Confronting challenges of non-formal education: A shift from book-based EFL to tailor-made, experimental syllabi

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Objectives

The target population was aged between 22 to 55 years from the Valencian Autonomous Community in Spain.

Mixed design, numerical data were complemented by the narrative data analysed on a semantic scale.

The results show that the new non-formal English as a Foreign Language (EFL) course requirements present challenges related to the transition from fixed-syllabus textbooks to tailor-made courses where students can determine the subject matter and the percentage distribution of the components (reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammar etc.) of their language courses.
Formal vs Non-formal

• The purpose of education systems is to impart formal training.

• Non-formal training runs parallel to the formal system but allows students more freedom to determine its elements.

• While generally formal education is rigidly structured, non-formal training is usually more student-centred and more flexible.

• The digital era started to change curriculum-design methods by incorporating digital technologies.

• The pandemic extended technological impact on education, work and social interactions, thus setting the stage for possible syllabi updates in non-formal EFL.
Educational System in Spain

TRAINING CENTRE
SCHOOL POLICY
- PEC (School Educative Project).
- POAR (Professional Orientation Plan).
- Plan for Coexistence.
- PAD (Differentiation Action Plan).
- PAT (Tutorial Action Plan).
- ICT (Information and Communication Technology) Plan.

LOCAL LEVEL
AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY OF VALENCIA
Decree 51/2018 (26 April) by the Consell based on
Decree 87/2015 (5 June) by the Consell.

EU POLICY
UNESCO education strategy 2014-2021

NATIONAL POLICY
Royal Decree 1105/2014 (26 December).
Organic Law 8/2013 (BOE 295, 9 December) or LOMCE, based on Organic Law 2/2006 (BOE 106, 4 May) or LOE.
The aim of this research was to answer the following questions:

- Are students satisfied with the way English as a foreign language is taught in the formal-education system?
- Do students resort to non-formal English learning to complement compulsory education?
- What type of class attendance do students prefer?
- What types of course and material are they interested in?
Design

• 1. Questionnaires with closed- and open-ended questions were administered to non-formal-education EFL students (n=72)

• 2. A focus-group interview with semi-structured questions that sought to obtain information by promoting interaction between participants (n=7)
Quant Data 1

Birth ranges
- Between 1965 - 1980: 50.0%
- Between 1981 and 1996: 20.0%
- Between 1995 and 2000: 100.0%
- Other: 0.0%

EFL at School
- No: 0.0%
- Yes: 100.0%

EFL at University
- No: 0.0%
- Yes: 50.0%

Private tutor
- No: 0.0%
- Yes: 50.0%

Corporate training
- No: 0.0%
- Yes: 50.0%

EFL courses abroad
- No: 0.0%
- Yes: 50.0%
Quant Data 2

Education

Preferences for English language certification
Syllabus preference

- 69.4% Other
- 20.0% A course based on past examination papers for some official certificate
- 10.0% A book-based course supplemented by other topics of interest
- 0.0% Tailor-made course based on topics of interest

Preferences for learning mode

- 80.0% Traditional classroom complemented with informal learning
- 60.0% Traditional classroom supplemented with computer-assisted and mobile-assisted learning
- 40.0% Online classrooms, computer-assisted and mobile-assisted learning
• St_4. Gender: woman.
• Age: 27.
• Profession: unemployed.
• Currently studying English: in a group in a language school.
• Current level: B1.
• Official certificate: yes, B1 from EOI.
• Objectives of studying English: “I want to find a job as a nursery teacher.”
• Personal explanation: “I want to be able to speak fluently in English, to know how to play games in class, and to give instructions in English.”
• Preferred distribution of CEFR framework components in class: 50% speaking, 20% listening, 10% reading, and 20% writing.
• Type of syllabus: “It is better to be able to select interesting or necessary topics for a course.”
• “I am interested in retelling and discussing fairy tales in English, training some nursery rhymes, and singing children’s songs. Such topics cannot be found in students’ books.” “I frequently use my mobile phone.”
• In class I am fine with technological or technology-free games (guessing games, pelmanism, picture descriptions, monologues, etc.). Training a theatre play would be very helpful for me.”
Conclusion

• The results obtained show that the majority of participants demonstrate the predisposition for tailormade courses.

• Another noteworthy finding was that the majority of the students considered speaking skills a priority (between 40% and 80%), assigning less importance to listening (between 5% and 30%), writing (5% and 20%) and reading skills (5% and 20%).
Final Thoughts

For questions and suggestions please contact
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