

# DESIGN OF A GAME-CENTERED BOOKLET TO REDUCE THE AFFECTIVE FILTER WITHOUT DEPENDING ON ICT TOOLS

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## DISEÑO DE UNA CARTILLA CENTRADA EN JUEGOS QUE NO REQUIEREN HERRAMIENTAS TIC PARA REDUCIR EL FILTRO AFECTIVO<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

This documentary research focuses on the effects of the use of humor in class and the ways to implement it even when communication technologies are absent. Considering the reality of many students in Colombia who do not have access to ICT tools, Internet, or telephone signals, this study sought to develop a game-centered booklet for people over 14 years old to increase knowledge or improve the teaching-learning processes all over Colombia. However, it can be taken into account that social, and economic barriers could be overcome to reach equity.

*Keywords:* Affective filter; Humor; Games; Materials design; Absence of ICT tools.

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## RESUMEN

Esta investigación documental se centra en los efectos del uso del humor en clase y las formas de implementarlo, incluso cuando las tecnologías de la comunicación están ausentes. Considerando la realidad de muchos estudiantes en Colombia que no cuentan con acceso a herramientas TIC, Internet o señal telefónica, este estudio buscó desarrollar una cartilla lúdica para mayores de 14 años, a fin de incrementar conocimientos o mejorar procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje en toda Colombia. Sin embargo, se puede tener en cuenta que las barreras sociales y económicas podrían ser superadas para alcanzar equidad.

*Palabras clave:* Filtro afectivo; Humor; Juegos; Diseño de materiales; Ausencia de herramientas TIC.

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## I. INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Many teachers in Colombia think that practicing this profession is a permanent challenge, especially for those who teach in rural areas. What is more interesting about teaching an FL is that many of those teachers are not solely English teachers, since they have to teach all of the subjects. Another thing to take into account is that in the rural context the flexible model is used because many children cannot physically go to school every day. The reality of unsatisfactory educational conditions in Colombia ought to be taken into account since not all cities, towns, or regions have access to ICT tools. Unfortunately, in our country, we have many problems in terms of connectivity. To illustrate, not all nation has full internet or telephone signal coverage. Even in places where it is available with these poor conditions, another problem arises: the impossibility of locals to have devices that allow them to successfully connect to the Internet. In our republic, there are many areas that have been practically forgotten, both by the companies in charge of bringing communication technologies, and by the Colombian government itself, which does not give people the opportunities to access the internet and with its new teaching-learning methods.

Access to technologies or economic resources should not be a barrier that prevents people from learning a new language, therefore, I firmly believe that the creation of instruments for teaching foreign languages does not depend on ICT tools. This will become the foundation of the discussion, so all people, regardless of their geographical location or socioeconomic background, can access new methods or experiences that help them learn a foreign language. I think that in Colombia, we must begin to think of rural areas or areas with little connectivity, not as remote and forgotten areas, but as an opportunity to get the best out of teachers, our creativity, our well-known good humor, and the ability to solve educational and interconnectivity problems.

Furthermore, another aspect that supports this study was how students perceive learning an FL and also the authors' own experience. In order to get more information, a poll was answered by around 100 random people who were older than 14 years old who did not have any relations with each other because they had different occupations.

In relation to the researchers' experience, it was quite evident that many professionals studied English because it was a must, instead of a real wish. In fact, from poll results, it was confirmed that it is one of the reasons they acquired a foreign language. Hence, as expected, based on poll results, more than half of surveyed people learned an FL (Foreign Language henceforth) because they had to, either as a requirement at the university, to get better job opportunities or to have a job promotion.

Nowadays, many people may perceive that knowing an FL is not a plus, but rather an obligation, just to prevent staying at the back, being the last option when applying for a new job, or in some other cases to be able to develop a well-rounded professional profile to be eligible in all the possible fields. Unfortunately, that perception can only be obtained once the person has a better appreciation of reality, which is why most of the students of English courses are teenagers or adults. Nonetheless, based on the poll, it can be said that the need to acquire an FL does not vanish throughout time.

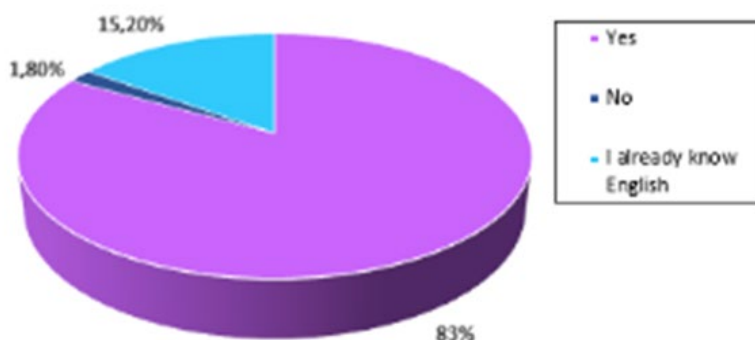
Despite how English is seen as an obligation by many students, teachers could make this process more enjoyable for them, either by using different teaching techniques or by taking the time to understand their personalities. It is important to keep in mind that how a teacher communicates is key in the teaching-learning process. With

that in mind, we can use games in our classes to teach or reinforce different topics and it could be well accepted by students as shown by results from the poll. The following graphic shows that more than 80% of the people would like to learn an FL by playing games.

FIGURE 1

QUESTION 5. SURVEY TO IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM TO RESEARCH

Would you like to learn English by playing games?



Considering the reality of Colombia as well as what students prefer, I wanted to create new material for those who live in rural areas or even those who live in urban areas with limitations to accessing ICT tools. The project created a booklet with ten different games, with all of the material and instructions included to bring a new vision of what learning English could be for those who have been forgotten by many, including the government.

In relation to the theoretical framework underlying this study, it has to do with: *learning English as a foreign language* and *affective filter*. It is important to highlight that humor is utilized as one of the affective filters; it is, therefore, relevant to bear in mind that all the positive effects that are taken into account here when talking about laughter and humor are directly related to the brain's acceptance of these stimuli as signs of happiness. All that has been mentioned led us to wonder, ¿how to lower the affective filter when learning English as a foreign language?

## II. LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

To start this research, I wanted to first verify how humor and the learning process are handled by the brain, with the most important point being how this organ works when learning an FL and if this action changes depending on the age of the students. In this sense, PICA<sup>3</sup> completed a study using three different techniques: 1) Instruction only; 2) Naturalistic; and 3) Mixed (a combination of 1 and 2), where she tried to demonstrate that what affects the way students learn is not about their ages, but about the way they acquire an FL. In fact, they committed mistakes. They, as adults, made the same mistakes that kids made when studying at school.

In this particular case, we could suppose that age is not something that affects the way a person learns, the process will be exactly the same regardless of age. Given that, we could think that the issue could be related to discipline in the classroom or paying attention to the explanations given by teachers, but not about how the brain processes information.

Furthermore, GENESEE<sup>4</sup> says that each brain is different and of course, some illnesses and aging affect the brain as well as other body parts, however, this author also explains how learning an FL may help the brain stay healthy, by creating new connections among neurons. In the beginning, the brain will process it as something new yet non-understandable then after some exposure, and the new connections, the person will start recognizing the sounds and the speech, even if it is an adult or someone who is not specifically a kid.

## III. AFFECTIVE FILTER

Based on the hypothesis of KRASHEN, several emotional and affective situations help the acquisition of an FL, some of those are motivation, anxiety, self-confidence, and personality traits. Taking that into

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3 TERESA PICA. "Adult acquisition of English as a second language under different conditions of exposure", *Language Learning*, vol. 33, n.º 4, 1983, pp. 465-497.

4 FRED GENESEE. "Brain research: Implications for second language learning", UC Berkeley, Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence, 2000, available in [<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/58n560k4>].

account, KRASHEN also mentions that students with high self-confidence, motivation, and low levels of anxiety will be more successful in the process of learning that second language<sup>55</sup>. An affective filter, as its name suggests, is a filter that strains the input of the new language. If the filter is active or high the acquisition will be lower, but if the filter is open or low, more information will be acquired.

Additionally, DU mentions that based on KRASHEN's theory, teachers can find more attractive and effective tactics to teach, techniques that go beyond the textbook, introducing into the classroom different ways to motivate students and also help them forget about learning anxiety. It is important to mention that people should take into account that the affective filter does not affect the acquisition of the mother tongue since children do not present this filter in their learning process<sup>66</sup>. As mentioned before, I began the process by checking documents related to humor, but when studying them I realized that humor is part of the affective filter, which is why I started with this topic.

#### IV. HUMOR

Before tackling the topic of learning through humor, it would be ideal to have a basic concept of what humor is; which is what can cause laughter or amusement<sup>7</sup>. It can be inferred that humor refers to the social context and that it is composed of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral elements<sup>8</sup>.

Then we have a researcher, MADRID<sup>9</sup>, who went a little further by breaking out known conventions in the learning process. She carried

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- 5 RICARDO E. SCHÜTZ. "Stephen Krashen's theory of second language acquisition", *English Made in Brazil*, April, 1998, available in [<https://www.sk.com.br/sk-krash-english.html>].
  - 6 XIAOYAN DU. "The affective filter in second language teaching", *Asian Social Science*, vol. 5, n.º 8, 2009, pp. 162-165, available in [<https://ccsnet.org/journal/index.php/ass/article/view/3457>].
  - 7 DENISE PIROWICZ. "El humor en los procesos de enseñanza aprendizaje" (master's thesis), Buenos Aires, FLACSO, 2011, available in [<https://repositorio.flacsoandes.edu.ec/bitstream/10469/3381/3/TFLACSO-01-2011DP.pdf>].
  - 8 ROD A. MARTIN. *Psicología del humor: un enfoque integrador*, Madrid, Orión Ediciones, 2008.
  - 9 JAZMÍN MADRID VALDIVIEZO. "Papel de la risa y el humor en la enseñanza y aprendizaje: explicaciones neurofisiológicas", *Apuntes Universitarios*, vol. 5, n.º 2, 2015, pp. 41-55, available in [<https://apuntesuniversitarios.upeu.edu.pe/index.php/revapuntes/article/view/240>].

out an investigation in which she wanted to review how the use of humor affects the learning process at the neurological level. Results were quite worthwhile, she confirmed the positive influence of the use of humor in the teaching-learning processes since humor transforms affective, social, and cognitive aspects; however, it is concluded that the insertion of laughter and humor in the classroom requires empirical research that starts from a neuro pedagogical approach.

Unfortunately, the author did not have much luck since in Spanish there is little empirical research on the introduction of humor in the classroom, which is not dedicated to the link between didactics and humor. Nevertheless, humor does not always trigger laughter, so it is not always possible to identify whether humor affected the students or their learning processes. It is important to clarify that the stimulus that causes laughter is usually “joy”, this feeling of pleasure that is triggered by external and internal stimuli<sup>10</sup>.

In that sense, I would like to highlight the part about “pleasure”. A person feels pleasure with humor; according to AUCOUTURIER<sup>11</sup>, the *homo sapiens* is born for pleasure, the human being always looks for what is pleasant or good for him and removes what is unpleasant or bad for him because of internal or external signs. Based on the previous reference, we could think that learning using a resource that provides pleasure will always be more attractive to any person.

In addition, students consider a “good sense of humor” as one of the most valued characteristics of good teachers. Concerning performance in various tasks, it is found that humor encourages greater mental flexibility, more constant attention, better analysis, and decision-making capacity<sup>12</sup>. The aforementioned characteristics could be considered by any teacher as a great advantage, even if the student does not learn an FL, having those skills developed in students, they may go further than expected with just the teaching-learning process of a new language.

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11 BERNARD AUCOUTURIER. *Del placer de jugar al placer de aprender. La acción preventiva de la práctica psicomotriz PPA en la escuela*, Lecture, 2006.

12 ALICE M. ISEN. “Some ways in which positive affect influences decision making and problem solving”, in LISA FELDMAN BARRETT, MICHAEL LEWIS & JEANNETTE M. HAVILAND-JONES (eds.). *Handbook of emotions*, New York, The Guilford Press, 2008, pp. 548-573.

There is a strong relationship between the emotional state of students and their motivation in the classroom<sup>13</sup>. Following that idea, I would dare to say that having motivated students is the dream of every teacher in any area of knowledge. Having students willing to learn will have them open to acquiring new skills. Resulting in teachers enjoying the activity of teaching itself and the student having fun while learning.

In the same vein, BILOKÇUOĞLU & DEBRELI<sup>14</sup> establish that a teacher who uses humor in the classroom will help students lessen their fear of speaking in a new language, this will also help them feel more comfortable, which clearly means that the affective filter is effectively reduced to help students with all the learning outcomes. In this case, it could be inferred that humor is then a reliable way to reduce the affective filter.

Unfortunately, here in Colombia, there are not many pieces of research that have been dedicated to the implementation of pedagogical tools that forget those spaces of fun based on humor; that help create a conducive and ideal environment for students to learn while smiling. Why is it important to include humor? From our point of view, humor in the classrooms could be the key to opening the affective filter and enhancing the learning process of the students.

## V. METHODOLOGY

Different investigations were studied in order to connect the theoretical framework with the researcher's observation for the creation of the booklet. A qualitative approach was used to interpret data, without any kind of numerical exposition.

To develop this study, I revised some different documents, a total of 41 documents were collected and analysed, and organized chrono-

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13 MARÍA VICTORIA MONTAÑÉS SÁNCHEZ. "El humor, la risa y el aprendizaje de ELE: una revisión desde la psicología y la didáctica", *Revista de la Facultad de Educación de Albacete*, vol. 33, n.º 1, 2018, pp. 129-143, available in [<https://revista.uclm.es/index.php/ensayos/article/view/1568/pdf>].

14 HASAN BILOKÇUOĞLU & EMRE DEBRELI. "Use of humour in language classes: an effective 'filter' for affective filter?", *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, vol. 14, n.º 3, 2018, pp. 347-359, available in [<https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/650719>].



logically and classified according to the type of text (articles, research projects, interviews, news, etc).

TABLE 1  
CHRONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF DOCUMENTS

Year	Quantity
Unknown	1
1983	1
2000	1
2005	1
2006	1
2008	2
2009	2
2011	2
2012	2
2013	2
2014	2
2015	5
2016	3
2017	2
2018	4
2019	7
2020	2
2021	1

TABLE 2  
CLASSIFICATION OF THE DOCUMENTS

Type of document	Number
Scientific articles	19
Thesis	19
Interviews	1
Newspaper articles	1
Website posts	1

Compiling the information from the aforementioned documents, the idea was to accomplish two specific objectives in this research. First, to analyse the state-of-the-art regarding learning English as a foreign language taking into account the affective filter and lack of ICT tools in certain contexts, and second, to present conclusions regarding the contributions that have been made in the teaching and learning of EFL lowering the affective filter. Both of them provide plenty of comprehensive in-depth reading.

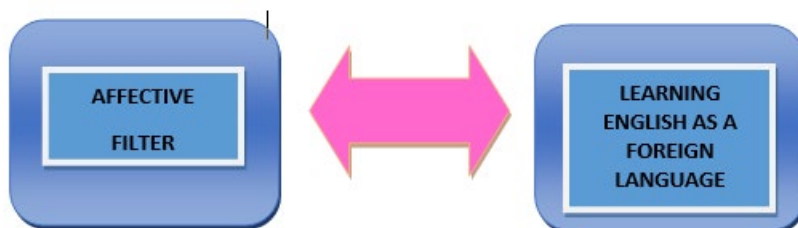
When selecting the documents, the idea was to choose the ones from the last ten years, but for specific data or studies that have not been replicated, I had to read only the ones existing nowadays, those being older than most. I also considered the type of documents, focusing on the thesis and research articles to better support the ideas, without considering the geographical position of the publication.

## VI. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the documents reviewed, the categories shown below were given priority and focused on the two constructs of the present study.

## VII. AFFECTIVE FILTER AND LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

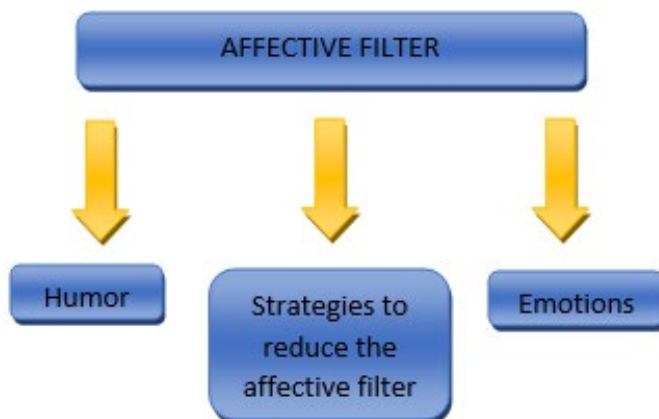
FIGURE 2  
MAIN CONSTRUCTS OF THE RESEARCH



## A. Affective filter

The first category I analysed was the affective filter, since this was the one that called our attention the most when reading the documents related to humor. Thanks to the examination of a variety of texts, I could create three subtopics as shown in Figure 3. I will present each of the subcategories with a short definition and different literature that support the existence of each of them.

FIGURE 3  
SUBTOPICS EXTRACTED FROM THE AFFECTIVE FILTER



## B. Humor

To be honest, I first started with questions about how humor can really help in the teaching-learning process, but when I began to review the subject, I realized that humor can simply be used as a tool to reduce the affective filter. In fact, as PURWASIH<sup>15</sup> indicates, using materials that include humor is an effective method to obtain better re-

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15 ANI PURWASIH. "The effectiveness of humor text in teaching speaking to the tenth-grade students of SMK Pancasila 1 Kutoarjo in the academic year of 2015/2016" (bachelor thesis), Purworejo, Indonesia, Purworejo Muhammadiyah University, 2016, available in [<http://repository.umpwr.ac.id:8080/bitstream/handle/123456789/2197/122120002-Ani%20Purwasih.pdf?sequence=1>].

sults when the ability to speak in English is mentioned. ASKILDSON<sup>16</sup>, also stipulates something very similar; in his research, he used humor with the intention of lowering the affective filter and the results were overwhelming to confirm this theory, as well as ABOUDAN<sup>17</sup>, whose study demonstrated that most of the students preferred to learn English using humor in their classes. However, ASKILDSON indicates the importance of doing more research that focuses solely on the use of humor. Although this case had very good results, there is not a vast history or evidence about this, which could mean that focusing not only on humor-centered classes as a tool to lower the affective filter but also, as a tool to promote the learning of an FL; a new learning path in which both students and teachers feel more comfortable and have better results.

BILOKÇUOĞLU & DEBRELI<sup>18</sup> point out that humor helps to create a good environment, as well as helps to remove the tyrannical perception that may exist in the traditional way of teaching. This will make students share more with teachers, and have a more humanistic and friendly perception of the FL classes. This would make the whole teaching-learning process more enjoyable.

### *C. Strategies to reduce the affective filter*

With the intention of creating a new strategy to help lower the affective filter for English learners, CUMBAJÍN<sup>19</sup> began to research, she found out in her study that teachers are the ones who can actually help lower the affective filter within the classroom by implementing

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- 16 LANCE ASKILDSON. "Effect of humor in the Language classroom: humor as a pedagogical tool in theory and practice", *Journal of Second Language Acquisition and Teaching*, vol. 12, 2005, pp. 45-61, available in [<https://journals.uair.arizona.edu/index.php/AZSLAT/article/view/21286/20865>].
- 17 RIMA ABOUDAN. "Laugh and learn: Humor and learning a second language", *International Journal of Arts and Sciences*, vol. 3, n.º 3, 2009, pp. 90-99.
- 18 BILOKÇUOĞLU & DEBRELI. "Use of humour in language classes: an effective 'filter' for affective filter?", cit.
- 19 INÉS MARIELA CUMBAJÍN PARRA. "Estrategias didácticas para reducir el filtro afectivo en el aprendizaje del idioma inglés, en la Unidad Educativa José Mejía Lequerica" (master's thesis), Quito, Pontificia Universidad Católica Del Ecuador, 2018, available in [<http://repositorio.puce.edu.ec/handle/22000/14691>].

different tools or strategies. In the research carried out by CARREÑO<sup>20</sup>, she says that, unfortunately, the affective filter is not always taken into account when planning activities, but what seems even more pertinent to us is the lack of adequate materials in educational centres to develop different activities. The strategy presented was based on executing different activities that brought the students closer to each other, as well as to the teacher, and in this way, the probability of solving doubts or problems would be easier.

Besides, VILLACRESES<sup>21</sup> wanted to analyse the mindfulness technique as a method to lower the affective filter in FL classes. This technique has positive psycho-emotional effects, since it decreases the physical and mental symptoms of anxiety, improves the individual's self-esteem, and promotes motivation. The results of the use of this technique are inherent to whether they are elementary, high school, or university students. This strategy influences the production and development of each of the four communicative skills of the language. In listening comprehension, the student's motivation towards what is heard is highlighted; in reading comprehension, self-esteem, and motivation; in oral expression, motivation, and anxiety; in written expression, anxiety.

Another option was studied by MAMANI<sup>22</sup>, here the author focused on dramatic expression as a learning strategy to reduce the affective filter to improve the oral expression of the Aymara language. This study concludes that this strategy is motivating and creative for students and that through it, within the process of acquisition-learning of a second language, learners acquire the self-confidence

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- 20 MARÍA CARREÑO DE PEDRO. "Actividades y estrategias para reducir el filtro afectivo en el aula de lengua extranjera (inglés) en educación primaria" (bachelor thesis), Spain, Universidad de Valladolid, 2014, available in [<https://uvadoc.uva.es/handle/10324/4496>].
  - 21 CAROLINA MARISOL VILLACRESES RODRÍGUEZ. "La técnica Mindfulness como herramienta para el filtro afectivo en el aprendizaje del idioma inglés" (bachelor thesis), Quito, Universidad Central del Ecuador, 2020, available in [<http://www.dspace.uce.edu.ec/handle/25000/23149>].
  - 22 JANETH ROXANA MAMANI GUARACHI. "La expresión dramática como estrategia de aprendizaje, para reducir el filtro afectivo alto, que dificulta la expresión oral del idioma Aymara como L2, en estudiantes del sexto de primaria de la Unidad Educativa 'Walter Alpire Durán A' de la ciudad de El Alto" (bachelor thesis), La Paz, Bolivia, Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, 2019, available in [<https://repositorio.umsa.bo/handle/123456789/23042>].

to develop the oral expression of the language. In addition, with this learning strategy, it was possible to reduce the high affective filter of the students; show interest, and feel comfortable using the Aymara language orally.

Although all the conclusions found by BETANCOURT<sup>23</sup> in some way have personal relations to the author, we consider it pertinent to mention this document since it remarks that it is not only about reducing the affective filter, it is also about making students feel really good in classes when they try to use any of the four basic skills. In addition, she expresses that it is also about stimulating motivation and that the tool she created can be used in class but also outside of it, which will help students to have free access to this website.

A different tool used was based on talk cards LA SPISA<sup>24</sup>, who demonstrated that this strategy helps adults to reduce affective filter, also that they enjoyed English classes more, and of course that their proficiency improved. The cards and all the activities done with them helped lower the anxiety levels of the students since the cards gave them key information or even formulaic language, collocations among others, which helped them retain more information in English.

What is more, the moment of analysing the affective filter and the adult's learning process, ROBERTON<sup>25</sup> found out that when the affective filter is lowered in adults, they use their target language. He accomplished this by having cooperative activities, like groups working in classes or creating a poster. Based on some surveys, students felt the class was more enjoyable, less hesitant, and more motivated. He mentions that reducing the affective filter works with adults as it does with children, once the affective filter is lowered, the learning process is much easier for them.

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- 23 CAROLINA BETANCOURT RUIZ. "Games as ESL strategies to lower affective filter and increase student engagement, input, and output" (bachelor thesis), Greensboro College, 2019.
- 24 LUISA LA SPISA. "Using small talk cards to help lower the affective filter and increase language acquisition in adult English learners" (master's thesis), Wayne, NJ, The William Paterson University of New Jersey, 2015, available in [<http://elibrary.pcu.edu.ph:9000/digi/TD03/2015/TD0320150000436.pdf>].
- 25 TIMOTHY ROBERTON. "Reducing affective filter in adult English Language Learning classrooms" (master's thesis), The Evergreen State College, 2011, available in [[https://archives.evergreen.edu/masterstheses/Accession2010-03MEd/2011/Roberton\\_Tim\\_MEd\\_2011.pdf](https://archives.evergreen.edu/masterstheses/Accession2010-03MEd/2011/Roberton_Tim_MEd_2011.pdf)].

## D. Emotions

All emotions are part of the affective filter and these in one way or another to a lesser or greater extent can affect how the student receives information, including learning. Emotion, motivation, attitude, anxiety, and personality, can be included within the affective filter. PRADA<sup>26</sup> focused on how self-confidence affects oral production in English as FL, the project was based on different activities to raise self-esteem and once the students had better levels in it, they also had better results in their oral production. Even students who initially did not want to participate in the speaking activities were motivated and began to take part in them.

Another author who declared emotions as part of the affective filter and the affectation in learning is MARTÍN<sup>27</sup>, she commented that the influence of the emotional component in the acquisition of knowledge and learning of the English language in her study was carried out through different humanistic tasks. With these activities, she managed to improve the atmosphere in the classrooms and helped to improve the qualitative learning process said by the students, thus implying that if emotional intelligence and filter reduction can be systematically included effectively, students' motivation will improve significantly.

In addition to what is included in the affective filter, MENDOZA<sup>28</sup> says that affection is key when talking about the development of human being because that is where their potential lies in self-confidence and in what she wants to achieve. Moreover, the child is required to fulfil certain physical and emotional needs, because if it is not done in

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- 26 HERNANDO PRADA ARANGO. "Students' self-confidence as a way to improve English oral production in tenth-grade students at Ricaurte School" (master's thesis), Bogotá, Universidad Libre, 2015, available in [<https://repository.unilibre.edu.co/handle/10901/7878>].
- 27 OFELIA MARTÍN VELÁSQUEZ. "La influencia del componente emocional en el aprendizaje del inglés" (master's thesis), Spain, Universidad de La Laguna, 2019, available in [<https://riull.ull.es/xmlui/handle/915/17307>].
- 28 DIANA PATRICIA MENDOZA GUANTIVA. "Identificación de la falta de afecto familiar como factor del fracaso escolar en lengua materna de los alumnos del ciclo I del colegio de bachillerato de la Universidad Libre" (bachelor thesis), Bogotá, Universidad Libre, 2013, available in [<https://repository.unilibre.edu.co/handle/10901/7941?locale-attribute=en>].

that way, it can cause high anxiety levels in the student, which could amplify the affective filter and thus deteriorate the learning process.

In the same vein, LEONG & AHMADI<sup>2929</sup> mention in their study that people with low motivation or low self-esteem or with high levels of anxiety had more problems when it comes to oral production. However, those with problems who find a more pleasant and friendly environment, feel better and improve their orality, which is why teachers must promote good environments, be closer to their students and help them overcome their difficulties, their shyness, as well as letting them know that it is okay to make mistakes.

### VIII. LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The second category of this study was learning English as a foreign language, which was divided into three subtopics to better understand the documents, the classification was as follows:

FIGURE 4

SUBTOPICS EXTRACTED FROM LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE



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29 LAI-MEI LEONG & SEYEDEH MASOUMEH AHMADI. "An analysis of factors influencing learners' English-speaking skill", *International Journal of Research in English Education*, vol. 2, n.º 1, 2017, pp. 34-41, available in [<http://ijreeonline.com/article-1-38-en.html>].



## A. Strategies

Nowadays there are numerous alternatives to learning English that are far from the old methodology. We now have many options we can choose from, it depends on the skills and the topic we want to reinforce or the type of students we have, as mentioned by MISKARYAN<sup>30</sup>. One of those things that we struggle with the most is vocabulary, maybe because there are people who think that it is based on the output. She conducted this study using song videos for five to six years old, unfortunately, she came to the conclusion that this is a great tool, but perhaps it is not the ideal one for a population of the targeted age range, since in this particular case, the students did not obtain better results than the control group; which traditionally did the whole process. Although in classes, they had greater retention of specific aspects, but after a while, they forgot them.

New options can always be the order of the day. For example, THAM<sup>31</sup> did a study, in which they used lexical cues in their first and second language in which they wanted to check if this also helped the acquisition of an FL. After the study, they obtained very good results, even after several sessions students still identified the new words and also reflected on the importance of taking them into account in all language learning programs. It is important to highlight the particular cases of those who are bilingual because for said cases it would be necessary to be a little more flexible regarding the use of L1 and L2 in the activities, without this interfering with the real learning of the target language. Likewise, CULMA & PÁEZ<sup>32</sup> had the idea that for their research they would use storytelling as a strategy to acquire new vocabulary in third-grade children. After completing the entire process, they concluded that this strategy was versatile, fun, and, above all, effective in achieving the proposed objective.

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30 MARINE MISKARYAN. "The impact of using video-based songs in target language on learners' vocabulary acquisition" (master's thesis), Yerevan, Armenia, American University of Armenia, 2012, available in [<https://dspace.aua.am/xmlui/handle/123456789/1258>].

31 ADAM THAM IRWAN THAM. "An eye-tracking study of bilinguals' processing of lexical cues in L1 and L2" (master's thesis), Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya, 2016, available in [<http://studentsrepo.um.edu.my/6677/>].

32 DIANA CAROLINA CULMA CAICEDO & LUISA FERNANDA PÁEZ OSPINA. "Storytelling as a strategy to promote vocabulary acquisition on third graders" (bachelor thesis), Universidad del Quindío, 2016, available in [<https://bdigital.uniquindio.edu.co/handle/001/179>].

A different study was carried out by JORQUERA & SAAVEDRA<sup>33</sup>, in which they focused on how non-verbal communication affects learning. Unfortunately, more use of translation was made than it was planned, which could have affected results since the original idea was to open students to real situations, in which learners are immediately exposed to another type of input at the same time as what they hear. They finally suggest that it would be ideal to make teachers aware of how good it might be to use this strategy and thus have resulted not only in more reliability but also in general support of learning processes that can benefit those who want to acquire an FL.

### *B. Learning English in Colombia*

English education in Colombia is a permanent challenge, not only because there are many bilingual people who teach English without being professionals in this area but also because of the cruel reality of the country, even when the government and some private institutions have created different programs. As an example of the latter, the British Council<sup>34</sup> gives an idea about how the Colombia Bilingual Plan and the Foreign Languages Competencies Development Program are aimed at having a bilingual country, which stands out for its educational level and also how this purpose directly affects the economic goals as well. Unfortunately, as a result of the study, they found that in Colombia there is a lack of an environment conducive to learning a new language, both in public and private schools. Furthermore, it is also necessary for people to show a real interest in learning English itself; the latter is linked to the fact that this foreign language is not yet part of the culture, families, or business relationships.

The same authors also discovered that good language learning is limited to people from high socio-economic strata, where they can have access to bilingual schools or other complementary language

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33 KAREN JORQUERA SANDOVAL & ROMINA SAAVEDRA JARA. "The importance of nonverbal communication when teaching English as a foreign language in Chilean schools" (bachelor thesis), Valdivia, Universidad Austral de Chile, 2012, available in [<http://cybertesis.uach.cl/tesis/uach/2012/ffj.82i/doc/ffj.82i.pdf>].

34 BRITISH COUNCIL. *English in Colombia: An examination of policy, perceptions and influencing factors*, 2015, available in [<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/English%20in%20Colombia.pdf>].

learning programs, or even leave the country. Thus, it is necessary to recognize that there should be more equity in learning English as an FL. In this document, it is also mentioned as an important aspect that teachers face many challenges, which range not only from lack of motivation or lack of resources but also to the geography of the country that limits the access of entire communities to other learning options, ideas that are directly related to the statement of the problem.

When it comes to learning English in Colombia, the Colombia Bilingual Plan almost always comes to the fore, which, as CÁRDENAS & MIRANDA<sup>35</sup> mention, it has the intention of improving the level of English as FL in all the school stages of the country, but up at the time of conducting this study, there were no major investigations related to the effectiveness of this program. Nevertheless, in their own study, they found major shortcomings, such as the lack of personnel to implement this program and also that the level of English of the teachers is even below the goal, which is a B2 according to the common European framework, this reveals without the need to go further that there are problems with the implementation of the plan and obviously with the possibility of achieving the proposed goals.

As part of the revision of this initiative, GÓMEZ<sup>36</sup> went to some schools to check how this program is implemented and she found out that factors such as culture, history, or traditions are not included, which can make it difficult for students to understand the context. Moreover, students in some cases become aware of how important it can be to learn an FL, as well as their attitude toward learning. She also mentions that most students are permanently exposed to words or expressions in English and that despite being aware of what it can mean, students do not have a good attitude towards learning a new language, because they do not understand it. They only see the short-

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35 ROSALBA CÁRDENAS y NORBELLA MIRANDA. "Implementación del Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo en Colombia: un balance intermedio", *Educación y Educadores*, vol. 17, n.º 1, 2014, pp. 51-67, available in [<https://educacionyeducadores.unisabana.edu.co/index.php/eye/article/view/3045>].

36 MARTHA INÉS GÓMEZ BETANCUR. "Assessment of the Language Program used in the Municipality of Medellín to teach English as a foreign language through the analysis of its linguistic and socio-cultural impacts" (doctoral thesis), Medellín, Universidad de Antioquia, 2018, available in [<https://bibliotecadigital.udea.edu.co/handle/10495/12745>].

term benefits, such as bringing money to their families which could be heartbreaking if we take into account the reality of our country.

At this point, only the program and its problems directly related to English as an FL have been alluded to, but for example, FANDIÑO<sup>37</sup> referred to another aspect that we must currently take into account and that is the learning of technologies and how teachers implement them in their language classes. Using technologies can help students broaden their perspective of more complex environments and interact in more creative ways, which can stimulate better responses in terms of output skills which becomes a new challenge. DEL TORO *et al.*<sup>38</sup> stipulate that there are skills that are somewhat forgotten, such as reading comprehension, and that it is key to the development of a bilingual person, thus leaving the doubt that perhaps there are many more errors or things that are not covered in the current programs or that are seen in a superficial way because for the research carried out. They realized that this skill seen in English was only seen constantly in high school students, despite the fact that according to their research, children who see reading comprehension in an FL from primary school are more likely to have a better level of comprehension in adulthood.

### C. Tools to learn

So, what has been mentioned so far means that more problems have been found than things to highlight and show in the country's bilingual programs, but perhaps there is hope, as BARRAGÁN & AMADOR<sup>39</sup>

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- 37 YAMITH JOSÉ FANDIÑO PARRA. "21st century skills and the English foreign language classroom: A call for more awareness in Colombia", *Gist Education and Learning Research Journal*, n.º 7, 2013, pp. 190-208, available in [[https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2367524](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2367524)].
- 38 ZAILY PATRICIA DEL TORO, ANA CAROLINA MERCADO, MILTON PÁJARO MANJARRES, LUIS FERNANDO NORIEGA, WILLINGTON WATTS & MILTON LÓPEZ SÁNCHEZ. "Challenges in English teaching and learning in Colombia", *English Language Teaching*, vol. 12, n.º 4, 2019, available in [<https://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/elt/article/view/0/38815>].
- 39 DIEGO FERNANDO BARRAGÁN GIRALDO & JUAN CARLOS AMADOR BÁQUIRO. "Appropriation of ICT in the educational field: Approach to public policy in Colombia years 2000-2019", *Digital Education Review*, n.º 37, 2020, pp. 109-129, available in [<https://revistes.ub.edu/index.php/der/article/view/30609>].

expresses since Colombia has expanded the appropriation and implementation of ICT tools in the field of learning. In fact, this study mentions how the government has carried out several projects in which it seeks to implement these tools. This is very positive for the new generations that can feel more identified with this digital age. Unfortunately, it also found that despite these efforts, there are no significant changes in educational practices, but we also think it is prudent to mention that Colombia has more problems related to this aspect since Colombia has connectivity problems. As GRANJA<sup>40</sup> denotes in his article, out of 85 countries, our country ranked 83rd in terms of internet accessibility, and Colombians must also work more hours to pay for broadband or mobile internet connections, without counting the 23,8 million people who are in remote areas that have no access, which is clearly related to the statement of the problem that led us to do this research.

This is a well-known problem, as revealed in the interview with DIEGO MOLANO the ex-minister of ICT in Colombia made by Blu Radio<sup>41</sup>, but with the pandemic, it became clear that there are many other countries with connectivity problems. In Colombia, we also have another problem, and that is that only 10% of people of school age have access to tablets, computers, or other electronic devices that allow them to connect to the Internet. It could be said that having the guarantee of greater Internet coverage could give people more alternatives for learning or communication or even revolutionize agriculture as proposed by MANRIQUE & BALVIN<sup>42</sup>. However, for this particular case, forgetting a little about the approach of their proposal, this study manifested what could be the solution regarding the problem

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40 SIMÓN GRANJA MATIAS. "Colombia, uno de los países con más dificultades en acceso a internet", *El Tiempo*, September, 11, 2020, available in [<https://www.eltiempo.com/tecnosfera/novedades-tecnologia/internet-calidad-de-conexion-en-colombia-con-mas-dificultades-en-el-mundo-529850>].

41 REDACCIÓN BLU RADIO. "El problema de la conectividad es mundial, no solo de Colombia: exministro de las TIC Diego Molano", *Blu Radio*, September 23, 2021, available in [<https://www.bluradio.com/nacion/el-problema-de-la-conectividad-es-mundial-no-solo-de-colombia-exministro-de-las-tic-diego-molano>].

42 FREDY ESTEBAN MANRIQUE LATORRE & ANDRÉS FERNANDO TORRES BALVIN. "Uso de redes LoRAWAN en vehículos aéreos no tripulados, autosustentables, como solución al problema de conectividad de dispositivos IoT en zonas rurales de poca cobertura en Colombia", Bogotá, 2019.

of connectivity in rural areas, using low-power technologies and wide coverage, such as the LoRAWAN –Low Power Wide Area Network– which is a specification for low power wide area networks. In fact, in the said investigation they not only verified that it is ideal to provide an internet connection to large rural areas that due to their geographical location do not have internet access, despite the efforts made by the government, but the other part is still missing, children who do not have a device that they can use to connect to the net.

Taking into account these problems, a tool that could be useful and effective is a booklet, for example, ALZATE & HERERA<sup>43</sup> designed and implemented a booklet for educational purposes and the results were favourable with respect to the authors' objectives the students were able to have direct contact with the booklet, they used it as a support tool on certain occasions and the specific learning objectives were successfully achieved. The good thing about this tool is that it can be designed based on the specific needs of a group of people, as CÓRDOVA<sup>44</sup> did, where the creation of the booklet was based on the requirements of employees in the tourism sector who needed to learn English, but they had specific prerequisites, they did not demand them to master the entire language, but they did need to cover a specific need. Another advantage of the booklet is that employees could have access at any time, and also that it can be utilized not only for the workers who were working at the time the booklet was created but also for future employees. Other advantages of booklets are that they are concise, have much clearer language, and use visual tools if necessary, as *Cajón de Herramientas* suggests in its post<sup>45</sup>.

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43 ERIKA ANDREA ALZATE AGUDELO y LUZ ALEJANDRA HERRERA MARTÍNEZ. "Diseño e implementación de una cartilla educativa como estrategia didáctica para el reconocimiento del rol ecológico de los macromycetos. una iniciativa para la conservación del humedal la conejera con los estudiantes del colegio IED Tibabuyes Universal" (bachelor thesis), Bogotá, Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, 2017, available in [<http://repositorio.pedagogica.edu.co/handle/20.500.12209/10793>].

44 EDWIN DANIEL CÓRDOVA MONTAÑO. "Booklet design for English language teaching to tourism employees from 'Playa Almendro' resort in Tonsupa, Esmeraldas, 2018" (bachelor thesis), Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador, 2019, available in [<https://repositorio.pucese.edu.ec/handle/123456789/1946?mode=full>].

45 CAJÓN DE HERRAMIENTAS. "Cartillas pedagógicas", June 2, 2015, available in [<https://cajondeherramientas.com.ar/index.php/2015/06/02/cartillas-pedagogicas/>].

All that was first conceived just as impracticable was confirmed in all of the documents, highlighting the most relevant conclusion that using humor certainly helps to reduce the affective filter. Even though this is something that many know as absolute truth, in Colombia, there is not enough research about this topic and even fewer teaching tools that use it, especially when talking about those that are not intermediated by ICT tools.

## IX. CONCLUSIONS

After reading the documents, now it is possible to say that lowering the affective filter when learning English as a foreign language is possible and it is based both on the tasks that take place in class and on the teacher. In the exercises, the student must gradually gain confidence in expressing himself in the target language, which will in turn eliminate barriers such as shyness. The idea is that the assignments are carried out collaboratively and that they also feel closer to both the teacher and their peers.

Thanks to the information found, I was able to design a booklet with some activities based on everyday games but slightly modified, in order to make sure that students share with their peers when playing. As mentioned in the research, this will help students accomplish their goal of learning English but first using a game as a tool to do it and second lowering the affective filter since they will be focused on playing instead of paying attention to their production in English.

The booklet designed in this research stands out because all its activities are games in one way or another. In fact, it mentions who would be the winning player, gives instructions to the teacher so that he/she can guide the activity, and also gives instructions to the players/students, which clarifies doubts while the game is being played. It is also characterized by its versatility because all its activities can be carried out without the need for ICT tools, which is a great benefit for those remote communities in the country or for those who, even in large cities, cannot access the internet or electronic devices.

As for the analysis that can be made of existing research regarding the affective filter, in Colombia much has been done to review and take into account not only the design of material as in the case of our study, but also for class planning, curriculum and of new strate-



gies, but it seems that it has not been applied yet. Nowadays teachers and researchers are beginning to talk about emotions and the factors that can interfere with the teaching-learning process. In a superficial way, they talk about emotions, but this is only one component of everything, which is part of the affective filter. If we mention learning English as an FL in Colombia, the panorama is even more discouraging, because although the government has good intentions when creating programs, it completely forgets the human factor available, the real language level of many of the teachers of schools, the geographical reality that prevents many people from having access to new forms of learning and the gap that already exists, since people in better socioeconomic strata have assured access to learning English, but the same cannot be said of the most vulnerable populations.

Thanks to the research carried out, nowadays it is possible to easily identify those activities that can really help teachers to create the ideal environment to lower the affective filter in their students. Innovating always seems to be the answer, but even the simplest activity in which the student is given the opportunity to manage situations forgets that it is about learning and that it can be evaluated all the time, but that it is about practice activities.

It would be ideal for Colombia to delve a little into issues such as the affective filter. Unfortunately, although there is extensive research on the matter worldwide, Colombia seems to lag behind, and much of what is proposed remains in research articles and thesis, but very little in the classroom, where there is still a tendency for the traditional method and for recreational activities to be seen only as a break for students from masterclasses and not as something that can be included permanently in class plans.



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