

THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY FOR LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

EL USO DE LA TECNOLOGÍA PARA APRENDER INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA

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Abstract

The use of technology and technological tools have allowed endless advantages within society in different areas such as health, politics, environment, education, among others. Technology evolves as time goes by and in the educational field it is no exception, significant help has been observed in this area, specifically in the learning of new languages, in this case, the English language since there is a diversity of technological tools that facilitate and encourage students to maintain interest within the aforementioned area and thus be able to increase their knowledge in a more interactive way. The main objective of this research was to identify students' perceptions of the use of technology for learning English as a foreign language (EFL). The institutions that were part of this research were the Technical University of Cotopaxi (UTC) and the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador (PUCE), the first being a public university and the other a private institution. In this research, the differences and possible similarities that these two institutions have with respect to the use and application of technology were highlighted. For this research, a survey with a Likert scale was applied to 60 students from each university to learn more about the differences that each one has and thus they were analyzed thoroughly in order to obtain optimal results on the effectiveness of the use of technology in learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in each of the institutions mentioned above. In conclusion, it is highlighted that technology is a very important study tool today due to the advances it has made, allowing and opening the way to a wide range of resources that students of a foreign language can access. It is also mentioned that education in both universities is not so different, so a student from a public institution can obtain the same study results as a student from a private institution as long as they have access



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to the necessary resources for learning. In conclusion, it must be taken into account that the preparation of both the teacher and the student for the correct use of technology in the classroom is extremely important, so each of them must be trained and prepared for the proper use of technology and technological tools provided in each higher institution.

Keywords: english as a foreign language, technology in education, student perceptions, private and public universities.

Resumen

El uso de la tecnología y las herramientas tecnológicas han permitido un sin fin de ventajas dentro de la sociedad en diferentes áreas como salud, política, medio ambiente, educación, entre otras. La tecnología evoluciona a medida que pasa el tiempo y en el ámbito educativo no es la excepción, se ha observado una ayuda significativa en este ámbito, específicamente en el aprendizaje de nuevos idiomas, en este caso el idioma inglés, ya que existe diversidad de herramientas tecnológicas que facilitan e incentivan a los estudiantes a mantener el interés dentro del área antes mencionada y así poder incrementar sus conocimientos de una manera más interactiva. El objetivo principal de esta investigación fue identificar las percepciones de los estudiantes sobre el uso de la tecnología para aprender inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL). Las instituciones que formaron parte de esta investigación fueron la Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi (UTC) y la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador (PUCE), siendo la primera una universidad pública y la otra una institución privada. En esta investigación se resaltaron las diferencias y posibles similitudes que tienen estas dos instituciones con respecto al uso y aplicación de la tecnología. Para esta investigación se aplicó una encuesta con escala de Likert a 30 estudiantes de cada universidad para conocer más sobre las diferencias que tiene cada uno y así se analizaron exhaustivamente para obtener resultados óptimos sobre la efectividad del uso de la tecnología en el aprendizaje del idioma inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) en cada una de las instituciones mencionadas anteriormente. En conclusión, se destaca que la tecnología es una herramienta de estudio muy importante en la actualidad debido a los avances que ha tenido, permitiendo y abriendo camino a una amplia gama de recursos a los que pueden acceder los estudiantes de una lengua extranjera. También se menciona que la educación en ambas universidades no es tan diferente, por lo que un estudiante de una institución pública puede obtener los mismos resultados de estudio que un estudiante de una institución privada siempre y cuando tenga acceso a los recursos necesarios para el aprendizaje y en se debe tener en cuenta que la preparación, tanto del docente como del estudiante para el correcto uso de la tecnología en el aula, es de suma importancia, por lo que cada uno de ellos debe estar capacitado y preparado para el uso adecuado de la tecnología y las herramientas tecnológicas. proporcionados en cada institución superior.

Palabras clave: inglés como lengua extranjera, tecnología en la educación, percepción de los estudiantes, universidades públicas y privadas.

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Introduction

In today's digital age, innovation has become an integral part of every aspect of our lives, including education (ISDM, 2024). In this age of technological advancement usage of technology has touched every field of our life education is not an expectation. Research has emphasized that teachers around the world are now just coming to grips with integrating technology-based learning tools into their practices. (Guribye, 2005) states that:

When studying technology-mediated learning from a sociocultural perspective, it is common to understand technology as a mediating artefact. This view of technology has obvious strengths in that it captures both the material and symbolic aspects of technological tools. It also gives artefacts a central place in relation to understanding human action, cognition and learning. (p. 47)

Use of technological tools in language learning, in this case primarily teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), has lately received immense attention (Álava et al., 2023). A number of studies have found that technology can facilitate vocabulary learning and have a positive effect on pronunciation, and in addition, it allows users to access interactive resources that can enhance the learning experience (Lesia Viktorivna et al., 2022). In education technology has managed to dilute the borders to knowledge and make it very easy for you to push your message to now millions of people worldwide (Kuddus, 2022).

But still, there is a lack of extensive information concerning student uses and perceptions in very different educational contexts like public and private universities (Metzger et al., 2003). This article presents the results of the comparison of students' perceptions of the use of technology for learning English at Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi (UTC) and at Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador (PUCE). Learning technologies are used for various activities that engage students in training.

There is an urgent need for pedagogical strategies that equitably and efficiently integrate technology to best serve teachers and their students. The present research aims to study and compare the perspectives and experiences of the UTC and the PUCE students related to the technological tools used for learning English. We carried out a survey involving 60 students to obtain their opinions and perceptions from the students. Training programs sponsored by the government or ministries of education could encourage EFL technology use. This study will aid the understanding of such contextually dependent benefits and challenges of technology use for EFL instruction while proposing recommendations for improving educational practice in such settings.

“Technology is an effective tool for learners. Learners must use technology as a significant part of their learning process” (Ahmadi, 2018). The use of applied technology in the educational field offers countless benefits for students due to the speed and ease with which information can be found about programs and applications that help improve and learn a language (Cornelio et al., 2024). There are also benefits and problems that both teachers and students face when applying technology in English as a foreign language learning classrooms.



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According to (Awan & Zia, 2015), “excellent infrastructure creates an environment which affects the mood and behavior of learners” (p.3). Also Awan states that “physical facilities are one of the stimulating factors that play a fundamental role in improving academic achievement in the school system. These include; school buildings, accommodation, classrooms, libraries, furniture, laboratories, recreational equipment apparatus and other instructional materials” (p, 5). Both UTC and PUCE students have access to technology, however, there are significant differences in each of them due to the infrastructure.

Methodology

Study design:

This study adopted a quantitative approach, using a descriptive and comparative design to analyze the perceptions that students have regarding the use of technology as a support for teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). For this study, a cross-sectional survey was used to collect data from students at two higher institutions; Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi Pujilí extension (UTC) and the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador Santo Domingo headquarters (PUCE).

Participants:

The sample was made up of 30 participants per university, giving a total of 60 students who were involved. The students were randomly selected to measure their language learning abilities. In addition, the criteria for selecting the participants included: being enrolled in the university and having access to technology to be used in the different educational environments of these higher institutions.

Instrument:

The instrument was a survey designed in a structured way to collect data on the perceptions that each student from the different universities involved has about the use of technology for learning English as a foreign language. The survey contained 15 items to be evaluated on a Likert scale, which framed the effectiveness of the use of technology and the challenges that teachers and students can face when applying them. This survey was thoroughly reviewed and validated by experts in the area of education, thus allowing its effective application.

Procedure:

For the effective application of the instrument, what the questionnaire and the research consisted of was briefly explained to the participants. Once it was explained what it consisted of, an informed consent was applied, which contained more detailed information about the research; in the informed consent, the anonymity and confidentiality of each of the participants was assured, also explaining that the survey would only have educational and research purposes. When the participants signed the document, a link was sent to the course president which contained the survey composed of 15 items that they had to answer according to the personal criteria of each student.

Analyze data:

The data was carefully analyzed using spreadsheets that were linked to the Google forms where the survey was applied. The data were presented in bar diagrams for their respective analysis, subsequently the



comparison was made between the two universities involved UTC and PUCE, as the survey contained the Likert scale for its measurement, the criteria for collection were: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree.

Results and discussion

The following analysis of results will be obtained through a descriptive analysis that will allow identifying each of the responses provided by the students about the use of the technological tools used in the process of learning English as a foreign language (EFL). As mentioned above, the survey was divided into two criteria: perceptions about the effectiveness of technology use and challenges faced by technology use. The survey will be analyzed by linking three items that are related to each other to avoid redundancy.

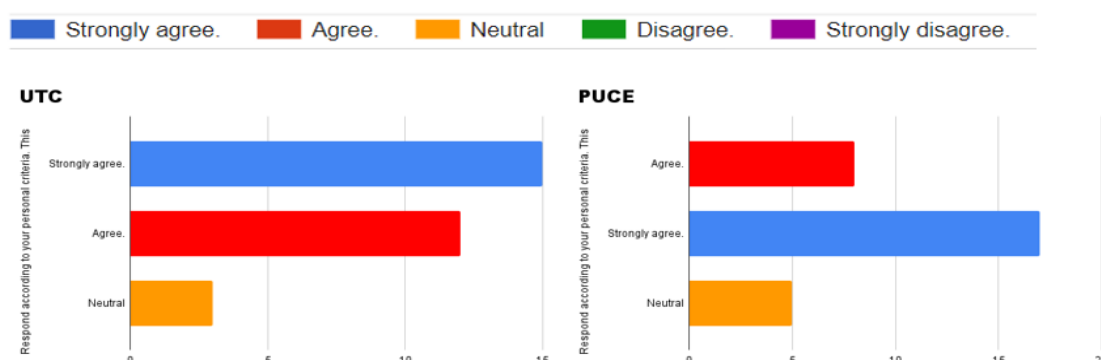


Figure 1. Technology enhances my understanding of English language concepts.

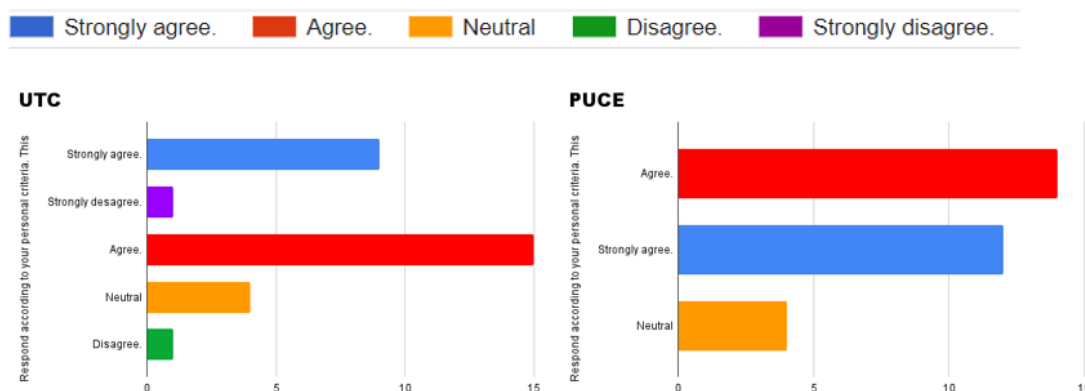


Figure 2. I feel more confident in my English language abilities when using technology for learning.



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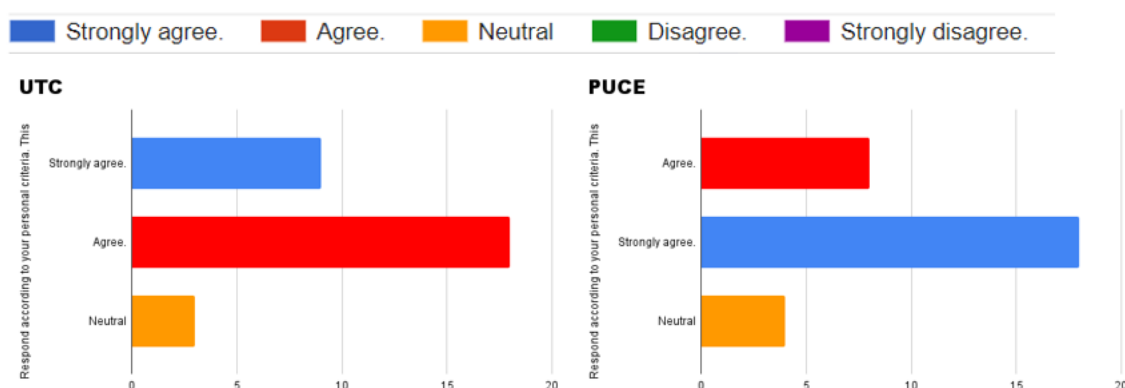


Figure 3. Technology allows me to receive immediate feedback on my English language exercises and assignments.

As we can see in Figure 1 and 2, both Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi and the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador mostly strongly agreed that technology helps to better understand the concepts in the English language, in addition, the use of technology makes the participants have more confidence when developing each of the skills within the English language, however there is a small population of the UTC in which they disagree and strongly disagree about how attractive and pleasant the technology applied in education can be precisely in the language study, in this case, the English language.

On the other hand, in Figure 3 it could be seen that PUCE participants strongly agreed that technology allows them to obtain faster feedback, on the other hand, UTC participants mention that they mostly agree that the Technology allows them to get immediate feedback when using technology.

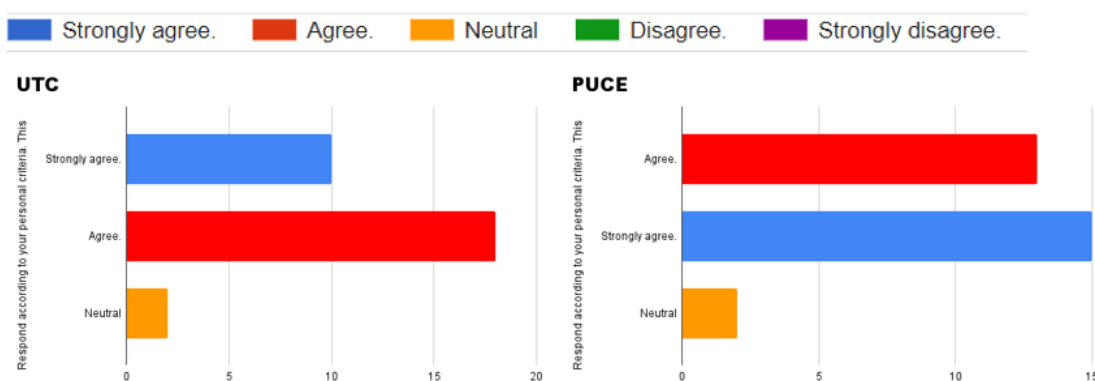


Figure 4. Using technology makes learning more enjoyable and engaging.



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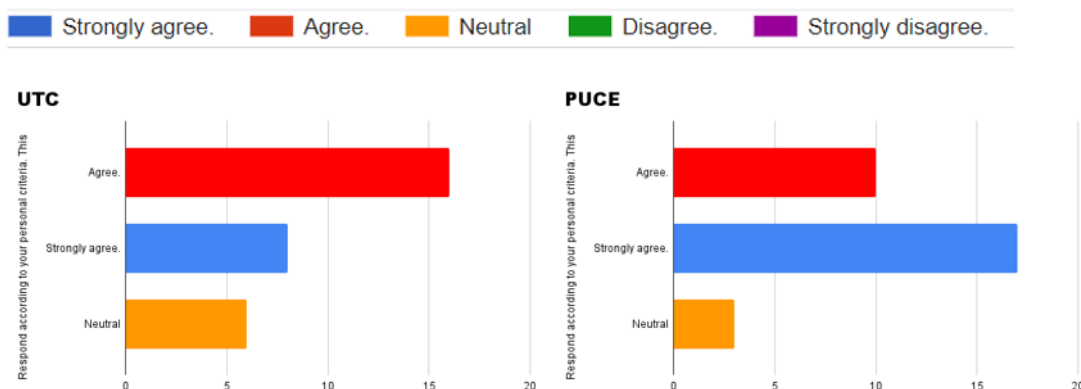


Figure 5. Technology helps me personalize my English language learning experience.

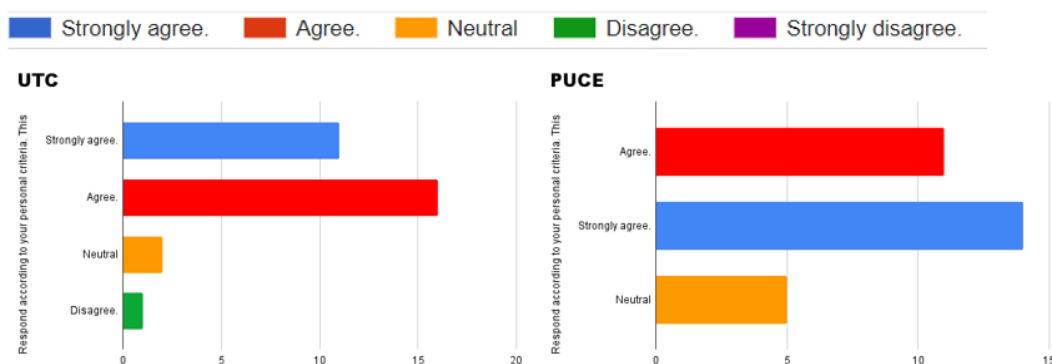


Figure 6. I find that technology helps me stay motivated to practice English.

Figures 6, 7 and 8 talked about how the student feels using the technology. The results showed that the majority of PUCE participants strongly agree that technology keeps them motivated in the educational field and they can also personalize their learning in the English language according to their needs, thus providing an interactive and attractive experience. On the other hand, the UTC participants indicate that technology does help keep them motivated and can improve their experience in learning the English language but not in its entirety, for which the participants mostly selected: agree, however a small population stated that they disagree that technology motivates them to practice the English language. It may be because people easily find distractions in technology that prevent the use of this tool in a responsible and educational way.

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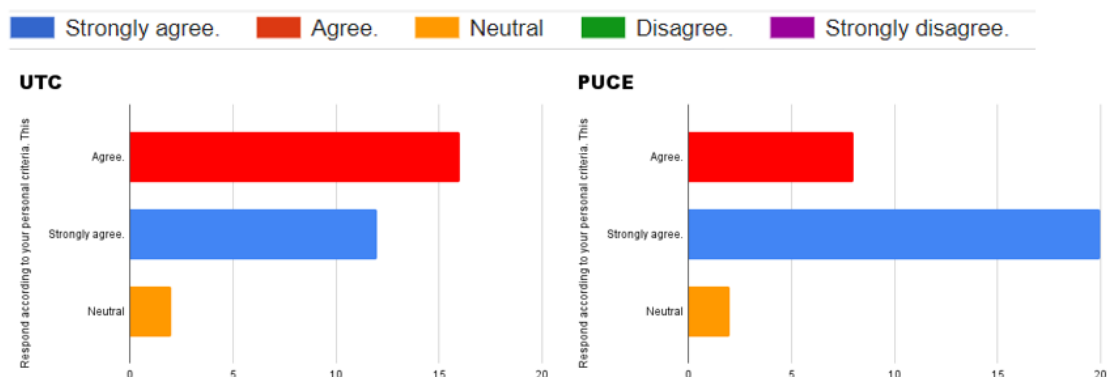


Figure 7. Technology helps me practice English language skills outside the classroom.

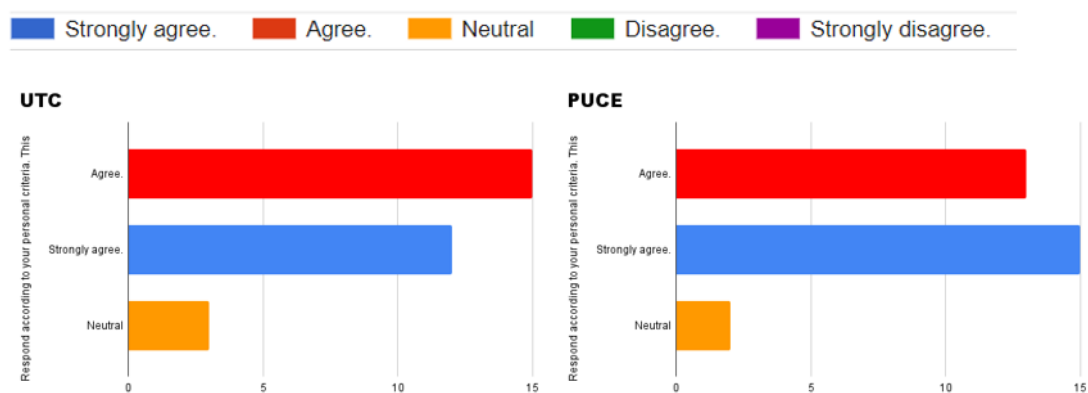


Figure 8. Technology allows me to access a wider range of English language resources.

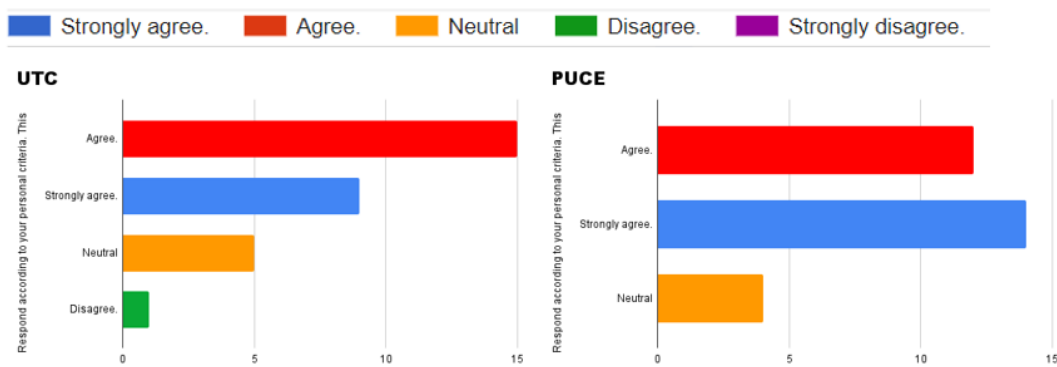


Figure 9. I believe technology can facilitate communication practice in English.

Figures 7, 8 and 9 analyze learning outside the classroom and communication. As can be seen in the figures regarding the learning of technology outside the classroom and the improvement in English language



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communication thanks to the resources that can be found that the UTC participants agree, while the PUCE participants They strongly agree that technology helps them in the learning process outside the classroom since there are several resources that allow you to enter an educational environment in which you can reinforce your language learning. There are participants who remain neutral since they are not sure if technology helps or harms learning. Finally, on the part of UTC, there is a small population in which they disagree because they do not believe that technology facilitates communication in the English language.

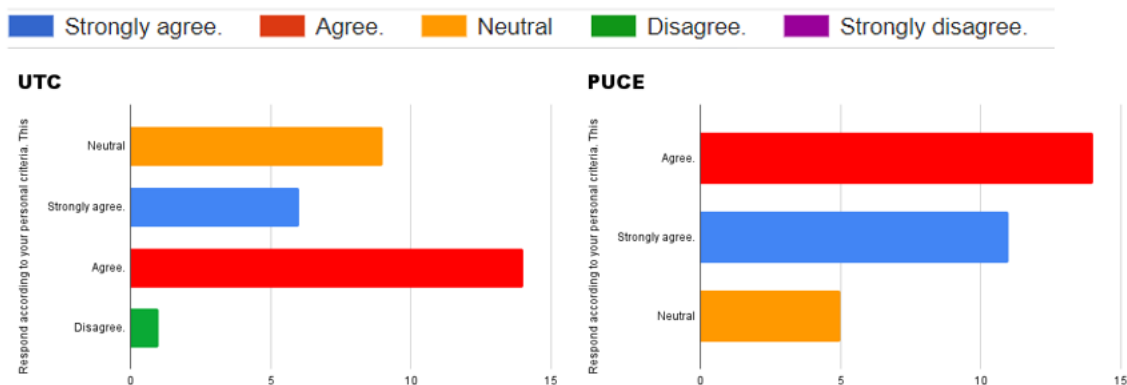


Figure 10. I prefer using technology over traditional methods for learning English.

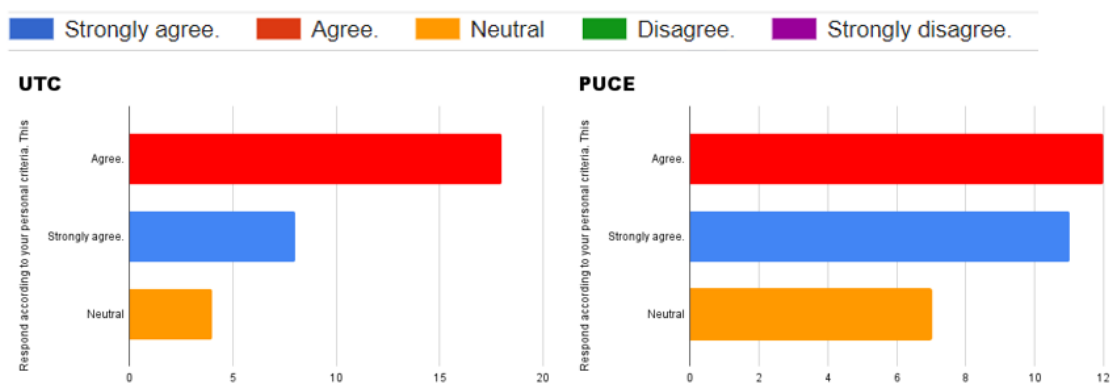


Figure 11. I am satisfied with the level of integration of technology in my English language learning curriculum.



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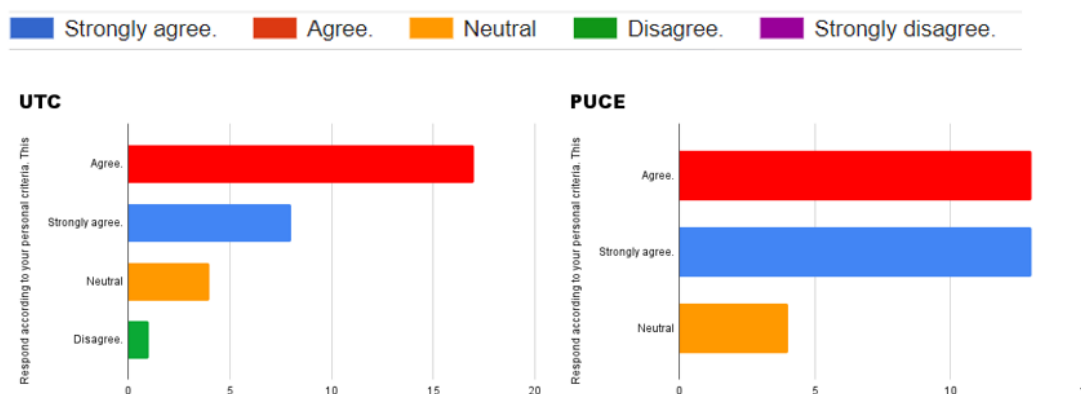


Figure 12. I believe that technology helps bridge the gap between formal English language instruction and real-life language use.

Figures 10, 11, and 12 assess the methodology and level of integration of the English language in the curriculum. As can be seen in the figures, both UTC and PUCE participants mostly agree that technology is preferred over traditional methods for learning the English language, however, there is a small population of UTC that does not agree with using technology as a resource for language learning. On the other hand, in terms of the implementation of the English language in the curriculum, participants from both universities have stated that they agree with the integration of the English language in the classroom. Finally, participants from both universities have mentioned that they strongly agree and agree that technology is very helpful in applying the language in daily life, not only applying the language in a formal way. Likewise, a small population of UTC disagrees, as can be seen in figure 12.

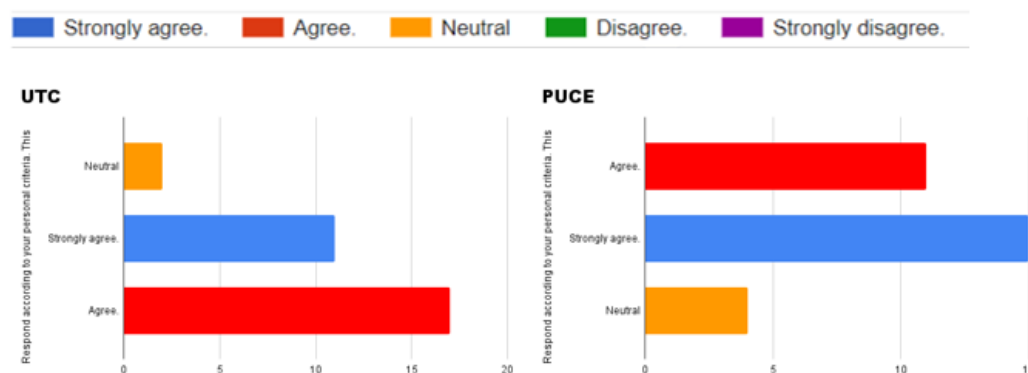


Figure 13. In your opinion, the use of technology is equally effective for learning English in both public and private educational settings.



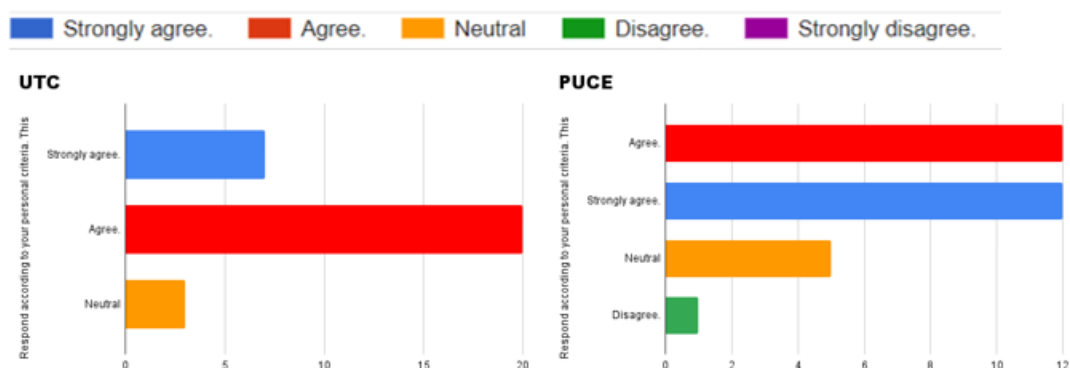


Figure 14. The availability of technology resources influences my decision to enroll in English language courses.

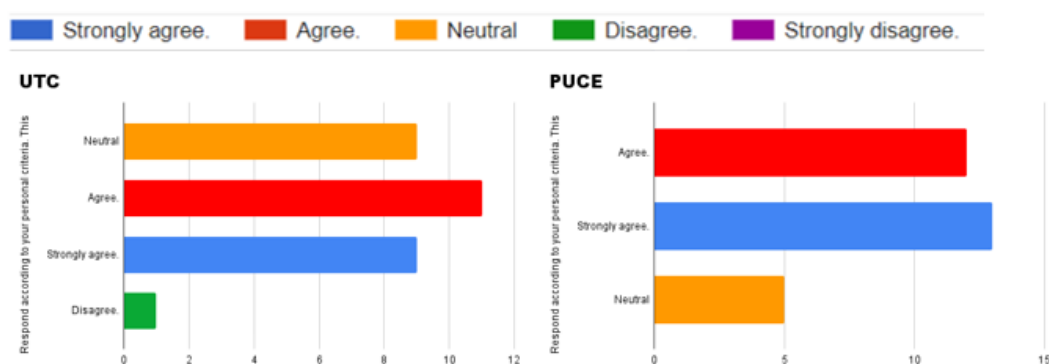


Figure 15. I perceive that teachers in private educational institutions are more adept at integrating technology into English language instruction compared to teachers in public institutions.

Finally, figures 13, 14 and 15 discuss the possible differences between educational institutions and private institutions, in which participants from both institutions mention that English language education is equally effective in the two contexts already mentioned, which is why most participants agree and strongly agree. On the other hand, figure 14 discusses the availability of technological resources to be able to enroll in English language courses, which most students say they agree with, however a small population from PUCE does not agree, which can be understood as meaning that the application of technology in English courses is not necessary. For the analysis of the last figure, it can be observed that both UTC and PUCE students agree and strongly agree that teachers from private institutions are better trained to integrate technology in the classroom. Likewise, a small population from UTC mentions that they disagree, as can be observed in figure 15.

Conclusions

In conclusion, it is highlighted that technology is a very important study tool today due to the advances it has made, allowing and opening the way to a wide range of resources that students of a foreign language can access. It is also mentioned that education in both universities is not so different, so a student from a public institution can obtain the same study results as a student from a private institution as long as they have access to the necessary resources for learning.

In conclusion, it must be taken into account that the preparation of both the teacher and the student for the correct use of technology in the classroom is extremely important, so each of them must be trained and prepared for the proper use of technology and technological tools provided in each higher institution.

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