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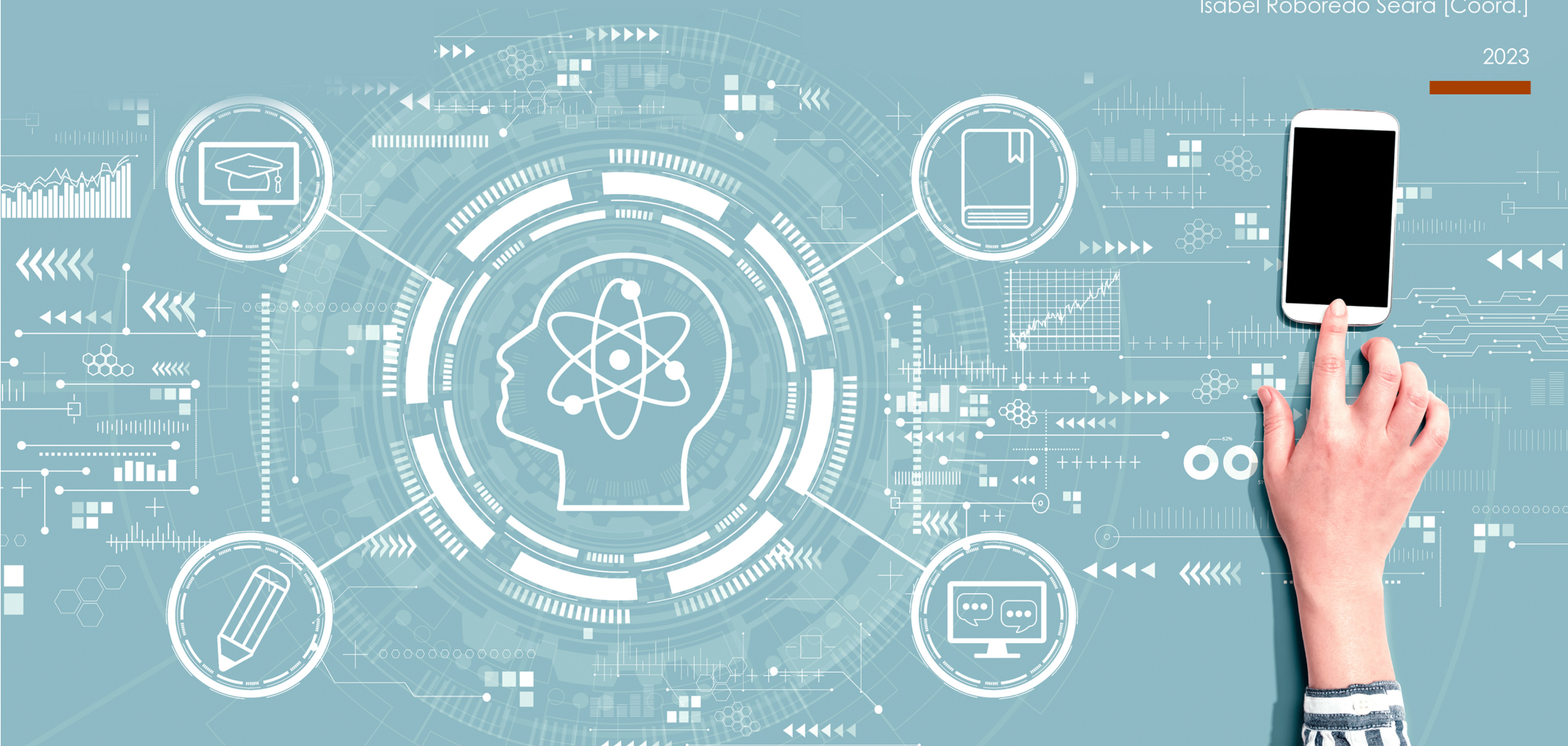
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INOVAÇÃO E TECNOLOGIA NO ENSINO DE LÍNGUAS PEDAGOGIAS, PRÁTICAS E RECURSOS DIGITAIS

Isabelle Simões Marques; Susana de Magalhães Oliveira; Adelina Castelo;
Ana Cristina Braz; Ana Setién Burgués; Antonio Chenoll; Jeffrey Scott Childs;
Katja Götsche Clara; Cristiana Vasconcelos Rodrigues;
Isabel Roboredo Seara [Coord.]

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DIGITAL AND GAME-BASED TOOLS IN A COURSE OF SPANISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES: DIPLOMACY

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ABSTRACT

The arrival of ICTs in language teaching-learning has been a methodological revolution in this field. However, at present, they have become a necessity due to the global circumstances we live in, and teachers have had to adapt to this new context. On the one hand, a good choice of digital tools when organizing teaching units allows us to introduce, develop, conclude and evaluate our students' learning. On the other hand, a good choice of digital tools helps us to maintain the motivation of current students and to create community both in face-to-face classes and in virtual classes. These programs allow the development of highly versatile individual and/or collaborative activities. Each one of them allows the development of one or more of the communicative skills: reading and listening comprehension, oral-written and integrated expression. This new panorama also affects the teaching of languages for specific purposes. In addition, students for specific purposes are usually made up of professionals from a certain field of work, with a working day that sometimes does not meet the established schedule, which is why many workers prefer to attend an online language course, in which they study your pace and on your schedule. An example of workers in which their schedule can be easily altered is that of Diplomacy and International Relations. For this reason, this article will present some activities designed using digital tools for a Spanish course on diplomacy and International Relations.

Keywords

E-learning, digital tools, game-based tools, Spanish

INTRODUCTION

The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the teaching and learning of foreign languages has become a methodological revolution in this field. However, it has been transformed into a necessity due to the global context that we are living in nowadays. In fact, in 2017, the European Commission published The European Framework for Digital Competences for Educators (DigCompEdu). Teachers have had to adapt to this new international situation pre and post-pandemic COVID-19.

On the one hand, a good selection of digital tools to organize the activities of a unit allows us to present, develop, practice, and assess our students' learning process. On the other hand, an appropriate selection of digital tools allows our students to be engaged and motivated in both face-to-face lessons and in virtual lessons. These tools allow teachers to create individual and/or collaborative activities. Each tool could be used for improvement and practice of linguistic and communication skills: reading and listening comprehension, speaking and writing expression, or integrated skills.

This new context affects the process of teaching languages for specific purposes as well. Moreover, students of a course of language for specific purposes are mainly professionals of a specific field, with a specific schedule of working hours, which is the reason why those students prefer to attend the language course remotely. This is also the case of professionals and workers who attend a course of Spanish for Diplomacy and International Affairs.

In this context, the aim of this paper is to present some practical examples of integration of language activities which were designed for a course in Spanish for Diplomacy and International Affairs, using interactive ICT and game-based tools.

1. E-LEARNING METHODOLOGY

New technologies have eliminated distances in communication between persons. In education, the time differences and the

physical distances are not such a big obstacle for the organization and creation of language courses. In the digital era, we see a new teaching context and cultural and educational changes, amongst which predominate plurilingual contexts, multimodality, students' autonomy, and the digital competencies of teachers and students (Hernández Muñoz & Román-Mendoza, 2018).

There are a variety of innovative models of teaching that are applied in educational contexts. Teachers must adopt a positive attitude and be trained to introduce them to their educational environment. In other words, innovation in teaching languages is vital for the teachers. Some innovative approaches are collaborative, interactive, gamified, ICT-based, and autonomy-focused, which involve new teaching skills: pedagogical and digital (Veljkovic Michos, 2021). The digital era promotes distance learning and the introduction of hybrid methodologies such as Blended Learning, which represents the combination of face-to-face and online lessons, synchronous and asynchronous interaction. This methodology involves digitalization and the use of ICT in the process of teaching languages.

The educational institutions usually provide apps and digital tools for both in-person and virtual learning providing the possibility for more autonomous learning. On the other hand, there are a large number of digital tools and platforms that allow teachers to create activities to develop learners' language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) in both individual and collaborative ways. Furthermore, some of these tools could be used for formative assessment.

There are a variety of applications that can facilitate gamification in the lessons, a process that is accepted by both adult and young students. The use of these tools can increase motivation and enhance learning because of their interactive and multimodal characteristics, feedback and possibility of control of the learner (Gilakjani, Ismail, & Ahmadi, 2011, p. 1323).

On the other hand, these activities allow students not to use the traditional coursebook or practice book. These activities also develop the curiosity of the students and involve them more actively in the lesson thanks to these tools.

1.1. Learning and knowledge technologies and information communicative technologies

In educational contexts, the concept of Learning and Knowledge Technologies (LKT) guides the use of Information and Communicative Technologies (ICT) toward a more pedagogical purpose for the teachers. In fact, the European Commission organized the European Framework for Digital Competences of Educators (DigCompEdu) where it is possible to read “the potential of digital technologies to encourage innovation in education and training practices; improve access to lifelong learning; and impart the new (digital) skills and competences needed for employment, personal development and social inclusion” (2017, p.7) This educational innovation also affects the field of teaching/learning foreign languages.

Currently, it is difficult to think of lessons where the use of gadgets such as computers, digital whiteboards, tv or mobiles are not present in our lessons. We tend to use powerpoint presentations, watch movies or videos on the internet, listen to songs, use digital tools such as Kahoot, Quizizz, word-cloud, etc. Veljkovic Michos (2021) affirms that it is a consequence of the digital era for students and teachers to be connected to the internet most of the time. Besides, most of our students were born in the online era, being what we know as “digital native[s]” (Prensky, 2001).

In the case of teaching/learning languages with the use of ICT, there are studies that demonstrate positive experiences in the context of Spanish as a foreign language, presenting their usefulness in the development of skills and competences in language learning (Piñol, 2014; Barredo, 2017). Accordingly, our didactic proposal settles in this context.

In the knowledge society, TLK (Technologies for Learning and Knowledge) is a term that emphasizes the use of technologies in different learning fields outside of the formal context, promoting the individual and independent learning (Vivancos, 2008). However, the selection and the application of the ICT resources depend on the abilities and knowledge of the teacher. The use of ICT is an instrument for the different didactic purposes to improve the quality of the teaching and the learning opportunities.

1.2. Gamification

The concept of gamification was defined in 2011 by Deterding et al: “The use of elements of game design in non-game contexts. This differentiates it from serious games and design for playful interactions” (p. 2). However, Veljkovic Michos (2021) highlights in her thesis that gamification did not arrive to an educational context with the advent of digital tools, since games have always been present in human culture. According Huizinga (1949), the game was considered an important area of culture and a tool for different fields, because games were considered a serious activity, with rules and competitiveness. Piaget (1986) considered games to be a fundamental activity in the early years of the children because it does not involve evaluations or punishment. Recent researches also confirm the effectiveness of games to engage participants in different contexts and environments. The study of Zichermann y Cunningham (2011, p.36) shows that the game design, mechanism, and dynamics help to involve and motivate people in different fields. Werbach and Hunter (2012, p. 9) suggest the use of gamification and “the game thinking” to improve businesses and productive capacity. On the other hand, Sicart (2014) introduced the idea of the use of games with computers and playful activities combined with digital tools. In similar way, Glover (2013) underlines the psychology of the game as the main characteristic of gamification and describes the benefits of the game in non-game contexts with the aim of encouraging motivation, concentration and the effort of the participants.

Hence, gamification is not a result of the latest learning model because it was used in the process of teaching and learning before the digital era. Nevertheless, the use of gamification has been worth more than the game value and its possibilities as an educational resource are considerable. Prensky (2003) comments that games and game-based activities could enhance learning, and motivate and engage learners, provided they are well designed and planned for educational purposes. If the play activity is well organized and planned it will be positively received by any learner, regardless of age or academic background.

Following the previously mentioned research, there is a general opinion that ICT and gamification are beneficial tools for teaching and learning contexts, and this is the main reason why this proposal of a course of Spanish for specific purposes, and more specifically, for International Affairs and Diplomacy includes the employment of technological tools with gamification.

2. LANGUAGE FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES (LSP): SPANISH FOR DIPLOMACY

The economic, technological, and social transformations influenced by globalization are changing the supply and demand for language courses. The use of ICT has not only changed communication, information availability, and content dissemination, but also has revolutionized teaching and learning models, the role of the teacher, the learners, and the learning environment (Kramsch, 2014). Following this idea, what do we mean when we talk about teaching language for specific purposes (LSP)? The definition that better explains our understanding of this approach is “LSP covers the language, discourse, and culture of professional communities and specialized social groups, as well as the learning and teaching of this subject from a didactic perspective” (Sorbonne Université & Erasmus+, 2020). That is, this approach is based on students' professional needs. The aim of this approach is that learners acquire effective and fluent communication in a foreign language in order to perform their responsibilities successfully in that language.

2.1. Teachers and learners in a course of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP)

Santiago-Guervós (2009) says that the teacher of a foreign language should be flexible, versatile, and creative in order to ensure quality teaching and not just a user of materials. In our case we must talk about the teacher from two perspectives:

- A) On the one hand, the multidisciplinary skills of the language teacher for specific purposes. Aguirre (2012, p. 14) claims that the teacher of specific purposes selects, organizes, and provides the necessary linguistic information for the learner to communicate effectively in the target language in his/her work environment. Also, (s)he must show an interest in the specific language and the functions that learners must perform in their work context. This is a complex task, as it brings together linguistic knowledge and the functions of the work environment of a particular field.
- B) On the other hand, the teacher of language for specific purposes, the same as a general language teacher, should maintain constant scientific training and updating. According to Mishra and Koehler (2006) it is important to be proficient in technological and pedagogical aspects, as well as in the content of the teaching subject, to facilitate up-to-date and learner-centered teaching.

The rapid development of technological advances, foreign language methodologies, and the COVID-19 pandemic have not only increased the use of digital tools for language teaching/learning but have also increased the interest in and demand for virtual courses.

Since the arrival of the pandemic, there has been a boom in virtual education without any doubt. Before this, we witnessed a gradual transformation, but with this new global context, virtual learning has improved and developed more quickly.

Learners of an LSP course are adults (professionals, workers, or students of a determined discipline) and they prefer to learn or improve their knowledge in the target language in order to communicate effectively and fluently in the specific context of their discipline. They are usually working students, adult learners, and professionals who have regular working hours and it is difficult for them to attend in-person lessons. That is the reason why it is more suitable for this kind of learner to attend an online language course with flexible hours, which they can attend and complete at their pace.

2.2. Spanish for diplomacy

If language is considered a vehicle of communication between people the human factor is essential in this process. Professionals with knowledge and fluency in foreign languages have become an important value in various international institutions. Moreover, in the field of Diplomacy and International Affairs, being fluent in foreign languages has been a mandatory characteristic and a very helpful skill of these professionals for centuries (Jara Rocanti, 1989).

In this sense, there are documents (Amarna Letter, 14th B.C) that indicate that emissaries who were sent to negotiate with the king of other settlements were those persons who spoke different languages and could adapt to the traditions of those settlements. This is why the area of diplomacy has been highly associated with foreign language knowledge and communication skills (Robles-Gomez, 2020).

In the specific field of Spanish for Diplomacy and International Affairs, there is a lack of scientific research and papers published about teaching Spanish for specific purposes in this discipline (Robles-Gomez, 2020). However, Spanish is a language with international relevance and it is an official or working language in the main international organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), etc. Moreover, institutions such as the UN or NATO have designed their curricula for teaching a foreign language (Robles-Gomez, 2020). Does it indicate that there is a lack of materials and that the creation of specific teaching and learning content is of crucial importance for this discipline? We intend to understand and explore the benefits of the use of ICT and gamification tools in language teaching and adapt them to the course of Spanish for Diplomacy and International Affairs.

When it comes to the Course of Spanish for Diplomacy we did not only notice a lack of traditional materials, such as course books or other didactic materials in paper format, but also a lack of digital resources created for virtual lessons. That is the reason why we intend to propose the integration of some activities that could be designed with ICT tools and with gamified resources as supplementary

didactic material. These activities are inspired by the research of Robles-Gomez in this field and Veljkovic Michos in the field of digital tools in teaching languages.

3. COURSE DESCRIPTION

_ Student profile: students, professionals, workers, translators, and interpreters who have Spanish as a foreign language.

_ Level: C1

_ Modality: Flipped classroom

_ Platform: Microsoft Teams

_ Apps: Kahoot, wordwall, quizizz, EdWordle, etc.

_ Time: 3 hours in class, 2 hours online

_ Title: Felipe VI, El rey Embajador. This term was coined in issue 58 of the magazine Diplomacia S. XXI.

_ Skills:

- Inside the class: productive skills: speaking, writing, grammatical and lexical reinforcement.
- Online class: receptive skills: reading and listening comprehension, audio-visual comprehension.
- Content: grammatical, functional, vocabulary, cultural awareness, and diplomatic. The activities presented below are mainly based on diplomatic and functional content because they are activities designed to use digital tools.

_ Diplomatic content:

- Introduction to the current Spanish monarchy
- Spanish official protocol: delivery of letters of credence

- Drafting of credential letters in Spanish
- Handing over letters of credentials (verbal + non-verbal communication)
- Addressing His Majesty, the King (Majestad, tengo el honor de...)

_Functional:

- Making a presentation/interview with the monarch halfway between formality and informality.

3.1. Justification of the intervention proposal

King Felipe the 6th is the highest representative of the kingdom of Spain inside and outside the country's borders. His presence is required in many diplomatic events, since he conducts diplomacy in multiple ways, through economic diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, or in any of its other forms. Furthermore, for a foreign ambassador to perform his duties as such, he must present his Letters of Credence to the King of Spain. Until (s)he delivers them in a ceremony held at the Royal Palace, (s)he cannot such act in that role.

3.2. Digital and gamified activities

As previously discussed, the utilization of digital tools and gamification model in the teaching and learning process is understood as beneficial because of their potential to enhance learning, motivate and engage students in the learning process, whenever the learning content is well designed, learner-centered and adapted to the specific educational context (Veljkovic Michos, 2017).

On the other hand, when it comes to the Course of Spanish for Diplomacy, a variety of relevant and updated didactic material, both in traditional and digital format is not available so far (Robles-Gomez, 2022, p. 115). That is the reason why we intend to propose some activities that could be designed with ICT tools and with gamified resources as supplementary computerized didactic material.

For this purpose, we suggest two aspects of the utilization of the ICT tools:

_Activities with digital tools during the lesson (Edwordle, Edpuzzle, Mentimeter);

_Use of the gamification tool Quizizz for a formative evaluation at the end of each lesson.

1. At the beginning of the course or the first lesson, the teachers can introduce a new topic with the “ice-breaker” activity created with the word cloud form to present the most relevant aspects of the topic with keywords, in the form of a cloud which contains several words relevant for understanding. In that way, students can see and read the main words and phrases of a new text that their teacher is going to present, and will be able to predict answers to the following questions:

What aspects will be presented in the text?

What are the keywords of the text?

What could the title of the text be?

- _ Highlighting the relevant terminology of a text.
- _ Encouraging creative thinking and debate on a chosen topic.
- _ Presenting and introducing the specific vocabulary to students.

The ice-breaker activity was introductory to the following task, the reading comprehension exercise. The activity has been digitalized with the Wordwall web application, which allows the teacher to create both interactive and printable activities based on existing, pre-prepared templates.

2. Once the students were informed about the topic and after they made predictions regarding the details of new content, they should proceed with the activity based on the practice of audiovisual comprehension skills.

The topic of the activity: Delivery of Credentials

Task: Students should answer questions with multiple-choice and open-ended options of answers. The activity has been designed and digitalized with the web platform Edpuzzle.

This online tool allows the teachers to create interactive activities with inserted video materials, and to add interactive elements to create a specific and meaningful audio-visual task that can be assigned to their students.

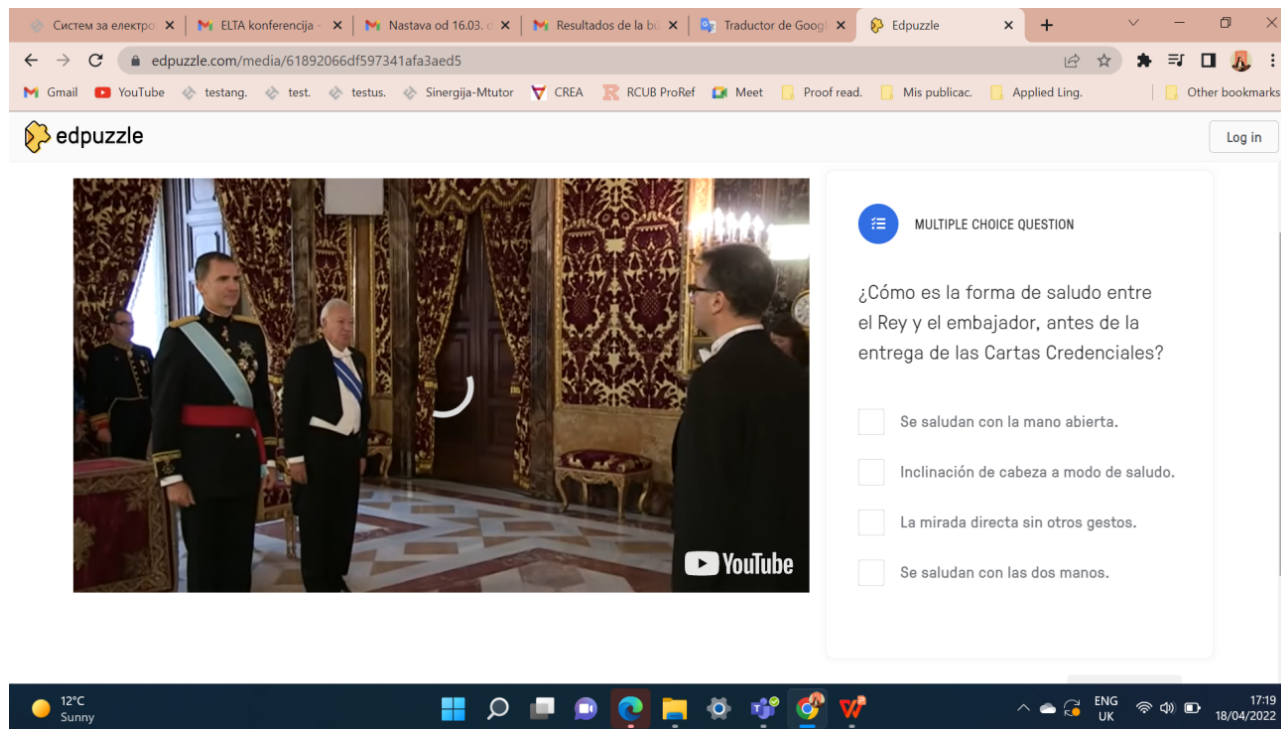


Figure 2. Delivery of Credentials, Edpuzzle

Activity created with Edpuzzle: <https://edpuzzle.com/media/61892066df597341afa3aed5>

3. For the review of the presented content and topics, and for the lesson evaluation, students can be asked to complete an interactive activity and receive immediate feedback. For this purpose we created the quiz with multiple-choice, true or false, and open response questions, using the gamification online tool Quizizz.

This task aims to assess the progress of both the learning and teaching process, and to keep the track of students' understanding and progress in their learning.

Title of the activity: The Royal House

The activity has been created and digitalized with the interactive application Quizizz, which enables teachers to create or use the existing gamified quizzes, lessons, presentations, and flashcards for their students.

This web application allows teachers to gamify the didactic content through various game elements, such as positive competition, a sense of progress, feedback, leader-boards, feedback, point-scoring, and awards.

The activity can be performed both in the face-to-face classroom and in the virtual environment, in a synchronous and asynchronous model of interaction.

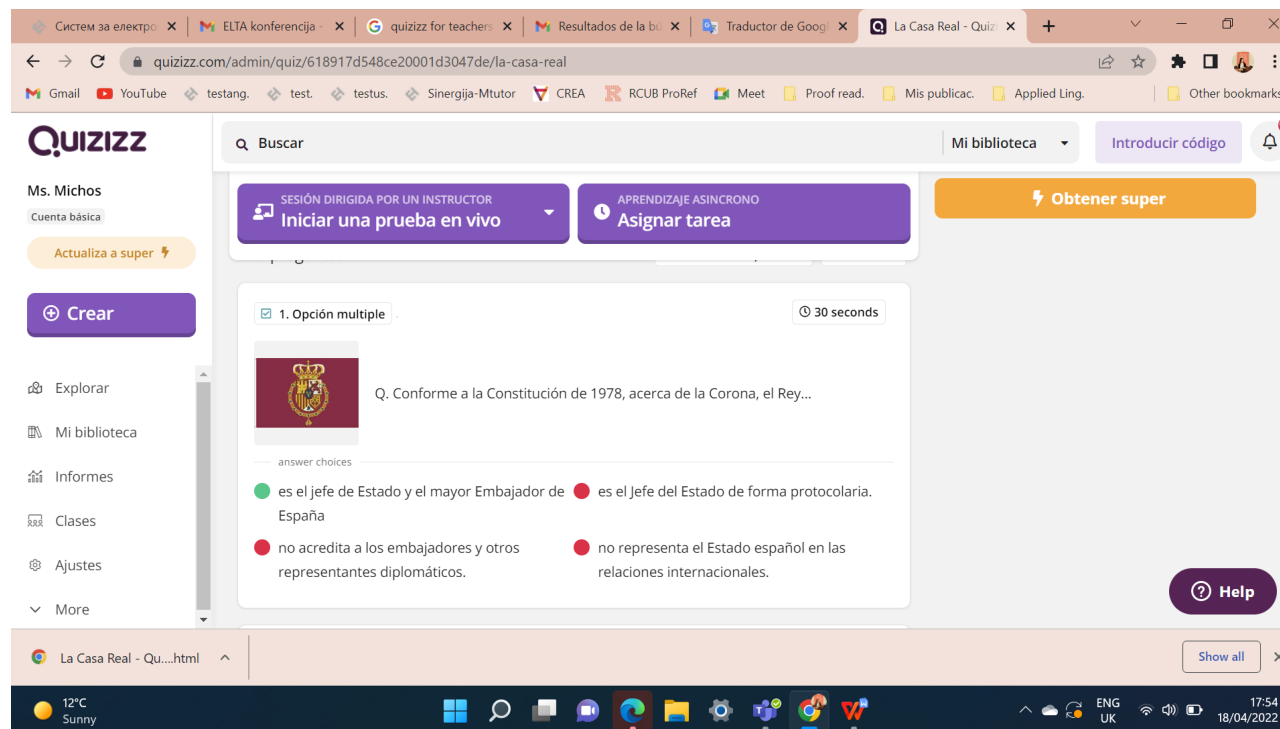


Figure 3. The Spanish Royal House, Quizizz

4. At the end of the lesson or didactic unit, the teachers may receive student's opinions and collect their answers on a presented topic in real-time in two ways:
- At the beginning of the class or teaching session as a warmer activity.
 - At the end of the class to evaluate the lesson and presented content.
 - In the middle of the lesson to introduce a new topic or to collect the specific answers from students before continuing with the same topic.

The online tool that teachers can use to create polls, quizzes, or interactive presentations is the web application that allows for obtaining votes, opinions, and responses from students in person or remotely.

For these purposes, teachers can utilize the online tool Mentimeter, which is suitable for synchronous learning, where the interaction between teacher and student takes place at the same time (the place does not have to be the same), but also for virtual lessons. Mentimeter is a type of tool called a "student response system," which has the potential to improve test scores, and motivate learners in the ESP/EAP classroom, due to its flexibility and an unlimited number of participants, and offers a diverse way for students to respond using their mobile devices (Moorhouse, & Kohnke, 2020).

The functions of this activity are valuable for the evaluation and creation of a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom: assessment of a didactic sequence, self-assessment, and keeping up with the progress of students in a gamified and playful way.

CONCLUSION

The incorporation of digital technologies in the process of teaching and learning of foreign languages has become essential due to current global circumstances. On the one hand, there is a huge variety of digital tools available online; on the other hand, language

teachers must be digitally and pedagogically competent enough to choose, analyse and create didactic activities to offer the meaningful content to the students and to assess the learning process.

The appropriate selection of technological tools allows teachers to create effective and engaging individual and/or collaborative activities that can be implemented within a blended learning model. These tools may be used for the improvement of various language skills: reading and listening comprehension, speaking and writing expression, and integrated skills.

When it comes to the course of Spanish for Diplomacy and International Affairs, due to a lack of traditional materials, such as course books and other didactic materials in paper format, and the insufficiency of digital resources created for virtual lessons, teachers and experts in this field should select and design appropriate teaching material adapted to learners needs and course features.

These materials can be created with the support of ICT tools and game-based resources as supplementary interactive didactic material.

Teachers of language for specific purposes should be multidisciplinary in orientation because they need to have continuous trainings not just in the field of the language they teach, but also in the methodologies of language teaching, as well as in the language of their specific field (vocabulary, linguistic structures, etc.). Besides that, language teachers must develop their technological and digital skills and promote digital literacy among students to achieve their pedagogical goals based on didactic and ICT supported teaching materials. In that context, the use of new methodologies and digital tools must be adapted to specific purpose language courses if our aim is to have active, engaged and motivated students attending our lessons. Besides knowing how to use a variety of digital tools in our lessons, it is essential to know when and why to use them in the specific class, taking into consideration the didactic goals and the pedagogical base as the core factors of the utilization of ICT tools.

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