

## Implementing a Teacher Training Program Supported by ICT

TORRES HERNÁNDEZ Ana Guadalupe (1), VERA PEDROZA Alejandro (2),  
GUILLÉN RAMÍREZ Susana Anabel (3), GUZMÁN VALDEZ Juana Elena (4)

Universidad Veracruzana, México (1)

Universidad Veracruzana, México (2)

Universidad Veracruzana, México (3)

Universidad Veracruzana, México (4)

### Abstract

*The University of Veracruz has 6 Language Centers in different cities of the State of Veracruz in Mexico. Their main mission consists of fostering language learning acquisition through a wide variety on language courses aimed at university students as well as people from the community of each city. Through the years, these Centers have also committed to meet the different demands of society. Among them, we found the necessity to support English language teachers from upper secondary education to improve their language level and their teaching-learning strategies in order to perform more effectively in their own institutions by making use of the new information and communication technologies.*

*For this reason, a group of teachers of the 6 Language centers carried out a very hard work in the creation and implementation of a teacher training certification course for English as a second language teachers.*

*This paper describes the implementation of this certification program in the Language Center of Poza Rica, Mexico as well as the work and tasks done in the module "Fundamentals of Instructional design and assessment of English language. It mainly aims at comparing the results obtained by two generations of students who work with different educative platforms. Findings suggest similar behaviors regarding knowledge acquisition.*

**Keywords:** *Teacher training, language teaching, ICT;*

### 1. Introduction

Some people say they could never be teachers because they are not patient enough to teach someone. Other people say it is a very easy job because teachers usually work from Monday to Friday and have lots of vacation periods. In our opinion, if a person has the vocation for teaching, it will be the easiest and most enjoyable job in the world.

According to Harmer (2002) [1], teachers describe themselves like actors because they are always on stage, like orchestral conductors because they direct conversations, and even like gardeners because they plant the seeds and watch them grow.

But, what makes a good teacher? Harmer (2001) [2] asked this question to a variety of people such as teacher trainers, teachers, and students. Here are some of their answers:

- "A good teacher makes his/her lessons interesting"
- "A good teacher must love his/her job"
- "Good teachers have a lot of knowledge, not only of their subject"
- "A good teacher is someone who has an affinity with his/her students"
- "She/he should be able to correct students without offending them"

In summary, Harmer (2001) simply responds the question by stating that "good teachers care more about their students' learning than they do about their own teaching" (p.3). These kind of teachers are the ones who worry about preparing themselves and being up to date by doing research, attending to academic events and of course getting the necessary training for improving their teaching methods and techniques.

The implementing of teacher training courses becomes necessary because "teachers have a direct effect on educating the individuals in all the sectors and, so designing the societies. For this reason, teacher training process has been regarded as one of the most important issues of the education system" (Kildan, İbret, Pektaş, Aydınözü, İncikabı, & Recepoğlu, (2013) [3].

In the field of language teaching, "there has been an increased demand for language teachers due to 'the age of communication' and the consequent need to train these teachers" (Wallace, 1997, p.2) [5].

Therefore, the Universidad Veracruzana (UV), has prepared different graduate programs to help language teachers to improve their teaching methods and techniques in order to offer better language courses in all its schools.

## 2. Teacher training programs at Universidad Veracruzana (UV)

The University of Veracruz has about 90 graduate programs such as: specialties, master's degrees and Doctoral programs in the 5 different regions where the University is located (see figure 1).

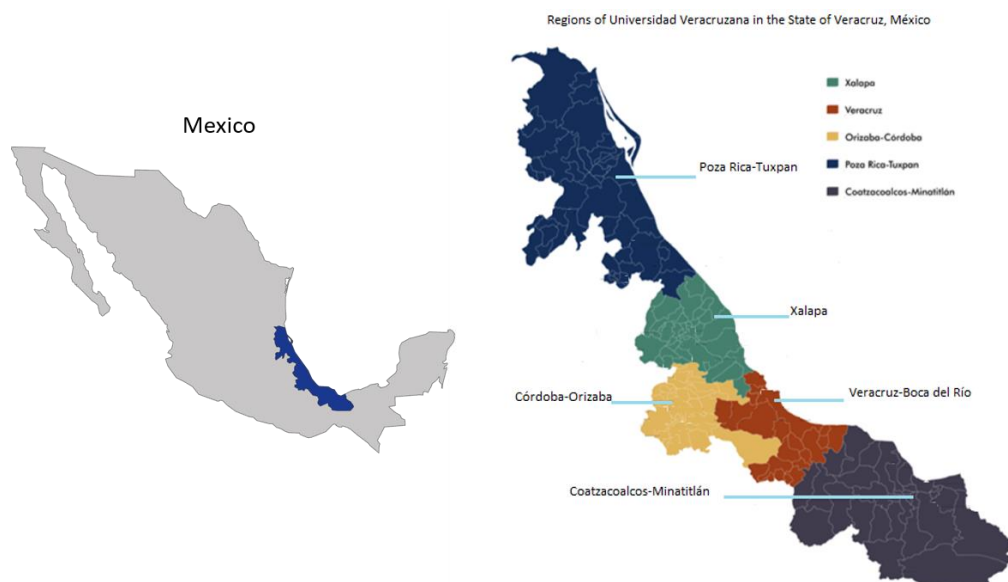


Figure 1. UV's Regions in the State of Veracruz.

Most of University's degree programs that help training teachers belong to the area of Humanities. Among the foreign language programs we can find one Doctoral Program in Language Science and two Master Degrees, one in Teaching English as a Foreign Language and the other in French Didactics (Universidad Veracruzana, 2018) [4].

These professional education opportunities are mostly centred in the city of Xalapa, which is the Capital City of the State of Veracruz. So, applicants have to move from their cities to study one of these programs carrying them time and economic problems. For this reason, the UV International Office and the Language Centres started a collaboration agreement with the Office of High School Education in the State of Veracruz to develop a special teacher training program for high school teachers of English from all over the State due to the needs these teachers had to regularize their professional profile. This program was called Diploma in Training and Certification of Language Teachers.

## 3. Diploma in Training and Certification of Language Teachers

The importance of this Diploma is derived from the impact of globalization on Mexican national education that is tangible in the Educational Reform of 2013 and in the design of current educational programs based on the Competency approach. So, the need for training teachers in Secondary schools results from their various profiles, which require updating methodologies, language skills and competencies for teaching English as a foreign language.

Therefore, the meetings to develop the Diploma in Training and Certification of Language Teachers started October 2015 with a group of English Teachers from the different Languages Centres to determine the Diploma's important details such as: aim, modality, modules, registration requirements, and total length.

The Diploma aimed at updating the Secondary School English teachers to help them improve the educational quality of their teaching through language enrichment and specialized pedagogical training. The total length of the program was 270 hours after which most graduates were able to speak English in a B2 level (according to the Common European Framework) and developed pedagogical

skills and teaching competences to have a better performance as English teachers and also making a creative use of the Information and Communication Technologies.

It was a multimodal program with in-person, online and autonomous sessions divided in 4 modules:

- Module 1. Language Enrichment
- Module 2. Training for EXAVER III (The institutional B2 Certificate of English)
- Module 3. Principles of teaching-learning in EFL
- Module 4. Instructional Design and Assessment of the English Language.

In March 2016, the Poza Rica Language Centre opened this program for the first time with a group of students who were English teachers at different schools from the north area of the State of Veracruz. Most students of these group were able to finish all the modules of the Diploma on December of the same year. In 2017, the second generation of teachers signed up and completed the program. These two cases of teacher preparation experiences are presented and compared regarding the last module of the program which is described in the next section.

#### **4. Two cases of teacher training supported by ICT**

The fourth module of the Diploma was named "Instructional Design and Assessment of the English Language". It aimed at strengthening the elaboration of an instructional design and learning materials applying the principles of teaching, planning and evaluation, considering techniques and teaching activities centred on learning and the management of learning groups including the use of resources and multimodal didactic means to favor the development of communicative competence in the target language.

It involved the teachers' preparation through one in-person session every Saturday and the rest of the work through ICT and educative platforms. During the in-person sessions, teachers were introduced to different and very important subjects such as: Instructional design, effective planning, group management, motivation in the classroom, selection and evaluation of textbooks and didactic materials, principles for language assessment, item writing, assessment of language abilities, among others. So, teachers were able to discuss, debate and share their own experiences on these topics.

The in-person sessions were presented in the same form to both of the cases described before (Group 2016 and Group 2017) but, the asynchronous work mediated by ICT was different. The first group (2016) worked with our institutional platform called Eminus, and the second group (2017) worked through Google Drive.

##### **4.1 Asynchronous work through Eminus platform**

When Group 2016 started the fourth module of the Diploma, they have previously work with the Eminus Platform, so it was really easy for them to keep working this way. The work dynamics consisted of signing in to find the different tasks they had to do, download the instructions and materials and upload their tasks. For questions or doubts, students use the platform forums in order to share them with the instructor and their classmates so, feedback was for everyone.

##### **4.2 Asynchronous work through Google Drive**

Group 2017 was not able to work with Eminus because the module started two weeks later so, it was not possible for them to take the induction training for the platform. So we decided to work through Google Drive with the agreement of being aware of the e-mails sent by the instructor. Those E-mails contained the tasks with their corresponding instructions and materials for students to send the finished tasks back. For questions or doubts about the tasks, these students used a WhatsApp group.

#### **5. Comparative**

Tables 1 and 2 below present the main similarities and differences found in Group 2016 and Group 2017.



Table 1. Similarities.

Similarities
<p>In both generations:</p> <p>Eight students were able to finish Module 4 of the Diploma,            Most students were English teachers at the city of Poza Rica.            Most students were women.            Most students were not familiarized with the module's contents.            Arithmetic mean of students' grades was 8.75            Both generations were enthusiastic to work online</p>

Table 2. Differences.

Differences	
Generation 2016	Generation 2017
<p>Teachers had a higher level of English.            All students did a good management of their tasks in the Eminus Platform.            Most students uploaded their tasks, and homework on the deadline.            Not many questions or doubts about the tasks and homework were posted in the Eminus forum.            Regular grades in final written exam</p>	<p>Teachers had a lower level of English.            Most students did a good management of their tasks in Google drive.            Most students sent their tasks, homework and extra class work after the deadline.            Many questions or doubts about the tasks and homework posted in the WhatsApp group            Good grades in final written exam</p>

## 6. Conclusions

This paper described the implementation of a Diploma in Training and Certification of Language Teachers at the Poza Rica Language Centre in México and presented a brief comparative with similarities and differences of the results obtained by two generations of students who worked with different educative platforms.

The groups were very similar in number of students, gender, and the city where they work. Both of them haven't read before about the contents of module so, they learned a lot of techniques and methodologies. Even though both groups were keen to work online, one of them (2017) experienced more problems than the other (2016) working this way. As you can see on table 2, students from group 2017 were not able to deliver their tasks on time and had great difficulty on understanding the same instructions given to group 2016. It was possible to notice a higher level of language management through essays and presentations in group 2016 then in group 2017. However, both of them obtained the same arithmetic mean in their final grades due to a better performance on group 2017 on the final written exam.

In conclusion, as the use of different platforms to manage students' on line work did not affect their final grades, it is important to keep promoting these kind of educative resources to help teachers make a creative use of the Information and Communication Technologies and foster the autonomous learning, so they can do the same with their own students.

## References

- [1] Harmer, J. (2001). "How to teach English". England. Longman.
- [2] Harmer, J. (2002). "The practice of English Language Teaching", England, Longman.
- [3] Kıldan, A., İbret, B., Pektaş, M., Aydınözü, D., İncikabı, L., & Reçepoğlu, E. (2013). Evaluating Views of Teacher Trainees on Teacher Training Process in Turkey. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 38(2). <http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2013v38n2.10>
- [4] Universidad Veracruzana. (2018). Posgraduate Courses of the Language Faculty. Available at: <https://www.uv.mx/idiomas/posgrados/posgrados/> (checked on September 13<sup>th</sup> 2018)
- [5] Wallace, M. (1997). "Training foreign language teachers. A reflective approach". England. Cambridge University Press.