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## The virtual experience of the course Drama for English as Second Language at the Sede del Pacífico of the Universidad de Costa Rica

La Experiencia virtual del curso Drama para Inglés como segunda lengua en la Sede del Pacífico de la Universidad de Costa Rica

Jonathan Salas-Alvarado

Sede del Pacífico  
Universidad de Costa Rica  
Puntarenas, Costa Rica  
johathan.salas@ucr.ac.cr

**ABSTRACT:** This article systematizes the experience lived by the teacher and the students of the course Drama for English as Second Language during the first semester of 2020. This semester was particularly marked by the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The article provides definitions of terms used during the course but most importantly it deals with the adaptation process the teacher went through to adjust the contents, activities, and instruction of this course to a new virtual reality that had never been experienced by any of the participants (including the teacher). An important part of the course is to approach the participants (11 English Teaching senior students) to different drama and theater techniques that can be used in the English classroom. So, the article also mentions the activities that were implemented, the way they were developed and it offers the perception of the participants about the course itself, the job done by the teaching when adapting the contents, and their criteria regarding the activities presented so that they, as future teachers, can talk about the teaching potential those activities have.

**KEYWORDS:** Drama, Pandemic, Virtual education, English, Teaching

**RESUMEN:** Este artículo sistematiza la experiencia vivida por el docente y los alumnos del curso Drama para Inglés como Segunda Lengua durante el primer semestre de 2020. Este semestre estuvo particularmente marcado por el inicio de la pandemia COVID-19. El artículo proporciona definiciones de términos utilizados durante el curso, pero lo más importante es el proceso de adaptación por el que pasó el docente para ajustar los contenidos, actividades e instrucción de este curso a una nueva realidad virtual que nunca había experimentado ninguno de los participantes (incluido el profesor). Una parte importante del curso es acercar a los participantes (11 estudiantes de último año de la carrera de Enseñanza del Inglés) a diferentes técnicas de drama y teatro que se pueden utilizar en el aula de inglés. Por otra parte, el artículo también menciona las actividades que se implementaron, la forma en que se desarrollaron y ofrece la percepción de los participantes sobre el curso en sí, el trabajo que realiza el docente a la hora de adecuar los contenidos y sus criterios respecto a las actividades presentadas para que, como futuros profesores, pueden hablar sobre el potencial didáctico que tienen estas actividades.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Drama, Pandemia, Educación virtual, Inglés, Enseñanza

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## Introduction

The 2020 pandemic provoked by the COVID-19 reached pretty much every single corner of the planet and, without a doubt, affected every human action, education was not an exception. Thousands of educational institutions both public and private starting from kindergartens up to universities all over the world were forced to put their face-to-face activities on hold and reinvent themselves to continue providing educational services to their students while protecting their health as well as the health of those who work for them, teachers and administrative staff.

On March 20th, the Universidad de Costa Rica (UCR) announced the suspension of all of its face-to-face activities from that day up to April 13th to evaluate the progress of the COVID-19 disease in the country. However, after some time, the authorities decided to continue working remotely for the rest of the first semester. This marked the beginning of a new chapter in the life of this important educational institution; it opened the window to virtual education. All courses in all campuses had to be virtualized and teleworking as well as distance education began.

The process has not been easy for anyone. In the specific case of the UCR, Oviedo (2020) points out that the institution had been using a virtual platform for the last 10 years: “Mediación Virtual”. This platform has been used as the official site where teachers and students have interacted to take advantage of the teaching resources it offers; nevertheless, its use had not been excessive. Once the UCR decided to migrate to virtual education all courses had to use this platform and this generated a high demand in its use which brought a huge challenge for the department in charge of it.

One of the courses that started working virtually during the first semester of 2020 was LM-1364: Drama for English as a Second Language. This course belongs to the School of Modern Languages of the UCR and it is part of the B.A in English Teaching major, students in the Pacific Campus have to take this class during the first semester of their senior year. According to the syllabus of the course, it is an introduction to the use of dramatic techniques for teaching English as a second language. The idea, as presented on the syllabus, is also to approach students to different plays, amateur, and professional ones, to know their characteristics, and to be able to discuss the topics they deal with.

Among the objectives of the course, it is possible to see that it aims students to get acquainted with drama techniques to be used in the English classroom as well as with a small corpus of plays related to education. Also, by the end of the course, students are expected to be able to use drama techniques to teach English, think about teaching/learning processes through drama, and reflect on topics related to education, prejudice, and stereotypes on minority groups. In short, the English teaching students who take this course get exposed to different types of texts that help them understand not only the dramatic structure and its elements but also reflect on different issues. At the same time, students are presented with a set of different techniques related to drama or theater that would help them improve their methodologies in the English class.

When reading about the course, it is possible to think that it was never meant to be thought virtually. However, the health emergency the world was facing pushed the teacher and the students to look for different alternatives to reinvent themselves in a way that would be effective and that would guarantee the accomplishment of all the objectives presented on the syllabus.

As for this article, it intends to present the alternatives proposed by the teacher to cover the contents of the course over the first semester of 2020. There is also a review of the main concepts studied during the course so that all of the terms can be clear to guarantee a better understanding of the process and the activities developed. At the same time, the students who were part of the course are given the chance to present their perceptions and opinions about two specific aspects: virtual education and its implications as well as class activities they were part of, the idea is that they can provide their point of view regarding those activities and that as future teachers, they can talk about the potential those techniques have when applied in the English classroom.

## Definition of terms

During the course, there were different techniques and activities presented to the students. The main idea was not just to present the concepts or techniques but to request them to put them into practice so that they could make sure of their effectiveness,

their advantages, and their disadvantages. Before referring to the specific methodology applied in the course, it is important to go over some of the main concepts and definitions.

### **Drama/Theater**

When talking about these two concepts, many misconceptions may arise. Actually, in many cases, they have been used interchangeably. The truth is that they are not necessarily the same. On one side, drama refers to a written play; on the other hand, the theater is best related to an onstage production. However, for this article, both terms are going to be considered synonyms. That been said, Salas (2017) considers drama as “an artistic activity whose general purpose cannot only be limited to mere entertainment” (p. 308). Indeed, drama’s exclusive purpose is not just to entertain. As with any other form of art, drama is meant to help the audience reflect on the messages or messages every play transmits.

There are a lot of different manifestations related to theater in different cultures. Guliyeva (2011) mentions forms such as “Turkish shadow puppets, Chinese opera, Greek Tragedy and comedy, traditional African storytelling and drumming, and fully-staged shows and performances” (p. 521). This author considers that independently from the style, in general, “performances have the potential to create magical and unforgettable moments for their audiences” (p. 521).

Regarding the use of drama in education, Uysal and Yavuz (2018) mention that it “can be defined as the activities which students portray themselves or act out as another person in an imaginary scenario” (p. 377). It is very important to emphasize what Ulldemolins (2014) points out: “by using drama in the classroom the goal is not to teach acting or performance skills, but it is presented as a that can be adapted and integrated to different subject areas” (p. 8). Indeed, using drama in the classroom does not refer to instructing students on acting but to use such techniques derived from drama in the classroom for the benefit of the students. In many cases, the techniques will need adaptation but that is one of the reasons why they are useful: they can be adapted easily to teach different contents.

When it comes to the specific use of drama or acting techniques in a language classroom, the benefits increase even more.

For instance, Uysal and Yavuz (2018) provide a set of good reasons why these techniques should be part of the language classroom. They consider that drama, among other things, “make possible for learners to express their ideas and emotions through gesture and facial expressions” (p. 377). At the same time, continue the authors, drama gives students the chance to exchange language and use it in a scene. Drama “promotes contextualized and authentic language use in a low stress and positive environment. Therefore, drama cultivates the development of learner’s emotions, social skills and participation in the community” (Uysal & Yavuz, 2018, p. 377).

On the other hand, Guliyeva (2011) mentions that if drama is used effectively, it can be beneficial not only for students’ intellectual skills but also for their emotional ones. This is true since drama activities are meant to help actors and actresses find the emotions and learn how to play with them in a way in which they can portray convincing characters. This is something that helps the individual improve his or her self-esteem and confidence. At the same time, it gives the person knowledge of the body, the gestures, the voice, and the movement. All this can eventually create an appropriate space for language to emerge naturally. Ulldemolins (2014) believes that “by using drama techniques to teach English, pupils get the opportunity to use the language meaningfully and appropriately, while the monotony of a conventional English class is broken and the syllabus transformed” (p. 11). Drama gives teachers the chance to transform the traditional language classroom in which the teacher has had the main role and has been in charge of approaching content to the students who have been passively receiving them. By implementing drama activities in the classroom, students can have more freedom to create their learning and improve their linguistic and social skills.

### **The use of puppets in the language class**

Whenever you hear the word puppet you might start thinking about some sort of a funny doll-like toy that is used to entertain children. In part, such thought is not wrong; however, the idea of puppets goes beyond that and their potential is not only limited to entertainment. Kröger and Nupponen (2019) define puppets as a:

Movable doll that a puppeteer manipulates. The body movements provide visual impressions: a puppet conveys emotions and thoughts through movement, for example, of its hands and head. A puppeteer can also give the puppet a voice. A puppet is an inanimate object that, in the hands of a puppeteer, comes to life. (p. 393)

So, it is an inanimate object that comes to life when used by somebody, the puppeteer. The person that uses it can create a complete world in the life of that object, he or she has the power to imagine and portray any type of story. There are different kinds of puppets such as hand puppets, finger puppets, rod puppets, marionettes, among others.

About the importance puppets might have in education, Insani (2017) considers puppets an effective medium in teaching, especially in the case of young learners. This use can be even more beneficial in the case of the language classroom since, according to Insani (2017) “puppet can help young learners to internalize language patterns, enhance listening skills, develop risk-taking skills and student confidence” (p. 683).

On the other hand, Remer and Tzuriel (2015) mention that many studies consider that using puppets might increase motivation in the learners. Also, the authors consider that the use of puppets can help learners to be able to express feelings and thoughts. This might be reached since the learners that interact with the puppets can connect with them and project ideas more easily. Many times, learners have problems when speaking in public since they are afraid to be seen and to be judged. When using a puppet to express themselves, students can hide behind the scenario and the one that is going to speak in front of others is the puppet. This disassociation might help the students to start gaining confidence so that one day it is them who speak in front of others with no problems.

Çağanağa and Kalmış (2015) see in puppets a tool that can be used by children or adults. They consider that since puppetry (the art of using puppets) is a visual one, it can be used to communicate with people who cannot read or write or who are unable to understand spoken language. Mentioning Piaget, the authors agree on the fact that “puppets play helps young children develop

creative and cognitive skills by forcing them to use their imagination. “They make up the roles, the rules, the situations, and the solutions” (Çağanağa & Kalmış, 2015, p. 3).

Puppets, continue Çağanağa and Kalmış (2015) are:

a type of three-dimensional symbolic art form and being able to move and speak. Because of these characteristics, it serves as a vehicle for transmitting knowledge through several senses, thereby providing an opportunity for a wide range of learning abilities.

These characteristics make them a powerful teaching tool. Di-yani (2011) as cited in Insani (2017) considers that puppets, used as the teaching media could help learners to develop language, have better learning, increasing their creativity, and improve social skills which eventually might improve the relationship within the families of those learners.

### **Storytelling in the language classroom**

Storytelling is probably one of the oldest human practices. It is how people transmitted ideas, thoughts, events, among others back then when paper, computers, or cellphones were not even part of anyone’s mindset. Ikramuddin (2017) mentioning Stanley and Dillinghan (2009) defines storytelling as “an oral activity to grab audience’s attention by using multisensory stirring emotion of an event in a story, it involves improvisation in telling a story, facial gestures, and body movement” (p. 17). McDury and Alterio (2003) as mentioned by Satriani (2019) define storytelling as an activity that is used to pass information from one person to another one or from a generation to the next one. Then, it is telling others what is in your mind, what is going on in your life, in someone else’s life, in your town, or anywhere else.

In many cases, storytelling has been used to instruct others or just to keep some piece of information alive. Then, it is possible to find the educational value it has always had. Indeed, this activity might bring several benefits when used effectively in the classroom. For instance, some of the ones mentioned by Satriani (2019) are motivation, improvement in students’ memorization capacity as well as in the increase of their vocabulary. Students’ interest in reading might also be benefited from the use of storytelling since it motivates students’ imagination and curiosity for what is there

on the books, for the stories they haven't found yet. Ikramuddin (2017) considers that this technique helps children (whenever it's used on young learners) to use language in an extended period of time while reconstructing stories; this, according to the author, helps language development in learners since it requires active participation.

Second language learners may find storytelling useful in their process. Khodabandeh (2018) mentions that this is "one of the best ways to help students learn the four skills in their first and second language because of the numerous benefits embedded in stories" (p. 25). Stories have different linguistic aspects in a meaningful context which makes them ideal in the language classroom since students are going to be learning grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and intonation funnily.

### **Theater games in the classroom**

The game is something that comes naturally to human beings. It is part of the learning and socialization process we go through, it is part of life. Theater, as a human activity that aims to develop people's abilities to use their bodies and voices to portray different activities, situations, and emotions, has found in the game a way to help actors and actresses develop that capacity. A lot of the acting training that people receive in drama schools or informal theater groups consists of the use of games, games that teach the participants how to use their bodies, their voices, how to build the characters they have to impersonate, how to be someone else. Considering those aspects, it is important to think about the possibilities that such games might have within an educational environment, particularly in a foreign language classroom.

Dundar (2013) mentioning Savignon (1983) suggests that drama activities "can enhance communicative competence and thus facilitate language learning in general" (p. 1425). The author considers that the theater setting gives students the chance to use the target language in a realistic and meaningful context. Indeed, Dundar (2013) paraphrasing Smith (1984) points out that both, a professional actor and a language learner, intend to communicate a message and, at the same time, both face the obstacles of dealing with new roles and the language itself. Then, the same strategies could be used in both cases to overcome the problems and reach



the objectives: the effective use of the language to convey an intended message.

Students learn better within a less restrictive and stressful environment. Salas (2017) considers that

the use of drama in education seems to be more beneficial since it can eventually lower anxiety and stress, at the same time, it can place students into fictional scenarios in which they can use the target language in a realistic and spontaneous way. (p. 308)

Dundar (2013) also considers that drama games “are meant to create immediate motivation as well as physical and/or mental stimulation, which will draw students into or sustain active learning that, is centered on authentic/actual communication in the target language” (p. 1425). So, these types of activities can help teachers lower the anxiety that students might develop when learning a new language. The idea is to make learners understand that the process could be as natural and as funny as a game so that learning could take place more easily.

Farmer (2012) mentions that drama games should be used within the classroom environment since they improve teamwork, they encourage students to be creative and interact more. At the same time, they help them develop their kinesthetic intelligence as well as their communication skills. They give students the chance to improve their confidence and understand that learning may be something they can enjoy and remember. Then, without a doubt, these activities are beneficial for students’ learning process.

### **Readers Theater in the language classroom**

Readers Theater is a technique that has been gaining popularity over the years and the reason why it is becoming more popular is that its characteristics make it easy to use and the results it provokes are very positive for the people who put it into practice. Lekwilai (2014) defines it as “an instructional method that requires to orally perform reading from scripts” (p. 96). In general terms, what it proposes is that a person takes a play script and reads it out loud. It doesn’t require scenography, lights, or costumes. Actually, it doesn’t even need the reader to memorize any lines from the text but it needs the reader to use his or her voice to transmit the message, so the reader has to portray the emotions presented in

the text only by using voice inflections and if is necessary change the tone of his or her voice according to the situations and based on each of the characters he or she performs in the reading.

When applied effectively in the classroom, Readers Theater can offer students many benefits. For instance, Ortlieb and Young (2018) consider that among all the different strategies used to improve readers' fluency, the most notable one seems to be Readers Theater. The reason is that for this strategy to work, students have to read the text many times while rehearsing for the presentation. Repeated reading implies an easier word recognition and if the person that is doing the reading is doing it with a text written in a foreign language that might be his or her target language (in the case of a foreign language classroom), the benefit is even higher since this person is exposed to grammar, spelling, vocabulary, and syntax and while reading out loud his or her pronunciation, intonation, and fluency might also improve.

Rasinski *et al.*, (2017) mention that this activity could be understood as a fun reading activity, but the benefit goes beyond that. The authors consider that Readers Theater "may be a very influential instrument for improving a variety of components of reading and social development" (p. 174). These authors also point out that the strategy helps the students to share and interpret different stories with others. The nature of Readers Theater might also increase other aspects in students such as teamwork, collaboration, and confidence.

### **The use of songs and theater in the classroom**

Music surrounds us in everyday life and almost everybody is connected to it in one way or another. Most people listen to music, can name favorite composers, music genres, vocalists, bands, or musicians. Many sing, learn or play instruments.  
(Möts, 2016, p. 11)

What the author says is undeniably true. Music is pretty much everywhere and it is part of many human activities. Then, the idea of using it within the language classroom is not crazy.

Within her study, Degrave (2019) mentions that in different surveys carried out by Engh (2013), Jamouille (2017) and Tse (2015), teachers mentioned they think that music has benefits in the acquisition of a foreign language since it can help the development of language skills as well as cultural aspects. At the same time, according to the analysis made by the author, music “creates a good, enjoyable, relaxing atmosphere and that it lowers stress levels or affective filters” (Degrave, 2019, p. 412).

Degrave (2019) also points out that when it comes to music in the foreign language class there are three main categories to be used: music with no lyrics, songs, and the use of rhythmical activities. These are all possibilities that language teachers can explore to enrich their teaching-learning processes.

The use of music within the language class brings many benefits to the students. Indeed, Alfred and Joe (2018) affirm that “songs can help students acquire a foreign language. Song lyrics are repetitive, the language is simple and easily remembered” (p. 75). These authors also point out that a person doesn’t need to understand a language to be able to memorize the lyrics of a song. This might make no sense when it comes to teaching but, think about this: by constantly repeating a song, even if the person doesn’t know exactly what it says, this person is memorizing a structure, a group of words (vocabulary) as well as the pronunciation of those words. Human curiosity and interest might lead this person to look for the meaning of such vocabulary and then new learning begins. Alfred and Joe (2018) also mention that songs are full of informal everyday use language. This might help students to understand and develop meaningful structures which is what, at the end of the day, many teachers want their students to do.

According to Môts (2016):

Learning any foreign language requires a great deal of memorization, particularly concerning vocabulary and grammar. As songs contain rhymes, measured phrases, many repetitions, and are melodic, they help students to remember structure and lexicon. For younger learners teachers try to find simple texts with lots of repetitions and simple, conversational language. Because they are effective, songs may often be the most effective choice to aid memorization. (p. 11)

Therefore, the use of songs in the class helps students learn vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation in a low-stress environment since listening to music and humming songs is part of what they might do at home, at a party, at the gym, when driving somewhere, or during the breaks in the school.

### **Improvisation activities in the classroom**

Life is not written down on any script, it is something that is built every day and people react to every situation naturally with the obligation to handle them, hopefully in the best way. So, people are constantly improvising. It seems that improvisation is part of life. Improvisation or Impromptu is widely used in modern theater, according to Vilč (2017), it “is a specific theatre tradition where performances are created through spontaneous interactions of performers, live in front of the audience” (p. 33). According to the author, the technique requires a set of rules that must be followed on stage. It can be practiced individually or in groups.

This type of theater improvisation can be adapted from the stage to the classroom. Landy (1982) as quoted by Dundar (2013) defines it as “an unscripted, unrehearsed, spontaneous set of actions in response to minimal directions from a teacher, usually including elements of which one is, where one is and what one is doing there” (p. 1426).

Seppänen *et al.*, (2018) point out that according to Johnson (1985, 1999) and Spolin (1999), “besides being a popular genre of performing theater, improvisation is a suitable tool for the study of social interaction” (p. 2771). They consider it flexible and easy to adjust. Having that information in mind, it is possible to say that there are some benefits in this technique that might help students learn, in this case, a foreign language.

Bresnahan (2015) establishes that “in a general sense improvisation is spontaneous, unplanned or otherwise free-ranging creativity” (p. 1). So, it’s a technique that promotes freedom and creativeness in the ones that use it. According to Komulainen *et al.*, (2011), this technique can motivate students’ enjoyment of the learning process. It can be used as something that goes out of the routine and regular language classes where many things are programmed and the teacher expects a specific answer or response from the students. When expecting the unexpected teachers can

discover what students can produce (linguistically speaking) also, it can help to work on learners' confidence as they manage pressure when having to produce something with no time to prepare it. In improvisation, students are expected to build up situations, they have to use the language while acting, they have to pay attention to their interlocutors and be able to react effectively to the input they receive from them.

Maples (2002) as cited by Dundar (2013) mentions that improvisation gives students the chance to enhance their linguistic skills as well as their confidence. These types of exercises, "provide three main goals: student pronunciation improves, proper use of a grammatical structure is reinforced, and vocabulary practice is enhanced" (Dundar, 2013, p. 1426). The problem of this technique might be that to produce substantial and meaningful language, students are expected to have certain linguistic knowledge, it would not be recommended for beginners unless some adaptations are made. Dundar (2013) also mentions that improvisation is used in the language classroom with the idea of giving students a way to express themselves. Confidence will build with practice and exposure to the activity.

### **The use of films within the instruction of acting skills in the language classroom**

Movies and short films have been around for quite a long time so that they have become part of life. They create these different worlds that trigger viewers' imagination and interests. Chen (2015), considers that films are "the art of reproduction of life. At the same time, they can vividly reflect all aspects of social life, and can bring people the auditory and visual enjoyment" (p. 764).

Films are an artistic manifestation that goes beyond art, they have a social incidence that can generate thoughts and ideas on the audience. Like many other artistic manifestations, films can be used in the language classroom. Blasco *et al.*, (2015) consider that the use of movies in teaching is a way to get to students' effective domain and this, according to the author can enhance reflective attitudes and make a connection between learning and experiences. What happens with this is that movies have to power to connect the viewers with different characters and situations and that could help them to interact in a way that empathy is built up

and the learning experience can be more effective since it is going to be meaningful.

Alluri (2018) points out that:

Films aid in teaching various skills while using in a foreign language teaching classroom. Teachers can exploit in teaching verbal skills, Writing, Vocabulary, Grammar, and cultures as these are different skills of a language which are not interrelated, the teacher must use different teaching techniques/methods while teaching these areas. (p. 146)

By taking a film as a starting point, language teachers can explore several strategies to develop different linguistic skills in the students. Movies, as well as songs, offer authentic language which is more meaningful when learning since it is very similar to what is used by native speakers of the target language in everyday conversations. Movies are not made to be used in a language classroom but they offer plenty of possibilities to develop not just a language but also to understand cultural aspects. For Chen (2015), since the words or the language in films is more vivid, learners can remember them and imitate them more easily so that aspects such as pronunciation and intonation can be improved. Another aspect that is good about the use of films, according to Chen (2015), is that they use colloquial language or slang that is not very common on language books or audiovisual material that was made for the sole purpose of teaching a language.

Finally, Kusumaningrum (2015) offers some advantages related to the use of films in language class. The author considers that they can be used to teach linguistic skills such as listening, writing, and speaking. Also, aspects such as vocabulary and grammar can be approached more funnily.

Kusumaningrum (2015) mentions that the movies present language in a natural way since the one used in the films comes from native speakers of the target language and because of this, students can have to chance to learn a more accurate pronunciation. At the same time, different expressions can be learned within an appropriate context. Films, according to the author, motivate students to learn and they teach them intercultural aspects.

## Radio Theater

Before television and, of course, before the internet and streaming arrived, there was the radio. This massive means of communication provided people not just with information related to what was taking place in their communities, countries, or around the world it also worked as an entertainment tool. According to Urrego (2020), families gathered around the radio to listen to stories, many of those were plays or literature classics. Radio theater or radio drama, based on Urrego (2020), is a fiction or drama genre where different stories could be broadcasted. It lacks any type of visual component, it exclusively depends on the sound, that is, dialogues, music, and sound effects. All of those components, continues the author, help the audience (listeners) to imagine the story being told.

Like many other ideas presented in this document, radio theater can have a didactic use. Rodríguez (2014) considers that radio theater can produce a link between culture, entertainment, and acoustic memory. Radio theater can take advantage of a pedagogical effect through active learning developed from listening, recognition and emotion. Kaplún (1992) as mentioned by Rodríguez (2014) considers radio theater a popular education instrument. Urrego (2020) considers that this technique is a didactic proposal that requires no scenography.

This technique behaves pretty much like Readers Theater since it implies the reading of a dramatic text out loud. The only difference is that readers are not standing in front of an audience but in front of a microphone. However, benefits such as the enhancement of fluency, pronunciation, intonation, and vocabulary remain the same. Urrego (2020) points out that its use helps students to develop their communicative skills as well as verbal and nonverbal communication. At the same time, the author also considers that aspects such as motivation play an important role in Radio Theater. The radio is not as popular right now as it was 50 or 60 years ago so, some adaptations might be welcome such as the use of podcasts, which in the end it is the same, the only difference is the channel that broadcasts the information.

## Virtual education

When thinking about virtual education, there are different names such as e-learning, virtual learning, online education, among others. All those terms refer to the same idea: teaching and learning from home by using the internet and technological devices as the main source of communication between teachers and students.

Heng and Sol (2020) mention terms such as e-learning, online learning, distance learning, blended learning, and hybrid learning. All of them, according to the authors, refer to the idea of using technology within the learning process. What makes the difference, based on Heng and Sol (2020) is the way students engage in the process. To clarify the terms, it's important to mention that, according to the authors, online learning or e-learning are both a type of distance education in which all the educational process takes place using the technology to transmit the information which is sent through the internet. In some cases, and depending on the institutions and the programs, students might have to regularly join online sessions. Learning materials; however, will be accessed online and assignments have to be submitted to the platform that the educational institutions decide to use.

On the other hand, Heng and Sol (2020) mention blended and hybrid learning that are the same. The idea, as the authors point out, is to mix traditional face-to-face methods with online instruction. This methodology, according to the authors, offers students a better understanding of contents due to the social interaction that's obtained using face-to-face instruction.

Obeidat *et al.*, (2020) consider that there are two types of e-learning: simultaneous delivery and asynchronous delivery. In the first type (also known as synchronous), both instructors and learners “communicate and interact directly at any real-time” (p. 96). In the case of the second type, the communication does not occur in any real-time. Instructors prepare the materials and make them available to the students who can work with them any time they want to.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, this type of instruction rapidly increased its popularity since there was no other way to keep the educational systems going while keeping people safe at home to



prevent the spread of the virus. Virtual education has many advantages but it also presents different disadvantages.

Surkhali and Garbuja (2020) mention that in an ideal context (student having access to technology), online learning has many advantages, for instance, it can

Offer a great deal of contents, interactions, flexibilities, and reinforcements. Learners can keep themselves engaged from any place using any devices such as mobile phone, laptop, or computer at their convenience. In general, online learning is beneficial in accelerating learning and reinforces students and teachers at the comfort of home during this time of global crisis. (p. 1)

Dwidienawati *et al.*, (2020) mention that e-learning can offer benefits not only to the students but also to the universities that use it. In the case of the universities that put it into practice, according to the authors, it could imply cost-saving since there is no investment infrastructure, at the same time, universities can offer global education services, that is, their services are not going to be limited to one single country, they can get students from all over the world with no problems. In the case of the benefits for the students, the authors consider that virtual education gives them instruction that is not limited in time and space, it could be done anywhere as long as there is an internet connection and a technological device such as a computer, a tablet or even a smartphone.

In terms of the disadvantages, Alsoud and Harasis (2021) consider that virtual education has affected students' educational process since in some cases, access to certain materials such as digital textbooks is compromised due to copy-right limitations. Also, they point out the fact that some students have had difficulties doing group projects due to the limitation of on-campus socialization and interaction. Also, the authors mention aspects such as a higher chance of distraction on virtual education and well as the lack of social interaction, and the difficulty to stay in touch with teachers. Finally, it is important to remember that not everybody has the same opportunities when it comes to access to technological devices and internet connection. Many people don't own a computer or live in very remote areas where internet service is not available or their socio-economic conditions limit them from affording such service.

## Methodology

Drama for English as a Second Language course was taught during the first semester of 2020, right after the COVID-19 pandemic took over in Costa Rica. At that time, there were more questions than answers, insecurities and doubts were part of teachers' and students' lives. Even though many people thought the pandemic would be over soon and face-to-face classes would go back to normal, the truth is that it did not happen and nothing has been the same ever since. Education could not be stopped, contents had to be covered and objectives fulfilled; however, changes and adaptations had to be made. The objective of this section is to describe the adaptations that were made in the methodology of the course, a course that went from a face-to-face format to a high virtual modality.

### Participants

The participants of this course were 11 senior year English Teaching Major students (only one student did not complete the instrument but participated in the discussion of the activities each week, so he/she is part of the investigation as well), 8 men and 3 women whose ages went from 21 to 31 years old. These students lived in different cities such as Puntarenas, Cartago, Orotina, Desamparados, Palmares, Pérez Zeledón, Turrialba, and San Mateo and during the whole semester, they had to stay in their hometowns and attend virtual classes all week long. Also, it is important to mention that this was the first time all of the participants took that course.

### Course methodology and activities developed

Originally, the course was composed of 15 weeks in which contents had to be covered and evaluated. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were two weeks in which the class was stopped. This pause was made based on a decision of the administration of the Campus. Those two weeks (from March 22<sup>nd</sup> to April 5<sup>th</sup>) were used for teachers and students to train on the use of virtual tools and the migration from face-to-face instruction to virtual education.

After those two weeks and holy week break, classes restarted on April 13<sup>th</sup>. The methodology of the course was hybrid since the teacher used a virtual classroom on a platform provided by the UCR (Mediación Virtual). The virtual platform was used to assign students materials, readings, and assignments they had to cover week after week. At the same time, the application WhatsApp was used to have more direct communication with the students since all of them found it easy and convenient to use. For the synchronous part of the course, the teacher, following the instruction of the university, used the meeting platform Zoom and he met with the students for two hours every week.

The contents of the course were divided into three different categories: theory and history of drama and theater, Plays reading and analysis, and the use of different drama and theater techniques in the English class. In the case of the theory and history of drama and theater, students were assigned one topic to present to the class in no more than twenty minutes, they worked in pairs and there was a group of three. Those presentations were synchronous.

For the reading and analysis of plays, students were assigned a total of 15 plays. The topics they dealt with were related to the ones proposed by the syllabus of the course: educational issues, the role of women and minorities. Depending on the week's assignments, students had to read one or two plays per week. Before the analysis and discussion, students were requested to complete comprehension quizzes on Google Forms to cover aspects related to the contents of the plays, after that, the topics of the plays were discussed in class through Zoom.

Regarding the most important element: the use of drama and theater techniques in the English class, from all available resources, the teacher selected the following:

#### *Drama and theater games to teach English*

To present this topic, the teacher used a PowerPoint Presentation that mentioned the main concepts of the topic such as drama, theater, games, as well as the advantages that the use of those activities might have in the language class.

After the theoretical content, students were presented with 8 different theater games that they put into practice (virtually). Once the games were developed, students talked about the teaching

potential they had and they suggested possible variations to make the games even more useful. The games can be found in the article Salas (2017).

### *Readers theater technique*

To present this technique, the teacher used a PowerPoint presentation in which he explained the characteristics and the correct process to apply it in the class. After that, students took some excerpts from the plays they read that week and put into practice the technique. In the end, there was a discussion about the benefits they found in Readers Theater.

### *Teaching through puppets*

To work on the topic of puppets and their use in the language classroom, students were provided with a short presentation and an article that talked about the type of puppets available, their characteristics, advantages, and disadvantages when used in the classroom. That information was provided using Mediación Virtual. Also, students were requested to work in groups, elaborate their puppets, create a story based on the contents provided by the Ministry of Public Education (MEP) and present it next class. All the students completed the task successfully and talked about their experiences.

### *Storytelling in the English class*

For this technique, students were briefed on the concept, characteristics, and implementation of storytelling. Then, they were requested to prepare a short story and present it the week after in class. After the presentation, each student received feedback from his or her classmates and teacher.

### *Theater and songs in the English class*

To implement this idea, students were requested to watch some videos in which deaf people used American Sign Language to “translate” some popular songs. This worked as an inspiration and a starting point for the students. The idea of the activity was not to actually use sign language but to take a popular song, check the lyrics, and try to find gestures and signals to represent or to mime the

content that is being provided. How can this technique be useful? When preparing the song, students are pushed to read the lyrics of the song and look for the meaning of certain words so they can be able to look for appropriate gestures and movements to mime it to their classmates. So, grammar and vocabulary could be improved. Due to the characteristics of this task, students worked alone. They had a week to prepare the presentation that was delivered to the class. After the performance, each student received feedback from classmates and the teacher.

### *Teaching English through movies and short films*

The use of movies and short films in the language classroom, as previously stated, is very convenient since they help learners develop different linguistic skills. The skills to be developed depending on the technique or activity carried out by the teacher. There are several possibilities but in the case of the course, the activity that was put into practice was the dubbing of short scenes. To understand this a little bit more, it is important to point out that the dubbing of movies is a very common process. It consists of replacing the language used in a movie with a different one. This is very easy to see when you go to the movies and a film that was originally made in English is streamed in Spanish or any other language. Having this idea in mind, students were requested to work in small groups, choose a short scene from a popular film (no more than five minutes long) and rewrite the dialogue presented in the scene so they could produce something different. Obviously, they had to respect aspects such as the number of characters in the scene. It is important to mention that they were asked to choose a movie that was originally made in English and that the dialogue they had to create had to be also in that language. Students could choose from recording the scene and present the video to the class or do it live. All of the groups decided to record it in advance. They were given a week to work on this project, after the presentation, each group was given feedback from classmates and the teacher.

### *Impromptu theater technique in the English class*

The idea of impromptu is basically to request participants to improvise a specific situation, no preparation time is provided so that they have to respond to what they are required almost instantly.

Participants should have a very acceptable command of the language they are being asked to use when carrying out the activity. In the case of this specific course, that was not a problem since the participants were all senior English teaching students. With that in mind, students were divided into three different groups. Each group had to provide the teacher three sets of words: five movie genres, five crazy titles such as “The revenge of the green cow” and five different settings such as the living room, Mars, China, etc. When the lists were ready, they were sent to the teacher through WhatsApp and the teacher wrote them on separate papers that were later mixed up and selected randomly to assign each group a title, a setting, and a genre that they had to use to create their improvised story. So, each group was given something like: “The revenge of the green cow” that had to be developed at grandma’s house and whose genre was science fiction. Each group carried out this process two times, presenting a different story each time. In the end, the students talked about the experience and provided recommendations.

### *Final projects*

The course also requested students to present two final group projects. One was the virtual presentation of a scene from one of the plays they read during the semester. The other one was the development of a radio theater project. In the case of the presentation of the scene, students were divided into pairs and one group of three, they chose a scene and the teacher helped them to analyze it and adapt it to a virtual presentation, they had to present it live on Zoom. For the radio theater project, the class was divided into two and each group had to write an original short play to portray it using the radio theater technique. They had to mind the use of the voice, sound effects, and music while presenting the assignment, it was also live on Zoom.

### **Instrument**

To evaluate, in a general way, the course. Participants were sent a digital instrument at the end of the semester. The instrument was an anonymous questionnaire (see annex 1) created using Google Forms and sent to the students via e-mail. It was divided into four different parts. The first part was about participant’s personal in-

formation such as name, sex, and age. The second part is intended to get information regarding general aspects of the course. The third part dealt with the perception participants might have on the teacher's job and the last part consisted of questions inquiring information about the activities and techniques developed in the course.

## Results

The results to be presented are divided into three sections: the first part refers to the general perspective students have on the course and the job the instructor did to adapt it to the virtual environment during the first semester of 2020. The second section refers to the opinion the participants have related to the challenges virtual education brought them, specifically in the development of this course. The last part presents their perceptions about the activities developed in the course.

### About the virtual course

This was the first time all the participants took the course. In terms of the level of difficulty, 70% consider it was moderate while 20 % of them found it easy and 10% think it was difficult. All of the participants consider that if the course would not have been virtual, the level of difficulty would have changed, 50% consider the course would have been more difficult while the remaining 50% say it would have been easier. Those who consider the course would have been harder in a face-to-face context think that the evaluations would have been more complex, some others say that they are not good at performing in front of others and that virtual classes made that part a lot easier since they felt protected by the screen. The ones who point out the course would have been easier to mention that in a face-to-face class, interaction is easier. Also, many activities and strategies could have been developed with fewer problems.

Regarding students' expectations, all of the participants consider that the course fulfilled the expectations they had. They found it fun and practical. One of them says that the course was very well structured and that was beneficial for them. Also, some of them say that the course gave them different teaching tools (using the

techniques studied) that they could apply in the future as language teachers. Some of them also point out the importance of reading and studying different plays since they gave them additional information and helped them talk about different social and educational issues.

When asked about the part or the aspects that they enjoyed the most in the course, 36,3% of them mention that they enjoyed the plays they read as well as the analysis and the discussions made in class when talking about them. Some other students mention that they enjoyed the elaboration of puppets, the acting activities. One of them mentions that he enjoyed the development of the class and another one enjoyed the use of the drama techniques studied and developed during the course. On the other hand, when students are asked about the aspect or aspects that they enjoyed less in the course, 54, 5% of them consider that they did not enjoy the amount of reading they had during the semester since some of them consider that it was time-consuming. Some others, mention that they didn't enjoy the acting and performing part that much. One of the students mentions that she didn't like the class schedule. 80% of the participants consider that in general terms, they learned a lot of new information and techniques that can be useful in their future job, the other 20% in general terms, consider they didn't learn much but at least the activities were interesting and they might use them in the future.

When asked about the difficulties they had in the course due to its virtual nature, 70% of the participants admit they had problems while 30% of them mention they had no problems at all. The ones that confess they had difficulties mention aspects such as technical problems due to an unstable internet connection which made it harder for them to interact in class and the development of assignments and projects during the week. This was a situation that affected not only this particular group of students but many others. It's not a secret that some areas of Costa Rica don't count with high-speed internet access and that many students depend on the use of data from their phones to connect to classes and meetings. These students, as previously stated live in different areas of the country. Particularly, there was a student who lives in a rural area of Pérez Zeledón, in this place he didn't have to chance to hire high-speed internet, so he had many difficulties during the semester, especially for the synchronous classes on Zoom.



## About the teacher

The idea of this section is to talk about the perception students have regarding the job made by the instructor of the course, especially in regards to the adaptation from a face-to-face course to a virtual one. 100% of the participants consider that the teacher did an excellent job in this course and all of them also agree on the fact that the teacher did a great job adapting the course into a virtual one. About this, students consider that the adaptation process was not an easy task; however, they consider the teacher found many ways to implement a dynamic course using all available resources effectively. One of the students comments that she thinks the teacher did a good job since “he adapted the course without letting the virtual modality stop the purpose. I mean, the fact of being virtual was not a barrier for him to develop the activities and the objectives of the course as if it was face to face”, another one thinks that “the teacher knew how the theory works so he undoubtedly knew how to adapt it to lead the students towards achieving goals”. So, according to those comments, it is possible to say that the students are satisfied with the adaptations and the job the teacher did.

Indeed, 100% of the participants consider that the teacher helped to learn during the course. On the other hand, students also offer some recommendations on how they think the teacher could have improved the course. Some of the recommendations were the fact that they consider that longer break periods would have been better also being more flexible in terms of the formative assessment since they think that due to the pandemic, there was a two weeks pause, so the contents could have been reduced a little.

Finally, about the problems that emerged during the semester due to the virtual nature of the course, students consider that the teacher handled them effectively. As presented above, most of the problems in this course were provoked by an unstable internet connection. When those problems happened, according to the students, the teacher tried to talk with them to find solutions and adapt the activities so that everyone could participate and present the activities. So, it was a collaboration process in which students were taken into consideration which guaranteed that both, teacher and students were satisfied with the solutions provided. Also, students mention that “the teacher prepared extra options for those who couldn’t connect to the class”. Also, one of them says that “the

teacher solved problems by establishing different means of communication, such as WhatsApp audios for people that could not connect or had connection problems”, he, according to the students, was able to adapt to the problems each person had.

**About the activities**

This section aims to present the results obtained from the instrument about the perception the participants have of the different activities developed during the course. This is a very relevant part since one of the main objectives of the course is to provide students with drama and theater-related activities that they can use to teach English in the class as future teachers.

After the implementation of each activity during the semester, there was a conversation with the participants so that they could give their perception about them, the positive and the negative aspects that they had. The following chart summarizes those opinions:

**TABLE 1**

PERCEPTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS REGARDING EACH OF THE ACTIVITIES DEVELOPED IN THE COURSE

Name of the activity	Positive aspects	Negative aspects
<b>1-Readers theater technique</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-It is a very easy technique to implement.</li> <li>-It doesn't require scenography, lights, or costumes, so, it is cheap to implement.</li> <li>-It promotes teamwork.</li> <li>-It helps students to develop linguistic aspects such as pronunciation, intonation, fluency, and vocabulary.</li> <li>-It helps students to develop confidence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-It is time-consuming since it implies that students need to rehearse the text before presenting it. This rehearsal should be ideally done in class so that the teacher can help the students during the process.</li> <li>-It is time-consuming for the teacher since he/she has to look for, adapt or write suitable plays that could correspond to the contents being studied in the class.</li> </ul>
<b>2-Teaching through puppets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-It motivates students because it's something interesting and different.</li> <li>-It helps less confident students to speak in class.</li> <li>-It promotes students' creativity and teamwork.</li> <li>-It helps students to develop linguistic aspects such as pronunciation, intonation, fluency, and vocabulary.</li> <li>-If students write the dialogues, it can also help them to improve aspects such as grammar and syntax.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-It is time-consuming for the students, in the case they might need to create their own puppets from scratch.</li> <li>-If students are asked to buy the puppets it could be an expensive activity.</li> <li>-It requires students to invest time rehearsing and preparing the presentation.</li> <li>-It could produce anxiety in the shiest students.</li> </ul>
<b>3-Storytelling in the English class</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-It helps students develop speaking skills.</li> <li>-It helps students enhance linguistic aspects such as pronunciation, intonation, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary.</li> <li>-It is easy to adapt to different topics, time, and linguistics levels.</li> <li>-It helps students to improve public speaking and confidence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-It doesn't promote teamwork and collaboration unless it's developed as a group project which, based on its characteristics is not advisable.</li> <li>-Shier students might not feel confident when standing in front of the class telling a story.</li> <li>-It might be difficult to use it with true beginner students.</li> </ul>

<b>4-Theater and songs in the English class</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-It's something creative and motivating since students usually enjoy music.</li> <li>-It helps students to develop reading comprehension and vocabulary.</li> <li>-It helps students to improve confidence when standing in front of the class.</li> <li>-It improves students' body language.</li> <li>-It promotes teamwork and collaboration when implemented in groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-It's challenging for shy students.</li> <li>-It's time-consuming for the students since they have to invest time preparing and rehearsing the presentation.</li> <li>-It can cause problems if the teacher allows students to choose any song since they might choose songs with inappropriate messages.</li> </ul>
<b>5-Teaching English through movies and short films</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-It's an interesting and innovative technique.</li> <li>-Most students enjoy movies.</li> <li>-It helps students develop grammar, syntax, vocabulary, pronunciation, and intonation.</li> <li>-It helps students improve listening, writing, and speaking skills.</li> <li>-It promotes teamwork and collaboration.</li> <li>-It can be adapted to different topics and levels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Some students might have problems with the use of technology.</li> <li>-Not all educational institutions have technological resources such as speakers and overhead projectors that are necessary for the implementation of the activity.</li> <li>-Not all students have computers or internet access to have access to movie scenes.</li> <li>-It's not a good idea to use it with very young learners.</li> <li>-Teachers have to be careful with the scenes the students select since they might choose inappropriate ones.</li> <li>-It is time-consuming for the students.</li> </ul>
<b>6-Impromptu theater technique in the English class</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-It's entertaining.</li> <li>-It's easy to adapt to different topics.</li> <li>-It doesn't consume much time.</li> <li>-It helps students develop their speaking skills.</li> <li>-It promotes teamwork and collaboration.</li> <li>-It doesn't require scenography or costumes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-It is not recommendable for true beginner students.</li> <li>-Shy students might have problems when participating in it.</li> </ul>
<b>7-Radio theater</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-It's entertaining.</li> <li>-It's easy to adapt to different levels and topics.</li> <li>-It promotes teamwork and confidence.</li> <li>-It helps students develop oral and writing skills (in case they write the scripts).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-It's time-consuming for the students.</li> <li>-Some students might have problems since some of them don't have a stable internet connection and the devices they need to put into practice.</li> <li>For it to be amazing it requires a certain level of expertise in terms of audio editing.</li> </ul>
<b>8-Prepared Scenes presentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-They are very easy to prepare since it's like putting on a role play.</li> <li>-It helps students develop oral skills and increases their vocabulary.</li> <li>-Some plays could be adapted to any level and topic.</li> <li>-It motivates teamwork and creativity in the students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-It's time-consuming for the students since it requires a lot of rehearsing.</li> <li>-It's challenging for shy students.</li> <li>-It might require students to invest money in scenography and costumes.</li> </ul>

Source: Own elaboration based on participants comments and opinions.

At the end of the semester, when provided a questionnaire, students gave their general opinion about the activities developed during the course. When asked about their favorite activity, 40% chose the radio theater, 30% preferred the prepared scene presentation while activities such as the use of puppets, Readers theater, and storytelling were selected by 10% of the students. On the other hand, when asked about their less favorite activities, 40% chose impromptu acting, 20% chose the prepared scene presentation, 20% mentioned acting songs, and readers theater, as well as storytelling,

were selected by 10% of the participants. This is a matter of what they found more appealing or interesting. It is really interesting to see how divided opinions were, some like some activities while others dislike them, such is the case of the prepared scene presentation, reader theater, and storytelling.

Participants also provided their perception of the teaching potential they think the activities have. According to them, the ones that have more teaching potential (that is, the ones that they consider could help students to learn more) are the prepared scene presentation (30%), storytelling (30%), impromptu acting (10%), Radio theater (10%), Movie scene dubbing (10%) and the use of puppets (10%). Something interesting in this case is the fact that even though some students confessed not to like activities such as impromptu acting, the prepared scene presentation, and storytelling, they see teaching potential in them. On the other hand, acting songs (20%), movie scene dubbing (20%), impromptu acting (20%), readers theater (20%), the use of puppets (10%), and storytelling (10%), were selected as the activities with less teaching potential. This is also interesting since activities like the use of puppets, storytelling, and readers theater are part of students' favorite activities. Then, it could be said that opinions were very contrasting but it's evident that there's a high degree of objectivity since even though participants manifested they liked or disliked certain activities, that opinion did not influence the perception they have on the teaching potential of the activities. For instance, an activity such as movie dubbing that was not mentioned as favorite or less favorite is mentioned as one of the ones they believe has more teaching potential.

At the beginning of the semester, students were given the course syllabus and were briefly told about the activities to be developed during the course. Back then, nobody would have thought that the course had to be virtualized 100% some weeks later. When students were asked if they ever thought that it was going to be possible to carry out all of the activities proposed in a virtual course. 60% of them say that they considered it was going to be possible whereas 40% say they didn't think it was going to happen. The ones that thought it was not possible, say that at first, they thought that it was difficult due to the interactive nature of the course, many activities were pretty much games and face-to-face interaction

was necessary. Also, someone says that nobody was ready since this was the first time for all of them and the teacher working in a virtual environment. Among the ones that consider that it was possible to develop the activities proposed in the syllabus despite the circumstances say that they thought it was possible due to the nature of the course, they think it's an easy course to adapt.

When asking participants if the virtual nature of the course complicated the execution of the activities, 60 % admit it did and 40 % consider it did not. This is interesting since in the previous question 60% of the participants didn't think that the virtual nature of the course was going to affect the development of the activities and 40% consider it was going to do it. The participants that consider the virtual mode of the course did not affect the execution of the activities say that it was possible since the teacher was able to adapt them all since they were friendly to this type of education. Also, they consider that the teacher was very well organized. On the other hand, the ones that consider that the virtual nature of the course complicated the execution of the activities during the course confess that some of the activities needed more visual materials. Also, group assignments were difficult to carry out since not everybody had the same access to a stable internet connection. So, assignments such as the performances gave them problems. Something relevant; however, is that 100% of the participants consider that the course accomplished its objectives.

Finally, students were asked if they would use any of the activities developed in the course as future English teachers, 90% of them say they would do it and one 10% wouldn't use them. The activities they mention are the use of puppets, they would use this one since they think it's very creative, funny, and interesting and it helps students cover many aspects when learning a language since it helps students put language into practice. So other participants consider they would use dubbing movie scenes activity since it implies summarizing an idea that would help learners understand the matter easily. Some other participants mention they would use storytelling, prepared scene presentations, and radio theater due to their interactive and adaptable characteristics. Finally, one of the participants would use the acting songs activity because he considers that the body is also part of language expression and students can use language through their bodies which might be attractive for them.

## Conclusions

The pandemic provoked by the COVID-19 forced us all to adapt and innovate within the “new normal”. To keep the university community safe, the administration had to make important decisions that implied several changes, the UCR would have never thought about the possibility to migrate 100% of its courses and functions to a virtual environment.

Within these circumstances, Drama for English as a Second Language course had to change but the contents and the quality needed to remain the same. The adaptation process was complex since every single aspect of the class was meant to be done face-to-face. Even the materials (readings) were printed. So, starting from digitalizing all the documents, creating a virtual environment, and adapting all the activities to the new reality, it all implied time, effort, and creativity not just for the teacher but for the students as well. It was like everyone was used to operate in a certain way, pretty much like robots, but suddenly, somebody changed everyone’s “chip” and things had to be different and there was to time to think about it.

What was difficult about migrating to a virtual environment to teach the course? The most complicated aspect was to adapt the drama and theater activities to teach English as a second language. In terms of theory, play reading, and class discussion, the virtual mode did not mean any difficulty except for the students who did not have a stable internet connection, in this course that was a problem for 3 out of 11 students. However, not all three had problems all the time and at the same time, so it did not affect anyone badly.

As presented in the results, students found the course useful and they are satisfied with the job and adaptations made by the instructor. At the same time, they manifested that learning under the circumstances they had to take the course was possible and that they consider that all of the objectives of the course were accomplished. Students missed the physical interaction in the class and indeed, this physical interaction would have probably increased the benefits students received even more. Learning wouldn’t have been better but different, the experience would have been another one. One aspect that could have been more beneficial of a face-to-

face interaction would have been the fact that students would have been challenged to, for instance, act in front of an audience and that would have implied aspects such as body movement, voice control, among others.

One of the main objectives of the course was to provide students with a group of drama and theater activities that could be used in the English classroom. So, a total of eight activities were presented, applied, and discussed. Students had the chance to put them into practice then, they were able to realize their teaching potential as well as the positive and negative aspects in each of them. All of the activities might provide English learners and teachers, that's the main conclusion that participants got.

Some of the activities might be more suitable for some ages, levels, and topics than others. It's the teacher's job to know how and when to adapt them accordingly. Adaptability is one of the characteristics that participants valued the most in these activities as well as the fact that they can stimulate the development of more than one linguistic skill at a time which gives them an important teaching potential.

The virtual mode of the course brought several challenges for both the students and the teacher. However, the capacity to adapt to the new circumstances was the one that made the process successful. It's important to mention that all students approved the course with a very good grade and that's, without a doubt, a product of the effort they made.

Challenges will always come, especially in education, resilience is fundamental if an obstacle needs to be overcome. This pandemic proved that if there's a good attitude and interest in learning, educational objectives can be accomplished.

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## Annex 1

### **Drama For ESL: The Virtual Experience.**

This questionnaire aims to know about your perception of the Drama For English Teaching course that you took during the First Semester 2020. The idea is to know about the experience you lived since this is the first time this course is thought in a virtual way which is something that one might consider very difficult due to its practical nature. The information you provide here will be anonymous and will be only used for this research.

#### **I Part. Personal Information**

1-Sex : Female Male Prefer not to say

2-Age:\_\_\_\_\_

3-Place of residence:\_\_\_\_\_

## II Part. General Aspects of the Course

- 1- Was this the first time you take this course?  Yes  
 No
- 2- How did you take the course?  Virtual  Face-to-Face
- 3- How would you describe the level of difficulty in this course?  
 Very Difficult  
 Difficult  
 Moderate  
 Easy  
 Very Easy
- 4- Do you think that if the course wouldn't have been virtual the level of difficulty would have been different?  Yes  
 No
- 5- Why? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6- Did the course fulfill your expectations?  Yes  No
- 7- Why? \_\_\_\_\_
- 8- Did you have any problems during this course due to its virtual nature?  Yes  No (go to question 10)
- 9- What problems did you have? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 10- What did you enjoy the most about the course? \_\_\_\_\_
- 11- What was the part that you didn't like about the course? \_\_\_\_\_
- 12- What phrase best describes your case in this course?  
 I learned a lot of new information and techniques that can be useful for my future job.  
 I didn't learn much but at least the activities were interesting I might use them in the future.  
 I didn't learn anything and I think the course was a waste of time.

### III Part. About the teacher

1-The teacher's job in this course was:

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Poor

2-Do you think the teacher did a good job adapting the course to a virtual mode?

Yes  No

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

3-Was the teacher able to help you learn in this course? \_\_\_\_\_

Yes  No

4-What do you think the teacher could have done different to help you more in the course? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5-How did the teacher solve the problems that occurred during the course due to its virtual nature? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### IV Part. About the activities and techniques developed in the course

1-Which of these activities was your favorite during the course?

- Reader's theater
- The use of puppets.
- Story telling
- Acting songs
- Dubbing movie scenes
- Impromptu acting
- Prepared scenes presentation
- Radio Theater

2-Which was your least favorite?

- Reader's theater
- The use of puppets.
- Story telling
- Acting songs

- Dubbing movie scenes
- Impromptu acting
- Prepared scenes presentation
- Radio Theater

3-Which do you think has more teaching potential?

- Reader's theater
- The use of puppets.
- Story telling
- Acting songs
- Dubbing movie scenes
- Impromptu acting
- Prepared scenes presentation
- Radio Theater

4-Which has less teaching potential?

- Reader's theater
- The use of puppets.
- Story telling
- Acting songs
- Dubbing movie scenes
- Impromptu acting
- Prepared scenes presentation
- Radio Theater

5-Did the virtual nature of the course complicate the execution of any of the activities?

Yes  No

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

6-At first, did you think that it would be possible to carry out all those activities in a virtual course?  Yes  No

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

7-Did you consider that the course accomplish its objectives?

Yes  No

8-As a teacher, would you use any of the activities developed during the course?

Yes  No

9-Which would you use and why?

\_\_\_\_\_