The Importance Of Instruction-Giving To Better Students' Performance Of Class Activities In English Lessons

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ABSTRACT

Making sure that pupils in an EFL classroom understand the procedure of how to do an activity has always been a vital topic in the teaching field. Confusion and misunderstanding have to be contended with many different resources such as the so-called ICQs (Instruction Checking Questions). There has not been much information regarding the theme stated. That is why a necessity to study it was one of my main objectives since teachers have to be informed how to do it and the steps to consider. Surveys were conducted to a small population of fifteen teachers that currently work at Centro de Educación Continua in Universidad Técnica de Machala. The survey results obtained showed that most of the respondents are acquainted with instruction-giving; nevertheless, they feel they are not doing a good job in their classes. That is why it is recommendable to read this article and find out how to make the best of an English class.

Key words: EFL classroom; teaching field; ICQs; steps; survey

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La Importancia De ICQS Para Un Mejor Desempeño De Las Actividades De Clase De Los Estudiantes En Las Clases De Ingles

RESUMEN

Asegurarse de que los alumnos en un aula de EFL entiendan el procedimiento de cómo hacer una actividad siempre ha sido un tema vital en el campo de la enseñanza. La confusión y los malentendidos tienen que lidiar con muchos recursos diferentes, como las llamadas ICQ (Preguntas de verificación de instrucciones). No ha habido mucha información sobre el tema planteado. Es por ello que la necesidad de estudiarlo fue uno de mis principales objetivos ya que los docentes tienen que estar informados de cómo hacerlo y los pasos a seguir. Se realizaron encuestas a una pequeña población de quince docentes que actualmente laboran en el Centro de Educación Continua de la Universidad Técnica de Machala. Los resultados de la encuesta obtenidos mostraron que la mayoría de los encuestados están familiarizados con la instrucción; sin embargo, sienten que no están haciendo un buen trabajo en sus clases. Por eso es recomendable leer este artículo y descubrir cómo aprovechar al máximo una clase de inglés.

Palabras clave: *aula de inglés; campo de la enseñanza; ICQ; pasos; encuesta*

INTRODUCTION

Life is a leading process and without unambiguous directions, there cannot be a path to follow. Apart from the existence of instructions, there ought to also be the comprehension of them since there is no point in having task orders written or spoken if they cannot be understood (Mertová, 2018). It can be claimed that English has become a hotly-debated topic for the last couple of decades persuading individuals to learn it for different purposes which may well range from aviation to agriculture reasons. That is why good strategies to steer a classroom environment in which English is taught had better be a crucial feature. There are several types of classroom management theories that can bolster the smoothness of a lesson, but giving instructions is said to be of great assistance for both understanding and guidance for professors and learners (Radeva, 2021).

It is generally assumed that teaching the language in classrooms is paramount so as to fulfil alike academic ambitions. However, this research suggests that checking what students have to do with a class activity is just as salient as the actual teaching process; that is why it aims to identify the importance of instruction-giving by means of bibliographical resources and the conduction of surveys so as to make teachers aware that the students' performance of class activities can be improved by getting to know the different manners in which an order can be delivered. The research methodology to be applied in this project is both quantitative and qualitative which are basically different from each other since the quantitative approach is considered to be a rationalistic one funded in positivism whose commencement sprang from the nineteenth century; they are known as scientific and experimental as well. On the other hand, the qualitative method is recognized for being ethnographic, naturalistic, anthropological, phenomenological and case studies. (HAMEED, 2020)

Each and every single teacher has experienced that awkward moment when students are either doing a different thing from the real assigned task due to misunderstanding resulting in a discouraging outcome for the teacher whose maybe first intention was to lead the task in the most appropriate way (Padilla-Padilla et al., 2021).

Some instructors are said to have sought different solutions to the dilemma mentioned above for instance the use of flashcards or the mother tongue in a classroom whose environment ought to be English, for instance. A great deal of investigators has invested their entire careers in discovering whether the usage of L1 in English classroom is as effective as many professionals in the field think. A recent research study that was carried out in Saudi Arabia revealed that the majority of the students and teachers who were surveyed and interviewed claimed that using their mother tongue helped them in their English learning process (Alshammari, 2011).

Another strategy that professors are after is scaffolding the at-times long instructions - scaffolding is understood to be a series of steps which allow learners to build broken pieces of directions given by teachers to do an activity. The aim has always been to support learners at the beginning to later permit them to work independently as they grow up in their foreseeable future studies (Bentley, 2010).

Regarding pronunciation and graded language, teachers are used to using the so-called speech unit. According to Cunningham, Bell, Redston, & Clementson (2014) stated that "Speech units help us to organise what we say by diving it into groups of words. Speech units can vary in length in order to emphasise particular words." That is to say that teachers attempt to pause while speaking so pupils can understand what they are trying to say to assist the learner with the comprehension of class activity orders.

Be that as it may, ICQs have gained its stance in the English teaching environment for the particular reason that students need to be checked what they have to do before actually doing a task.

According to Scott Thornbury (2006), he defines instructions as verbal or written orders that belong to the strategies of classroom management. They will typically include a frame which indicates the end of a previous activity and the commencement of a new one; a summary of the task and its aim; the organisation which refers to peer or group work; the procedure which basically means what the learners need to do; mode that can be understood as whether the to-do activity is oral or written; outcome which is the result students will obtain after task performance; strategy which can be exemplify as a gist or detailed task; timing that has to do with the time to

be taken during the activity; last but not least, the cue which is a sign for learners to begin doing their activity.

Thornbury also claims that class activity instructions should be delivered by means of imperative and sequence words such as first, next, then, after that, finally. In order to practise instruction giving, instructors can borrow techniques from TPR, which stands for Total Physical Response, where the pupils perform physical instructions supplied by their masters (Sanchez, 2015). Without some moving and entertainment, learners will typically find that learning a lot of new words by just being seated and repeating them is something uninteresting and there will be some wasted time after having explained the procedure of such task since their motor systems are inactive. Instead, if educationalists want a better response from students in terms of knowing what to do with a task, they should opt to use this foreign language learning method or, in turns, make use of ICQs (Luruk, Kamlasi, & Lasi, 2021).

Mixing both, this method and instruction giving is admitted to be superb for young learners who are always the one who simply need to be on the move with songs, dancing and listening stories. It has to be acknowledged that using ICQs for little children both might or might not work accurately since they are beginning to learn the language. Instead, in order for them not to lose focus on the teacher giving orders, these must be appealing and attractive for them so that they can perform well in book activities and class tasks too (Astutik, Megawati, & Nisak Aulina, 2019). Nonetheless, what functions for one type of student, might not work for others due to learning styles. Moreover, teachers should understand where their pupils come from, how they were raised and even consider any psychological problem they may keep with them because those obstacles can hinder their learning process as well as the orders they are given to do something in class. That is why the concept Differentiated Instruction must be called into action since, by applying this, all types of learners will be addressed appropriately leaving discrimination, or in worst cases bullying, aside (Raza, 2018).

Creating an English environment in a classroom is believed to be just as difficult as teaching the language itself; accordingly, when giving instructions, professors have always liked to direct and instruct their apprentices in the target language. Nevertheless, they find it tough when delivering

them due to different factors like lack of English comprehension. According to Jim Scrivener (2005), it is possible to guide students to do a class task in the target language with no need of using the mother tongue.

Scrivener stablishes that long wordy directions that embed the essential part of the instructions are typically unplanned; this happens since the teacher is unwary that they are talking in this way until they hear themselves and realise how badly they have done it; therefore, the misunderstanding of orders is sometimes accountable to the students when it is indeed the instructor who did not succeed in clarifying what was required. Scrivener, as a result, defined five steps towards the improvement of the instruction giving. Firstly, teachers must become aware of their own instruction-giving. Secondly, they should preplan their instructions by short sentences and simple and clear language in a sensible order. Thirdly, they should separate instructions from distractions for instance chit-chatting, telling off, joking, etc. Fourthly, modelling is the key rather than just telling. And finally, as fifth step ICQs come to shine in instruction giving; the instructor needs to make sure learners understood each and every single part of the task.

Scrivener (2005) also defines why an activity might not be carried out properly; and this is as students tend to be absent-minded or they do not hear what message the teacher is trying to convey. Trying to deliver a task order is difficult when there is chatter or distractions; that is why teachers should make eye contact with the class, establish a gesture that indicates they would like to say something and be patient until everyone is completely silent.

There are said to be plenty of forms of how to give scholars instructions to do a task such as a reading comprehension activity. What some teachers are prone to do is providing them with context. By doing so, they will become more familiar with the order they have to do with the task. Some educators prefer doing it by building some sort of interaction between them and the learners; this allows them to become more engaged and fostered to listen to their professors when they have got to deliver a specific instruction (Pustika et al., 2019).

As a result of the pandemic, teachers found various ways to enhance their students in their online English lessons by incorporating mobile applications such as LINE, a messaging mobile app, so as to give learners a more entertaining way of understanding what to do. This experiment, which

was primarily conducted in the first semester of an English-speaking class resulted in more benefits than downsides for the reason that the less involved learners were nowhere near as motivated as the ones who did love the subject. Apparently, this project built a more class-trusting enhancement on behalf of the students despite not being in a classroom together (Chang et al., 2021).

There are a great deal of recommendations regarding intruction giving. According to BBC Learning English (2017), the first one that teachers should take into account is the timing awarded to students when having to do a class activity. Also, learners must be attentive to what the lecturer is saying, otherwise they will lose focus when doing the class assginment. Laslty, if professors are handing in a printed worksheet, they must make sure it is given after finishing giving the instructions. Writing the orders on the board, for beginners can be of great support for both the educator and the trainee as well as using gestures and body language to complement the instruction giving.

Meanwhile, with more advanced students, teachers can apply Inquiry-based learning, which is understood to look for the truth of something by asking question thanks to that inheritated inquisition that each human being owns, to awake their pupil's curiosity of finding out what they have to do with a previously received activity; they will do this by asking their teachers questions about how to perform the task and teacher will only confirm (Husni, 2020). And the best of all, when teachers are encountered to provide their learners with long and very tricky directions, they can always opt to use ICQs to ensure their students fully understand what they have to do (BBC Learning English, 2017).

There were a lot of reasons why learners miscomprehended what their educators instructed them to do. One of the main motives was the pandemic stakeholders lived. Learners felt that they were no longer motivated by their teachers since there was no that rapport that coexisted in English classrooms. They sensed they were talking to a machine who had their teacher's face on it. This led to lack of motivation and interest in the class; therefore, misunderstanding of instructions. (FERSAOUI, 2021).

Teachers will normally speak at an ungraded English level without taking into consideration that they are in a context where they had to steer the way they transmit a message to their students. Using a language that contains both well-grammatically-structured forms and daily-life language can cultivate a better encouragement towards students; this will permit the educational environment to eschew any kind of socio-pragmatic failure which is regarded as the capability to notice the effect of context within the classroom (Benattabou, 2020).

Apart from the evident and most common reasons why apprentices find it difficult to cope with orders, little are teachers aware of the disabilities learners innately may have and unknowingly, teachers just speak and convey messages, content as well as instructions assuming all the students are able to deal with that (Fekih, 2019).

On the whole, it is understood that human beings are prone to develop their skills of understanding something when they are asked questions. In the educational field, especially in EFL classes, the response educators obtain when they are asking their learners questions is a confirmation that whether they understood or did not comprehend something. It is said to be an easy task for teachers on account of the ease of recognizing the capability of comprehension each and every single student has (Badem, 2018).

ICQs can be concepted as didactics strategies that help class guides or teachers to give instructions or directions in their English classrooms. Furthermore, they are commonly known as Instruction Checking Questions which are those types of questions that professors make use of so as to make sure that students understand the indications and steps that they need to follow to be able to do a specific class or book activity. For example: A teacher orders his students to talk to their partners for three minutes and discuss the questions provided by the book and then say what they have in common; the teacher might be tempted to ask the following questions: Do you have to answer the questions individually or with a partner? (with a partner) How many minutes do you have? (three minutes) Do you have to say what similar or different things you have? (similar) (Белоног, 2021).

'Do you understand?' is the question that class observants have regarded as part and parcel of an EFL lesson; because everyone uses it, it does not mean that it is the best one. In fact, some experts, who are dedicated to study language studies, say that the question mentioned above is futile since

it cannot be assumed by learners answering 'Yes.' that they fully understood what they have to do. That is why ICQs must be used in language classes as learners may as well be too timid to admit that they did not comprehend what they have to do. The ideal ICQ must be one that only requires an answer of yes or no or, in turns, an answer that contains from one to three words (Bolen, 2022).

Table 1.

Examples of ICQs and when and how we might choose to use them

Task	What students might misunderstand / what they might do that you don't want them to do	ICQ
Students look at a series of sentences about their partner and guess if the statements are true or false. They put a T an or an F in the first column next to each statement according to their guess. You then want them to have a conversation with their partner and put a T or F in the second column with the actual information they receive. Afterwards they will see who guessed most accurately; them or their partner.	Students may immediately start talking to their partner rather than guessing first.	What do you do first – ask your partner or guess about your partner?
	Students may put their answers in the wrong column.	Where do I write my guess? (gesture to handout)
	Students may give one or two-word answers, but the teacher wants to encourage fluency in the activity.	Do you give a one-word answer or give your partner more information?

Note. Taken from "CELTA TRAIN get on board. CELTA TRAIN get on board" by STOOSH72, 2019, https://celtatraincom.wordpress.com/2019/01/06/checking-understanding-part-1-instruction-checking-questions-icqs/

When asking ICQs, teachers are supplied with some feedback by having their learners answer their questions and obtaining their answers; they will indeed know that everything is neat and clear to proceed with the task and that there is some level of confidence by the students to perform well during the class activity. Moreover, shy students who never pay attention or are too reserved

to answer can make use of the teacher's questions and their classmates' answers to comprehend what they have to do (STOOSH72, 2019).

According to Bolen, there are some steps to consider when thinking about making ICQs in the English classroom. As step number 1, the questions that are to be asked need to be really straightforward so that learners do not feel mystified when having to answer them. In step number 2, there is a reference to the lesson planning; lesson plans are a set of structured stages in which teachers guide their lessons and their students so as to obtain an outcome at the end of the class; it can have stages like lead-ins, pre-teaching, the development which is the stage where the learner explores and constructs the target language, the practice alongside a wrap-up section (Carvajal-Ayala & Avendaño-Franco, 2021).

Therefore, teachers should include the ICQs within their lesson plans. There are experienced educators who have the capability of asking them in the spur of the moment. But this is not a good idea for the ones who are starting to use them since it can be a bit hard to think of them. In step three, ICQs should be part of every English teacher's lesson since there is always a small percentage of learner who do not always get what they have to do. In step number 4, professors can prevent their pupils from daydreaming by using ICQs due to the fact that distractions are always present. Finally, as the last step, teachers should consider if the instructions are already easy to understand as they are written in a book. Nevertheless, if they are shown a three-line order, ICQs must make their appearance.

Being online does not mean that ICQs cannot function just as well as they do in face-to-face classes. There is a slight difference when teaching virtually tough; the solution, in order to shun boredom and obviousness, professors should focus on asking questions about the toughest part of the instruction such as on how use a target language and the structure it has got. This will force learners to be more aware of what they have to do before joining a break-out room activity, for instance (elttraining, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

In order to do this research paper, a quantitative approach was used which basically consists of abstract concepts most commonly known as theoretical structures that utilises a valid and reliable measurements to guarantee the quality of any investigation. (SÜRÜCÜ & MASLAKÇI, 2020) What is more, a descriptive design was also used to develop this project in order to purely study the conditions of how a learner understand instructions given by their teacher. As mentioned earlier in this written work, online cross-sectional surveys with five-point scales under the Likert Scale were conducted to a small population of fifteen teachers that currently work at CEC UTMACH so that their perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and opinions could be gained regarding instruction-giving. (Siedlecki, 2020) One of the limitations, however, was that one of the teachers was not acquainted with the term ICQs and was not able to complete the survey as properly as desired, but with a short explanation by the conductor they managed to.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After identifying the variables and indicators and having made the questionnaire, the survey was made on a very popular online platform called Google Forms which later was sent to the fifteen teachers selected for this research and automatically percentages were given to be able to interpret the results. (Loaiza Angulo, 2023)

Table 2.

In the following table, the variable, indicators, items and percentages of the results of the respondents regarding professor, graded-English, class activities and instruction giving are shown.

Operationalization Matrix			Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	Total
Variable	Indicator	Item						
Professor	Effective communication	Feeling of students misunderstanding what teachers instruct them to do	-	20	66,7	13,3	-	100
	Coherent communication	Being concise when communicating with students in class	53,3	40	6,7	-	-	100
Graded-English	Appropriate level of English for learners	Using easy vocabulary and grammar when giving instructions to students	66,7	26,7	6,7	-	-	100
		Resource such as flashcards to give instructions to learners	33,3	26,7	6,7	20	13,3	100
Class activities	Tasks based on skills	Asking students to read listening, speaking, reading and writing tasks on their own	40	33,3	20	-	6,7	100
Instruction-giving	Long and difficult instructions	Supporting students when activities with difficult instructions in the English class	33,3	53,3	13,3	-	-	100

Note. Own

In the table 3 above, it can be noticeable that teachers at CEC (Centro de Educación Continua UTMACH) sometimes feel that their learners misunderstand what they are instructing them to do which contrasts a little to the feeling of being concise when communicating with their learners as they always think they are coherent when they talk to their pupils. Based on this research, this

might be due to the fact that teachers are not probably taking into account the different level of English their learners have and probably are unaware of any cognitive disability.

Also, teachers at CEC have claimed to always use easy lexis and syntax when giving instructions to their students as well as always utilising resources to give instructions in their classes which in accordance with this research both features are plus in the development and performance of their learners' learning process. Furthermore, 40% of the teachers surveyed expressed that they always allow their students to read instructions on their own which is an advantageous point as long as they manage advanced English learners. What can be a bit surprising is that 53,3 % of the teachers often support their learners when there are activities with difficult instructions – this can lead to many downsides in the class such as lack of interest or motivation, confusion or misunderstandings. It is vital that professors always assist their pupils in every step they make in their learning process. 93,3 % of the teachers admitted to knowing what ICQs are

Table 4.

In the following table, the variable, indicators, items and percentages of the results of the respondents regarding ICQs are shown.

Variable	Indicator	Item	Yes					No	Total
	ICQs	Knowing what ICQs are	93,3					6,7	100
			Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	No	Total
	Easy and simple questions	Making simple ICQs for students	46,65	46,65	-	-	-	6,7	100
ICQs	Yes-No questions	Forming ICQs as yes-no questions	13,34	53,27	19,96	6,62	-	6,7	100
	Open-ended questions	Making ICQs as open-ended questions	13,34	46,65	19,96	13,34	-	6,7	100

Note. Own

When having to answer whether teachers know about ICQs, only 6,7% of them said no which can be considered positive in an EFL classroom since the majority of the teachers know and probably use ICQs when delivering their lessons. However, more than the half of the teachers make them as yes-no questions which is the most ideal structure to follow when asking ICQs whereas less than the half use open-ended questions, probably with learners whose speaking skill is more developed. 46.65% of the teachers surveyed affirmed that they make ICQs as simple as possible while the other half do not.

CONCLUSION

This research project had the aim of describing the importance of instruction-giving in order to improve the students' performance of class activities in English lessons. Based on the descriptive research alongside with the application of surveys which were used to develop this dissertation, it can be concluded that it is really salient for educators to make sure that the learners understand what they have to do with a class activity and that they could enjoy success at the of any kind of task.

What is more, it is very essential to consider the easiness of how professors deliver instructions no matter the form they do it – with flashcards, graded-language, TPR, etc. - so as to ensure that learners do not feel that timidness of answering and participating in class or worsen their academic learning process.

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