

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63332/joph.v5i6.2534>

Interdisciplinary Approaches in ELT: Semiotics, AAC Systems, and Neuroscience

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Abstract

The study aimed to determine the qualitative impact of semiotic, neurocognitive, and psychoanalytic approaches combined with Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Systems in English Language Teaching (ELT) within Teacher Training Schools across Mexico. Three-phase interventions were applied (Eco, 1976; Barthes, 1957; Kramsch, 2013; Kress, 2010), alongside semi-structured in-depth interviews and classroom observations (Krashen, 1982; Damasio, 1994; LeDoux, 1996; Siegel, 2012; Vygotsky, 1978; Gardner, 1985). The results highlighted the positive impact of interdisciplinary semiotic approaches and AAC Systems (Tedesco, 2012; García & Domínguez, 2007; Cavanaugh, 2009; Siegel, 2012) in fostering semiotic learning environments for ELT (Damasio, 1994; Phelps, 2006; Goleman, 2006; Zembylas, 2005; Krashen, 1982).

Keywords: English Language Teaching, Teacher Training, Applied Neuroscience, Educational Semiotics, AAC Systems.

Introduction

English language teaching (ELT) in Teacher Training Schools in Mexico demands innovative and contextualized solutions. According to diagnostics from the National English Strategy (*Estrategia Nacional de Inglés*, ENI) and the National English Program (*Programa Nacional de Inglés*, PRONI), only 12% of pre-service teachers achieve a B2 level based on the descriptors of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (SEP, 2017; INEE, 2018; González, 2019; Ramírez Romero, 2012; Villegas Salas, 2014; Rojas, 2021). This underscores the urgent need to integrate pedagogical strategies that encompass semiotic, emotional, and neurological dimensions to enhance teacher training and efficiency in ELT within Teacher Training Schools.

The theoretical framework builds on interdisciplinary perspectives, emphasizing the necessity of adopting an integrative semiotic-didactic approach that addresses the symbolic and cognitive dimensions of learning (Lotman, 1998; Barthes, 1957; Eco, 1976; Kress, 2010). It explores the cognitive role of semiotic representations in brain structures such as the amygdala and hippocampus, essential for memory consolidation in ELT (Damasio, 1994; LeDoux, 1996; Pessoa, 2008; Siegel, 2012; Hamann, 2001; Phelps, 2006). Additionally, it considers the cultural-cognitive interactions within the semiosphere (Lotman, 1998) and examines pictograms as cultural signifiers that facilitate universal yet individualized learning, delving into the psychoanalytic perspective of semiotic representations in education (Freud, 1915; Lacan, 1966; Kristeva, 1984).

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The main objective of the study was to evaluate the efficacy of didactic strategies grounded in semiotic, neuroscientific, and psychoanalytic approaches involving pictograms, within the context and phenomenology of Mexican Teacher Training Schools (SEP, 2017; INEE, 2018; González, 2019; Ramírez Romero, 2012; Villegas Salas, 2014; Rojas, 2021). The research addressed the pedagogical and cultural limitations faced by pre-service teachers in learning English, aiming to foster more inclusive and impactful didactic experiences (Bachelard, 1958; Krashen, 1982; Vygotsky, 1978; Gardner, 1985; Norton, 2016; Larsen-Freeman, 2020). It also sought to contribute to academic discourse on foreign language teaching in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), while generating practical tools to enhance initial teacher training.

Theoretical Perspective

As a foundation, Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems have proven effective in developing communication and learning skills. Studies have demonstrated that systems such as PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) significantly enhance the ability of students with communication difficulties to participate in language learning (Bondy & Frost, 2001). These systems help students construct sentences and express ideas in a structured manner, facilitating the development of basic linguistic skills.

In the specific context of English Language Teaching (ELT), literature indicates that AAC systems "can" be adapted to teach English by integrating images, pictograms, and other visual resources into activities that allow students to practice vocabulary and grammatical structures in real and functional contexts (Heward, 2013). However, no systematic approach explicitly designed for ELT has been identified.

Delving into the use of pictograms and Semiotic Representations in ELT, these are addressed as simplified graphical representations with a tendency towards archetypal universality (ARASAAC; Bachelard, 1947, 1948, 1958, 1961, 1964; Lacan, 1966; Lotman, 1974, 1979, 1986, 1998, 2001, 2013). Pictograms are used to visually and directly transmit information.

When applied to ELT, pictograms facilitate vocabulary acquisition and the understanding of grammatical structures. They are embedded within text sequences interspersed with images in a rudimentary "item-exchange function." This method captures the semiotic essence of pictograms and the syntagmatic function within texts and sentences. Evidence shows that pictograms help students cognitively associate words with concrete images, aiding vocabulary comprehension and retention (Simmons et al., 2015). They are also used to teach abstract and grammatical concepts more accessibly and visually.

Didactically, pictograms have been explored to enhance student participation and motivation in foreign language learning. Visual representations such as icons or flashcards promote inclusive teaching, adaptable to different learning styles (Sutherland et al., 2017).

Incorporating **Semiotic Grammar** and multimodality into ELT involves examining how signs and symbols are used to create meaning. Kress (2010) theorizes that using multiple modes of communication (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) enriches language learning. For Kress, visual representations like pictograms and graphics, combined with spoken and written language, provide a more comprehensive and effective learning experience, which he terms Semiotic Grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Moreover, multimodal strategies enable students to use various forms of representation to express ideas and understand linguistic concepts. This includes combining pictograms with text and hands-on activities, supporting learning on multiple levels (O'Halloran, 2011).

To integrate the augmentative nature of AAC systems as didactic tools specifically aimed at ELT, a logical approach is required. This should interconnect an in-depth analysis of the intercultural inclusivity and archetypal nature of semiotics (Bachelard, 1947, 1948, 1958, 1961, 1964; Lacan, 1966; Lotman, 1974, 1979, 1986, 1998, 2001, 2013) with the didactic aspects of symbolic grammar. Semiotic studies offer a solid foundation for designing and implementing effective AAC systems in ELT, while understanding the cognitive mechanisms in symbolic grammar allows for AAC systems that facilitate language learning and communication in English classrooms, regardless of the educational context or language proficiency of teachers and students.

Thus, the **Symbolic Grammar** developed by Kress and van Leeuwen extends the semiotic perspective of the sign by analyzing how visual and textual signifiers combine to create more complex linguistic meanings (2006). This theory effectively adapts to the use of communication boards in ELT classrooms, demonstrating that signs not only function linguistically but also operate within a "grammar" that organizes their combination to convey messages in various functional and communicative contexts.

The proper arrangement of signs in communication boards ensures that visual and textual representations (Bachelard, 1947, 1948, 1958, 1961, 1964; Lacan, 1966; Lotman, 1974, 1979, 1986, 1998, 2001, 2013) reflect the target language's grammar and semantics. This facilitates the construction of coherent sentences, even for teachers and students with limited English proficiency.

From a semiotic standpoint, Kress and van Leeuwen argue that representation goes beyond the organization of signs in a sequence. It includes the interconnection of signs with their cultural and communicative context (2006). This approach ensures that AAC communication boards for ELT are linguistically precise, culturally appropriate, and pedagogically adapted to students' needs. The structural foundations provided by symbolic grammar allow visual and textual signs (Bachelard, 1947, 1948, 1958, 1961, 1964; Lacan, 1966; Lotman, 1974, 1979, 1986, 1998, 2001, 2013) to combine effectively within boards, turning them into tools that facilitate English language learning, regardless of the linguistic proficiency of teachers and students.

Logically arranging images within different boards allows semiotic representations to play a crucial role in developing linguistic skills. These representations enable students to construct meaning through visual and textual signs (Machin, 2016). Regarding semiotic representation, Machin highlights that visual and textual signs cognitively support language learning by concretely representing abstract concepts (2016). These signs can be interconnected within boards according to the linguistic and functional structures required (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Moreover, the integration of semiotics into education emphasizes the importance of symbolic representations in constructing linguistic knowledge. Semioticians like Cobley and Schulz emphasize that these representations not only aid in understanding linguistic concepts but also facilitate communication by enabling students to construct coherent messages in the target language (2013). This perspective reinforces the necessity of designing AAC boards inspired by

semiotics to effectively support the development of increasingly complex linguistic skills (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

State of the Art

The state of the art highlights a virtually unexplored gap in the integration of effective didactic strategies for ELT in Teacher Training Schools and the specific application of semiotic perspectives in English language teaching (SEP, 2017; INEE, 2018; González, 2019; Ramírez Romero, 2012; Villegas Salas, 2014; Rojas, 2021). It underscores the utility of examining how semiotics, neuroscience, and psychoanalysis can converge didactically to address the communicative, cultural, and cognitive learning needs of pre-service teachers (Gardner, 1985; Norton, 2016; Larsen-Freeman, 2020; Siegel, 2012; Pessoa, 2008; Bachelard, 1958).

To date, no studies have specifically addressed the application of AAC systems in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching. This project represents a unique opportunity to explore and develop innovative pedagogical strategies that systematically incorporate the augmentative nature of AAC systems in ELT classrooms. It contributes to both educational innovation and the social and academic inclusion of students and teachers with complex communication needs. AAC systems have gradually evolved in educational contexts, having initially been recognized as essential tools for facilitating communication among individuals with complex needs.

This study focuses on analyzing the interaction between AAC systems and English language teaching from a semiotic perspective, exploring how the signs and symbols employed in these systems contribute to the cognitive development of linguistic competencies in an inclusive environment. Notably, it emphasizes their specific application within the scope of ELT.

A review of current academic literature revealed a lack of conclusive studies specifically addressing the use of AAC systems in EFL teaching. While AAC systems have been extensively studied in educational and clinical contexts, primarily to support individuals with disabilities, their application in language teaching—and more specifically in ELT—remains largely uncharted.

Existing research on AAC systems tends to focus on their effectiveness in enhancing communication and participation in everyday life (Beukelman & Mirenda, 2013). However, these studies do not directly address how AAC systems might be integrated into language teaching programs, nor how they could impact learning a foreign language like English. Conversely, research on language teaching often examines isolated, unsystematic uses of multimodal resources such as images, pictograms, and other visual symbols to support vocabulary and grammar learning (Kress, 2010). Nonetheless, these studies treat multimodality as a supplementary strategy within broader pedagogical frameworks rather than as a central methodology for ELT.

From a semiotic perspective, it was observed that English teaching in Teacher Training Schools continues to rely heavily on grammatical and mechanistic approaches, overlooking the impact of symbolic contexts on the cognitive construction of meaning within these institutions (Lotman, 1998; Barthes, 1957; Eco, 1976; Kramsch, 2013; Kress, 2010). This study's intervention emphasized the pictographic synergy of linguistic signs in ELT within a "semiosphere" that connects cultural, personal, and emotional meanings through symbolic contextualization (Lotman, 1998; Barthes, 1957; Eco, 1976; Kramsch, 2013; Kress, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978). The cultural myths and identities of speakers and their relevance in the language acquisition process were key focal points (Eco, 1976; Kramsch, 2013; Kress, 2010).

Regarding the pictographic dimension, interventions explored cognitive synergy to understand the role of emotions in knowledge acquisition (Damasio, 1994; LeDoux, 1996; Phelps, 2006; Pessoa, 2008; Siegel, 2012; Hamann, 2001). Neuropsychological structures such as the amygdala and hippocampus play a critical role in memory consolidation and knowledge retention, influencing or inhibiting linguistic learning (Damasio, 1994; LeDoux, 1996; Phelps, 2006). These insights align with models like Krashen's affective filter (1982).

Furthermore, the psychoanalytic approach enabled a deeper understanding of the cognitive-communicative barriers faced by pre-service teachers and the need for systematic didactic approaches in Teacher Training Schools (Freud, 1915; Lacan, 1966; Kristeva, 1984; McGhee, 2018; Winnicott, 1971; Chodorow, 1978). The unconscious processes, pictographic representations, and memory formation (Freud, 1915; Lacan, 1966), along with the relationship between language, desire, and identity (Kristeva, 1984; McGhee, 2018), were key to this analysis.

Methodology

The first challenge of the project was to strategically group various semiotic representations into communication boards and arrange them based on the functional and communicative structures defined by the target language. This aimed to promote a more conscious and natural language acquisition process (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Considering the scenarios posed for both basic and teacher training education, it was also necessary to address the need for these boards to be usable even by teachers whose circumstances required them to teach English, despite their training and language proficiency not meeting the minimum standards for effective instruction.

In this context, the project developed a collection of boards and strategies that enabled these teachers to positively impact their students' achievement and performance levels while fostering the development of linguistic skills in an augmentative and conscious manner within their classrooms. This required consideration of various theoretical and practical aspects that were approached from a semiotic perspective of symbolic grammar and its relevance to the cognitive-constructive mechanisms of language.

Given that semiotics examines signs and their meanings in different contexts and that its theoretical framework provided a novel foundation for the effective design and implementation of communication boards specifically oriented toward ELT, it was crucial to concretely characterize the cognitive synergy between symbolic grammar, semiotic representations, and syntagms. This characterization was essential to develop didactic strategies that facilitated the development of linguistic skills with the support of AAC systems in English within basic and teacher training education classrooms.

This research utilized a **qualitative approach**, seeking to analyze the implementation of semiotic, neuroscientific, and psychoanalytic strategies combined with Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems in English Language Teaching (ELT) within Teacher Training Schools in Mexico.

The theoretical framework of the study was structured around lines of analysis that systematically examined semiotics and the integration of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Systems into the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (ELT). The approach combined semiotic theory, systemic-functional grammar, sociocultural theory, and contemporary pedagogical strategies to provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of

the processes involved. This approach was multidimensional and addressed the cognitive, social, and linguistic aspects of teacher training and ELT.

The study's methodological approach emphasized four main theoretical pillars: semiotic theory, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, Fisher and Frey's pedagogical strategies, and the incorporation of multimodal tools such as pictograms. These pillars provided a structured path to analyze and implement AAC and semiotic tools in ELT classrooms.

1. Semiotic Theory and Systemic-Functional Grammar

Conceptualization of AAC and its Relevance to ELT

AAC systems were conceptualized as sets of visual tools and strategies originally created to support individuals with speech and language difficulties. Within a semiotic framework, AAC systems were considered systems of visual signs, incorporated into communication boards to mediate the construction of meaning in the teaching and learning process (Lotman, 1990). According to Lotman, sign systems expand the individual's *semiosphere*, a concept that is essential in educational settings as AAC not only promotes communication but also enriches the learning environment by offering new channels of expression and meaning-making.

From the perspective of systemic-functional grammar, developed by Halliday (1978), AAC systems were analyzed as semiotic resources that allowed students to engage in specific linguistic functions within social contexts. This theory focused on how language functions are used to construct meaning within social environments, a crucial consideration in the teaching of English as a foreign language. AAC systems served both as tools for teaching grammar and as mechanisms that allowed students to actively participate in the construction of meaning within the classroom.

Variables and Categories

The study identified key variables and categories to assess the impact of AAC systems and their integration into ELT:

- **Primary Variables:** The impact of AAC systems on ELT, the development of linguistic competence in English, and the performance levels of students in the English language.
- **Categories:** Augmentative communication, semiotic interaction, language acquisition, and multimodality in teaching contexts.

2. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Mediation and Social Learning in ELT with AAC

The sociocultural theory of Vygotsky (1978) provided key insights into how linguistic abilities develop in a mediated learning environment. The concept of the *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD) was pivotal, defining the gap between what a student could do independently and what they could achieve with appropriate guidance. In the context of ELT, AAC systems functioned as cognitive mediators, allowing students to engage within their ZPD through social interaction and semiotic mediation.

In inclusive classrooms utilizing AAC systems, social interaction was focused cognitively. The analysis examined how AAC-mediated communication contributed to the inclusion and active participation of students and teachers regardless of their linguistic abilities.

Indicators:

- **Social Interaction:** The frequency and quality of interaction between students using AAC systems.
- **Progress in the ZPD:** An assessment of progress in linguistic and functional English competencies within the students' Zone of Proximal Development.

3. Fisher and Frey's Pedagogical Strategies

The Gradual Release of Responsibility Model and Multimodality

The model of gradual release of responsibility proposed by Fisher and Frey (2014) was adapted to support the use of AAC systems in ELT. This model allowed students to transition from guided learning to independent and autonomous practice. Semiotic representations, such as pictograms and concept maps, facilitated the understanding and retention of grammatical structures and linguistic concepts (Bachelard, 1947; 1948; 1958; 1961; 1964; Barthes, 1972; Lacan, 1966; Lotman, 1974; 1979; 1986; 1998; 2001; 2013).

Multimodality, as described by Kress (2010), was another key pedagogical strategy. Fisher and Frey emphasized the importance of employing different modes of representation to support the learning process. Within this study, the use of AAC systems was analyzed in their ability to represent language visually and tangibly, allowing students to organize and structure their linguistic knowledge more effectively.

The analysis focused on how AAC systems mediated cognitive language learning and their impact on students' cognitive and social development. It examined the effectiveness of Fisher and Frey's gradual release model in teaching English through AAC, evaluating how this approach facilitated language acquisition and social inclusion.

4. Key Concepts and Indicators

Multimodality and pictograms

Within the scope of this study, multimodality was understood as the use of multiple modes of communication—visual, auditory, and kinesthetic—to support learning processes. Pictograms, as a specific type of visual representation within AAC systems, were analyzed not only as communication tools but also as ways of structuring knowledge and facilitating the acquisition of linguistic skills.

Syntagms and Symbolic Grammar

Syntagms, as the basic units of meaning within a sentence, were explored in relation to AAC systems to understand how these grammatical structures could be visually represented and taught. Symbolic grammar, derived from semiotic theory, provided a theoretical framework for analyzing how visual and linguistic signs combine to create complex meanings in the context of ELT.

Additional Indicators and Variables:

- **Linguistic Acquisition:** Evaluating the level of vocabulary and grammatical structure acquisition in English through AAC systems.
- **Social Inclusion:** Assessing the level of participation of students with and without special needs in ELT activities using AAC systems.

- **Pedagogical Effectiveness:** Measuring the efficacy of applying AAC strategies with teachers in basic and teacher training education, even in cases where teachers had limited English proficiency or prior experience.

The study employed a **descriptive and interpretative design**, aiming to explore the effectiveness of the proposed strategies and their impact on pre-service teachers' linguistic and cognitive development. The intervention was conducted in three distinct phases:

Phase 1: Diagnostic Assessment

An initial evaluation was performed to identify the specific needs and challenges of pre-service teachers regarding English language learning. Semi-structured interviews and classroom observations were employed to collect qualitative data on the participants' linguistic competencies, learning preferences, and communicative barriers (Krashen, 1982; Gardner, 1985; Larsen-Freeman, 2020).

The assessment highlighted gaps in vocabulary, grammar, and communicative fluency, as well as a lack of motivation and confidence in language use. These findings informed the design of tailored AAC strategies and semiotic interventions.

Phase 2: Implementation of Semiotic and AAC Strategies

During this phase, communication boards, pictograms, and symbolic grammar were introduced as part of the teaching methodology. These tools were designed to address specific linguistic challenges and enhance the cognitive processing of grammatical structures and vocabulary.

The teaching interventions were delivered in a multimodal format, incorporating visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements to support diverse learning styles. The semiotic approach facilitated the integration of cultural and symbolic dimensions into language instruction, creating a more meaningful and engaging learning experience (Lotman, 1998; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2010; Eco, 1976).

Phase 3: Evaluation and Reflexive Analysis

The final phase focused on evaluating the impact of the implemented strategies on pre-service teachers' linguistic development and their ability to apply the acquired skills in classroom settings. Data collection methods included:

- **Semi-structured interviews** to gather participants' reflections on the learning process and the perceived utility of the AAC tools.
- **Classroom observations** to analyze changes in teaching and learning dynamics, including student engagement and the use of symbolic grammar in communication.

A reflexive analysis was conducted to interpret the qualitative data, triangulating findings from interviews, observations, and diagnostic assessments. This approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of the interventions' outcomes and their implications for teacher training programs (Vygotsky, 1978; Siegel, 2012; Gardner, 1985).

Population and Sample

The study was carried out in Teacher Training Schools across Mexico, involving pre-service teachers. The participants were selected based on their varying levels of proficiency and diverse

socio-cultural backgrounds, providing a representative sample of the challenges faced in these institutions.

The sample consisted of a total of **323 students**, of which **256 (79.3%) were women** and **67 (20.7%) were men**. Based on their academic program and grade level, the students were distributed across various teacher training schools in Mexico as follows:

- **145 students (26.6%)** were enrolled in the **Escuela Normal Superior de Querétaro**, with the following distribution by grade and degree:
 - **72 students (22.3%)** were first-year students.
 - **26 students (8.1%)** were second-year students.
 - **47 students (14.6%)** were third-year students.
 - Among them, **62 students (19.2%)** were enrolled in the **Bachelor's Degree in Teaching and Learning of Spanish**, while **83 students (25.7%)** were in the **Bachelor's Degree in Teaching and Learning of Tele-secondary Education**.
- **79 students (24.5%)** were enrolled in the **Escuela Normal de Texcoco**, with the following distribution by grade:
 - **31 students (9.6%)** were second-year students.
 - **28 students (8.7%)** were third-year students.
 - **20 students (6.2%)** were fourth-year students.
 - All of these students were enrolled in the **Bachelor's Degree in Teaching and Learning of English**.
- **99 students (30.7%)** were enrolled in the **Escuela Normal de Educación Especial del Estado de México**, with the following distribution by grade:
 - **41 students (12.7%)** were first-year students.
 - **58 students (18.0%)** were third-year students.
 - All of these students were enrolled in the **Bachelor's Degree in Educational Inclusion**.

This population sample reflects a diverse range of academic backgrounds, programs, and educational trajectories, highlighting the multi-contextual nature of the study and the context emphasized the need for innovative teaching strategies, given the limited linguistic resources and the disparity between educational objectives and classroom realities. The use of AAC systems and semiotic approaches addressed these issues by providing accessible, practical, and culturally relevant tools.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical research practices, ensuring informed consent from all participants and maintaining confidentiality throughout the process. The interventions were designed to respect the cultural and personal contexts of the participants, aligning with principles of inclusion and educational equity (Ainscow, 2019; SEP, 2017).

Results

The implementation of semiotic, neuroscientific, and psychoanalytic strategies combined with Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems yielded significant qualitative outcomes in the context of English Language Teaching (ELT) within Teacher Training Schools in the State of Mexico. These findings are interpreted through the lens of semiotic, neuroscientific, and psychoanalytic perspectives, allowing the analysis of how emotional, cognitive, and cultural dimensions influence the teaching and learning of English in Teacher Training Schools. The results are grouped into categories aligned with the research objectives.

1. Semiotic Dimensions in English Language Teaching

The results regarding semiotic dimensions in the teaching of English indicated that while most pre-service teachers had theoretical knowledge about semiotic approaches, their practical application remained limited. This aligns with Lotman (1998) and Barthes (1957), who assert that linguistic signs must be taught within their cultural context. However, interviews revealed that only **45% of pre-service teachers** integrated cultural aspects into their lessons, focusing merely on vocabulary or idiomatic expressions without delving into the semiotic construction of meaning (Eco, 1976; Kramsch, 2013; Kress, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978).

The traditional focus on grammar predominates in the pedagogical practices of Teacher Training Schools and does not align with contemporary semiotic proposals. This traditional approach excludes semiotic modalities that include images, gestures, and other symbols, impeding effective communication in inclusive educational contexts (Kress, 2010; Beukelman & Mirenda, 2013). This finding underscores the need to reform pedagogical approaches in Teacher Training Schools by more explicitly incorporating semiotics as a central axis of teacher training programs (Barthes, 1957; Kress, 2010; Kramsch, 2013; Eco, 1976; Vygotsky, 1978; Beukelman & Mirenda, 2013).

2. Emotional Aspects and the Role of Pictograms

The theoretical analysis highlighted that emotions are fundamental in the process of learning English. The systematic use of pictograms based on AAC systems was shown to contribute to reducing anxiety levels, improving vocabulary retention, comprehension of structures, and facilitating systematic and communicative language use. According to Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis, teachers with high anxiety, insecurity, or lack of confidence struggle to create effective learning environments where emotions play a key role in memory consolidation and information retention, especially in communicative contexts (Damasio, 1994; LeDoux, 1996; Phelps, 2006; Siegel, 2012).

However, in-depth interviews revealed that **63% of pre-service teachers** preferred methods prioritizing grammar over communicative interaction. In contrast, pre-service teachers who engaged in collaborative, communication-centered activities reported an **78% increase in student satisfaction**, an **81% increase in motivation within the classroom**, and an **87% improvement in the fluency and quality of both oral and written communicative interactions**. Their performance was **62% above the average index**, supporting Vygotsky's (1978) ideas about social and collaborative learning. Additionally, **84% of teachers** who implemented these strategies reported that their students exhibited increased motivation and participation, validating the hypothesis that the inclusion of semiotic and pictographic aspects in foreign language learning facilitates language acquisition effectively (Gardner, 1985; Phelps, 2006; Siegel, 2012; Krashen, 1982; Vygotsky, 1978; LeDoux, 1996).

3. Cognitive and Neurological Strategies in ELT

Regarding cognitive and neurolinguistic strategies, the analysis revealed that pre-service teachers had not yet fully incorporated strategies that integrate cognitive and emotional processes, despite advances in neuropsychology. Most teachers continued to prioritize repetition and memorization rather than strategies focused on emotional and cognitive reflection and comprehension (LeDoux, 1996; Damasio, 1994; Siegel, 2012).

Classroom observations showed that **38% of teachers** still used visual resources superficially, primarily for repetitive vocabulary exercises. Conversely, **73% of teachers** had begun to promote more active and reflective participation in the classroom by semantically involving their students in cognitive processes. They achieved this by systematically using AAC resources and semiotic strategies, resulting in a **61% increase in vocabulary usage** and a **58% improvement in both oral and written performance** among their students (Damasio, 1994; LeDoux, 1996; Phelps, 2006).

These findings demonstrate that integrating pedagogical approaches that combine semiotic, pictographic, cognitive, and technological strategies is essential for improving students' performance in learning foreign languages (Siegel, 2012; Gardner, 1985; LeDoux, 1996; Damasio, 1994; Phelps, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978).

4. Cognitive-Emotional Connection and Inclusive Teaching

The analysis showed that pre-service teachers adopting an inclusive and semiotically systematized pictographic approach achieved results **48% above the average** in terms of participation and motivation. They integrated the systematic use of AAC systems into ELT, promoting a more dynamic learning environment that favored social learning and communicative interaction (Vygotsky, 1978; Krashen, 1982).

72% of students reported a significant increase in motivation and a greater willingness and confidence to engage in communication in English, confirming that the pictographic component is an important factor in facilitating language learning (Gardner, 1985; Vygotsky, 1978; Krashen, 1982; Siegel, 2012; LeDoux, 1996; Phelps, 2006).

5. Practical Implications and Advancements in Language Learning

The interviews and classroom observations revealed that **84% of students** who incorporated semiotic resources, applied neuroscience insights, and psychoanalytic SAAC approaches demonstrated significant improvements in their performance. Average gains were as follows:

- **67% increase** in vocabulary use.
- **53% increase** in the use of grammatical structures.
- **62% improvement** in the quality and extent of oral production.
- **71% improvement** in the quality and extent of written production.

Despite recognizing their importance (Lotman, 1998; Barthes, 1957; Kress, 2010; Eco, 1976; Kramsch, 2013; Siegel, 2012), **87% of pre-service teachers** agreed that teacher training programs still lack sufficient resources in these areas. This highlights the need to integrate or increase interdisciplinary approaches into teacher training curricula.

Discussion

The results of this study highlight the transformative potential of integrating semiotic, neuroscientific, and psychoanalytic strategies with Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems in English Language Teaching (ELT). The findings align with prior research emphasizing the cognitive and motivational benefits of multimodal and culturally relevant methodologies (Lotman, 1998; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2010; Damasio, 1994; Gardner, 1985).

1. The Role of Semiotics in Enhancing Cognitive and Linguistic Development

The application of semiotic principles in AAC systems demonstrated the importance of symbolic representations in language acquisition. By structuring linguistic elements within a semiotic framework, pre-service teachers were able to comprehend and internalize vocabulary and grammatical structures more effectively.

This underscores the relevance of Lotman's theory of the semiosphere, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of signs and their cultural contexts in the construction of meaning (Lotman, 1998). The cultural and emotional resonance of pictograms and communication boards contributed to deeper engagement with the language, facilitating both cognitive and affective learning processes.

2. Multimodality and Motivation

The multimodal nature of the interventions, which combined visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements, was a key factor in increasing participants' motivation and engagement. This aligns with Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodal theory, which advocates for the integration of multiple modes of communication to enhance the learning experience (2010).

Participants reported that the use of visual tools, such as pictograms and communication boards, made the learning process more accessible and enjoyable. This finding supports Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, which posits that reducing anxiety and fostering positive emotions can significantly enhance language acquisition (1982).

3. Inclusivity and Pedagogical Innovation

The study demonstrated that AAC systems and semiotic strategies promote inclusive teaching practices, addressing the diverse needs of students in resource-limited and multicultural contexts. The ability of pre-service teachers to adapt these tools to various learning scenarios reflects the versatility and practicality of the proposed methodologies.

This finding aligns with Ainscow's principles of inclusive education, which emphasize the importance of creating flexible and equitable learning environments (2019). By incorporating cultural and cognitive dimensions into their teaching, participants were able to develop more empathetic and student-centered approaches, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and classroom practice.

4. Neuroscience and Psychoanalysis in Language Learning

The neurocognitive and psychoanalytic dimensions of the intervention provided valuable insights into the processes underlying language acquisition. The activation of brain structures such as the amygdala and hippocampus facilitated memory retention and emotional engagement,

reinforcing the importance of integrating neuroscientific principles into ELT methodologies (Damasio, 1994; LeDoux, 1996).

The psychoanalytic perspective enriched the understanding of how unconscious factors, such as identity and desire, influence language learning. By addressing these elements through semiotic tools, participants were able to overcome psychological barriers and develop a more positive self-perception as language learners and future educators (Freud, 1915; Lacan, 1966; Kristeva, 1984).

5. Bridging Policy and Practice in Teacher Training

The practical application of AAC and semiotic strategies in Teacher Training Schools has significant implications for educational policy and practice. The results demonstrate that these methodologies can effectively address the challenges outlined in the National English Strategy (ENI) and the National English Program (PRONI), particularly in contexts where linguistic resources are limited (SEP, 2017; INEE, 2018).

By providing accessible and culturally relevant tools, this study contributes to the development of innovative teaching practices that align with the goals of these policies. It underscores the need for systematic integration of AAC systems and semiotic strategies into teacher training programs, fostering more inclusive and effective approaches to ELT.

Conclusions

This study demonstrated the significant impact of integrating semiotic, neuroscientific, and psychoanalytic strategies with Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems in English Language Teaching (ELT) for pre-service teachers in Teacher Training Schools in Mexico. The findings highlight the effectiveness of these methodologies in addressing linguistic, cognitive, and cultural challenges, paving the way for innovative and inclusive teaching practices in resource-limited contexts.

1. Semiotic Contributions to ELT

The use of AAC systems grounded in semiotic principles facilitated the acquisition of vocabulary and grammatical structures through symbolic representations. The organization of linguistic elements within communication boards allowed participants to develop cognitive patterns that enhanced their understanding and retention of the English language. This aligns with theories that emphasize the role of semiotics in constructing meaning and fostering cultural connections in language learning (Lotman, 1998; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2010).

2. Multimodal and Inclusive Approaches

The incorporation of multimodal strategies enriched the teaching-learning process, making it more accessible and engaging for diverse student populations. By addressing the affective and cognitive needs of pre-service teachers, the interventions reduced anxiety and increased motivation, creating a positive environment for language acquisition. These findings reaffirm the importance of inclusive and student-centered methodologies in ELT (Krashen, 1982; Ainscow, 2019).

3. Cognitive and Emotional Engagement

The study highlighted the importance of integrating neuroscientific insights into ELT practices. By leveraging brain structures such as the amygdala and hippocampus, the interventions

promoted memory consolidation and emotional connection to the learning process. The psychoanalytic perspective further contributed to understanding and overcoming unconscious barriers to language learning, enabling participants to develop a stronger linguistic identity and greater self-confidence (Damasio, 1994; Freud, 1915; Kristeva, 1984).

4. Alignment with Educational Policies

The findings underscore the potential of AAC systems and semiotic strategies to bridge the gap between the objectives of the National English Strategy (ENI) and the National English Program (PRONI) and the realities of classroom practice. These methodologies provide practical and scalable solutions to the challenges faced by Teacher Training Schools, particularly in resource-constrained environments (SEP, 2017; INEE, 2018).

Final Considerations

This study contributes to the academic and practical discourse on ELT by proposing an interdisciplinary framework that integrates semiotics, neuroscience, and psychoanalysis with AAC systems. It highlights the importance of designing culturally relevant and cognitively enriching teaching tools that address the needs of both students and educators.

The results call for further research and systematic implementation of these methodologies in Teacher Training Schools, ensuring that future educators are equipped with the skills and resources necessary to foster inclusive and effective English language learning environments.

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