

The Co-construction of Knowledge and
the Use of Critical Thinking in Academic Virtual Forums

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Dedication

To my parents Luis Eli Pulido and Blanca Inés González

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Abstract

This paper aims to report a research carried out with students of an advanced English course in a distant education undergraduate TEFL program at Universidad Santo Tomas. The main objective of the research was to determine patterns of co-construction of knowledge, and find evidences of the use of critical thinking in the virtual forums used in the English course. This was done through the application of two instruments: an adaptation of Gunawardena, Lowe & Anderson's (1997) interaction analysis model, and an instrument that surveyed Paul's universal intellectual standards (2007), which are standards that can be applied to thinking whenever one is interested in checking the quality of reasoning about a problem, issue or situation. The study followed a qualitative descriptive research design, and data was collected through a content analysis of the students' written posts. The outcome of the study was the characterization of the students' online interaction through the identification of phases of interaction and the evaluation of the quality of reasoning. The study also showed the need for teachers to propose virtual forum themes that promote critical thinking development in students.

KEY WORDS: Critical thinking, interaction, universal intellectual standards, co-construction of knowledge, distance education, virtual forums, descriptive study, content analysis.

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Introduction

The main characteristic of the human being is the ability of reasoning. This characteristic is important in daily life as well as on issues of education, social and work situations, especially in E-learning and B-learning, because it determines the acquisition of new knowledge. Consequently, conceptualizing the meaning of critical thinking in online education, and how it is promoted in virtual education involves an interaction model that considers the student, the learning environment and course design, where the development of teaching guides and materials is very important because they contribute to the promotion of constructivism, cooperative and collaborative learning (Gross, 2011).

Critical thinking is a process by which a person reflects on different aspects, situations or experiences of daily life to solve a problem, describe a position or give a response (Lopez, 2000). In particular, in online education, critical thinking integrates the ability to think and solve problems through the use and management of technological resources. (Cobo, R. 2011). The teacher plays a very important role in the generation of critical thinking. To do this, the teacher must have a set of skills that will help in achieving this goal in students (Cobo, 2011). As stated by Gross (2011), collaborative work is very important in online education, since it allows the exchange of ideas among the members of a group, through interaction and teamwork.

Additionally, learning English as a foreign language, developing English skills and thinking critically are ongoing processes that are not defined by a specific point of development. As processes, they can be refined through materials that stimulate and generate controversy. (Baez, 2004).

In distance education, virtual forums are enabling environments that meet all the necessary characteristics to encourage critical thinking in students. In this regard, Bautista (2006) claims that teaching in the virtual environment involves supporting thinking with questions that allow students to think for themselves.

Considering the importance of developing critical thinking in virtual education, this descriptive study aimed to determine patterns of co-construction of knowledge and find evidences of the use of critical thinking in a group of EFL learners. To find these elements, this project included the implementation of virtual forums in an advanced English course in a distance education undergraduate TEFL program with the intention of collecting information about the students' participation.

One of the theories about the co-construction of knowledge examines interaction in terms of five phases of interaction (Gunawardena et al, 1997). Those interaction levels help to identify the construction of knowledge in a students' debate in a virtual forum. In other words, if their opinions about the theme have a progressive growth around the debate. Subsequently, critical thinking has its basic principles in the presence of universal intellectual standards, clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance and fairness (Paul and Elder, 2007); to think critically entails having command in these standards. Questions proposed in a virtual forum must be designed to apply them (Paul 2007). With a content analysis, this research intended to identify the extent to which these elements are present in the students' participation.

In order to carry out this inquiry, I found three motivations. First, there is the personal conviction as a student that people organize their thoughts in a better way when they write. Second, I found inspiration in the words of Terry Anderson who, speaking about distance

education, said that when people interact with each other, the different interpretations of a given topic, provide occasions for the construction of new knowledge (Anderson and Garrison, 2001). Third, I was inspired by Richard Paul, who claims that “Excellence in thought must be systematically cultivated” (2007).

The present research report is organized in the following sections:

In chapter 1, I explain how the problem came to be, and I describe the educational context in which this research was developed. In chapter 2, I present the theoretical framework that supports this investigation, including key concepts and previous studies related to my research interest. In chapter 3, I describe the research design giving an account of the type of research and procedures that were followed, as well as the profile of the research participants. In chapter 4, I explain the instructional design, the procedures for data collection, and the criteria for data analysis and results. In chapter 5, I present the conclusions and pedagogical implications of the study, as a way to synthesize the results of this investigation. Finally, I include a list of the references used in this research project and the appendixes that complement this research report.

Chapter 1

Problem Statement

In my process as an English learner, all my experiences in virtual classrooms were very important in my reflection about distance education. I remember an English class where we had to write an opinion essay in English about three main qualities that a person must have in order to be successful in life. We did not expect this topic or question; we used to write essays based on reading texts or previous information. However, when the teacher asked that question we had to reflect and inquire into reality, find out what those qualities were, give a recommendation to other people -not just to ourselves- and, identify the most important factors that were relevant in this topic.

We had to initiate a process of reflection that involved practical activities like formulating hypotheses, exposing own ideas, proposing alternatives, asking more questions, listening to other opinions, arguing about the opinions of others, looking for additional reasons, keeping in mind the original problem, and finding examples and relationships with our sociocultural environment with similar situations in our country. Learning at that time was much greater and much deeper than in other occasions. The reason is that the teacher stimulated our thoughts in order to reflect and analyze.

In that exercise of writing an opinion essay, I found that we do not naturally consider the rights and needs of others. I could think about my qualities in order to be successful in life but it was more difficult to think about the relevant qualities that other people could cultivate in order to be successful in life. In other words, we live with an unrealistic sense that we have fundamentally figured out the way things actually are, and that we have done this objectively.

Nevertheless, it is a mistake because sometimes we assume that what we believe is true all the time or we assume that the dominant beliefs of social groups are true even though we have never questioned the basis for many of these beliefs. (Paul, 2007, p 9).

Then, my research interests emerged from the experiences I have faced as a student in a context of English as a foreign language learning in a model of distance education (B-learning), and from the need to organize my thoughts in order to develop my research project. I identified that, when I write, I can organize in my mind my thoughts better, but it is not enough; sometimes my thoughts are partial, biased, distorted, incomplete or subjective.

In this reflection, I understood that the quality of my work depends on building and producing organized thoughts. In addition, Paul (2007) said that *the quality of our life and everything that we do depends precisely on the quality of our thoughts*. The consequent questioning was how students actually improve the quality of their thoughts.

Some preliminary questions emerged: where can students of English as a foreign language (EFL) in distance education express their ideas and opinions in English? That place must have the option of interaction among students in order to provide opportunities for a cooperative exercise of construction of new knowledge. How can EFL students cultivate their thoughts? The reflection upon those questions let me understand that I needed to formulate a unified question.

For that reason, I started an inquiry oriented in previous studies about this topic. In this process, I identified Velazquez and Figueroa's work (2010), who carried out a research to determine the level of development of critical thinking in higher education in their country, analyzing not only the causes of its low level, but also designing strategies for its development. This study found that low level of development of critical thinking is due to deficiencies in the

ability of analysis, ability of inductive reasoning, deductive reasoning, and ability of inference.

This study also found that students need to have an educational system that enhances levels of thought. This research by Velazquez and Figueroa set a precedent in Latin America for research on critical thinking development of university students.

Deepening in other studies, it was important for me to find the work of Jaramillo (2011), who developed a research on the implementation of a Virtual Classroom as a teaching strategy in the process of teaching and learning in B-learning to promote the development of critical and reflective thinking of students, encouraging the construction of knowledge. This study discusses the importance of implementing, motivating and managing information and communication technologies (ICT) in the educational learning – teaching processes. The author found that it is important to convert the technological resources of the virtual classrooms into a teaching strategy to develop critical thinking in students.

In addition, I found an important reflection in Gabriela Lopez' (2013) research about critical thinking in the classroom. This work helped me to focus on my final research question because the author pointed out that in the school students should learn to learn to ensure that they acquire an intellectual independence. This can be achieved through the development of higher skills such as critical thinking. The author found that progress is beyond cognitive skills training; it is further distinguished by the provisions that each person brings to the task of thinking, traits such as open-mindedness and sensitivity to the beliefs, feelings and knowledge of others and how thoughts faces the challenges of life (Lopez, 2013).

Finally, in order to develop an objective research analysis and present supported results, I drew upon the work of Gunawardena et al. (1997). They developed a study that attempted to find

appropriate interaction analysis/content analysis techniques that assist in examining the negotiation of meaning and co-construction of knowledge in collaborative learning environments facilitated by computer conferencing. Contributions of this author are present in a significant form in this project.

Talking about critical thinking, previous studies helped me to understand that some patterns are recurring or present in students' thoughts, in their reflections and participations in virtual classrooms, but if we want to improve critical thinking in students, first we have to identify what Paul (2007) coined 'universal intellectual standards' – UIS and next, cultivate them. Consequently, I would like to identify some actions and behaviors that students of English language assume when they interact with other students in a virtual discussion forum.

For those reasons, I am interested in identifying patterns of the use of critical thinking in virtual forums so I formulated a unified question and an objective for my research:

Research Question

What do EFL students' participation in academic virtual forums inform about the co-construction of knowledge and the use of critical thinking?

Research Objective

To identify characteristics of the use of critical thinking and co-construction of knowledge in a group of EFL learners.

With this objective, the research aims to answer the research question and to find those patterns of the use critical thinking in a group of EFL learners in virtual forums as a way to assess their participations and identify students' interaction. The phases of interaction that Charlotte

Gunawardena (1997) proposes in her Interaction Analysis Model (IAM) and the Universal Intellectual Standards (UIS) that Richard Paul (2007) explains in his guide to critical thinking establish the research line followed in this project.

Justification

Nowadays, enhancing critical thinking in learners is considered one of the foreign language teachers' tasks with great importance in foreign language classrooms. There are various factors affecting language learners' critical thinking skills. Among these factors are the assessment methods used. Therefore, through managing the ways of assessing language learners' ability, language teachers can help them develop critical thinking skills (Shirkhani et al. 2011).

Information and communication technologies have been taking a relevant place in modern life and especially in education. Yúfera (2012) pointed out that now we use the computer and the web more than a notebook and pencil. The construction of knowledge in the digital age is an important factor in students' lives. Information is communicated visually, through hearing, or in writing. Humans must continue reading on the screen of our computers if we want to be part of this new way of building knowledge. In this regard, if we want to communicate our thoughts with technology, we should write well, for example, through e-mails, smartphones or virtual classrooms. Writing has an important role in the construction of knowledge and students' thinking development in this new digital era.

Furthermore, the increase in demand for university programs under the distance educational model has been influenced by socio-economic factors, as well as the rise of mass media, the Internet and globalization. One of the major challenges of education in regard to the widespread use of ICT is the possibility of using these technologies to promote the construction of knowledge (Romero G. Carol, 2013) as part of the development of thinking, because computer-mediated education, requires a strategic structuring, that encourages student

interaction. This challenge can take place in virtual forums, which can be exceptional tools to stimulate thinking in students.

Even, with the rise of globalization and the evident importance of knowing at least one foreign language, learning English remains a difficult task for undergraduate students. Therefore, I believe that, if students participate constantly in virtual environments in an English course, they may improve their thinking, and they may have the opportunity to propose critical opinions. Unfortunately, sometimes students are not aware which aspects must be cultivated in order to improve their thinking when they are learning a foreign language.

I found my motivations in three ideas around the virtual education context. First, the fact that people organize their thoughts better when they write. Second, in words of Terry Anderson when speaking about distance education: *“when people interact among them, the different interpretations of a same topic provide occasions for the constructions of new knowledge”* (Anderson, 2001). I found a third motivation in Dr. Richard Paul when he claimed that, excellence in thought must be systematically cultivated (Paul, 2007. p4.)

For the aforementioned reasons, this research is an observation of written communication by English students in a discussion virtual forum to do a content analysis about characteristics of co-construction of knowledge and patterns of the use of critical thinking in virtual environments.

I consider this research important because it can provide the teaching process with new elements and appropriate topics for forums in order to promote students' interaction, improve their thoughts, become critical thinkers and improve their participation in the target language.

This research is important to the institution where the study takes place because it can provide new research elements that may help teachers to improve the questions proposed in virtual forums with academic purposes. This research is an opportunity to give new arguments about the importance of interaction in a debate in virtual forums in higher education.

Finally, in research field this investigation is important because provide more information about patterns of students' interaction in distance education and blended learning (B-Learning), also this research provide information about universal intellectual standards proposed by Richard Paul (2007) observed in students' participation in virtual forums.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I analyze some important research that help to contextualize this study in regard to theoretical arguments about critical thinking. I intend to describe what critical thinking involves in terms of the relation between critical thinking and education processes; the relation between critical thinking and distance education; the importance of virtual forums as a convenient methodology to develop critical thinking; and the co-construction of knowledge as a form to educate critical thinkers.

Relation between critical thinking and education processes.

J. Bruner (2011) found about cognitive theory that: *Knowledge acquisition is the one thing that often goes beyond the simple words, it is to make sense of a subject, to know the meaning of a concept. What a subject or concept means.* Students do not just write words without sense or context during their educational process. Students write ideas, thoughts and their own reflections and experiences.

Among the authors who theorize about critical thinking are Elder and Paul (2003), who define critical thinking as the need for prosecution and examination. Prosecuting is to submit a matter for consideration, discussion and judgment. In turn, examination is rigorous inquiry that is made about the qualities and circumstances of a thing or a fact. To discuss a subject and carefully examine it, the thinker must provide arguments, judgment and comprehension of the operation of comparing two ideas to meet and determine their relationships -theoretical definitions- (2003).

Critical thinking requires solving problems, making decisions, learn new concepts, but at the same time, includes much more than that.

In fact, the concept of critical thinking is not easy to define. Richard Paul (2007) found that the quality of our life and everything that we do depends precisely on the quality of our thoughts. Supported in this idea, critical thinking is framed as the art of analyzing and evaluating thinking with the objective of improving it. In addition, it has some results: a well-cultivated critical thinker raises vital questions and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely. Critical thinking is learned and constructed, not acquired, and in consequence, teachers have to educate future critical thinkers.

A critical thinker has the responsibility to gather and assess relevant information using abstract ideas to interpret it effectively. A critical thinker comes to well-reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards; thinks open-mindedly within alternative systems of thought, recognizing and assessing, as need be, their assumptions, implications, and practical consequences; and communicates effectively with others in figuring out solutions to complex problems.

In short, thinking critically is a human element co-constructed in classrooms by students through a work of self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking. It requires rigorous standards of excellence and mindful command of their use. It entails effective communication and problem solving abilities and a commitment to overcome our native egocentrism and socio-centrism. (Richard Paul and Linda Elder, 1997).

Elder and Paul (1997) provide an important contribution because they established the universal intellectual standards that analyze the student's participations in virtual forums. These standards of clarity, accuracy or veracity, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance and fairness will be explained largely later in the research design and matrices in the data analysis section.

The universal intellectual standards should lead to better reasoning. For this reason, it involves cognitive activities that allow students to self-criticize and/or evaluate their own thoughts and opinions. Clarity is the first standard because it allows student to adequately convey what they really want to express. Accuracy or veracity is the second standard and it shows whether what we say is true or is according with reality. Precision refers to giving more details about our opinion or position. Relevance allows us to identify the concordance in the topic proposed in a debate. Depth refers to considering the most significant or relevant aspects of the subject treated. Breadth allows us to consider another point of view. Logic allows us to identify whether our contributions or opinions make sense. Significance allows us to recognize whether our opinion focuses on the central idea. Fairness is the last standard proposed in this research and it allows us to know whether our points of view are consistent with the interests of other participants.

Elder and Paul claim that critical thinking involves mastering these standards. The standards are applied to thinking whenever you want to assess the quality of reasoning about a problem. In this research, the standards were applied to the students' opinions in order to identify if the students showed the standards in their own contributions and opinions, spontaneously.

Universal intellectual standards allow the process of analyzing and assessing thinking in order to improve it (Elder and Paul, 2007). The key is that the debate topics proposed in the forums facilitate and trigger the creative side of critical thinking, so that students can analyze and evaluate thinking effectively.

Relation between critical thinking and distance education.

In James Heiman's book (2013), the author poses the idea that any explicit critical thinking pedagogy in the writing classroom is required, especially in online environments. This is because the students can accommodate the ideas and information that they give and receive in a virtual written environment, constructing an outside/inside distinction in critical thinking development (Heiman, 2013). I agree with the author in the sense that the student who participates in a virtual written forum should have an overview of the subject under discussion. The student must not ignore small areas; for example, the opinions of their peers or small ideas or sub-ideas. All is important for the construction of critical thinking.

I started this inquiry in previous studies by researchers about this topic. In this process, I identified the work of Velazquez and Figueroa (2010), who developed a research to determine the level of development of critical thinking in higher education in El Salvador. They applied the California critical thinking skills test -CCTST 2000- to a group of students of different universities, analyzed the causes of its low level, and designed strategies for its development. According to the results of the test, the students of the study sample, as a whole, present the development of critical thinking at a disadvantage as compared to *sophomores* from other universities. This research set a precedent in Latin America for research on critical thinking development of university students because, this research indicates in results that Salvadoran

students have low development of the skills evaluated by the test. The study indicates that students implemented poorly skills such as analysis, inductive reasoning, deductive reasoning, or conceptual inference.

One explanation for the low level found in the performance of the sample is related to the high percentage of people who work and study simultaneously, which for this sample reaches 50% of students. The results of this research are important for my research project because they indicate points of critical thinking that should be promoted in students; for example, skills of reflection and self-analysis of thought. On the other hand, the study showed that students who had good academic performance obtained better performance in critical thinking skills. There is a positive correlation between academic performance and critical thinking. This allows me to conclude that it is important to optimize the academic development of students with appropriate spaces for discussion to simultaneously improve critical thinking.

Deepening in previous studies, I also found the work of Jaramillo (2011). He developed a study on the implementation of a Virtual Classroom as a teaching strategy in the process of teaching and learning in B-learning to promote the development of critical and reflective thinking of students, encouraging the construction of knowledge. This study discusses the importance of implementing, motivating and managing ICT in the educational processes of learning-teaching. The author found that it is important to convert the technological resources of the virtual classrooms into teaching strategies with a process of learning to develop critical thinking in students.

In addition, I found another important reflection in Lopez' work (2013). She developed a research about critical thinking in the classroom for a university in Mexico. This work helped to

focus my final research question because she pointed out that in school the student needs to acquire an intellectual independence. This can be achieved taking the development of higher order skills such as critical thinking. The author found that progress is beyond the cognitive skills training. It is further distinguished by the provisions that each person brings to the task of thinking; traits such as open-mindedness, the attempt to be sensitive to the beliefs, feelings and knowledge of others and how individuals face the challenges of life.

Considering the aforementioned authors, the relationship between critical thinking and distance education focuses on the idea of interaction because interaction in peers is essential to developing learners' communicative competence. I think that virtual forums is a good example of a place where students can develop communicative competences like critical thinking skills. Through the study of these authors, this research supports the virtual forum as a place where students interact with peers in order to construct critical thinking. Besides, according to the authors, teachers can guide students to be more autonomous, and I really think that students have to make an additional endeavor for getting access to information and improve their critical thinking development.

The interaction between students' knowledge and teacher knowledge is possible in a virtual environment because students need to interact in the computer with other students in each activity that they do, and teachers can provide pedagogical assessment and feedback. Finally, they can teach and reinforce both language learning, critical thinking and strategic computer competence to obtain the results that they expect.

The above statements become stronger in the investigation by Fedorov (2008) in the Costa Rica Institute of Technology, which postulates the virtual forum as a methodological

strategy for the development of critical thinking in university levels. According to the author, the virtual forum is a didactic strategy where the attitudinal dimension and auto-regulative dimension have important roles and manage to enhance cognitive operations taking them to the highest level of competition in the development of critical thinking.

In his study, he supports the idea that virtual forums are excellent strategies for the development of critical thinking in any education system. For example, involving multiple cognitive and social-emotional aspects, like following the thread of dialogue, thinking and understanding interventions, making messages to promote a continuous dialogue, mentioning the expression of others, respecting autonomy of the participants and leaving the obvious to explore other alternatives, among many other possibilities.

In fact, according with the author, some of the advantages of virtual forums are: stereotypes associated with social class or physical appearance are diminished; the participation of all is facilitated including the most introverted; it is given greater flexibility and independence of place and time participation; learning through problem solving as a group is reinforced; the student is allowed to improve their written communication skills. Finally, a full transcript of the discussion is generated, which gives users the opportunity to negotiate, retrieve and correct ideas (Wilkins, Beth, 2002).

On the other hand, Fedorov warns about the implications and limitations of virtual forums. For instance, the large investment of time that moderation can be considered as one of the main constraints (2008). Moreover, a technological tool alone contributes almost nothing to the development of students' critical thinking, if it is not applied in the context of an educational model that defines the roles and rules of the game (Fedorov, 2008).

Besides, the interaction in educational environments allows the generation of learning communities. As Brown (2000) states: "the design of a learning community is to create learning environments that allow group participation and interaction in dialogue, sustained reflection, argument and refutation ... where participants explore increasingly complex and challenging scientific issues".

Collaborative work resulting from the didactic interaction in virtual forums tends toward generating the co-construction of knowledge and this is necessary for the development of critical thinking of students. Following Brown (2000), we can argue that "in a participative structure knowledge is obtained and shared".

Therefore, a virtual forum is a virtual learning environment designed to encourage reflective thinking. That is why this study aims to design virtual discussion forums with topics that promote reflection, feedback, the necessity of exactness, organization of thought, and clear expression (J. Garrison 2001).

Chapter 3

Research Design

To carry out this research process it was important to establish some key elements, procedures and actions such as the type of research, context, participants, procedures for data collection and instruments for data. Then, this chapter presents information on these research elements used to achieve the purposes of the research.

Type of Research

The research intends to identify the characteristics of the situation being studied. This research study follows a descriptive qualitative approach (RB Johnson and L Christensen, 2008) since it is an effort to describe what EFL students' participation in academic virtual forums inform about the co-construction of knowledge and the use of critical thinking. Besides, the research design for this study follows the principles and procedures of Content Analysis (Rose Marra, 2004).

Descriptive research has some specific features (Manganip, 2012): *Descriptive research ascertains prevailing conditions of facts in a group or case under study; It gives a qualitative description of the general characteristics of the group or case under study;* In this case I am going to describe the characteristics and patterns of students' interaction in a virtual forum.

Descriptive research contributes much to the formulation of principles, behaviors, activities or process observed. Descriptive research contributes to the establishment of standard norms of conduct, behavior, or performance. According to this feature I am going to identify

elements of universal intellectual standards present in a sample of students' participation in academic virtual forums.

Descriptive research gives a better and deeper understanding of a phenomenon on the basis of an in-depth study of the phenomenon; in this case, the phenomenon observed is the construction of knowledge and other elements of critical thinking development in academic virtual forums. Descriptive studies contribute to the development of these data-gathering devices in two way. First through creating directly a demand for them, and second through providing the normative, standardizing procedures by which the scales are evaluated and calibrated.

According to all these characteristics from Manganip (2012), this research focusses on describing data observed in students' participation and interaction on debate forums. Observing virtual forums contributions, we can evaluate them and identify patterns and elements of critical thinking development.

Role as a researcher

My role as a researcher in this research project is "Participant Observer". Manganip (2012) states that participant observation can be viewed as both a method and a methodology. It is popular amongst researchers who wish to study and understand another community, culture or context. Researchers do this by immersing themselves within that context as long as they need to build up a lasting and trusting relationship with those people or context being studied.

In this research, I participated in the development of virtual forums as an observer and monitor of debates that I proposed for each forum. This participation into the context was necessary because I guided the debate providing a space where students could express their

opinions freely, and through the discussion of the debate, they could achieve a progressive development of knowledge about the subject discussed and through interactions among them.

In participant observation, researchers become covert participant observers. Students participate in their activities without knowing that they are part of research. In this research, this point is very important because the covert participant is the solution to my intention to develop a role as monitor in virtual forums without an interventionist position.

Research Context

The context of this research is a course of Advanced English in the distance education undergraduate TEFL program at Universidad Santo Tomás. The participants were the students of this course during the second semester 2015. I selected this group of students because they have a high English level, so they have the faculty to participate in an appropriate way in academic virtual forums. In this English level, the students' participation in forums took into consideration the information contained in academic materials and the initial opinion proposed in the forum. The students' level of language use did not affect or hinder the understanding of speech in general. Similarly, tenses and vocabulary were used in an appropriate way.

In order to answer the research question, the implementation of two virtual forums took place in the virtual classroom of Advanced English III. The proposed themes were shown in virtual forums and participants had to produce constructive ideas with organized thoughts that allow them go deeper in their reflections around the debate. The students' participation was the data that I analyzed by the content analysis method. The topics proposed were in agreement with the course's English level. This was an adequate environment to analyze construction knowledge and other elements of critical thinking development.

These forums had a defined structure where I proposed two themes for debate and students had to post their opinions in order to transcend from the simple opinions to deep thoughts and reflections. This was possible thanks to three different steps of participation: initial opinion, debate follow up, and support one's point of view. The characteristics of these forums are in agreement with the ideas of Marra (2004) when she said that an online "discussion" forum has to have a positive and potential impact in students, with topics of current social life that attract the students' interest.

In addition, the forums' structure had some guidelines that students had to follow for a successful participation. Each student had to participate at least three times giving his/her point of view. Each student had to read the opinions of other students. Student had to refuse or approve the opinions of others – giving arguments. If a student was refused in his/her opinion, he or she had to defend it or improve it. Finally, students had to choose the best ideas that they read in the discussion forum and they had to write a final idea with their conclusions.

Data gathering

This study considered two virtual forums for the implementation stage and they were implemented in two different moments along the Advanced English III course. For data gathering I followed these steps:

1. Open the platform of Advanced English III – 2015 –II and access the virtual forums 1 and 2 (Appendix A)
2. Go to the participation section of the virtual forums. (Appendix B)
3. Download or copy text information of each student's participation posted there. (Appendix C).

4. Organize all texts in chronological order. This was important to understand the thread of debate, sequence of student's contributions, order of ideas, student's interaction and evolution of participations (Appendix H), The organization was: a) Initial student's contribution where he/she responded to the forum question. b) Reply by another students showing agreement or disagreement. c) Finally, the first student's reply to their classmates.

With this information, organized in a Word document, I carried out the data analysis applying an interaction analysis protocol and the universal intellectual standards questionnaire adapted to this research.

Instruments of data analysis

For data analysis, I used two protocols:

An Interaction Analysis model (IAM) protocol (Gunawardena et al. 1997). With this protocol, I did a qualitative content analysis. This protocol posits five phases where EFL learners interact, not necessarily sequentially, as knowledge is being constructed during an online debate.

The phases are: phase one, sharing and comparing of information; phase two, discovery and exploration of dissonance or inconsistency among participants; phase three, negotiation of meaning or knowledge co-construction; phase four, testing and modification; phase five, phrasing of agreement and applications of newly constructed meaning. Each phase name is associated with the phase that follows. I adapted those five phases into statements of the protocol proposed by Gunawardena (1997) (Appendix D).

The second instrument was a questionnaire (Appendix E) based on Universal intellectual standards by R. Paul (2007) and modified into questions (see figure 1 below). The standards are applied to thinking whenever one is interested in checking the quality of reasoning about a problem, issue or situation, in this case, a debate's question in an academic virtual forum (Richard Paul, 2007).

Clarity	Could you elaborate further? Could you give me an example? Could you illustrate what you mean?
Accuracy	How could we check on that? How could we find out if that is true? How could we verify or test that?
Precision	Could you be more specific? Could you give me more details? Could you be more exact?
Relevance	How does that relate to the problem? How does that bear on the question? How does that help us with the issue?
Depth	What factors make this a difficult problem? What are some of the complexities of this question? What are some of the difficulties we need to deal with?
Breadth	Do we need to look at this from another perspective? Do we need to consider another point of view? Do we need to look at this in other ways?
Logic	Does all this make sense together? Does your first paragraph fit in with your last? Does what you say follow from the evidence?
Significance	Is this the most important problem to consider? Is this the central idea to focus on? Which of these facts are most important?
Fairness	Do I have any vested interest in this issue? Am I sympathetically representing the viewpoints of others?

Figure 1. Universal intellectual standards. Original questions.

Instructional Design.

This research identified some aspects and elements of critical thinking development and co-construction of knowledge in virtual forums in an Advanced English course. The purpose of

this course is to develop communicate and linguistic competences that are in agreement with the standards of the First Certificate in English exam. The course syllabus is based on the contents of the book 'First Certificate Expert', by Jan Bell and Roger Gower. It contains 12 units with two sections each, and addresses integrated skills: reading, writing, listening speaking, language development and use of English.

The units are: 1.Lifestyles, 2.Earning a living, 3.The world around us, 4.Challenges, 5.Discovery, 6.Enjoying yourself, 7.Keeping up with the fashion, 8.The important things in life, 9.The consumer society, 10.Out and about, 11.Well-being, 12.Getting your message across. Two units were used to construct and apply the virtual forums: unit 9, 'consumer society' for which the proposed theme in virtual forum 1 was: What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?; and unit 10, 'Out and about' for which the proposed theme in virtual forum 2 was: What are your tips to improve your English skills?

Given that this course is developed in the methodology of distance education, we had digital tools like a virtual platform where students had access to all activities proposed along the course. In the platform, we had the opportunity to develop virtual forums. Usually, these virtual forums are aimed to ask questions or concerns of students regarding the development of a specific activity or to solve specific communicative situations related to the ultimate goals of the course. In addition, virtual forums are also a space for the teacher to propose some questions that students must solve.

I designed a topic for virtual forums based on the topics making part of the course, so each theme proposed in the virtual forums has a pedagogical relation with the book's units. These debate virtual forums are spaces where students can discuss among them about specific topics

that have a consistent relationship with their course English level. In conclusion, virtual forum's themes were developed based on the course topics and they were connected to the teaching purposes of the same course.

Principles and procedures inherent to critical thinking. The pedagogical intervention considered the principles of critical thinking. That's to say, raise vital questions and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely; gather and assess relevant information and interpret ideas effectively; come to well-reasoned conclusions and solutions, test them against relevant criteria and standards; think open-mindedly, recognizing and assessing assumptions, implications, and practical consequences; and communicate effectively with others in figuring out solutions to complex problems (R. Paul, 1997). All these principles must be oriented to promote and improve students' interaction in virtual forums.

Richard Paul (1997) found a clear way to follow in order to promote in students the collaborative construction of knowledge and in order to think critically; for those reasons and according to prior researchers, I designed the instructions the students followed in doing the forum. The virtual forums were designed in order for students to participate using the elements of thought and reasoning described before. Once each forum is made available in the platform, the students had to read the forum's instructions. Next, they had to read and watch the material proposed to support or complement the forum question. Then, they had to analyze this information and participate with their point of view, with their ideas and opinions, supporting their participations with relevant arguments. Later, they had to read other students contributions and reply to their classmates. That is the elemental procedure for interactions in a virtual debate. Students, necessarily, have to use elements of thought, and the objective of this research is identify those elements.

Basis considerations in the design of online forums aimed to determine elements of critical thinking. Based on the elements of thought proposed by Richard Paul (2007), the students' reasoning could have characteristics like choosing significant and realistic *purposes* in order to participate clearly. They could express their ideas and *new questions* in several ways to clarify the meaning of the *problem* proposed in the virtual forum. Maybe all their reasoning could be based on *assumptions*, but they would have to determine whether they are *justifiable*. They have to support their *point of view* with new data, examples, real information and *evidences*; later, reading other students contributions, they could *evaluate* other points of view and with this new information, they could construct *new concepts and ideas*, opening the possibility to other *interpretations* by which they draw *conclusions*, implications and possible *consequences* (pg. 5).

I identify those elements in two steps. First, I identify if students developed a progressive reasoning, classifying their contributions in five phases based on interaction analysis model – AIM protocol by Gunawardena (1997). Later, I identify the presence of elements of thought according to elements of universal intellectual standards expressed by Richard Paul (1997).

In this context, instructors need to provide discussion forums for socio-emotional discussions that have the goal of nurturing a strong sense of community within the course as well as group discussion forums for content-and task-oriented discussions that center on authentic topics (Garrison, D. R., Anderson, T., and Archer, W. 2001).

In order to facilitate discussions effectively, the instructor or moderator generates an almost invisible social presence in the virtual classroom, avoiding becoming the center of all discussions by emphasizing student–student interactions, and attend to issues of social equity

arising from the use of different communication patterns by culturally diverse students (Rovai, A. P. 2003) (pg 7-23).

Contents of the course and the proposed forums. The first debate virtual forum (Figure 2) was available during ten days. The topic proposed was based on Unit 9 “the consumer society”, and had the objective of practicing English skills and vocabulary; particularly, informal expressions, conditionals and mixed conditionals, and conjunctions. The topic was related with people’s moral motivations to do things in life. For the selection of this topic, I considered Facione (2007), who states that critical thinking has to help people to make right decisions to improve one’s future. Consequently, topics with moral motivations where people have to react in different situations of life is an excellent opportunity to improve critical thinking (see the complete content of Virtual Forum 1 in Appendix F).

Before posting your first participation in this forum, please make sure you have read the instructions uploaded in the v-room in order to make your participation in this activity totally effective for evaluative purposes.

In this forum you must answer the following question:

What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

The main goal of this forum is to construct a progressive knowledge about topic proposed by providing clear, coherent and concise opinions regarding the topic. The following video can provide you with some ideas towards this controversial issue.



Additionally, we can start the discussion with an opinion of Mister Graham, 45 years old. An English man from Manchester – United Kingdom, He said:

Figure 2. Virtual forum 1. Main screen.

The second debate virtual forum (figure 3) was available during ten days, and the topic proposed was based on the contents of Unit 10 “Out and about” Section A: Travel. The textbook proposes the use of passive voice narrative tenses. The second topic of discussion was related with own ideas for improving English skills in students, and tips or habits they are developing in order to improve the foreign language. Students had the opportunity to argue their opinions, to defend their positions and to listen to other habits around the same subject (see the complete content of Virtual Forum 2 in Appendix G).

Before posting your first participation in this forum, please make sure you have read the instructions uploaded in the v-room in order to make your participation in this activity totally effective for evaluative purposes.

In this forum you must answer the following question:

What are your secrets or tips to improve your English skills?

The main goal of this forum is to construct a progressive knowledge about topic proposed by providing clear, coherent and concise opinions regarding the topic. The following video can provide you with some ideas towards this controversial issue.



Additionally, we can start the discussion with an opinion of Australian professor Rohan Cox. He said:

A secret on how to increase or improve the pronunciation skills for speaking English is increase your listening skills because listening is most of the pronunciation result. If you have

Figure 3. Virtual forum 2. Main screen.

Assessing online forums. The forums had a defined structure where I proposed different themes (questions) for debate. In consequence, students had to post their contributions with their opinions and points of view. Rose Marra (2004) establishes the methodological characteristics of these forums. She said that an online “discussion” forum has to have a positive and potential impact in students, with topics of current social life that attract the students’ interest. Thus, students receive a question and the participants have to produce constructive ideas and they have to organize thoughts that allow them go deeper in their reflections around the debate. If they agree or they do not, students have to support their opinions. Students have to refute or

complement the opinions of others students. In addition, students have some duties that they have to follow in their own participations and debate, the students have to participate punctually and thoroughly (post, reply to classmates' opinions, and thank replies received). Each student has to participate at least three times giving his/her point of view. Each student has to read the opinions of their classmates. The assessment was based on the students completing those steps. Besides, the following evaluation criteria was implemented:

SKILL 1:

Grammar and text accuracy: The grammar in the text itself is appropriate for course level. The speech does not have grammatical errors that affect or hinder the understanding of speech in general. Similarly, tenses and vocabulary used were very appropriate.

SKILL 2:

Participation: The student participated punctually and thoroughly (posted, replied to classmates' opinions, and thanked to replies received).

SKILL 3:

Use of tools: Videos, initial opinions: There is clear evidence that for student participation in the forum she/he took into consideration the information contained in the video and the initial opinion proposed in the forum.

SKILL 4:

Pertinence to task: The student participation is effective for task. His/Her original post responds to the forum question. The student's reply to their classmate's is thoughtful and appropriate.

SKILL 5:

Critical assessment: The student shows to agree or disagree with the view of another partner. The student evaluates of own or others contributions. Student proposes conclusions.

Figure 4. Evaluation criteria.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

Considering that this research aimed to describe and analyze what students' participation in academic virtual forums inform about the co-construction of knowledge and the use of critical thinking in a group of EFL learners, the features of this study better related to the descriptive research approach. Therefore, this study used qualitative research methodologies (Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Dörnyei, 2007). For the data analysis, the research study followed the principles and procedures of Content Analysis (Mayring, 2000).

Accordingly, I focused on describing data and characteristics that I observed in students' participation in debate forums. I identified patterns and elements of students' interaction in the virtual forums and their relation with critical thinking development based on a model for the analysis of interaction proposed by Gunawardena (1997). I also observed and described different aspects of the use of critical thinking present in the students' participation based on the guide to critical thinking by Richard Paul (2007).

I identified those elements in two steps. First, I identified whether students developed a progressive reasoning, classifying their contributions in five phases of Interaction Analysis Model – IAM protocol, (see appendix D). Then, I determined the presence of Universal Intellectual Standards – UIS, (see appendix E). These UIS categories were used to develop an assessment in students' participation based on elements of thought present in students' contribution.

Data Collection and data management

About data gathering procedures, I used two virtual forums for the implementation stage, and they took place in two different moments along the course Advanced English III, during the second semester of 2015. These forums provided me with the students' written responses, that I used for further analysis. Marra (2004) said that a discussion forum is a significant component of online courses that potentially promote critical thinking in students. For Marra, we must begin by examining the content of the online discussion forums to do the data gathering (Marra, 2004, p. 2). The procedure I used was the following:

1. Open the platform of Advanced English III – 2015 –II
2. Go to the participative section of the virtual forums one and two.
3. Download or copy text information of each student's participation posted there.
4. Organize all texts in chronological order. This was important in order to understand the sequence of contributions.
5. Paste the information in a Word document with different conversational threads.

With this procedure, I obtained a number of conversation threads as the students participated in virtual forums. Each conversation thread has three students' contributions, at least, but this number of contributions vary depending on the students' interactions in each conversational thread. Organized in a chronological order, this information allowed me to understand the progressive reasoning and co-construction of knowledge present in the students' participation (see data collected in Appendix H). The information collected was organized per group of participations in a continuous conversation thread, one conversation after another.

Data Analysis

For the analysis of collected data, I developed a descriptive study (Manganip, 2012) focused on describing characteristics of critical thinking and aspects of co-construction of knowledge that I observed in students' participation on debate forums through qualitative content analysis. The basis of qualitative content analysis was laid by Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Harold D. Lasswell in USA during the 20ies and 30ies of 20th century. Qualitative content analysis wants to preserve the advantages of a more qualitative text interpretation. Those advantages emphasize in four points (Mayring, 2000. Art.20):

- Fitting the material into a model of communication: It should be determined on what part of the communication inferences shall be made, considering aspects of the communicator (his experiences, opinions, thoughts), the situation of text production, the socio-cultural background, the text itself, or the effect of the message.
- Rules of analysis: The material is to be analyzed step by step, following rules of procedure, devising the material into content analytical units.
- Categories in the center of analysis: The aspects of text interpretation, following the research questions, are put into categories, which are carefully founded and revised within the process of analysis (feedback loops).
- Criteria of reliability and validity: The procedure has the pretension to be inter-subjectively comprehensible. For estimating the inter-coder reliability, we use in qualitative content analysis the points of view of Project Director several times.

The above listed components of qualitative content analysis guide the procedure of text interpretation. Mayring (2000) developed a number of procedures of qualitative content analysis

amongst which two approaches are central: inductive category development and deductive category application. In this research, I used the procedures of inductive category development, which aim to formulate a criterion of definition derived from theoretical background and research questions that determines the aspects of the textual material taken into account. Following this criterion, the material is analyzed and categories are gradually deduced. Within a feedback loop, those categories are revised, eventually reduced to main categories and checked in respect to their reliability. If the research question suggests quantitative aspects (e.g. frequencies phases), they can be analyzed too.

Interaction Analysis Model. In order to provide an answer to the research objective and present supported results, I followed the procedures for analysis proposed by Gunawardena, Lowe and Anderson, (1997). In order to classify the students' participation in phases and determinate a possible progressive interaction in their virtual conversation and contributions, I used the "Interaction analysis model – IAM" with five phases based on the protocol suggested by the aforementioned authors. In discussing IAM, the authors proposed a new definition of interaction that did not focus only on the links between messages, but rather conveyed an overview of the messages in the context of the debate referred to as "the entire set formed by the online communications among the participants" (Gunawardena et al., p. 407). Following this idea, interaction is depicted as a "quilt block" which presents itself as a whole by joining and adding many parts, all of them unique and distinct. They argue that interaction is the process through which negotiation of meaning and co-creation of knowledge occurs, and should be viewed as the totality of interconnected and mutually-responsive messages, an entire set formed by the online communications among participants. Given this definition of interaction, the authors argue for considering an entire message as a unit of analysis (Lucas et al., p. 576).

The protocol implemented in this study responds to the structure proposed by Gunawardena et al. (1997) in which EFL learners must move thoughts across each phase, not necessarily sequentially, as knowledge is being constructed in the online debate all time. In their study, the authors noted the progress of certain strands of argument from Phase I to V, moving from lower to higher mental functions, and evidence of more than one, two and sometimes three phases within a single message usually progressing from lower to higher mental functions. According to the authors, those three phases are where the majority of postings and reference to resources occurred (Lucas et al., p. 576).

The phases proposed in this model are, phase one, sharing and comparing of information; phase two, discovery and exploration of dissonance or inconsistency among participants; phase three, negotiation of meaning or knowledge co-construction; phase four, testing and modification; phase five, phrasing of agreement and applications of newly constructed meaning.

Phase 1. *Comparison of information* relates to an observation or review, according to one or more participants. Corroboration proposed by participants, questions and answers to clarify details, definition, description or identifying examples of a problem.

Phase 2. *Dissonance and inconsistency* relates to identification of disagreements, questions and answers to clarify the source of disagreement. Citation or experience are proposed to support arguments.

Phase 3. *Negotiating co-construction* is about negotiation or clarification of meanings, negotiation of the importance of the arguments, identifying areas of agreement with disagreements, proposals and negotiations; (new) statements that contain commitments and co-construction of knowledge and/or proposal integration of metaphors and analogies.

Phase 4. *Test and modify the co-constructed synthesis* is the synthesis proposal check, check for an existing cognitive schema, checking against personal experiences, formal verification against data synthesis and verification against contradictory testimony given in the literature.

Phase 5. *Agreements and applications* is about summarizing agreements and metacognitive reflections that illustrate understanding, and changing ways of thinking as a result of the interaction.

The protocol applied in this research maintained the same theoretical and analytical framework from Gunawardena's model, but focused in a context of students of EFL. Each phase name is associated with that phase follow. It means that exist an intrinsic relationship between each phase and that a superior phase depends of presence of preceding phase in students' contribution. Table 1 shows the protocol from Gunawardena model.

Phase	Operations which occur at this stage include:
<i>Phase I</i> Sharing/ comparing of information	A. A statement of observation or opinion
	B. A statement of agreement from one or more participants
	C. Corroborating examples provided by one or more participants
	D. Asking and answering questions to clarify details of statements
	E. Definition, description, or identification of a problem
<i>Phase II</i> The discovery and exploration of dissonance or inconsistency among ideas, concepts or statements	A. Identifying and stating areas of disagreement
	B. Asking and answering questions to clarify the source and extent of disagreement
	C. Restating the participant's position, and possibly advancing arguments or considerations in its support by references to the participant's experience, literature, formal data collected, or proposal of relevant metaphor or analogy to illustrate point of view
<i>Phase III</i> Negotiation of meaning/ co-construction of knowledge	A. Negotiation or clarification of the meaning of terms
	B. Negotiation of the relative weight to be assigned to types of argument
	C. Identification of areas of agreement to overlap among conflicting concepts
	D. Proposal and negotiation of new statements embodying compromise, co-construction
	E. Proposal of integrating or accommodating metaphors or analogies
<i>Phase IV</i> Testing and modification of proposed synthesis or co-construction	A. Testing the proposed synthesis against "received fact" as shared by the participants and/or their culture
	B. Testing against existing cognitive schema
	C. Testing against personal experience
	D. Testing against formal data collected
	E. Testing against contradictory testimony in the literature
<i>Phase V</i> Agreement statements(s)/ applications of newly constructed meaning	A. Summarisation of agreement(s)
	B. Applications of new knowledge
	C. Metacognitive statements by participants illustrating their understanding that their knowledge or ways of thinking (cognitive schema) have changed as a result of the conference interaction

Table 1. Phases of interaction in Gunawardena's model.

Universal intellectual standards. In order to identify elements of thought in students' participation and determine a possible quality of reasoning in their virtual conversation and contributions, I formulated a group of questions classified in the Universal Intellectual Standards proposed by Paul (2007); the ultimate goal for these standards is to be present in the thinking of students forming part of their reasoning. In order to identify them, UIS must be applied to elements of thought present in students' contribution. The elements of thought are present all time in debate contributions and they are not the object of this part of research. The points of view, purposes, questions, information, inferences, personal concepts, implications and

assumptions as elements of thought are the basis in order to assess the presence of UIS (Paul, 2007, p. 21). The following figure depicts this author's critical thinking model:

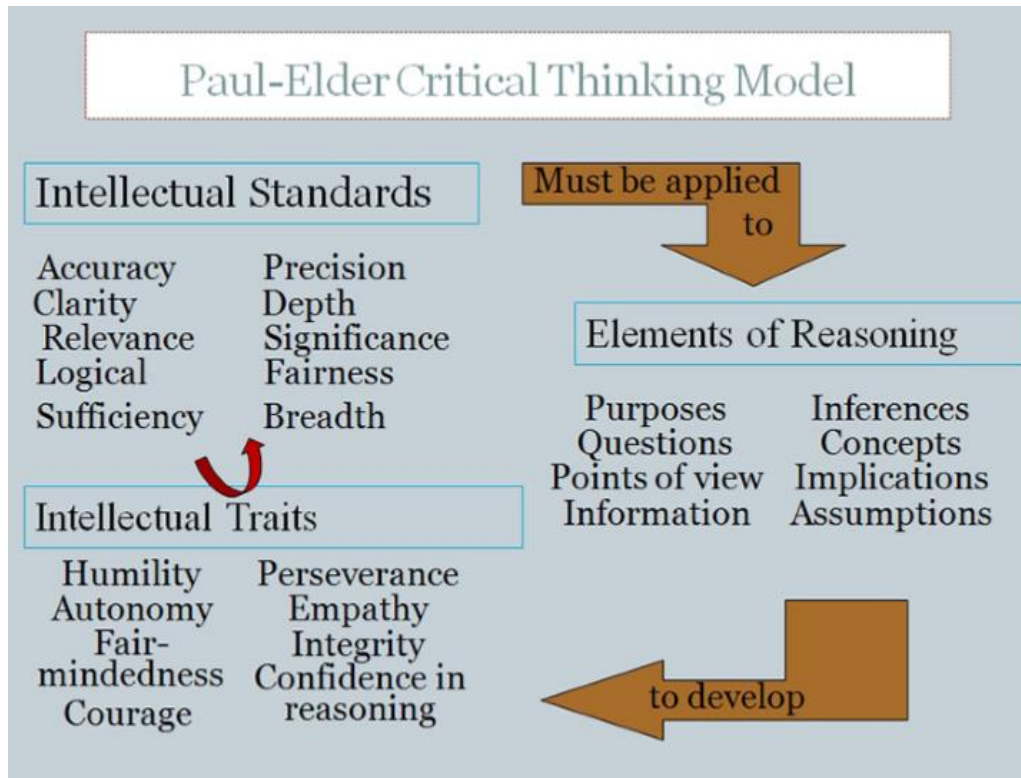


Figure 5. Paul-Elder critical thinking model

The author proposes nine UIS: clarity, accuracy or veracity, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance, fairness; which incorporate the principles of critical thinking, thus allowing that the elements of reasoning and thought are easier to identify in a written text. The author proposes a set of questions for each intellectual standard. The deductive procedure to follow is to raise all the questions of the standards in each students' contribution that we propose to analyze in sampling collected. These questions allow me, as a researcher, to assess the students' contribution in order to identify the presence of the UIS.

The standards are explained below:

Clarity: is the gateway standard. If a statement is unclear, we cannot determine whether it is accurate or relevant. In fact, we cannot tell anything about it because we do not yet know what it is saying. With this standard, I can ask if students could elaborate further on a point into the debate forum, if they could express that point in another way or if they could give an illustration and/or an example about their point of view. Sometimes, the students' contribution is unclear. In order to address the question adequately, we would need to have a clearer understanding of what the person asking the question is considering the "problem" to be.

Accuracy or veracity: a statement can be clear but not accurate. With this standard, I can ask if students' participation is exact or faithful with the theme proposed in the debate. If a student's point of view is really related to the theme proposed and how we could check that his/her opinion is accurate.

Precision: is asking people to give more details about the topic proposed, if they could be more specific. A statement can be both clear and accurate, but not precise. Here I evaluate the details given by students' opinions in order to be more precise.

Relevance: With this standard, I can ask how something is connected to the question, and how something supports the issue. A statement can be clear, accurate, and precise, but not relevant to the question at issue. For example, students often think that the extension of their posts is enough for a contribution in a debate forum, but sometimes those contributions were not related with the theme proposed. In this case, there is no relevance because there is no relation between the theme proposed and the students' contribution.

Depth: intends to understand how an answer addresses the complexities of a question according to the topic proposed. With this standard, I can ask how people are taking into account the problems in the question; I could identify if students are dealing with the most significant factors in the debate. A statement can be clear, accurate, precise, and relevant, but superficial (that is, lack depth).

Breadth: we need to consider another point of view. With this standard, I can ask if there is a way to look at a question that is different from the student's point of view. For example, what something would look like from a conservative standpoint. What something would look like from the point of view of another. A line of reasoning may be clear accurate, precise, relevant, and deep, but lack breadth (as in an argument from either the conservative or liberal standpoint which gets deeply into an issue, but only recognizes the insights of one side of the question).

Logic: asks for the sense of the topic proposed. With this standard, I evaluate if students' contribution really make sense. If students follow from what themselves said or others said. What students' opinions imply. When we think, we bring a variety of thoughts together into some order. When the combination of thoughts is supporting mutually and make sense in combination, the thinking is "logical." When the combination is not mutually supporting, is contradictory in some sense or does not "make sense," the combination is not logical.

Significance: responds to reflections about whether the point of view is the most important to consider or if people are not focused in correct topic. In addition, significance asks for the central idea to focus on. With this standard, I can ask for other important elements related to the topic proposed and which of these facts are the most important.

Fairness: human thinking is often biased in the direction of the thinker - in what are the perceived interests of the thinker. Humans do not naturally consider the rights and needs of others on the same plane with their own rights and needs. We therefore must actively work to make sure we are applying the intellectual standard of fairness to our thinking. Since we naturally see ourselves as fair even when we are unfair, this can be very difficult. A commitment to fair-mindedness is a starting place. With this standard, I can ask if students have a stake in an issue. If they are sympathetically representing the viewpoints of others or just their own.

For each standard different questions were organized to help me to examine students' contribution. Questions become a checklist for further data analysis. Figure 6 is an example of a schema designed to analyze students' participation in academic virtual forums and it was oriented to do an assessment about the presence of Universal Intellectual Standards.

UNIVERSAL INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS	QUESTIONS THAT CAN BE USED TO KNOW IF PEOPLE ARE APPLYING THEM
CLARITY	Does student give an example about their opinions? Does student illustrate with arguments that he/she understand the topic proposed in the debate?
ACCURACY / VERACITY	Could I find out if student interpretation about the theme is correct?
PRECISION	Does student give more details about his/her point of view? Is student participation according to the topic proposed?
RELEVANCE	Is students' contribution relate to the problem?
DEPTH	Student opinion propose other difficulties that we need to deal with?
BREADTH	Does student' contribution consider another point of view ?
LOGIC	Does full student' contribution make sense together? Does student first paragraph fit in with last one?
SIGNIFICANCE	Is student' point of view the most important point to consider? Is student' poin of view the central idea to focus on?
FAIRNESS	Does student have any interest in the viewpoints of others? Does student evaluate own opinion front of other opinions?

Figure 6. UIS questions

Both, protocols - IAM and UIS – are checklists to describe meaningful interactions that promote in-depth learning in online discussion forums, and both instruments are based on some of the most rigorous work in this young field.

Results

Following the procedure of text interpretation (Mayring, 2000), the results were organized in inductive category development. The main idea of the procedure is to determinate the aspects of the textual students' participation taken into account. The main research question was reduced to main categories and checked in respect to their reliability. Below, there is a figure with the main categories organized in three groups of results that respond to the research question of this study. Each main category was developed in one or two sub – categories:

RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS		
MAIN QUESTION	MAIN CATEGORIES	SUB - CATEGORIES
What do EFL students' participation in academic virtual forums inform about the co-construction of knowledge and the use of critical thinking?	The importance of interaction in students' participation.	The most recurrent phases of interaction.
		The progressive and co-constructive process of a debate.
	The quality of reasoning as an important characteristic of a critical thinker.	Students analyzed, understood and self-evaluated opinions about a problem-solving in a virtual debate.
	Intellectual standards and interaction' phases are present in a different and complementary way	The more evidences of interaction, the more quality in reasoning. (interaction as a stimulus of reasoning)

Figure 7. Results of data analysis

Research analysis was an arduous process where I as researcher had to read each student' participation and to interpret them based on the protocols' characteristics. In the following pages, I explain each category and sub-category.

Interaction in students' participation. The evidences originated in the application of IAM protocol are the most important signs that pointed to the existence of real and clear interaction during a debate in a virtual forum. In this first analysis, I determined the way to classify and to identify interactions and its importance in the co-construction of knowledge.

In each virtual forum, the students created threads about the proposed themes. There were 20 threads in virtual forum 1 and 22 threads in virtual forum 2 (see appendix I). The coded forums included 92 postings from students and tutor. Two postings were coded with the following characteristics: tutor' contribution motivates students to continue the discussion with an active participation. Tutor' contribution is a form to develop a moderator function into the debate. As a result, tutor interventions promoted students' interactions between student – student and student – tutor. All those postings respond to the 42 threads.

As stated before, the results of the application of IAM protocol demonstrate the presence of interaction between students in virtual forums. A first analysis is shown in table 2, where I quantified the number of interactions per topic and per phase.

The most recurrent phases of interaction. The total of students' contributions were 92. This number represents the total of individual contributions in virtual forums for this research project. In virtual forum one (1) there were 49 individual contributions and in the virtual forum two (2) there were 43 individual contributions. I identified the IAM phases in each student's contribution, and found that, in the 42 discussion threads, the students' interaction went up to phase number 3, but their participation did not reach phases 4 or 5.

PHASE	TOPIC (A)	TOPIC (B)	TOPIC (C)	TOPIC (D)	TOTALS
1	44	8	12	36	100
2	5	8	2	-----	15
3	8	2	-----	-----	10
4	0	-----	-----	-----	0
5	0	0	0	-----	0

Table 2. Phases of interaction reached in virtual forums 1 and 2.

According to the table, the most recurrent phase of interaction was phase number 1 followed by phase 2 and phase 3 with just a total of 10 phase 3' topics identified. Each phase determines if there is progressive and real interaction among the participants in the debate proposed in virtual forum.

Rarely, discussion groups showed a progressive growth in deepening interaction phases. By contrast 89% of the discussions remained in phase 1 of IAM protocol. Only 8% of the discussions progressed to phase 2. And just 3% of students' contributions demonstrated the interaction characteristics of phase 3, which is the highest level of interaction among students found in this research project. These results reflect a low development among participants that participated in each conversational thread. Nevertheless, in spite of a low development in the students' participation, the interaction was present as the most important element of a debate.

The progressive and co-constructive process of a debate. The data shown in figure 8 responds to the following procedure: if a students' contribution is marked with a "phase 1" note, it means that the student is in first phase of interaction because this contribution shows operations

that occur in that stage (review operations in table 1). If the student's participation is marked with "phase 2" note, it means that there is a progress in the discussion forum and an evolution in the operations identified there; each new progress in debate' interactions among students is marked with a new phase until phase number 5.

In virtual forum 1, students had to start a debate around the question: '*What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?*' as explained in the instructional design – chapter 3. Sequence Students had two previous information in order to participate in virtual forum 1. Students had a reading text and a video according to the topic proposed. As shown in figures 8 and 9, there is a sequence where students are giving their contributions. In this example, we analyze a same thread with three students' participation. The conversation between the students unfolds in a logical and chronological sequence debating the same topic proposed in the virtual forum.

In the data analysis I found that, through the same thread on this virtual forum, the students shared opinions about a common theme. Even though there were some grammatical mistakes - incorrect possessive adjective - the analysis shows that the process of interaction took place, and there were elements of the constructive process of a debate.

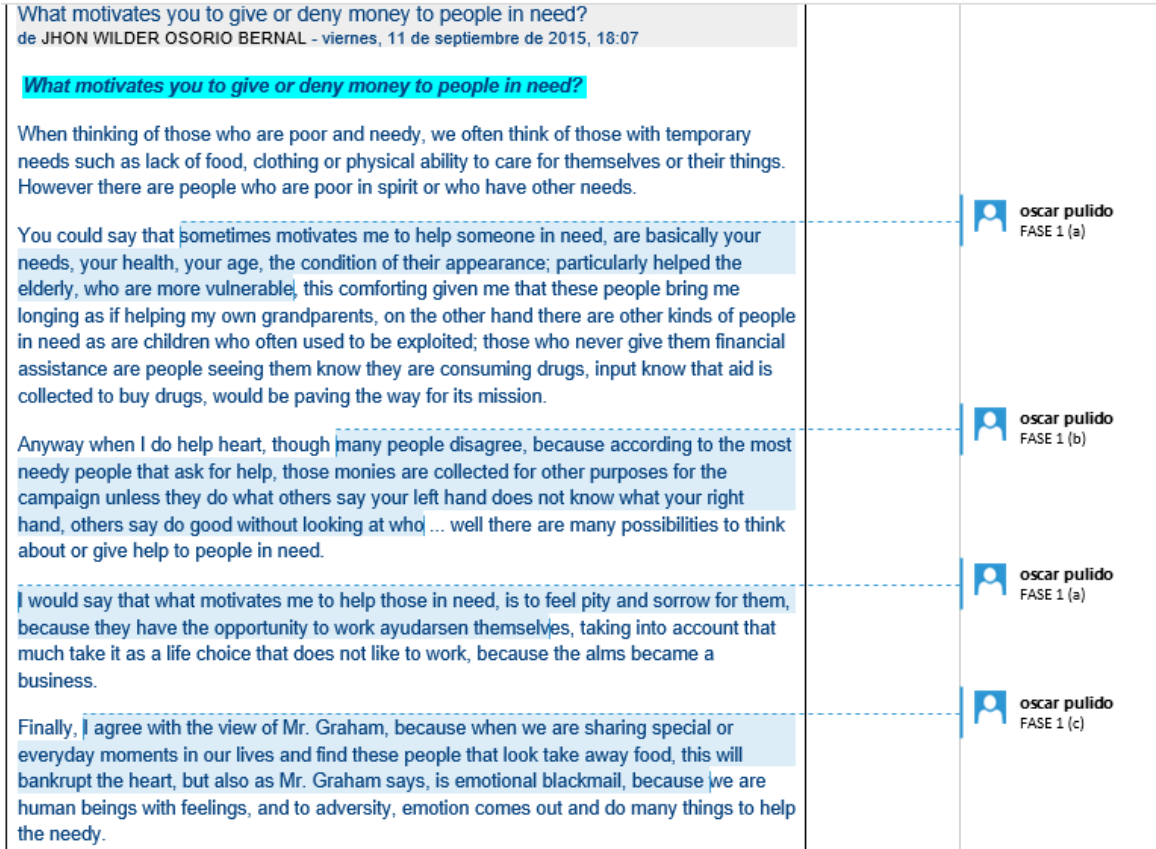


Figure 8. Example 1 from virtual forum 1

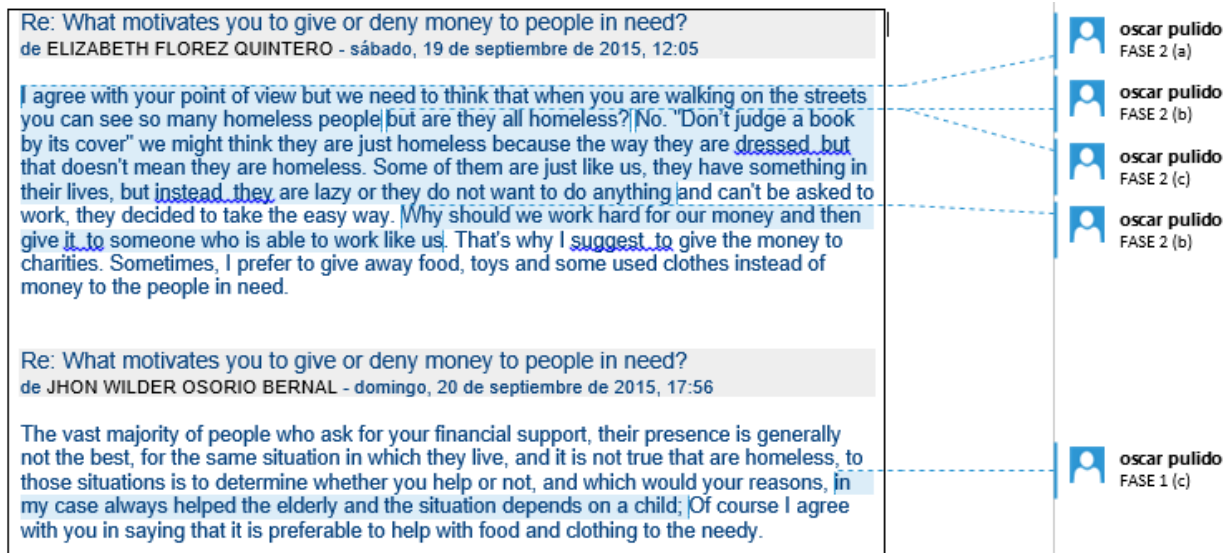


Figure 9. Example 2 from virtual forum 1

Nevertheless, overcoming the grammatical difficulties we can move on to analyze the content of students' contribution. In phase 1 of IAM – protocol, section “a”, the protocol identifies if the student shares his own opinion. We found that, when the student wrote about his motivation in order to help someone in need, he is sharing his own opinion about the topic proposed in virtual forum 1.

In phase 1 of IAM – protocol, section “b”, the protocol identifies if the student compares information received with his/her own opinion. In the example, the student compares his opinion with the information received in the video proposed in virtual forum 1. We find this application in the paragraph where he explains the situation watched in the video: *“because according to the most needy people that ask for help, those monies are collected for other purposes for the campaign ... well there are many possibilities to think about or give help to people in need”*.

Continuing the analysis of the first student's contribution, we find the following text *“I agree with the view of Mr. Graham, because when we are sharing special or everyday moments in our lives and find these people that look take away food, this will bankrupt the heart...”* In this text, the student not only compares his opinion with other contributions, but also extends his opinion with an example from everyday life. This shows features of phase 1 of IAM – protocol, section “c”, where the protocol identifies supporting one's contribution with examples.

Continuing on the same thread of this forum's participation, when the second student introduces her participation, we notice the next sentence *“...I agree with your point of view but we need to think that ...”* It is a clear example of exploration of dissonances or inconsistencies among participant's opinions identifying areas of disagreement. And in the next sentences, the student postulates new questions and she incorporates other points of view on the discussion:

“...when you are walking on the streets you can see so many homeless people, but are they all homeless?...” or *“...Why should we work hard for our money and then give it to someone who is able to work like us”*. Those elements are part of phase 2 of IAM – protocol sections “a” and “b”. Section “a”, proposes to discover and explore dissonances or inconsistencies among participants that allow us to identify areas of disagreement. Section “b” refers to postulating new questions to the discussion.

In phase 2 of IAM – protocol, section “c”, the protocol proposes to ask and answer questions to clarify disagreement. We find this characteristic in the second students’ participation when she says *“...but, are they all homeless? No. "Don't judge a book by its cover" we might think they are just homeless because the way they are dressed but that doesn't mean they are homeless”*. In this case, the second student is answering a question with the purpose of clarifying her own point of view.

Continuing on the same thread of conversation, we find in third participation that the student is giving his own contribution about the theme proposed in virtual forum. There are no clear evidences that the student develop previous opinions or contributions of other students. The third student is limited to exposing his own point of view and we can evidence that he uses examples in order to support his contribution. We identify this when he says, *“...in my case always helped the elderly and the situation depends on a child”*. As we saw in previous analysis, the use of examples to support first contribution corresponds to phase 1 - section “c”. We do not see an evolution between phases in the third participation.

Finally, the third participation provides the following sentence *“Of course I agree with you in saying that it is preferable to help with food and clothing to the needy”*. This sentence

offers us an example of statement of agreement between participants. According to IAM Protocol, these evidences are identified in phase 1 - section "d".

It is evident that the majority of contributions in the virtual forums are statements of agreement. It was difficult to find students' contributions that present another point of view different to the first participant. For this reason a recurrence in students' participation is necessary if we want to increase contributions in a debate forum in order to promote a more interactive and active debate between students.

On the other hand, when there were evidences of phase 2, it was because students raised for themselves or for other students' new questions inviting to go deeper into a specific aspect of the subject under discussion, or some other sub-theme emerged in the virtual forum. According to Gunawardena model, when a student proposed new questions is a sign that students are in a stage of reflection and this indicates that the debate is promoting a co-construction of knowledge around the theme proposed in the virtual forum.

Consequently, "debate" is a fundamental element in a virtual forum that aims to stimulate the development of thought in students. For example, in a student's contribution (Appendix H) I found sentences like that "*...but the matter is I think about doing something good for that person. Give money is the solution? Could help? Or not? ...When people give money to others are helping? I'm sure that people make this with good intentions, but what is the result? The best way to help is giving money? I guess that no*". When a question is postulated in a student's contribution, it can be classified in phase 2 of the protocol based on Gunawardena's model. It means that the student has a progress in interaction and in construction of debate because the student is proposing new elements or aspects for discussion.

However, a significant co-construction of knowledge in students' contribution was not achieved, because the patterns of co-construction of thought were encountered with no significant relevance in the analysis of content. We can evidence it because most students' contribution stood in phase 1, where students express patterns such as sharing own opinion, compare information received with own opinion, support first contribution with examples, and formulate a statement of agreement or disagreement between participants.

For example, we can demonstrate this behavior in one student's contribution (Appendix H), where I found sentences like "*My point of view.... Of how to improve or increase the pronunciation skills for speaking English, can be through many strategies not only one in specific...*" with this statement, the student is positioning her point of view. This statement is located in phase 1: "Sharing own opinion". However, I did not find other deeper elements of interaction in her participation.

The quality of reasoning. I applied a questionnaire (review figure 6) focused on analyzing the presence of UIS to do an assessment in a selected sample of students' participation in virtual forums 1 and 2. The presence of these standards is supported in elements of thought evidenced in students' contributions. The elements of thought are necessary in order to identify UIS, but the elements of thought defined by R. Paul like 'generating questions' or 'giving information, concepts or points of view', are not subject to this investigation because a student learns to develop autonomously those elements of thought over time.

We can analyze new questions that students proposed in their contributions in virtual forums, their interpretations and experiences, their points of view, as well as their implications and overall opinions to determine if UIS are present in their participations. This study has been

conclusive in the idea that the more profound has been the interaction of the debate between students, most critical was their participation; with each new contribution in a same thread of conversation, the students demonstrate that they understand, analyze and evaluate the proposed theme in the virtual forum and their own position about it.

In other words, if the UIS are present in students' participation, it is not only because they are characteristics of the critical thinking development as proposed by Paul, but because they determine that the student understood, analyzed and evaluated the proposed virtual forum theme and their own point of view about it.

Students analyzed, understood, and self-evaluated opinions about a problem-solving in a virtual debate. Based on the study of Marra (2004), content analysis methods provide to online educators and researchers valuable information for analyzing online discussion forum content (pg. 23). In addition, the author stresses the importance of researchers predominantly use this method for assessing the content and outcomes of these forums and only recently have researchers developed instruments for conducting meaningful qualitative analysis of online discussion forums (Marra, 2004).

For this reason, UIS – checklist is important because it helped to identify the presence of - UIS- in students' participation. Not just to mention if one or another standard is present as a characteristic of critical thinking development, but because the UIS lead the student to an explanation much more assertive about what they understood, they analyzed and evaluated about the problem or question posed in the virtual forum. Therefore, UIS allow us to identify where there were greater understanding and analysis by students.

For the application of UIS – Checklist (table 3) a random selection of six students’ participation in virtual forums was made. All students’ participation selected for application of UIS- Checklist are from different conversations and were selected from virtual forums 1 and 2.

UNIVERSAL INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS	QUESTIONS THAT CAN BE USED TO KNOW IF PEOPLE ARE APPLYING THEM	VIRTUAL FORUM 1						VIRTUAL FORUM 2					
		CONVERSATIONAL DISCUSSION "A" Angela Katerin Munar Moreno		CONVERSATIONAL DISCUSSION "B" Jhon Wilder Osorio Bernal		CONVERSATIONAL DISCUSSION "C" Diego Urrego Acosta		CONVERSATIONAL DISCUSSION "D" Argelio Hernandez Tellez		CONVERSATIONAL DISCUSSION "E" Diego Urrego Acosta		CONVERSATIONAL DISCUSSION "F" Laura Juliana Mora Garcia	
		YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
CLARITY	Does student give an example about their opinions?	X		X		X		X		X		X	
	Does student illustrate with arguments that he/she understand the topic proposed in the debate?	X				X			X	X			X
ACCURACY / VERACITY	Could I find out if student interpretation about the theme is correct?	X			X		X			X			X
PRECISION	Does student give more details about his/her point of view?	X			X	X		X		X		X	
	Is student participation according to the topic proposed?	X			X	X		X		X		X	
RELEVANCE	Is students' contribution relate to the problem?	X		X		X		X		X		X	
DEPTH	Student opinion propose other difficulties that we need to deal with?	X			X	X		X		X		X	
BREADTH	Does student' contribution consider another point of view ?	X		X		X		X		X		X	
LOGIC	Does full student' contribution make sense together?	X			X	X		X		X		X	
	Does student first paragraph fit in with last one?	X			X	X		X		X		X	
SIGNIFICANCE	Is student' point of view the most important point to consider?		X		X		X		X	X			X
	Is student' poin of view the central idea to focus on?		X		X		X		X	X			X
FAIRNESS	Does student have any interest in the viewpoints of others?	X		X		X		X		X		X	
	Does student evaluate own opinion front of other opinions?	X		X		X		X		X		X	

Table 3. UIS checklist

Applying UIS – Checklist implies identifying characteristics of clarity, accuracy/veracity, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance and fairness in the selected students’ participation. As an example, we have the contribution of a student in virtual forum 1. In order to identify the presence of intellectual standards, it is necessary to do a qualitative analysis of all the students’ contribution. Only in context, the researcher can identify characteristics proposed by UIS. The main ideas focused in elements of reasoning (ER) present in each paragraph of the students’ contribution are highlighted in yellow. These main ideas help us to identify the presence of UIS.

What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?
de ANGELA KATERIN MUNAR MORENO - jueves, 17 de septiembre de 2015, 22:41

Hello classmates and teacher,

Well, about this topic, I consider that it is a controversial and sensitive issue. People like to do good things and help to other people but the matter is think about doing something is good for that person. Give money is the solution? Could help? Or not?

When people give money to others are helping? I'm sure that people make this with good intentions, but what is the result? The best way to help is giving money? I guess that no.

However, it's important to evaluate the situation before to make a decision about give or not money, because in some cases it could help. But I like when people do something good to win this help or money. Thing like sell any product, provide a service like clean the boats or shoes, or sweeps the streets.

But we can find people asking for money all the time in transmilenio. Some people sing nice songs, other scream songs, others are friendly, others seems like they are demanding money. In the streets, we can find children asking for money or adults with children asking for money. If people give them money are making a bad decision because children shouldn't ask for money. I'd prefer deny money to a foundation of children or help these foundations as volunteer. It's a better way to help.

To conclude this reflection and asking the question, I consider that the things that motivate me to give or deny money is to help people that worth it. People that make efforts to survive honestly. But beyond to give money the motivation is to help in any way to this people, especially children. They deserve to have a better quality of life.

By Angela Munar

Figure 10. UIS analysis

UIS-Clarity is identified in a student's contribution (figure 10 above) because her explanation is supported with an example about her point of view, when she said that: *is a good idea giving money, when people do a good thing to win it*, she is clarifying that she agrees with giving money only in cases when people work to win it. We can identify that she is showing what she thinks about the topic proposed. She is explaining her point of view and she uses examples to

do it. The use of examples is an element of clarity. In addition, if she has the capacity to support her point of view with examples, it is because she understands the debate theme.

Since the student's contribution is clear, now we can determinate if it is accurate or relevant; in other words, if the contribution is precise or connected with the theme proposed. In her reflections, the student is giving real and relevant information based on the theme proposed in the virtual forum. Ideas proposed by the student in her reflection show elements of real life, so we cannot say that she is lying or she is saying something wrong. Her contribution is an evidence that she understood the debate theme. The student's reflections answer the question proposed in the debate, so we can say that her interpretation about the theme proposed is correct.

The precision of her arguments could be more exacts if her arguments were more developed, but we find elements of precision because she offers details about her point of view, about what she thinks. In fact, she starts her reflection with a question about why we should give money on the street. Besides, her contribution is relevant because her points of view relate to the problem proposed in virtual forum and support with own arguments the main question.

When she says that *she considers the topic is a controversial and sensitive issue*, she is demonstrating that some factors make this a difficult problem. Her point of view is not superficial. She demonstrates other complexities and difficulties about the question and she invites her interlocutors to analyze deeper factors of the initial question proposing more and new questions like *...when people give money to other are helping?*

The UIS – breadth is present in her contribution because she is inviting other participants to analyze the importance of the topic proposed. In fact, she says *“it's important to evaluate the situation before to make a decision about give or not money, because in some cases it could*

help". With this invitation, she is demonstrating that she considers other perspectives or points of view, and she is proposing a deep and further reflection into the debate theme.

In the fourth paragraph, we find examples of real life according to her own experiences and after that, she presents what she would do in the proposed case. Here, she makes a logical development. All of her ideas make sense together and there is a coherent connection between evidences and paragraphs. All these elements are evidence of the presence of logic in the student's contribution.

Maybe, in the post, we could expect more facts, but we find the ideas that she considered the most important for her contribution and she focused on a central idea. These elements show us the presence of the UIS – significance. This standard will become more relevant with responses and contributions of other students. The responses of other students could help to determine if the student's point of view is the most important point to consider.

The UIS – Fairness is present in this student's contribution because she shows a real interest in this issue proposing further reflections to other students. When she explains that she is considering her own motivations or when she is proposing new reflections to other students, it is evidence of a sympathy for the views of others.

As I just explained, the evidence of the presence of UIS are not in the fragmented analysis of a student's participation. On the other hand, it is necessary to analyze each student's participation in a comprehensive and integral manner, in order to determine the level of understanding, self-analysis and self-reflection. In fact, the analysis of Angela's contribution is an example of how UIS are present in a debate contribution and how it helps us to determine the level of student analysis, understanding and self-evaluation. If we find them in a deeper and a more significant

way, we can say that the contribution was more critical. I can conclude that student analysis, understanding and self-evaluation are components of critical thinking development.

Intellectual standards and interaction phases are present in a different and complementary way. In those parts where there was a clearer interaction, the presence of UIS was also more easily found. Short interactions in the virtual forum were present and they stimulated reasoning among students. This was evident in the application of questions in order to identify the presence of Universal Intellectual Standards. When I carried out the qualitative analysis of students' contributions in a single conversational thread, I evidenced a significant progress in the debate. The debate progressed from phase to phase, and the presence of standards became more evident. However, the conversations analyzed did not exceed phase 3. The latter shows that there is not a deep knowledge about how to participate meaningfully in a discussion forum.

Additionally, in the same content analysis, I could not identify students grouped in phases 4 and/or 5. It means that students did not elaborate further their contributions. Elements like "use arguments or expressions that evidence a negotiation of meaning with the purpose of making a knowledge co-construction", "agreement and applications of newly constructed meaning", or "summarizing agreement and cognitive statements that show new knowledge construction", were not found in student's contributions of virtual forums 1 and 2. In general, students started discussions, they participated with initial opinions but they do not continue with a co-constructive exercise of debate. They abandoned the reasoning process at some point of the debate.

One reason why students drop the interaction process was given because the students made the process contributing to two regulatory participations. Therefore, a recommendation for future processes should be not to limit the number of postings, and encourage students to participate significantly more than two or three contributions in the debate to avoid obstructing the construction of knowledge that takes place in the exercise.

Despite this, it is significant to find evidence of the presence of standards in the short mental elaborations that students offered in their contributions in discussion forums. This same content analysis allowed me to reflect on the importance of standards, finding that, “clarity” as an UIS is the most necessary standard in the co-construction of knowledge in virtual forums participation. Students need to elaborate further their opinions, purpose clearly their contributions, and give examples for other participants to better understand, especially when students are writing in the English language.

“Depth” is another standard proposed by Paul that needs to be improved. Students do not usually want to do an effort in order to analyze and organize their thoughts, and they prefer superficial contributions, which do not favor significant progress in the debate, interaction and the construction of knowledge. For example, common answers of students were “I agree with you” or “I agree with this” which was often used in those virtual forums. Nevertheless, these answers lack depth because they do not account for the complex issues treated in undergraduate education.

Another standard that has a deep relationship with the last standard mentioned is “Breadth”. In a process of knowledge co-construction, it is necessary to consider other points of view. However, I identified that in students’ participations it was uncommon that students looked

at the debate question from another perspective or consider other ways to answer. Students' participation were in the same standpoint all the time.

“Relevance” is the most interesting standard for students because all of them considered the themes proposed in virtual forums important. The high participation in virtual forums of debate proposed in the course shows that the issues were of interest to students. In addition, their initial contributions respond to the question topic.

The application of the instruments help me to identify that the co-construction of knowledge was an important element for the development of a critical thinking. The progress between phases is only possible when students interact among them. Students did not reach ~~the~~ phases 4 and 5 because there was not a more active and continuous interaction in each thread of discussion.

Further, the instruments help me to identify different and complementary aspects of critical thinking development. The intellectual standards and the interaction phases were present in a different way and, at the same time, in a complementary way in students' contributions in the forums. Both have the same relevance in identifying elements of the development of thinking in virtual forums.




The more evidences of interaction, the more qualities in reasoning. As I said in the previous category of data analysis, clearer evidences of interaction implied an increase in the presence of standards. The design of the second virtual forum is an example of this.

Figure 11 shows an example of the application of IAM – Protocol in the second virtual forum. The second virtual forum offers us an evolution in forum design, specifically in the design of instructions because the forum's moderator has more active participation. This decision was

made after analyzing the data obtained in the first virtual forum. From the little interaction evident in the first virtual forum and low development of collaborative discussion among students, who mostly limited themselves to express their own points of view, without deeper stages of discussion, I concluded that the teachers should play a more active participation in the development of the debate itself.


Consequently, in the second virtual forum, the tutor plays a role of active moderator in the debate. His function is to stimulate the analysis of the theme proposed, reflection, discussion and controversy among students in order to understand the general idea of the debate. These are the features needed in a discussion forum that is looking for the construction of knowledge.


In the example, we evidence an effective progress in students' contribution that was not present in the first virtual forum and it offers us a higher quality of students' reasoning.

TIPS TO IMPROVE ENGLISH SKILLS de LADY DAYAN SILVA BELTRAN - martes, 6 de octubre de 2015, 17:22	
To start I have to said that there is not an accurate way to improve our English skills because each one of us is different, we learn in different ways and what it works for me could not be work for someone else. In my personal experience I did learnt empirically, without having previously taken a course to enroll to the bachelors. I considered that my high motivation for learning everyday it helps, I could recommend certain tips that works for me in order to improved the skills for learning English:	 oscar pulido PHASE 1 (a)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Watch television and movies in English: in that way you can sharpen your ear to the language, it is a great way to listen to different dialects, also allow us to listen to intonations and stress in the words. Native people have their own slang and jargon. As a personal suggestion I recommend <i>Two and a Half Men</i>, this is a hilarious series that had helped me to understand an informal way of speaking English. o For formal speaking I watch BBC news and CNN news, their way of speaking allows me to catch and retain words for my lexicon. o Read English books from the courses are the best way of learning about great topics. This allows me to read at my own pace and also leads me to seek more information on other books or the Internet 	 oscar pulido PHASE 1 (a)
	 oscar pulido PHASE 1 (c)

tips to improve my english level
 de ARGELIO HERNÁNDEZ TELLEZ - miércoles, 7 de octubre de 2015, 19:26


Learning a language is not easy, but not impossible, here there are some of the main tips that have improved my skills in English. When I decided to learn the English language take one of the most difficult ways, but not impossible, so I decided to talk regularly and especially. I lost the fear of making mistakes, in addition to mistakes lead perfection. Repeatedly I put news in English by international channels, always being very focused and trying to understand every single word of the presenters. as I advance in my course I am always attentive to commercials and each of the words with which I live around me that have to do with the English .in sometimes watch movies in English, practice pronunciation and because no treatment to act them my way and imitating the stars; along time ago I have been connected with foreign in whatsapp and this has helped me improve my level and I have been attend the talks scheduled on Saturday the CAU. Another tips and perhaps one of the most important is whether we see a word that is new to us don't advance to not having mean and learned perhaps in the respective dictionary or translator of your choice. But personally I think that this can not happen if we as students really do not have a like and a vocation for what we are doing.

 oscar pulido
 PHASE 1 (a)

 oscar pulido
 PHASE 1 (a)

Re: tips to improve my english level
 de MAURICIO BUITRAGO AVILÉS - viernes, 9 de octubre de 2015, 13:23


Argelio thank you very much for your participation, excellent contribution. I would like you to consider the fact that many people have not a vocation oriented at learning other languages; but they require a foreign language for exceptional reasons, for example, a student mobility program, a temporal work or conferences abroad or just tourism and holidays. In conclusion, they do not give importance to learning a foreign language. Do you think these people without vocation oriented learning languages should implement your tips? Why? Why not? (If other students want to participate here, their contributions are welcome).


 oscar pulido
 PHASE 2 (b)


Re: tips to improve my english level
 de ARGELIO HERNANDEZ TELLEZ - sábado, 17 de octubre de 2015, 21:34

Dear teacher

Well maybe if it's important to have a vocation because it motivates you and takes you to find some high goals. of course the age at which we begin to learn is very important, although some adults have more discipline than young people. I sometimes think that people without vocation is not that they can not learn but perhaps its rate of learning may be less, I'm thinking that there is what we call motivation or like for who learn, and there are people who have certain skills more than others, for example I'm better the writing and Reading than the listening , but maybe with more hours of study can will be better in listening, hence we do not like what you may not spend much time, and in terms of speaking must be able to express in public regardless of mistakes and above participate in conversations and dives in the place where even if your country does not speak English. Enough to bring a higher level of motivation and if you keep good discipline achieve your goals in less time than you think. I recommend recharge and force yourself to socialize, meet people, get out of the classroom environment and lose shame. Everything is achieved if you feel; starts small, overcomes difficulties, and you'll be surprised what you can get. One of the best evidence that you're learning English, is when you get something of the soul and say in that language.

 oscar pulido
 PHASE 3 (b)

 oscar pulido
 PHASE 3 (a)

 oscar pulido
 PHASE 3 (a)

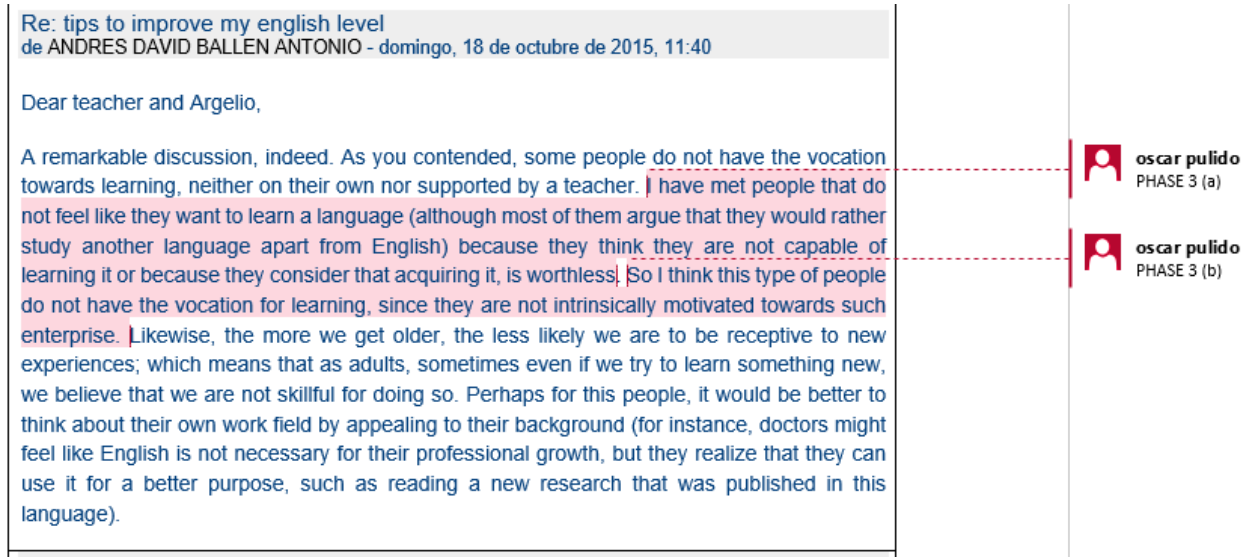


Figure 11. Example of virtual forum 2

In virtual forum 2, students had to start a debate around the question: “*What are your tips to improve your English skills?*” as we saw in the proposed forums in instructional design – chapter 3. Students had two points of reference in order to participate in the virtual forum. Students had a reading text and a video based on the topic proposed. In the sequence shown in figure 11, there was not a consecutive connection between the first interventions. For this reason, the third contribution corresponds to the moderator’s intervention.

We have a conversation between three students in a logical and chronological sequence debating the same topic proposed in the virtual forum and one debate’s moderator intervention. Students 1 and 3 participated once. Student 2 participated twice. The debate’s moderator participated once, and stimulated the students’ contributions and participation.

In this data analysis, I applied the IAM – protocol. In the first text, the student uses sentences to introduce her point of view like “*...I have to say that*”, “*In my personal experience...*”, “*I consider that...*”. With these sentences, the first student explains her own

opinion about the theme proposed (phase 1 - section “a” in IAM Protocol). Next, according to IAM Protocol, in the same phase 1 but in section “c”, we find a sentence of a student who wants to support her first contribution with examples: “...*I could recommend certain tips that works for me in order to improved the skills for learning English...*”.

What we expect in the second participation is that next student gives a continuity to the first contribution but we find that there is not a connection between the first contribution and the second contribution. Students 1 and 2 were limited to share their own points of view. For this reason, we find in the second contribution sentences focused on sharing the student’s point of view. Sentences like “*here there are some of the main tips that have improved my skills in English*” and “*But personally I think that...*” According IAM Protocol, the last sentences were classified as Phase 1 – section “a”.

In this moment of debate thread, the moderator’s intervention is necessary. The third participation is a moderator’s intervention whose objective is to promote reflection and debate. In this part, the moderator proposes a question to the second student for reflection and consideration: “*Do you think these people without vocation oriented learning languages should implement your tips? Why? Why not?*”. The use of questions is intentional because the questions focus on previous student’s participation. Questions lead students to consider other viewpoints in front of their own contributions. According to IAM Protocol, this sort of questions are classified as Phase 2 – section “b”.

The moderator’s intervention achieved the goal because after some days, the second student uploaded a new and more elaborate contribution answering the moderator’s questions. This new contribution lead us into a more elaborate debate, giving continuity to the topic

proposed in this forum's conversation. When the second student answer previous questions, he is introducing himself into Phase 3 of IAM Protocol.

We can observe those more elaborate reflections in sentences like *“I sometimes think that people without **vocation** is not that they cannot learn but perhaps its rate of learning may be less...”*. *“I’m thinking that there is what we call **motivation** or like for who learn, and there are people who have certain skills more than others”*. In these sentences, the second student is introducing new sub-topics to the debate such as *vocation* and *motivation*, that allow to have a more specific and explicit idea of the second student’s point of view and own opinion. The introduction of new sub-topics in the debate by the second student is an action expected by IAM Protocol in phase 3 -section “b” that analyzes if students test and promote new knowledge proposed against an existing cognitive schema in order to co-construct a new one.

Complementing the information above, the second student supported his new contributions in the debate forum with examples, personal experiences and advice. We can observe this in sentences like *“for example I’m better the writing and Reading than the listening, but maybe with more hours of study can will be better in listening”* or sentences like *“I recommend recharge and force yourself to socialize, meet people, get out of the classroom environment and lose shame”*. These personal experiences and advice are related to the sub-topics proposed by himself; and IAM Protocol analyzes if participants provide evidences, references, examples, personal experiences and other sources to support own opinions in Phase 3 – section “a”.

Later, in this conversation we find a third participant. His contributions focus on the main theme and sub-topics proposed by the second student. Again, we use IAM Protocol in order to

analyze this contribution. We find that the third student is in Phase 3 because his reflections are connected with points analyzed in this phase. For example, in the sentence *“I have met people that do not feel like they want to learn a language... because they think they are not capable of learning it or because they consider that acquiring it, is worthless”*, we find evidences that the third student is speaking about personal experiences (Phase 3 – section “a”), where participants provide evidences, references, examples, personal experiences and other sources to support own opinions.

Subsequently, the third student says *“...So I think this type of people do not have the vocation for learning, since they are not intrinsically motivated towards such enterprise”*. We can analyze that this sentence is in phase 3 – section “b” because the third student is testing and promoting new knowledge proposed against an existing cognitive schema in order to co-construct a new one. In this case, the third student gave his opinion about the sub-topics “vocation and motivation” proposed by the second student in the previous intervention. In these final contributions, we find new discursive interactions that allow starting the construction of knowledge among students.

In virtual forum two, we found cases where the interaction between students advanced to phase 3 of the protocol based on the interaction analysis model – IAM by Gunawardena (1997). It was evident that the students made an effort to provide evidences, references, examples, or personal experiences and other sources to support own positions and explain their opinion in a better way. In phase 3, students could do things like that and/or test and promote new knowledge because the virtual forum offered them new elements in order to understand more extensively the idea of a debate; analyze their own views and point of view of others; and evaluate proposals reflections of the debate.

We found an example of that in Maria Concepcion Lobon Valencia's contribution made on Saturday, September the 19th 2015, 13:39 hours; when she said; "*Some time ago I did an interview with a man who asked for money and said that...*" "*...when I travel to classes in Cali CAU observed the same thing happens...*" In this example, the student is using elements that allow her to provide evidences with personal experiences. In addition, this pattern is classified as phase 3 in the protocol; providing clarity and relevance to her own participation.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Implications

In this chapter, I present conclusions in response to the research question stated for the study and based on the qualitative analysis of data. Then, I compare them with the findings of research studies that I addressed in the literature review. In the second part of this chapter, I present pedagogical implications as derived findings that I got in the process, as well as lines and topics for research in further studies.

Conclusions

The research methods used in this work respond to the objective proposed and the real necessities of this investigation. In order to answer the main question, I obtained three significant results. First, the importance of interaction in students' participation in an activity of co-construction of knowledge as a debate in a virtual forum was evident. Second, an important characteristic of a critical thinker is the quality of reasoning explained in three abilities: the ability to analyze, the ability to understand, and the ability to assess themselves. Third, I found that the intellectual standards and the interaction phases are present in a complementary way in students' participations as elements that stimulate the students' interaction and reasoning.

The virtual discussion forums foster a sense of interaction between students, with the teacher/tutor, with the contents of the forum, and with the socio-cultural context, because the students' contributions are supported in their real experiences and in their environment. Thus, the identification of patterns of interaction of students' participation in academic virtual forums

provide ideas for teachers about how to design virtual forums with the intention of promoting skills applied to stimulate and to cultivate thought.

I can conclude then, that a critical thinker must develop different abilities such as responding to problems and fundamental questions clearly and accurately; formulate clear questions against the proposed topics; collect and evaluate relevant information using their own ideas. Interpret and understand the ideas of other students properly; reach well-reasoned conclusions and solutions; test own arguments confronting them with real-life examples; and think with an open mind recognizing and evaluating, as needed, assumptions, implications and practical consequences of what is said. Finally, the critical thinker should effectively communicate with others to devise solutions to the proposed problems in the virtual forum.

When the students' participation stays mostly in phase 1, it indicates that the effort in thinking is reduced in their contributions to sharing own opinions, and comparing information received with their own opinions. Teachers are required to reinforce the idea of cultivating in students the aspects described above.

These conclusive ideas support the demand of virtual forums that are more elaborate, and that help and encourage students to think critically. For this reason, it is important to review the instructional design of activities in virtual discussion forums, in view of their effect on the extent and quality of discursive interactions of students and, therefore, on the construction of knowledge among peers. There is a need to review the structural characteristics of virtual forums, in order to design them in a more precise form and the use of resources of interaction and discourse that can be generated from the design of better activities.

The students had to replicate after receiving a comment on their post, and this, unfortunately, most of the time never happened. This difficulty (difficulty to follow the rules) prevented that the number of potential interactions was greater. In this sense, if students had followed the rules of interaction raised, they would have registered more structured discussion interactions than those that took place. This could become the main explanation why the number of replies in both forums was more or less similar.

In conclusion, it is clear that there is a need to provide more accurate aids to students in terms of precise rules of interaction, appropriate assessment procedures, and discussion' themes to guide students in the activity of the virtual forum, in order to increase their chance of developing critical thinking and command of new knowledge.

On the other hand, previous studies developed by Velazquez and Figueroa (2010) in El Salvador; Jaramillo (2011) in Colombia; Lopez (2013) in Mexico; and Gunawardena et al. (1997) in the United States, marked a procedural way forward in this work, and were valuable references that support the importance of this research topic in academic investigations. A general idea unites them all: the virtual forum as a pedagogical space for construction of knowledge. Faced against this statement, the main contribution of the present research is that the virtual forum is thought as an educational space to encourage interaction among students where construction of knowledge be more effective, because it stimulates the critical thinking development of the students.

Pedagogical implications.

This research contributed to the academic research about the use of critical thinking and co-construction of knowledge in virtual forums because it provided evidences of the presence of patterns of students' interaction and the improvement of quality of students' reasoning.

In a virtual forum, we should find the quality of discourse produced. The data revealed that were differences between the first and the second virtual forum. Although we might think that the natural consequence was that the number of participations that occur in this type of learning contexts is considerably increased, this does not necessarily indicate a higher quality of speech in students' contribution. The data reported in this study shows that we had an increase in the number of interactions in the second virtual forum as compared with the first one; however, the difference was not so drastic. From my point of view, it is worth pausing to reflect on the frequency of occurrence of each interaction, because it is through this information that we can argue that the virtual forum may become truly productive. Including many concepts in a virtual forum is not what is important, but rather the number of times that the student is able to interact with different ideas, opinions and people that are related. In the present study, three phases of interaction recorded a high frequency in the second forum, so it can be inferred that the understanding about the proposed issue was better, this in function of the possibility of further reflection on the themes proposed.

The questions applied to the students' participation allowed identifying the depth of the students' reasoning process. I analyzed samples in order to determine the presence of important characteristics to find out if the questions proposed in the virtual forums allow students go to better and better reasoning. The success of an argument not only depends on the depth of

reflection, but also in a suitable environment. The questions proposed in a discussion forum as well as the complementary elements that surround it, should help to guide and motivate the student.

A virtual forum should foster an environment for reflection and expression of arguments. The topics proposed on the forums must have some meaning to the lives of students or should treat problems or the real - everyday life situations of students. Virtual forums should provide an environment conducive to free expression and socialization among students around the topic of discussion in the virtual space. Among the current models that may be more successful in achieving their goals are those that try to link teaching critical thinking skills to everyday situations or problems (Saiz and Rivas, 2011).

New virtual forums. The idea of promoting students' interaction in virtual forums is fundamental when we have to prepare the debate theme. In order to develop new virtual forums this research provide, as an element for teachers, the necessity to include in a virtual forum design the use and development of universal intellectual standards. The presence of those standards into the students' activities as a fundamental part of their contributions during a debate in a virtual forum encourage them to develop critical thinking. On the other hand, other characteristic of virtual forums must be the promotion of discussion among students. The application of the interaction analysis model in this research revealed that progress between phases of interaction is fundamental in order to allow spaces for the co-construction of knowledge. The students' interaction turned out to be the essential ingredient of the students' co-construction of knowledge.

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Appendices

Appendix A


 Rubrics for written fora participation


PHASE 1

WRITING PRACTICE 1 - FORUM 1

Right below you can find a file with clear instructions for the participation in the first forum of our course. Please read these instructions carefully in order to make your participation in the activity 100% valid for evaluative purposes. Keep in mind that the deadline to participate in this first forum is September the 20th.

NOTE: I strongly suggest that you watch the two videos on critical thinking posted below the label "Other Learning Aids" of the section "Resources" of our V-room in order to get some additional support for the development of this sort of task.

 Instructions to participate in FORUM 1

 FORUM 1 - Critical thinking: "People in Need"

PHASE 2

WRITING PRACTICE 2 - FORUM 2

Right below you can find a file with clear instructions for the participation in the second forum of our course. Please read these instructions carefully in order to make your participation in the activity 100% valid for evaluative purposes. Keep in mind that the deadline to participate in this first forum is October the 18th.

NOTE: I strongly suggest that you watch the two videos on critical thinking posted below the label "Other Learning Aids" of the section "Resources" of our V-room in order to get some additional support for the development of this sort of task.

Appendix B

Colocar un nuevo tema de discusión aquí

Tema	Comenzado por	Rélicas	Último mensaje
What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?	 ARGELIO HERNANDEZ TELLEZ	1	JAVIER ALEJANDRO LANDINEZ SEGURA mié, 7 de oct de 2015, 22:24
What motivates me to give or deny money to people in need?	 JAVIER ALEJANDRO LANDINEZ SEGURA	2	JAVIER ALEJANDRO LANDINEZ SEGURA mié, 7 de oct de 2015, 22:08
What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?	 DIANA ALEXANDRA CASTRO PERDOMO	2	DIANA ALEXANDRA CASTRO PERDOMO sáb, 3 de oct de 2015, 21:41
People in Need	 TATIANA NOVOA RUIZ	1	DIANA ALEXANDRA CASTRO PERDOMO mié, 23 de sep de 2015, 14:20
What motivates me to give or deny money to people in need?	 LAURA JULIANA MORA GARCIA	4	LAURA JULIANA MORA GARCIA mar, 22 de sep de 2015, 10:28
What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?	 ELIZABETH FLOREZ QUINTERO	2	ELIZABETH FLOREZ QUINTERO lun, 21 de sep de 2015, 20:14
Give or deny			

Appendix C

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

VIRTUAL FORUM ONE (1) – STUDENT'S PARTICIPATIONS

What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need? Argue your Answers.

OPINION
de RUBIELA VALIENTE ABREU - jueves, 17 de septiembre de 2015, 20:11

Hello Dear partners,

I don't think we should give the homeless money due to we don't know what they would use it for. They could use it for their needs or for drugs. I would rather give them food or donate important stuff in the charity. Also, some catholic churches receive food as a store for people that go and ask for. There is a control and people would know is for a truth cause.

Re: OPINION
de ANGELA KATERIN MUNAR MORENO - jueves, 17 de septiembre de 2015, 22:49

Hello Rubieta, |

I'm agree with you. The idea is to help and giving money is not the only way to help. We can help with fodd etc. However I consider that we shouldn't take a radical position about this and think always that people is acting bad. I know, the world nowadays is crazy and people now make crazy things but, when you help to someone, you first should think about help before to think in bad things that people can make with money or things that you give. Sometimes it's good trust and selfless giving, relying only on good will. Finally God look our hearts and not the amount of money we give or lose in bad people.

Appendix D

Interaction analysis model (IAM):

Phase 1. (a) Sharing own opinion. (b) Comparing Information received with own opinion. (c) Support first contribution with examples. (d) Statement of agreement or disagreement between participants.

Phase 2. (a) Discovery and exploration of dissonance or inconsistency among participants: identifying areas of disagreement; (b) Postulated new questions. (c) Asking and answering questions to clarify disagreement.

Phase 3. (a) Provides evidences, references, examples, personal experiences and other sources to support own position. (b) Test and promote new knowledge proposed against existing cognitive schema in order to co-construct new one.

Phase 4. (a) Use arguments or expressions that evidence a negotiation of meaning with the purpose of making a knowledge co-construction.

Phase 5. (a) Is evident the new knowledge co-constructed. (b) Agreement and applications of newly constructed meaning. (c) Summarizing agreement and cognitive statements that show new knowledge construction.

Appendix E

UNIVERSAL INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS	QUESTIONS THAT CAN BE USED TO KNOW IF PEOPLE ARE APPLYING THEM
CLARITY	Does student give an example about their opinions? Does student illustrate with arguments that he/she understand the topic proposed in the debate?
ACCURACY / VERACITY	Could I find out if student interpretation about the theme is correct?
PRECISION	Does student give more details about his/her point of view? Is student participation according to the topic proposed?
RELEVANCE	Is students' contribution relate to the problem?
DEPTH	Student opinion propose other difficulties that we need to deal with?
BREADTH	Does student' contribution consider another point of view ?
LOGIC	Does full student' contribution make sense together? Does student first paragraph fit in with last one?
SIGNIFICANCE	Is student' point of view the most important point to consider? Is student' poin of view the central idea to focus on?
FAIRNESS	Does student have any interest in the viewpoints of others? Does student evaluate own opinion front of other opinions?

Appendix F

DISCUSSION FORUM 1:

Question:

What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need? Argue your Answers.

In this discussion forum you have to give your opinions about the question proposed at first and during the time of open forum you have to participate actively reading the opinions of your partners and debating their ideas. Please be coherent and concise in your opinions.

Watch the video: Homeless Drug Addict VS Homeless Father (Social Experiment) and participate in the virtual forum with your opinions and points of view:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ilxjo5RlzFc>

The final propose of this forum is construct a progressive knowledge about topic proposed.

Reading proposed:

*The Debate stars with an opinion of Mister Graham, 45 years old. An English man from Manchester – United Kingdom, **He Said: Rather than just giving change to homeless people on the street from time to time, I think it is much better and far more useful to make a regular monthly donation to one particular charity of your preference. I get really annoyed with the charity collectors who stand outside shops and swoop on you, asking you for money for this cause and that cause, trying to make you feel guilty if you say no. I also disapprove of all those***

junk letters you get, you know, with photos of starving children or animals in pain or whatever. I feel that they are almost trying to exploit you – it's a kind of emotional blackmail. It's up to me after all who I donate money to and I actually make a point of giving to organizations that get less publicity rather than the trendy ones that are linked to celebrities.

Appendix G

DISCUSSION FORUM 2:

Question:

What are your secrets or tips to improve your English skills and what are your recommendations to new students?

In next video you will listen a person who disagree with those who say watching movies is a good idea to improve listening skill. What do you think? Is that true? Why? Why not? Join the Discussion forum with your opinions and points of view.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_PQvy9xKNw

In this discussion forum you have to participate actively reading the opinions of your partners and debating their ideas. Please be coherent and concise in your opinions.

The final propose of this forum is construct a progressive knowledge about topic proposed.

Reading proposed:

*To start the Debate, I propose, as an example, an opinion of Professor Rohan Cox from Australia, **He said: A secret on how to increase or improve the pronunciation skills for speaking English** is increase your listening skills because listening is most of the pronunciation result. If you have excellent listening skills you will have excellent pronunciation. And the best way I know to increase listening skills, which will automatically increase pronunciation skills is to transcribe. Which means to write or type what you*

hear. For example, transcribe videos. On the internet, there are millions of videos. The best ones I recommend would be news videos, for example from CNN.com; so go to CNN.com or any other English news web site where they have videos. Just play some videos. Look for a topic that interests you. Click on it, play it and transcribe it. It will be very difficult. You will get many words wrong, and you will miss some words, perhaps you didn't hear the word, or you just couldn't get it, maybe it's a new word. So you don't know what it is. All right? So transcribe the video. Next step would be to record your voice reading your transcription. So you record yourself reading your transcription. And as you play one sentence maybe. Play one sentence, then listen to the video again. Compare your pronunciation to their pronunciation – the native speaker. This is to see if the pronunciation is bad or is close. So that's one way to check, or one way to monitor how you are progressing. It is my recommendation. (Rohan Cox from www.English-Essentials.com 2010).

Appendix H

VIRTUAL FORUM ONE (1) – STUDENT'S WRITTEN PARTICIPATIONS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

Question: What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need? Argue your Answers.

OPINION

de RUBIELA VALIENTE ABREU - jueves, 17 de septiembre de 2015, 20:11

Hello Dear partners,

I don't think we should give the homeless money due to we don't know what they would use it for. They could use it for their needs or for drugs. I would rather give them food or donate important stuff in the charity. Also, some catholic churches receive food as a store for people that go and ask for. There is a control and people would know is for a truth cause.

Re: OPINION

de ANGELA KATERIN MUNAR MORENO - jueves, 17 de septiembre de 2015, 22:49

Hello Rubiela,

I'm agree with you. The idea is to help and giving money is not the only way to help. We can help with fodd etc. However I consider that we shouldn't take a radical position about this and think always that people is acting bad. I know, the world nowadays is crazy and people now make crazy things but, when you help to someone, you first should think about help before to think in bad things that people can make with money or things that you give. Sometimes it's

good trust and selfless giving, relying only on good will. Finally God look our hearts and not the amount of money we give or lose in bad people.

FORUM

de MARIA CONCEPCION LOBON VALENCIA - jueves, 17 de septiembre de 2015, 17:40

what motivates you to give or withhold money to people in need?

When you talk about poor often I think of the difficulties that many people go right now as our Colombians living in Venezuela and deported today. These people may be temporary poor because they need to succeed, none of them want to keep them but they need help to succeed as employment.

Other people like to help them and are complaining to solve their problems but did nothing. Others have no family or if they have been abandoned because the hinder them.

At times what motivates me to help people is when I see the point of wanting to get ahead, or when I see a patient who has no one to help you or the family of the sick person is unemployed or living conditions are precarious.

I love helping the elderly regularly go home nursing to facilitate perishable food because they are people I'm sure in his youth helped others but for different situations are abandoned in nursing homes and these entities nonprofit them gives good morning.

I thank God every day for having a job, health to help people who need especially to the elderly. I say, Do good without looking at who.

Re: FORUM

de ANGELA KATERIN MUNAR MORENO - jueves, 17 de septiembre de 2015, 22:57

Hello,

I like your point of view, and consider pertinent the topic about Colombians deported.

However I cannot avoid think about why people decided live in venezuela when government give them all for live and they prefer these thing thta win the thing with efforts here in colombia.

But you made me think about other important thing. To help or to act it's very important to keep in mind a nice sentence that you said.

"Do good without looking at who"

If we act keeping in mind this sentence, we not seek excuses for not helping. Excuses like.. I don't give money because he or she is bla bla bla.

Thank you for your sentence and reflection

What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

de ANGELA KATERIN MUNAR MORENO - jueves, 17 de septiembre de 2015, 22:41

Hello classmates and teacher,

Well, about this topic, I consider that it is a controversial and sensitive issue. People like to do good things and help to other people but the matter is think about doing something good for that person. Give money is the solution? Could help? Or not?

When people give money to others are helping? I'm sure that people make this with good intentions, but what is the result? The best way to help is giving money? I guess that no.

However it's important to evaluate the situation before to make a decision about give or not money, because in some cases it could help. But I like when people do something good to win this help or money. Thing like sell any product, provide a service like clean the boats or shoes, or sweeps the streets.

But we can find people asking for money all the time in transmilenio. Some people sing nice songs, other scream songs, others are friendly, others seems like they are demanding money. In the streets, we can find children asking for money or adults with children asking for money. If people give them money are making a bad decision because children shouldn't ask for money. I'd prefer deny money to a foundation of children or help these foundations as volunteer. It's a better way to help.

To conclude this reflection and asking the question, I consider that the things that motivate me to give or deny money is to help people that worth it. People that make efforts to survive honestly. But beyond to give money the motivation is to help in any way to this people, especially children. They deserve to have a better quality of life.

By Angela Munar

Re: What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

de HARIN BERRIO ARENAS - sábado, 19 de septiembre de 2015, 13:14

Hello Angela,

I really agree with your opinion, our opinions are very alike. As you, I consider that giving or denying money is a complex matter, especially nowadays, when is hard to know who is begging with honesty or who's not. It is clear that most of us give money with good intentions but sometimes those who are receiving the money are wasting it in things that are not worth it.

Re: What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

de MARIA CONCEPCION LOBON VALENCIA - sábado, 19 de septiembre de 2015, 13:39

Hi, Angela

Let me say in reply.

Likewise, I believe that this issue is controversial and sensitive. Because there are people who like to live asking for money such as friends say each day get to be asking for money. Some surveys have seen people who pretend to be sick, disabled for life begging for money and they argue that it is a way to work and earn money easily. Some time ago I did an interview with a man who asked for money and said that it supported his family and had two house to rent.

Therefore, it is difficult to give or withhold money.

In Transmilenio in Bogota as in mine in Cali when I travel to classes in Cali cau observed the same thing happens, some angry, others kindly ask the favor by offering sweets or singing because they no longer say it is the way they work.

In order that each person looked shape gives or withholds money because sometimes you do not know who truly need or can not help but work must be done for God it is kind to every one of us.

You must ask God to people who arrive in economic aid are people who truly need it and be yourself judge of his own conscience to give or withhold money.

Thank you,

Concepción Lobón

Give or deny money, that's the question.

de DIEGO URREGO ACOSTA - domingo, 20 de septiembre de 2015, 08:54

According with the video that I saw I made a comparison with the reality liven in our country, many times we can find people asking for money in a variety of places for example in public

transportation, at the exit of malls, streets and traffic lights asking money or trying to sell something.

The doubt or trouble for people is that happens behind of "homeless" people because they are exploited by other people, this is the case of some children who ask money in the traffic lights, the thing is if they do not get enough money will be abused in the majority of the times by their own parents.

In the world begging is an old business, for this reason you don't know how to do in the case that you want to help someone, there are two possibilities: you really help a homeless person or you should be scammed.

SOURCE <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-235375>

Re: Give or deny money, that's the question.

de ROCIO DEL CARMEN DIAZ NARVAEZ - domingo, 20 de septiembre de 2015, 14:42

Hello Diego,

I really agree with you, in my opinion today it's very difficult know who is honest or not because many people do it in order to trick us.

What motivate you to give or Denny money to people in need?

de ANDREA BELTRAN SILVA - domingo, 20 de septiembre de 2015, 17:07

Hello everybody!

I am in agreement about the fact that we have to help "homeless", but the issue that I see is that we don't know the right way to make it true. In our country there is a lot of records about child exploitation and violation of human right with this kind of illicit jobs.

Better alternatives are available in order to help people with insufficient means, There are formal organizations that give assistance to the "homeless individuals", not only giving some food or clothes, else teaching them that if they get a better job they can improve their way of life.

Therefore we would be contributing in reducing the child exploitation.

Thank you!

Re: What motivate you to give or Denny money to people in need?

de JHON WILDER OSORIO BERNAL - domingo, 20 de septiembre de 2015, 17:44

I agree with your opinion, if we look at statistics, records show that children are exploited to ask that behind this vulnerable population is mounted a full operating company, then it would be best to help households help children without home, with food, clothing and think it would be a better contribution.

What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

de ROCIO DEL CARMEN DIAZ NARVAEZ - domingo, 20 de septiembre de 2015, 14:33

At the present time, it's difficult to be able to recognize that people begging on the streets do so whether or not, today many good people like me, and we're ticked by people with bad feelings because they're acting thinking only of their own profit.

The gift of giving to those in need, exists in the mind of every person born to do so, nobody could be forced in order to give. But we must clarify that in his teachings Jesus tells us that we can find more happiness in giving than in receiving.

We can give as many times as possible and it's in the consciousness of these people to decide to use to these benefits to make good things or bad things. We must not stop because there are unscrupulous people, who live by begging for different reasons in their lives; since it can be beneficial to receive and want to receive using people like fools can be negative for them.

Re: What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

de JHON WILDER OSORIO BERNAL - domingo, 20 de septiembre de 2015, 18:13

I agree with you when you say that when you give a person any help, they can be used on other things, to the same good of the person or to continue destroying their lives, and of course you help anyone without looking at who, that it is that help is because I was born for religious beliefs, well ... and many people who ask, because most do not want to work, and ask is easier, plus it is a business.

What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

de ANGELA CARDONA FRANCO - domingo, 20 de septiembre de 2015, 18:29

What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

Mr. Graham said "Rather than just giving change to homeless people on the street from time to time, I think it is much better and far more useful to make a regular monthly donation to one particular charity of your preference; organizations that get less publicity rather than the trendy ones that are linked to celebrities". Well, in my personal opinion, as I have not much money, I prefer to help a poor family I know living around my neighborhood, people very simple, who needs shoes and clothes, uniforms to take their children to school, poor parents needing pencils and notebooks to give their kids.

I personally don't use to give money to every one collecting money standing on the streets, however if I see an old person, an ancient one I would give some little money to eat something meanwhile. I am feeling more motivated to help others when I see the real situation, as in the situation I mentioned before, it is very rewarding when you see their happy faces by receiving support.

Finally, I observed on the video that when people in need situation, is asking support for drugs and alcohol, many people walking around him, stopped to give some money, but when turned off to ask for a family support, just no body stopped to help; just a woman who seemed not to have much, stopped and gave him what she had. Then a sentence stated on the video just called my attention and want to share it with all of you "Sometimes those who have less, are the ones who give more".

What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

de NADIA FERNANDA CASTILLO PUENTES - domingo, 20 de septiembre de 2015, 07:51

Hello everyone

First of all I want to say that this issue be part of something very sad for a society is something that without the help and intervention of government never ceases to occur. As a citizen, when I see such situations in the street never helped with money, if possible give food or clothes or anything else that might be helpful but never money.

While there are people who ask for money to put food on their families, many also take advantage of the charity and the money collected is used by things that continue to degrade their living conditions. Maybe the video is very explicit in the part where the beggar asks for money for drugs and that here in our country

is not seen; but it is our understanding that many of those who ask for money is to get high and to continue to worsen their situation.

That's one side on the other hand as citizens we should always try to offer alternatives for these people many of them in good mental and physical health to learn to make a living in a dignified manner, is that the unemployment rate in the country it is not the lowest but we can motivate these people to hold informal jobs where they can get money and help their families if this is your main goal and not simply give them a coin or note and make follow their comfort.

The only thing that really motivates me to give money is to help elderly people or those who really are really sick; and knowing that perhaps in many cases are exploited by others who abuse and exploit these people for monetary gain.

Thanks.

Re: What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

de LEYDI YHOANA TRIANA CASALLAS - domingo, 20 de septiembre de 2015, 18:25

Hi Fernanda

I am agree with you. It is true that give money is not the solution. Like you say is better give food, clothes or any thing that actually help to needy. Another way to help is providing any job or teach any manner in that they can get money.

Unfortunately in our country there are many homeless people. Some to cause of forced displacement caused by the violence. Is very true that this issues is competence of the government. But also is true that there is not much that wait of the government.

On the other hand. You are right in that many homeless people ask for money for to buy drugs and alcohol. For this reason the persons don't give any way of help or money to these persons.

With all due respect, Yhoana Triana Casallas

Re: What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

de ANGELA CARDONA FRANCO - domingo, 20 de septiembre de 2015, 18:33

Hi, Fernanda,

I am also agree with you, as I said on my contribution, I prefer to help people in need, close to me, people that I know because I know their needs, I have helped very poor families living near to my house, because not all poor people are bad ones. I have helped them because I have noticed they are simple and honest people.

Let's continue to helping others who actullay need.

Best regards,

Angela.

What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

de JHON WILDER OSORIO BERNAL - viernes, 11 de septiembre de 2015, 18:07

What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

When thinking of those who are poor and needy, we often think of those with temporary needs such as lack of food, clothing or physical ability to care for themselves or their things. However there are people who are poor in spirit or who have other needs.

You could say that sometimes motivates me to help someone in need, are basically your needs, your health, your age, the condition of their appearance; particularly helped the elderly, who are more vulnerable, this comforting given me that these people bring me longing as if helping my own grandparents, on the other hand there are other kinds of people in need as are children who often used to be exploited; those who never give them financial assistance are people seeing them know they are consuming drugs, input know that aid is collected to buy drugs, would be paving the way for its mission.

Anyway when I do help heart, though many people disagree, because according to the most needy people that ask for help, those monies are collected for other purposes for the campaign unless they do what others say your left hand does not know what your right hand, others say do good without looking at who ... well there are many possibilities to think about or give help to people in need.

I would say that what motivates me to help those in need, is to feel pity and sorrow for them, because they have the opportunity to work ayudarsen themselves, taking into account that much take it as a life choice that does not like to work, because the alms became a business.

Finally, I agree with the view of Mr. Graham, because when we are sharing special or everyday moments in our lives and find these people that look take away food, this will bankrupt the heart, but also as Mr. Graham says, is emotional blackmail, because we are human beings with feelings, and to adversity, emotion comes out and do many things to help the needy.

Re: What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

de ELIZABETH FLOREZ QUINTERO - sábado, 19 de septiembre de 2015, 12:05

I agree with your point of view but we need to think that when you are walking on the streets you can see so many homeless people but are they all homeless? No. "Don't judge a book by its cover" we might think they are just homeless because the way they are dressed but that doesn't mean they are homeless. Some of them are just like us, they have something in their lives, but instead they are lazy or they do not want to do anything and can't be asked to work, they decided to take the easy way. Why should we work hard for our money and then give it to someone who is able to work like us. That's why I suggest to give the money to charities. Sometimes, I prefer to give away food, toys and some used clothes instead of money to the people in need.

Re: What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

de JHON WILDER OSORIO BERNAL - domingo, 20 de septiembre de 2015, 17:56

The vast majority of people who ask for your financial support, their presence is generally not the best, for the same situation in which they live, and it is not true that are homeless, to those situations is to determine whether you help or not, and which would your reasons, in my case always helped the elderly and the situation depends on a child; Of course I agree with you in saying that it is preferable to help with food and clothing to the needy.

Re: What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

de ANGELA CARDONA FRANCO - domingo, 20 de septiembre de 2015, 18:39

Hi, Jhon,

Yes, this is the reason why I prefer to help "people in need" that I know their situation, and most that all if they have kids at school. As there are always people taking advantage from others in order to get money to enrich their personal position.

Best regards,

Angela.

My Opinion

de JANICE LIZZETTE RONDON FRANCO - domingo, 20 de septiembre de 2015, 22:13

To give or deny money to people in need becomes in a difficult decision we have to take frequently these days, and this decision implies the intrinsic concept of justice and benevolence applied to the people who have been victim of the economical, social and cultural situation of our country. Unfortunately there are many people that use these situations as an excuse to get money in an accessible and easy way, swindling, bluffing and taking advantage of the goodness of people. This becomes in the first reason for me, to deny giving money to this people. I specially get annoyed when a young man get into the bus saying there aren't any other alternative for him to get a solution for his economical problems, while he have a good health and capability to work , meanwhile outside exist so many people who really don't have the chance to do it. Additionally we find so many people that beg for money just for buying drugs and hallucinogenic, acting so rude when we try to offer some food or help instead of money. This and other situations has lead me to distrust this people, so I prefer help donating that money to social foundations, or giving clothes and things I don't use.

But the mainly reason I have to deny money to people in need, is because of this act is not a real solution for their problems, neither for the social or economic situation they are living. There is a need of social conscious that make us taking part of the change, promoting values and ethic lifestyles, showing compassion and a caring attitude towards this people, all of this could give them a little of hope in their lives. That's why I think the best way to help is being part of the change, supporting the charity establishments, organizations or foundations that work on this cause, too.

To give or deny your money

de LEYDI YHOANA TRIANA CASALLAS - domingo, 20 de septiembre de 2015, 17:11

Should we give or deny money to the people in need? I think that the answer to this question is subjective and complex. Many homeless people ask for money on the street. But unfortunately most of them doing it because they don't want to work since for them it is their job. On the other hand, actually there are people that need some money in a specific moment.

They are forced to request money gifted. In the case of displaced persons or people that have lost their home.

Today, many people deny money because they are tired of feeling cheated. It is true that like human beings we must help to the needy. But also is true that many people take advantage of good-hearted persons. Is difficult to know who say the truth and who is cheating.

Now I think that is better give some help that don't be money. We should give, for example foodstuff, drinks, and clothes. Give money is not an alternative. The money never will be the solution. Another form of to help is providing job and a roof where live. A good option is through of a foundation or charity. Is important to research well to who you give your money to help to more needy. Also there is dark-hearted people that cheat to name of foundations.

To sum it up, we should help to needy. But give them money is not a way of help.

By Yhoana Triana Casallas

Re: To give or deny your money

de JANICE LIZZETTE RONDON FRANCO - domingo, 20 de septiembre de 2015, 22:24

Hello dear partner,

I am totally agree with you on this topic. Sometimes give or deny money to people "in need" becomes in a hard and thoughtful decision if we consider the real situations we are living today. Unfortunately most of the people use this supposed "needs" to cheat people and obtain money in a easy way. I have to say most of this people create false stories and say many lies to touch the good hearts of people and get some money. Furthermore, this kind of people prefer begging for money than work, removing the opportunity to people who really are in need. As you said before, is better to help this people giving and donating things or clothes than giving them money.

What motivates me to give or deny money to people in "need"?

de ANDRES DAVID BALLEEN ANTONIO - viernes, 18 de septiembre de 2015, 12:28

One cannot talk about this theme without taking into account the audience to whom one is addressing to. For that reason, it is not always good to generalize, because it is unknown the reasons behind the path chosen by that particular person. However, one cannot dismiss the reality of most (not all) of the people who beg for money in streets, because while it is true that there are people who might be displaced by violence and are actually in need of some

economical support, there are persons who expect from others material stuff and some coins in exchange of nothing and without any other reason.

I know that some people might find my judgment heartless and unwitting, nevertheless this is not about "giving without looking at who" but the other way around: the motivation should be underpinned under the assumption of "giving by looking at who"; not because you are expecting to receive something in exchange, but because by discerning the people who are really in need, you can make a great contribution. If you keep providing money to the individuals in the latter situation, they would get used to it and will not recognize things beyond their reality (I.e., their addiction to drugs and alcohol, etc.). Therefore, if you want to make a contribution you can look for people who are really in need of food, clothing or money, and then donate to a charity some supplies (medical equipment) who might be in charge of a particular situation.

Re: What motivates me to give or deny money to people in "need"?

de HARIN BERRIO ARENAS - sábado, 19 de septiembre de 2015, 13:01

Hello Andres,

I found two points in your opinion that I agree with. I agree that is preferable to make donations to those organizations that we know will help those who really need to be helped, on the other hand, I agree that if we are constantly giving money in the streets people will get used to it.

Re: What motivates me to give or deny money to people in "need"?

de LAURA JULIANA MORA GARCIA - domingo, 20 de septiembre de 2015, 19:47

Hello Andres

I really liked your analysis because it is very realistic and it is also practical. I mean, when you mention the importance of the audience, it is true to realize what kind of people are asking for money. If he or she is young and he has the capacity and the ability to work in something, they can do it.

Also, the point about to make a contribution in terms of food, clothing or money to donate to a charity, it is a good idea, because it is the direct problem to solve, and that way you're sure that the contribution is in good hands.

Re: What motivates me to give or deny money to people in "need"?

de TATIANA NOVOA RUIZ - domingo, 20 de septiembre de 2015, 21:17

Really i like you point of view we have to find strategy to try to help people in need. Your ideas were clear to express youCOngrats.

Re: What motivates me to give or deny money to people in "need"?

de ANDRES DAVID BALLEEN ANTONIO - domingo, 20 de septiembre de 2015, 22:27

Hello Tatiana, Harin and Laura,

I thank you for reading till the end. I'm really grateful that we found tons of things in common and that our perspective about the matter is alike, likewise, that your opinions are quite similar to mine. It seems that I have a new reading club...just kidding! Take care you too,

Regards,

Andrés.

What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

de LUZ DARY CAYCEDO VILLAMIZAR - lunes, 21 de septiembre de 2015, 00:00

What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

BE GENEROUS EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE STRANGERS TO YOU

Share with people who are in need, don't matter if they are saying the truth, don't matter if this person is your enemy. The most important thing is give and give with generosity, practice hospitality. Being human usually do judgments through appearance, but nobody knows the heart, that's the reason I wouldn't want to think if people says the truth. Give to the one who asks you, don't forget that we have given a lot from God.

Always give with love, see all people how they were your own brothers ands sisters, and treat them with extreme sweetness.

Give or deny money, what a big dilemma.

de [HARIN BERRIO ARENAS](#) - sábado, 19 de septiembre de 2015, 13:02

Give or deny money, what a big dilemma.

Nowadays, one could say that begging in the streets has become a business. It is devastating to see people suffering from hunger and unemployment; however, it has become annoying to see almost in every traffic light at every corner and even in public transportation people begging, and unfortunately, it seems to be increasing every day. So, giving money has become a "must" sometimes, just for safety concerns.

All human beings are entitled to be treated with respect and love. I think Colombians are charitable people and we are considerate of the poor and needy. However, sometimes we realize that people is lying to get money, which make us be a little insensitive and refrain from giving money because we don't know if what they are saying is true or not. I confess that I give money when I really feel that the person is being honest or just when I can.

I consider that we as country, as society, should help others to became self -sufficient, no make them dependents of the money of others in the streets. There should be charitable organizations that can provide jobs or training for people to be able to work. I think that the solution to hunger is not to give people *"everything in their mouth"*, but teach them to be self-sufficient, provident, so they can appreciate what they have. As Lao Tzu's said: *"Give a man a fish, feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, feed him for a lifetime"*.

Harin Berrio.

Re: Give or deny money, what a big dilemma.

de [NADIA FERNANDA CASTILLO PUENTES](#) - domingo, 20 de septiembre de 2015, 07:38

Harin Hello, I totally agree with you.

The problems shown in the video, unfortunately evidenced not only in our country, it is a problem that exists worldwide even more evident in less developed countries. The point of all this is to identify what can be done to avoid such situations and as you say no longer used to people asking for money to

survive when both are in their full physical and mental capacity to perform any work in exchange for money they can meet their basic needs.

See you then. God Bless You.

Fernanda Castillo

Re: Give or deny money, what a big dilemma.

de [HARIN BERRIO ARENAS](#) - lunes, 21 de septiembre de 2015, 16:03

Hello Nadia, thank you for your comments! I appreciate it.

What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

de [ELIZABETH FLOREZ QUINTERO](#) - martes, 8 de septiembre de 2015, 22:58

If you give money to a homeless person you are just encouraging their behavior. There are many services in U.S.A available to help the homeless get back on their feet. They reject these services and choose to be homeless. Also, you don't have idea how they're going to use the money for (drugs-alcohol). The money that you would like to give them should go to an organization that provides services to homeless or charities. We should stop giving easy money, in fact people who give them money should be penalized. Government and CPS should take strong steps against them especially where children are involved. I work hard and value the money which I have worked hard to earn. In addition, I pay a fortune in taxes that supposedly go towards welfare; I'm not handing out additional money. Easy money is an extreme attraction for the lazy people sitting around all day collecting spare money off of the passersby. The money comes so easy they won't feel motivated to find a job and to improve their lives. By giving money to these sorts of people, far from helping them you are encouraging them to be lazy. Not only are you encouraging the homeless to stay on the streets, but you're encouraging others to do the same. People who think they have nowhere to go will think that there is a place on the streets for them. They will think they can live on the streets before trying to solve their problems properly.

Elizabeth Florez Quintero

Re: What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

de [DIEGO URREGO ACOSTA](#) - domingo, 20 de septiembre de 2015, 09:04

Hello Elizabeth, I think you're right in your opinion, because give money to "homeless" people just encourage them to keep in the same situation for example using drugs, drinking and other addictions.

By the other hand I think that begging is a kind of mafia that abuses of the people's good heart, they make people feel guilty in order to get money without work.

Re: What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

de ELIZABETH FLOREZ QUINTERO - lunes, 21 de septiembre de 2015, 20:14

Thanks for your comments :)

What motivates me to give or deny money to people in need?

de LAURA JULIANA MORA GARCIA - martes, 8 de septiembre de 2015, 20:41

My Point of view

In my case it is not easy for me to decide to deny or give money because of many evidences in the newspapers, or experiences that I have heard about homeless people that aren't really sick, or they are not handicapped, I have become very suspicious. Thus, I believe in this phrase: "GIVE a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime." This saying illustrates the truth that simply filling an immediate physical need may be of limited value. It is even better to help people learn how to solve problems and address their own needs (Watchtower Bible, 2005). For that I prefer to support organizations that help people in these aspects. I also deduce, that when there're young and healthy people asking for money, I see no problem to work and do something useful for their lives. So I don't give them money. Also I observed their physical aspects; sometimes it is obvious that a person is a drug addict or alcoholic, so if I give them money I think that I will contribute to their bad habit, thus I am strongly against that. Regarding children, I don't like those buying things or asking for money, and I deny myself, I don't give them money, because it encourages child exploitation. Nowadays, people take advantages of any situation to benefit themselves. In this case we should do a critical thinking process: input, analysis and finally output.

Reference

Watchtower Bible. (2005). Homelessness—What Is the Solution? *Awake*, 8-10.

Re: What motivates me to give or deny money to people in need?

de [NADIA FERNANDA CASTILLO PUENTES](#) - domingo, 20 de septiembre de 2015, 07:59

Hello

I agree with you. It is often better help organizations or foundations that support the cause of those who have had fewer opportunities in life than giving money or food and keep feeding laziness, abuse and opportunism often hidden the need to generate pity.

Have a nice week.

Fernanda Castillo

Re: What motivates me to give or deny money to people in need?

de [LAURA JULIANA MORA GARCIA](#) - domingo, 20 de septiembre de 2015, 19:28

Hello, Nadia.

Thank you for your response, I am completely agree with you, sadly, people are not honest and in some cases they manipulate situations to gain money without hard work. And we can't support this any more.

Re: What motivates me to give or deny money to people in need?

de [ANDRES DAVID BALLEEN ANTONIO](#) - domingo, 20 de septiembre de 2015, 22:20

Hello Laura,

As always, your opinions are very delightful to read and compelling at the same time. As you clearly stated, it is way better teaching them how to fish rather than giving them fish. There might be myriad of reasons, but the thing here is (as you said) beggars (and even when they use children for such enterprises) are just encouraging a behavior that is against any commonsense regardless of the culture.

I found your perspective pretty interesting,

Warm Regards,
Andrés-

Re: What motivates me to give or deny money to people in need?

de [LAURA JULIANA MORA GARCIA](#) - martes, 22 de septiembre de 2015, 10:28

Hello Andrés

Thank you for reading my post and comment on it., For me it's a pleasure to receive such interesting points, no doubts your views are clear and they complimented my analysis.

So long,

Laura

People in Need

de TATIANA NOVOA RUIZ - domingo, 20 de septiembre de 2015, 21:14

What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

In our society every single corner you usually see homeless or people asking for a help. Families in a difficult situation, hungry babies, single mother, teenagers out mind, people who have grown without love and care; politics has different programs to try to counteract this but it is enough so it is mandatory to try to do something more to look beyond of our environment.

There is more happiness in giving than in receiving. Act 20: 35. This world of the bible it is very clear to understand that we are so blessed every day and it is necessary to pay back to God all His kindness for example to Invest reconnecting lives and help restore the dignity of someone like the importance of personal hygiene, social activities, personal care, cooking and nutrition, case management trying to rebuild their lives

It is kind of difficult deny money when you see people in need but what a pity! When you give something with all your heart and you feel that they didn't take advantage of this. The most important is the intention that you do the things.

As the Pope Francis said: "Dear young people do not bury your talents the gifts that God has given you! DO not be afraid to dream of great things! We have many skill with those we can help people in need. Just a word, a hug, an economical help, a prayer etc It can change the world. My motivation is return back all the love that i had had received from God and many people can feel good and happy.

Re: People in Need

de DIANA ALEXANDRA CASTRO PERDOMO - miércoles, 23 de septiembre de 2015, 14:20

Good day, dear classmate Tatiana,

I think the same of you about the most important when I give something is to have a good intention, looking at that person with mercy and love.

Although it's very sad when a person begs for money and it doesn't need it. It is very merciful give anyone if it need it or not. My Lord that's in heaven is who rewards. Everyone will see where will reach or will arrive with its intentions.

I think who give with love, it will receive the same. So, who gives, it will receive the same thus it is not of the same person, it will be of another person, but it will always receive the help of God.

Who sows, it will harvest too!!

We must look at the world with Jesus' eyes!!

sincerely,

Diana Alexandra Castro Perdomo

Cau Neiva.

What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

de DIANA ALEXANDRA CASTRO PERDOMO - miércoles, 23 de septiembre de 2015, 11:02

Good day, dear Teacher Mauricio and classmates!

My God motivates to me to be a charitable or benevolent person!!

I always give money to people that need some help, because I think, if they demand or ask me something, it is because they need it.

If a person who smokes marijuana or cannabis asks me for money and I do not give to it, this person has the mentality of smoking, its objective is smoking, therefore, it must get money to smoke, and if it doesn't get it, probably it will steal or kill to someone to satisfy its urge to smoke marijuana or cannabis.

Certainly, I've seen several people lying, in relation they say they're very needy, living in subhuman conditions, they don't have someone in their life, nobody to support to them, etc. It happens those people have a lot of money because they only save it; and when they die, somebody finds out that those people had many properties and much money.

Many people come to my home to ask me for money and food and I always help them and I talk with them, I listen to them, I advise them to try to change, improve or take care of their life.

*I think nobody is poorer than that doesn't want to give something to someone. So, **sometimes those who have less are the ones who give more!***

I am not a rich person but I believe in my God so much. For this reason, I watching the world with Jesus' eyes!

Re: What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

de ARGELIO HERNANDEZ TELLEZ - jueves, 24 de septiembre de 2015, 22:06

Dear classmate diana alexandra castro perdomo to be charitable must not be confused with shamelessness, i must ask to give or if you really need, in terms of drug addicts i do not share your idea, who is a drug addict should be treated by the state or perhaps his family and not propiciate his destruction. I have always believed that people who really need are easily recognized although i do not deny that there are some who take advantage of the kindness of us. As for the last paragraph generosity is not a sign of wealth, but rather our willingness to give what we have. We must recognize that there are many government services available to help homeless people to rebuild their lives and meet their basic needs. I think it's more consistent help these charities so that offer services to the needy by the principle of solidarity in which we help without expecting anything in return. Finally classmate. Not only money can help people sometimes a good advice or a smile or act can help those disadvantaged people who can change your life.

Re: What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

de DIANA ALEXANDRA CASTRO PERDOMO - sábado, 3 de octubre de 2015, 21:41

Good day, dear classmate!!

I think that one should serve without expecting to be served. One must give without expecting to receive. So, when a person gives something without looking to someone, God that is in the heaven will reward of several ways, good health, a nice family, a good job, etc.

Moreover, if you give money or something to someone and this person does wrong things or pay you of a wrong form, God will judge to it.

Thanks for your attention, Dear Argelio!!

What motivates me to give or deny money to people in need?

de JAVIER ALEJANDRO LANDINEZ SEGURA - lunes, 7 de septiembre de 2015, 18:16

Well what really motivates me to give money is the people's appearance and their age. On one hand I look if they seem to be really needed or if they are just begging for alms to get drugs, and on the other hand I take into account if they are too old to work; I can't stand watching old people on the streets wondering around and looking for something to eat. That just breaks my heart. When I see people who accomplish these requirements I prefer to buy some food for them rather than give them money; in that way I will know that somehow I filled their bellies and made them feel better. It is a different story when you give them money; you don't really know what they are going to do with it, if they are going to use it wisely or if they are going to buy something that will cause them even more damage than the one they have already received. Giving clothing or shoes is also a good idea.

Now, thinking about reasons that motivate me to deny money to people in need is the fact that some homeless or even people who don't seem to be so, ask you for change in a really rude way or trying to threaten you with a face gesture or with threatening words. In this cases I always say that I don't have anything to give and I usually walk away in a very quickly way.

Re: What motivates me to give or deny money to people in need?

de ANDRES DAVID BALLEEN ANTONIO - viernes, 18 de septiembre de 2015, 12:48

Hello Javier,

Very interesting opinion for two reasons: firstly, you mention something that is related to the video posted in the V-Room, which is about a guy who disguises as a beggar, and appears in two scenes: in the first part he asks for money in order to buy drugs and in other act he asks because his family is in need. Here is my point briefly: most of us are just aware of the personal appearance without really knowing why they are in need. And the second reason which I agree with you: giving people money does not necessarily means that they are going to do something wise about it, it might be the opposite. For that reason it is important to make people aware that there are tons of programs that the government provides so as to have a better quality life.

Thank you for your opinion!

Re: What motivates me to give or deny money to people in need?

de JAVIER ALEJANDRO LANDINEZ SEGURA - miércoles, 7 de octubre de 2015, 22:08

Thank you very much for the feedback, anyway it's not easy to know when people are really in need. I think sometimes we just can help without asking anything; God will judge our deeds.

What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

de ARGELIO HERNANDEZ TELLEZ - jueves, 24 de septiembre de 2015, 21:31

Poverty in the world may never be a problem solved by the different states due to inequality and lack of opportunities, but if we give money to the homeless perhaps we increase it, the first thing we must do is to start by identifying the possible causes than produce it. if you give money to a homeless person they're just consolidating their behavior, even if it is an old man could be helped by their condition and the lack of public policies that our elderly in vulnerability. Worldwide there are many government services available to help homeless people to rebuild their lives and satisfy their basic needs. I think it's more consistent help these charities so that

offer services to the needy by the principle of solidarity in which we help without expecting anything in return. often in our societies childs are forced to ask money in any corner of the city, because the state does not provide policies for those childs. Not only money can help people sometimes a good advice or a smile or act can help those disadvantaged people can change their life. While some people might make very good use of the money in their basic needs, others might be using drugs and alcohol. causes curiosity me as the video shows a poster indicating money for drugs and alcohol and people helps much him, but when presented a poster with a girl indicating their status as single parent not much. Therefore generosity is not a sign of wealth, but rather our willingness to give what we have.

Re: What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?

de JAVIER ALEJANDRO LANDINEZ SEGURA - miércoles, 7 de octubre de 2015, 22:24

Well, I totally agree with you in the fact that it is not good to give money to homeless; I think there are other ways of helping them like giving them some food or even offering a smile and a chat. There are people asking for money because there are a lot of people who actually give money on the streets. The government should look for solutions to take out all these people from the streets and offer them much more than a meal; they should be offered a job and the opportunity of studying and being part of the society.

bye bye.

VIRTUAL FORUM TWO (2) – STUDENT’S PARTICIPATIONS

Question: TIPS TO IMPROVE ENGLISH SKILLS

How to improve listening skills

de RUBIELA VALIENTE ABREU - sábado, 10 de octubre de 2015, 21:28

Improve listening

My point of view, according to the video, of how to improve or increase the pronunciation skills for speaking English, can be through many strategies not only one in specific. I agree with the suggestion that Rohan Cox makes about watching videos without subtitles because it helps us focus on pronunciation and the expression of their faces. Personally, I used to watch all the news with subtitles, but one day I decided to change the methodology and start watching the news and movies without subtitles; at the beginning it was hard, but I discovered that I could understand the context. The next time I did the exercise I could understand some words, so as a result, I decide to watch all the movies without subtitles every time I could. This made me increase my listening and pronunciation skills. I would like to, through these means of communication, take this methodology and share it and another tips with all of you.

My tip:

With the help of cell phones or any other technological devices, I read and listen to English Talking books through the following website: <http://eduteach.es/videos/animated-stories-children/>, after that, I usually record myself reading these books out loud.

With this methodology my pronunciation got better. Then at school, when I had the opportunity I read children's books with pictures and I also read them out loud. I asked questions about the story especially to 3rd and 4th graders. I love these grades because they don't laugh at you or make fun of your pronunciation. This makes me gain more confidence in myself and reach the goal that I want. There is a saying that I think most of you know, which is, "Practice makes perfect".

Secrets or tips to improve my English skills

de JAVIER ALEJANDRO LANDINEZ SEGURA - miércoles, 7 de octubre de 2015, 23:24

Well, I have used a lot of different strategies to acquire and improve my English skills but I think I cannot mention all of them right now, so I will share some of them; the most relevant or the ones I remember well.

I strongly believe that the key is to practice it every single day; as we don't live in a country where English is the native language, we don't feel the need to study it because we understand everything people around us say. So it is necessary to create a space or an 'atmosphere' where we are forced to practice English. For example I

configured in English my e-mail account, my Facebook, Twiter, Instagram, and all the social networks that I have. I also set up in English my computer; and this includes Windows and all its software; and my cellphone and its applications. This makes me practice English every time I turn on my computer or my cellphone. When I play video games, I do it in English as well. It is also a good idea to configure in English our TVs, DVDs, Stereos and all electrical appliances we might have at home.

Another excellent thing I did to improve my English skills was to get a friend whose native language was English. I had proved all the methods that I could find in the internet and somehow I had acquired some abilities, but they weren't significant. But when I started to share really good conversation with my American friend, was when I realized I was making a lot of pronunciation and grammar mistakes. Everything because many of the words that I was currently using where learnt by reading them in a text book and not by listening to them from the people who where born where such language is spoken.

Little by little, just by speaking with my friend, I learnt what I hadn't learnt in many years of study. And in a short period of time, without trying or making big efforts, my friend taught me hundreds of lessons, even about idioms; and the best of all, without paying him a single cent.

Re: Secrets or tips to improve my English skills

de MAURICIO BUITRAGO AVILÉS - viernes, 9 de octubre de 2015, 13:24

Javier thank you very much for your participation, I see that you had a learning experience similar to the experience proposed in the video of this second forum. What do you think about the video? Do you agree with youtuber explanation? (If other students want to participate here, their contributions are welcome).

Re: Secrets or tips to improve my English skills

de JAVIER ALEJANDRO LANDINEZ SEGURA - martes, 13 de octubre de 2015, 18:37

Well teacher, on one hand I agree with the guy when he says if we want to enhance our listening skills it is better to watch the movies without any subtitles; it is because we have to concentrate more and make a bigger effort to understand what we hear; but on the other, I think to watch movies with audio and subtitles en English is an excellent exercise for both our eyes and ears. It all depends on the seriousness and responsibility we have when we do such exercise. With the latter mentioned method we can make an association between the words we read and the sounds we listen to. Additionally, in exercises like that one, I recommend to have a notebook in our hands to take notes about unfamiliar words and characters. It is also a good idea to write down the words and sentences we understand without looking at the subtitles.

A secret how to increase or improve the pronunciacion skills for speaking English

de MARIA CONCEPCION LOBON VALENCIA - domingo, 11 de octubre de 2015, 13:42

A secret how to increase or improve the pronunciation skills for speaking English

Learning a language other than ours is not easy but I think that when one likes something must be devoted to achieving success for that reason, I consider that to improve my English, I hear the channel 99 where they teach English and I repeat all they say also use a notebook to write grammar. English channel CCN use it and buy films in English to hear the pronunciation can understand and see that movie. Once a month call a friend I have in Canada to talk to her because it is native and helps me improve pronunciation and intonation of words. It's great to talk to foreigners born.

With my brother when calling also have the opportunity to talk to him, interaction with others helps to improve the language because everyone has their pronunciation.

Listen to songs in English; read songbooks to improve my intonation and pronunciation, videos on youtube that I find are good.

The classes I teach my students also help me to improve the level and with them correct writing be interacting with English is an excellent idea because listening, speaking, reading

and writing can daily be better at learning process English Learners and it helps to lose the fear of speaking.

My cell phone is a good tool because it is in English and learn technical words found there.

To learn and improve the level of English I am convinced that we must work four skills like listening to improve pronunciation and speak up because that way we can correct, reading, read what you find in English to understand the text and write what you hear also helps to connect the text.

Attend or organize conversation clubs with other people conversation club are important because we can all help.

Re: A secret how to increase or improve the pronunciation skills for speaking English

de YULIANA ANDREA RUEDA MARTINEZ - viernes, 16 de octubre de 2015, 15:21

I agree with you , the person want to learn English must be devoted to achieve goal which know English. The best thing is you try several ways to increase your knowledge about the foreign language.

While you watch the film, you listen the story of the movie, thus you increase the skill of listening, you learn new phrases and words.

Listening English songs is a way which enhance your listening.

Talking with native speakers is the best way to improve your speaking as well.

you also attend conversation clubs where people talk English, therefore you will increase the speaking and your listening.

MY SECRET ON HOW TO IMPROVE THE LISTENING AND VOCABULARY

de YULIANA ANDREA RUEDA MARTINEZ - viernes, 16 de octubre de 2015, 11:53

First It's appropriate to increase your English using podcasts. Specially if you listen a podcast, you will improve the listening. It's appropriate to increase listening using podcasts. For example you want to listen a poodcast about English of Great Britain, you should choose the podcast 6 minute English in the website www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english

Second this website of learning of the English includes podcasts and its respective transcripts, these transcripts offer new English vocabulary in a context. You can study this new vocabulary of a story or tale. In end it's convenient to improve your vocabulary using transcripts.

Third people of all age and people at all levels of English can choose podcasts and transcripts which are ways to learn listening and vocabulary. There are podcasts for children or anybody; for example a child wants to listen a story about the China's elephant, this child has choose the podcast called saving China's elephant. In summary anybody can use the podcasts and transcripts which are the best ways to learn listening and new words.

In conclusion you can choose a podcast and transcript in the website www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/. First it's appropriate to increase listening using podcasts. Second it's convenient to improve your vocabulary using the transcripts. Third anybody can use the podcasts and transcripts which are the best ways to learn listening and new vocabulary. In end the podcasts and transcripts improve the skill of listening and acquire more new words.

Re: MY SECRET ON HOW TO IMPROVE THE LISTENING AND VOCABULARY

de MARIA CONCEPCION LOBON VALENCIA - viernes, 16 de octubre de 2015, 18:57

I agree with your opinion, if you want to learn to speak English can use the podcast for all ages and according to their need. Example if you want to hear stories can be forwarded to a podcast for it. It's very interesting this method of study to improve English proficiency.

The interesting thing about improving the standard of English is the desire that every person has to catch up and interact with other people is important, conversation clubs and you have the opportunity to hear the intonations of each person.

The songs are very good and taking into cell helps a lot because this technological device is part of our daily life are inseparable.

To increase the level of English to use various technological advances and hearing aids we can offer other people have to be open to positive change to improve listening and pronunciation, thus can acquire new vocabulary every day.

tips to improve my english level

de ARGELIO HERNANDEZ TELLEZ - miércoles, 7 de octubre de 2015, 19:26

Learning a language is not easy, but not impossible, here there are some of the main tips that have improved my skills in English. When I decided to learn the English language take one of the most difficult ways , but not impossible, so I decided to talk regularly and especially. I lost the fear of making mistakes, in addition to mistakes lead perfection. Repeatedly I put news in English by international channels, always being

very focused and trying to understand every single word of the presenters. as I advance in my course I am always attentive to commercials and each of the words with which I live around me that have to do with the English .in sometimes watch movies in English, practice pronunciation and because no treatment to act them my way and imitating the stars; along time ago I have been connected with foreign in whatsapp and this has helped me improve my level and I have been attend the talks scheduled on Saturday the CAU. Another tips and perhaps one of the most important is whether we see a word that is new to us don't advance to not having mean and learned perhaps in the respective dictionary or translator of your choice. But personally I think that this can not happen if we as students really do not have a like and a vocation for what we are doing.

Re: tips to improve my english level

de MAURICIO BUITRAGO AVILÉS - viernes, 9 de octubre de 2015, 13:23

Argelio thank you very much for your participation, excellent contribution. I would like you to consider the fact that many people have not a vocation oriented at learning other languages; but they require a foreign language for exceptional reasons, for example, a student mobility program, a temporal work or conferences abroad or just tourism and holidays. In conclusion, they do not give importance to learning a foreign language. Do you think these people without vocation oriented learning languages should implement your tips? Why? Why not? (If other students want to participate here, their contributions are welcome).

Re: tips to improve my english level

de ARGELIO HERNANDEZ TELLEZ - sábado, 17 de octubre de 2015, 21:34

Dear teacher

Well maybe if it's important to have a vocation because it motivates you and takes you to find some high goals. of course the age at which we begin to learn is very important, although some adults have more discipline than young people. I sometimes think that people without vocation is not that they can not learn but perhaps its rate of learning may be less, I'm thinking that there is what we call motivation or like for who learn, and there are people who have certain skills more than others for example I'm better the writing and Reading than the listening , but maybe with more hours of study can will be better in listening, hence we do not like what you may not spend much time, and in terms of speaking must be able to express in public regardless of mistakes and above participate in conversations and dives in the place where even if your country does not speak English. Enough to bring a higher level of motivation and if you keep good discipline achieve your goals in less time than you think. I recommend recharge and force yourself to socialize, meet people, get out of the classroom environment and lose shame. Everything is achieved if you feel; starts small, overcomes difficulties, and you'll be surprised what you can get. One of the best evidence that you're learning English, is when you get something of the soul and say in that language.

Re: tips to improve my english level

de ANDRES DAVID BALLEEN ANTONIO - domingo, 18 de octubre de 2015, 11:40

Dear teacher and Argelio,

A remarkable discussion, indeed. As you contended, some people do not have the vocation towards learning, neither on their own nor supported by a teacher. I have met people that do not feel like they want to learn a language (although most of them argue that they would rather study another language apart from English) because they think they are not capable of learning it or because they consider that acquiring it, is worthless. So I think this type of people do not have the vocation for learning, since they are not intrinsically motivated towards such enterprise. Likewise, the more we get older, the less likely we are to be receptive to new experiences; which means that as adults, sometimes even if we try to learn something new, we believe that we are not skillful for doing so. Perhaps for this people, it would be better to think about their own work field by appealing to their background (for instance, doctors might feel like English is not necessary for their professional growth, but they realize that they can use it for a better purpose, such as reading a new research that was published in this language).

Tips to Improve my English Skills

de JHON WILDER OSORIO BERNAL - sábado, 17 de octubre de 2015, 10:32

Learning a language becomes difficult, because you do not hear every day naturally as our native language, if you ask me what is the best way to improve the skills, I have many difficulties to give a correct answer, because institutions, schools, whether they are academies, only finally became a business, they offer packages with very high costs, where everyone we speak a second language, whatever the cost, but the results are not as expected, and many feel frustration.

So we must turn to what Professor Rohan Cox proposes, improve listening skills that success would have a good pronunciation, and then begin to see films with subtitles, according to improve listening, but we focus on the grammatical part, and there's another difficulty, because remember that when you start to learn the grammar of a language also becomes difficult if you do not know the grammar of our own language, in different learning about starting with the grammatical part, structures, and others natural method, like when we were kids ...

In my case, when time permits me in my work and long hours of work, I try to see news like CNN, BBC, noting large changes in input sounds, often feeling disappointment at not quite understand British English; Another would help watch the movies without subtitles trying to understand as much as another serious music tip a few hours; have friends from other countries to improve pronunciation; the popcats another very interesting tool to improve the ability to hear, and read English literature would last; get several books, try to make summaries and write a lot, every day .

Re: Tips to Improve my English Skills

de TATIANA NOVOA RUIZ - domingo, 18 de octubre de 2015, 11:20

Really i like your strategies, it is pretty important to collect many resources to improve our English Level, Congratulations.

Blessings.

Re: Tips to Improve my English Skills

de JHON WILDER OSORIO BERNAL - domingo, 18 de octubre de 2015, 16:22

Thanks for your comments, but really are general and very basic strategies that anyone can put into practice to enhance the skills and improve the level of English

What are your secrets or tips to improve your English skills?

de TATIANA NOVOA RUIZ - domingo, 18 de octubre de 2015, 11:13

Learning English is a big challenge but it is not impossible. Every day you are learning. Just keep going.

There are many tips to improve our English skills.

Listening: Eye contact is very important.

Pay attention what the other person is saying.

Ask if you don't understand.

Songs are so important to organize the lyrics, fill the gaps, build de song. and i love this web sites <http://es.lyricstraining.com/>

Practice the vocabulary that you learnt before and find videos relate it and try to identifie what

did you learn?

Listen native people.

Watch a movie without subtitles.

Take notes. according to the listening in orden.

Writing: Read English literature

Imitate your favorite writer.

Before you start writing you must organize your ideas like introduction, body one, body two, conclusions.

Use your dictionary and synonyms

Use the magic WH-Q who, where, how, when, why...

SPEAKING Learn vocabulary and use it when you want to speak.

Listen careful

Practice with native people or English speakers.

Use technology.

Read out loud

Have a debat.

READING: Find something interesting to read

High light the vocabulary known and find 10 words unknown

Use the magic WH-Q who, where, how, when, why to understand

Try to understand each word.

Memorize the text.

I hope that you like it

Re: What are your secrets or tips to improve your English skills?

de JHON WILDER OSORIO BERNAL - domingo, 18 de octubre de 2015, 16:30

I think your advice to develop the four skills to enhance the learning of English language are intresantes, since for each skill using tools that help develop and improve English language learning; excellent contributions.

How to improve your english skills?

de DIEGO URREGO ACOSTA - miércoles, 14 de octubre de 2015, 17:12

Certainly english is the most important and useful language around the world, but, for a good use of the language we need to work a lot to improve the skills that are dependant one of each other, for example I can improve my listening or my speaking if I can't understand the messages that other speakers produce, so, understanding depends of the context, I mean that in our country is a little complex to learn english because the context it is not given for an immersive experience that is the best way to learn because you are "forced" to use the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), for example in my town there aren't enough people to practice, just have the teacher of the other high schools, and some times its difficult to interact for time questions. By the other hand in order to practice the skills we can use on line

tools like voice thread, in which you can practice listening, speaking, writing and reading, or we can listen music in english, translate the lyrics and search for unknown vocabulary. For practice speaking I know a great tool at beginning of the program, I'm talking of the clear speech tool, that permit us work and focus in the critical phonemes and words to speech in english. In conclusion the learning of a foreign language is constant process in which we need to practice day by day in order to avoid a "fossilization" in a step of learning.

Re: How to improve your english skills?

de ARGELIO HERNANDEZ TELLEZ - miércoles, 14 de octubre de 2015, 22:09

DEAR CLASSMATE, I WAS READING HIS FORUM OPINION AND I FOUND IMPORTANT ASK A QUESTION ABOUT IT .

WHAT DO YOU THINK WOULD BE THE BEST STRATEGY TO IMPROVE OUR ENGLISH LEVEL IN CITIES WHERE THE ENGLISH ISN'T THE NATIVE LANGUAGE? PLEASE SEND ME ADVICES OR MAY BE SUGGESTIONS THANK YOU

ALL THE BEST

Re: How to improve your english skills?

de MAURICIO BUITRAGO AVILÉS - viernes, 16 de octubre de 2015, 18:04

Appreciated students, I encourage you to continue this conversation. Diego, please answer to Argelio. And Argelio after you receive an answer, you have to analyze Diego's ideas and write back your point of view about it. Remember, both of you have to use arguments and explain your point of view.

Re: How to improve your english skills?

de LAURA JULIANA MORA GARCIA - domingo, 18 de octubre de 2015, 18:28

Hello Argelio, Diego and Teacher Mauricio.

I live in Cúcuta and this is a city where it is difficult to find foreign people. So, English is not a second language, here you learn English as a foreign one, just in private schools and institutions.

So, one thing you can do is to use the technology and try to contact people from other parts of the world, program like Skype and Sharedtalk.

Also in the university you can propose English conversational clubs, and there you can practice with teachers and students.

Ok, I hope these suggestions help you.

My Tips to improve my English skills

de JANICE LIZZETTE RONDON FRANCO - domingo, 18 de octubre de 2015, 20:52

Speak English language is one of the most important achievements in my life because I'm proud to say I have learn It thanks to my effort, interest and determination. Since I was at school I never conformed with the experiences in English classes; on the contrary I used to watch videos, listen to music, search for lyrics and their meanings, and ask my English teachers for every doubt that could arise about It. Then I started to buy books, movies and novels in this language, and I have to say that this really help me so much to understand better many topics as expressions. I'm proud to say that even though I've never taken course in English, I have improved my skills to deal with this foreign language thanks to this great dedication. So, my recommendation to improve English skills is to work with dedication in this skills: in Reading, by reading different types of texts like novels, beginning with short novels like "The Canterville Ghost" or "Pride and prejuice" and then adding more difficult level with long stories like "Les Miserables" or "Journey to the center of the earth"; reading news from English countries could be helpful too, or getting various magazines. Reading frequently will help you to write different types of texts in various topics, extending your vocabulary as improving your grammar. About Listening and Speaking skills, the best way to improve them

is by using the language in conversations. The dialogue is the most important tool we have to learn a language, and for this you should take advantage of every moment you have to talk to your partners, teacher or English native persons you could meet. If this is very hard, just try by watchin the news or TV series without subtitles, and participating in forums. I think this comments would be helpful, but you will discover your own tips by practicing with dedication.

How to Improve English Skills

de LAURA JULIANA MORA GARCIA - domingo, 18 de octubre de 2015, 18:21

When you decide to learn a second language you need to face some challenges that are part of the learning process, there are many ways to improve those English skills and also there are many theories but I think the most important part is the commitment, dedication and discipline the person has towards his own process.

In this kind of distance education, every student has to be conscious that the learning process depends the most part on the student himself and the personal strategies he or she might use. In my personal experience I could say that I have taken advantages of the university resources like the English conversational club that a space where I have had the opportunity to express myself and my beliefs in English with other students and teachers, also I have helped beginners students which allows me to reinforce my own knowledge. Other tool is the Cambridge platform that is a very complete virtual area I could improve my pronunciation, new vocabulary and grammar patterns.

In addition, once a year I attended to an English convention of Jehovah Witnesses in Bogota. There I listened to native speakers talking about the most important information in the Earth: The Bible Scriptures and God's Kingdom. Also I took notes of the speeches in order to focus on the meaning and not just hearing. Finally, to improve my pronunciation I sing aloud English songs imitating the native accent.

Re: How to Improve English Skills

de JANICE LIZZETTE RONDON FRANCO - domingo, 18 de octubre de 2015, 21:06

Good night Laura.

As you have said, learning a second language requires more than a lot of theories wich you could get on any course, but to learn a language and imprpove on It, is necessary to be conscious and responsible towards the challenges that this implies. The discipline and dedication is very essential as helpful to make this learning process easier and efective. Music

is one of the best tools you could use to improve your English skills. I totally agree with you. Singing songs at school, during a shower or at home is not just funny but enriching and I have to say this really helped me to get interested to study this topic with passion. I got so interested to learn about what my favourite songs meant, that, without realizing I get a great master English level that made me decide to become in an English teacher. So I think learning English could be interesting, fun and easy if you have the best attitude towards it.

Tips to improve your English skills

de LEYDI YHOANA TRIANA CASALLAS - domingo, 18 de octubre de 2015, 23:38

Learning a new language is a hard activity but is not impossible. Many people feel frustrated when are learning a new language and their learning process is not successfully. There are several ways for increase your English skills.

The first tip is to be very persistent and positive. If you like the films you can watch it but you can put it in English and without subtitles. Try of understand the most of scenes. Then you can see the films again but with subtitles in English. You compare the first exercise with the second. You try take note of unknown words and you search its meaning.

Other way is put English songs in your cell phone. Listen the song when you are doing any activity. Write the lyrics and try to sing the same way that the singer. Pay attention on pronunciation.

You also can read your favorite book but in English. When you are reading underline the unknown words. Try read aloud and if is possible ask to any friends or family that to listen to you.

There are many apps in your app store that you can download and practice your English or you can use some social networks for interacting with English speakers.

If you have the opportunity to travel to an english speaking country. Do it! It is the best way for practice your skills. Or you can attend to the talk groups. Sure there are in your city!

Finally you need remember that the most important is the persistence.

what are your secrets or tips to improve your English skills?

de ANDREA BELTRAN SILVA - domingo, 18 de octubre de 2015, 23:13

Hi everybody!

I think that to learn another language is not easy if and when you don't have the necessary motivation and disposition to learn it, for me the motivation is a key point to start do anything for example choosing your professional career, practice of different sports, learning other language well if you want start any activity at least you must have a little motivation and pleasure.

on the other hand, one of the fears when you learn other language is when you have the opportunity to talk with native people or with people that know very good the language. I recommend you that the first step is take the risk doesn't mind if you make many mistakes but is the best way for lose the fear. in my case I improve my english skills, listening to music and the same time reading the lyrics, practicing this exercise I can improve the pronunciation and vocabulary as a well as record my voice and then compared with the original conversation.

finally I watch many tv shows like the big bang theory, friends etc and I programme the audios of the movies only in english, also is it important every day reading the articles or books that increase and improve your english skills.

thank you, Andrea Beltrán

Re: what are your secrets or tips to improve your English skills?

de LEYDI YHOANA TRIANA CASALLAS - domingo, 18 de octubre de 2015, 23:54

Hi Andrea

I am very agree with you. The most important is the motivation and perseverance. When people doing it all is possible. On the other hand you mention that we need lose the scary to talk in English. If we have mistakes we must not worry because it is ok. The mistakes are one way to learn.

Finally I think that the songs are a excellent alternative for practice English. But is very important doing it with a good pronunciation. You need to practice several time to make it. Also you mention other tips. Watch your favorite programs TV in English is a good idea

How to improve my english Skills

de ANGELA KATERIN MUNAR MORENO - lunes, 19 de octubre de 2015, 09:29

I consider that I improve my english skills when i get contact with english. But how is this contact? reading and writing. When I read and after this I write, or when i write expressing my ideas I thought in english and I remember vocabulary and structures. About listening skills, I used to watch videos with subtitles in english, but now I'm surprised because the last video say the true, it`s posible that this strategy don`t work well because the brain is focused on one function, not two functions.

However I used another strategy, listen music, but with this strategy it`s important be focused on the pronunciation and not in the rithm. It`s improtant try to pay attention to the pronunciation and try to understand and imitate this.

Another good strategy it try to speak and interact with foreing people who speak in english. They can help us to improve our skills, don`t feel fear and interacting quietly. There are a lot of apps and pages to chat in english. Thank's

Useful tips of improving your English

de ANDRES DAVID BALLEEN ANTONIO - miércoles, 14 de octubre de 2015, 15:44

Nowadays, people are obsessed with learning English and getting a native-like accent, by expecting to acquire it in less than a month or even by looking for magic formulas in order to accomplish such enterprise. Unfortunately, learning a language can be a challenging work since the process of acquiring it, is different from mastering any other skill.

Therefore, what professor Rohan Cox claims is true: when we use subtitles for improving our listening skills, we are just getting used to the written word (we do so because we want to spend less energy), instead of focusing on the spoken words. Thus, watching movies with subtitles is pointless in the sense that the main aim is to focus on listening rather than reading, leading us to be dependent on the subtitles when in the real world we cannot put subtitles to a native speaker who talk to us.

Accordingly, in order to conclude this reflection, I will briefly expose some tips I used when I started learning English: first, instead of watching a movie, it is better listening to **podcasts** as much as we consider necessary and then ask ourselves how much we understood from the listening. Second, reading **a literature book** may enhance our “grammatical and lexical awareness” (as I call it) by allowing us to get used to the written English. And third, if we want to mix both strategies, we might want to consider using **audiobooks** for practicing both skills.

Here are some helpful links for improving your English skills:

- www.radiolab.org
- www.ted.com
- www.vocabulary.com

- www.audiobooks.com
- www.gutenberg.org

Re: Useful tips of improving your English

de ANGELA KATERIN MUNAR MORENO - lunes, 19 de octubre de 2015, 09:35

Hi Andres:

Thank you for include links to improve your english skills.

Sometimes I use links or pages like:

Busuu

Duolingo

Thekakaokechannel

or apps like "hello talk" or Duolingo

My personal secret on how to improve the pronunciation, listening and speaking English skills

de ELIZABETH FLOREZ QUINTERO - jueves, 15 de octubre de 2015, 22:41

I would like to share with you the best tip and secret that I used to learn English. Using songs is a really great way to improve your pronunciation, listening, speaking and grammar skills and you are likely to learn and remember new vocabulary and idioms. Singing along with your favorite English songs will help you to learn how to pronounce English words correctly and will also help to reduce your accent. There are exercises you can do which will help you even more

1. Choose an English song with lyrics that you can hear clearly (preferably one that you haven't heard before).
2. Listen to the song with your eyes closed and try to work out the theme of the song from the lyrics and the expression in the singer's voice (is the song about love? Has the singer been hurt? Is the singer happy?)
3. At this stage, you could listen to the song again and write down any words or phrases that you hear (whether you understand them or not).

4. Find the lyrics online

5. Listen to the song again and read the lyrics at the same time. Did you guess the theme of the song correctly?

6. Look up any words or phrases you don't understand in a dictionary and write them down.

7. Listen to the song a few times while you read the lyrics and when you feel comfortable, start to sing along.

8. Save the song onto your iPod and listen to it while you are travelling to work or school. The more you listen and sing along, the easier it will be to remember the vocabulary and grammar I hope that you put this advice in practice because it worked for me.

Re: My personal secret on how to improve the pronunciation, listening and speaking

English skills

de RUBIELA VALIENTE ABREU - sábado, 17 de octubre de 2015, 16:52

Hi, love this strategy, I have practiced many times however, I tend to choose songs with lyrics with understandable meaning because there are many that you can understand anything. Also for students is a great activity to break the ice.

Best wishes.

Re: My personal secret on how to improve the pronunciation, listening and speaking

English skills

de ELIZABETH FLOREZ QUINTERO - lunes, 19 de octubre de 2015, 21:31

Thanks I appreciate your comments

A secret on how to increase or improve the pronunciation skills for speaking English

de ROCIO DEL CARMEN DIAZ NARVAEZ - martes, 13 de octubre de 2015, 09:45

In fact, I think that it is no easy to learn a second language, but when you want you can do it, because you must be able to carry out activities in order to help you to develop the skills known, in this case to learn more about the new language.

I think, in my case is really very important to practice English to listen music in English, to listen news, to listen the movie without subtitle, in this manner you are creating the habit to help you in order to develop the listening skill because you can get better pronunciation and you can understand the different dialects or accents that exist in the second language.

On the other hand, it's necessary to read, I notice that when I read magazine, books or whatever thing in English you can get more vocabulary and try to include them in your daily conversation, by the way, talking about talk, another way to practice the 2L is to participate in conversation club where you can get native person who can guide this activity.

Now day, to exist a lot of method or way to learn English in order to improve our knowledge, for example the technology every day to invent or to create different way to communicate and we can explore or to take advance it.

I have heard some friends say that they have had opportunity to live in the United State, that the way they learnt English it was listen to the TV every moment.

Overall, we must get the opportunity to practice either to listen, to read, to talk and to write in whatever manner in order to increase or improve our knowledge in skill English.

Well, as a matter of fact, I feel to need practice more, and I need to dedicate more time, because I still often feel afraid to say or pronounce something wrong, I have not much time teaching, some colleagues who have much time teaching English as well advise me to listen, talk as long as I can in English even tell me I must repeat and repeat aloud my own pronunciation.

In conclusion, we can learn the 2L, but it depend that the motivation, encouragement, the engagement that oneself to have in order to learn. Sometimes it can sound like a challenger for some people or somebody.

Re: A secret on how to increase or improve the pronunciation skills for speaking English

de ELIZABETH FLOREZ QUINTERO - jueves, 15 de octubre de 2015, 22:55

I agree with your advice on how to learn English and I think that learning English in Colombia is difficult but not impossible. My secret of how I learned English in the United States was hearing music and reading the lyrics of the songs. If you would like to know more about how to improve your English pronunciations and accent try to use the steps that I shared in the forum. Do not give up, keep do in it and you will be better every day.

Best regards Elizabeth Florez Quintero

Re: A secret on how to increase or improve the pronunciation skills for speaking English

de ROCIO DEL CARMEN DIAZ NARVAEZ - lunes, 19 de octubre de 2015, 18:47

Thank you so much, Elizabeth for your advice, I take it into account also I am doing the task, I started to hear the music and lyrics. God bless you.

Re: A secret on how to increase or improve the pronunciation skills for speaking English

de NADIA FERNANDA CASTILLO PUENTES - lunes, 26 de octubre de 2015, 13:08

Hi Elizabeth:

I agree with you. think that the best way to improve listening is with song because in the songs there are a lot of word that are used like a conectors and sound as a one word.

TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR ENGLISH SKILLS

de DIANA ALEXANDRA CASTRO PERDOMO - domingo, 8 de noviembre de 2015, 22:22

Good day, dear Teacher Mauricio and classmates.

Excuse me, because I'm participating to now in this forum. It happens that I have been very sick, I was operated and I was incapacitated for a month. But now I'm here, giving to you my contribution. It's the following:

I consider a person learns English language when first, he or she studies and tries to learn his or her mother language. After that, I think my secrets or tips to improve my English skills are:

1. ***Learn grammar***
2. ***Learn vocabulary and the pronunciation of a word because every day one memorizes a new word or many words when one uses the dictionary.***
3. ***Listen to English music that you want or like***
4. ***Watch movies in English without subtitles in Spanish or another language***

5. ***Watch musical videos in English of a singer that you want or like***
6. ***Participate in conversations in English***
7. ***Watch out or be aware when someone wants or likes to speak in English for being able to interact with him or her***
8. ***Watch programs which people, animals, things or cartoons speak only in English as CNN in English, Natgeo Wild in English, etc.***
9. ***Write something every day, maybe a phrase, a song, an idiom or famous quote, etc.***

Finally, I propose that the outstanding tip to improve your English skills is locate or place in the context because of this manner or way, you use needed or right words for understanding the moment.

Thanks for your attention, All the best, Diana!

Secrets or tips to improve my English Listening skill

de NADIA FERNANDA CASTILLO PUENTES - lunes, 26 de octubre de 2015, 12:51

Hi Everybody and Teacher:

Sorry for my late posted but I forgot totally to participate.

Well my secrets or tips to improve my english listening skill are:

1. To listen other speak in English and try to understand what they say. For example I listen news or preaches in English
2. I used platforms where they have listening tasks and solve them.
3. To listen song with lyrics in English, but first I listen the song and try to understand the context. Then I listen reading the lyrics and learn the letter.

Thanks.

Re: Secrets or tips to improve my English Listening skill

de DIANA ALEXANDRA CASTRO PERDOMO - lunes, 9 de noviembre de 2015, 00:14

Hi, dear Nadia

About your contribution, I agree with you very much, when you mention that first, you listen to the song to understand the context and then, you listen or pay attention to the lyrics and at the same time, you learn the letter of the song. It's an excellent ploy!

I think you improve listening and reading skills, when you learn a song, also, you work out your memory, really!

Students like learn English by means a song. They learn the letter and vocabulary more easily. They listen to the song. At the same moment, they sing or read the lyrics and finally, they learn it. It's a funny class. They love this type of classes.

Thanks for your attention!

All the best,

Diana

TIPS TO IMPROVE ENGLISH SKILLS

de LADY DAYAN SILVA BELTRAN - Lunes, 9 de noviembre de 2015, 17:22

To start I have to said that there is not an accurate way to improve our English skills because each one of us is different, we learn in different ways and what it works for me could not be work for someone else. In my personal experience I did learnt empirically, without having previously taken a course to enroll to the bachelors. I considered that my high motivation for learning everyday it helps, I could recommend certain tips that works for me in order to improved the skills for learning English:





Watch television and movies in English: in that way you can sharpen your ear to the language, it is a great way to listen to different dialects, also allow us to listen to intonations and stress in the words. Native people have their own slang and jargon. As a personal suggestion I recommend *Two and a Half Men*, this is a hilarious series that had helped me to understand an informal way of speaking English.











- For formal speaking I watch BBC news and CNN news, their way of speaking allows me to catch and retain words for my lexicon.
- Read English books from the courses are the best way of learning about great topics. This allows me to read at my own pace and also leads me to seek more information on other books or the Internet
- At home I like to write in English my doctors appointments, the groceries list, I write the most I can in that way I keep practicing the skill.
- In the city where I live is almost impossible to find out native speakers so I pen pal with couple of native friends overseas that most of the time give me feedback and correction of my speaking and writing, they have been great helping me to improve my speaking and writing skills.

- Listen music is one of the best because I am learning new vocabulary and meanings. If is a new song that I like it, I listen to it about 3 times in order to catch up with the rhythm then I search for the lyrics and I learn the song, I like to record myself in a video, at the end of the song I played the video, this gives me the chance to check up for mistakes and improved my pronunciation. There are a lot of pages for listen to any kind of music like youtube, spotify and many more.
- In the classroom with my tutors we practice English whenever we can, they are great teachers, committed to our learning, all the time they give us feedback and correction.
- My computer and smartphone are set it up to English language this is actually a good way of learning the language. I have turned my Facebook and smartphone settings to 'English' it have helped me to continue learning the language while I am communicating with my friends.
- It is important to keep in mind that learning it is a long process is not something that will happen snapping the fingers. It will take time and also great amount of intrinsic motivation, mainly.

Appendix I

Virtual forum 1 – Sample of DISCUSSION GROUPS

Tema	Comenzado por		Rélicas
OPINION		RUBIELA VALIENTE ABREU	2
FORUM		MARIA CONCEPCION LOBON VALENCIA	2
What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?		ANGELA KATERIN MUNAR MORENO	3
Give or deny money, that's the question.		DIEGO URREGO ACOSTA	2
What motivate you to give or Denny money to people in need?		ANDREA BELTRAN SILVA	2
What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?		ROCIO DEL CARMEN DIAZ NARVAEZ	2
What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?		ANGELA CARDONA FRANCO	1
What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?		NADIA FERNANDA CASTILLO PUENTES	3
What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?		JHON WILDER OSORIO BERNAL	4

To give or deny your money		LEYDI YHOANA TRIANA CASALLAS	2
What motivates me to give or deny money to people in "need"?		ANDRES DAVID BALLEEN ANTONIO	5
What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?		LUZ DARY CAYCEDO VILLAMIZAR	1
What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?		ELIZABETH FLOREZ QUINTERO	3
Give or deny money, what a big dilemma.		HARIN BERRIO ARENAS	3
What motivates me to give or deny money to people in need?		LAURA JULIANA MORA GARCIA	5
People in Need		TATIANA NOVOA RUIZ	2
What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?		DIANA ALEXANDRA CASTRO PERDOMO	3
What motivates me to give or deny money to people in need?		JAVIER ALEJANDRO LANDINEZ SEGURA	3
What motivates you to give or deny money to people in need?		ARGELIO HERNANDEZ TELLEZ	2

Virtual forum 2 – Sampling of DISCUSSION GROUPS

Tema	Comenzado por		Rélicas
How to improve listening skills		RUBIELA VALIENTE ABREU	1
Secrets or tips to improve my English skills		JAVIER ALEJANDRO LANDINEZ SEGURA	3
A secret how to increase or improve the pronunciation skills for speaking English		MARIA CONCEPCION LOBON VALENCIA	2
MY SECRET ON HOW TO IMPROVE THE LISTENING AND VOCABULARY		YULIANA ANDREA RUEDA MARTINEZ	2
tips to improve my english level		ARGELIO HERNANDEZ TELLEZ	4
Tips to Improve my English Skills		JHON WILDER OSORIO BERNAL	3
My Tips to improve my English skills		JANICE LIZZETTE RONDON FRANCO	1
How to Improve English Skills		LAURA JULIANA MORA GARCIA	3
Tips to improve your English skills		LEYDI YHOANA TRIANA CASALLAS	1
what are your secrets or tips to improve your English skills?		ANDREA BELTRAN SILVA	3