



Is It Possible To Characterize The Young English Teacher As A Digital Native?

Astrid Ramírez Valencia· Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas. Bogotá, Colombia. aramirezv@udistrital.edu.co. orcid <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3025-5982>

Luz Marilyn Ortiz. Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas. Bogotá, Colombia. Lmortiz@udistrital.edu.co. Orcid <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2514-2251>

Blanca Lucia Bustamante. Universidad Pedagógica y tecnológica de Colombia, Bogotá, Colombia. lucia.bustamante@uptc.edu.co. Orcid <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7227-2019>

Abstract

There are multiple ways of characterizing the young English teacher whose age range is between 18 and 23 years old. On the one hand, it is believed that he/she is a digital native teacher; alternatively, this teacher is widely trained to manage digital environments and relevant pedagogical strategies as a part of his/her educational processes. According to the above, this research aims to analyze; if that belief is accurate in the current pandemic situation. For this purpose, it was adopted a descriptive qualitative research; with a group of 30 students in their last semesters who are doing their teaching practice in some schools in Bogota, Colombia. The collection instruments used were a structured interview and a survey. It is concluded that the process of training young English teachers should lead to projecting the technology to the school, thus renewing the experiences gained during the pandemic.

Keywords: Digital native, digital competence, young English teacher.

1. INTRODUCTION

Currently, human beings are immersed in a digital society, where technology plays a fundamental role in different contexts. It includes family, school, friends, and, in general, society. The generation of people who were born during these transformations has traits that make them different from others concerning the use of technology. However, it is commonly stated that this group of young people that is considered as digital natives, do not make use of technology in their learning processes; many of them due to social, economic, or other factors. Therefore, it is possible to affirm that the

generation of digital natives requires guidance for the development, management, and application of digital skills; however, many of them do not have this support at school. The above is the case with digital natives; they are preparing to become teachers who do not have the technological knowledge to use ICT from a pedagogical perspective. This scenario leads to the following question: What do new teachers considered digital natives do to use technology for pedagogical purposes in the English field?

In this regard, it is necessary to delve into the issue of digital natives when they begin the process of teaching a foreign language, in this case, English, so the following question arises:

2. Literature review

2.1 Who are digital natives?

It is worth mentioning that currently a large part of the new language teachers can be called digital natives. They were born in the mid-twentieth century and early twenty-first century, in an era characterized by significant advances based on technological development achieved in a short time, which have brought new living conditions for everyone.

This new circumstance has had considerable effects, especially in the education field, giving way to a technological mediation that facilitates the production of novel forms of learning and access to knowledge.

Franco [1] ratifies the concept of digital natives, pointing out that they are those who were born in a world immersed in technology. It means they make use of digital media to the point of becoming an integral part of their existence; in other words, they have had permanent contact with technology since early childhood, which facilitates the operation of the devices.

The above suggests that digital natives have unique characteristics and competencies from those of other generations. For example, they have developed skills to perform multiple tasks simultaneously, showing a preference for images rather than texts, opting for the possibility of learning through experience, with a high capacity to search and create materials. This situation translates into future teachers an ability to make presentations, organize blogs, and set up their content, among other capabilities. The mentioned traits turn out to be fundamental for the educational context. They determine not only what young people want to learn but also how the content should be approached. Here, it is expected to be accompanied by the use of technology as a motivating tool for the condition of digital natives, a fact that should be considered in the school environment.

Prensky [2] states that the learning processes carried out with digital natives should be mediated by the use of technology; it can make their learning much more effective and motivating since technological resources have commonly accompanied their environment. They generally have multiple analog tools for performing all activities, which they develop in their daily lives.

This perspective raises much insight into the condition of being considered a digital native since not all young people, even if they meet the state of having been born in a certain period, know, nor the digital culture. The above facilitates the controversy between the authors' proposals, such as Franco [1] and Prensky [2]. Thus, rethinking the idea demarcated by modernity to enter thinking about this new young person; who, despite meeting the condition of age, has been affected by factors such as their technological environment, their social sector, and their cultural capital.

Therefore, it is essential to mention Blanco [3], this author recognizes that not all digital natives have sufficient tools to enable them the management and use technology, establishing that not for having grown up in a digital world should develop within it accurately and appropriately. Therefore, young English teachers require digital knowledge. For example, they need instruction on the use of technology, a pedagogical training process in using technology, and a domain that the school should develop and, in particular, by the teacher training institutions. Bearing in mind this, it should generate moments of understanding of the pedagogical use of the various tools that they can teach English classes.

2.2. Digital competencies and teacher training

The conditions of the digital era have generated several changes whose impact has had an impact principally on the market and the educational context. They have required the generation of new knowledge, as well as the development of specialized areas essential to meet the demands of today's society.

It is imperative to note that several studies by Martín-Barbero [4], Piscitelli [5], and Castells [6] have been widely recognized for identifying the technological potential of the so-called "digital natives". They established that the configuration of meaning and knowledge they possess is more related to that of a user of technology; rather than a creator and applicator of technology for specific purposes, such as educational ones.

Figel [7] states that "digital competence [...] requires a good understanding and broad knowledge of the nature and function of IST, computer applications, and the

potential opportunities and risks offered by the Internet and electronic communication for professional life, leisure, collaborative networks, learning and research" (p. 1).

Consequently, this perspective is marking a unique path in the ways of acting of the teacher as a subject acting within a globalized society, who puts technology in the function of his pedagogical work, to facilitate access to knowledge for his students, making it much more attractive, and not only to be used for recreational or leisure purposes.

From this perspective, we can identify the concept of a digital native English teacher who, besides having mastery of the technological elements, needs to assume a critical position regarding their use, without allowing them to alienate their teaching work. On the contrary, to be aware that technology is available to facilitate their teaching practice, leading them to take an ideological perspective on access and the possibilities that the use of tools and platforms gives them in their pedagogical experience.

On the other hand, Unesco [8] establishes three moments for incorporating ICTs within the classroom, which revolves around the design, implementation, and valuation of educational fields mediated by technology.

It relates the first to the planning or organization of elements that allow the construction of ICT competencies and standards with a pedagogical perspective; in other words, the teacher recognizes, organizes, and modifies ICT in the educational context.

The second, referred to as implementation, allows the design and planning of ICTs in an educational scenario; that is, it is related to the moment in which the technological tool is put into use, facilitating the development of the teacher's pedagogical exercise in a different, conscious and assisted way.

Finally, the evaluation moment allows assessing the effectiveness of the tool to learn when ICTs are incorporated in an educational context; in such a way that student participation is monitored, examining its effectiveness at the moment when the pedagogical exercise is developed, in this case, related to the teaching of the English foreign language. Thus, it is possible to detect shortcomings or successes in the search for weak points in using technology in the classroom, to identify improvement alternatives that make possible an effective teaching train; supported by technology.

Concerning the moments proposed by UNESCO [8], we highlight the sense of appropriation. In terms of "the knowledge that teachers develop about ICT, the instrumental use they make of them and the transformations they make to adapt them

to their educational practices" (p. 108), a position that focuses on meeting the needs of knowledge and the design of activities mediated by the use of devices that the school has so that technological tools become facilitating instruments for the English language teaching processes.

It is worth remembering Viñas [9], who makes valuable contributions regarding the knowledge that digital teachers should have in the technological field; such as:

1) knowing how to search the Internet, 2) knowing how to manage information, 3) possessing knowledge that allows them to create multimedia lessons, 4) needing knowledge that prepares them to manage virtual classrooms and work with tablets, 5) being aware of how to connect virtually, managing and controlling their digital identity, 6), learning how to take part accordingly in social networks and, 7) understanding copyright, knowing how to reference them.

Based on these precepts, it can be affirmed that this digital discernment is configured as an accumulation of skills. It makes this new digital native teacher an English teacher with wisdom that can be improved, and that over time requires constant renewing. Always at the pedagogical service to optimize his-or-her performance in the classroom.

From this preface, we can deduce other opinions, such as those established by the Google platform [10]; which, in collaboration with the UGR (University of Granada), proposes a program that allows the training, strengthening, and acquisition of knowledge related to the field of elementary tools in digital environments called Actívate. Actívate is available to the public and, therefore, can be available to these digital native teachers. Thus, guiding a cognitive dimension that enables them to adapt their performance as professionals in the pedagogical field, by providing various keys, techniques, standards, and tools with which it is possible to be permanently updated with the operating systems of the moment, teach them to solve problems, provide them with security and updating tools in the management of ICT, content creation and communication management, empowering them in the development of skills for the use and application of technology.

These criteria lead to the establishment of technologies in the educational system, turning them into a support tool for both students and teachers. It makes the foreign language teaching processes more efficient, produces a change in the teaching forms of a language, and thus introduces the new dimension of the virtual world to the school.

These other alternatives go beyond the simple inclusion of technological elements within the school context, as new dynamics of anchoring and meshing the use of

technology will necessarily have to be implemented, accompanied by teacher training processes.

Definitely, in the pandemic's situation, integrating ICT in the school with home learning modality has had a high impact that has demonstrated its functionality, to the point of becoming the only most effective resource to make the pedagogical exercise and the meeting between teachers and professors viable, so that technology has become the tool that made the school possible, in times like the ones we are currently living.

In fact, despite the difficulties of access due to not having the economic resources to be able to use technology, this tool made possible the relationship of the interacting technological subject within a society marked by the dominance of technology, to the point of becoming the only object that made the subject position viable, in the cybernetic society in which the homes of school children became.

It cannot be ignored that, although many of the digital natives have some knowledge and experience regarding the use of technology for recreational purposes, it could also be recognized that many of them did not know how to use all the technological tools for pedagogical purposes, so they had to leave their role as users of technology, to become applicators of resources and virtual tools within reach and according to their role as English teachers.

Faced with this problem, education faculties and teacher training programs should strengthen the curriculum with digital skills that allow them to evaluate, create and use technology for educational purposes. It can facilitate the production and selection of information, increase their autonomy, develop decision making, flexibility, problem-solving, teamwork, with great communicative potential. It gives room for adaptation, according to the situation of the moment that is being presented. Thus, the digital native English teacher will meet the needs of a future society characterized by being liquid and fluctuating.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research was conducted from a qualitative approach that, according to Martínez and Ramírez [11], enables the recognition of reality by determining its dynamics and adopting a comprehensive and proactive vision of the manifestations and behaviors of the observed object, which, in this case, is related to the digital native English teacher of the moment.

On the other hand, the understanding of this phenomenon is sought by determining its characteristics or behaviors, to have a sharp look at the situation studied, reaffirming the position of Bernal and Ramírez [12], for whom qualitative research enables the identification of a problem and defines the most relevant aspects; until achieving a rigorous look, that allows being characterized, approached and studied by the researcher.

Likewise, the study is descriptive; because it collects information that makes possible an approach to the various dimensions of the analyzed phenomenon, in the words of Hurtado [13], in this case, related to digital native teachers who are in a training process.

3.2 Population

The participants were a group of pre-service teachers. They are part of an English degree program. Their ages are between 18 and 25 years, and they were doing a teaching practice with elementary school children in an official institution. The selected sample was chosen randomly, since there was no specific pattern of behavior among the participants. All of them had the possibility of being active subjects in this study.

The research was carried out during twelve months, a period in which the pre-service teachers were immersed in the virtual teaching practice.

The instruments that allowed data collection were a survey and some observations. Camargo and Ramírez [14] highlight the potential offered by the survey; which, in this case, made it possible to follow up on the pedagogical activity of the trainee teachers.

4. SURVEY RESULTS

Figure 1 shows the relationship between the age of the participants and their status as digital natives, since 65% of them ranged between 18 and 25 years, a statement reported in the interview with the group of practitioners, in which their age was inquired, to establish whether they coincided chronologically with that of the digital natives. On the other hand, 25% of them were between 25 and 35 years old, while 10% were between 35 or older, choosing to work with the most representative of the entire sample, as shown below.

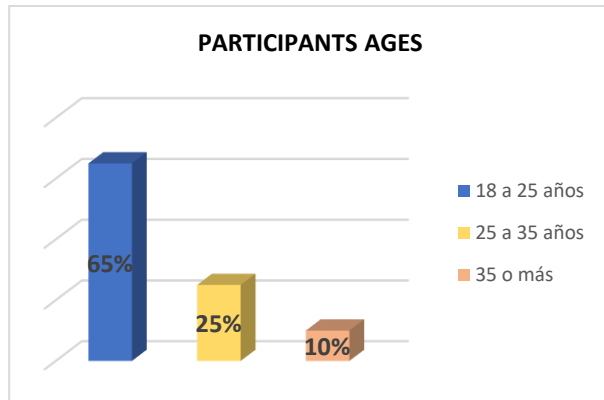


Figure 1. Participants Age. Own elaboration

Then, according to the considerations of Prensky (2012). At a first glance, the age can be considered a determining factor to establish the condition of digital natives in these participants.

On the other hand, according to Figure 2, the access to the technology of the practicing native teachers is low, equivalent to only 40% of them, while the remaining 60% claim not to have it, leaving in evidence a weakness in front of this consideration, which is quite remarkable, in terms of connectivity and their digital native status. Consequently, among other arguments, some of them said that this situation was due to the following reasons: low economic resources, which prevented them from acquiring a proper connectivity system, in some cases they claimed to have only one device per family, which must be rotated among its members, and others explained that the devices they had were quite obsolete, which did not allow them to use the technological resources available on the networks.

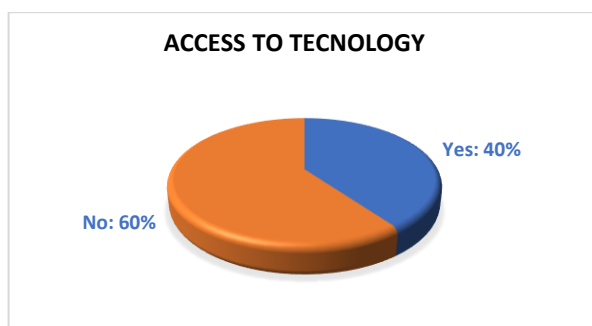


Figure 2. Access to technology. Source: Own elaboration

In this situation, it can be seen that public education does not facilitate the possibility of access to technology, and therefore does not provide the potential guarantees of their

condition as digital natives, limiting the right to comprehensive education, as stated in the Colombian Constitution.

Finally, the participants were asked what tools they used in this new circumstance of teaching at home, the results of which are shown in Figure 3.

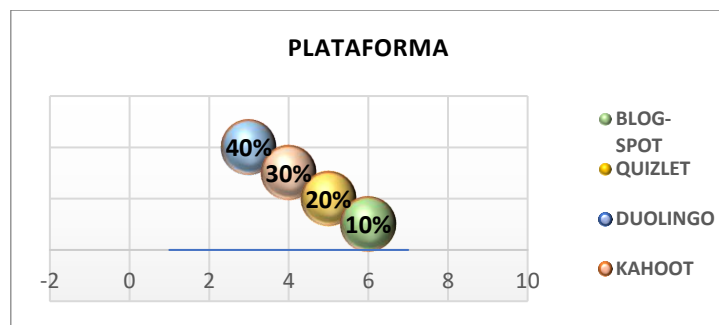


Figura 3. Plata form. Source: Own elaboration

Of all those interviewed, 40% responded that they used Duolingo; 30% used Kahoot; while 20% used Quizlet, and only 10% used Blog-spot.

The high incidence in using Duolingo is doubtless because this platform allows for follow-up both in terms of time and subject matter worked on by the user, scheduling pending lessons, in such a way that it establishes continuity in the organization and monitoring for those who use it.

On the other hand, the respondents who preferred to use Kahoot did so because this application allows reinforcing the contents, however, they also expressed their opinion on the complexity for primary school children to access this platform, while Quizlet was used because it facilitated the creation of flashcards, as well as for the organization of content reinforcement activities; finally, they indicated that they used Blog-spot, for simplifying the creation of opinion texts and encouraging participation, which is why it was used notably with children in the highest grades of primary school.

It should be noted that this representative sample of students in training had the opportunity to practice in person and virtually. In the face-to-face moments, it was found that in the lower grades of primary school corresponding to grades zero to two, the children had little access to technology, while those in grades three to five had higher technological resources, revealing a marked degree of inequality within the same institution.

When we entered the moment of the pandemic, i.e. We noticed how this deficiency continued to be quite marked at the same levels, as the children of higher levels had

better resources than those of lower levels. Often, a device had to be used by several members of the same family.

These approaches also reveal the potential of technological tools and their impact on the teaching performance of the digital native teacher, who recognizes that they facilitate his exercise, promote interactivity, and have a multiplicity of resources and activities. Also, it is relevant to know how to choose and select the material on the network because, without this knowledge, one can run the risk of making mistakes during the class.

Likewise, it was found that technology encourages autonomous and cooperative work among the participants in the class, which is why it is important to promote the value of teamwork, as well as the principle of collaboration and support.

Finally, it was corroborated that the use of these resources facilitates the teaching processes developed by the digital native teacher and, also, that not all children used technological devices because of their economic deprivation, which marginalized them from school, since the school, by not providing them with devices and connectivity deprived them of knowledge, reflecting, even more, the educational inequity in the times of the pandemic.

The following are the results obtained by digital native teachers for the technological support sources used when they were immersed in their teaching practice in times of pandemic.

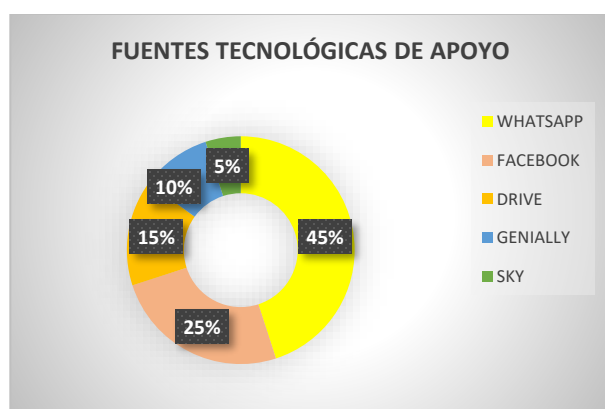


Figure 4. Technological support resources. Source: own elaboration

As can be seen, concerning technological support resources, the one with the highest incidence was WhatsApp, with a frequency of 45%, which indicates its preponderance; however, it can also be seen that 25% of them used Facebook. These applications allow

inserting images, sending videos and files that can remain for long or short periods, as established by the user; likewise, uploading photos and explanatory or expository texts, such as guides and didactic material, is necessary for the development of English classes.

Thus, these applications became the facilitating spaces to develop the home school, promoting communication between different members of the educational community. It facilitates the sending of workshops, lessons, and pronunciation videos in the English language recorded by the practitioners, which gave children the opportunity to get in touch with this language and parents to get involved in learning by taking the role of teacher's assistants.

Consequently, it is pertinent shortly to continue using this type of application since they facilitate access to communication by allowing the simultaneous reproduction of messages and, especially, by promoting direct contact between the sender and the receiver of the message.

Prensky [2] points out that digital native teachers must be able to develop multiple tasks; search for information on the network, create materials, have selection criteria, choose the material and the topic according to the pedagogical needs, among other multiple variables that can be considered planning and developing an English class. Likewise, they need to know how to create materials, create blogs, and, why not, generate their pedagogical content, weighing the successes and errors in classroom actions when using this type of technological tool.

Finally, Figure 4 illustrates the use of technology by teachers in training, who were asked about the purposes they pursued when using technology. Regarding this, 65% indicated that they used it for monitoring, while 20% used it to plan activities and 15% to create activities.

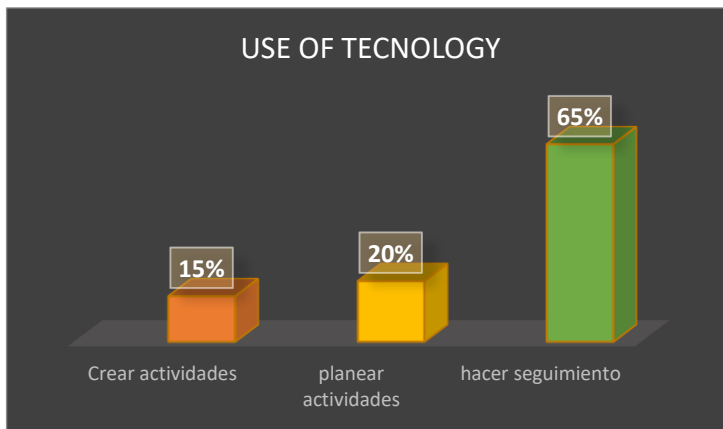


Figure 5. Use of technology. Source: Own.

These indications allow establishing that the most established index was the follow-up of the students' activities. It is probably because of the possibility offered by technology; in terms of the organization of the ways of teaching and the opportunities provided by teachers when integrating technology in the follow-up of the activities performed by the students.

The above means that technology offers instruments or devices that allow the presentation of both individual-work and teamwork. The organization of various evaluations, with which the evaluative follow-up processes are automatically recorded and clear and orderly information generated regarding the results, without the teacher having to use the time to develop this activity. In this way, the teacher will have the possibility of having within reached the numerical figures obtained by each student, through the establishment of various numerical scales determined by the school, showing the results of their students, but not the formative processes achieved. Probably, because of this advantage, this criterion obtained the highest percentage because it allows showing a result numerically.

Regarding the second item that is related to planning, the percentage is quite low, it suggests that technological tools offer the possibility of organizing, classifying, and determining various activities developed within a group of students. It promotes cooperative learning, for example, by planning an activity to be developed in a network; all users can complement it and share knowledge in a group, thus enriching the interaction among participants.

The least relevant criterion was the activities creation, which requires extensive technological knowledge and pedagogical mastery since it requires mastering this knowledge and making it an efficient training factor to be considered chiefly for programs that educate teachers.

This consideration cannot leave aside relevant criteria, such as the responsible use of technology and the awareness and promulgation of various recommendations to be taken into account when accessing the network and when being part of groups of cybernauts.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The current society has generated multiple changes, notably due to the incidence of technology in the educational field, from which have emerged the so-called "digital native English teachers" who, as recorded in this paper, many indications lead to consider their non-existence, especially if only the age factor is considered being called in this way.

However, it is evident the profusion of challenges that these teachers have. Among them, new knowledge and domains in the technological and pedagogical field. Besides accompanying this knowledge with a critical attitude towards the use of technological devices and the information there.

The participants in this research recognize their shortcomings in the use and pedagogical mastery of the tools currently used for recreational and social purposes. When they are in the educational context, they change their vision and use of them. These considerations lead to an analysis of the great responsibility of university teacher training institutions.

The current pandemic situation has brought new challenges and ways to develop the teaching activity. It demonstrates the impact that technology has had to bring the school to homes, promoting a remote meeting between students, teachers, and parents, who have claimed their role as educators, colleagues, and assistants in the learning process of their children.

Thus, in response to whether teachers in training are digital natives, it could be stated an affirmative response once they develop their competencies and skills to perform several tasks in the educational field experiential learning, their ability to search and develop learning material, their ability to make multimedia presentations, blogs and create their content, and so on. On the other hand, the task also depends on public institutions, as they must seek solutions to the irregularities that arise with the administration of technologies so that the teaching work can be made viable concerning the pedagogical use of technology in today's world.

Finally, this research has generated multiple concerns that have led us to reconsider the potential of digital native teachers of English who, from a critical perspective of their work and high creativity, can enhance technology in our times. Thus, counting with a pedagogical perspective allows them to open a new school that leads them to transform their training process, to project the technology within the reach of the school, and to renew the experiences acquired during the pandemic.

6. REFERENCES

- [1] C. de P. Franco, "Understanding digital natives' learning experiences". Revista Brasileira de Lingüística Aplicada, vol.13, no. 2, pp. 643-658, Epub January 24, 2013. Disponible en <https://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S1984-6398201300500000>
- [2] M. R. Prensky, From digital natives to digital wisdom: Hopeful essays for 21st century learning. Corwin Press, 2012.
- [3] S. Blanco, "Nativos digitales y tecnoanalfabetos funcionales". Cibersur.com, 2014. <http://www.cibersur.com/016018/nativos/digitales/tecnoanalfabetos/funcional es>.
- [4] J. Martín-Barbero, La educación desde la comunicación. Bogotá: Editorial Norma, 2002.
- [5] A. Piscitelli, Ciberculturas. 2.0. Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2002.
- [6] M. Castells, La sociedad red Una visión global. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2006.
- [7] J. Figel, "Competencias clave para el aprendizaje permanente". Altablero no. 52, pp. 9-10, 2009. https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1621/propertyvalues-41323_tablero_pdf.pdf
- [8] Unesco, "Competencias y estándares tic desde la dimensión pedagógica: Una perspectiva desde los niveles de apropiación de las TIC en la práctica educativa docente", 2016. Disponible en: <http://www.Unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Santiago/pdf/Competencias-estandares-TIC.pdf>
- [9] M. Viñas, "Competencias digitales y herramientas esenciales para transformar las clases y avanzar profesionalmente", 2015. Recuperado de: <http://cursoticeducadores.com/ebook-competencias-digitales.pdf>
- [10] Google, "Formación gratuita en competencias digitales", 2017. Disponible en: <https://www.google.es/landing/activate/home/>
- [11] E. Martínez y A. Ramírez, "Una mirada desde el desarrollo de la inteligencia emocional por medio de las artes plásticas en segundo de primaria". Revista Boletín Redipe, vol. 10 no. 3, pp. 192-201, 2021. Disponible en: <https://revista.redipe.org/index.php/1/article/view/1228>

[12] S. Bernal y A. Ramírez, “Optimización del aprendizaje del inglés en niños de primaria con el uso de Duolingo”. Revista Boletín Redipe, vol. 9 no. 4, pp. 232-249, 2020. Disponible en:

<https://revista.redipe.org/index.php/1/article/view/966/874>

[13] Hurtado, “Investigación holística”. Instituto Universitario de Tecnología Caripito – Sypal Caracas:, 2000

[14] L. Camargo y A. Ramírez, “El huerto escolar, una apuesta ecológica para afianzar la escritura en inglés con niños de primaria”. Revista Boletín Redipe, vol. 9, no. 5, pp. 127-142, 2021. Disponible en:

<https://revista.redipe.org/index.php/1/article/view/981>