

ELT Collaborative Materials: A Pedagogical Proposal for Paraguay

Materiales colaborativos para la
enseñanza de lengua inglesa: una
propuesta pedagógica para Paraguay

Original Research Article




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Submission: october 10, 2024

Accepted: december 03, 2024

Published: december 04, 2024

How to cite this article:

Cantero Cabrera, Rolando. «Materiales Colaborativos Para La enseñanza De Lengua Inglesa: Una Propuesta pedagógica Para Paraguay». Enletawa Journal, vol. 17, n.º 2, diciembre de 2024,  <https://doi.org/10.19053/uptc.2011835X.18630>

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Abstract

This project examines the efficacy and applicability of providing pedagogical materials to English language educators in Paraguay. The proposed materials are designed to enhance language proficiency, critical thinking, an understanding of the relationship between global and local perspectives on language and culture, empathy, and social awareness among students in Paraguay. The project was conducted in the departments of Alto Paraná and Caaguazú with nine in-service English teachers from public and private schools and teacher training institutes. The research encompasses the following cities: Ciudad del Este, Presidente Franco, Minga Guazú, Coronel Oviedo, and San José de los Arroyos. The instruments utilized to gather the data necessary for this qualitative study were surveys, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews. The study was based on the principles of participatory action research and collaborative design of materials, a process known as co-design. The results underscore the effectiveness and relevance of designing materials in collaboration with English language teachers and adding linguistic aspects of locality and cultural components.

Keywords: ELT, pedagogical materials, collaborative materials.

Resumen

En este proyecto se analiza la eficiencia y relevancia de la implementación de materiales pedagógicos para profesores de inglés en Paraguay. Los materiales propuestos pretenden mejorar la proficiencia del idioma, el pensamiento crítico, perspectivas glocales de lenguaje y cultura, empatía y conciencia social entre estudiantes paraguayos. Este proyecto fue conducido en los departamentos de Alto Paraná y Caaguazú con 9 profesores de inglés en servicio, de colegios públicos, privados e institutos de formación docente. Las ciudades que se tomaron en cuenta en la investigación son Ciudad del Este, Presidente Franco, Minga Guazú, Coronel Oviedo y San José de los Arroyos. Los instrumentos utilizados para recoger la información requerida para este estudio cualitativo fueron encuestas, grupo focal y entrevista semiestructurada. El estudio se basó en la investigación de acción participativa y diseño colaborativo de materiales (codiseño). Los resultados subrayan la eficiencia y relevancia de diseñar materiales pedagógicos mediante la colaboración de profesores de inglés y añadiendo aspectos lingüísticos de localidad y componentes culturales.

Palabras clave: enseñanza de lengua inglesa, materiales pedagógicos, materiales colaborativos.

Ñemombyky

Ko tembikuaareka oheka pe tembipuru mbo'epyrã jejapo joaju Inglés Ñe'ẽ ñembo'épe mbo'ehára kuérape guarã Paraguay-pe, ombohováí haña mba'eichapa ikatu ojehecha porãve peteĩ “enfoque inclusivo” ha “contexto-pe”. Jahecháva jepi, Inglés Ñe'ẽ ñembo'e oñepyruvaekue tetãnguéra ambue oñe'ẽva inglés-pe, ombojerovia haña hína umi “norma de hablantes nativos” ha ñembo'e omotenondéva pe “gramática”. Ha'eve, inglés ñembo'e oparupi, ojavoka hína peteĩ mba'e pyahu, upea oikove América Latina-pe, ojeheka hína “pedagogías” ojehechauka haña umi “realidad local”. Oñemopyendáva hína “Global Englishes”, ha “Inglés como Lengua Franca-pe”, ko tembikuaareka ojavota tembipuru mbo'epyrã mbo'eharakuéra paraguajo ndive ojehecha haña umi “perspectiva dominante” ha “narrativas coloniales” oĩva hína umi “recurso tradicional” Inglés Ñe'ẽ ñembo'epe. Umi tembipuru joaju ojevapóva ohechauka hína ñe'ẽ arandu, “pensamiento crítico”, “conciencia social” ha “empatía”, ombojoaju hína mbo'eharakuéra ha estudiante kuéra ha'eve umi “agente de cambio”. Oñemohendáva hína heta Paraguay távape, oñemba'apo Alto Paraná ha Caaguazú-pe, porundy mbo'eharakuéra ndive oĩva mbo'ehao “pública” ha “privada-pe”, ko “investigación-acción participativa” oipuru “encuestas, grupos focales” ha “entrevistas semi-estructuradas” ojevapo haña “recursos pedagógicos”. Ko tembiapo ojechauka umi mba'e ndojepoiva Inglés Ñe'ẽ ñembo'épe ha upéicha avei omotenonde pe “diseño colaborativo de materiales”, ojevapóvaekue mbo'eháara kuéra ndive omohenda haña pe táva ñe'ẽ ha táva arandu. Ko tembikuaareka, oĩva peteĩ “Programa de Maestría, Universidad Pedagógica ha Tecnológica de Colombia (UPTC)-pe”, oipytyvõ Inglés Ñe'ẽ ñembo'e ñembopyahu ha ombojerovia peteĩ “enfoque humanista” ha “reflexivo” oipytyvõva umi mbo'ehára ha temimbo'e-kuéra ikatu hañaicha oiko pe “cambio social”.

Ñe'ẽ Mandu'apy: diseño colaborativo de materiales, ingleses globales, glocalidad, justicia social en la educación, materiales de ELT socialmente responsables.

Introduction

The field of English Language Teaching (ELT) originated in inner-circle English-speaking countries, focusing on the perspectives of native speakers. However, as English has become a global language, there is an increasing demand for diverse perspectives in ELT, especially in Latin America. This has led to a shift away from imported teaching methods towards more accessible and humanistic approaches that reflect local realities.

In this context, ELT materials design is becoming a collaborative movement, encouraging educators to become active designers rather than passive consumers of materials. This involvement can foster learner autonomy and promote equitable and inclusive education. This research aims to create a series of pedagogical materials for English teachers in Paraguay in collaboration with local educators. By integrating their insights, the project seeks to develop resources that go beyond traditional communicative skills and emphasize critical and reflective thinking.

This initiative diverges from top-down approaches that often ignore local voices, focusing instead on responsive materials that empower teachers and students. Rooted in the author's academic research and belief in the transformative potential of English language education, the project aims to cultivate agents of change within communities and to enhance their engagement with the world.

This project is not only the result of my academic research and participation in the Master's Program in Language Teaching at the Pedagogical and Technological University of Colombia (UPTC, by its acronym in Spanish), but also stems from my long-held belief that English language teaching should empower teachers, students, and communities. I believe that

through critical engagement with society, English language education can help create agents of change who are capable of positively impacting their world and shaping their reality.

English language proficiency is an asset in the interconnected world, but it can also perpetuate colonial agendas. In Latin America, particularly in Paraguay, there is a growing critique of the disconnect between English language teaching and local realities. ELT materials often reinforce colonial narratives, marginalize diverse perspectives and fail to meet the needs of local educators and learners. The author's research focuses on collaborative ELT materials design with the aim of creating context-sensitive resources for Paraguay. A needs analysis with 32 teachers revealed significant limitations in addressing students' needs and cultural contexts.

The literature review highlighted the scarcity of initiatives focused on responsive ELT materials in Paraguay, Central and Latin America, to name a few. Many researchers such as Núñez-Pardo and Téllez-Téllez (2017), Ramos-Holguín and Aguirre-Morales (2024), Mosquera-Pérez (2024), among others, have carried out significant studies in the Colombian language research field. At the international level, we have Tomlinson (2011), considered one of the world's leading experts in the development of language learning materials, Tomlinson explains that adaptable materials allow educators to tailor resources to meet the specific needs of their students, thereby enhancing their effectiveness. In the Paraguayan context, Cazuriaga Flores and Villalba Acosta (2024) conducted a needs analysis of English language learning materials in a public school in Asunción, Paraguay. The study found that most participants were dissatisfied with traditional ELT materials, highlighting the need for more dynamic and engaging materials. The research suggests that while typical ELT materials can improve students' English

communicative skills, more dynamic and engaging materials should be integrated to better meet the specific interests and needs of learners.

The materials of this research were designed with flexibility in mind to accommodate various teaching styles and classroom dynamics. The findings underscore the urgent need for materials that reflect both global and local perspectives, empowering teachers to adopt responsible approaches in their classrooms. The research aims to bridge the gap between ELT practices and the social realities of Paraguayan communities, advocating for resources that foster critical engagement and address pressing social issues.

Context and Participants

The study involved the collaboration of 32 English teachers who volunteered to participate. It is important to note that the participants were not recruited randomly. Participants were recruited using the following principles of selective sampling. According to Marshall (1996), selective sampling is one of the multiple existing approaches to choosing participants. However, while other approaches such as snowball sampling and convenience sampling, to mention a few, are somewhat less meticulous due to the informality underlying such approaches, selective sampling is more reliable in the sense that it allows researchers to select the most appropriate population.

Bearing in mind that in selective sampling researchers have the freedom to invite the most appropriate participants to join the study, I extended, through email, WhatsApp and Facebook websites regarding TESOL and EFL, invitations to English teachers from Paraguay. Originally, I sent around 100 invitations for educators to join my study. However, at the end 32 of them responded, from which 26 accepted the invitation to also analyze the initial version of the materials.

Since 32 English teachers accepted my invitation to firstly collaborate to decide the relevant topics for the construction of the materials, and then 26 expressed their willingness to implement them, I can say that my group of participants consisted of two big groups, one of 32 English teachers who contributed in diverse ways to the construction and piloting of the resources and one of 26 who manifested being willing to apply the materials in the respective educational institutions in which they work. Although in the end only 9 English teachers actually implemented the resources due to several constraints they faced, including time and a pre-established set of institutional actions to perform, said number is still really meaningful because these educators work in different public and private institutions spread out in various regions of the Paraguayan territory including Ciudad del Este, Presidente Franco, Minga Guazú, Coronel Oviedo and San José de Los Arroyos.

Methodology

This research was framed within the qualitative tradition as it attempted to explore and understand how a collaborative approach informs the development of English language teaching materials that promote global and local perspectives, empowering teachers to adopt responsible approaches in their classrooms.

In an effort to address the existing gap between English language teaching materials and the sociocultural realities of Paraguayan students and teachers, this research used a methodology that was selected to ensure that the materials developed with the collaborating English teachers and students would not only be pedagogically sound, but also deeply reflective of the local context and its unique needs. Therefore, and having these considerations in mind, the specific

approach that was selected for the development of this study was a Collaborative Design Process (Co-Design) that also combined principles of “Participatory Action Research” (PAR).

So, to carry out the design process, and intervention, this study relied on principles of a collaborative design approach, as highlighted above. Collaborative design processes are particularly valuable in educational research as they focus on the insights and experiences of those directly affected by educational materials (Stringer, 2013).

Here, it becomes also essential to acknowledge that since this study was moved by a genuine interest in having in-service English teachers from Paraguay collaborating in the materials design process, the research process, and the specific approach selected for its implementation, was rooted in participatory action research (PAR). Methodologically speaking, PAR is one of the many existing approaches to research that strongly and continuously emphasizes the active involvement of participants in the research process to address real-world problems (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000).

Data Collection

Step 1: Needs Analysis to Justify the Need of Designing Responsive ELT Materials

I undertook a two-step data collection process. The first step of this process consisted, in overall terms, of undertaking an initial needs analysis and an initial literature review to confirm that initiatives like this were rare but needed.

The overall intention of the survey initially used for the needs analysis was to determine whether or not English teachers from Paraguay, i.e., potential collaborators, were satisfied with the ELT materials they were using or have used in their professional careers. It is quite interesting that while a considerable number of teachers expressed partial satisfaction with the materials available, as they delved deeper into the survey, they began to express more critical and reflective

views about the ELT materials they were familiar with or had historically been exposed to Paraguay due to governmental and institutional regulations. The set of findings derived from such a process was complemented by the implementation of a second survey that sought to expand on the initial findings. These actions, in turn, helped to determine that although there are a considerable number of ELT textbooks produced either by major publishers or local designers in the country, more initiatives focused on materials design are still needed.

In fact, carrying out the second stage for this first part, which consisted of an initial literature review aimed at examining the number of initiatives that have similarly made efforts to create ELT responsive materials, revealed that although materials design has gained momentum as a separate field of knowledge within the ELT spectrum, it has rarely been developed by teachers, indicating that there is a lack of ELT materials that aim to promote the development of the four communicative skills while also promoting critical thinking and awareness among the learners. In turn, these actions have definitely made it noticeable that having such kinds of resources, and by extension this thesis, is something worth doing.

Step 2: Gathering and Analyzing Feedback from Participants Post-Testing of the Initial Resource Version

After the initial stage of data collection, which firmly laid the foundation for this initiative, the next phase focused on gathering feedback after the materials were ready to be implemented in educational contexts in Paraguay. Two data collection instruments were employed: a teachers' survey and a "cycle talk." While surveys are often associated with quantitative research, I designed this one to include both closed-ended and open-ended questions, making it primarily qualitative and suitable for the purposes of this study. The survey was designed to capture the initial reactions and insights of English teachers regarding the relevance and significance of the materials in their classrooms.

The second tool, the cycle talk, was inspired by the traditional focus group method in which participants respond to semi-structured questions. However, to honor Paraguay's oral tradition and incorporate decolonial principles, I adapted this method and named it the “cycle talk.” The goal was to create an informal, pressure-free environment where the teachers could freely express their thoughts, drawing on their personal experiences without the constraints that often accompany formal research settings. This approach not only aligns with the decolonial theory present throughout the thesis but also fosters an open dialogue that reflects the values of inclusion and cultural respect.

By combining the survey and the cycle talk, both instruments complemented each other, offering a holistic understanding of the materials' impact. While the survey provided initial insights, the cycle talk allowed for a deeper exploration of the issues raised and gave teachers the opportunity to expand on their thoughts. The use of these two methods ensured a rich, nuanced set of data, essential for understanding the full scope of the study. To design these instruments, I drew on the guidelines of prominent researchers. For the survey, Dörnyei's (2014) recommendations were particularly useful, especially his emphasis on recognizing the limitations of surveys, such as the risk of superficial answers. Acknowledging these limitations, I decided to incorporate the cycle talk to ensure a more comprehensive and in-depth data collection process.

Data Analysis

Although data were continually gathered throughout the study, initially to justify the need for this initiative and later to explore participants' views and insights regarding the collaboratively built materials, I consistently adhered to the principles of thematic analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Macías & Mosquera-Pérez, 2024). This approach involved three key steps: A) Transcription and Familiarization, B) Coding and Theme Development, and C) Thematic

Interpretation. However, it is important to note that different levels of analysis were conducted depending on the stage of data collection.

In the first stage, which involved conducting a needs analysis and supporting it with an initial literature review to establish the study's foundation, I focused primarily on the first two steps, transcription and familiarization, followed by coding and theme development. These steps were sufficient to demonstrate the need of initiatives like this. However, in the second stage of data collection, which occurred after the materials were shared and analyzed by in-service English teachers, all three steps of thematic analysis were followed.

Undertaking the full thematic analysis at this stage ensured that I could not only justify the collaborative experience of designing ELT materials but also identify patterns in the data provided by the participants.

Findings and Conclusions

Category 1: Paraguayan English Teachers Informing ELT Materials Development: Amplifying Other Stakeholders' Voices

Historically, ELT materials have been shaped by dominant English-speaking countries, specifically the United States and England, reflecting their cultural and linguistic norms. However, as recent scholarship (Gómez-Rodríguez, 2015; Núñez-Pardo, 2022) has argued, the growing call for localized pedagogical practices in ELT urges a departure from such one-size-fits-all approaches. This study contributes, therefore, to this critical discourse by centering the

voices of Paraguayan English teachers who, through collaborative inquiry, express a desire for context-sensitive materials that reflect their unique sociolinguistic realities.

To start with, it is important to highlight that the first level of analysis of the study shed light on the fact that whereas ELT traditional materials have played and continue to play a determining role in ELT connected processes, most of the collaborators felt that these “materials are not very didactic”, that “They are very abstract” (Sofía, research collaborator # 6. Inst 2) and that most of them are “very outdated and lack cultural content and context” (Andrés, research collaborator # 7. Inst 2). In fact, these were not the only feelings that most of the English collaborators had toward ELT materials. Whereas the initial motives why they were partially dissatisfied with typical ELT resources were linked to an absence of didactic and contextual content activities, a couple of collaborators indicated that these resources often overlook interdisciplinary subjects and make an evident effort to merely promote either American or British culture. In this regard, Andrés, the Research collaborator #7 and Samuel, the Research collaborator #17 expressed the following respectively “I want a material that is more interdisciplinary, that helps us carry out projects with students (Andrés, Research collaborator #7, inst 2), “I agree with some of the ideas other English teachers have expressed, and in addition, they promote culture from a superficial and not critical perspective, which is something quite distant from our Paraguayan context”(Samuel, Research collaborator #17, inst 2)

As expressed by the collaborators, traditional ELT and by extension EFL (English as a foreign language) models have promoted delocalized (Álvarez-Valencia & Valencia, 2023) views of English teaching and learning. By extension, traditional ELT materials have predominantly focused on general views of culture and language, leaving aside the particularities as well as societal issues and dynamics of territories where English is taught. This assertion was not only pointed out by these collaborators but has also been highlighted by scholars coming from

different ELT backgrounds for whom ELT has failed to address the socio-cultural realities of the 21st century. Moreover, it seems that these attitudes continue to be promoted by the ELT materials available in the field.

Interestingly, the previous notions have begun to gain momentum and be more widely discussed in ELT worldwide. Al Tarawneh (2023), Baker (quoted by Mosquera, 2024), Bonilla-Medina (2023), Castañeda-Peña et al. (2022) Macías (2010), Mahboob (2011), Matsuda (2012), Macías and Mosquera-Pérez (2024), Pennycook (2006), to mention a few, have been inviting other scholars and English practitioner to diversify the field by analyzing alternative viewpoints in ELT, and by undertake actions that may lead to a real societal change not only in terms of ELT but overall. Significantly, when participating in this initiative, the collaborators of this study declared they thought that current ELT materials should be different to those traditionally imposed. Felipe the research collaborator # 11 and Paula the research collaborator # 12 manifested that

Although the books provided by ministries and publishers can be useful as a foundation, it is essential for teachers to make an effort to incorporate a variety of perspectives and encourage critical thinking about Anglo-Saxon cultures to offer a more comprehensive and equitable education” (Felipe, Research collaborator #11, inst 2) because in Paraguay they believe they need “materials adapted to the reality of Paraguayan youth, who know little about the global world, and to incorporate Paraguayan culture into English texts for better interaction, interpretation, and assimilation of the content (Paula, Research collaborator #12, inst 2)

These interpretations offered by the research collaborators are highly interesting in the sense that as active agents of their own educational contexts they know the particularities, needs, and interests of their respective educational communities. The participants did not only remark the need of detaching from traditional Anglosaxon views toward culture and English. Furthermore, they also argued about the need to have ELT materials that addressed glocal and

intersectional particularities of English and culture. This position was similarly reaffirmed by the research collaborators # 13 and #15 whose pseudonyms were Martín and Javier. To these collaborators, traditional ELT materials mostly “promote culture from a superficial and non-critical perspective is something that is quite far removed from our Paraguayan context” (inst 2) and “although it is essential to teach English as a foreign language while considering the students' immediate context with materials that align with their personal experiences” (inst 2), indicating, therefore, that there is an increasing need to make efforts to design ELT materials that address alternatives within the field.

The first level of analysis led to the realization that although these collaborating ELT teachers from Paraguay had a high level of knowledge and expertise with ELT materials, many of them felt that these resources were not fully adequate for their particular context. A second level of analysis served to identify some of the potential themes they thought should be addressed in the material design process I would be undertaking. When inquired about these aspects, many topics and enriching notions appeared. Some of the most remarkable potential topics pointed out by the research collaborators had to do with English as a tool for transformation, Standard English vs Guaringlish, English as a Lingua Franca, Paraguayan Culture, and Anglophone Cultures to name a few. In the following graphic retrieved from the survey I give a more detailed account of these elements:

9. ¿Cuáles de los siguientes temas crees que deberían ser considerados al diseñar materiales para la enseñanza del inglés?

33 respuestas

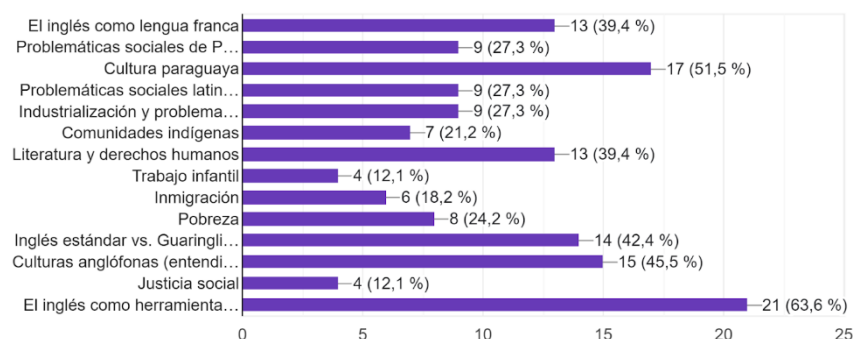


Figure 1. Research collaborator's answers

Source: own elaboration.

Most of the research collaborators indicated that they would like to have ELT materials which transcend the “objectifying” (Reagan, 2004) and “instrumentalizing” (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) view of English as a product and that use the language as a means for social transformation. When asked about their selections, most of the research collaborators stated that they believed that having ELT materials tackling these topics “would help students become good citizens who are aware of their rights and responsibilities, as well as to identify more with their culture” (Carlos, Research collaborator #19, inst 2). Additionally, the research collaborator # 26, Claudia, added that

these topics can serve to develop a critical perspective of our country and as Latin Americans to understand where we stand linguistically. We need to know why we emigrate, who emigrates, and when emigration is necessary or not. Therefore, if students understand that those who are poor in our country are notably those without higher education, where completing high school is now just the basics, they can better appreciate the importance of the Guaraní language and recognize that a significant percentage of Paraguayans are bilingual. On the other hand, understanding the differences in Anglo-Saxon cultures, and why Europe or the U.S. are so different, is crucial.(Claudia, Research collaborator #26, inst 2)

Suggesting thus, that amplifying the selection of topics when designing ELT materials can contribute to resignifying ELT to better and more efficiently address societal, cultural, and linguistic circumstances taking place in today’s world.

Undoubtedly, the research collaborators' initial participation suggested that these ELT resources integrating the aforementioned themes and characteristics could significantly enhance students' cultural awareness and sensitivity, fostering discussions rooted in social and cultural relevance. The collaborators emphasized the importance of materials that accurately reflect the diverse linguistic, social, and cultural contexts of various communities, which in turn could boost students' motivation and engagement in English classes. However, they also recognized the need for professional development initiatives, such as workshops and collaborative meetings, aimed at equipping teachers with the skills and strategies needed to effectively implement these new materials in their classrooms, as shown below:

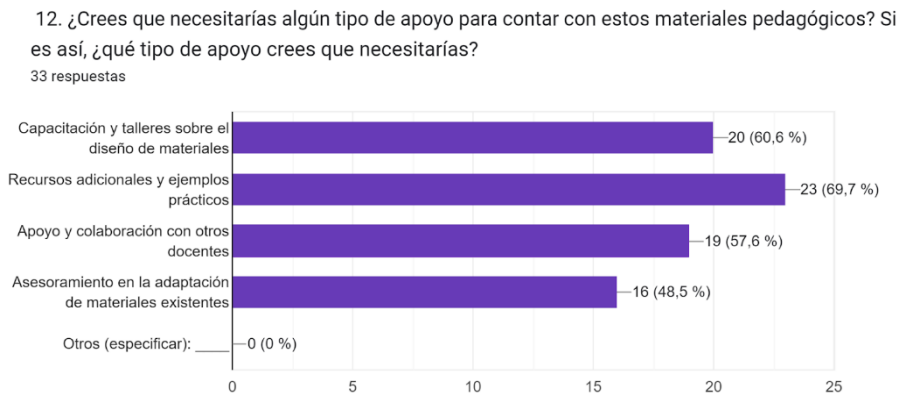


Figure 2. Research collaborator’s answers

Source: own elaboration.

These findings indicate a clear recognition of the gap between existing materials and the dynamic needs of contemporary learners, which requires a shift in the way resources are conceived and used in ELT. In this line, the data collected from the initial stage of the project revealed a pressing need for alternatives to the conventional ELT materials that have historically

dominated the landscape. While the collaborating English teachers have relied on established pedagogical resources, they expressed a desire for materials that extend beyond mere language mechanics to encompass broader themes related to society, culture, and identity. This call for more inclusive and contextualized materials reflects a global trend within ELT circles, where there is increasing advocacy for resources that appreciate local perspectives and challenge the dominance of Anglophone cultures.

In the field, prominent scholars such as Gómez-Rodríguez (2015) and Núñez-Pardo (2022, 2023) exemplify the movement towards creating materials that honor local narratives and challenge traditional views. These scholars advocate for an approach that respects and integrates the complexities of local identities and experiences into the ELT curriculum. The research researcher who participated in this study echoed this sentiment, emphasizing that while it is important to acknowledge standard views of English and English-speaking cultures, there should also be a focus on a more local perspective (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). This perspective advocates for the recognition of diverse cosmogonies, epistemologies, and identities, and ensures that the teaching of English reflects the realities of the communities in which it is practiced. Additionally, the initial stage of the findings revealed that the collaborator Paraguayan English teachers in this study were eager to incorporate their culture into ELT materials. They believed this integration can instill a sense of responsibility and awareness regarding sociocultural and sociolinguistic issues among students. Yet, they do not advocate for the exclusion of traditional views. Rather, they seek a balanced approach that harmonizes local and global perspectives in English language education.

This first section of data analysis also highlighted a shared understanding among the research collaborators that traditional ELT resources often lack didactic quality and relevance, making them feel disconnected from the sociocultural contexts of their students. Many of the

collaborators noted that conventional materials tend to be abstract, outdated, and overly focused on American or British culture, which does not adequately address the realities of Paraguayan society. This dissatisfaction points to a broader critique within the ELT community, where scholars argue that traditional approaches have failed to adapt to the sociocultural complexities of the 21st century. In line with this critique, numerous researchers including Baker (quoted by Mosquera, 2024), Bonilla-Medina et al. (2021), and Pennycook (2006) have called for the diversification of ELT by integrating alternative perspectives that reflect the changing realities of language learners worldwide. Participants of this study, as previously expressed, echoed these sentiments and advocated for materials that are not only educational, but also transformative in nature.

In conclusion, the insights retrieved from the collaborator Paraguayan English teachers partaking in this initial section of the project indicated a clear path forward for the development of ELT materials that are relevant, culturally sensitive, and inclusive. They envisioned materials that transcend traditional frameworks, promoting critical thinking and fostering a deeper understanding of local and global contexts from a reflective and critical position. These findings served as the foundational element in guiding the design of the ELT resources conceived in this research.

Category 2: Collaborative and Responsive ELT Materials: What the Paraguayan English Teachers Think and Feel About Them

The first category clearly established the basis for involving collaborating English teachers in the eventual design process. It emphasized the need for ELT materials that go beyond a skills-based and purely linguistic focus. In contrast, this second subcategory gives an account of the insights and experiences of these collaborating English teachers as they applied the designed ELT materials within their respective classroom environments.

After the implementation of the materials in real classroom settings, the collaborating English teachers reported finding these resources “very effective and appropriate for the context of our youth” (Sofía, Research collaborator #5, inst 3) and “easy to combine with other different areas” (Claudia, Research collaborator #26, inst 3). Additionally, while Lucas, the research collaborator # 9 manifested that he “found the presentation of the material on the importance of Paraguayan culture excellent as it touched on what most identifies Paraguayans: their language, Jopara, Guarañol; tereré, a very traditional drink with herbal remedies, and chipa, a typical food that is always present and delicious on any occasion” (Research collaborator #9, inst 3), on his part, Martín, the research collaborator #13 declared that

It is striking that the materials are not focused on vocabulary or grammar, although students can still learn new terms and syntactic constructions through them. What stands out in each document is the theme, whether social, cultural, or sociocultural. These topics enable the creation of a moment for reflection and analysis, which later translates into written and oral production as well. (Martín, Research collaborator #13, inst 3)

Indicating, in general terms, that they had a positive view of the ELT material designed.

The aforementioned research collaborators were not the only ones to sustain having found the ELT materials highly beneficial and enriching for their English lessons. For instance, Manuel, the research collaborator #21 argued that he found the materials quite interesting “because these allow for the development of different language skills. They make it possible to incorporate vocabulary, learn the pronunciation of words, and read about various topics. Additionally, they require both oral and written production” (Research collaborator #21, inst 3). In this regard, Manuel also shared that he liked the resources offered because “while a globalized perspective is important, it's essential to connect with the environment our students live in. Students feel more connected to situations that seem possible or imaginable to them, due to their proximity or exposure” (Research collaborator #21, inst 3), something which was further

reaffirmed by Paula who stated that she definitely enjoyed the process because the resources made the “students feel part of the process and identified with their context. They were more engaged with the mind maps because they understood the text clearly, as it related to their reality, especially since most of them are beginners” (Research collaborator #12, Oral talk)

As the research collaborator kept reflecting about the process, they held the idea that the ELT resources piloted with their help were beneficial due to the fact that the “the students were hooked. They really enjoyed it” (Laura, Research collaborator #28, inst 3). Likewise, it was equally highlighted that the ELT materials designed based on the overall experience made “students felt like part of the process and connected with their context. With the mind maps, they were more participative because they understood the text clearly, as it related to their reality, especially since most of them are beginner” (Laura, Research collaborator #28, inst 3). To further illustrate, the research collaborator #23 also commented that the “students got hooked in the lessons. They participated actively because the topics and materials were highly catchy for them. They enjoyed working with the topics proposed” (Luis, Research collaborator #23, Oral talk). Put differently, “the materials set the ground for promoting alternative practices in the classroom because said material also covered contexts from other places, making it both local, as it talks about our country, and global, as it discusses other countries” (Carlos, Research collaborator #19, Oral talk).

As just displayed, after the implementation of the ELT materials a considerable number of the research collaborators agreed that these resources could show the students a different yet enriching perspective of English teaching and learning. By integrating themes that are not commonly born in mind but that have the potential to make people critically reflect about societal, cultural, and linguistic issues, the resources were impactful in the way that “some of them reflected and highlighted what Paraguay’s customs truly are” (Manuel, Research

collaborator #21, inst 3) and triggered reflection and thought provoking discussions because said resources did not only address Paraguayan culture, but also cultural aspects of other communities such as India, something which is not really common in ELT related materials and activities. Overall, manifested Carlos, “it's a great way to invite the students to learn about other cultures” (Research collaborator #19, Oral talk), cultures different to traditional Anglosaxon communities.

It is important to note that while most of the findings from the implementation stage of the materials were positive, the collaborating teachers also suggested areas for future improvement. Some mentioned the potential for including content related to other languages, such as Portuguese, given its relevance in the region. Others recommended integrating more specific cultural content, such as tourism, medicinal practices, or the biographies of notable national figures. These suggestions indicate a desire for materials that are even more contextually relevant and linguistically inclusive.

In one particular comment, Martín claimed that he would not propose significant changes for future versions of the materials. However, he did state that he would

suggest creating them with a more detailed focus on linguistic and cultural aspects of the regions where they are applied, as previously mentioned” (Martín, Research collaborator #13, Oral talk). In a related stance, Paula indicated that “in the materials for beginner levels, I would add more short exercises before reaching the reflection stage. For example, comparative charts between India and Paraguay or researching countries with two official languages, and comparing a Paraguayan celebration with a foreign one. This would obviously require more hours and more extensive planning. However, after analyzing each group of students, it is an alternative worth considering. (Paula, Research collaborator #12, Oral talk)

From the overall analysis, it can be affirmed that the materials were well received by both the collaborating English teachers and by the students with whom they tested such ELT resources. Although I have exemplified here the findings from the testing phase, these materials seem to have facilitated a more experiential learning experience in which students feel identified.

Furthermore, they seemed to stimulate critical thinking by exposing students to foreign English-speaking cultures while respecting linguistic and cultural differences.

These findings are consistent with those obtained in other studies. The studies conducted by Núñez-Pardo and Téllez-Téllez (2015), Núñez-Pardo et al. (2017), Núñez-Pardo and Téllez-Téllez (2021) suggest that when individuals are provided with the opportunity to create and related with ELT materials that challenge historically imposed notions of the English language and culture individuals have the opportunity to engage in more meaningful and critical classes and discussions by means of English. Therefore, continued collaborative design processes with more teachers and students should be fostered.

In closing, the findings of this section highlight that while English teachers, such as the research collaborators who willingly participated in this study, have traditionally had to adhered to conventional ELT materials due to the lack of resources that integrate influential aspects of culture and language, the integration of their voices, knowledge, and expertise in the materials design process can lead to obtaining enriching and remarkable results. This experience shows that by valuing and actively involving English teachers, significant advancements in the quality of ELT materials can be achieved.

Overall, this endeavor to co-create ELT materials with collaborators who are eager to promote an alternative perspective and challenge the conventional approaches in qualitative research within ELT has proven to be enlightening because although some contributions have aimed to incorporate related academic positions to better reflect the realities of those involved, there has been a notable dearth of efforts that truly listen to the voices of English teachers and challenge the traditional top-down methodologies. Thus, this thesis not only contributes to the contexts of Paraguay or Colombia but also serves as a broader contribution to the Latin

American region, advocating for collaborative “English otherwise” views and efforts within ELT pedagogy.

Implicaciones éticas

El autor declara no tener implicaciones éticas.

Declaración de fuentes de financiación

El autor declara que la fuente de financiación fue el convenio de cooperación internacional suscrito entre el programa Nacional de Becas de Postgrado en el Exterior para el Fortalecimiento de la Investigación, la Innovación y la Educación ‘Don Carlos Antonio López’ BECAL, dependiente del Ministerio de Hacienda de la República del Paraguay y la Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia (UPTC).

Conflictos de intereses

El autor declara no tener conflictos de intereses.

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