Ceibal en Inglés – Primary Education
Methodology Statement
December 2020

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1. Introduction

Ceibal en Inglés is an educational program designed for teaching English to Uruguayan primary school children in fourth, fifth and sixth grades. For the program, a new pedagogical model has been developed which consists of a blend of face-to-face, distance and remote team teaching and adopts an innovative use of telepresence technology which allows for remote teaching in real time without losing the benefits of challenge-based teaching methodology.

The program has been designed to tackle a problem in Uruguayan primary education: the lack of teachers of English. It is also based on a strength in Uruguayan education: the commitment of classroom teachers and their belief that learning English may become a most useful tool for the future of their students.

Ceibal en Inglés works with the British Council and other institutes in Uruguay and abroad to conduct the different components of the program.

2. Objectives

The main goals of the program are to teach English in Uruguayan primary schools and raise the standards of English teaching in general, as well as promote changes in education. This is done through innovative use of telepresence technology and using the laptops which have already been distributed to the schoolchildren.

After three years of English (4th to 6th grade), students will have received approximately 200 language learning hours. The program has been designed to take children with an A0 level[1] of English (absolute beginners) up to approximately A2 level.

English language training is also offered for the classroom teachers, who are encouraged to work at their own pace and can progress as far as their motivation leads them. A positive attitude towards foreign language learning at the primary school level is fostered and encouraged, so as to ensure the success of the program.

3. Program Design

For the English learning of the **children**, the program includes:

- Development of new pedagogical models for
  - lessons delivered in challenge-based format by **Remote teachers** (RTs) via videoconferencing
  - ICT use in the classroom
  - changes in the role of the classroom teachers and students in consequence of RT presence and use of technology in the classroom
  - laptops used in class
- An updated curriculum for the new pedagogy
  - step-by-step challenges for students to complete called "Missions"
  - digital content provision for student laptops
  - the curriculum can be delivered either with students at schools or at home
- Evaluation of student learning
  - Through an online adaptive test
  - As well as through regular formative assessment

For the English learning directed at the **classroom teachers** (CTs), the program includes:
- Online assessment of classroom teachers' current level of English
- Online training to improve teacher language proficiency
- Provision of online support through a virtual community for teachers
- Ongoing assessment of language level and the issuing of certificates

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[1] CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages)
http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Cadre1_en.asp

3.1 Pedagogical model
The program design combines three modalities of language teaching, that together define the specifics of this project:

- **Remote teaching**: The teacher of English is not physically present just like in other forms of *distance teaching*. Unlike distance teaching, however, students are in a group of approximately 25 children, in their own classroom, in their school, with their CT.
- **Team teaching**: Team teaching is an approach in which two or more teachers are jointly responsible for course content, lesson activities and assessment. Remote and classroom teachers can only teach by mutual cooperation.
- **Blended learning**: Blended learning is a form of formal education in which a student learns in part through online delivery of content and instruction. In the *Ceibal en Inglés* blend of teaching, the RT teaches remotely, the CT does so face to face, and all use an LMS, called CREA.

3.2 Lessons A, B & C
The design of the project includes three forty-five minute classes a week of English. These are called lessons A, B and C, and they are understood as a weekly cycle of lessons.

- **Lesson A** is taught by the RT via videoconference. During this lesson, the CT is also active, working in tandem with the RT to facilitate the learning. She is also in charge of classroom management, student's engagement and motivation

  Lessons B and C are led, organized and oriented by the Classroom Teacher (CT) , who may not know any English, but who, through highly scripted lesson plans in Spanish is able to revise and recycle what is taught in lesson A, and help and support students' achievement of missions. In this program the remote teacher models the language and the classroom teacher is the enabler of learning, a challenging but most inspirational role.

  The design also mandates that the two teaching professionals coordinate weekly to discuss how to implement the weekly cycle that comes next, and to provide feedback as to how the previous week went. At the same time, it is during coordination that the CT may inform the RT about her class, her students, her school community, and the RT is able to support in all that relates to second language acquisition, and reasons for teaching decisions.

3.3 Curriculum content

In the first year, the content of the lessons revolves around the life of the students, and moves to general curricular needs in years two and three of the program. In the second and third year, the syllabus also includes curricular academic content related to the official primary school curriculum.

4. Technological Component

The program requires an innovative technological solution to make more effective and widespread use of teachers who are available to teach but who are not physically located in the Uruguayan schools**.**

4.1 Videoconference equipment

The videoconference is a call done via internet in real time. The equipment installed in each school have a codec, an UPS, a camera, a microphone and loudspeakers (4 to 6 loudspeakers on the side walls, depending on the size of the room), and a television set with a large screen, 55".

For the call to be established, both parties (the remote teacher and the group) have to use compatible videoconference equipment. Connectivity is through fibre optic cables. The call can be made independently of the geographic distance, whether within Uruguay or from abroad.

The videoconference equipment allows for audio and video communication; both parties can hear and see each other in real time, with excellent quality of sound and image. The camera which is part of the equipment allows viewers to regulate the perspective from a broad, general vision of the whole class, to more specific images of a particular student or a small group of students.

Videoconference equipment permits "file sharing": by connecting a standard computer to the codec, participants on one side may show the other side audio, video (images, documents, songs, films). When sharing files, the equipment allows a choice of different layout options. For example, the RT's image or the shared content can be minimized or maximized.

Technology imposes certain specific conditions. The remote teacher may not walk around the classroom to see students' work, or speak personally to them; the remote teacher and the children cannot typically see each other ´s full body, which has to be taken into account when doing certain activities or representations which include movement; the frontal grouping of the class (i.e. with the teacher standing at the front and all students

looking towards her) is hard to change. It also has positive consequences or potentially beneficial consequences. Integration of digital material is far more consistent and systematic in videoconference lessons (it does not depend on additional equipment; it is an integral part of the proposal). All materials can be maximized in size on the screen, this offers valuable teaching strategies.

4.2 Children's and Teachers' laptops

In Uruguayan schools all primary school students and teachers have laptops. Students and teachers participating in Ceibal en Inglés are expected to use the laptops provided by Plan Ceibal during English lessons.

Children have one of the following three types of laptops: Clamshell Sirio, HP Stream, Haier Murzim. By using their laptops children and teachers access online and digital materials (games, templates, activities), most useful for lessons B and C. Lessons A, conducted by remote teachers, might also include the use of laptops, even when these lessons focus mostly on modelling language and interaction between the remote teacher and the students or among the students themselves.

4.3 CREA - Plan Ceibal Platform

CREA, the Learning Management System used by Plan Ceibal enables classroom teachers, students and remote teachers to have access to different materials (lesson plans, online activities, digital materials) and to communicate with each other during and in between classes.

There are two main parts to CREA:

Lesson Plans and Materials. The classroom teachers and remote teachers can communicate with each other and find the lesson plans and associated materials in CREA. Ceibal en Inglés lesson plans are only provided in digital format and are written both in English and in Spanish.

Aulas Virtuales. In this space, the classroom teachers, remote teachers and students are able to interact through internal mail or forums, hence error correction in students 'written work is done in this virtual space: students upload their written work and remote teachers read, correct and send information back.

Links to games and digital materials are located in the *Aulas Virtuales* for the students to

use either in lessons B and C, or on their own. (e.g. for homework.)
These *Aulas Virtuales* connect other platforms used for learning Englsih.

5. Pedagogical Approach

Challenged- based learning

Ceibal en Inglés understands that we are constantly surrounded by challenges, and that schools need to establish a clear link between education and the world. For this reason, our model is based on challenges, which have been called "missions".
Students and teachers can work collaboratively and hand-on as challenges are two folded: they have a linguistic question to answer together with a handcraft to produce.

Challenge Based Learning provides:

1. A flexible and customizable framework that can be implemented as a guiding pedagogy or integrated with other progressive approaches to learning.
2. A scalable model with multiple points of entry and the ability to start small and build big,
3. A free and open system with no proprietary ideas, products or subscriptions.
4. A process that places all Learners in charge, and responsible for the learning.
5. An authentic environment for meeting academic standards and making deeper connections with content.
6. A focus on global ideas, meaningful Challenges and the development of local and age appropriate Solutions
7. An authentic relationship between academic disciplines and real world experience
8. A framework to develop 21st-century skills
9. Purposeful use of technology for researching, analyzing, organizing, collaborating, networking, communicating, publishing and reflecting.
10. The opportunity for Learners to make a difference now.
11. A way to document and assess both the learning process and products,
12. An environment for deep reflection on teaching and learning[1]

The goal of this program is the teaching of English as a foreign language with integration of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). The program aims at the acquisition of both informal language for everyday communication as well as more formal academic uses of English through the progressive integration of curricular academic content adapted to students´ level and age.

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[1] Nichols, M., Cator, K., and Torres, M. (2016) Challenge Based Learner User Guide. Redwood City, CA: Digital Promise.

Use of Spanish (L1 for both students and classroom teachers)

The program recognizes the need for CT and RT to use Spanish to communicate with each other, although this should be limited during class time. During the first semester, the use of Spanish during class might be felt to be necessary by the remote teacher in order to establish rapport and an effective working relationship with the classroom teacher. However, the program emphasizes the importance of restricting the use of Spanish to a minimal proportion of class time, in order to maximize children´s opportunities of exposure to English. In case the remote teacher decides that the use of Spanish is required, it should be used only after the message was expressed in English (not the other way around), and continuous code mixing and code switching are discouraged. As students and the classroom teachers progress in their knowledge of English, remote teachers should progressively use exclusively English during lessons A. Weekly coordination, be it face-to-face or virtual (or a combination of both), however, will need to be conducted in Spanish.

6. Teachers

There are two professionals involved in the teaching process: one knows English and the challenges of second language acquisition; the other knows the Uruguayan Educational Public System, her school and her students. Only between the two of them can they gather all the skills needed for the teaching of English to young learners. Thus, periodic coordination between the two professionals is paramount for the success of the project in each classroom.

6.1 Classroom Teacher (CT)

CTs in Uruguay are all graduate, committed teachers. In this program her role changes from the traditional teaching role as understood in our culture of transmitters of knowledge. In Ceibal en Inglés, the CT becomes the facilitator and the learning enabler as in general, CTs do not know English. Therefore, they have to move from a more comfortable place of transmitting knowledge, to a more challenging one of collaborating with the RT and students to create knowledge together in partnership. The position of the CT is different because the content she enables to be learnt is content which she does not previously possess. In terms of knowledge she is at a place of equality with her students but has vast experience as a learner and can discriminate reliable sources from others, and can, most importantly, help students find the necessary organization, work ethic, and adult support to guide their learning. She is not a model of language but is a model of learning and knows all the didactic strategies that promote learning in her students.

Due to her key role, the CT is highly supported by a team of mentors who visit schools and offer strategies to overcome the different challenges presented by the program, such as tips for better coordination with the RT, best ways to approach lessons B /C, or use of technology, among many others. CTs also attend an Orientation Course before term begins provided by our mentors both at their schools or at a central venue.

The CT role entails:

- To be present and actively participate during the 45-minute lesson A, taught once a week by the RT through videoconference,
- To guide, support and lead the learning of English and the completion of the missions in two 45-minute lessons (lessons B and C),
- To participate in a regular weekly coordination estimated at half an hour with the RT.

CTs know they do not need to speak any English when they join the program to be successful in enabling their students to learn. It is their attitude towards learning a foreign language and collaborating with remote teachers and their students that makes the difference.
However, the program offers an online course in EFL. The Ceibal en Inglés team encourages and facilitates CTs´ learning of English to go as far as possible but does not make it mandatory as experience has vastly shown that English is not essential to enable its learning, an open attitude to new challenges however, is.
It is in this particular point where the role of mentors becomes indispensable.

6.2 Remote Teacher

RTs are highly motivated professionals with an interest in innovation in education. Some teachers work from Uruguay; others from other countries. They are requested to have a teaching degree, a minimum C1 level of English so that they provide an excellent model of language proficiency, and B1 level of Spanish, to ensure coordination with CTs is handled adequately.

All RTs are trained to work in this innovative program through modules designed by the Ceibal en Inglés Quality Management team.

Quality managers have been designated to make sure all RTs comply with the requirements of the program. Lessons are observed either from teaching points, from the school, or remotely through videoconference equipment, feedback is provided and when necessary action plans are offered and supervised.

RTs work at different institutes and thus there is an institute coordinator who supervises and supports each RT and provides a link between Ceibal en Inglés Quality managers, the RT and the outsourced institute.

The greatest challenge for the teacher of English in this program is to find a way to connect with her students. Unlike other forms of distance learning, which allow for people to establish communication when they find the right time to do so, or that only engage a few people per connecting time, the remote teaching done in this program has the vividness of being in the moment facing around 25 children accompanied by a CT at their own school. The RT then encounters similar challenges of face-to- face teaching, but does not have the same tools available, because she is not physically present in the classroom. Thus, the relationship between students and their RT is mediated by the technology and the CT, who not only is responsible for the classroom management and student's engagement, (her most evident contribution to lesson A), but is the main link between the students and English language learning.

It is essential for the right implementation of this program that the remote teacher who accepts the responsibility to work for Ceibal en Inglés, remains at her post throughout the school year, so that a stable teacher-students and teacher-teacher relationship is established. Only through trust built over time, can the main objectives be safely preserved.

The responsibilities of the RT are:
● Teach lesson A and clearly guide the CT about lessons B & C
● Weekly coordination with CT
● Correction of students' work in English
● General orientation to CT on technology, second language acquisition, and English learning

6.3 Coordination

Teamwork and collaboration are the bases of the program.

This project is based on the idea that the teaching of English is undertaken by a pair of teachers doing the job typically performed by one. Only by the efforts of two different actors, the RT and the CT, can children learn. For this reason, weekly coordination is paramount and mandatory.

The first aim of coordination is to establish a bond of trust between the two teachers. The CT needs to be certain that the RT will appear on the screen at the pre-established time with her class well planned and organized; and the RT needs to trust that the CT will be actively participating in lesson A, and that she will make sure the students will review all the content learnt in lesson A and accomplish the mission, during lessons B and C.

Elements of coordination:

- CT informs RT about her group: number of children, level of the group, number of children who study English privately and their level of English, any special difficulties in the group, children's preferences, or important aspects of specific children. Ideally, she will send the RT a list of the children in her group and one short comment about each child.
- CT informs RT about her school and the specifics of the social context of the group she teaches.
- RT explains what she will do in her class A, what aspects of each lesson plan she will cover, and will give simple and clear advice as to what to do in lessons B and C to follow-up the main elements of lesson A so that students can accomplish the mission and upload it to the LMS.
- RT supports CT in aspects of second language acquisition the CT does not know about.
- Negotiation of certain elements such as "use of Spanish". The amount of Spanish used in each class might be negotiated between the two teachers. It is important however that RT explains to CT that it is expected for newcomers into a foreign language to feel confused at the beginning due to lack of understanding, but that little by little children will learn to make sense.
- Negotiation about how to make the best use of those children who already speak English.
- Negotiation about which other activities offered by the program will be chosen by each group (Shakespeare Festival, Rural Schools Spring Festival, Apollo CEI contest, Sing Along, etc)
- In general, RTs lead the use of technology in this program and help CTs in their process

of appropriation of the LMS and the VC technology.
● RTs correct students 'written work and inform CT of the students 'performance

7. Assessment and evaluation

Assessment of the children's progress is carried out on a regular basis, after each unit of work (approximately every 10-12 lessons) with an online adaptive test being given to all children at the end of the year.

The assessment during the year mainly tests the oral production of the children and serves several different purposes. Primarily, it gives the two teachers (CT & RT) an indication of how the children are doing and lets the RT adjust the pace and/or revise relevant material as required. These assessments are an integral part of the lesson plans and instructions are provided there to help the RT with the implementation of the assessment and with recording the marks.

The online adaptive test has been written by a specialized assessment writing team and has been validated by CRELLA. It is given to all children at the end of the year. When results have been collected from one year to the next, this analysis will also allow Plan Ceibal to evaluate the success of the project's impact on the learning of English throughout Uruguayan primary schools.

Each child receives a certification of the level of English achieved by the end of the Primary School cycle (6th grade).