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A NEW ENGLISH LEARNING CULTURE FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

NUEVA CULTURA DEL APRENDIZAJE DEL INGLÉS EN ESTUDIANTES UNIVERSITARIOS

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the results of the Research Project entitled “Creation of a New English Language Learning Culture”. The authors have the hope that English study at the university can be improved with the formation of a new leaning culture that made the students excellent learners. Theoretical and empirical methods allowed the analysis and characterization of the problem: the learners do not know how to learn English, as well as the elaboration of the New Culture and a strategy for its application, directed to achieve better learnings for the communicative, interactive and intercultural competences. A system of actions was designed and put into practice with students from Foreign Language Studies at the University of Pinar del Río. The teachers and the students themselves are the mediators to achieve to learn to learn the language. The results reflect the transformations made in the students’ traditional culture in favor of the new one where enjoyable, motivating, dynamic, faster and more efficient learning take place.

Keywords:

English language, learning, culture, university students.

RESUMEN

El artículo presenta los resultados del proyecto de investigación “Creación de una nueva cultura del aprendizaje de lenguas”. Los autores tienen la esperanza que los estudios del Inglés en la universidad puedan ser mejorados con la formación de una nueva cultura de aprendizaje que haga de los estudiantes excelentes aprendices. Métodos del tipo teórico y empírico permitió el análisis y caracterización del problema: los estudiantes no saben cómo aprender inglés, así como la elaboración de una Nueva Cultura y estrategias para su aplicación, dirigido a lograr la competencia comunicativa, interactiva e intercultural. Un sistema de acciones fue diseñado y puesto en práctica en estudiantes de la carrera de Lenguas Extranjeras de la Universidad de Pinar del Río. Los profesores y estudiantes son los mediadores para lograr aprender a aprender la lengua. Los resultados reflejan la transformación realizada en la cultura tradicional de aprendizaje de los estudiantes en una nueva, donde tenga lugar un aprendizaje más divertido, motivador, dinámico, rápido y efectivo.

Palabras clave:

Lengua inglesa, aprendizaje, cultura, estudiantes universitarios.

INTRODUCTION

A strong tendency in the world today is to declare the communicative, interactive and intercultural competence as the goal of foreign Language learning and teaching, and not only the communicative competence. The idea is that the students need to learn how to communicate, how to interact and how to share with people from other cultures. It is clear that communication is not exactly social interaction, as some people think. These concepts are deeply interwoven, but they do not mean the same. One may have a high level of communicative competence and a low level of interaction, or the other way around.

On the other side, foreign language teaching has changed greatly since 1972 when the concept of communicative competence was put forward by Hymes. Since then, language teaching and learning has shifted from traditional, structural and behaviorist approaches to communicative, interactive and reflective approaches. These changes have been speeded by the coming of a new technology that has moved language learning dramatically, to a point from which many people wrongly believe that schools and teachers are not needed longer (Avery, & Marsden, 2019). Nowadays there are many tendencies or interpretations of the communicative approach, which go from very classical positions to contemporary communicative language teaching (Boers, et al., 2020).

This contemporary communicative language teaching view includes task-based learning, content-based learning, text-based learning, as well as different types of courses like immersion programs, English with Specific Purposes, Professional English, Scientific or Academic English, Casual English and courses for the Preparation of different International Tests as Cambridge Preparation for the TOEFL, or IELTS, among others.

The term Language Learning Culture is not widely used in the world. Richards & Lockhart (1995) devote two chapters of their book: *Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms*, to explore teachers' beliefs and learners' beliefs systems. They tell about the source of teachers' beliefs, the beliefs about English, learning, teaching, the program, the curriculum, and about language teaching as a profession. They also focus on the learners and tell about their cognitive styles, the learning strategies, the beliefs about the nature of English, the speakers, the four language skills, the language learning and teaching process, the appropriate classroom behavior, about the self, the goals, and they give instruments to measure each item mentioned. Language Learning strategies has also been searched by García, Bernal-Díaz, & Abreus (2019)

Language Learning Culture is a conscious process that involves the learner's knowledge, behavior and feeling about what a language is and how it is used, as well as how to adjust himself to the wide range of opportunities he has at hands to learn the language easier, faster, better, naturally, spontaneously, with joy and happiness. A New English Language Culture (NELC) means that the learner conceives language as a tool for cognition, culture, reflection and social interaction. As Aguayo, et al. (2019) say, the students learn the language inside and outside the classroom. In this sense, being connected with the world, understanding and using real English, improving their cultural background are all a need, following Richards (2014), as well as sticking to the feeling the success psychology, and above all, being humanistic in learning and using the language for the sake of humanity. On the other hand, Liu, Chen, & Hwang (2018) focus on the role of Mobile-Based Collaborative learning in the Fitness Center for the development of English Listening Comprehension. Mobile collaborative language learning has also been searched by Kukulska-Hulme & Viberg (2018). In words of Kim, D. (2020), learning to learn and to teach the English implies teaching the language and the culture to the whole student.

English is taught to all students in the Cuban universities. Besides, future English teachers are trained and graduated in four years. However, the learning results in terms of communication are not good at all. Future English teachers end their studies at the university without reaching yet the expected B2 level. The problem is that Cuban University students do not know how to learn the English language. In fact, the students' paradigm "Learn to Learn" is weak. Hence, the target to change is not simply the method, but the subject who studies the language. Our hope lies in the need that students and teachers have to acquire a New English Learning Culture to become excellent teachers and learners. So, what is needed is an excellent language learner to cope with and get the best from all the technical, human and social resources at hands in order to learn English efficiently. The teacher's greatest challenge is to teach them a New English Learning Culture to be excellent learners, so that they could improve their English competences.

We call this culture "new" because it is "new" for the students and for most teachers who still have wrong ideas about how language is learned. The NELC would be a fine way for the students to get through and make a big jump at English learning in Cuban universities. The New English Learning Culture involves the students and the teachers because they both need it. The teachers are the agents in charge of carrying out the actions to educate the NELC

in the learners. However, from now on, we refer only to the learners (or the students), and not to the teachers, for the sake of brevity and the need to focus on the learner. Hence the objective of this research is to propose a New English Learning Culture to change the university student into a great and excellent language learner who could learn English efficiently.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The University “Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca” is situated in Pinar del Río city in the far west of Cuba. The University Foreign Language Department has the mission of forming English teachers during four year studies. There, a group of researchers has a scientific project: “Creating a New English Learning Culture”. This project started in January 2016 and ends in December 2019. This group created a whole and integrated English learning culture based on the qualities of the English teaching and learning process, and their experience in this field. Qualities such as the students’ beliefs about the English language, the learning strategies and the use of the success psychology, among others, became dimensions from which indicators were derived to measure the students’ English learning culture.

The authors used a definition of language learning culture as the starting point to operationalize the dependent variable: English learning culture. This term has been defined by Acosta as the system of beliefs, attitudes, sources, psychology, approaches, strategies and resources the students use to learn the language. The authors used these qualities to decide on the dimensions and indicators the dependent variable might have, which would be considered, later on, to elaborate the instruments needed to measure and get information about the scientific problem: its real state and the changes it has gone with the instrumentation of the strategy intended for this purpose.

The students’ English language culture was measured through a survey and a group debate, before and after the instrumentation of the strategy especially elaborated to create in the students the New English Learning Culture. Then, the results of both measurements were compared quantitatively and qualitatively to find out the difference, if any, that tells if the learners’ English learning culture was transformed into a new one or not.

Questionnaires applied to the students

The authors elaborated questionnaires and guides for each empirical method used. These were administered to diagnose the current state of the students’ English Learning Culture, and later on, to obtain data about the social impact of the NELC education process carried out to make the students better learners. The following are just

examples of these questionnaires (Most objectives and instructions were omitted to save space):

Survey. Objective: to obtain information from first-year students about the English learning process at the Foreign Language Department in the University of Pinar del Río.

Instruction: Dear, learner, could you, please, answer the following questions. The data you offer would help to make better English learning in the near future. Feel safe and secure. You don’t have to write your name. Thank you.

Questionnaire

I study English outside the classroom:

- Less than an hour a week _____.
- From two to three hours a week _____
- From three to five hours a week _____
- From five to seven hours a week _____
- More than seven hours a week _____

A. I learn English:

- Alone _____
- With a peer _____
- In small group _____

B. I learn English outside the classroom:

- At home _____
- At my friends’ home _____
- At the library _____
- In the Computer Center, or in English Clubs _____
- Any other place not mentioned here _____

C. To learn English outside the classroom, I use:

- Digital courses in the computer _____
- Grammar books _____
- Dictionaries _____
- Talks with friends or relatives _____
- English private course _____

D. The difficulties I face in learning English are the following:

- Lack of materials and technology.
- Lack of knowledge and strategies to learn.
- Lack of communicative practice.
- Lack of time.
- Lack of effort and energy.

f. Lack of people to talk to.

Issues for discussion

- a. What difficulties do you face in learning English at this university?
- b. What could teachers do to improve your learning of English?
- c. What resources do you have to learn English?
- d. Where do you learn English more, inside or outside the classroom?
- e. How much do you use the technology for English learning?
- f. How is your psychology to learn English? Bad, good, successful?
- g. What is for you “a culture to learn English?”

Questions for the oral interview to the students

- a. How is your English? How do you feel about the English you have learned?
- b. What strategies do you use to learn English inside and outside the class?
- c. How is your cultural background? How does it help or harm your learning?
- d. How is your attitude to learn English, and your psychology?
- e. Do you consider yourself a slow or a fast English learner? Give reasons.

Questions for the oral interview to the teachers

- a. How could you improve your English teaching at the University?
- b. How do you feel about the students’ English learning at the university?
- c. How useful and functional may the NELC be to improve your teaching?
- d. Could you tell any experience you have had with the NELC?
- e. Is there anything anew for you as a teacher in the NELC?

Questionnaire about students’ general cultural background

Answer the following questions:

- 1. Who is Isabel Allende? Who is Alice Walker?
- 2. “What is our oil doing under their soil?” Who could have said it?

- 3. Who was Martin Luther King? When and where did he live?
- 4. Who was Pele? And Babe Ruth? And Jack Robinson?
- 5. Who would be the President of United States in 2020?
- 6. What is The Academy Award (The Oscars)?
- 7. Where does Jazz and Rock music come from?
- 8. Where and when would the next Olympic Games happen?
- 9. CIA, CNN and BBC are all the same. What are they?
- 10. What do these groups of letters stand for? JFK. GGM. CFK. USA. BE.

Questionnaire on the students’ English learning self-evaluation

A. Write Yes, No, or Not much.

- a. I love to be a teacher _____
- b. I like English _____
- c. My English is good _____
- d. I put much energy to English language learning _____
- e. My attitude towards language learning is good _____
- f. I use effective methods to study English _____
- g. I study a lot of English outside the classroom every week _____
- h. I enjoy English classes _____
- i. I am greatly motivated to learn English _____

B. Complete the following ideas:

- a. My main problems in learning English are these: _____.
- b. I use the following English learning strategies: _____.
- c. The resources and materials I have to learn English are these: _____.
- d. I am afraid of learning English in class because: _____.
- e. I enjoy learning English when: _____.
- f. I guess that My English learning culture is _____.
- g. What I hate most of the English lessons is: _____.
- h. Outside the classroom I study English about _____ a week.

- i. I am happy (or sad) with the English I have learned in this University because: _____
_____.
- j. What would your university do to help you to improve your English? ____.

A Strategy to Create a New English Learning Culture

The authors elaborated the strategy in order to put into practice the NELC intended to transform and improve the students' English learning culture. A strategy is a system of actions designed and carried out in practice to solve a problem, that is to say, to change or transform something. The actions are intended to the main agents that take place in the formation of the learning culture in the learners: The teachers, the language officials, and the students themselves. Here are some examples of actions:

For the students:

- To draw the students' awareness about the importance of English.
- To teach the students the many strategies they can use to learn English.
- To teach the students what English is, how it functions and how it is used.
- To teach the students how to use the success psychology in learning.
- To teach the students how to "study" English outside the classroom.
- To show the students through tasks how to use English learning strategies.
- To show them how to use the cell phone, the computer and The Internet.
- To show the students how beautiful and useful learning English could be.
- To show the students how useful short stories are for English learning.
- To create opportunities for the students to interact making speech.
- To use The Internet to be connected and communicate with the students.
- To discuss useful ace topics, interested and needed to the students.
- To organize workshops and conferences in English for them to take part.

For the University:

- To state an educational policy to encourage and support the creation of the NELC at the university.
- To offer information to the head and staff of the school about the social role of learning English, the objectives and the many things the University can do to encourage the students to improve the English study.
- To support a project directed to the task of forming the NELC at the university.
- To carry out the process of Internationalization of curricula, methodologies, researches, courses, books, teacher and students.
- To create the necessary conditions in terms of human, social and technological resources to learn English. Examples: Multimedia centers, conferences, invited English speaking people, bibliography, teachers professional development.

For the English teachers

- To encourage them to improve their English and the ways they teach it.
- To share information with the scientific community about the NELC.
- To teach the teachers how to educate the NELC in the students
- To invite to class people who can speak English.

The population is made up of 6 professors and 56 first-year students of the Foreign Language Studies at the University of Pinar del Río, Cuba. Finally, it was determined to use the probabilistic sample, type simple random. The sample was of a significant size ($n = 60$) with a 98% confidence interval and a 3.5% margin of error. This group is made up of a total of 4 teachers and 56 students.

RESULTS

The results of this research present the current state of the first-year students' English learning culture at the Foreign Language Department of the University, and the transformation suffered as effects of the application of the strategy elaborated to change it into a New English learning Culture.

The survey applied to 56 students shows that:

The Questionnaire on the students' English learning self-evaluation and the oral interview with the students, used for the diagnostic stage, reveal that:

A total of 54 students, out of 56, love English, it means a percentage of 96, but only a third wants to be English teachers (33%). Most of the students (59%) evaluate their

English as “Regular” or “Fair”, only one as “Excellent” and none as “Bad”. Most of the students (81%) say their attitude towards English is “Good”, but only 11% says they put enough energy to it. Most of the students (76%) write that they do not use effective methods to learn English and explain through the interview that they don’t know well how to study the language.

Only 7 students say to study English more than 10 hours a week outside the classroom, it means 13%. According to the interview, what most of the students do is to do the homework, including project work. Related to the number of people that the students study with, 44 (79%) students selected “alone”, while 12 (21%) students wrote that they studied with their peers, in pairs or in small groups. Asked about the place where they used to study, 51 (91%) students write at home. The others include the city library or the university documental center. The Computer Center or English Clubs. Two students write their English learning culture is “Excellent”, while most of them, 82% evaluate theirs as “Fair” (22%) or “Regular” (60%). On the other hand, the oral interview shows that the students do not know how a foreign language should be learned.

Most of the students (96%) do not know what an English language learning culture means. They confuse it with the knowledge they have about the general culture of the world. Asked about the English learning strategies they use to learn English, 67% says they use dictionaries, cells, reading the notes taken in class, doing the homework and the project works, but none mention new strategies like listening much English before speaking, learning phrases rather than words or being crazy or hearing voices.

The students mention the following resources to learn English outside the classroom: Integrated English Practice textbook (100%). Dictionaries (100%). Listening to songs (37%). Watching films (42%). Talks to friends or relatives (41%). The Internet (14%). Grammar books (11%). English private courses (2%). Magazines and newspaper (2%). Short stories (1%).

Asked about the difficulties they face in learning English, the students mention the following: lack of materials and technology, lack of knowledge about how to learn the language, Lack of strategies to learn, lack of communicative practice, lack of time, lack of effort and energy, lack of people to talk to, lack of access to The Internet.

Asked about their main problems to improve their English, the students mark the following: Lack of motivation (2%). Bad attitude to learn the language (22%). Lack of methods to learn the language (31%), Lack of instructions to learn the language (30%). Low level of general culture to understand language use (49%), Low level of participation in class (31%). Being afraid of making mistakes (24%). Shyness (19%). Being afraid of making mistakes (24%). Lack of the English language learning culture (51%).

In the survey the students evaluated their own English learning. This self-evaluation shows that 14 % got 5, 55% got 4, and 31 % obtained a grade of 3. The students who said that they learned more outside the classroom had a historical mark of 5 or 4, while those who said that they learned more inside the classroom had a mark between 4 and 3.

A student´ self-evaluation of their own English learning culture

The qualities or dimensions of the NELC was evaluated in first year at the beginning and at the end of school course 2018-2019. The difference in marks tells us the transformation of the students’ English Learning Culture into a new one Table 1:

Table 1. The students´ English learning culture.

Items	Initial test	Final test	Difference
a) Beliefs about the language and its learning	4	4.6	12%
b) Learning English outside the classroom	3.3	4.5	24%
c) Successful psychology to learn English	3.9	4.6	14%
d) English language learning strategies	3.7	4.4	14%
e) Level of general and integral culture	3.6	4	8%
f) The use of technology to learn English	2.7	4.1	28%
g) Focusing real English use in learning it	3.2	4.5	26%
h) Connectivity with the world and oneself	2.2	3.5	26%
i) Opportunities for reflective social interaction	3	4.8	36%
j) How to use humanism in learning English	3.3	4.5	24%

Out of this data, in the initial questionnaire a total of 53 students is evaluated of “Fair” (26) and “Regular” (27), while two students get a mark of two points and one gets “Very Good”. Therefore, the students’ level of English Learning Culture ranks very low. Meanwhile data from the final questionnaire shows that the means is higher. A means of the students’ English Learning Culture Self-evaluation (from 5) is 3 in the initial test, and 4.35 in the final test, with a meaningful difference of 1.35 (27%).

On the other hand, a second questionnaire was administered to 56 sample students the first day they entered to the University in order to obtain detail information so as to characterize their cognitive and social areas, and elaborate their profiles. The results are these Table 2:

Table 2. The students’ cognitive and social areas.

Items to be self-evaluated	NO	%	SI	%	Difference
English mastering background	51	91	5	9	7%
General Cultural background	46	82	10	18	64%
Motivation for English learning	5	9	51	91	82%
How much you like English	2	4	54	96	93%
Want to be an English teach	10	18	46	82	64%
Resources at hand to learn English	41	73	15	27	46%
How hard is to learn English here	42	75	14	25	50%
Happy with your English learning here	18	32	38	68	36%

Time devoted to English learning weekly:

From 1 to 3 hours: 32 students (57%)

From 4 to 6 hours: 16 students (29%)

From 7 to 10 hours: 4 students (7%)

More than 10 hours: 4 students (7%)

There is a total means of 27 for “No” and 29 for “Yes”, with a signification level of two.

Questionnaire for the students’ general cultural background

The written test to measure the students’ general cultural background shows that their level of general cultural background is very low, for 98% failed the test. The students do not know Who Isabel Allende, Alice Walker and Victor Hugo are, they do not watch Telesur, they are unable to understand the question: “What is our oil doing under their soil?”, the sense of war, who the Black Panthers, Martin Luther King, Baby Ruth and Jack Robinson were, what a Latin Grammy is and what the Academy Award is, where Jazz and Rock music comes from, Where and when the next Olympic Games will take place, where and when the next World Football Championship will happen, what the CIA, CNN and BBC are, what these groups of letters stand for: JFK. GGM. CFK. USA. BE, and who the President of United States would be in 2020.

Group Debate

The group discussion lasted an hour in each of the two groups, with a total of 56 students and four teachers. It was conducted by the two researchers, authors of this article. A presentation of the objective, the issues to comment on and the methods to go opened the session, followed by the participants’ opinions and a close up. The results are these:

The students said that the main limitation that they faced in learning English at the University was that they did not know how to learn the language because their experience in doing so was not good at pre-universities, before entering to the University. The students also said that they expected the teachers to give them techniques and tips to learn the language. It was needed, they said, that teachers gave them more opportunities to listen and speak English. Almost all students agreed that they had a cell and a textbook to learn English, but that was not enough. Best students said they learned more English outside the classroom, while most weak students agreed that they learned more inside the classroom. The

students agreed that they used the cell and watch movies on TV, but added that not all of them had computer and few had access to The Internet. Concerning the psychology they had to learn the language, most of them agreed that they had faith, motivation, need and desire to learn English. All except two students had chosen to study the language. Asked about what a culture to learn English meant, most students knew nothing about this concept, while few referred as “how to learn the language”, or “the methods to learn it”.

The New English Learning Culture

The NELC in the learner goes hand-in-hand with critical self-reflection as a basis for decision making, planning and action in learning. The students feel a need to find a way to learn the language, thus they make adjustments on them and on the learning conditions to intensify language learning and achieve better results in terms of language knowledge and communication performance. The NELC has got a number of important dimensions. What are, for us, the qualities of a New English Learning Culture? Let us have a look at them:

1. The learners’ beliefs about the language and its learning. Communication involves both language and speech. The common mistake is to think that learning about the system leads the students to master speech. Unfortunately, what most students do in class is to learn about the language. To make speech is a harder task than to learn about grammar, pronunciation, meaning or word formation. Speech is what the students need because it is the way to develop the students’ communication skills.
2. Learning English outside and inside the classroom. Learning English is not only a matter of classrooms and teachers. It is mainly the responsibility of the learner. He or she needs to know well that mastering a language needs much time and energy. It is not a matter of few hour’s classes a week. Language learning should also happen outside the classroom, in different scenarios, with different resources, meeting people, using the new technology, hearing voices, speaking to oneself.
3. The psychology of success in learning English. The students need to develop a success psychology, as Hoge (2019), points out, if the learner is frequently tired, bored, depressed, he would struggle to study English consistently, instead of enjoying it. He would have poor concentration. The teacher has a major role in motivating the students to learn English. There are many ways to do so. For example: Express love to the students, show them that they can learn English easily and fast, help them to make some speech practice every day. The learner needs to be eager to make speech because he or she feels emotions when saying things in English. Doing so, English learning becomes effortless and enjoyable, but it needs time and energy because good things do not come easy.
4. Using technology to improve English learning. Most of the students need some instructions about how to use technology for English learning: the Internet, WWW, multimedia center, e-mails, software, computers, cells, video, and television. Learners may be connected to one another and to the whole world. Nevertheless, the learners need help to learn how to choose good topics, texts and tasks that could benefit them to achieve the main goal of English learning. Learning to learn with technology is a students’ need for it offers many attractive and amazing uses that may draw their attention to awesome issues.
5. Language learning happens through reflection and social interaction. English language learning needs plenty of opportunities for the students to reflect on the language system and its use, and to interact with it in communication. The students may use the inductive method to arrive at the language rules on their own from listening and reading. The use of the semantic-pragmatic text analysis is a good way to have the students reflect on meaning in texts and contexts and to interact with them. People learn a language best when using it to interact with others rather than studying how language works and practicing rules mechanically.
6. The use of new English learning strategies. Among the strategies university students may use we propose the following:
 - Learn English phrases rather than words.
 - Listen as much English as possible before you speak.
 - Hear voices, as if someone were talking to you, and you reply.
 - Repeat in low voice everything that the teacher or other people says.
 - Monitor what oneself says, correcting if there is any mistake.
 - Monitor everything that the others say, that is, check out if any mistakes.
 - Answer in one’s inner speech the questions the teacher asks others.
 - Talk to yourself when you are alone, in front of the mirror, when possible.
 - Watch TV films and shows, and reflect on the way language is used.
 - Get used to listen and say storytelling as a technique to study English.

- Learn to handle phrases with care, changing it and creating similar ideas.

The technique of “handle with care”, is an excellent way to make speech, to develop speaking skills and to acquire fluency. The teacher gives the student an idea or a phrase. Then the student handles it with care, going from slow to fast, using different tenses, type of sentences, changing, adding or reducing information. Example:

The teacher says: *“I bought some bread around here early this morning”*. Then the student repeats the idea and adds related ideas from his or her own: Example:

“Did I buy any butter? No, I didn’t buy butter at all. Did you see me buying bread? I guess nobody saw me. Never mind. It doesn’t matter. Can you tell me, please, where I can buy a pie? You say I have no money to buy a pie? I bought a big one yesterday.” Anyway, I’ll buy it tomorrow. Yes, I bought bread.

The student’s initiative and imagination has got a space in this kind of task as well as creation, naturalness and spontaneity. The objective is to have the learners reproduce and create phrases and ideas around a given one.

1. Learning real English use rather than the language system. Real use of the English language is defined by Hoge (op.cit), as real English that the native speakers really use with their friends, their relatives and their co-workers. It is every day common English. It includes sentences of daily communication, slangs, idioms, common phrases, cultural references, filler words, natural rhythm of English, spicy jokes, etc. It refers to that English that little it is in the textbooks designed for language learning. Nobody actually talks that way. That is why it is worth for the students to watch films, series and shows on TV, and to read newspapers, magazines, books and literature.
2. Connectivity with the world and oneself by means of English. Connectivity is a dimension of the New English Learning Culture that widens the scope of real language use. It means that the learner uses technology to connect with the world and with himself using the language. It is a wonderful opportunity to meet people and learn about their language and culture. Therefore, the learner interacts with much input coming through reading and listening. This interaction makes possible the process of intake, in which the learner builds up knowledge about the world and the language. Then they are able to express it by means of speaking or writing. Needless to say that feeling, emotions and culture are at the bottom of every speech.
3. The student’s cultural background and the English language. The student’s cultural background refers to what the learner already knows about the knowledge and culture that humanity has accumulated (Rienties

et al., 2013). The students’ cultural background widens their chances to learn English because they can understand better both the culture and the language. They also have more choices of topics to talk about as well as more information. An efficient English learning process needs a student alert and knowledgeable of what is going on around him or her. In this way, he would be able to analyze better the input, to make critics on it and to produce more meaningful messages. He, who knows nothing, has nothing to talk about.

4. Humanism in English Learning. A student with a positive attitude and full of love will have the will, the energy and the time needed to be successful at English learning. If he has a strong will he is better able to use strategies for English learning. He is always ready to learn the language and its use, to approach learning from inside, and to make speech. English learning is a sound affective process in which the learners can find joy and personal realization. The students enjoy it when the process is well-managed by the teacher.

For the creation in the students of the NELC, the authors designed a set of interactive learning tasks to show them how they could learn English better. Two new techniques are a sign of the interactive tasks created to make students reflect on their own language learning, feel how language operates to create meaning in given contexts, and how useful it is to develop communication skills. The techniques are these:

Reacting linguistically (Created by the authors of this article) Example:

- a. React linguistically, at least, five times to these ideas:
 - What’s on your face?
 - Student: “I don’t have anything in my face”. “What do I have in my face?” “What can you see on it?” “Is there anything on my face?” “Perhaps a fly, or a mark, or any stuff”. Other possible common phrases the teacher can say: “What the hell do you say?” “Take this medicine three times a day”. “Is there a good news?” “Don’t think (that) the moon is not a cheese”.

Note: this is a good occasion to explain the use of that or its omission in informal language. The teacher should ask the student, when needed, to say the idea faster, improving pronunciation, intonation and blending.

- b. The Never End Technique (Created by the authors of this article)

The Aircraft Disaster in Havana

Hi, students. It is good to meet you. Have you heard the news about the plane crash? An aircraft disaster happened yesterday in Havana (May 18th, 2018). Student: Is that true? Teacher: Yes, of course. A plane crashed into the

land, near the airport, five minutes after it took off. Student: What's the meaning of "crash"? Teacher: To have an accident. Student: Did anyone die? Teacher: Unfortunately. There are a lot dead people and three injured who were taken to a nearby hospital. Student: Did the plane crash against houses? Teacher: not on houses, but into a cassava crop, near a little wood. Student: And what's a wood? Teacher: An area of land covered with trees. The plural is woods. Student: So, you can say, "The little boy ran into the woods to make number one"? Teacher: Absolutely. One can say that! Student: But who is one? Teacher: One means any person. Student: I haven't heard that much in English. Teacher: Perhaps because it is British use. Student: And so? Teacher: You don't learn British English. Student: So, we would never learn it? Teacher: Never, never, never in your courses. Well, what should I do if I turn the Television on, and there is a British film? Teacher: It's easy, turn it off. Student: Why? Teacher: Because some people say that it interferes with your American English learning. Student: Do you believe that? Teacher: No, I don't. I guess it enriches your English. It is the richness and diversity of English. Student: And what am I going to do? Teacher: do what you please. It's up to you. It's a personal matter. I mean it's your own business. Students: Great! Thanks a lot. Teacher: Don't mention it!

Note: Nobody knows the way the speech will take. It doesn't matter either. What cares is the plane disaster, its effects and the learning of real English use. Besides, an advanced student may play the teacher's role. Anyway, it is an interesting and encouraging technique to start a lesson talking about real things, as real people in real situation.

On behalf of the NELC proposal, it should be said that we have shifted from grammar to communication, from knowledge to reflective social interaction, from the teacher to the learner, from the language system to its real use, from the classroom to the outside, from the book to technology, from the method to the attitude, from linguistics to sociolinguistics, from empiricism to psychology of communication, from the shadow to connectivity, from old times to new contexts, from bookish English to real English use, from learning to speak by repetition to listening comprehensible input.

DISCUSSION

The results show and test the initial idea that gave rise to this research: the need to form in the university students a NELC to make them capable of learning more and better. Theoretically speaking this idea was justified, but now it is tested empirically.

It has been proved that when the students come for the first time to the University, they have distorted and wrong ideas about what language is and how it is learned. For many students learning English is simply a matter of saying phrases and words, for which they don't have to think much and interact with others. However, the fact is that to master English is not only to say: "Good morning, what is your name? or "Tom is a boy and Mary is a girl". It has to do with sharing ideas, conveying meaning, receiving and transmitting information, expressing feelings and emotions. It also means learning casual English (formal and informal), real English use as well as academic and scientific English for professional purposes, depending on the learners needs.

As has been seen in the results, most first year university students to be teachers are highly motivated to learn the language, but only few want to be teachers. The reason is that they would be better paid working in tourism or in a private business than being a teacher. Fortunately, this fact has changed dramatically for the Cuban Government raised the teachers' salary significantly from July 1st on, just few days after this research was finished off. Now, teachers who left their jobs are coming back to retake it, and now more than 80% of the students want to learn English to be teachers. The raise of the teachers' salary has had a great social impact on teachers and students as well as their relatives.

The students tend to confuse the term NELC with the term cultural background because the first term is a new one for them. The students mention some indicators of the NELC isolated, but they do not have a whole vision of what it really is. They know, for example, that using The Internet is a way to learn the language, but most of them do not know how to do it efficiently. Even few learners have a good command of English. They say that the reason is that they were born with a gift to learn it, that is to say, they learn it by accident, hearing songs, and watching films, as if words came out from inside, thanks to a ghost or something alike: *"I don't have strategies to learn English. I learn it listening and saying things all the time in the street, everywhere. I learn it fast because I have that power. I don't have to make any effort. It is inside of me. It is under my skin. English comes to me"*, said Joan, the one self-evaluated as "Very Good". As can be seen this student has a good English Learning Culture, but he is not conscious of that because he hasn't conceptualized it yet. Therefore, this research helped him precisely to do so, to get aware of why and how he learns, and to add new qualities to his NELC.

The results show that many students are not quite aware of the role of social interaction in learning. Hence, they do

not participate much, they are lazy to repeat in their inner speech, or make enough speech to develop communication abilities. This fact has to do with their beliefs about the language and its learning. They think it is learned like others subject matters are. Many teachers confirm this wrong view, setting them to learn about the language, and not to make speech.

As Saussure, F. (2009) said, speech is the actual realization of language. It is individual and concrete, while language is general and abstract. One learns to speak a language by speaking, to understand it orally by listening, to read by reading, and to write by writing. Very often one finds some people who say, "I know English, but it is hard for me to speak it". It means that they are unable to make his own personal speech yet.

Sometimes the students get tired of saying things repeatedly because they don't realize that speech is endless as a way to learn the language better. Speech is the way to improve pronunciation, fluency, and native-like discourse as well as to remember and learn new phrases and words. In addition, making speech is a way to know more about the world and about us, to improve our cultural background. The students need much doing to develop oral and written communication skills. Most students get bored when having to repeat, or say things they have hardly heard before. They are not aware that each speech practice adds more qualities to their communication ability. How many times in his life has Messy had to hit the ball to become Messy? Alternatively, how many swings did Babe Ruth do to be called "It's gone"? If he were alive, he would still be training swings before the game because sports as art needs much adjustment. Communication is both art and science.

Another important point is that most students and teachers still think that language is grammar. The students need to know quite well that the objective of learning a language is communication, and not grammar in itself. The grammar they need is a functional and pedagogical grammar that helps communication. Example, they should learn that "there is" and "there are" may be used to express existence, but they don't need to know that "there" is a formal subject. On the other hand, they would learn inductively that "is" belongs to the verb "To be". If they say "There is something in the air" or "There are flowers in the garden", that is good enough. That is it, unless they would be structural linguists. The students easily and soon learn: "May I have your pen, please?" without knowing the grammar category of every word there in. Anyway, little by little they will be building up grammar rules coming from understanding and making speech.

English learning is a hard and long-term task for any student. To accelerate and intensify their learning at the University, the students should know about the existence of two sharply different views in language learning: the traditional (structural and behavioral) approach and the communicative approaches. They should also know the advantages of the latter over the former. They should also use the exploratory and reflective approaches to learning English. These let them discover the rules of the language by reading and by listening as well as focusing on meaning, function and context as primary concepts of communication learning. In addition to this, it is worth for the students' English learning to view communication as a process of information gap, share of information, selection and feedback. The teacher's task is to create the conditions for the students to model the communication process.

Language learning is the result of processes of the following kind: Reflective social interaction between the learner and other users of the language, collaborative creation of meaning, trying out and experimenting with different ways of saying things, using interactive-based tasks, pair work and group work activities, project work, skill integration as well as to experiment and try out making speech. The students should feel the need and the desire to get involved in social interaction through the language and reflect on its use. This interaction may take place face to face or using the technology. Anyway, interaction matches a learner's centered approach based on the student's cognitive and affective needs.

Learning English demands many hours of interaction and reflection outside the classroom because learning inside the classroom is not enough to become a competent English user. The students need much listening and speaking casual English, reading newspapers, magazines, literature, and writing phrases, ideas, texts. The lesson becomes an orientating learning base, a way to confirm old items that the students already know and to get familiar with new language and cultural items. Therefore, learning outside the classroom is a need to develop the language abilities naturally and spontaneously as real conversation happens. Most of us have learned more culture, literature, geopolitics, or English outside the classroom than inside of it. The results in this research confirm the idea that the best English learners generally assign a major role (more than 60 percentage) to English learning outside the classroom, while less able students rely more on the lesson.

As have been seen in the results, the students are satisfied with their learning and teachers. This is partly due to the human spirit of the Cuban teachers devoted plainly to their profession and well aware of their role as educators.

Nevertheless, the students are not quite clear of the progress they could experiment if they and the teachers used a NELC. Nevertheless, many students talk about improving the English class, by avoiding boring tasks, the same class structure, and looking for more originality and creativity, with a new class dynamic. There are English university students who still load a great amount of the old traditional lessons that does not match the XXI Century students' needs. A new class dynamic asks for oral intensive, interactive, communicative and cultural English learning. The greatness of the English lesson at universities lies in the naturalness, spontaneity and freshness of its dynamics.

As the results show a bunch of students have a bad psychology for English learning. Most of them are motivated, but not always intrinsically. They want to learn English, but not all have the will to put energy and time to it. There is a small group of students who do not turn emotional when learning the language, or are scared of learning it, or do not feel confident and secure in the English classroom. Our state of mind is decisive to learn a language. Many students are scared of failure, making mistakes and being inactive. The teacher's challenge is to make them think positive and be sure they will succeed. They need to be willing to learn, alert, full of energy and joy for learning. The students often think they must be perfect, that they can't stumble. They should not be afraid to fail because one learns by failure. Sometimes they feel overwhelming, then they have to learn to believe in themselves.

Needless to say, the students need to know where and how to find information on the Internet. Today teachers worry about their students' cell in class, when not used properly. The learner's social interaction needed to learn a language may be affected by The Internet if not used smartly. Technology favors making speech if the student can interact with it, but it doesn't make it for itself!

The use of English learning strategies is another weak point in forming the English teachers at the University. The results reveal that the students use few and old strategies, and do not mention new ones like repeating internally, saying phrases from slow to fast to get fluency and good intonation, hearing voices, watching films and talking alone, among others. Learning to learn is also an objective of English teaching, for the students will need it to learn long life. According to Oxford (1996), English learning strategies are actions to look for information, process it, store it, and retake it when needed.

The most striking dimension of the NELC has been undoubtedly learning real English, perhaps for its novelty, opposed openly to the old habit of learning bookish English from formal English textbooks. Learning real English use

is necessary in today's world because of several reasons: Technology makes it available, time is gold as events happen fast, and the learners want to learn something meaningful right now, not tomorrow. They want to learn real English to understand real people and be understood by them. Language use includes both linguistic and pragmatic knowledge as well as skills in understanding and producing discourse. We study use if we examine how people convey meaning through the process of constructing discourse. The students need to hear real people talking real English in real situations, instead of learning grammar from books. As Hymes (1972) says, there are rules of use without which grammar rules are useless and inoperative.

The use of the language refers to the function of the word or the phrase like part of a communication system (Use). The students turn emotional when they hear Babe Ruth saying to more than 50 000 fans in the Yankee Stadium (YS) two days before he died: *"Do you know why my voice sounds like that? Because death is close."* Or when the manager of the YS announced some days later: *"Babe has gone!"*, or when Mackey Mouse says, "I am done". The students do not easily forget these phrases, and what is more, they produce their own similar phrases, for example, *"Do you know why your head aches you?"* *"My friend has gone"* *"I'm done"*. Real English use learning goes hand in hand with students making speech.

The students' connection is still weak for several reasons: need of University internalization processes, lack of access to The Internet, and lack of English speaking people to develop communication and socialization skills. Connectivity is a need because it lets the learners know how people really use the English language. There is a cultural and social effect of English learning when the students push themselves into the international World Wide Web, or when they are connected with someone who speaks English. The learners put the world inside their mind and move with it. Thus, they get in touch with what is going around them and they can feel how it is bound to their own lives. The students need to be connected themselves with real people, information, ideas and emotions, so that they could be under the other people's skin.

Connectivity is essential to create and understand different topics and contexts that the learner needs to understand and to talk about. The learning of pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar is boring and more difficult when it is out of context. Thus, context makes language learning easier, interesting and meaningful. The students are excited about real language use and the culture that language expresses, when they are involved and compromised with actions and people. This connection makes the student

feel the energy, the power and feeling of the characters. Connectivity helps the student become a fantastic, great English learner because it makes language alive. English is dead language for those that study it for a test, for those that approach its learning as a must. It is dead language as Latin, for those that focalize the textbooks and the exams. The students need to give life to English. They should bring it alive to transform it into a behavior of life. That's how one really adds power to one's English learning, using it in real life through connectivity. This is really a need at universities, where English is dead language for most learners. They should make it real speech to bring it alive! To make English their own behavior is the only way they could be down with English!

The student's cultural background is one of the dimensions that ranks lower. In new times, young people do not always learn what is needed to become a good, peaceful and useful citizen. Many university students have a narrow scope of the world they live in, and sometimes they receive deceitful or false news. One of the functions of language is the cognition of the world. Thus, English learning is a wonderful way of knowing new things around us. They learn the target language and the culture it expresses, by listening and reading songs, stories, news, descriptions, narrations, argument, dialogues, etc. Much of our knowledge of the world culture and history has come from our English learning or our real English use in life. Unfortunately, some people confuses this term of Cultural background with the term New English Learning Culture. For the sake of this paper, the former is a dimension of the latter.

The students' attitude is good in general terms, even when there are some that do not make great efforts and give enough time to English learning. However, they all hope to be good citizens, using English for the sake of peace, justice and faith. Humanism places man at the center of the universe. Man's happiness, freedom and peace is what English language learning cares for most. Ultimately, communication is an instrument to educate human beings who should be able to make a better world. Humanism deals with feelings, attitude and values. The key value of humanism is love. For us, the key issue in English learning is the student's

attitude and not the method or course book as many people have traditionally thought.

The student's attitude and values let English learning go ahead safely and get through. Our main task is to encourage the students to love English and its learning. Only love can make English learning useful and meaningful. The students should feel the need to learn English for it

helps them to socialize with other people, to express their emotions and to be useful and creative citizens. It is a fine way to come closer to the real diverse world and culture, so that they could help to make them better. That sense of social usefulness is what gives us spiritual peace, justice and freedom. This only happens when the great thing that is inside us comes out and we help others. People expect somebody else to take care of themselves. The students should feel that solidarity is the only thing that gives life a sense and that they can change the world since we, human beings, are by nature, social creatures who expect someone else to take care of themselves. Hence, English is purposeful and helps as a means of communication to make a better life.

CONCLUSIONS

Creating a whole integrating English Language Learning Culture (ELLC) in the university students who learn English is a need for the students to learn faster, easier and better. This implies the use of new strategies, beliefs, and attitudes towards the language and its use in real life. It means being connected with the digital technology, learning real language outside and inside the classrooms, improving one's general culture and knowledge as the background for socializing and contextualizing the language, reflecting, interacting socially and learning the language as a way of expression meaning, culture and thought.

On behalf of the NELC proposal, it should be said that there is a striking shift from grammar to communication, from knowledge to reflective social interaction, from the teacher to the learner, from the language system to its real use, from the classroom to the outside, from the book to technology, from the method to the attitude, from linguistics to sociolinguistics, from empiricism to psychology of communication, from the shadow to connectivity, from old times to new contexts, from bookish English to real English use, from learning to speak by repetition to listening comprehensible input for speaking.

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