

EFL Professors' Perceptions and Intentions towards the Integration of the Tools in UNA Virtual Program at UNA Brunca Campus

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Resumen

La ponencia se basa en una investigación que enfoca de manera primordial el uso, o desuso, de las herramientas ofrecidas por el programa UNA Virtual el cual se encarga de incentivar la utilización de las Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación (TICs) en ambiente educativo de la Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica (UNA). Asimismo, el estudio identifica y explica algunos factores que intervienen para que dichas herramientas tengan una limitada integración en la práctica educativa de once docentes de inglés como lengua extranjera de la Sede Regional Brunca de la Universidad Nacional. A la vez, se recogen y analizan las percepciones de los estos profesores en relación con el uso y la importancia que tienen el Internet y las herramientas educativas basadas en la web para ellos y su práctica docente. En la investigación se utilizaron métodos cualitativos y cuantitativos de recolección de datos pero el estudio tomó un diseño fenomenológico. Bodgen and Biklen (2003) se refieren a este tipo de diseños como aquellos que intentan reconocer las percepciones de las personas y los significados que ellas le atribuyen a un fenómeno o experiencia. (como se cita en Hernández, Fernández and Batista, 2010, p.515). El diseño generado es valioso para la investigación pues son las experiencias de los participantes las que se convierten en el centro de análisis y sus puntos de vista son sobre los cuales se basan los resultados del estudio.

Palabras clave: Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación (TICs), tecnología educativa, herramientas WEB, Programa UNA Virtual

Abstract

This research primarily focuses on the use or lack of use of the tools offered by the UNA Virtual program which is in charge of incentivizing the utilization of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the teaching and learning environments at Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica (UNA). In addition, the study identifies and explains some factors affecting the integration of Web-based tools (tools based on the Internet) in the teaching praxis of a group of eleven EFL (English as a Foreign Language) professors teaching in the English Teaching Major at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension. Moreover, it recognizes the perceptions of these professors in regard to the use and importance of Web-based tools in their teaching praxis. This research made use of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection, but the study took an overall qualitative phenomenological design. Bodgen and Biklen refer to this type of designs as those intended to recognize the people's perceptions and meanings attributed to any specific phenomenon or experience (as cited in Hernández, Fernández and Batista, 2010 p. 515). What made this specific design valuable for this investigation is that the participants' experiences become the center of the analysis their views towards the phenomenon are the focal point upon which this research is grounded.

Keywords: Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), educational technology, Web-based tools, Web-based Instruction, UNA virtual Program

1. Introduction

The advent of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and the fast growth of the Internet offer multiple opportunities for English-as-a-Foreign Language teachers (henceforth EFL teachers) to innovate and improve their instruction. Nevertheless, there are many instructors around the world who do not make use of computer technology even though its availability, familiarity and sophistication increases every day. Costa Rica's higher education is not the exception to this reality. This is a very risky scenario considering that at this educational level future professionals are being formed and they will have to be ready for a job market where technology skills are highly valued.

There is no doubt that teachers play a major role in promoting and integrating new technologies in teaching and learning. Nevertheless, this integration might be limited sometimes by a series of factors of different sources. In general terms, teachers' lack of the information and skills required for integrating new technologies is a relevant issue. Other teachers might be skeptical of the advantages of new teaching practices compared to traditional ones. Other sources of fears are more related the trustworthiness of technology or the lack of interest and commitment shown by professors.

In addition to teachers, school authorities also have a responsibility. They are to lead initiatives if they expect their faculty to use more technology in their teaching. Carefully planned actions towards a better integration of technology are in the hands of administrators. They should be in charge of enhancing changes in their own institutions.

The central issue inspected in this study is that, on one side, today's technological generation demands teachers to integrate Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) in their instruction, but on the other side, many teachers are not fully taking advantage of the tools that are available and provided to them by their institutions. Particularly, this research aimed to identify why EFL professors at the Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica in its Brunca Branch Campus are not integrating the Web-based tools offered by the UNA Virtual Program in their teaching praxis.

Challenges in adapting, integrating and promoting the use of technology constantly increase and educators should be ready to face them. Meloni (1998) states that "Technology will not replace teachers...teachers who use technology will probably replace teachers who do not" (p.10). It is important that teachers be able to trespass the barriers for the adoption of modern technologies for they might be at risk of becoming obsolete or distant from the exigencies of a modern world. In the advent of a technological century, the use of modern technologies and virtual learning seems to be a convenient, promising option for professors to enhance their students' interest and knowledge, especially when it comes to higher education and second languages.

Research questions

- a. What are the EFL professors' perceptions about the usefulness and ease of use of Web-based tools in their teaching praxis?
- b. What are the EFL professors' perceptions and intentions in regards to the potential integration of the tools from UNA Virtual program?
- c. What factors are affecting the EFL professors' potential integration of the tools offered by the UNA Virtual program in their teaching praxis at UNA Brunca Branch Campus?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Internet and English Teaching

Due to the fact that the Internet was originated in the United States, nowadays most of the information that is available through this means is in English. Experts say that this is one important reason why the Internet has become a very rich source for instruction and a convenient tool for English language teaching (Teeler and Gray, 2000; Mubireek, 2001). These qualities make of the Internet not only an efficient communication technology, but also a fundamental tool for ESL teaching and learning.

The Internet has also changed the way people see the world and has influenced a great number of areas such as communication, science, arts and others. Education has not escaped from its influence. Jalobeanu et al. (2003) place the origins of Internet-based education back in 1840 with distance education. The authors state that two decades later and because of the creation of the Internet and the incorporation of computers into schools, evolution of distance education has been notorious and the number of institutions offering Internet-based courses, and degrees has increased greatly (p.23). This fast growth toward a more technological education involves great responsibility from educational institutions that need to plan strategies to respond to the new demands that these tendencies bring.

There are unique traits that make the Internet different from other media and particularly influential for the language teaching field. One of its most remarkable characteristics has been simply regarded as “many to many” because of its interactive nature being an open medium that allows participation of different actors. Servon (2002) states that “unlike other media used to deliver information, television and newspaper for example, the Internet allows users both to respond to what exists and to produce their own material relatively inexpensively *if* they possess the skills and access necessary to do so” (p. 3). In teaching and learning environments the virtues previously mentioned propitiate the necessary conditions for the enhancement of self-confidence, self-training and continuous education.

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is one of the most significant areas of innovation in language education technology. Ever since it was introduced in the 1960s, it

has changed along with the way teachers view language teaching. One clear definition to help understand the term is given by Egbert and Petrie (2008) who present it as “learners learning language in any context with, through, and around computer technologies” (p.4). CALL should be understood as a process and, as such, it involves different variables. Learners, context, language tools, activities as well as teachers and peers have a role to play in the success of this process.

2.2. Web Based Instruction (WBI) and Second or Foreign Language Learning

The concept of Web-Based Instruction is perhaps one of the most significant ones in this research because it encloses the kind of instruction mediating while using Internet-based tools. Ritchie and Hoffman (as cited in Khan, 1997, p. 6) define Web Based Instruction as “...a hypermedia-based instructional program which utilizes the attributes and resources of the World Wide Web (WWW) to create a meaningful learning environment where learning is fostered and supported.” Teaching and learning through WBI is not as different from classroom instruction in that their main purpose is to acquire knowledge and be able to use it. They do differ, however, in the vast alternatives for instruction found in the web which facilitate the learning process and make it more meaningful.

WBI is founded on some fundamental characteristics, being interactivity one of the most important ones. Jalobeanu et al. (2003) state that students not only interact with each other and their tutors but also with the Web itself (p. 39). This interaction facilitates the use of different teaching methods and approaches such as Community Language Learning (CLL). The basic premise in this method is that “Learners become members of a community ~their fellow learners and the teacher~ and learn through interacting with the community. Learning is not viewed as an individual accomplishment but as something that is achieved collaboratively” (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p.94). The environments created through the use of Web-Based activities promote learners’ cooperative skills and group learning in the classroom and outside of it.

Other theories of second language acquisition support the use of web-based tools for instruction. On his part, Ellis (1997) refers to the role of interaction in second language acquisition as a means for the participants to engage in what he calls negotiation of meaning. He states that Learners involved in this interaction can soon be correcting their own errors (p.46). Interaction is a very important part of web-based instruction, too. It occurs in different moments and ways (i.e. with the computer, with the web, with peers and with instructors). This interactivity helps learners acquire the language in ways that they may not have in the common classroom.

There are different benefits derived from this interaction. Some experts have summarized these benefits into “opportunities for negotiating meaning, obtaining enhanced input and directing attention to linguistic form” (Egbert and Petrie, 2005, p.55). The learner benefits from his or her own experiences but also with the experiences of others with whom he or she interrelates in the Web-based environment which helps them improve their language in a dynamic way.

2.3. Teachers' Use of Internet

It is not easy to define or established well grounded statistics on the quantity and quality of Internet integration in teacher's methodology and instruction. As Teeler and Gray (2000) portray it, telling how many teachers use the Internet for teaching purposes or how many use it for language teaching is, in fact, a very difficult task. What can be said, however, is that the Internet is used for a very extensive list of purposes in English Language Teaching (ELT) "development, updating language skills, finding materials, learning about computer applications, keeping in touch with friends and colleagues, teaching, working on class projects and activities, and just having fun" (p.5). The Internet is definitely being used and this use increases as computers become more frequent in schools around the world.

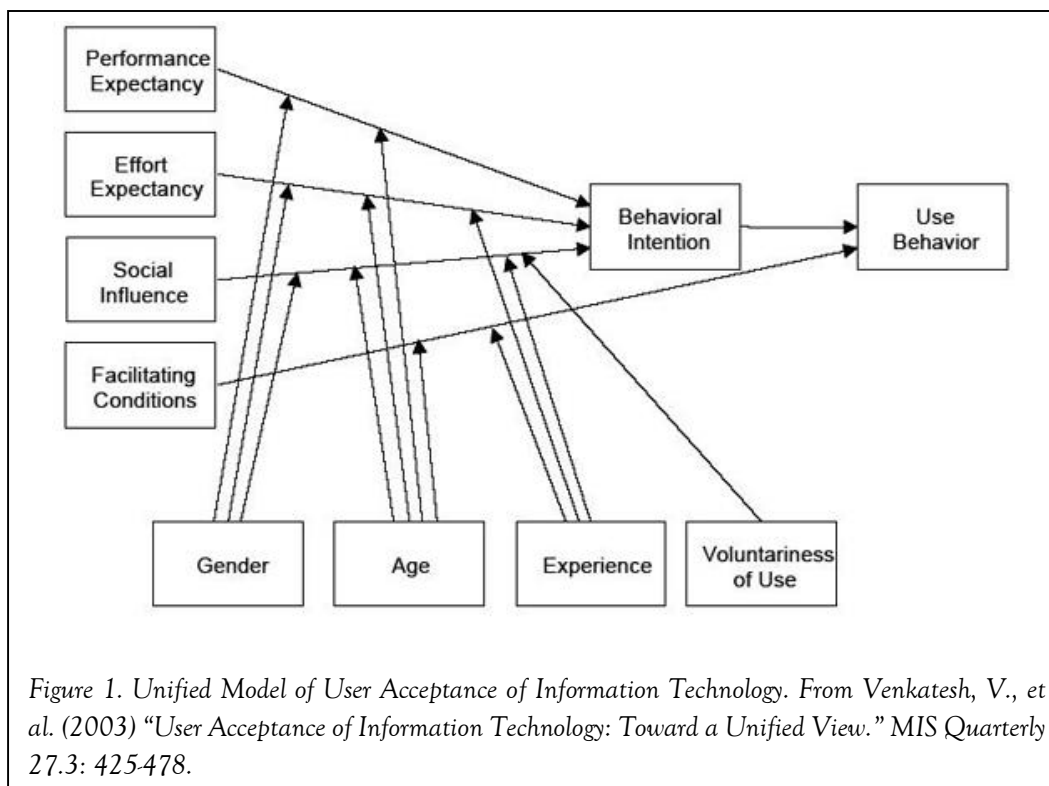
The growing use of this tool has a series of implications for teachers, particularly those who are not digital natives. It offers teachers new and rapidly changing possibilities for their instruction, but the effectiveness of computer technology and the Internet does not depend only on the medium but on the way people use it. Some obstacles in this regard are presented by Kuo (2008):

However, developing a technology proficient teacher is not an easy task. It involves many complex works, such as striving for funding to purchase technology equipment and software, establishing school technology support system, designing appropriate technology assisted curricula, and recruiting professional technology educators. (p.5)

As can be seen, factors affecting the use of technology are of all kinds: from administrative matters to curricular incompatibilities.

2.4. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

To help explain and better understand the reasons why some people use technology a model called TAM or Technology Acceptance Model was developed in 1989. The creators believed that two variables: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of technology directly influence the people's attitudes towards a computer technology and the behavioral intentions to use it. Nevertheless, the TAM did not remain unchanged since first proposed more than twenty years ago. Figure 1 shows its evolution.



The model proposed in 2003 tries to integrate preexisting models to explain the acceptance process. Venkatesh et al. (2003) state that three constructs are linked to behavioral intentions to use technology: performance expectancy (the degree to which an individual believes that using the system will help him or her to attain gains in job performance), effort expectancy (the degree of ease associated with the use of the system), social influence (the degree to which an individual perceives that important others believe he or she should use the new system). The fourth construct is facilitating conditions (the degree to which an individual believes that an organizational and technical infrastructure exists to support use of the system). This one is not linked directly to behavioral intention but to the use behavior (pp 445-454). In addition, the authors also detailed the role of some key moderators and the relation that they have with each of the constructs. These moderator variables are gender, age, experience and voluntariness or the extent to which potential adopters perceive the adoption decision to be non-mandatory.

2.5. Teachers' Attitudes towards Technology

Another crucial aspect that has been referred to when explaining technology integration in education is teachers' attitudes. Categorizations for attitudes have been largely studied and discussed. For instance, Ramanair and Sagat (2007) categorize them into cognitive, the behavioural and the affective. The first one represents the "users' thinking," that is, the opinions of what they consider positive or negative about using technology. The second one is the affective category which deals with feelings and emotions experienced using technology; and the last one, the behavioural category, deals with actions (par. 9). At

different levels teachers' attitudes are linked to their integration of technology in their instruction and the identification of those attitudes is very important before conducting research on educational technology.

The simple addition of a technological device to an educational context does not guarantee by any means that the learning process will change to be more successful. On the contrary, it might get in the way if not used properly. Levin and Wadmany (2011) affirm that "teachers have the most impact on the quality of technology use in schools and therefore, factor relating to teachers are more frequently cited as influencing technology use in schools" (p. 237). Consequently, any effort made to explain phenomena related to the integration of any technology in education might not be separated from understanding the roles played by the teachers.

There are reports on different studies that show that teachers have a very crucial role in relation to ICT and its effect on pedagogy. For example, the work of Moseley and Higgins concluded that successful use of ICT is linked to teachers' attitudes "teachers who have positive attitudes towards ICT itself will be positively disposed towards using it in the classroom" (as cited in Mumtaz, 2000, p. 328). Knowing this, it is evident that promoting a good disposition towards technology is a factor that contributes to successful results in teaching experiences. Here lies the importance of incentivising positive practices concerning WBI for example.

Professors' attitudes towards technology might be influenced by several aspects and circumstances. Holden and Rada (2011) establish that teachers' personal factors such as subject matter, gender and teaching experience are very linked to classroom technology usage. They also declare that higher levels of technology acceptance are related to a higher willingness to change their teaching practices to use technology (p. 348). The analysis of these personal factors becomes crucial when trying to understand why some tools such as the ones offered by UNA Virtual are rejected or accepted.

2.6. Teachers' Perceived Relevance of Technology for EFL Teaching

There have been concerns in relation to the real impact that technology has in the acquisition of knowledge. In an study conducted with university professors in Illinois, Butler and Sellbon (2002) concluded that some of them question the impact of technology in learning because "Very few journals summarize the results of well-run experiments on the impact of technology, and little useful scientific information is available in the web" (p. 26). Many skeptical facilitators are not easily convinced that using technology and Internet will have much greater benefits than traditional instruction. Considering this, it is very important that universities encourage assessment to verify the value that technological tools can bring to the teaching and learning process.

It is important, hence, that universities set specific incentives for teachers to know exactly how to use ICTs. In this regard, Afshari et al. (2009) suggest that institutions must develop a vision that guides the integration of these tools:

Users of technology must have a fundamental belief in the value of innovation or the innovation is doomed to failure. Teachers must have opportunities to study, observe, reflect, and discuss their practice, including their use of ICT, in order to develop a sound pedagogy that incorporates technology. (pp. 83-84)

Evidently, setting clear purposive visions of benefits and beliefs behind ICT integration in the school will facilitate the adoption of those tools.

2.7. The UNA Virtual Program

Fundamental for this research is the understanding of the UNA Virtual program and the philosophical and methodological foundations that ground it. Castro (2010) places the origins of the program in the year 2002 when the Program for the Development and Applications of New Technologies in the Academic Processes (PRODAPA for its initials in Spanish) is instituted. It represents the first step for the university's strategy in this area. In 2004, the program changes its structure and is called NOVUS from the Latin word new. Finally, in 2005, NOVUS becomes UNA Virtual and its first goal is the establishment of policies for the incorporation of ICTs in the academy (p. 4). This changes show the evolution of the program and the efforts made by the university in order to stimulate the use of technology.

The program is founded upon UNA's principles and Pedagogical Model (Modelo Pedagógico). Castro (2010) refers to three moments in which the connection of the program to the principles previously mentioned are reflected:

- The function of technologies as a means to facilitate interaction among professors, students and learning contents.
- At UNA teaching presumes the existence of alternative learning environments supported with new technologies.
- Technologies of information and communication become a changing agent that influences the pedagogical work and the relationships between pupil-educator and educator-pupil. (p. 7)

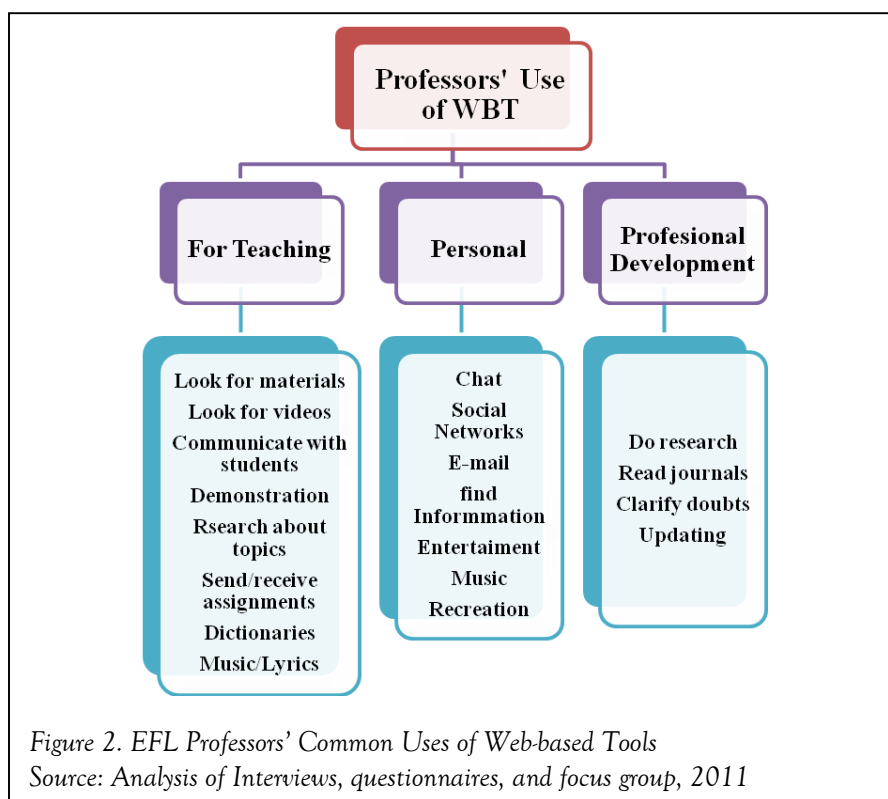
Clearly, UNA Virtual is a vital instrument for the university to reach its goals of adopting technologies for the implementation of innovating teaching and learning practices in the institution.

3. Results

3.1. EFL Professors' Perceptions about Web-based tools (WBT)

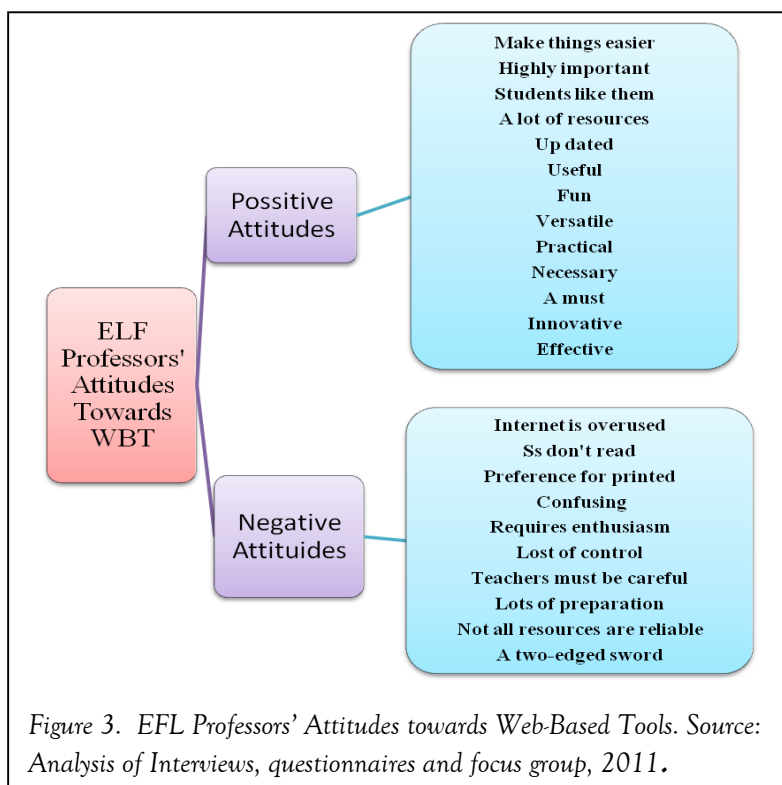
3.1.1. *Perceived Usefulness*

The instructional (Internet for teaching) and the personal dimensions have the most weight. Participants invest a significant part of their time searching for materials for their classes, videos to introduce, illustrate, exemplify or contextualize class topics and also music or lyrics. Another common use, though not all do it, is the e-mail or social networks (i.e. Facebook) to communicate with students. Sending and receiving assignments and class materials is also common. The personal dimension shows that professors do not differ from regular users of Internet which use it for communication and enjoyment purposes. The third dimension shows how technology contributes to professors' independent professional development, too. Figure 2 shows examples to illustrate this category.



Attitudes towards the use of Web-Based tools were also identified in the analysis. Clearly, positive attitudes towards WBT were predominant over negative ones. Different comments given by the participants evidenced how professors perceive these tools as necessary. For example, Clare stated: “*Us without technology? I can’t imagine, Right? Our future teachers without technology?...We need to take advantage of all these tools in the classroom, so I would say that it’s something that is necessary*” (personal interview, 2011).

Nevertheless, there were also some negative attitudes, though they were not generalized. For example, comments made by four participants highlighted the need for professors to be careful when using the Internet and all tools based on this means. Liza commented that *[Internet-based tools] it's a two-edge sword. Teachers who use them must be really prepared or careful, so it is like it has benefits but it also has... it can cause problems*” (focus group, 2011). In the same line of thought, some remarks were made for the need to scrutinize the resources in order to guarantee reliability (Yale, personal interview, 2011). Ming and Sidney also manifested that the wide spectrum of options and resources available in the Internet might make users to get confused and overwhelmed (focus group and questionnaire, 2011). Figure 3 shows the constructs that evidenced the attitudes towards the use of Web-based tools.



3.1.2. Perceived Ease of Use of WBT

This category represents the perceived ease of use of WBT expressed by professors. In the questionnaire professors were given a series of statements they had to mark according to their level of agreement SD (strongly disagree), D (disagree), PA (partially agree), A (agree), SA (strongly agree). The items intended to measure professors' perceived ease of use of technology (in this case web-based tools) showed very balanced results. WBT are considered neither very difficult nor very easy to use. When given the statement "Internet-Based tools are easy to use and understand," five of the professors responded positively, three remained neutral, and only three disagreed manifesting that they are a not easy (see table 1).

Table 1.
Professors' Perceived Ease of Use of WBT

	SD ↓	D	PA	A	SA ↓
The Internet-based tools are easy to understand and use.	0(0%)	3(27%)	3(27%)	4(37%)	1(9%)
My job provides opportunities for me to learn about the Internet.	0(0%)	1(10%)	4(36%)	2(18%)	4(36%)
My job provides opportunities for me to teach about the Internet.	1(9%)	0(0%)	6(55%)	3(27%)	1(9%)
A large number of my colleagues currently use Internet-based tools.	0(0%)	1(9%)	1(9%)	3(27%)	5(45%)
EFL teachers should be trained/ educated to use the Internet-based tools in instruction.	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	2(18%)	9(82%)
Using Internet-based tools saves time and effort.	0(0%)	0(0%)	4(36%)	1(9%)	6(55%)
Class time is not enough to include Internet-based tools.	2(19%)	3(27%)	3(27%)	3(27%)	0(0%)
I am competent to use Internet-based tools in the classroom.	0(0%)	1(9%)	5(46%)	3(27%)	2(18%)
I know how to integrate Internet-based tools into classroom curricula.	0(0%)	0(0%)	7(64%)	3(27%)	1(9%)
I need training to improve my internet literacy skills.	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4(36%)	7(64%)

Source: Questionnaire for teachers, September 2011.

Teachers also perceived that their jobs offer some opportunities for them to learn about the Internet, when presented with this statement, most of them partially agreed, agreed or strongly agreed. Results changed a little when asked if their jobs provide opportunities to teach about the Internet, but even then results inclined to the positive side. Most of the professors also considered that a large number of their colleagues are currently using Internet-based tools.

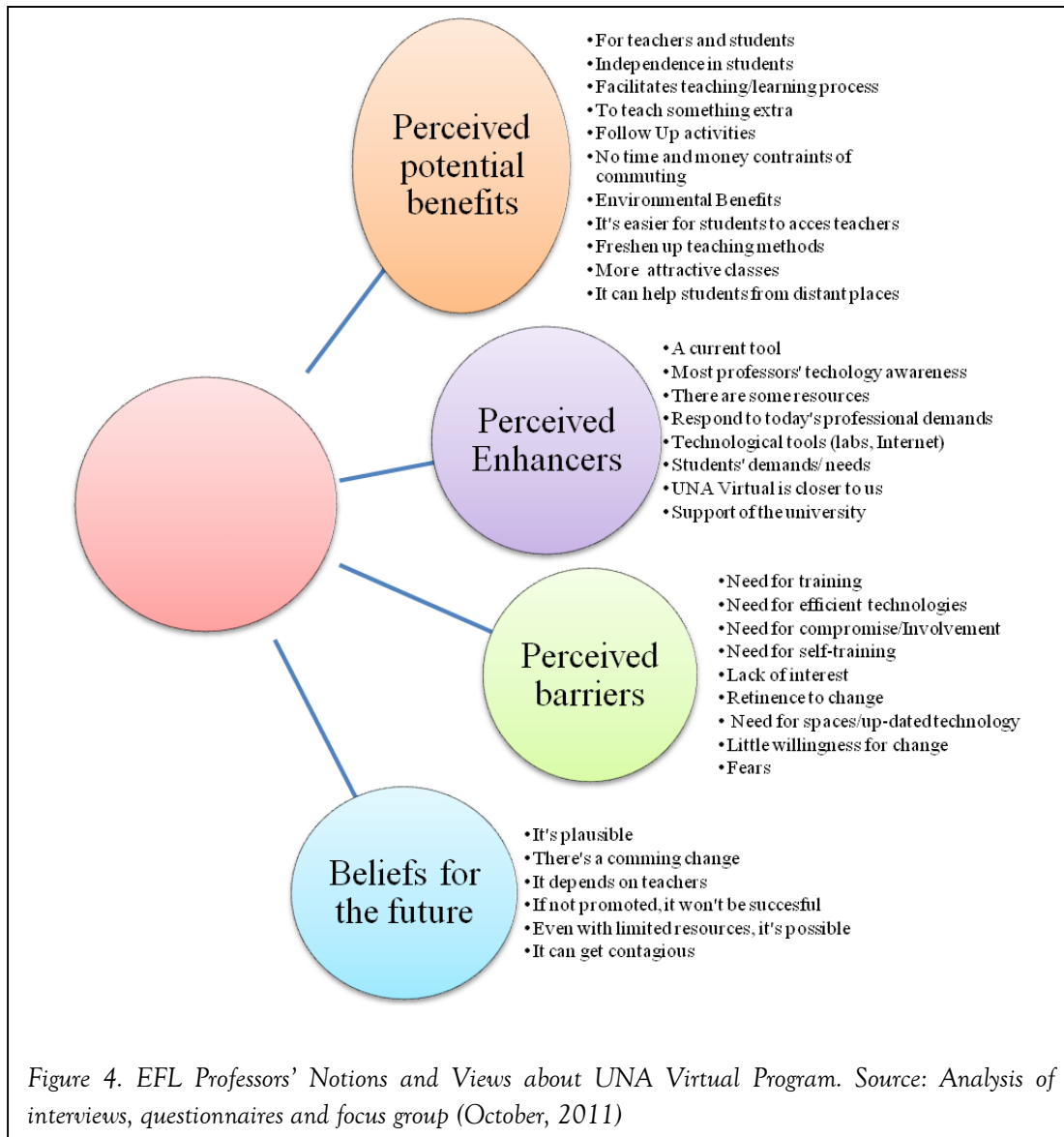
3.2. UNA Virtual Program

The second general topic to be discussed in this section is the UNA Virtual Program and the potential implementation of their tools. Even though there is a generalized low level of knowledge or certainty about what UNA Virtual really is and the possibilities it offers, professors at Brunca campus showed their expectations, their notions, their beliefs, their thoughts and even their fears in regards to this program.

3.2.1. EFL Professors' Views about the UNA Virtual Program

At the beginning of this study, during the questionnaire, 6 of the 11 participants responded to have none or little knowledge about the existence of the UNA Virtual program and what it was about, which was reconfirmed during the interviews. Actually, only two of the eleven professors said that they had attended some workshops, but none of them have used any of

the tools after this. Nevertheless, all of the participants without exception manifested, at some point or another, willingness to learn about the tools. In general terms there are positive expectations in regards to the potential implementation of the program and the benefits it might bring. Only a couple of professors seemed more skeptical or less enthusiastic. Figure 4 shows the main categories emerged in this topic.



3.2.2. Perceived Potential Benefits of the UNA Virtual Program

Among the potential benefits that participants constantly mentioned perhaps the most popular was the idea that it can be beneficial for the learning process. Teachers as well as students will be benefited with the integration of virtual tools in instruction according to them. In addition, the tools might be used for different purposes such as follow up activities, extra class and warm up activities or before the class activities. One example is given by Miley

a participant who expresses that students can have more possibilities to access teachers out of the class through the use of virtual communication (personal interview, 2011). Other significant benefits are the formation of more independent students and the contribution to the environment since by of web-based tools many students would be able to work and learn at home with no need to commute to a learning center.

3.2.3. Perceived Enhancers

This category encloses the aspects that professors believe encourage them or might facilitate or allow their integration of the tools from UNA Virtual in their teaching praxis. One aspect to remark is that most of them believe that the tools from the program respond to today's professional demands. Likewise, they think UNA Virtual is a current tool and that it can fulfill students' present needs and demands. In addition, professors expressed that one aspect that may contribute to a possible integration of the tools is the availability or existence of some equipment in the branch such as wireless Internet and laboratories.

One more enhancing factor is that UNA Virtual is closer to professors. In other words, UNA Virtual is part of the university and has its support; hence, it is not just any other tool. In addition, one of the most important aspects mentioned is the belief that the EFL professors at Brunca branch are showing more technology awareness. Some said that this positive attitude shows that many professors want to learn how to use technology more in their instruction.

3.2.4. Perceived Barriers

Even when there are mostly positive hopes for the program, possible barriers are also present. The number one barrier mentioned by all the participants is the need for training. It is not very likely that the tools be used by this group of professors without prior better training. A second perceived need is that of more efficient technologies. Even though the professors believe that there are some technologies available in the branch, they also believe that more and better devices must be provided. Better spaces and infrastructure were some other aspects mentioned.

When consulted about the preceding issues the Brunca branch' dean Mr. Geovanni Jimenez said that there have been some trainings for UNA Virtual, but the impact of the program has been slow. He thinks one reason is the current generational process among professors. Many of them have not faced the ICTs revolution yet which might create some resistance to them. Another reason is that there has not been a clear need to use Virtual tools in the branch. On the other hand, even when he thinks accessibility to technology may be a barrier, he thinks it is not justifiable because most people in the university have access to wireless Internet. However, he does believe that time is a constraint. Professors must find the moments to access and learn about the resources because UNA Virtual is a very varied platform.

The coordinator from the UNA Virtual program also referred to the existing barriers. According to him the impact of the program in the different branch campuses of UNA has

been relatively low. He thinks there have been some important but not permanent experiences and one of the main reasons is the distance from the branches. There is a lack of presence of the program that affects its integration into the different majors and courses (Castro: e-mail interview 2011).

Other barriers that were identified cannot be considered merely physical or technical. They are more related to the teachers themselves. For example, five of the teachers considered that in order to integrate tools like the ones offered by UNA Virtual, professors must get involved and be committed and motivated to invest the necessary time to get informed about the opportunities available. The lack of interest or reticence to change current teaching practices can represent an obstacle, too.

This last aspect was supported by the dean and the coordinator from UNA Virtual program. Mr. Willy Castro from UNA Virtual believes resistance and fear might be obstructing a better integration of the program not only in the branch campuses but in the university in general (e-mail interview, 2011). Likewise, Brunca branch's dean expressed that one latent threat present in the campus is the lack of interest from the academic staff on trying to use the different tools (personal interview, 2011).

Finally, some fears regarding the use of virtual teaching were identified. For instance, one participant expressed her concern for the idea that one day virtual teaching might replace class instruction. Hence, only one professor might be needed to do the work two or three professors used to do. Yale said that students might become very dependent on Internet and they will read less magazines or newspapers or other sources. Liza expressed that some teachers are afraid of losing the control of the class. In the case of Sook In, she is more concerned with the effect of Web-Based Instruction in personal contact "*but what I don't like it is that it is like... I don't know how to say this...like separating people more. You know? Like it is not personal contact: face-to-face contact and it is very important for me*" (personal interview, 2011).

3.2.5. Beliefs for the Future

Along the research the participants' predictions or thoughts about the future of the UNA Virtual program in the Brunca campus were notorious. It is possible to say that all professors perceive the future of Internet-Mediated English Teaching as very plausible. Some believe there have been some changes in the past years that foresee a positive future for this type of instruction. For example, Dan commented: "*teaching is evolving and language teaching is evolving faster and I think that in a few years we're gonna be using those tools here*" (personal interview, 2011).

Java believes that, in spite of the limited resources available at the moment, it is possible to integrate the tools and Jim said that if the tools start being used, it can get contagious. In other words, professors will start spreading the word and sharing experiences so that others can get interested. Other comments were more related to the students:

Clare: “Students are waiting for this renovation on teaching practices right away, so I anticipate very good responses from the students and teachers at UNASRB” (questionnaire, 2011).

Liza: “We have to approach students and technology is the best way to approach them, to talk their language and their language is one of technology, so hopefully we’re gonna use technology more” (personal interview, 2011).

4. Conclusions

4.1. What are the EFL professors’ perceptions about the usefulness and ease of use of Web-based tools in their teaching praxis?

In regard to perceived usefulness, it is possible to affirm that in a generalized way the population under study found Web-based tools to be highly important in their jobs. There are many areas of the professors’ lives that are directly influenced by the use of the Internet and tools based on this means. Nonetheless, the professional part is perhaps the most dependent in this kind of tools. From simple basic uses of the Internet as an information source to more complex applications of it, the data demonstrated that Web-based tools are believed to be very useful and greatly valued. This is a reliable predictor of a possible success of the integration of new web-based tools such as the ones offered by the UNA virtual program.

Regarding the perceived ease of use of Web-based tools, it does not seem to be a strong predictor of success as is the perceived usefulness. Professors were not inclined to affirm that Web-based tools were difficult to use, but they did not affirm that the tools are very easy either. Though opinions were divided in this regards, the results did show a tendency towards a positive perception. Mostly, the data revealed that integrating this kind of technology is feasible and most teachers are willing, even eager, to learn how to use it.

4.2. What are the EFL professors’ perceptions and intentions in regards to the potential integration of the tools from UNA Virtual program?

As to the UNA Virtual program, the major obstacle for its integration at the moment has been the relatively scarce information professors have of it. Due to factors such as the little promotion of the tools or a low need for virtual teaching in the Brunca branch, the program and its components or possibilities are not well known among the participants. Nonetheless, the professors do have some expectations and intentions in regards to the potential implementation of the program in their teaching praxis.

Most participants perceived the tools as a good option that might respond to the present needs and demands of students and teachers. There are several potential benefits for the teaching and learning process. Most professors showed enthusiasm and good expectations in regards to the latent advantages of UNA Virtual. This forecasts a positive future for the program in the Brunca branch if it is well promoted by the coordinators of the

program and by the branch's authorities as well. This could be done through the implementation of a more aggressive strategy that could help promote more awareness about the potential benefits of the program and built more confidence among the professors who might be interested in implementing it.

The future success of the UNA Virtual program in the Brunca campus depends on teachers and on a better support of it. The study revealed that in general terms the participants showed interest to learn about the program and the possibilities it offers. Encouraging factors such as the support of the university, and the positive attitudes shown by most of the professors are good predictors. There is a belief that the program will be used and implemented more in coming times especially because most professors are becoming more aware of the importance of educational technology.

4.3. What factors are affecting the EFL professors' potential integration of the tools offered by the UNA Virtual program in their teaching praxis at UNA Brunca Branch Campus?

4.3.1. Teacher-level Barriers

Integrating ICTs into teaching and learning might turn into a complex process that may encounter a number of difficulties or barriers. Such is the case of the UNA Virtual program in the Brunca branch. The latent barriers found in the study were located in two main levels. The first one is the teacher-level barriers or those related to the teachers themselves. Obstacles at this level include the teachers' resistance to change current teaching practices and negative attitudes. This happens mainly when a teacher is used to certain teaching approaches that they have used for many years and it originates some level of rejection to new ones. Shifting from classical approaches to more technology oriented ones is not easy for professors.

A second barrier is the lack of interest of some professors which is related to the previous one. Nevertheless, the lack of interest does not imply a rejection of technology-based teaching practices but simply an indifferent stand towards them. The third barrier acknowledged was the lack of teacher competence. It may include technology competence in general or just lack of competence in the use of UNA Virtual tools.

One more aspect is the need for self-training practices among teachers. Some participants believe that in order to improve technology skills teachers need to look for their own ways to learn. Professionals need to show curiosity about technology, commitment and involvement. Nevertheless, becoming familiar with new technologies requires time and effort. And many times busy teachers do not have the time even when they might have the interest.

4.3.2. School-level Barriers

School-level barriers identified in the study included as the first and most relevant one the lack of effective training on the tools offered by UNA Virtual. In order to be able to decide whether the UNA Virtual tools are useful for their teaching purposes, professors must

know first what they are about and how they work. Without pertinent prior training, professors will not be able to see any advantage of the tools.

A second school factor limiting the use of UNA Virtual and other WBT in general is the reduced accessibility to up-dated and trustworthy technological resources in the branch and the need for technical support. To guarantee a higher success of the program in the branch the institution should make efforts to guarantee the optimal resources. It does not mean that technology does not exist. There are technologies available that serve as a good start but they should be constantly up-graded to respond to the fast changes of today's world. Also the access should be guaranteed for all EFL students and teachers.

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