	0	3	14	84	0	0	0	0	18	80
6. I am confident about my ability to learn English successfully.	0	0	0	0	21	79	0	0	3	0	24	73	0	0	0	7	40	53
7. I have to pass an international exam if I want to graduate.	0	0	0	7	7	86	0	0	0	0	22	78	0	0	0	5	18	76
8. I like the atmosphere of my English classes.	7	0	7	0	50	36	0	0	5	11	46	38	0	2	9	16	33	40
9. My parents encourage me to study English and other foreign languages.	0	0	14	7	7	71	0	3	3	11	22	62	2	9	4	9	36	40
10. I am working hard to learn English.	0	7	0	21	50	21	0	0	3	16	51	30	0	4	7	22	33	35
11. My language success depends on what I do inside the classroom.	50	36	14	0	0	0	22	32	22	16	8	0	20	24	27	16	9	4
12. My language success depends on what I do outside the classroom.	36	29	7	7	14	7	22	27	27	11	11	0	13	25	22	20	9	7
13. My language success only depends on what only the teacher does in the classroom.	57	29	14	0	0	0	38	30	16	8	3	0	31	29	20	15	2	2
14. Business related subjects should be taught in English.	0	7	0	7	43	43	0	3	16	19	38	22	2	11	18	33	25	11
15. I study English only to have good marks.	29	43	7	7	14	0	43	19	16	11	8	3	27	29	18	11	11	4
16. English must be a compulsory subject.	0	7	14	7	29	43	3	5	3	19	35	35	0	9	11	5	35	40
17. Some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages.	0	0	14	14	36	36	0	3	8	11	43	32	4	5	9	18	31	29
18. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.	21	36	21	7	0	0	43	24	19	3	5	3	45	22	5	13	7	5
19. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.	14	0	0	0	21	57	5	3	5	0	30	51	2	4	2	7	11	65

Table 6.3 learners' beliefs about the language learning process, and their motivations to learn.

The fact that more than half of the students of the pass group, and the narrow fail group, and almost half of the students from the fail group strongly disagreed or disagreed that English is not a difficult language to be learnt, may be taken as an indication of successful language learning, but not all of them performed well in the language test. This means that students who believe that studying a foreign language is too easy, will not necessarily have a good performance in a language test. Thus, feeling overconfident does not produce good results.

One aspect that highlights the answers of the questionnaire is motivation. Students showed they had different types of motivation. This is a positive factor for the development of the language lessons because learners with sufficient motivation can achieve a working knowledge of an L2, regardless of their language aptitude or other cognitive characteristic (Dörnyei, 2001). For example, for the great majority of the students of the three groups strongly agreed or agreed that English language was a vehicle that could help them achieve both personal and professional goals. The possibility of studying abroad, using English during their university studies, and considering the option of getting a good job opportunity are stimulating learning elements. Additionally, a great majority of participants of the three groups agreed that their parents have encouraged them to study English, which could be an additional favorable learning stimulation. Moreover, the fact that 70% of the students in each group agreed that English ought to be a compulsory subject taught throughout their undergraduate degree and not only during their first four semesters shows that learners are motivated to learn. A big plus for learning English is that students sense the good atmosphere prevailing in the language class, as well as the fact that they want to study not only because they want to have a good mark, but also because they want to learn.

Students also showed that they were aware of the fact that the learning process implies they have to work both inside and outside the classroom, and that they do not have to depend only on what the teachers tell them to do.

The questionnaire results suggest that there were some contradicting beliefs. For instance, data shows that above 90% of the students feel confident and motivated to learn; but only some of them agreed to follow courses of content area taught in English, which means that some of those learners who expressed feeling confident about their ability to learn English successfully did not feel entirely so.

One interpretation of this is that learners trust their capacity to learn English, even though they have not passed the exam. This is related to what Mori (1999) revealed in the study by claiming that ‘(...) students who generally believe that the ability to learn is innately fixed tend to attain lower proficiency in a foreign language’ (p. 399). Another fact about it is that it seems to be necessary to gather more data which help to make a more accurate interpretation, as there might be other reasons that explain why learners did not pass the language test, even when they believe English is not difficult to learn, and when they feel confident about their ability to learn it. Table 6.3 below shows the results of section two related to the students’ personal opinions about their language learning needs.

Section one																		
Items	Pass (A)						Narrow fail (B)						Fail (C)					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. Write English more.	7	14	7	29	21	21	0	3	16	38	27	14	2	4	5	31	36	20
21. Speak English more.	7	7	7	21	29	29	3	3	8	19	32	35	0	4	2	15	36	44
22. Read information about Economics.	0	7	14	7	57	14	0	3	8	22	43	24	0	4	7	22	29	38
23. Learn more vocabulary.	0	14	21	7	29	29	0	3	8	38	38	14	0	5	4	15	38	38
24. Understand foreign people when they speak to me.	14	14	21	21	7	21	6	6	14	19	33	22	4	0	7	20	22	47
25. Attend international conferences.	0	0	21	7	29	43	0	0	5	30	49	16	2	4	7	22	36	29
26. Learn grammar.	7	14	21	14	21	21	0	8	11	19	43	19	0	2	7	24	38	29
27. Pronounce better	14	14	14	21	14	21	5	8	8	22	35	22	2	7	2	18	27	42

Table 6.4 students’ personal opinions about their language learning needs.

Section two of the questionnaire shows the opinions of the learners about their own language learning needs. The information revealed that students of the three groups agreed in some items. In items 22 and 25, students of the three groups were inclined to agree about the same needs regarding their need of reading information about the field of Economics in English, and attending international conferences.

They also have different beliefs. For instance, 69% of students of the C group agreed they needed to pronounce better while only 57% of group the B and 31% of the A group believed the same. Another example is item 24, 69% of students of group C agreed they needed to understand foreign people when they speak. 55% of the B group and only 29% of the A group believed the same. A third example about the differences is item 26. 67% of students of the C group agreed they believed they needed to learn grammar, while 42% of the A group expressed the same feeling, students of the B group are closer to what the C group believed. One more example about the discrepancies in the data is in item 21, 80% of the students of the C group agreed that they needed to speak English more, 70% of the students of group of the B and 58% of the A group believed the same. Items 20 and 23 show beliefs similar to these described before. Table 6.4 below shows the results of section three related to the students' personal beliefs about their preferred ways of learning English.

Section three																		
Items	Pass (A)						Narrow fail (B)						Fail (C)					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. Following a textbook.	7	7	7	7	57	14	5	5	19	24	32	14	2	5	15	31	36	9
29. Listening to others using English in class.	0	0	7	29	43	14	5	8	19	27	35	3	2	4	15	35	31	15
30. Listening to the teacher using English in class.	0	7	0	21	50	21	0	3	8	22	46	22	0	2	11	29	33	25
31. Listening to audio-recordings.	0	0	0	29	36	36	3	3	8	22	30	32	0	5	4	15	40	36
32. The teacher giving oral/written feedback.	0	7	0	0	57	36	0	0	0	3	59	38	0	0	5	7	36	51
33. Giving oral presentations.	0	7	0	7	29	57	0	0	3	19	35	43	0	2	7	27	35	29
34. Role-playing.	0	0	7	7	29	57	0	3	0	14	41	43	0	0	4	16	38	42
35. Doing project work.	0	7	14	14	21	43	0	3	0	22	56	19	0	2	11	33	29	22
36. Doing exams.	7	7	14	14	36	21	0	0	11	35	41	14	0	5	15	33	35	13
37. Taking part in language games.	0	7	14	21	21	36	0	3	3	24	51	19	0	2	9	7	35	44
38. Memorizing dialogues, expressions or passages.	14	7	14	29	36	0	3	5	11	30	32	16	4	4	13	38	25	16
39. Doing written assignments (short passages, reports, essays).	0	7	7	21	29	36	0	0	5	35	32	24	0	0	11	31	35	24
40. Reading silently in class for information.	0	14	7	21	50	7	3	8	5	27	30	27	4	9	18	27	27	15
41. Reading aloud in class.	0	0	7	29	36	29	3	8	5	19	46	19	0	5	11	29	35	18
42. Reading about a specific field.	0	0	7	7	21	64	0	0	0	8	46	46	0	0	5	13	44	36
43. Studying grammar rules.	0	7	0	14	29	50	0	0	3	19	49	30	0	0	5	24	45	25
44. Practicing pronunciation.	0	7	0	14	36	43	0	0	3	3	46	46	0	2	0	13	35	49
45. Using a computer.	7	0	0	14	43	29	0	3	5	22	43	27	2	2	13	16	40	25
46. Using dictionaries.	7	7	14	14	50	7	0	5	8	27	38	22	4	0	4	25	38	29
47. Having mistakes corrected.	0	7	0	14	29	50	0	0	0	14	43	43	0	0	7	11	31	51

48. Learning lists of vocabulary.	0	7	0	21	50	21	5	0	3	19	32	38	0	2	11	16	31	40
49. Working with the whole class.	0	0	21	29	43	7	3	5	14	11	46	19	0	5	7	31	35	22
50. Working in small groups.	0	0	14	29	43	14	3	5	11	30	35	16	0	4	15	33	31	18
51. Working in pairs.	0	0	21	29	29	21	3	3	11	19	43	22	0	4	11	27	35	22
52. Working individually.	0	0	14	14	43	29	0	3	3	22	35	38	2	4	7	26	35	26

Table 6.5 students' personal beliefs about their preferred ways of learning English.

Concerning their preferred ways of learning, students of the three groups revealed that they disagreed about their language preferences, but they also agreed upon some points.

Items in which students have a similar percentage of agreement, which means that they slightly agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed were those items related to listening to the teacher using English in class, item 30. A great majority of the students from the three groups agreed upon that. One similar preference is item 32, a great number of students preferred the teacher to give them oral or written feedback.

Another point of agreement is related to exams, item 36. In this item the preferences are very similar between group A and B, however fewer students of group C agreed with that statement. More than half of the students like to do written assignments, although students of group A have a preference in this matter over the other two groups.

Reading about a specific field and studying grammar rules are two other language learning strategies in which the three groups have similar preferences. In both statements, items 42 and 43, students of group C are slightly less in agreement with the other two groups.

Using a computer to learn, error correction, learning lists of vocabulary, working in small groups and individually are five more language learning strategies in which the three groups have similar inclinations.

Using dictionaries, working with the whole class and working in pairs have very similar levels of agreement among the three groups. Even though there are differences among them, they do not differ drastically.

There are other items in which learners of two groups had similar preferences, but the students of the other group did not. For instance, item 28, following a text book. In this point less than half of the students of group B and C agreed or slightly agreed, and 71% of the students of group A agreed. However, 24% of the students of group B, and 31% of group C slightly agreed, which means that more students agreed than disagreed with the idea of studying English with a course book.

Another example is item 31, listening to audio-recordings; 72% of learners of group A, and 76% of group C preferred to use audio-recordings to study English, while 62% of the students of group B did.

Concerning the use of role-plays as a language learning strategy, 86% of students who passed, and 81% of students who failed liked the idea of doing role-play, whilst 74% of students who narrow failed did not.

Reading silently and reading aloud in class are two other learning strategies in which students of two groups, A and B, have similar preferences over students of another group, C.

Items in which students of the three groups have different percentages of agreement are item 29. 57% of students who passed, 38% of students who narrow failed, 46% of students who failed agreed to listen to other students using English in the class. Over half of the students agreed to give oral presentations, but the percentages of agreement vary among them. It ranges from 86% of group A to 64% of C.

Below 50% of the students of the three groups agreed with the idea that memorization is a good language learning strategy. However, their level of agreement differs among them; only 36% of students who passed agreed, while 48% of the students who narrow failed and 41% of students who failed.

There was a high level of agreement among the three groups concerning the practice of pronunciation, but it differs from one group to another. 79% of students of group A agreed, 92% of B, and 84% of C.

6.7 Aspects of change in the new syllabus

Chapter three states that there is literature that supports the notion that curriculum innovations in developing countries are rarely effectively implemented, and have often

failed to achieve their objectives (O’Sullivan, 2002; Higgins and Rwanyange, 2005; Altinyelken, 2010), especially when they are designed by government institutions. The scholars suggest that in general, curriculum innovations are adequate in written text. Nevertheless, in many cases their implementation has resulted in undesirable outcomes rarely translated into classroom reality. Altinyelken (2010) suggests that one failure of policy makers considering curriculum implementation is that they do not consider the classroom realities as well as other subjective and objective realities within teachers work.

On the other hand, there is literature that suggests that in some cases curriculum implementation through AR has been successful (Nason and Whitty, 2007; Carver and Klein, 2013; Bat and Fasoli, 2013). One of the reasons for success is that those affected by planned changes have the primary responsibility for deciding on courses of critically informed action, which seem likely to lead to improvement (McTaggart, 1994).

It was stated earlier that the UEP syllabus was not derived from school experience; it was not in line with the reality of the school; as it was defined from the top what was to be taught and teachers through instruction, implemented it. Alternatively, throughout the new syllabus design process (see appendix 9) the opinions of different stakeholders were taken into account and the language teachers intervened in the decision making. This turns it into a school-based syllabus, as it shares the responsibility of designing the language syllabus of the school with teachers, who have the knowledge to point out weaknesses and shortcomings, and due to their key position are able to discover potential gaps and bringing about change or improvement. This new syllabus is more responsive than the UEP one to the needs and interests of the students it serves.

Besides that, many of the decisions about its design were based on information about students’ preferences and motivations to learn the language, converting it into a more student-centred syllabus, as it pays more attention to the learners’ needs, and devises within the teaching situation. Thus, it is more interested that students gain the language knowledge and skills they need to carry out real world tasks, by teaching the specific language skill that may be useful or necessary to do an activity or job well.

Section 6.2 above analysed the characteristics of the UEP syllabus and stated that the syllabus was a table of vocabulary, grammar and functional items, which did not clearly specify key parts such as objectives, teaching methodology or an evaluation system. It

also stated that the syllabus matched with different syllabus types. For instance, product-oriented, because its focus was on the knowledge and skills, which learners should gain as a result of instruction; type A because it was related to what should be learned; formal because it represented a primary concern with language learner's knowledge; synthetic because the different parts of language were taught independently and progressively. Finally, according to the design process, the UEP syllabus followed a “specialist” approach; as it followed a top-down design approach.

Concerning the layout for example the UEP syllabus seems to be incomplete as it did not include clear sections where basic information such as objectives, methodology and evaluation were organised.

The layout of the new syllabus on the other hand is more organised and provides adequate sections where the designer incorporates the basic parts. The elements contained in the new syllabus allow both the designer and the reader to understand and follow it in a clear and understandable way. The fact that the syllabus has a neat format easy to read and understand is important, as it is a public document available for any interested person in reading it. It should be a public document containing the basic elements adequately organised, and easy to understand by students. Thus, the new syllabus has a better format than the UEP.

Section 6.2 states that the UEP syllabus does not settle clear objectives; this gives rise to uncertainty among language teachers. On the contrary, the new syllabus sets out clear objectives for each of three terms of the teaching course. Setting clear objectives helps define a common direction where everybody has to move in. The following comment were made by teachers:

I feel that we are certain about the way we are following. The syllabus is very clear about where we should go, and the students also know what exactly they have to do, what they have to achieve, the vocabulary they are going to learn. Yes, the class has a complete different format, it is clear where we are going to, what will be doing, the type of materials are using and what we want to do with it. (Appendix 3, Q2, LT1-I, English translation)

The fact that the syllabus has clear objectives also creates trust and certainty in stakeholders, and favours accountability, which is not very popular among teachers, but it is something that everybody has to deal with, and the fact that a syllabus has clear

objectives could allow teachers and the institution to provide evidence of improvement. Clear objectives do not only favour accountability, but also change and improvement as the outcomes of the course can be evaluated based on achievement descriptors, which can show those areas where learners can improve their language learning. Another considerable difference between the EUP syllabus and the new syllabus is that the latter's objectives respond to the needs of the learners, whereas the former does not. For example, according to language teachers interviewed, the EUP syllabus was just a list of contents of grammar and vocabulary. The content of the new syllabus instead, responds more to an English for Specific Purpose approach, than to a general English syllabus approach linked with the EUP syllabus. Both syllabuses are connected to a course book, *Matters and in-Company*, but the latter is more related to business English and teachers had a teachers' pack materials, which gave them the opportunity to have access to a wide variety of activities and resources, which allow the course to develop in a more generous way. As confirmed by a teacher:

The class is not only grammar; I am improving a lot the area of business vocabulary. The grammar structures that we study are much more linked with the students' field of study. The content of the class is much more related to their area of study, and it is not so much to what it was used to be before, disassociated grammatical items. (Appendix 3, RQ2, LT1-III, English translation)

The content of the new syllabus is closely related to the description of the language content assessed in the BEC test. For instance, one of the tasks students have to do in the test is to fill in gaps after listening to a person speaking. The new syllabus language content and activities in which students have to

Listen to an extract from a radio program about a company, and complete a word building exercise with business vocabulary

The fact that both the content and the tasks incorporated in the new syllabus are related to the BEC test might eventually help to improve both the results of the test, and the students' language knowledge and skills. Other advantages of the content of the new syllabus are related to its variety. Students are exposed to a wide diversity of business related topics, which cover a wide range of language aspects to which the students are exposed to. Besides the extension of the aspects it covers, the topics and content of the

syllabus are of current interest, and deal with real-life situations. The content and the tasks are intertwined as they belong to the same topic, which helps to convey meaning effectively

The UEP syllabus does not explicitly recommend any particular methodology, but according to the interviewed teachers, they followed a presentation practice and production methodology, as their main aim was to cover the grammar and vocabulary content of the syllabus. Based on the experience of the researcher in the research field, it can be said that a common and recurring teaching methodology was the transmission of knowledge from teachers to students. This was in part due to the lack of teaching resources and materials, which did not give a lot of options for teachers to make use of other means.

Alternatively, the new syllabus follows a skill-based teaching methodology as its main purpose is to teach a collection of specific abilities in using the target language. Some of the tasks students have to do involve completing documents such as reports, questionnaires, planning, organizing information, role-play, as well as the development of learning strategies to read, to write, to listen to and to speak. Thus, even though the new syllabus does not have a statement about the methodology the course follows, it can be inferred by its content, and by the type of activities learners are required to do that the methodology the syllabus follow is skill-based, and task-based, where students learn through the completion of different types of language tasks, listing, ordering and sorting, matching comparing, problem-solving, sharing personal experiences. This change of approach improved the way things have been done in the class. The extract below is from a teacher interviewed

I used to follow closely the content of the other syllabus, but sometimes it was boring and it seemed that the aim of the class was only to cover the content. So, the change was very positive because we realised that all the knowledge we gained had a real-life application. So, this represented a main change in the class, the methodology of the class was not only centred in the content, but in what students were able to do with the language. They had to use the language to accomplish a task related to everyday situations. (Appendix 2, Q2, RESPONDENT, LT3-II)

Concerning evaluation, the UEP syllabus states that it has to be continuous. It also provides the different percentages teachers have to give to the different assessment activities such as homework, classwork and exams, but it does not provide any further details. The new syllabus does not provide great details about evaluation either. It states the percentages given for each assessment activity, but it does not give more facts. What is different about the new syllabus is that it makes reference to different types of assessment activities. The assessment activities the syllabus states agree more with the teaching methodology adopted, in other words students have to use the language to undertake certain type of tasks such as:

Designing a business blog (writing) and presenting it to the class (oral presentation) (see Appendix 9)

The new syllabus is also an ESP syllabus because it closely specifies what exactly it is that students need to know about the language, and need to do with the language in order to successfully perform in the target situation. A final characteristic of this syllabus is that it is tasked-based. It emphasizes social and problem-solving, fostering learners' needs and preferences in terms of learning interests. The tasks learners have to accomplish provide a vehicle for the presentation of appropriate target language samples to learners.

Even though the syllabus design process, collecting, analysing, and interpreting data to apply to and adjust their syllabuses was complex, it helped them to make decisions to improve their lessons.

6.8 Summary and conclusions

This chapter provides data about the experience gained by participants while getting involved in the process of improving the UEP syllabus through AR.

The UEP syllabus was defined at the University English Programme office and teachers through instruction implemented it. But is it difficult to believe that it is effectively implemented just because it was issued at the office of the Programme. The analysis of the UEP syllabus indicated that it was a syllabus composed by a table of vocabulary and grammatical items, but it lacked of clear learning objectives, and teaching methodology. It also lacked a clear statement about evaluation. The syllabus agreed with the description of different syllabus types such as Type A, formal, synthetic, product oriented.

A different approach to syllabus design would appear to depend less on policy directives and more on syllabus design and development activities which were located at the school level; considering the local knowledge and understanding of practitioners, language teachers, and students. Thus, different NAs were conducted to collect data, which helped language teachers design a syllabus based on the school needs. Data was collected in two different levels, micro, emerging from the learner, and meso-level, the broader setting of the workplace related to organizational outcomes, (companies, educational institutions, or government agencies).

The micro level showed the linguistic strengths and weaknesses of the students, those learning strategies they preferred to implement when they study English, and finally the beliefs they had about their own language learning process. The meso-level analysis revealed details about the target situation, where the learners needed to use the language, what aspects of the language they needed to use to have successful communication, the people they would use the language with, and the potential situations in which they would use the language. The analysis also showed the requirements the UC has concerning English language teaching. The results of the NAs were shown to the teachers for them to design a new syllabus.

The content of the course book was the basis for the new syllabus. Therefore, the content of the course changed from general to specific English. The objectives of the syllabus were also settled in terms of skill development, reading, writing, listening and speaking, and the learning of grammar and vocabulary were related to the field of business as well. Students were certain that they had to learn the language in order to do something with it, and the methodology they followed was process rather than product-oriented.

Chapter Seven: Analysis of the process of syllabus change

7.1 Introduction

One of the main reasons why AR is undertaken is that it helps improve the work environment of participants, both their practice and the quality of their understanding (Glassman et al., 2012; Bat and Fasoli, 2013). Evidence of curriculum improvement has been provided by Nason and Whitty (2007) who included AR as an essential component of curriculum development, entering a process of inquiry understanding, and improving their own professional practice. In the particular case of this study, the previous chapter showed that as the result of a process of reflection teachers shared their perceptions about the syllabus they were using, and expressed their opinions and concerns about the UEP syllabus. More information was collected by the researcher through the conduction of NAs; this information served as a basis for changing the UEP syllabus into a new syllabus which responded more to the needs of the students. Even though there is literature which suggests that AR has been used to improve school curriculums (McKernan, 1991), and the previous chapter has demonstrated how the UEP syllabus was enhanced by entering a process of inquiry, the syllabus design process did not follow a linear route; instead some challenges were taken on within the course of action. The data presented in this chapter analyses the syllabus improvement process, addressing research question two.

How did the process of improvement of the syllabus occur?

- How engaged were language teachers?
- How did the syllabus improve on the basis of NA?
- How did teachers become aware of new knowledge?

The chapter begins with the analysis of the participation of the teachers in the project, on the understanding that their contribution was essential to the research. Next, an analysis of the process of syllabus improvement on the basis of NA is done. Finally, an explanation of how teachers gained new knowledge is offered. The analysis is supported with insights into participants' experiences, opinions, and beliefs.

7.2 Teachers' participation in the project

The participation and interaction of teachers throughout this project relates to what Glassman et al., (2012) believe about the nature of AR, Glassman et al suggest that AR is a form of social inquiry through which members of social groups interact with one another, engage in open dialogue about their intergroup relationships, and collectively participate in a learning process to create social change within their communities.

Participants of this investigation engaged in a process of analysis and reflection leading them to make decisions and change based on local needs. This is in line with McNiff and Whitehead (2010, p. 19) who state that AR is 'a process that helps you as practitioner to develop a deep understanding of what you are doing as an insider researcher, so it has both a personal and social aim'. The initiative of this AR project did not start with the teachers but with the researcher; however they seemed to appropriate the project as their own, by way of getting involved in the analysis of the situation and openly expressing their points about it. This moment's reflection gave practitioners the possibility to express their perception about an issue, which needed to be looked at, but it had been unattended.

As a result of the evaluation of the syllabus, practitioners realised the type of syllabus they had been using, and understood that it was the product of centralised decisions, instead of the result of SBCD. Practitioners could express their opinions of a problematic situation that had been part of their working environment, which perhaps they had not been given an opportunity to openly express. The fact of involving language teachers in a process of analysis, and reflection upon the language syllabus they use to teach English, illustrates the emancipatory orientation of AR, which arises from a critical perspective that seeks to uncover the societal structures that coerce and inhibit freedom (Rearick and Feldman, 1999). As Grundy (1987, p. 18) claims that since human beings are steeped in tradition and taken-for-granted assumptions, they must generate critical theories 'about persons and society which explain how coercion and distortion operate to inhibit freedom to translate emancipatory interest into action. Consequently, the emancipatory interest of the teachers led them to improve the syllabus. Involving participants in an AR project, allowed them to pause and reflect and to review specific situations concerning their own work environment: what they do, how they do it, and why they do it the way they do it. In other words AR participants

enquired into their own lives. The following comments were made by participants concerning analysis and reflection:

‘Being involved in the project made me reflect upon the way I was working, and become aware of the fact that I could involve learners in the decision making process of the class, ’. (Appendix 5, RQ1, LT3-I, English translation)

Reflection is key for promoting actions and AR is intended to lead to actions which promote improvement of educational situations (Selener, 1997). AR approach places much greater demands on those responsible for action to be involved in the critical reflection process. Action research approaches are generally very collaborative (Sankar, Bailey and Williams, 2005). Even when the project was not an initiative of the practitioners, they had a collaborative and inclusive approach, and this was particularly evident during the most complex moments of the process; for instance, the moment when teachers had to use the information to design their syllabuses. Thus, the collaborative approach they adopted was one of the crucial points for the development of the project.

During this project practitioners engaged in dialogues about the situation of the syllabus, and this made them develop an understanding of what they were doing, and reflect upon their situation; reaching greater effectiveness through democratic participation, providing opportunities to participate in collective research on common troubles through discussion, decision, and action (Adelman, 1993). The extract below illustrates that as a result of the process of analysis and reflection practitioners made decisions to improve their existing situation:

‘I think we got involved from the very beginning. It was something that we wanted and needed to do. There were several moment of discussion that made us freely express our opinions, and also several sources of data emerging form the school which made us make decisions. Data provided by the NA, for example the need of following a course book, the results of the language test helped us to decide what we could do. By doing all this we are getting involved and taken into account ‘. (Appendix 5, RQ1, LT3-II, English translation)

This coincides with the views expressed by Meyer (2000) stating that AR’s strength lies on its focus on generating solutions to practical problems, and Winter and Munn-

Giddings (2002) who state that AR represents the study of a social situation carried out by those involved in that situation in order to improve both their practice and the quality of their understanding.

It should be pointed out that the participation of the teachers was voluntary. However, there was a genuine interest on the side of the head of the faculty, that the project be carried out. Thus, he was encouraging teachers to participate. Therefore, as the head of the faculty held a position of authority over them, this could have been understood as a sort of coercion. Nevertheless, it should be noted that, teachers never expressed any use of coercion by the head of the faculty; on the contrary they expressed their willingness to change the syllabus; therefore, their participation was voluntary, and all of them remained in the project from start to finish.

Although they took part in the project freely and voluntarily, the idea of conducting a project all by themselves under their own initiative and responsibility, without the encouragement of the head of the faculty, or the intervention of a researcher seemed to be somewhat unreal because issues such as time constraints, work load, motivation and accountability might seriously hinder practitioners to take initiative.

It seems that practitioners do not have time to think about other types of activities, which represent for them extra workload. The fact of starting a project that involves other practitioners, with different schedulers, may imply to work extra or probably outside normal working hours, which perhaps not many practitioners are able to do. It might not be easy for a language teacher to take the lead, and convince the rest of the colleagues to start a project to change things that perhaps have been done the same way for a long time. This may imply that they have to disagree with people, or even step outside their own comfort zone.

In general, practitioners expect these sorts of projects to be started at a different level of the educational system, and perhaps carried out by different people. For example, people who has the knowledge of what they are going to do, or may be people who feel confident that they know what they are doing, or simple practitioners who are willing to do it. However, the commentary of another teacher provided a point of view about the intervention of a researcher. She remarked that the intervention of an external researcher has clear advantages over internal practitioners. For instance: participants of the investigation might feel that the research is not biased; they might also believe that the

process is more reliable. A third important point is that research is systematic and all is gone into a formal and official document. The following comment was made by a teacher:

‘Concerning research sometimes it is better the intervention of a third party, as your case. The questionnaires for instance; learners noticed that they were not administered by their teachers, which I believe it allows them to express more freely; thus I believe it is necessary an external eye. Of course we, teachers, know what we are doing or what we are not doing. We improve a little bit of this, or a little bit of that. But a formal study as the one you conduct produces concrete evidence’. (Appendix 5, RQ2, LT1, English translation)

In addition to the idea that an AR project should be conducted by an external researcher, and not necessarily by a teacher, some believe that to conduct an AR project it is necessary to be trained in AR methodology; as teachers, they may feel incapable of carrying out a research project which involves knowledge and experience about research.

Halai (2011) analysed twenty AR theses written up by Pakistani MEd students, and found out that the most challenging situation for them was the fact that they needed to understand what AR was. The study revealed that the students’ perception of AR was ‘complex and messy’, and students needed to be trained in the field for them to be able to conduct AR (p. 201). Therefore, practitioners need to know AR, and to get familiarised with it before expecting them to start an AR project by themselves. Even though AR allows practitioners, and not necessarily experts to do research, it is still required that they develop certain research skills, which allow them undertake a research project; since AR projects can lead to challenges. AR project must be initiated, established and carried out before you have empirical data for your research (Simonsen, 2009). One has to prioritize, allocate the needed resources for the AR project and all this is time consuming (Crookes and Chandler, 2001), which makes it very challenging, especially for teachers whose schedules are already overloaded with teaching, who are usually not granted the time they spend doing the research (Block, 2000).

In sum, language teachers did get involved in this AR study, they went through an emancipatory process with regards to the situation of the language syllabus they were

using, and subsequently the emancipatory interest was translated into action in the form of an improved syllabus. While it is true that, teachers reflected upon the situation of the syllabus, and then modified it to make it more suitable to the teaching situation of the school; they also recognised that starting an AR project by their own would be not quite viable as certain conditions should be fulfilled before this to happen, for example to be skillful in AR activities, to have extra time to undertake a project, to be motivated to do it.

7.3 Analysis of the process of syllabus improvement on the basis of NA findings

Chapter six above presented all subjective and objective information necessary to define and validate a syllabus that satisfied the language learning requirements of students within the context of the faculty of Economics (Brown, 2006); proving that NA was a key approach in the improvement of the EUP syllabus.

A detailed description of the process of syllabus improvement on the basis of NA findings provided below, will help to understand how NA work within the context of a Mexican university.

Section 7.2 stated that the participation of the teachers in the process of syllabus change was voluntary. However, the idea of conducting a project all by themselves under their own initiative and responsibility, without the intervention of a researcher seemed to be complicated; as issues such as time constraints, work load, motivation and accountability might seriously hinder practitioners to take initiative. Therefore, NA was conducted by the researcher. He collected, analysed and sorted the information, which was presented to the teachers in the form of tables and figures, as shown in chapter six. The teachers' work consisted in analysing and understanding the data shown in the tables and figures, and in using that information to design the syllabus.

The first piece of information shared with teachers was the information provided by the two employers interviewed. The data about the target situation started to define the characteristics of the syllabus. The data mainly revealed that students needed to develop specific linguistic skills (see appendix 12). For example, students need to read, and write all sort of information concerning internal communication of a company, as well as getting used to accents from different nationalities.

The evidence that the syllabus had to be more specific in terms of the aims and content, instead of being general, made a good impression to teachers concerning the process of change; as one of the problems they had identified in UEP syllabus was the lack of specificity of the document. It was too general and teachers were uncertain about its aims; as claimed in 6.3 above:

The objectives are not clear (...) (Appendix 10, RQ2, RESPONDENT, LT3)

The good impression was caused not only by the focus of the syllabus that was shifting towards a specific approach, but also by the fact that teachers were receiving authentic information provided by the target situation. This could help closing the gap between the students' language lacks, and the target language by revealing the language knowledge and skills students need to effectively perform in the target situation (Gass, 2012); as revealed in the quote below:

'because what the employers say learners need to learn is real, and it is what will prove that learners were well taught by us'. (Appendix 4, RQ2, LT3-IV, English translation)

Even when the teachers received information which indicated that the syllabus started to change, they were not quite certain of what to do with it. They realised that the syllabus had to be more specific, and the content had to promote the development of skills, but they were not sure about how to transform that information into learning outcomes or teaching content. Questions such as: what are we going to do with that information? What are we going to teach? Or what materials are we going to use? emerged. Although the researcher participated in the research, he tried not to get involved in that sort of decisions, to let teachers play a more predominant role to generate their own knowledge supported in practice and experience. This is vital as they know the classroom situations better than anybody and can thereby make a unique contribution to the success of the syllabus (Al-Daami and Stanley, 1998). Allowing teachers play a predominant role to generate knowledge based on practice and experience contributes to their professional development, giving them the role of curriculum developers, an idea that contrasts with the traditional top-down schema in which teachers play the role of implementers of the ideas of external curriculum developers and researchers, as generators of disciplinary knowledge, respectively (Ebbutt and Elliott (1985) in Keiny, 1993).

Concerning the results of the language tests teachers were presented the figures presented earlier, together with the table of descriptions of the language knowledge and skills students were tested on provided in the appendices; the figures were crucial to understand language lacks students had, and the tables with the descriptions were also key to know what areas students had to improve. One of the teachers stated:

The combination of the figures with the information about the results of the test was very clear about the weaknesses of the students. But the figure was even clearer when I saw the table with the description; without the description I would not probably know what to do or how to improve the syllabus. (Appendix 3, RQ3, RESPONDENT, LT1-II)

The information provided to the participants was the product of an in depth analysis of the content of the language test. As presented in chapter 6, each part of the test, listening, reading and writing contains sections and each section evaluates particular uses of language and vocabulary and specific skills. The form in which this information was presented to the teachers, allowed them easily to easily identify those language aspects and skills students needed to improve. The information given to them was so simple to understand and interpret that they could have used the descriptors as learning outcome statements. For instance one of the descriptions of the first part of the reading section stated: “In this part, there is an emphasis on understanding short real-world notices, messages” (see appendix 9). Thus, a learning outcome of the new syllabus could be: understanding short real-world notices, messages.

The detailed analysis the researcher did of the language test results was not a highly complex task. Any language teacher can do it. However, it is necessary to know the needs students have; otherwise it may not be easy to know what sort of analysis is suitable to do. That is why, it is essential to design syllabuses based on the school needs, and not only implement prescribed ones. Because, a school-based syllabus design process allows individuals to find information provided by people, who have knowledge and experience about the teaching context, this could help more successfully change things that need to be improved.

Teachers’ attention is usually given to other matters that absorb most of their time and energy, such as teaching and marking, and not so much to thinking about a research project to help them change problematic situations they have in their schools. In the

previous chapter, it was stated that teachers expressed that it was not quite feasible they initiate a project like this. It is more common that the results of the language tests are basically used to organise students in levels of English, which is the case of the faculty of Economics.

At that point of the project, teachers started to realise they needed different teaching resources from the ones they were currently using, because the syllabus and the materials they were using did not meet the new needs revealed by the data. They realised they needed teaching materials with specific purposes, which helped students to master those skills necessary to improve their performance in the test. They thought about two possibilities; on the one hand they could have collected materials from different sources, course books, internet, grammar books, which was basically the way they had collected the material for the UEP syllabus. But according to them this has more disadvantages than advantages. One participant commented:

Collecting materials the way we have been doing so far has the disadvantage that it is difficult to find materials which are appropriate for the level of learners. We do not have time to search the materials and adapt them for the class. It is difficult that we can have access to everything, and all the things we need to reproduce the materials. Besides that it is very difficult that we find listening materials. (Appendix 3, RQ3, RESPONDENT, LT2-II)

The other option teachers thought about was to follow a course book, which according to one teacher was a better option. One of the teachers searched different options concerning business English course books, and contacted the editorial staff. Teachers decided to adopt the series *In Company* edited by MacMillan, because the books fulfill the demands in terms of content, price and availability.

The information about the students' beliefs complemented the data provided by the other two sources, the language test and the employers. Teachers found it more complex to understand the information of the questionnaire, because of the way it was presented, in the tables 6.8, 6.9, 6.10 shown earlier, but once it was explained to them they started to realise the meaning. One of the first reactions about the information obtained through the questionnaire was upon the fact that students were motivated to learn. As described before, they expressed different types of motivation to learn English. This encouraged teachers to keep going with the idea of improving the syllabus

The results of the other two parts of the questionnaire, students' opinions about their language learning needs, and their preferred ways of learning English, clearly indicated elements of the syllabus that teachers could include. Section two, table 6.9 was less complicated to understand because there were fewer items to pay attention to, and they were clearly stated in terms of language skills. Although the items of section three, table 6.10, were also related to language skills, there were other learning strategies that students expressed they strongly preferred, which teachers had to pay attention to, for example taking exams, memorizing expressions or vocabulary, or error correction.

The process of presenting, analyzing and discussing the information collected through the NAs, is something that teachers had never done before. Perhaps they had collected data about the results of exams to sort students according to their English level, but they had neither analysed information provided by different sources such as students' beliefs, employers' opinions, as well as analysing the results of a language test with the aim of finding students' linguistic strengths and weaknesses, nor they had used it to design a syllabus.

It was a different approach teachers adopted to deal with the language syllabus. This occasion teachers were not given a completed syllabus to be implemented as conceived by syllabus designers. They dealt with authentic information based on school needs. This implied that they had to cope with situations they were not faced with, for example deciding about the learning outcomes of their courses, or thinking about the most suitable language content for their lessons. As stated before, they just implemented the syllabus given to them. By coping with new situations about their work environment, teachers grow professionally as they become more confident and knowledgeable, collecting and using evidence, and learning about their own learning (Furlong and Salisbury, 2005). That is why AR has become increasingly popular around the world as a form of professional learning, specifically in education.

A key element of change in this process of syllabus improvement was NA, which proved to be a key element in syllabus design; as stated earlier it allowed both teachers and learners understand the language knowledge and skills needed to be included in the syllabus. It also helped define objectives, one thing that it was not clearly settled in the UEP syllabus. Additionally, NA provided information that allowed teachers to make informed decisions about the course of action of teaching and learning. It also helped to

decide about the appropriate teaching methodology, as well as the most suitable assessment activities.

However, conducting NAs can be challenging for classroom teachers, especially if they do not have experience in the field. For example, teachers should have a theoretical knowledge about the different NA approaches as well as the different data gathering techniques employed. This theoretical knowledge allows teachers make much more informed decisions about the sort of research methods to follow according to the context and the situation being researched. That knowledge can also allow teachers modify or adapt the original course of the investigation in the event that new challenges emerge. New challenges or issues could derive from data revealed by participants or unexpected events arising from the context. The more theoretical repertoire the researcher has in the field the better.

The data gathering stage is also challenging as it should provide adequate information to set the objectives of the course. Therefore, it is necessary to collect the type and quantity of data suitable to the aims of the process.

Another challenging moment of the process is the analysis and interpretation phase, as they saw data needs to be converted into information useful for decision making. One big issue concerning syllabus design is that teachers may not feel sufficiently skilled to do so; this was acknowledged by Martin-Kniep and Uhrmacher (1992) and Shawer (2010). Not all teachers feel capable of undertaking such a task; some believe that this activity should be carried out by people with specific expertise.

Another concern of the practitioners may be related to the moment when they have to use the data to design the syllabus. Even when the data had been already analysed and put into tables and figures, teachers still had to interpret it, and to convert it into learning outcomes, teaching content, materials and strategies. Their lack of experience on analyzing and interpreting data to be used to feed the syllabus did not help them. They had been used to receiving the syllabus and implementing it, but they had never been involved in the process of designing.

Teachers also had not considered the opinions of other people because it had not been necessary to do so. They had never been asked to intervene in the design of a syllabus. They just followed the content of the UEP syllabus, but they had never considered the

idea of involving other participants into the process of syllabus design, nor did they think about using the gathered data to feed into the syllabus. Following the content of a course book was a common practice.

Even when they recognized that including the wants and needs of different stakeholders into the syllabus was difficult, they believed not only that it was not impossible, but that it was something necessary to do. As stated by two teachers:

‘Analysing the opinions of other stakeholders is something new for me; it is something that I had never done before. I was used to following the content of the book without considering any other opinion but mine. At first, for me was a shock, but with the support of my colleagues, and especially to understand that the faculty needs something different from what I am doing, makes me think that I need to modify my way of doing things’. (Appendix 3, RQ1, LT1, English translation)

Even though teachers followed the same UEP syllabus; it seemed that each of them was following their own course without a clear purpose or a unanimous goal. As stated earlier, according to the teachers, one of the advantages of this project was the fact that they were working collaboratively and they communicated well together, which ultimately led to better teaching and learning.

Despite the difficulties and complexities concerning the process of using the gathered data to feed into the syllabus, language teachers agreed that it was something necessary to do, and also something which they felt more satisfied with and more committed to. They felt confident that, on the one hand the learners’ language knowledge and skills were going to be improved, and on the other that what learners wished to learn was going to become part of the language syllabus. It goes without saying that they also sounded confident about integrating what was necessary in the learners’ use of language.

Teachers had to arrive at crucial decisions about the proper way of making a careful and a detailed analysis of data to effectively incorporate it into the syllabuses. They had to select those key aspects that would meet the wants and needs of the great majority, that would be meaningful, and that would contribute to the improvement of learning. One thing the different stakeholders (the faculty, potential employer, learners) agreed on was

the fact that learners should obtain a Business English Certificate. Thus, teachers decided to evaluate, adapt, and adopt a series of business English course books and a series of preparation course books for the Business English Certificate. Therefore, they decided to incorporate the content of the book series into their syllabuses. The main reasons why teachers adopted this course book were because it is skilled-based and it contains plenty of listening materials with content related to business. The book also contains several authentic tasks, as well as a lot of activities to learn vocabulary related to business.

Although the base of the new syllabus was the content of a course book, as in the case of the UEP syllabus, there are considerable differences between the content of one book and the other. For instance, the new approach is skilled-based, whilst the second is centred on a list of grammatical and vocabulary items. This is a key difference especially because the NAs indicated that students had to develop linguistic skills, and not just learning grammatical aspects or vocabulary. Another vital difference is in regard to the materials, the new materials contained a lot of listening activities in which students listen to spoken English and extract factual information, and this was another need revealed throughout the NAs. The new content also contains authentic information and tasks, which help students to be in contact with updated facts, as well as something what students will have to cope with eventually. Choosing a course book was a good choice for teachers as designing materials for a class demands a lot of time, experience, as well as knowledge and practise.

7.4 AR facilitate the creation of knowledge grounded in practice

Developing self-reflection about teaching experiences can turn an AR process into an exercise in ‘ideological deconstruction’ (Elliot, 1989, p. 3), which means that the teachers’ experiences of syllabus design can be grounded in trying to facilitate their professional development and not in theoretical inputs by experts. Practitioners involved in the project learned things by their own, and not necessarily following the suggestion of specialists. It does not mean that experienced people in the area of curriculum design for example, can get involved in local projects, or that recently professional literature can be consulted by practitioners to learn from it. The point of this is that practitioners, those people who practise a profession, like a teacher have a lot to say about what

happens in the field of work, and not only specialists, researchers or like in the case of this study UC's syllabus designers, in other words knowledge can be created in grounded practise, it cannot be separated from the people who create it, knowledge is not a single or detached element found in literature, or in the mind of an expert (McNiff, 2013).

Throughout their participation in the AR project, teachers gained knowledge created within the field of work, and different from that found in literature, which usually has little or no attention paid to local needs. As discussed in early sections the knowledge gained from field experience, and the constraints in this study were related to the process of syllabus design: data collection, data analysis, and syllabus design. Even though, the initiative for conducting the project did not arise from the teachers, they became involved, and their collaborative work allowed them to overcome complex moments successfully. One participant commented about this:

'Well, the most I liked was collaborative work. The feedback provided by my colleagues helped me. We don't have enough opportunities to meet, because we all have very heavy workloads, thus working collaboratively is a good chance for me to keep learning and to share problems, concerns about specific situations of the class. The work sessions when we designed the syllabuses were enriching for me. Collaborative work is important. The groups view was fruitful and varied. It is always better to address the problems as a group, solutions are better'. (Appendix 7, RQ1, LT1-II, English translation)

The extract above highlights the importance of collaborative AR, which 'encourages participants to share common problems and to work cooperatively as a research community to examine their existing assumptions, values and beliefs within the sociopolitical cultures of the institutions in which they work' (Burns, 1999, p. 13). Collaborative AR is a key difference between doing a project to improve a syllabus through AR, versus a qualitative investigation of curriculum change, because in AR the involvement of practitioners is vital, whilst in qualitative investigation a specialist in the area of curriculum design can do the study without the collaboration of practitioners. AR promotes that local practitioners solve problems that affect their work environment.

Another important finding emerging from the work field was the topic of reflection, a key area in the field of AR. The interview revealed that through reflection teachers were

able to evaluate their work and make changes to the course and the way it was run. As one participant claimed:

‘The process of reflection was very important as our work is flawed and we don’t see ourselves from a different perspective as outsiders. In my particular case, it was like a dash of cold water ‘look this is the way you are running the course, and there are other ways of doing it. I have been teaching this same level of English for some time, and reflecting about it gave me a very different understanding of what I am doing, and of the direction towards my course should be running to’. (Appendix 7, RQ1, LT1-I, English translation)

The extract above corresponds closely with two AR definitions provided by McNiff and Whitehead (2010) AR is ‘a process that helps you as practitioner to develop a deep understanding of what you are doing as an insider researcher, so it has both a personal and social aim’ (p. 19).

Something remarkable about the knowledge they acquired during their participation in the study is that it was something learned by them. For example, they expressed that the involvement of the researcher during the development of the project was decisive to make the project a success, and that they could not have been able to conduct an AR project, unless they were given extra time, and they were trained to conduct AR. This same information was revealed by Hodgkinson (1957) suggesting that teachers as well as other stakeholders lack familiarity with the basic techniques of research, thus practitioners need to be trained before conducting research, that includes data processing and the formal presentation of it.

Thus involving language teachers within the project of AR allows them to be better informed about their field, and it also contributes to their professional development (Bennett, 1993); as they gain knowledge that they did not have before. A substantial difference to be noted is the approach this knowledge was gained, they learn things by doing them. Their participation generates practical knowledge created by them within the ground. All this has a resonance with what Johnson (2008) acknowledges about AR in the way that AR creates knowledge based on enquiries conducted within specific and often practical contexts.

7.5 Summary and conclusions

The process of syllabus improvement based in school needs implied the involvement of teachers. Although they did not initiated the project and did not conducted the NAs to collect the data, they analysed the information presented to them in the form of figures and graphs. The information about the target situations clearly indicated that the syllabus had to transform into a skill-based type, however teachers did not easily found the way of transforming the information into learning outcomes and teaching materials and tasks. The tables and graphs about the language tests more clearly showed the sort of language content and activities they had to incorporate into the syllabus.

Even when they produced a new syllabus, they also found challenges within the process of syllabus design. For example, the interpretation of the data was not easy for some teachers, as they were not familiarized with the process. They also found problematic the idea of using the information to feed into the syllabus. Although the process was not simple, they made decisions to change the syllabus. One key decision was the adoption of a business English course book.

Following AR model favoured participants to make a value judgment about it. Teachers realised that an educational project must be underpinned by a systematic collection of data to make informed decisions, making the course effective and efficient as a means of encouraging learning. Data reveals that participants understood that AR creates knowledge based on enquiries conducted within specific and often practical contexts, and not necessarily in theoretical inputs generated by experts.

In brief, the implementation of the AR model led to the improvement of the UEP syllabus, revealing that one of the key elements of the model was NA as it provides the critical information that allows practitioners to make informed decisions. Information revealed that practitioners got involved into the decision making process, which led to the generation of new knowledge about the syllabus design process, as well as to the improvement of the work environment.

Chapter Eight: A discussion about the process of improvement of the UEP syllabus

8.1 Introduction

Given that AR is likely to involve participants' reflections, attitudes, beliefs, and points of view, the chapter produces descriptions which resulted in a detailed characterization of the process followed to improve the UEP syllabus through AR. The discussion is based on both the earlier theoretical discussion and the data gathered over the course of this study.

The chapter presents the interpretation of the findings emerging from the investigation. It discusses the process the study went through, from the analysis of the original syllabus, the UEP syllabus, to the design of a new one. It makes an emphasis on the importance of NA in the process of syllabus change, and gives details of how the data emerging from the teaching context helped language teachers understand students' language learning needs, and also recognize the importance of critical reflection upon the process of syllabus design. Teachers also realise the significance of gathering data from different sources, as well as the relevance of data processing and systematization. The chapter also shows the challenges that syllabus design represent for language teachers.

8.2 The process of syllabus change

AR resulted to be of great utility guiding teachers in the change of the UEP syllabus. Reflective inquiry was conducted by practitioners across the AR process. Given teachers the opportunity to express their beliefs about the UEP syllabus, it allowed them to voice their opinions on a topic which they never had had the opportunity to take part in. They evaluated the UEP syllabus, a key document for the effective operation of the University English Programme, as it has a strong effect on the teaching of English to many students. Teachers agreed that the syllabus contained a list of vocabulary, grammar, and functional items organised into units, but it did not set clear goals and objectives, a clear methodology approach, or evaluation activities (See section 6.8). The UEP syllabus matched definitions given by several authors. Breen (2001) a formal syllabus, which is mainly forms, systems and rules of grammar, vocabulary, phonology, its shape might be lineal and may follow a presentation, practice and production

methodology. Nunan (1998) a product-oriented syllabus, which focuses on gaining knowledge and developing skills as a result of instruction. Comparable to a synthetic syllabus is one in which the different parts of language are taught independently and progressively. Here, the acquisition is a process of addition of parts until the whole structure of language has been put together (Wilkins, 1976). The UEP syllabus was also related to a Type A syllabus, which prescribes what should be learned; setting objectives and pre-determining the language by dividing it into small, isolated units (White, 1988). The syllabus is designed at the University English Programme, and teachers are recipients and implementers; there is usually no room for evaluation of the syllabus once it is implemented in the classroom.

In AR, reflective inquiry has the chief purpose of evaluating problematic situations to improve practice. Thus, AR was a major contribution to the improvement of the UEP syllabus. An ELT approach employed to improve the syllabus was NA.

The findings suggest that NA was a very useful approach to gather data, which eventually allowed teachers to make informed decisions to change the syllabus. Using NA offered an advantageous solution to one of the problems teachers mentioned during the interviews, which was the fact that the UEP syllabus did not meet the needs of the school. The interviewees concurred that NA is the key element of the study, as NA provided information that allowed them to make informed decisions about the course of action of teaching and learning, as well as helping them identify those activities learners feel more comfortable with or they like to work more with. As it was stated in earlier chapters NA has been defined as a method for collecting data to meet the needs of a particular group of students (Iwai et al., 1999; Weddel et al., 1997), or as the starting point to decide the aims, the method, the content and the assessment strategies of a language course. NA gathered data from different sources, for instance the faculty of Economics. One of the things the faculty had done to collect data about learners' language knowledge was the administration of a language test. However, its results were only used to arrange students into levels of proficiency, but the learners' language skills development was not considered to be an element of analysis. Therefore, to have an in-depth understanding of the learners' language knowledge and skills, a systematic analysis of the different parts of the test was done (See section 6.5). Then each part of the test was examined in detail (See section 6.5.1). The analysis allowed teachers make

informed decisions on the different changes the UEP should suffer. This new form of analyzing the information derived from the test, helped teachers fully understand those language aspects and skills the learners needed to improve them; as the new way of analysing the test was more detailed, which helped teachers to easily decide about both what language content include in the syllabus, and the learning outcomes of the lessons.

To investigate learners' strengths and weaknesses in language knowledge by means of established tests is a common practice. Chapter three presented the results of studies where the researchers also used language test to investigate this fact.

Language learning is a multi-factorial phenomenon, and a mere linguistic approach of the teaching target situation seems to be very simplistic, and will only reveal a partial view of the situation. Thus, it is appropriate to consider other data. Key participants of learning and teaching are learners, thus taking their opinions into consideration before making any decisions about teaching sounds sensible, especially if the approach to syllabus design is school-based.

In the data gathered through a questionnaire, learners said that English language was a vehicle that could help them achieve both personal and professional goals. The possibility of studying abroad, using English during their university studies, and considering the option of getting a good job opportunity were considered stimulating learning elements by learners. These results agree with what was reported in chapter three with regards to the motivation of pre-service EFL teachers in Thailand. Vibulphol, (2004) found that the majority of the participants responded that the main reasons why they wanted to learn English was because they wanted to have friends from other countries, and learn about English speakers, a good show of integrative motivation. Respondents also mentioned that they wanted to learn English because it was important for communication, for higher education, for information access and for job opportunity, instrumental motivation. Learners also agreed with the idea of learning English as a compulsory subject throughout their university studies, which shows that learners are motivated to learn. This could help them to achieve a working knowledge of English; since according to Dörnyei (2001) '(...) the vast majority of cases learners with sufficient motivation can achieve a working knowledge of an L2, regardless of their language aptitude or other cognitive characteristic. Without sufficient motivation,

however, even the brightest learners are unlikely to persist long enough to attain any really useful language' (p.5).

Other relevant findings about the learners' beliefs on their own learning are that they trust in their ability to learn English, even though some of them did not pass the test. Perhaps this is related to what Mori (1999) revealed in his study by claiming that '(...) students who generally believe that the ability to learn is innately fixed tend to attain lower proficiency in a foreign language' (p. 399).

Students also agreed to use a course book in their classes, which could be viewed not only as a preference, but also as a need; since at the moment the questionnaires were administered, learners were only using the materials teachers had brought to class instead of a course book. Another interesting finding was the preference learners had on the use of a dictionary, something that is not a common practice in the language classrooms. Also, they liked to learn through the use of a computer; an activity that teachers could probably incorporate into their lesson plans, especially since the faculty has installed language-learning software into their computers as a strategy for fostering autonomous learning and to support classroom teaching. Others felt it important that tasks such as practicing pronunciation, acting out a play or a dialogue, taking part in language games would help them learn. Studying grammar rules was one of their preferred ways of learning.

A great majority of learners approved that receiving feedback from their teachers was an activity that helped them gain understanding and learn. Receiving feedback from teachers is usually constructive indeed. However, there are other sources that can also provide very fruitful feedback, such as classmates, course books and other teachers. The most important point established is that learners identified feedback as a successful source of learning.

Chapter three reports that research on language teaching and learning has discovered that what learners believe about *their own learning* could become an influential factor for success or failure during learning, which means that what learners believe about *language learning* might influence their performance (Peackon, 1999). In addition, Mori (1999, p. 378) also stated that 'what students consider to be an effective strategy significantly influences their use of strategies'. Horwitz (1999, p. 557) states that 'Understanding learner beliefs about language learning is essential to understanding

learner strategies and planning appropriate language instruction'. Different studies described in chapter three revealed how language learning is affected by learners' beliefs (Peackon, 1999; Ariogul et al., 2009; Trinder, 2013).

Different study cases presented in chapter three also demonstrate that the implementation of learning strategies as a method of helping language learners enhances their learning efficiency (Kouraogo, 1993; Yang, 1999; Yilmaz, 2010; Ungureanu and Georgescu, 2012). Bruen (2001) found out that the more proficient students use more language learning strategies in a more structured and purposeful manner, and apply them to a wider range of situations and tasks; this happened during a study the researcher conducted with 100 second year students of German.

Considering that learning strategy selection and beliefs about it affect the process of language learning, it seemed appropriate to take them into consideration when making school based decisions on syllabus design. Teachers suggested that finding out about learners' beliefs about their own language learning changed the perspective they had in terms of content and teaching activities (See section 6.6).

The fact that the syllabus was school based did not exclude language teaching and learning institutional policies, which were always present at the moment of making decisions on content and teaching (See section 6.4.1). Teachers were conscious that institutional policies needed to be taken into consideration, but the difference was that they were one element to be considered in a broader conception of syllabus.

Therefore, it was decided to take the institutional policies concerning the teaching and learning of foreign language (gaining a good command of English for Business) into account, and also to consider the opinions of language learners and potential employers (See section 6.4, 6.6).

Another point that drew the attention of teachers, and made them change their previous understanding of their lessons in terms of content and teaching, was the opinion of the employers, who according to Chambers (1980) define the target situation communicative language needs. Teachers claim that the information provided by the potential employers helped them understand the authentic language and tasks learners needed to develop in order to deal with authentic situations within their possible work environments (See section 6.4). The results of the language test and the results of the

communicative target situation analysis (information provided by the employers) provided a clear picture of what the language learners' strengths and weaknesses were. Just what Wozniak (2010) did to identify the language needs of French mountain guides at the French Skiing and Mountaineering School.

After concluding the data gathering phase, there were five different sources of data which provided a vast quantity of valuable information, something that had never been done before, as all decisions concerning the UEP syllabus were made at the top, and teachers implemented the received curriculum, but hardly ever were involved in decision making. However, teachers were not accustomed to dealing with all this amount of information, which proved to be a real challenge for them to analyze it (See section 6.8).

One point teachers addressed concerning the data was that information would not be useful if it was not systematised (See section 6.8). Teachers drew the conclusion that data is very important, but interpreting and organizing data in the proper form has more value than raw data. Organizing data is important, but grasping its meaning as important as organizing the data is grasping its meaning. Therefore, raw information must be presented in a form that everybody can have access to, and perhaps even more important, in a form that everybody understands what it means. Thus, the figures and tables presented by the researcher, as participants suggested was a major contribution because they could easily understand what the gathered data meant (See section 6.8).

The findings suggest that one of the main advantages teachers observed was that the model provides a framework for allowing teachers to easily understand what needs to be taught. It helps to define the benchmarks in terms of achievement. This has been acknowledged by Nation and Macalister (2010). The four teachers interviewed remarked that one of the main benefits they obtained from the data was that it helped them design a course that moved in a clear direction. Everybody knew what to achieve and where to arrive (See section 6.8). The certainty of direction was generated by the content of the course, changed from general to specific English, as well as by the information given by learners in terms of what they wanted to learn and the ways in which they thought they learned best. All the information together helped the teachers to set clear teaching objectives (See section 6.7).

Data provided by participants revealed that even though the syllabus design process, collecting, analysing, and interpreting data, and using it to feed their syllabuses was complex, it helped them to make decisions to improve their lessons (See section 6.7). In contrast to the previous approach when they were asked to merely and implement the syllabus.

8.3 Challenges throughout the process

The findings reveal that conducting a NA can also present challenges such as the lack of knowledge of NA approaches, research methodology and of the fieldwork. Someone who aims at conducting NA must know the different NA approaches to decide how best to proceed, and to make the most adequate decisions in order to collect the proper data according to the aims of the study. Similarly, teachers who do NA must have knowledge of research methodology, as most of the activities they do involve research activities such as administrating questionnaires or conducting interviews as well as processing information. Knowledge of the fieldwork is advantageous to conduct NA, because this can facilitate the implementation of the research activities and prevent or take advantage of certain situations they already know in advance. In sum, ignoring different factors related to the NA process such as theoretical concepts, methodology and the fieldwork could hinder the conducting of NA, which means that a teacher who aims to conduct a NA should be fully competent to carry out the work.

Another competence a teacher who aims to conduct NA should have is the capacity of processing data. As it was stated earlier raw data has limited value. Data gains value when it is properly processed and interpreted, which requires that the person has or develops the capability to do so. Not processing or interpreting the data adequately, may lead to losing data value and not causing any effect on teaching and learning.

Findings also reveal that another challenge teachers could face appears when they want to use the data to feed into their language syllabuses (Nunan, 1988). The main problem with this is that teachers need to be able to interpret the data and to transform it into teaching goals, content, and activities. This implies that teachers should have a repertoire of resources (teaching methodologies and materials) at their disposal to draw on them. However, teachers do not always have access to resources and they have to draw from the resources they have at hand.

Two other challenges teachers mentioned were the lack of available time and the heavy workload. As stated in Section (5.5.5), teachers' working time ranges from 6-9 up to 42 hours a week allocated to one or more faculties or even campuses at the UC. While their main activity is teaching, they also have to do other duties. They teach in different departments, having to move from one to the next during their work day. In addition, during a semester they may have to plan and teach lessons from two, to up to five different levels of proficiency courses. They are committed to participating in evaluation processes, certification for their English proficiency level by international examination, and the certification of their ELT skills. Among other duties, they also participate in the organization of groups and timetables with the faculties they are part of. Therefore, due to their heavy workload they considered that doing other activities such as conducting an investigation to enhance the curriculum would probably be impossible, because they would not have the time to do it.

8.4 Summary and conclusions

The findings of the present study demonstrate that language teachers engaged in a process of analysis and reflection are led to make decisions and changes based on local needs. They took part in different events during the course of a school year where they critically expressed their beliefs and opinions about the situation they were coping with. They incorporated data collected within their teaching context, which involved the opinions, wants, and needs of different stakeholders, into their language syllabuses, changing the original plans; setting clearer learning aims, incorporating new teaching content and methodology. Interviews reveal that practitioners were able to move beyond their routine teaching and critically reflect on their practice, which enhanced their understanding of educational context, making them more active participants of the improvement of the syllabus.

The major improvement was the process of syllabus design followed; since it showed a different way of designing and developing a syllabus, based on school needs rather than a syllabus prescribed from the top of an institution. Findings in this study report that the knowledge generated in this study by language teachers, was very significant as it was something they became aware of on their own, and not necessarily learned from theory. The knowledge they gained was based on inquiry and not by theoretical inputs by teaching experts (Elliot, 1989), and this was one of the main knowledge teachers gained. Teachers said that it was necessary to have moments of inquiry and reflection in order

to discover important issues affecting the work environment. As a result of the enquiry teachers were able to address important concerns related to the importance of collaborative work, stating that feedback provided good chances for them to learn, to share problems and concerns about specific situations of the class, and that it was better to address the problems as a group.

Despite the volume of claims presented above, findings reveal that not to know about NA could hinder the gathering of data, as teachers might not feel fully competent to carry out the work. Also, not to have the capacity to processing data may lead to losing its importance. In addition to this, teachers need to develop the skills to interpret the data and to transform it into teaching goals, content, and activities. The lack of available time and the heavy workload are also challenges that teachers could face if they conduct NA by their own.

Chapter Nine: Conclusions

9.1 Introduction

The employment of AR as a tool to investigate the ELT syllabus design process is not yet a very common practise in studies in Mexico. This investigation used AR to study the effects of the implementation of a school based language syllabus within a context where English language is a mandatory subject across the undergraduate higher education curriculum.

The research shows how data gathered at the school level can cause change in the syllabus, the degree of involvement of practitioners in AR how AR affects the situation where decisions about the syllabus are top-down, and what knowledge can be generated by practice. Findings also show the challenges that practitioners face when using AR to develop and design an ELT syllabus.

It is therefore the purpose of this conclusion to provide a final statement about the use of action research to improve a language syllabus. The chapter also presents an explanation of the limitations of the study, and ideas for further research. It also explains the main limitations and contributions of the research.

9.2 Action Research proved to be a useful method to improve the UEP syllabus

Findings reveal that the implementation of an AR project led to the improvement of the UEP syllabus. The major improvement is the process followed to design the syllabus; based on school rather than a syllabus prescribed from the top. The process suggests, as it has been explained, the conduction of different NAs to collect data from different stakeholders. The AR project conducted in this study corresponds with other cases where AR was used to improve language programmes illustrated in chapter four.

Similar to the cases presented in chapter four the implemented changes to the UEP syllabus turn the new syllabus into a school-based instrument, sharing the responsibility of designing the language syllabus of the school with teachers, who have the knowledge to point out weaknesses and shortcomings, and due to their key position are able to discover potential gaps and bringing about change or improvement. This new syllabus is more responsive than the previous one to the needs and interests of the students it serves. Improvements were based on information about school needs, turning the

syllabus into a more student-centred one, as it pays more attention to the learners' needs, and devises within the teaching situation. Thus, it is more interesting that students gain the language knowledge and skills they need to carry out real world tasks, by teaching the specific language skill that may be useful or necessary to do an activity or job well. The new syllabus sets out clear objectives. Setting clear objectives helps define a common direction where everybody has to move in. The content of the new syllabus responds more to an English for Specific Purpose approach, more related to business English, than to a general English syllabus approach linked with the UEP syllabus. Alternatively, the new syllabus follows a skill-based teaching methodology as its main purpose is to teach a collection of specific abilities in using the target language, and it makes reference to different types of assessment activities as well. The tasks included in the new syllabus provide a vehicle for the presentation of appropriate target language samples to learners.

One of the answers that RQ2 was seeking to provide was if practitioners such as language teachers were able to participate and undertake systematic inquiry in the search of greater effectiveness (Adelman, 1993); believing that democratic workplaces foster employees who gain possession of their work, while enhances both morale and productivity (Hendricks, 2013).

The findings of the present study demonstrate that language teachers engaged in the process of analysis and reflection were led to make decisions and changes based on local needs. They took part in different events during the course of a school year where they critically expressed their beliefs and opinions about the situation they were coping with. Data collected within their teaching context. They also participated in a session where they reflected upon this project, providing detailed insights on their involvement with it, the change from the old to the new model, as well as the knowledge they gained.

Interviews revealed that practitioners were able to move beyond their teaching routine and critically reflect on their practice, which enhanced their understanding of educational context, making them more active participants of the improvement of the syllabus. One of the main impacts of the project on teachers includes their change of views about their work with other colleagues.

Chapter four report that traditional scientific social researchers usually see knowledge as a single or detached element found in literature (McNiff 2013), but our findings

report that the knowledge generated in this study by language teachers was significant as it was something they became aware of on their own, and not necessarily something learnt from in theory. The knowledge they gained was based on inquiry and not on theoretical inputs by teaching experts (Elliot, 1989), and this was one of the main kinds of knowledge teachers gained. Teachers said that it is necessary to have moments of inquiry and reflection in order to discover important issues affecting the work environment. This argument has a resonance with what Johnson (2008) acknowledges about AR in the way that AR creates knowledge based on enquiries conducted within specific and often practical contexts. Chapter eight reveals that through reflection teachers were able to evaluate their work, make changes to the course and the way it was run, implement changes, and improve.

One of the participants interviewed understood the importance of monitoring. The teacher participant arrived at this conclusion after participating and going through the whole process. The new knowledge reported coincided with what Nation and Macalister (2010, p. 107) believe about the purpose of monitoring in curriculum design, the authors assume that monitoring aim is to ‘make sure that the learners will get the most benefit from the course. As a result of the enquiry teachers were able to address important concerns related to the importance of collaborative work, stating that feedback provided good chances for them to learn, to share problems, and concerns about specific situations of the class, and that it was better to address the problems as a group. These ideas are in resonance with what Reys, et al. (1997) by claiming that monitoring ‘has considerable potential as a vehicle for teacher enhancement [...], offers opportunities for interaction and exchange of ideas [...].’ (p. 258).

Despite the volume of claims presented above findings reveal that teachers have also experienced a lack of time to plan and reflect in order to develop the ELT curriculum, and a lack of expertise, and understanding skills. Section 6.8 shows that they were not familiar with either the concept of AR or with the basic techniques of research. This was acknowledged by Hodgkinson (1957) in chapter four where he claims that teachers as well as other stakeholders like administrators, and supervisors lack familiarity with the basic techniques of research. Ellis (2010) also suggests in chapter four that much teacher-research has methodological limitations. In chapter four Halai (2011) presents a study to illustrate how teachers became action researchers and found that the most challenging situation for teaches was the fact that teachers needed to understand what

AR was. This confirms what the interviews revealed concerning language teachers becoming action researchers.

Interviews revealed that teachers would not begin an AR project by themselves because they did not feel confident to do so due to their lack of knowledge. They stated that they could do it, but it would probably take more time because only dedicated time to do research they did not know as much as AR and research methodologies. This implies that they do not feel capable of doing AR because they are not prepared to do so. This can be confirmed with one of the answers they provided stating that teaching English is not the same as doing research projects; therefore they needed to be trained for that particular purpose. Perhaps one of the major arguments against AR is that it should be left for specialists who have proper training and capacity (Burns, 2005). As Jarvis (1981) emphasizes AR is without academic reputation, and it should be left to academic specialists who have the experience and aptitude.

Another teacher said that it was better that a researcher conducted the project because practitioners, such as the case of language learners would be more confident while providing answers. Another reason is that a research project like this needed formality especially in the way of producing evidence, such as the report presented to them. In this regard Foster (1999) in chapter four criticizes the reports written by teachers claiming that ‘ in nearly all the reports insufficient evidence is presented to support key claims (...) there are significant doubts about the validity of evidence actually presented (...)’ (p. 388).

Time is another limitation. Teachers repeatedly expressed that language teachers like them, with a workload such as theirs, do not have enough time to do research. The issue of lack of time was discussed in chapter four as one of the main challenges to teacher involvement in AR. Chan et al. (1997) revealed that the great majority of teachers involved in an AR investigation were worried about the amount of time spent on meetings and about the workload attached to the involvement in the project, especially for teachers whose schedules are already overloaded from teaching, who are usually not granted the time they spend doing the research (Block, 2000).

The challenges that AR presents are not only related to the lack of familiarity, or the capacity of participants to conduct it, or the lack of time but also related to financial issues. Involving teachers in AR usually requires teacher to participate in meetings

during school hours to discuss their research, then the problem becomes financial as well as temporal, as substitute teachers must be hired.

9.3 Limitations of the study

The process of AR goes through cycles. This study completed one cycle that allowed the researcher to evaluate the situation, develop and implement an action plan, and to observe and reflect upon the process. Beginning a new cycle which helps to discover other problematic situations resulting from the teaching context would be very interesting. The implementation of more cycles could help to improve other areas of teaching, and also it would help to establish an ongoing system which supported the idea of continuous change and improvement.

As well as the AR process, the syllabus design process also follows cycles, and this investigation completed one, allowing the study to collect data, and design the syllabus, implement and evaluate. The fact that one cycle was completed allowed participants, especially language teachers, understand the whole curriculum design and development process. It also allowed the study to collect data to appreciate the process comprehensively, which permits to broaden and deepen the knowledge about how the syllabus design process can be conducted through AR.

To continue with more syllabus design cycles might be useful as they could show what other areas of the syllabus could be addressed. For instance, teaching methodologies, or the assessment process. Thus by implementing new cycles of the syllabus design process would highlight those key areas that could be tackled.

In AR the involvement of practitioners is key. The study planned that teachers got involved during the implementation of the action plan; they also expressed their beliefs and opinions at different phases of the project. One interesting thing to be observed concerning the participation of language teachers in AR would be the participation of language teachers at the beginning of the process. In other words, it would be thought-provoking to study the involvement of language teachers since the very beginning of an AR cycle where they initiate an inquiry process about a problematic situation they identified, developed and implemented an action plan.

It would be also interesting to work with a number of different student groups from different fields of knowledge, with different wants and needs to see how the

implementation of AR applies in different circumstances and situations, and with a variety of participants.

There may be other areas of participants' experiences and environment, which this research could investigate. This study is only a symbolic representation of participants and their context. For instance, the data gathered is selective and interpretative; as it is impossible for all the data collected in this research to be reported in the final presentation and analysis. It is hope that other researchers and readers will be able to determine the trustworthiness, credibility, dependability and transferability of the conclusions drawn (Shenton, 2004; Tavakoli, 2012).

The last phase of the AR cycle, reflection upon the implementation of the action plan, was only undertaken by the teachers. But students, the main users of the new syllabus, may have a lot to say about it. For instance, they could share their perceptions about the shift of content, from general to specific, or their opinions concerning how much the new syllabus meets their needs in terms of their preferred ways of learning. In brief, taking the opinions of the students into account during the last part of the AR cycle would reveal valuable information about the implementation of the action plan. Nevertheless, the main aim of the study was to involve language teachers in the process of syllabus design; involving students at some point within the project was beneficial for it, and it was something necessary to do as part of the NA, but the original plan was not to involve them throughout the whole process of the investigation. Besides that, involving students in the last phase of the AR cycle implied to expand the duration of the research, which would take a lot more time that it was originally planned.

9.4 Further research

An interesting area of further research would be a longitudinal study of the effects of the new syllabus. The study could cover a wide range of areas such as teaching. There is a lot of potential for developing this key area. Some of the topics that can be studied are teaching methodologies. It would be interesting to find out what problems teachers are facing within their classrooms, or what teachers can do to improve or change some of their teaching practices in order to improve teaching and the syllabus.

Another project can be conducted to investigate the possibility that language teachers start an AR project on their own initiative, whether in their own classrooms or doing collaborative research within their own schools.

Other AR cycles can begin with regards to language learners. For instance it would be interesting to investigate in a more comprehensive manner what students' learning strategies are, and what sort of changes can be made for them to be more autonomous learners.

New NA could be made for other target situations such as new potential organizations where students could either work or study. Results revealed that this research was limited to the data provided by two potential employers, but there are other organizations in the business area within Mexico or abroad, which could possibly hire English speaking graduates. Most significantly, new NA would be made for those educational organizations which the UC has signed mobility agreements with, and which require students to communicate in English. Another relevant source of new research, which was not considered in this investigation, was learners who already took part in mobility programmes in institutions of English speaking countries, and former learners who are taking part of postgraduate programmes or who are already working. Information provided by learners who already took part in mobility programmes would be of considerable importance to finding out not only the communicative demands, but also other sociolinguistic elements inherent to the culture of the target situation. Learners taking part in postgraduate programmes could provide data which revealed those communicative demands characteristic of the educational context, and learners who were already part of a company which required them to communicate in English could bring up to date information concerning not only the language needed, but also other specific factors teachers need to know to design a course, such as how the language will be used, who the workers will use the language with, where the language will be used. This would likely affect the making decision process in regards to the characteristics of the course.

Besides the analyses, a monitoring system across the implementation phase of the action plan should be introduced as a way of providing teachers and learners with information about the learners' present knowledge and progress, and it can also be a means of encouraging involvement and participation on the part of the language teachers. The

monitoring system could become a cyclical process of collective research on issues emerging from the teaching context, which could be solved through discussion, decision, and action.

The investigation suggested above could take place within the faculty of Economics itself. The importance of continuing the investigation within the context of the faculty of Economics lies in the fact that both syllabus design, and AR go through a cyclical process and continuing with the investigation in the same setting would let the research test the model more extensively.

More extensive research is needed to establish AR's relevance to the ELT syllabus process. Starting new cycles where other problematic situations can be investigated would reveal new knowledge concerning the implementation of AR to develop the curriculum.

9.5 Implications and contributions

AR can be a successful umbrella research method for the ELT syllabus design process. Chapter two claims that the curriculum design process can be an ongoing activity (Nation and Macalister, 2010); in this regard it is similar to AR, as it follows cycles. However, findings revealed that AR can embrace the curriculum design process and improve it. For instance, ELT curriculum design uses NA to collect data to design language courses. This study demonstrated that NA can be incorporated into the AR phases. NA was employed to gather data which was eventually used by the teachers to make decisions about their language courses. The study did not only aim at collecting data to design the language syllabus, but also at generating opportunities for language teachers to get involved in the decision making process, as they used the data to improve their language syllabus and teaching materials. Making decisions about their language courses based on data provided by the teaching context allowed them to realise that successful teaching and learning can be supported by systematic search of information based on the school needs and not necessarily prescribed by external experts or top policy makers. It proved that the systematic search of information allows practitioners to make proper decisions which positively impact teaching and learning. Results also showed that practitioners such as language teachers are able to conduct research as long as they are trained and have time to undertake AR projects. In addition,

results demonstrated that practitioners are able to create knowledge to analyse and reflect upon their work and to introduce amendments to their teaching practice.

The investigation makes a contribution to the syllabus design process highlighting the fact that despite its complexity, the implementation of the AR was successfully pursued; as practitioners modified their syllabuses on the basis of needs analyses meeting both the micro and the meso needs of the teaching context. The findings also offered insights into participants' examination about the advantages and disadvantages of the implementation of the model, as well as their points of view concerning three features of AR: practitioners can participate in research, an AR project contributes to the improvement of the work environment, and AR facilitates the creation of knowledge grounded in practice.

The findings add further support to the idea that English language teaching and learning need to be underpinned by a system which provides with information to the decision making process. This study demonstrated that hard data, information provided by members of an educational institution, can contribute to the decision-making process to improve teaching and learning.

This research makes a contribution to NA by conducting different analyses, which, in turn, complemented each other. Conducting a variety of needs analyses, helped further understand the decision making process should be fed by data coming from a range of sources, to have a comprehensive picture of the situation, and to try to integrate most of the elements into the curriculum to make the language course more suited to the teaching context, and more effective and efficient as a means of encouraging learning. Also, this research has implications for teaching; findings revealed that data gathered encouraged teachers introduce changes into their language lessons. This can have a number of important implications, for instance teaching and learning are not fixed. Since it is a changing process, it needs to be upheld by other educational factors related to learners, teachers, resources, sponsors; as language teaching is not only or primarily subject to the teaching of content, but to other educational issues surrounding it. If language teaching were primarily subject to the teaching of content, it would deny access to an extensive body of knowledge, which contributes to learning and teaching improvement.

This study implemented research activities located at the school level; sharing the decision making with the teaching context represented by language teachers, learners, and regional potential employers, creating a syllabus more attached to the needs of the school. To reach such an ambitious goal, it was necessary to employ AR, as it is a method used to generate meaning and understanding in problematic social situations and improving the quality of human interactions and practices within those situations (Burns, 2005).

The UC is integrated by thirty one faculties, in Mexico a faculty is a subdivision of a university which corresponds to a particular field of knowledge. Each faculty offers degrees of related areas of knowledge. In the UC English language teaching is across the curriculum of the thirty one faculties. This investigation was conducted in only one faculty, the faculty of Economics. In the study participated four language teachers, who evaluated and modified the UEP syllabus adjusting it to the needs of the faculty. With the understanding that the rest of the faculties of the UC follow the same language syllabus, similar projects can be undertaken where teachers consider the evaluation made to the UEP syllabus, to carry out NAs to collect data and to make amendments to meet the needs of the students who follow it. The methodology chapter of this thesis provides thick descriptions of both the procedures to conduct the NAs, and the instruments employed to collect the data. The literature review chapter also provides a discussion of the different NAs that can be employed. These two chapters do not only provide thick descriptions in regards to NA. They also provide detailed information about AR as the methodology to conduct an AR project. Thus, all those language teachers interested in the theme could read it and decide if the project can be transfer to their own particular context.

The study could also be transferred to the national context; as it was stated earlier English language teaching is part of the curriculum of several Mexican Higher Institutions. Perhaps the English language syllabus of the rest of the Mexican universities do not have the same features as the UC's does, however evaluating and improving a language syllabus is something necessary to enhance its quality. In this respect, the methodology this study followed can also be employed to evaluate language syllabuses of other Mexican Higher Institutions, and even institutions from other

countries; as it was detailed in unit four educational institutions from many different countries have decided to teach English, but most of the time the decisions about the syllabus is taken at high levels of the educational system, but it is not necessarily successfully implemented in the classroom.

To sum up, the investigation shows conclusively that AR can be used as a tool to design and develop an ELT curriculum within a context where decisions are usually taken on the top. The study highlighted that AR phases help practitioners, such as language teachers make decisions about their own syllabus and the decisions that they make are underpinned by data collected in their own teaching context. The decisions teachers made helped them realise that improvements to the curriculum can happen at school level and not necessarily can come from the outside.

9.6 Summary and conclusions

Returning to the original rationale that motivated this study; this thesis has attempted to offer a theoretical and empirically based exploration of the design and development of an UEP syllabus through AR. The syllabus design process was approached from a SBCD model following a series of steps starting from a NA to determine the particular characteristics of an ELT syllabus for a particular group of students with particular needs. NA was recognised as a key element of the model, providing information to allow teachers to make informed decisions.

The reflection phase offered by AR helped to realise that the project had a positive impact over the ELT syllabus and it helped to improve it in some areas such as teaching content and materials. It also helped to understand that an educational project must be underpinned by a systematic collection of data to make informed decisions, making the course effective and efficient as a means of encouraging learning.

Using AR to design and develop an ELT syllabus in this thesis has attempted to conceptualise and provide empirical evidence for the design and development of an ELT syllabus where English is compulsorily taught across the undergraduate curriculum of a university in Western Mexico. It is hoped that the exploration of the employment of some AR principles to analyse and reflect upon the design and development of an ELT syllabus, will result in a better understanding of how a process such as this can be developed from the practical context where teaching and learning take place, and by practitioners who know the situation and the needs it has.

Appendix 1: Sample of the transcription of an interview with two potential employers

RQ1 Researcher: ¿La empresa contrata personal del área de economía negocios internacionales o finanzas?

RESPONDENT, HRM 1: En nuestra compañía el idioma inglés es un factor determinante en la decisión de contratar a un empleado. Puede haber muchos egresados muy capaces, pero ese número disminuye después de que se evalúan sus habilidades en el idioma inglés. Pueden ser muy buenos en su área de estudio, pero si no saben inglés están compitiendo en condiciones desigualdad y es muy probable que no sean considerados para ocupar el puesto.

Topic: Needs in the context of the workplace

Code: ER

Meaning: English is an requirement for the company

RESPONDENT, HRM 2: Me gustaría enfatizar que un buen dominio del idioma inglés puede convertirse en una puerta para el mercado internacional para los egresados con calificaciones no tan sobresalientes, la empresa se encarga de capacitarlos.

Topic: Needs in the context of the workplace

Code: EK

Meaning: English knowledge provides employees opportunities to travel abroad

RQ2 Researcher: ¿En relación al aprendizaje del idioma inglés, que tipo de entrenamiento ofrece la empresa a sus empleados?

RESPONDENT, HRM 2: El departamento de capacitación y desarrollo profesional continuamente promueve la participación de nuestros empleados en diferentes actividades de capacitación. Una de ellas consiste en la preparación para presentar el examen TOEIC, por primera o segunda vez para el caso de aquellos empleados cuya certificación haya expirado.

Topic: Needs in the context of the workplace

Code: EIC

Meaning: English international certificate

RQ3 Researcher: ¿En qué situaciones los empleados usan el inglés?

RESPONDENT, HRM 2-III: Las situaciones en las que se utiliza el idioma inglés en nuestra compañía son situaciones en donde los empleados tiene que leer manuales, correos electrónicos información que se divulga en mensajes escritos o en foros en línea, así como también en textos pequeños que la

Topic: Needs in the context of the workplace

Code: ERP

Meaning: English is needed for reading purposes

compañía publica en una revista. Casi nunca nos visitan personal de otras partes del mundo, cuando lo han hecho es para intercambiar experiencias de lo que se conoce como prácticas exitosas.

RESPONDENT, HRM 2-III: Las situaciones en las que se utiliza el idioma inglés en nuestra compañía son situaciones en donde los empleados tiene que leer manuales, correos electrónicos información que se divulga en mensajes escritos o en foros en línea, así como también en textos pequeños que la compañía publica en una revista. Casi nunca nos visitan personal de otras partes del mundo, cuando lo han hecho es para intercambiar experiencias de lo que se conoce como prácticas exitosas.

RESPONDENT, HRM1-III: En ocasiones especiales alguno de nosotros ha participado en video conferencias lideradas por personal en Estados Unidos. En ocasiones muy rara, algunos colegas de fuera han venido a visitarnos, nuestra labor ha consistido en resolver algún problema o alguna petición que ellos tengan o simplemente ayudarlos con algo que necesiten.

RQ4 Researcher: ¿Han viajado a otras partes a capacitarse?

RESPONDENT, HRM 1-IV: Dependiendo de sus capacidades ha habido casos en que algunos empleados hayan tenido que viajar a otros países a recibir alguna capacitación en alguna área específica, o en la implementación de algún nuevo procedimiento sistema o técnica. También podrían viajar para formar parte de algún grupo de trabajo con el propósito de mejorar las prácticas de trabajo.

Topic: Needs in the context of the workplace

Code: ERP

Meaning: English is needed for reading purposes

Topic: Needs in the context of the workplace

Code: ELSP

Meaning: English for listening and speaking purposes

Topic: Needs in the context of the workplace

Code: EK

Meaning: English knowledge provides employees opportunities to travel abroad

Appendix 2: Questionnaire to find out what learners believe about their own learning and their preferred ways of learning English.

English Learner Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims to find out the learning needs, wants, needs and beliefs of English learners of the University of Colima. It consists of four sections. The answers will be used only with research purposes. The information supplied and your identity will be treated as confidential and will be protected as such.

Section one

In this section, we would like to know how much you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling a number from 1 to 6.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	
Example: I like chocolate cake very much					1 2 3 4 5 ⑥	
I believe...						
1. English is a difficult language to be learned.					2	1 2 3 4 5 6
2. Learning English is important to me because I want to study in other countries.						1 2 3 4 5 6
3. I feel able to take up subjects taught through English.						1 2 3 4 5 6
4. My knowledge of English is a decisive factor for my university studies.						1 2 3 4 5 6
5. My knowledge of English is a decisive factor for my professional life.						
6. I am confident about my ability to learn English successfully.					5	1 2 3 4 5 6
7. I have to pass an international exam if I want to graduate.						1 2 3 4 5 6
8. I like the atmosphere of my English classes.						1 2 3 4 5 6
9. My parents encourage me to study English and other foreign languages.						1 2 3 4 5 6
10. I am working hard to learning English.						1 2 3 4 5 6
11. My language success depends on what I do inside the classroom.					1	1 2 3 4 5 6
12. My language success depends on what I do outside the classroom.					1	1 2 3 4 5 6
13. My language success depends on what only the teacher does in the classroom.						1 2 3 4 5 6
14. Business related subjects should be taught in English.						1 2 3 4 5 6
15. I study English only to have a good marks.						1 2 3 4 5 6
16. English must be a compulsory subject.						1 2 3 4 5 6
17. Some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages.						1 2 3 4 5 6
18. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.						1 2 3 4 5 6
19. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.						1 2 3 4 5 6
Not at all	Not so much	So-so	A little	Quite a lot	Very much	
1	2	3	4	5	6	
I need to...						
20. Write English more.						1 2 3 4 5 6
21. Speak English more.						1 2 3 4 5 6
22. Read information about Economics.						1 2 3 4 5 6
23. Learn more vocabulary.						1 2 3 4 5 6
24. Understand foreign people when they speak to me.						1 2 3

					4	5	6
25. Attend international conferences.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
26. Learn grammar.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
27. Pronounce better					1	2	3
					4	5	6
Section two							
In section two, we would like to find out which aspects of language you feel you need most help or practice with. Answer the same way as you did before.							
Section three							
This section aims to know your preferred ways of learning English. Answer the same way as you did before.							
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree		
1	2	3	4	5	6		
I usually learn English...							
28. Following a textbook.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
29. Listening to others using English in class.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
30. Listening to the teacher using English in class.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
31. Listening to audio-recordings.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
32. The teacher giving oral/written feedback.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
33. Giving oral presentations.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
34. Role-playing.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
35. Doing project work.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
36. Doing exams.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
37. Taking part in language games.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
38. Memorizing dialogues, expressions or passages.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
39. Doing written assignments (short passages, reports, essays).					1	2	3
					4	5	6
40. Reading silently in class for information.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
41. Reading aloud in class.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
42. Reading about a specific field.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
43. Studying grammar rules.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
44. Practicing pronunciation.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
45. Using a computer.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
46. Using dictionaries.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
47. Having mistakes corrected.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
48. Learning lists of vocabulary.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
49. Working with the whole class.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
50. Working in small groups.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
51. Working in pairs.					1	2	3
					4	5	6
52. Working individually.					1	2	3
					4	5	6

Appendix 3: Sample of the transcription of an interview with language teachers about the design and implementation of the syllabus

Researcher Q1: ¿Cómo se sintieron en el momento de traducir los datos recolectados en el análisis de necesidades e integrar esas necesidades en el programa de su clase?

RESPONDENT, LT2-I: No fue fácil para mí porque estoy acostumbrada a planear mis clases de un día para otro, y no con mucha anticipación. Sin embargo el hecho de habernos reunido para analizar y discutir la información me hace sentir mucho más confiada. Creo que es difícil porque estamos acostumbrados a hacer las cosas conforme nuestro propio entendimiento, pero en esta ocasión necesitábamos tomar en cuenta las necesidades y opiniones de otras personas, y debemos de aprender cómo integrar diferentes deseos en un solo documento.

Topic: Teachers' perception about the design of the new syllabus

Code: NE

Meaning: The process was not easy

RESPONDENT, LT1-I: Analizar la opinión de miembros de la comunidad escolar es algo nuevo para mí, esto es algo que nunca había hecho antes. Estaba acostumbrada a seguir el contenido del libro sin considerar otras opiniones. Al principio, estaba como en shock, pero con la ayuda de mis compañeros, especialmente al entender que la facultad necesita que haga las cosas de diferente manera, me hace pensar que necesito modificar la manera como hasta hoy estoy haciendo las cosas.

Topic: Teachers' perception about the design of the new syllabus

Code: ADNE

Meaning: Analyzing the data is not easy

RESPONDENT, LT4-II Analizar lo que otras personas opinan es algo nuevo para mí, esto es algo que nunca había hecho antes, y no es fácil. No suelo ser muy directa. Sin embargo el trabajo en pares me ayudó a entender la información de mejor manera y con otro punto de vista.

Topic: Teachers' perception about the design of the new syllabus

Code: ADNE

Meaning: Analyzing the data is not easy

RESPONDENT, LT3-I: Aun cuando tuve que modificar la forma como venía trabajando, lo cual no es fácil, el hecho de escuchar las opiniones de otros actores me ayudó a entender cuál era la situación real de los estudiantes, y que tipo de actividades y lenguaje auténtico necesitan desarrollar para tener éxito en el mundo.

Topic: Teachers' perception about the design of the new syllabus

Code: OHU

Meaning: The opinion of the others helped me to understand students

RESPONDENT, LT4-I: Creo que un elemento clave es el hecho de que hemos creado un ambiente de trabajo positivo lo que nos ha permitido descubrir, reconocer y aceptar las cosas que no hemos estado haciendo en forma adecuada. Una de ellas es que no estábamos remando en la misma dirección. No significa que ha sido fácil, pero la voluntad de trabajar en equipo ha hecho el trabajo mucho más fácil.

RESPONDENT, LT2-II: Para mí, el mayor desafío es decidir cómo utilizar la información e integrarla de la mejor manera en el programa

Topic: Teachers' perception about the design of the new syllabus

Code: CW

Meaning: Collaborative work

Topic: Teachers' perception about the design of the new syllabus

Code: FSD

Meaning: Feeding the syllabus with data is challenging

Researcher Q2: ¿Crees que el proyecto ha tenido algún impacto en el desarrollo de tus clases?

RESPONDENT, LT1-I: Creo que hay un rumbo, ya está el programa, y ellos ven ha se va hacer precisamente esto, a donde queremos llegar, el vocabulario que les sirve, ellos ya están muy conscientes que no es una clase de inglés x, que al estar en economía, este pues a lo que van, de lleno a lo que es empresa y negocios. Pero si, si tiene la clase un formato totalmente diferente, ya se ve muy bien hacia dónde vamos, lo que se va estar haciendo, el tipo de material que se trabaja y lo que se quiere hacer.

Topic: Teachers' perception about the effects of the project on the lessons

Code: CO

Meaning: Clear objectives

RESPONDENT, LT2-I: El cambio vino a ser muy positivo porque me dio la oportunidad de darme cuenta exactamente hacia donde quería dirigir mis esfuerzos en función de las cuestiones prácticas que resultara un elemento práctico para que los estudiantes aprendieran.

Topic: Teachers' perception about the effects of the project on the lessons

Code: CO

Meaning: Clear objectives

RESPONDENT, LT1-II: Si ha habido mucha mejora en cuanto al léxico, faltaba muchísimo, y el programa lo considero y lo realizamos así, que la clase es más como, mi clase en especial, más apegada a al área de los chicos.

Topic: Teachers' perception about the effects of the project on the lessons

Code: CIM

Meaning: Content improvement

RESPONDENT, LT3-II: Seguía muy de cerca el contenido del otro programa, pero era aburrido, y parecía que el único propósito de la clase era cubrir el contenido. Así que el cambio fue muy positivo porque nos dimos cuenta de que todo el conocimiento aprendido tenía una aplicación de la vida real. Así que este representó un cambio importante en la clase, la metodología de la clase no sólo se centró en el contenido, pero en lo que los estudiantes eran capaces de hacer con el idioma. Tuvieron que usar el idioma con un propósito, para cumplir una tarea.

Topic: Teachers' perception about the effects of the project on the lessons

Code: CIM

Meaning: Content improvement

RESPONDENT LT3-II: Otra área en donde el programa ha tenido un efecto es en el desarrollo de las habilidades lingüísticas de los estudiantes. Esta mucho más definido, el aprendizaje de vocabulario, las habilidades lingüísticas la tarea que deben de hacer está mucho mejor enfocada.

Topic: Teachers' perception about the effects of the project on the lessons

Code: CIM

Meaning: Content improvement

RESPONDENT LT1-III La clase no es solo gramática, estoy mejorando mucho en el área de vocabulario de negocios. También las estructuras gramaticales que estudiamos están mucho más ligadas con el área de estudio de los estudiantes, no tiene mucho que ver con lo que era antes, temas de gramática desasociados.

Topic: Teachers' perception about the effects of the project on the lessons

Code: CIM

Meaning: Content improvement

RESPONDENT, LT3-I: Influyó mucho, porque una cosa es lo que yo quiero como maestros, pero la información me hace pensar, yo quiero que aprender gramática, pero esa no es la percepción y necesidad que tengan los alumnos, ellos lo que quieren es hablar, o pasar un examen, o poder escribir.

Topic: Teachers' perception about the effects of the project on the lessons

Code: IMA

Meaning: Improvement of the approach of the class

Digamos antes solamente era mi visión y era como una parte, pero ya cuando tomas

en cuenta los estudiantes ves un panorama completamente amplio, me dio mucha luz. La actitud del alumno cambió de ser una actitud pasiva, a ser una actitud activa, involucrada, estaban metidos. El ánimo y la disposición dio un giro cuando ellos toman parte de la responsabilidad, y eso me aligeró mucho la carga, ya no tengo que estar luchando con ellos para que tomen responsabilidad.

RESPONDENT, LT2-II: La opinión de los estudiantes fue relevante para mí, lo que ellos pensaban, creían, la forma que ellos les gusta aprender fue revelador saber todo eso, y me hizo cambiar, por ejemplo antes pensaba que pues ya todo estaba en el libro y el libro era todo, ahora creo que puedo crear más incluso involucrar a los estudiantes en el proceso creativo. Les pregunto qué les gustaría hacer con el contenido de vocabulario y gramática, y ellos me sugieren las actividades. Han filmado videos, han realizado 'role plays', y todo ha surgido de ellos, más comunicativo. Antes creía que se tenía que aprender las cosas memorizando, escribiendo, ahora improvisan más se comunican más.

RESPONDENT, LT2-III El hecho de que los estudiantes expresen interés por estudiar inglés es algo que me motiva a seguir el plan, y cambiar el programa actual para hacerlo que se ajuste a lo que ellos necesitan

Topic: Teachers' perception about the effects of the project on the lessons

Code: IMA

Meaning: Improvement of the approach of the class

Topic: Teachers' perception about the effects of the project on the lessons

Code: IMA

Meaning: Improvement of the approach of the class

Researcher Q3: ¿Qué relevancia consideras que tiene la información que se recolectó durante el análisis de necesidades?

RESPONDENT, LT 1-I: Sabía de la importancia que tiene el inglés en las empresas multinacionales, pero el hecho

Topic: Teachers' perception about the relevance of the data gathered

Code: DEMM

que venga de una persona dentro de la empresa tiene un significado mayor

RESPONDENT, LT 2-I: Bueno, la información sobre las situaciones en las que se usa inglés, así como la información concerniente a como la gente usa el idioma y con quien, nos dio una mejor idea del tipo de actividades que debemos incluir en el programa. Por ejemplo estamos seguros de que debemos desarrollar habilidades de lectura. Esta información nos hace el trabajo fácil, es información auténtica

RESPONDENT, LT 3-I: Esta información nos ayudó a tomar decisiones sobre el material que necesitábamos usar en clases. Por ejemplo, los estudiantes deben de ser habilidosos en lectura y escritura, sobre correspondencia en negocios, también tiene que desarrollar mejor sus habilidades para escuchar a otras personas de diferentes partes del mundo

RESPONDENT LT4-I Las figuras se nos presentaron eran muy claras sobre esas parte el examen en donde los estudiantes fallaron, claramente mostraban las debilidades de los estudiantes.

RESPONDENT LT1-II La combinación de las figuras con la información sobre los resultados del examen fueron muy claras sobre las debilidades de los estudiantes. Una imagen dice más que mil palabras. Pero la figura fue aún más clara cuando vi la tabla que presentaba los descriptores sobre lo que los estudiantes deberán poder hacer en el examen. Sin esa descripción, probablemente no hubiera sabido que hacer o como mejorar el programa

RESPONDENT, LT4-II La información que observé me reveló cosas que no había dado cuenta sobre mis clases. Para ser honesta estaba un poco confundida sobre la manera como debería de usar la información, y transformarla en aprendizaje, pero estaba claro que las cosas se deberían de hacer diferente.

Meaning: The information provided by the employer has a major meaning

Topic: Teachers' perception about the relevance of the data gathered

Code: DEMM

Meaning: The information provided by the employer has a major meaning

Topic: Teachers' perception about the relevance of the data gathered

Code: DEMM

Meaning: The information provided by the employer has a major meaning

Topic: Teachers' perception about the relevance of the data gathered

Code: FTIM

Meaning: The use of figures and tables was important

Topic: Teachers' perception about the relevance of the data gathered

Code: FTIM

Meaning: The use of figures and tables was important

Topic: Teachers' perception about the relevance of the data gathered

Code: FTIM

Meaning: Data revealed different things about the class

Appendix 4: Sample of the transcription of an interview with language teachers about the advantages and disadvantages of the model

Researcher Q1 ¿Qué ventajas le encuentras al modelo?

RESPONDENT, LT4-I: Pienso que los pasos que el modelo sugiere son muy claros. Después de haber hecho el análisis ya se tiene bien claro que se necesita, se elaboran los objetivos, y una vez elaborados decido que es lo que se necesita para cubrir ese objetivo.

Topic: Advantage of the model

Code: CSF

Meaning: Clear steps to follow

RESPONDENT, LT3-I: Entonces, respecto a organización y planeación, el modelo por objetivos es perfecto, ya que es una forma muy clara de a donde debes llegar, es como si fueras por un camino que te guía.

Topic: Advantage of the model

Code: CSF

Meaning: Clear steps to follow

RESPONDENT, LT2-I: Cuando se establece un objetivo, a los estudiantes les queda muy claro que es lo que debe hacer y/o aprender, y lo hacen o lo aprenden.

Topic: Advantage of the model

Code: CSF

Meaning: Clear steps to follow

RESPONDENT, LT1-I: La principal ventaja es que ya hay una estructura y formalidad y esos se refleja en todo, en la clase, proyectas seguridad, hay un camino que seguir. Antes era como estar en el aire.

Topic: Advantage of the model

Code: CSF

Meaning: Clear steps to follow

Researcher Q2 ¿Cuáles son las ventajas de ‘NA’?

Topic: Advantage of NA

RESPONDENT, LT3-I: Creo que un análisis de necesidades es una gran ventaja ya que desde un principio te da la

Code: PPIWH

certeza de que es lo que vas hacer a la hora de construir un plan de trabajo, ya que el recabar información te da una idea mucho más clara de lo que se debe enseñar y aprender.

RESPONDENT, LT2-II: Entonces la información del cuestionario de opinión de los estudiantes, hizo darme cuenta que era necesario modificar el programa de la clase. Al involucrarme en el proyecto, conocer la información me ayudó a modificar el contenido de la clase, y mi forma de enseñar.

RESPONDENT, LT1-I: El modelo funciona muy bien para ver que atacar que puntos débiles existen y así dedicarle más tiempo a cierta habilidad, se puede ver realmente como están los estudiantes basados en resultados del examen. Saber con qué tipo de actividades se sienten más identificados, o les agrada más trabajar. Es bueno saber cuáles son sus preferencias a la hora de estudiar, que tipo de actividades desarrollar.

RESPONDENT, LT3-II: El análisis nos ayudó a ver cosas que nosotros no habíamos visto respecto a lo que sucedía en los grupos, nos ayudó a entender lo que se necesitaba, por ejemplo que los estudiantes querían estudiar con un libro de texto.

RESPONDENT, LT2-I: La información proporcionada en el análisis no solo nos ayuda entender que debemos enseñar, sino en muchas ocasiones como lo debemos hacer.

RESPONDENT, LT2-I: La información proporcionada en el análisis no solo nos ayuda entender que debemos enseñar, sino en muchas ocasiones como lo debemos hacer.

RESPONDENT, LT3-IV: Nos ayuda entender o corregir posibles errores que se

Meaning: Provides with precise information about what you have to do

Topic: Advantage of NA

Code: PPIWH

Meaning: Provides with precise information about what you have to do

Topic: Advantage of NA

Code: PPIWE

Meaning: Provides with precise information about the weakness

Topic: Advantage of NA

Code: PPIWE

Meaning: Provides with precise information about the weakness

Topic: Advantage of NA

Code: PPIHT

Meaning: Provides with precise information about how to teach

Topic: Advantage of NA

Code: PPIHT

Meaning: Provides with precise information about how to teach

Topic: Advantage of NA

estén cometiendo durante el proceso de enseñanza. **Code:** PPIM

Meaning: Provides with precise information to correct mistakes

Appendix 5: Sample of the transcription of an interview with language teachers about their participation in AR

Researcher Q1 ¿Se sintieron involucrados en el proyecto y de qué forma?

- RESPONDENT LT2-I: Desde el momento que se ven ventajas y desventajas en las modificaciones que se harían al programa, y desde el momento que se hace reflexión sobre el proceso, creo que en todo este proceso nos hemos involucrado todos.
- Topic:** The engagement of the teacher
Code: RF
Meaning: Reflection throughout the process
- RESPONDENT LT4-I: Entonces al estar reflexionando en el proceso pues estamos participando, si nos quedamos callados no hay participación.
- Topic:** The engagement of the teacher
Code: RF
Meaning: Reflection throughout the process
- RESPONDENT LT3-I: El haber estado involucrado me hizo reflexionar en la forma que estaba trabajando y darme cuenta de que no solamente era lo que yo pensaba que se podía hacer, sino que también había que tomar en consideración otros actores, en este caso los estudiantes.
- Topic:** The engagement of the teacher
Code: ACW
Meaning: Awareness of collaborative work
- RESPONDENT LT1-I: Lo que más me gusto fue el trabajo en equipo, el acompañamiento de los compañeros en todo momento fue muy importante, no fue el trabajo de una sola persona, sino fue un trabajo colaborativo.
- Topic:** The engagement of the teacher
Code: ACW
Meaning: Awareness of collaborative work
- RESPONDENT LT1-I: Otra forma como sentí el proyecto que era mío fue en relación al programa de mi clase, anteriormente seguía un programa que no sabía ni quien lo había hecho, yo no participé en el diseño, entonces era ajeno a las necesidades del grupo. En cambio este programa era mío, basado en a las necesidades de mis estudiantes.
- Topic:** The engagement of the teacher
Code: PMW
Meaning: The product of my work
- RESPONDENT LT3-II: Pienso que nos involucramos desde el comienzo. Esto era algo que queríamos y necesitábamos hacer. Hubo diversos momentos de discusión en donde pudimos expresar libremente nuestras opiniones. También hubo diferentes fuentes de información que nos ayudaron a tomar decisiones. El hecho de ver los resultados del análisis y
- Topic:** The engagement of the teacher
Code: CE
Meaning: Comprehensive engagement

empezar a trabajar en relación a la información revelada por el análisis por ejemplo, en la sugerencia que salió con lo del libro, de ver los resultados del examen y tomando las consideraciones en base a los resultados para decidir que podíamos hacer, haciendo todo esto estamos siendo involucrados o tomados en cuenta.

Researcher Q2: ¿Qué tan factible sería que ustedes, sin el apoyo de un tercero, emprendieran un proyecto de estas características?

RESPONDENT, LT4-I: No creo que maestros de inglés con una carga de trabajo como la que tenemos podamos hacer investigación. Sin embargo, si los maestros quisieran, lo pudieran hacer. Pero tomaría mucho más tiempo que si lo hiciera alguien que sólo se dedicara a eso. Así que, ¿cualquier maestro lo puede hacer? Si, si puede. Implica trabajo y la voluntad de querer hacerlo, y ver la necesidad de investigar.

Topic: The feasibility that teachers conduct a project by themselves

Code: HWL

Meaning: Heavy workload

RESPONDENT, LT4-I: ¿cualquier maestro lo puede hacer? Si, si puede. Implica trabajo y la voluntad de querer hacerlo, y ver la necesidad de investigar.

Topic: The feasibility that teachers conduct a project by themselves

Code: Willingness

Meaning: Willingness

RESPONDENT, LT4-I: Pero tomaría mucho más tiempo que si lo hiciera alguien que sólo se dedicara a eso.

Topic: The feasibility that teachers conduct a project by themselves

Code: TMT

Meaning: It will take more time

RESPONDENT, LT2-I: Emprender un proyecto de investigación implica que debemos trabajar tiempo extra, y probablemente nunca tengamos tiempo extra para trabajar, porque nuestra carga de trabajo es pesada.

Topic: The feasibility that teachers conduct a project by themselves

Code: WOT

Meaning: Work over time

RESPONDENT, LT2-I: Sin embargo, si vemos la necesidad de hacer un análisis, y estudiar el contexto, investigar los lugares donde se puede usar el idioma, y diseñamos un programa a la medida, lo podemos hacer, no importa si tenemos mucho trabajo. El punto es que los maestros deben sentir que necesita hacerlo.

Topic: The feasibility that teachers conduct a project by themselves

Code: Need

Meaning: If there is a need

RESPONDENT LT4-I: Entonces al estar reflexionando en el proceso pues estamos participando, si nos quedamos callados no hay participación.

Topic: The engagement of the teacher

Code: RF

Meaning: Reflection throughout the process

RESPONDENT, LT1-I: Con relación a investigar, algunas veces es mejor la intervención de un tercero como en tu caso. Un ejemplo son los cuestionarios. Los estudiantes se dieron cuenta que no los iban a aplicar sus maestros, lo que implicó que ellos se sintieron con la libertad de contestar en forma libre, en este caso creo que es necesario una persona externa. Por supuesto que nosotros, los maestros sabemos lo que hacemos, o no. Mejoramos un poco aquí, y otro poco allá. Pero un proyecto formal como este, produce datos duros.

Topic: The feasibility that teachers conduct a project by themselves

Code: INR

Meaning: It convenient the involvement of a researcher

RESPONDENT, LT2-I: Yo creo que la capacitación es importante, porque puedes tener el conocimiento, por ejemplo para poder dar la materia, pero de ahí a que tengas conocimiento de cómo poder implementar y como llevar a cabo un proyecto de estas características, no es fácil.

Topic: The feasibility that teachers conduct a project by themselves

Code: TET

Meaning: Teacher training

RESPONDENT, LT4-I: Yo creo que debe haber capacitación y tendría que ser muy práctico, demasiado práctico, algo así como vamos a hacerlo sobre la marcha.

Topic: The feasibility that teachers conduct a project by themselves

Code: TET

Meaning: Teacher training

Appendix 6: Sample of the transcription of an interview with language teachers about their opinions regarding the possible improvement on the syllabus

Research Q1 ¿Cuál es tu opinión respecto a las posibles mejoras en el proceso de diseño e implementación del currículo?

RESPONDENT, LT2-I: Para mi identificar cuáles eran las necesidades de los chicos me permitió hacer una modificación, por ejemplo hacer una modificación de los contenidos que se estaban utilizando. Porque estaba utilizando un manual que si es muy bueno, pero era demasiada carga que ellos sentían, y así lo plantearon. El modificar los contenidos impactó en la actitud de los estudiantes, tenían una mayor disposición para poder hacer las cosas.

Topic: Improvement of the syllabus

Code: ISN

Meaning: Identify students' needs

RESPONDENT, LT3-I: Para mí el mayor aporte que tuvo fue la importancia de hacer un análisis, porque realmente nunca lo habíamos tenido, eso fue lo primero. Aparte de que arrojó información real, datos duros, pues nos dio una guía sobre lo que debemos saber para lograr u mejor rendimiento con los alumnos.

Topic: Improvement of the syllabus

Code: ISN

Meaning: Identify students' needs

RESPONDENT, LT4-I: Un impacto fue en la elección del material, el libro tiene buenos contenidos aptos y acordes a las necesidades de los estudiantes. El hecho de escoger el libro estandarizó, unificó el método, tipos de contenido, desarrollo de habilidades.

Topic: Improvement of the syllabus

Code: Course book

Meaning: The election of the course book

RESPONDENT, LT1-I: Existía algo formal, por escrito, no sólo era información sin ningún uso. Así que desde el momento que había evidencia, los datos que se recolectaron en el análisis, desde ese momento había algo tangible, algo que indicaba cuales eran las necesidades.

Topic: Improvement of the syllabus

Code: Formality

Meaning: The formality of the project

RES RESPONDENT, LT2-II: Los estudiantes sienten que están aprendiendo. La modificación al programa ayudó,

Topic: Improvement of the syllabus

Code: SGC

porque los estudiantes no van a hacer negocios, entonces el hecho de haber cambiado los contenidos a algo más general les dio confianza. Siento que han ganado confianza para comunicarse en forma oral.

Meaning: Students gained confidence

RESPONDENT, LT1-III Un libro incluye materiales que necesitas enseñar. También tienen audio y un libro del maestro, y tienen un plan claro de lo que debemos enseñar. Lo único que debemos hacer es encontrar un libro adecuado para nuestras necesidades. La desventaja es que en algunas ocasiones el libro es caro y algunos estudiantes no pueden pagarlo.

Topic: Improvement of the syllabus

Code: NSTM

Meaning: The teaching materials of the new syllabus

RESPONDENT LT2-III: Con lo que respecta a los materiales, está muy bien ya que antes no teníamos materiales de audio, y los nuevos materiales que tenemos incluyen audio. El uso de los audios en la clase prepara a los estudiantes para el examen BE

Topic: Improvement of the syllabus

Code: NSTM

Meaning: The teaching materials of the new syllabus

Appendix 7: Sample of the transcription of an interview with language teachers about their opinions regarding the generation of knowledge grounded in practice

Research Q1 ¿Qué aprendizajes se generaron a partir de su experiencia de su participación en el proyecto?

RESPONDENT, LT2-I: Lo primero que yo diría es que para llevar a cabo un proyecto de investigación es que se deben seguir pasos, que se debe hacer primero que se debe hacer después, se toma un tiempo para que sucedan las cosas y al final debe hacerse un corte y refeccionar, analizar cómo vamos hasta este momento. Hacer un análisis reunimos y decir que nos parece.

Topic: The generation of knowledge

Code: FPR

Meaning: It is necessary to follow a process in research

RESPONDENT, LT2-II: Darle seguimiento a las cosas es muy importante, fue todo un proceso que se llevó porque te ayuda a tomar decisiones y eso te va a llevar a conseguir mejores resultados.

Topic: The generation of knowledge

Code: FPR

Meaning: It is necessary to follow a process in research

RESPONDENT, LT3-I: Otro punto importante es ser formal en la interpretación de los resultados. Yo no lo consideraba tan importante, un aprendizaje que a mí me quedó. Se deben interpretar los resultados y darle un tratamiento más formal.

Topic: The generation of knowledge

Code: Trustworthiness

Meaning: The trustworthiness of results

RESPONDENT, LT3-II: Ahora ya lo estamos haciendo de esa forma con los exámenes que se aplicaron, estoy aprendiendo pero creo que se debe hacer de esa forma, a través de gráficas de manera formal.

Topic: The generation of knowledge

Code: CSI

Meaning: The compilation and systematization of the information

RESPONDENT, LT1-I: El proceso de reflexión es fue importante, ya que muchas veces nuestro trabajo está viciado, no tratamos de vernos desde otra perspectiva como externos. En mi caso si fue como un cubetazo de agua fría 'mira estas haciendo las cosas así y hay otras formas de hacerlas'. Tengo ya algunos años trabajando en este nivel y si me dio un enfoque totalmente diferente de lo que

Topic: The generation of knowledge

Code: REFK

Meaning: Reflection was key

estoy haciendo y hacia dónde van mis clases, a mi me sirvió muchísimo.

RESPONDENT, LT1-II: Bueno lo que más me gustó fue el trabajo en equipo con mis compañeros, toda la retroalimentación que mis compañeras me dan me ayuda. Y nosotros no tenemos muchos momentos de encuentro, y trabajando de este modo es un buen momento para mí para seguir aprendiendo y compartir inquietudes, o problemas o casos en específicos que se presentan en la clase. El tener las sesiones donde se diseñaron los programas fue muy enriquecedor. El trabajo en equipo es fundamental.

Topic: The generation of knowledge

Code: ACW

Meaning: Awareness of collaborative work

Appendix 8: University English Syllabus

UNIVERSIDAD DE COLIMA

University English Syllabus (Spanish: PROGRAMA UNIVERSITARIO DE INGLES)

Synthetic syllabus

General information:

Undergraduate:	Any field.
Duration:	45 hours
Hours per week:	3
Theory:	1 hour
Practice:	2 hours
Subject:	English VB
Semestre:	First

Preciding subjetscs: IIC

Following subjects: Inglés IIIA, Inglés IIIB, Inglés IIIC, Inglés IVA, Inglés IVB, Inglés IVC, Inglés VA, Inglés VB.

OBJECTIVE (S):

To help students develop their linguistic skills, therefore they can communicate both in oral and written form.

TEACHING GUIDELINES:

The teaching methodology of the course aims to help the students develop their oral, speaking Reading and writing linguistic skills. This will be done mainly through dialogues, dictation, grammar, reading comprehension, written exercises, and auditory discrimination exercises, and repetition. Real life conversation about the English culture can also be done through memorization.

The work in class will be done individually, in pairs, in team mode. Independent work will be done at home or at the Self access Centre. This is with the aim of helping the students strengthen what they learned in class.

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

Continuous evaluation such as homework, class work, written tests according to the following:

Homework and class work: 40%

Pre- term exams: 30%

Term exams: 30%

Percentages can vary according to the own criteria of the teacher and the specific circumstances.

PROGRAMA UNIVERSITARIO DE INGLES

LEVEL IIC

THEME	Vocabulary	Grammar and Functions
1	Education.	Quantity words: <i>some-, any-, every-, too</i> and <i>very</i> <i>too much</i> and <i>too many</i> .
2	News stories.	The passive (Present and Past simple)
3	Having a party.	The unfinished past: Present Perfect Continuous and Present Perfect Simple <i>for</i> and <i>since</i>
4	Doing things in the house <i>Door make?</i>	Sentence patterns(1): verb + person + to + base form of the verb Sentence patterns(2): reported sentences <i>say</i> and <i>tell</i>
5	Sports	Verb patterns(1): <i>if, when, as soon as, unless</i> Verb patterns(2): verb and 2 objects <i>Give it to him.</i> <i>Give him the present</i>
6	<i>Revision</i> Phrasal verbs	<i>Revision</i> Mixed practice

	Mixed words.	Second Conditional Making comparisons Question Tags
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UNIVERSIDAD DE COLIMA

University English Syllabus (Spanish: PROGRAMA UNIVERSITARIO DE INGLES)

Synthetic syllabus

General information:

Undergraduate:	Any field.
Duration:	45 hours
Hours per week:	3
Theory:	1 hour
Practice:	2 hours
Subject:	English VA
Semestre:	Any, if they passed the preceding levels

Preceding subjects: IVB

Related subjects: None

Following subjects: None

OBJECTIVE (S):

To help students develop their linguistic skills, therefore they can communicate both in oral and written form.

TEACHING GUIDELINES:

The teaching methodology of the course aims to help the students develop their oral, speaking Reading and writing linguistic skills. This will be done mainly through dialogues, dictation, grammar, reading comprehension, written exercises, and auditory discrimination exercises, and repetition. Real life conversation about the English culture can also be done through memorization.

The work in class will be done individually, in pairs, in team mode. Independent work will be done at home or at the Self access Centre. This is with the aim of helping the students strengthen what they learned in class.

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

Continuous evaluation such as homework, class work, written tests according to the following:

Homework and class work: 40%

Pre- term exams: 30%

Term exams: 30%

Percentages can vary according to the own criteria of the teacher and the specific circumstances.

PROGRAMA UNIVERSITARIO DE INGLES

NIVEL VA

THEME	Vocabulary	Grammar and Functions
1	Cualquiera	"Unreal" use of the past
2	Collocation	Narrative forms
3	The senses	Verb patterns
4	Uses of just Ways of emphasising adjectives	Giving emphasis (cleft sentences and other devices)
5	Commercial English	Future forms

Appendix 9: New syllabus

Universidad de Colima Dirección General de Educación Superior Facultad de Economía					
Name of the Syllabus: Economics, Finance and International Affairs					
Subject information					
Name of the subject: Pre-Intermediate Business English I					
Name of the Academy: Academy of Languages					
Semester	Credits	Weekly hours	Teacher guidance hours	Independent work hours	Individual learning or tutoring activities weekly hours
1	6	6	4	2	0
Previous subject:					
Semester core subjects:					
Consecutive subjects: Pre-Intermediate Business English II					
Goals					
<p>General purpose and objectives: Facilitate learners with the language and skills they need to realise their full potential as speakers of business English at work and in social settings. Develop the grammatical competence, increase the lexical range and acquire strategies to communicate effectively in both professional and social situations.</p> <p>Developed competences of the graduate in the subject: The student will be able to discuss and deal with work, company and social situations. He will know how to do business in English and operate effectively in real-life business.</p>					
Learning Units					
UNIT 1. FIRST STEPS IN BUSINESS ENGLISH OBJECTIVE. Having a first approach to Business English. Developing communicative strategies and acquire new vocabulary in an artificial environment of working situations through little discussions based on short reading texts, Just-in-Time Teaching, role playing, internet research, etc. Student will catch key points in short, clear, simple messages or conversations. He will understand with some difficulty texts that consist of job-related language. He will use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms living conditions, his present, his education and job. He will write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate needs.					
PERIOD: August 14 th – September 16 th , 2013		UNIT 1 ASSESSMENT DATE: September 20 th , 2013			
Contents		Didactic strategies and learning experiences		Learning assessment strategies and criteria	
PART I Introducing yourself and Self introduction mini speech first day at work. Asking for personal information.		1-2 Listening to an extract with introductions of participants from a Resources training course (<i>individually</i>). Information gap activity: Work and jobs		ASSESSMENT PARTS I and II Vocabulary quizzes and dictation 20%	

<p>Discussing and describing social networking.</p> <p>Discussing about experience of training courses.</p> <p>Completing a company profile.</p> <p>LANGUAGE USAGE Use of Present Simple and Present Continuous.</p> <p>Collocations.</p> <p>VOCABULARY LEARNING Words for describing companies and words to do with computers. Human Resources vocabulary. Social network vocabulary.</p>	<p>(profiles). Making a presentation about yourself on Facebook.</p> <p>3. Reading about Facebook (in pairs) and discussing some questions. Internet-based research: Different Social networks and vocabulary for using during the semester.</p> <p>4. Looking at key vocabulary associated with Human Resources (matching exercises). Internet-based research: People's experience of training courses.</p> <p>5. Listening comprehension of an extract from a radio program about a company and completing detail exercises. Completing a word building exercise with important business vocabulary.</p> <p>Examining the use of Present Simple for describing stable situations and Present Continuous for describing stable situations.</p> <p>Find the Rule – students are given sets of examples that demonstrate a single rule and are asked to find and state the rule.</p> <p>Working on collocations to talk about companies.</p> <p>Completing a weekly vocabulary report sheet.</p>	<p>Project: Designing a business blog (writing) and presenting it to the class (oral presentation) 30%</p> <p>Active participation in discussions, games, etc. Homework 30%</p> <p>Independent work: CAAL and Rosetta Stone</p>
<p>PART II</p> <p>Discussing and expressing opinion about leading executives and opportunities for women in business.</p> <p>Examining the use of blogs in business.</p> <p>Talking and asking about having a new job.</p> <p>Examining how people can balance work and stress.</p> <p>LANGUAGE USAGE Expressing frequency. Phrasal verbs. <i>Do</i> as an auxiliary.</p> <p>VOCABULARY LEARNING</p>	<p>1. Looking at a range of statistics about women in the workplace. Reading an extract of a blog of a leading executive on a corporate website and discussing (in pairs).</p> <p>Internet-based research: Business blogs in order to find out the most common topics, order, dynamics, interaction, comments, etc. Presenting it in class (in pairs).</p> <p>Listening to a dialogue about discussing the demands of someone's new job and finding out details in an information-gap exercise. Debating the advantages and disadvantages of having a new job.</p> <p>Completing a questionnaire of taking</p>	

Work and routines.	<p>regular exercise. Reading and giving opinion of an article about stress and relaxing. Having an exercise session in class (Team challenges).</p> <p>Examining the use of Do as an auxiliary and some phrasal verbs. Completing a chart about frequency in work and routines. Find the Rule – students are given sets of examples that demonstrate a single rule and are asked to find and state the rule.</p> <p>Completing a weekly vocabulary report sheet.</p>	
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Gomm et al; (2009). In company, Pre-Intermediate Teacher’s Book. Oxford: Macmillan Publishers Limited.
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INTERNET RESOURCES
www.businessenglishonline.net
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business/>
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/business/talkingbusiness/>
<http://www.youtube.com/>

UNIT 2. TELEPHONING AND FIRST MEETINGS

OBJECTIVE. Developing telephone skills. Learning and practicing to sound more polite and friendly on the phone. Student will bridge the gap between classroom theory and on-the-job practice through discussion of real-world and decision-making in a case study.
 Student will be able to write short, simple notes and messages relating to work. Student will be able to handle very short social or work information exchanges, even though he can’t usually understand enough. He can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms other people, living conditions, my educational background and his present or most recent job.

PERIOD: September 23rd – October 25 th , 2013	UNIT 2 ASSESSMENT DATE: October 28 th , 2013
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Contents	Didactic strategies and learning experiences	Learning assessment strategies and criteria
<p>PART I</p> <p>Saying numbers</p> <p>2. Making phone calls</p> <p>3. Discussing and solving telephone frustration.</p>	<p>1. Listening and completing exercises by writing down numbers that student hear. Games: Practice numbers pronunciation. (Team challenges). Conversation practice based on prompts (in pairs).</p> <p>Role-play 1: Ringing to the office to getting necessary information in a trip</p>	<p>ASSESSMENT PARTS I and II</p> <p>Vocabulary quizzes and dictation 20%</p> <p>Case Study: Internet Access. Taking part in a meeting Reading comprehension Listening comprehension</p>

<p>LANGUAGE USAGE Indirect questions.</p>	<p>situation. Role play 2: Telephoning for information and taking notes.</p>	<p>30%</p>
<p>VOCABULARY LEARNING Telephone language Numbers</p>	<p>3. Gap-fill exercises: Verbs and telephone expressions.</p>	<p>Active participation in discussions, games, etc. Homework 30%</p>
<p>PART II</p>	<p>Reading about business by telephone and Quescussion (discussion conducted entirely in the form of questions). Listening and completing a form exercises: Telephone calls extracts. Simulation: Telephone sales.</p>	<p>Independent work: CAAL and Rosetta Stone 20%</p>
<p>1. Making conversation with new people. 2. Talking about other people.</p>	<p>Find the Rule – students are given sets of examples that demonstrate a single rule and are asked to find and state the rule.</p>	
<p>LANGUAGE USAGE WH questions</p>	<p>Completing a weekly vocabulary report sheet.</p>	
<p>VOCABULARY LEARNING Adjectives for describing people. Usual expressions for giving opinion.</p>	<p>1. Completing charts exercises based on listening comprehension: a first meeting. Simulations of first meetings situations. Finding out about a person sitting next to you.</p>	
<p></p>	<p>2. Videos to describe what businessmen do and their personalities. Short dialogues: gossip talks about others.</p>	
<p></p>	<p>Find the Rule – students are given sets of examples that demonstrate a single rule and are asked to find and state the rule.</p>	
<p></p>	<p>Completing a weekly vocabulary report sheet.</p>	
<p></p>	<p>HALLOWEEN ACTIVITY</p>	

Bibliography and didactic resources :

Clarke, Simon (2009). In company, Pre-Intermediate Student’s Book. Oxford: Macmillan Publishers Limited.
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INTERNET RESOURCES

- www.businessenglishonline.net
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business/>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/business/talkingbusiness/>
- <http://www.youtube.com/>

UNIT 3. COMPANY HISTORIES AND CORRESPONDANCE

OBJECTIVE: Practicing speaking and get confident for short presentations. Get used to the language through the habit of reading a novel.
 Student will write a very simple email, for example telling a mistake in an order, complaining in a simple way. He will be able to understand short stories with a simple language in past.

PERIOD: October 29th – December 2nd, 2013

UNIT 3 ASSESSMENT DATE: December 6th, 2013

Contents	Didactic strategies and learning experiences	Learning assessment strategies and criteria
<p>PART I</p> <p>Making a presentation about a company’s history. Talking about the past.</p> <p>Discussing personal experience of the internet.</p> <p>Developing reading strategies.</p> <p>LANGUAGE USAGE Past Simple</p> <p>VOCABULARY LEARNING Business communication Business verbs for describing companies and what they do. Time expressions.</p> <p>PART II</p> <p>1. Developing writing strategies.</p> <p>2. Giving and receiving details about an important order.</p> <p>LANGUAGE USAGE <i>Will</i> for unplanned decisions.</p> <p>VOCABULARY LEARNING Business communication Usual expressions for complaining about errors in an order. Punctuation and spelling.</p>	<p>1. Completing a text about a company history and listing the dates and events. Preparing a short presentation about a company (origin, opening of new offices, periods of growth, personalities, events, products, etc).</p> <p>2. Radio documentary listening and quiz. Completing an article with verbs in Past Simple. Game: When was the last time you...?</p> <p>3. Reading a novel: - Characters analysis. - Business situations analysis. - Business strategies, etc. - Questionnaire.</p> <p>Find the Rule – students are given sets of examples that demonstrate a single rule and are asked to find and state the rule.</p> <p>Completing a weekly vocabulary report sheet.</p> <p>1. Emails from a company: correcting mistakes in punctuation and grammar. Fill the spaces to complete an e-mail confirming order. Writing an e-mail to tell about a mistake in an order.</p> <p>2. Put in the correct order exercise: Telephone conversations about important orders. Role-play: a complaining telephone call.</p> <p>Crossword. Matching the parts of sentences.</p> <p>CHRISTMAS ACTIVITY</p>	<p>ASSESSMENT PARTS I and II</p> <p>Vocabulary quizzes and dictation 20%</p> <p>Case Study: Dalway Computer Buying a computer in a store or by Internet. Listening comprehension. Simulation: manager-costumer. 30%</p> <p>Active participation in discussions, games, etc. Homework 30%</p> <p>Independent work: CAAL and Rosetta Stone 20%</p>

Bibliography and didactic resources :

Clarke, Simon (2009). In company, Pre-Intermediate Student’s Book. Oxford: Macmillan Publishers Limited.
 Gomm et al; (2009). In company, Pre-Intermediate Teacher’s Book. Oxford: Macmillan Publishers Limited.
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INTERNET RESOURCES

- www.businessenglishonline.net
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business/>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/business/talkingbusiness/>
- <http://www.youtube.com/>

ASSESSMENT CALENDAR

1st ASSESSMENT	2nd ASSESSMENT	3rd ASSESSMENT		
September 20 th , 2013	October 28 th , 2013	December 6 th , 2013		

Teacher's name and signature: *MLH. Vanessa Fonseca Salazar*

Design date: August 2013

 Academy President Approval
 Academy Approval date: _____

Universidad de Colima Dirección General de Educación Superior Facultad de Economía					
Name of the syllabus: <i>Second language competency based syllabus</i>					
Identification data of the subject					
Name of the subject : Advanced English I					
Teacher academy: Languages					
Semestre	Credits	Week hours	Face to face	Independent work	Tutoring
1	6	6	4	2	0
Preciding subjects: None					
Related subjects: None					
Concecutive subjects: Advanced English II					
Goals					
Goal: Students develop skills to learn new vocabulary. Additionally, they student strengthen, review and analytically explore grammar aspects through writing. Students improve their ability to communicate as business English language students. They improve the pronunciation; control the four skills effectively with the aim of solving problems: they exchange and interpret information in both professional and social situations.					
Elements of the profile of graduate developed throughout the subject: . He/she efficiently and clearly communicates in a written and oral form using appropriate message according to the situation, and different audiences. .Identifies, uses, and interprets written and oral messages (graphs) . Produces well written texts considering the audience and the social situation. . Understands authentic dialogues spoken in the real world					
Units					
Unit I : Business or pleasure? And Exchanging information					
Aim: Students will develop communicative skills, discover and learn business related vocabulary. They will practise different functions, roles, about how to build relationships with clients and colleagues, exchanging information in business situations linked to real situations					
Term : August 12-September 13		Evaluation date : September 13th			
Content		Teaching methodologies		Evaluation criteria	

<p>1 . Discussing corporate entertainment . Sharing information to select appropriate corporate events for clients. . Avoiding saying “No” . Paying and receiving compliments . Keeping up a conversation LANGUAGE USAGE . Tense review . Questions VOCABULARY LEARNING . Business in a small talk 2 . Describing attitudes to and content of meetings . Paraphrasing information . Pointing out discrepancies . Dialogue-building using the language of meetings . Breaking bad news and writing a report LANGUAGE USAGE . Conditionals VOCABULARY LEARNING . Meetings</p>	<p>.Think, pair and share . Buzz groups . Listening tasks . Reflective discussion . Debates . Brainstorming . Jigsaw reading activities. . Question generation . Writing to inform . Role playing . Playing games . Poster tours . Webquest .Filling gaps . Matching . crossword puzzles . Quizzes. . Creating a manual</p>	<p>. 80% class attendance in order to be given the final grade 20% Project and homework 20% Written exams 20% Oral presentation 20% Classwork 20% Independent work (CAAL)</p>
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Basic bibliography:
 In company, Upper-Intermediate book, Mark Powell, second edition, MACMILLAN
REFERENCIAS ELECTRÓNICAS:
www.businessenglishonline.net

Unit II: Do the right thing and Voice and Visuals

Students will identify the function of corporate social responsibility (CSR) to become aware about the ethics in business. They will learn vocabulary related to environment, business, numbers and graphs so they can use it to design visual material. They will also participate in simulated business meetings, and they will make presentations.

Period: Sept. 20 –Oct 21	Evaluation : Oct 25	
Content	Teaching methodologies	Evaluation criteria

<p>3 . Discussing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) .Playing devil’s advocate in a debate . Making a series of decisions that are both ethically and commercially sound LANGUAGE USAGE . Yes/NO and Object Questions VOCABULARY LEARNING .Related to CSR</p> <p>4 . Doing a quiz on how to command attention . Giving feedback on a presentation . Using visuals in a presentation . Analysing the voice in presentations . Giving a speech . Design graphs/charts LANGUAGE USAGE . Modal verbs VOCABULARY LEARNING . Presentations</p>	<p>. Think- Pair - Share . Buzz groups . Brainstorming . Discussion . Reading tasks . skimming and scanning . Structured controversy . Debate . Listening tasks . Role playing .Writing to inform . Concept mapping . Individual and group presentations .graffiti</p> <p>.Webquest .Filling gaps . Matching . Investigating . Playing games . Puzzles . Quizzes . Creating a manual</p>	<p>. 80% class attendance in order to be given the final grade</p> <p>20% Project and homework 20% Written exams 20% Oral presentation 20% Classwork 20% Independent work (CAAL)</p>
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Bibliography: In company, Upper-Intermediate book, Mark Powell, second edition, MACMILLAN
 REFERENCIAS ELECTRÓNICAS:
www.businessesenglishonline.net

Unit III: Problems on the phone and leading meetings

Students will improve their communicative skills when making and receiving telephone calls in English. They will also work with e-mails, notes and faxes. They will work with materials related to business strategies concerning functional language and resolute roles that a leader of a meeting uses.

Period: October 28-Dicember2 **Evaluation:** December the 2nd

Content	Teaching methodologies	Evaluation criteria
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Appendix 10: Sample of the transcription of an interview with language teachers about the UEP syllabus

Researcher Q1: ¿Cómo es el programa de inglés?

RESPONDENT, LT1: Pues el programa es básicamente el contenido de la serie de libro Matters. Es el mismo contenido para cualquier escuela de la universidad, no importa quien tome las clases (Appendix 7, RQ1, RESPONDENT, LT1)

Topic: Opinion of language teachers about the UEP syllabus

Code: Matters

Meaning: The UEP syllabus is based on the book matters

RESPONDENT, LT2: Uno de los problemas que le encuentro al programa de inglés es que tiene mucho contenido por cubrir, así que aun cuando uno se esfuerce por enseñar todo la verdad es casi imposible hacerlo (Appendix 7, RQ1, RESPONDENT, LT2)

Topic: Opinion of language teachers about the UEP syllabus

Code: LotC

Meaning: A lot of content to cover

RESPONDENT, LT3: El programa es solo una tabla de contenidos, una tabla por unidad.

Topic: Opinion of language teachers about the UEP syllabus

Code: GrVoc

Meaning: List of grammar and vocabulary

RESPONDENT, LT3:

No especifica los objetivos específicos, como por ejemplo el objetivo general del curso, que es lo que los estudiantes tienen que hacer o saber, existe un objetivo pero es relacionado al contenido. Así que básicamente uno hace deducciones de acuerdo al contenido.

Topic: Opinion of language teachers about the UEP syllabus

Code: OntS

Meaning: Objectives are not stated

RESPONDENT, LT3:

Pero un enunciado que describa el nivel de inglés que los estudiantes deben alcanzar, o las competencias que deben desarrollar no está claramente definido. Es básicamente una tabla de contenidos del libro.

Topic: Opinion of language teachers about the UEP syllabus

Code: ELntS

Meaning: English level is not stated

Researcher Q2: ¿Conoces los objetivos del programa?

RESPONDENT, LT2 Fue confuso para mi entender exactamente lo que tenía que hacer, puesto que el programa es

Topic: Opinion of language teachers about the UEP syllabus

Code: Confusing

meramente una tabla de contenidos, la selección de materiales se basaba en mi experiencia, y no mucho en el contenido del programa

Meaning: The UEP is confusing

RESPONDENT, LT1 Creo que los maestros de inglés tienen que hacer un magnífico trabajo al darle al programa un sentido adecuado. El maestro le puede dar el enfoque adecuado y algunas veces resulta difícil. El programa es solamente una tabla, carece de otros elementos que hacen de él un plan genuino que ayude al maestra llegar a algún punto.

Topic: Opinion of language teachers about the UEP syllabus

Code: Confusing

Meaning: The UEP is confusing

Researcher Q3: ¿Qué dice sobre la evaluación?

RESPONDENT, LT2 El programa no contiene un enunciado claro sobre evaluación. Obviamente hay actividades de evaluación en el curso que evalúan el contenido, en algunas ocasiones los estudiantes hacen alguna actividad oral o de escritura, pero no existe un enunciado claro sobre la evaluación, algún método que evalúe el progreso de los alumnos.

Topic: Opinion of language teachers about the UEP syllabus

Code: NtSE

Meaning: Does not contain a statement about evaluation

RESPONDENT, LT3 Respecto a la aplicación del examen BEC fue algo que se incluyó en el plan curricular. Pero eso nunca sucedió, ya que los estudiantes nunca estuvieron listos para ese propósito, no había materiales para enseñar o para preparar a los estudiantes para que tomaran el examen, y nosotros no nos sentíamos confiados para enseñar esas clases porque no conocíamos los materiales

Topic: Opinion of language teachers about the UEP syllabus

Code: SntBEC

Meaning: Students were not ready to take the BEC

RESPONDENT, LT1 Recuerdo que el año pasado de repente se nos dijo que debíamos enseñar los contenidos del programa, y al mismo tiempo incluir el contenido del inglés de negocios porque el programa se había convertido en un programa de inglés para negocios, debido al perfil de los estudiantes. Pero para ser honesta, estábamos perdidos no estábamos seguros de que se trataba todo esto. Así

Topic: Opinion of language teachers about the UEP syllabus

Code: Prescript

Meaning: It was a prescript syllabus

que lo que hicimos fue incluir algo del contenido relacionado a negocios al programa anterior.

RESPONDENT, LT2-II: Recolectar materiales de la manera como hemos venido haciéndolo hasta el momento tiene la desventaja de que es difícil de encontrar materiales apropiados para el nivel de los estudiantes. No tenemos tiempo para buscar los materiales y adaptarlos a nuestras clases. Es difícil que tengamos acceso a una impresora, y todas las cosas que necesitamos producir de materiales. Además de eso es difícil que encontremos material de audio

Topic: Opinion of language teachers about the UEP syllabus

Code: TMD

Meaning: Teaching materials are disadvantageous

Appendix 11 Code-book

Topic	Code	Meaning	Example
UEP syllabus	Matters	The UEP syllabus is based on the course book matters	The content of the book Matters
	GrVoc	List of grammar and vocabulary	The content of the syllabus is grammar and vocabulary
	LotC	A lot of content to cover	The syllabus is only a table of contents
	ELntS	The English level is not stated	An statement that states the level of English is not included
	Confusing	The UEP is confusing	It was confusing for me to understand what to do
			Each teacher has to give meaning to the syllabus
	NtSE	Does not contain a statement about evaluation	The syllabus does not contain a clear statement about evaluation
	SntBEC	Students were not ready to take the BEC	The BEC exam was something included in the plan of the school. But it never happened
We were not certain what all this thing about business English was about			
Prescript	It was a prescript syllabus	We were told what to teach and what to do	
	TMD	Teaching materials are disadvantageous	The collection of materials has been disadvantageous
Needs in the context of	BEC	Part of the curriculum plan	They will prepare to take the

educational institution			Business English Certificate
	CLIL	English as a medium of instruction	To teach some classes of different content areas in English
	ER	English is a requirement	English is a decisive factor in the decision to choose an employee
			English is used to read
Needs in the context of the workplace	EK	English knowledge provides employees opportunities to travel abroad	If candidates know English well, the company can train them abroad
	EIC	English international certificate	The company offers opportunities for employees to get an English international certificate
	ERP	English is needed for reading purposes	Employees have to read manuals, emails, in English
	ELSP	English for listening and speaking purposes	Occasionally. Employees could participate in video conferences with English native speakers
			This information helped us to make decisions
Teachers' perception about the design of the new syllabus	NE	The process was not easy	It hasn't been easy for me because I am used to planning my lessons on a daily basis
	NSTM	The teaching materials of the new syllabus	The book includes a lot of different materials
These materials include audio, something that we			

			did not have
	CW	Collaborative work	A key element is that we have created a positive environment
	FSD	Feeding the syllabus with data is challenging	He biggest challenge was to use the data to feed the syllabus
	ADNE	Analysing the data is not easy	Analysing the opinion of people is something new for me
			To analyse the opinion of the school members is something new for me
	OHU	The opinion of the others helped me understand students	To listen to the opinion of the others helped me understand what students beliefs
	AD	Advantages	The steps to design and to develop the syllabus that the model suggests are easy to follow
			The main advantage is that there is structured
	DIS	Disadvantages	When you carry the plan out other needs appear
			Working with objectives also limits the scope as learners
Teachers' perception about the effects of the project on the lessons	CO	Clear objectives	There is a clear path where we should go
			I found out where exactly I should lead my efforts
	CIM	Content improvement	Improved the vocabulary
The language content of the class was more authentic			

			Improvement of the skill development
			It is improving a lot in the area of vocabulary for business
	IMA	Improvement of the approach of the class	Now, it is centred on what students wanted and not only on what I wanted centred
			I ask students questions about the class, and what they want to do with the new content
			Adjust the plan to what they need
Advantages of the project	CSF	Clear steps to follow	The steps that model suggest are very clear
			The clearly tells you where you have to arrive
			Students are clear about what they have to do
			There's a clear structure
The engagement of the teachers in the project	RF	Reflection throughout the process	I was involved in the whole process doing reflection
			We get involved when we reflect upon the different situations
	ACW	Awareness of collaborative work	I realized the importance of collaborative work
	PMW	The product of my work	I felt the project was mine, I designed a syllabus based on my students' needs
	CE	Comprehensive engagement	Different moments of analysis, engagement and reflection

Syllabus improvement	ISN	Identify students' needs	An evidence of improvement was to identify the students' needs For me the NA was key
	Couse book	The election of the course book	The book was very important as it has relevant content for the students
	Formality	The formality of the project	The project was formal, it was not only information without any use
	SGC	Students gained confidence	Students feel they are learning
Knowledge grounded in practice	FPR	It is necessary to follow a process in research	First to conduct a research project, it is necessary to follow steps
			Keep track of things
	CSI	The compilation and systematization of the information	Data must be interpreted
			Results of the exams should be formally presented
REFK	Reflection was key	The process of reflection is important	
ACW	Awareness of collaborative work	What I liked the most was collaborative work	

Appendix 12 Information shared with the language teachers about the needs of the workplace

Category	Descriptions of the requirements concerning language knowledge and skills a candidate should have
English is a requirement of the workplace	Students with a very good command of English are in many cases hired first
	English was a job entry requirement
	Candidates have to include an English certificate in their résumé indicating their language proficiency
	Candidates also have to take a language test, which included writing, listening and speaking sections
	All employees are constantly invited to take the language test known as TOEIC to renew their knowledge and skills
	Their command of the language could become a key factor of improvement in their professional lives.
Situations in which English is used and people employees use English with	Moments in which employees have to read information about different areas of the company
	They need to be ready to use the language at any moment and in different situations
	Information is written in different formats as well, and with different purposes
	Employees usually interacted in a written form through emails, chats or forums
	Occasionally they have to participate in video conferences held by workers located in other companies mainly from the United States
	Very rarely people from other countries like India or the United States come to Colima and visit the companies to exchange experiences
	Employees sometimes could travel to other English speaking countries for training or to participate in working teams
	Employees sometimes need to carry out talks with coworkers from other nations
How the language is used	Reading is the language ability employees use most often, followed by writing, then listening and speaking
	Electronic means are undoubtedly the most common channels of communication
	The types of texts most frequently read are technical documents related to information of different departments of the company

Appendix 13 What students are being tested in the listening test.

Listening test	
Parts	Description of the language knowledge and skills students are being tested on
1	Candidates are being tested on their understanding of spoken English used in a range of situations and on their ability to extract factual information.
2	Candidates have to fill in each of the gaps. The answers may include dates, prices, percentages or figures. This part has a numerical focus and sometimes there are names that are spelled out on the recording; answers to these questions have to be written with correct spelling.
3	Candidates hear a monologue. On the question paper there is a set of notes or a form with gaps. There are seven gaps to fill in and the answers may be one or two words. On occasion, the key to one of the gaps may be a date.
4	Candidates are being tested on their ability to understand the gist of a longer text and to extract detailed and specific information as required by the questions. They may also be tested on the speakers' opinions.

Adapted from Cambridge English Business Certificates handbook for teachers (2016).

Appendix 14 What students are being tested in the reading test.

Reading test	
Parts	Description of the language knowledge and skills students are being tested on
1	In this part, there is an emphasis on understanding short real-world notices, messages. The difficulty of the task will not lie in understanding context but in identifying or interpreting meaning.
2	In this part, there is an emphasis on reading for detailed comprehension. Candidates are required to match each question to an appropriate part of the text. The testing focus of this part is vocabulary and meaning, using skimming and scanning skills.
3	In this part, there is an emphasis on interpreting visual information. This task consists of eight graphs or charts (or one or more graphics with eight distinct elements) and five questions. Each question is a description of a particular graphic (or element of a graphic) and candidates are expected to match the questions to their corresponding graphs.
4	This part tests the candidate's ability to locate detailed factual information. Candidates are not expected to understand every word in the text but they should be able to pick out salient points and infer meaning where words in the text are unfamiliar. The questions refer to factual information in the text, but candidates are required to do some processing in order to answer the questions correctly.
5	This part tests candidates' reading for gist and specific information. Candidates are expected to employ more complex reading strategies in this task, in that they should demonstrate their ability to extract relevant information, to read for gist and detail, to scan the text for specific information, and to understand the purpose of the writer and the audience for which the text is intended.
6	This part tests candidates' grammatical accuracy and understanding of text structure. This part has a predominantly grammatical focus and tests candidates' understanding of the general and detailed meaning of a text, and in particular their ability to analyse structural patterns.
7	This part tests candidates' ability to transfer information. Candidates are given two short texts, for example a memo and an advertisement, and are asked to complete a form based on this material. There are five gaps, which should be completed with a word, a number or a short phrase. In this part, candidates are tested on their ability to extract relevant information and complete a form accurately.

Adapted from Cambridge English Business Certificates handbook for teachers (2016).

Appendix 15 What students are tested on the writing test.

Writing test	
Parts of the writing test	Description of the tasks students are asked to accomplish
Part 1	Students should be able to produce an internal communication (e.g. note, message, memo or email) response. Arranging appointments, asking for permission, giving instructions
Part 2	Students should be able to produce a piece of business correspondence (letter, fax, email). Apologising and offering compensation, making or altering reservations, dealing with requests, etc.

Adapted from Cambridge English Business Certificates handbook for teachers (2016).

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