



The Use of Real Life Tasks to Enrich an EFL Course for Business Students

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Abstract

The purpose of research is to determine the impact on learning of using an authentic task to make teaching English more meaningful in an EFL class. Participants were twenty students from pre-intermediate level course from the Business School of Guayaquil University. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed to report the level of business email responses and to explain the reasons for its development. The intervention consisted of eight weeks of authentic task application in order to improve their ability in responding business email in the following areas: quality of response to customer, language usage and email form. Overall results indicated that students performance on responding business email increased a little after the use authentic task. By the end of the intervention almost all of the students reached expected level for the language subcategory. Discussion section presents the factors that might contribute to and impede the accomplishment of the objectives.

Keywords: authentic task, interaction, reflection, L1 use

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Over the last few decades, language use for communication has become necessary around the globe especially in Business area. Researchers in the field reported that English training investment in employees provoked sales increase in their companies. On the other hand, hundreds of executives from multinational companies assure that basic misunderstandings in international business deals have generated the loss of important income for their companies (Education First, 2014). Despite the importance of English language usage in the business world, some countries have reported low English proficiency levels. Ecuador included, occupies the 55th position among 72 countries in the scale (Education First, 2017). This means that professionals in Ecuador do not have sufficient English to compete globally thus reducing the opportunities for economic and professional growth.

In an effort to solve this problem, the Ecuadorian Council of Higher Education established the B2 or upper intermediate level¹ as the required level of English Before registering for the last semester of undergraduate programs (Consejo de Educación Superior, 2016). The public university in Guayaquil and specifically the business school where this study took place is aware of the global demands regarding English language learning. Besides knowing English, the majority of the careers from the business school expect students to graduate able to conduct online international negotiations and e-commerce activities. (Universidad de Guayaquil, 2016). Currently, few of the students graduate with B2 level even though they have 192 contact hours of English in the business program. Traditional pedagogy may contribute to this problem

¹ Based on Common European Framework of References for Language (CEFR) students on B2 level can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and independent disadvantages of various options.

since this type of approach expected learners to focus all the attention and effort mainly on learning concepts that later would be used to answer questions on paper test or to solve decontextualized problems, unattached to their professional environment (Ordoñez, 2010).

According a background information questionnaire ² before beginning the innovation, the majority of the learners mentioned that the most remarkable learning experiences they had had in their English courses so far were being able to listen, understand, and sing songs and to watch movies. Six students mentioned the fact that they hadn't had any agreeable learning experience at all. Finally, about 60% of the students said that they need it for professional purposes; specifically two students mentioned that they wanted to learn English because it is important for communicating with foreign entrepreneurs and for closing international negotiations. Even though business students want to learn English for professional reasons, there was no evidence of having learning experiences in English related to their careers

According to Chun (2010) incorporating authentic tasks has been used as a strategy to bring about significant learning. An authentic task is a problem or situation that reflects the complexity and ambiguity of real world challenges. It could generate a process of high-order thinking skills after creating a product or performance such as a memo, presentations or other write-ups. Also Herrington (2006) reported that learners immersed in authentic projects simulating roles encourage them to think more deeply about the decisions made on a daily basis as a professional in their area and motivates them to construct their own understanding of the context.

Although the advantages of using authentic professional tasks have been reported worldwide, no studies have documented its application in English courses particularly in

² Thirty students completed the Background Information of the Strategy inventory for Language learning (SILL) developed by Rebecca Oxford.

Ecuadorian universities. Therefore, this article reports the results of an innovation incorporating authentic tasks in a university classroom. The innovation consisted of enriching the pre-intermediate EFL course for business students with an authentic task: learning to respond business emails.

Literature Review

Why should learners use authentic tasks? Authentic tasks or performances are activities extracted or reproduced from life or real human experiences. The idea of transferring authentic tasks into the classroom is to motivate learning and to understand earlier the performances related to the subject-area students learn and the professions that embody them. The idea as mentioned by Ordoñez (2006) is that students from a young age can understand what it means to be an engineer, doctor or lawyer. This makes learning meaningful.

The ability to operate with a variety of activities or situations that emerged from everyday life is an example of authentic performance and an attribute of what Perkins (1998) denominated as understanding performance. He explained that an individual understands something when the knowledge can be used in a flexible way, which means using the information on hand in new ways and situations, reorganizing it and creating products. Such flexibility is brought about when the activity is presented as a challenge, which means a task that demands greater mental effort because it hasn't been done before. Challenging activities can also be defined as the ones that do not possess a single answer but instead an issue that elicits some discussion and proposes different ways of solution (Ordoñez, 2006). Despite the novelty value of the task, Perkins (1999) also considered that it should be presented as possible to address otherwise it would cause difficulties toward learning.

Challenging authentic tasks not only stimulate knowledge flexibility but also lead to the process of reflection. Based on Moon (2001) a reflective learner considers something complicated in detail because there is no immediate or evident solution and therefore the learner needs to think about existing knowledge on an even deeper level. Perkins (1998) also explained that there is not understanding without reflective involvement. This means to constantly think how well one is performing a task and how one can improve it and be willing to receive feedback.

In order to stimulate students' reflection, criteria-referenced self-assessment has been considered an effective tool for many educational researchers. This tool also known as rubric is a document that lists the criteria for a specific assignment and describes varying levels of quality, from excellent to poor (Andrade, 2001). Rubrics promote thinking and learning since they are written in student-friendly terms; define and describe quality work; indicate how common weaknesses can be avoided; and can be used by students to assess their works-in-progress and thereby guide revision and improvement. (Andrade, 2000; Andrade, 2001).

Could authentic tasks within a teamwork setting bring about learning? According to Vygotsky (1979) in his sociocultural learning theory he mentioned that social interactions are the vehicle by which individuals reach learning. He explained that shared activities let individuals internalize the cognitive and behavioral structures from the society, taking ownership of it. He also added that socialization lets students identify that there are a variety of sources of information available for them, not only the experienced teacher or textbook, but interaction with any other source can collaborate in their learning.

Should authentic materials be considered when planning authentic tasks? Authentic materials are the ones that contain natural speech or writing qualities of the speaker (Richards,

2002). They are relevant because they are connected to the syllabus and learners' needs (McGrath, 2002). Moreover it creates a comfortable, stress free language learning environment and increases learning motivation if students are interested. Despite the advantages of using authentic materials, Richards (2001) mentioned that these materials often present complicated language, unnecessary vocabulary and complex language structures which cause trouble for the teacher in lower level classes.

To minimize possible negative effect when presenting complicated language structures, the use of L1 act as beneficial strategy since it provides scaffolding that assist learners in understanding task and solving problems (Pan & Pan, 2010). Some L1 is justified especially for students with low level of target language (TL) proficiency because they possess a limited TL linguistic input and L1 serves as an alternate route for building associations between L1 and TL knowledge in students' minds (Cook, 2001, p.92). L1 is considered an efficient tool since it presents meaning of abstract vocabulary items in a less time-consuming (Cook, 2001, p.91). Code switching to L1 has been reported to provide positive environment since it establishes a good rapport with students as for example when praising them for a good job and when telling jokes (Edstrom, 2006). Educational researchers conclude that an appropriate quantity of L1 cannot be universally defined because it depends on teacher objectives and students' current level of proficiency, what Harbord (1992) suggested is that it should be used when the TL instructions lead to miscomprehension and frustration.

Methodology

This action research study used a mixed method design. Quantitative data was collected with a pretest and a posttest to determine learning. Qualitative data was collected using field

notes and interviews of some students. The objective of this study was to know the impact on learning of using an authentic task to make teaching English more meaningful for pre-intermediate level business students of a public university. The task was to respond business e-mails within the context of an Online Customer Service Department. Specifically three questions were expected to be answered: (1) Did responding to business emails improve as a result of applying authentic tasks? (2) What aspects of the authentic task facilitated or impeded the development of the business email responses? and (3) What are pre-intermediate business students' perspective regarding the application of authentic tasks in an EFL course? In order to answer the third research question, small samples of students were interviewed to know the students' perspective and deepen understanding of the quantitative results.

Participants

The participants of this study were twenty young adults with ages from 18 to 29 who were coursing their 4th semester of the different careers offered by the University. These were Foreign Trade, Business Administration, Marketing, Finance and Accounting. They were full-time students who enrolled in Module 4 of the total six modules of EFL courses. At module 4 students were expected to have A2 level of English proficiency which according to the Common European Framework (CEF) in the writing skills domain, this is to be able to write simple notes, messages and letters related to matter of immediate needs; to ask and answer questions about what they do at work; discuss what to do; make arrangements ; make and accept offers, make simple transaction in shops, ask for basic information; ask for and provide everyday good and services (Council of Europe, 2001).

The reason these participants were selected was because the researcher was the teacher of this group. According to Castillo (2009), this type of sample selection in investigation is known as a convenience sample since the subjects are chosen simply because they are easy to recruit.

Instruments

With the purpose of answering the specific research questions, three instruments were used to collect data: the Business Response Email Rubric, the Observation Field Notes and the structured interview.

Business email response rubric. The rubric was used to know if students improved their ability in responding to business emails as a result of adapting the text with authentic professional tasks. The rubric presented three sub-categories to measure students' improvement when replying to business emails. These were the quality of responses, correct use of language and email form. Each indicator was rated from 0 to 3 points and it depended on how well it was elaborated. For instance, a student's performance with 0 point was rated on Level 0 meaning there was no evidence of learning. Level 1 indicated that students approach expectations. Students rated on Level 2 met the expected professional goals and Level 3 indicated that students exceeded professional goals. For overall results Level 1 has a range of 1-3.9 points, Level 2 has a range of 4-6.9 points and Level 3 has a range of 7-9 points. (see Appendix A Business Email Response Rubric).

For the participants of this study, the level expected for overall results and on each subcategory was level 2. For overall results this means responses for business emails should be almost professional. As for the subcategories, on Responses to Customer subcategory this means that the email should respond to all customer inquiries and add one additional piece of

information that might anticipate further customer requests. In the Language subcategory, language errors were expected but they should not confuse meaning. Finally, in the Email Form subcategory, students were expected to include seven important email features such as the subject line, greetings, line of thanks, writing purpose, closing remarks, and closure and contact information.

The rubric was pilot tested first with seven master program colleagues and then with three faculty colleagues to improve rater reliability and clarity. A Spanish version was piloted with three students because it was going to be used for self-assessment as well as research purposes. In order to measure students' improvement writing business emails the rubric was used to analyze data in two instances, during Week 1 and Week 8. Means for overall class email response and for each of the sub-categories were compared.

Observation field notes. Field notes were used as a qualitative method to collect data that answer the second research question which aimed to determine the aspects of the innovation that facilitated or impeded the development of the business email responses. For eight weeks, notes were taken documenting observations while students were working on the authentic performance task. Two categories were analyzed: “facilitated learning” and “impeded learning”

Structured interview. Interviews were conducted for the purpose of knowing students' perspectives regarding the use of authentic tasks for learning to respond to business emails. The interview included seven open-ended questions that addressed different issues such as: experience working in authentic task, the agreeable and difficult stages, knowledge acquired, methodology and resources usage, and finally opinion about the results they obtained at the end of the innovation process compared with the initial result (see Appendix B Interview Protocol).

Eight students were selected for the interview at the end of the innovation process. The selection was done based on the students' scores or grades obtained from the post email evaluation. Thus, the interview was held with three high grades students, two average grades students and three low grades students. The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed and analyzed. Categories emerged by looking for patterns and were then coded.

Innovation

The innovation took place from November 16, 2015, to January 29, 2016, for a total of eight weeks, discounting two weeks of Christmas vacation. Students normally have two 90-minute English classes per week working with textbooks. For the innovation, one class was dedicated to textbook activities and the second class was dedicated to the innovation, which had adapted textbook goals. (See Appendix C Lesson Plans)

Authentic Tasks

The goal of the innovation was for students to respond to business emails providing a good quality of response, an appropriate use of language and email form. Every two weeks students had to respond to different types of business emails. Weeks 1&2 and 7&8 were emails of complaint, weeks 3&4 were emails of inquiry and weeks 5&6 were emails of clarification.

These tasks were performed within a simulated business context of an Online Customer Service Department (OCSD) in which students played the role as assistants who respond emails to customers (classmates).

Business Context Set-up and Task dynamic

Before initiating the tasks, groups of four students created the company concept; they named it, added a logo, product descriptions and prices and sent the information as an

advertisement to the potential customers. To create the business interaction between customer and company assistants, each student played two roles at different occasions. By playing the role as customer, the student read all digital advertisements and selected the companies they wanted to start an online commercial relationship. By playing the role as OCSD assistant, in a period of two weeks, students had to select two customer emails, shared its content within the group, discussed the problem and reached an agreement for the best solution. Only the assistant that took ownership of a particular customer email was in charge of writing down its response.

Adapting Textbook Tasks to the Authentic Business Task.

All business tasks of the innovation were adapted from the students' EFL course book units (*Smart Choice* Book 2). For example, in Unit 7 "There are too many stores" the textbook objective was to make a complaint using too/not enough and too many/ too much and the innovation objective was to respond to customer email of complaint for a product that had not been received in the condition that the customer expected. The assistants provided solutions for the inconvenience.

Another useful activity was to adapt textbook skill objectives to the innovation skill objectives providing some essential questions so that students related what they have just learned in the unit with the performance of the authentic business task. For example, the Unit 7 writing skill objective was to write a letter about favorite places to shop and the innovation writing skill objective was to respond to customer email of complaint so students were developing the skill of writing letters. The essential questions used to relate both skills were: What are the important parts/components of a letter? Are letter parts the same as email parts? What are the important parts for an email response to customers?

Resources for learning

In order for students to respond to customer emails, some resources were provided.

Teacher assistance. The teacher walked around monitoring and giving different type of feedback to the whole class, specific groups or individuals using both English and Spanish.

Teammate collaboration. Within the company groups, students had one another to collaborate with on any information needed in order to respond customer emails. The more knowledgeable member of the team was selected as leader and it was in charge to assign to each group member to at least two emails to respond within two weeks. It also had to report to the teacher the amount of emails answered so far.

Customer emails. These were emails written by classmates who played the role of customers reporting complaints, asking for information about a product or asking about how to use a purchased product.

Business Email Response rubric. This rubric was designed and used by the researcher to analyze emails responses and it was also used by the students to self-assess their email responses in all its categories. To avoid concept misunderstanding, the rubric was given in English and Spanish versions (see Appendix A Business Email Response Rubric)

Useful phrases for business. Students were provided with a list of authentic business phrases used when establishing formal contact with a customer. Before the innovation started, the meaning and use of each phrase was discussed and analyzed with the whole class.

Digital devices. Students used authentic business resources such as cellphones, tablets or laptops to interact with the customer and to search for information and word translation in order to respond customer emails.

Sample email responses. Before initiating the simulation, two samples were constructed with the aid of teacher, students and material resources provided to the class. These samples served as model on how to respond to customer emails using available resources.

Results

The following results show participant progress on business email responses, aspects that facilitated and impeded its learning and the participants' perspective of the innovation.

Participant Progress

To determine whether the quality of business email responses had increased or decreased in the classroom after the eight week innovation, the quantitative results from the email responses from Weeks 1 and 8 were reported as group means and mode for the overall quality of business email responses and sub-categories. Means for the overall business email responses and subcategories are compared in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Overall results: Business Email Responses and subcategories

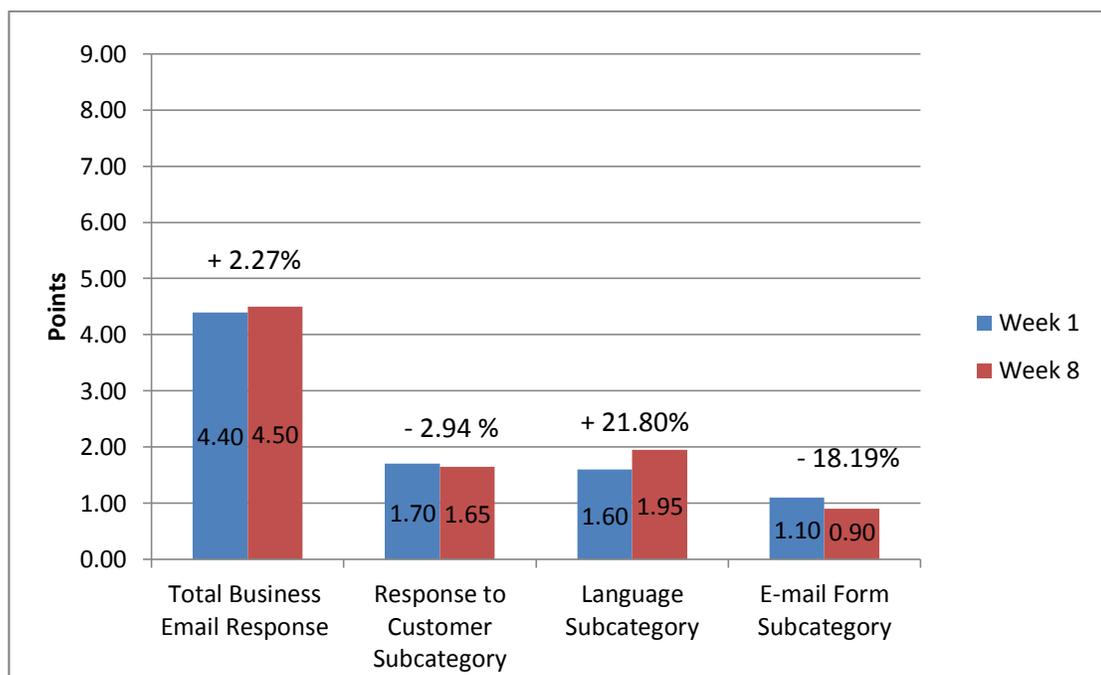


Figure 1 shows that total Business Email Response for Week 1 was 4.40 out of 9 points and Week 8 was 4.50 points meaning that they maintained the level 2 which was the expected level by the end of the innovation. Week 8 students' performance increased 0.10 points meaning 2.27% increase from initial response.

Figure 1 also shows that for three sub-categories, only Language increased. Language Class mean for week 1 was 1.60 out of 3 points and Week 8 was 1.95 (21.8% increase) points meaning that they maintained Level 1 but didn't reach the expected level 2. Responses to Customer sub-category class mean shows that week 1 was 1.70 out of 3 points and Week 8 was 1.65 (2.94% decrease) meaning that students maintained on the Level 1 but didn't reach the expected Level 2. It can also be seen that for Email Form subcategory, class means for Week 1 was 1.10 out of 3 points and Week 8 was 0.90 meaning that students decreased to Level 0 (18.19% decrease) which indicates that they didn't reach the expected level 2 by the end of the innovation.

Mode for the overall business email responses and subcategories for the expected level 2 are compared in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Number of students on expected level 2 for the Business Email Responses and its subcategories.

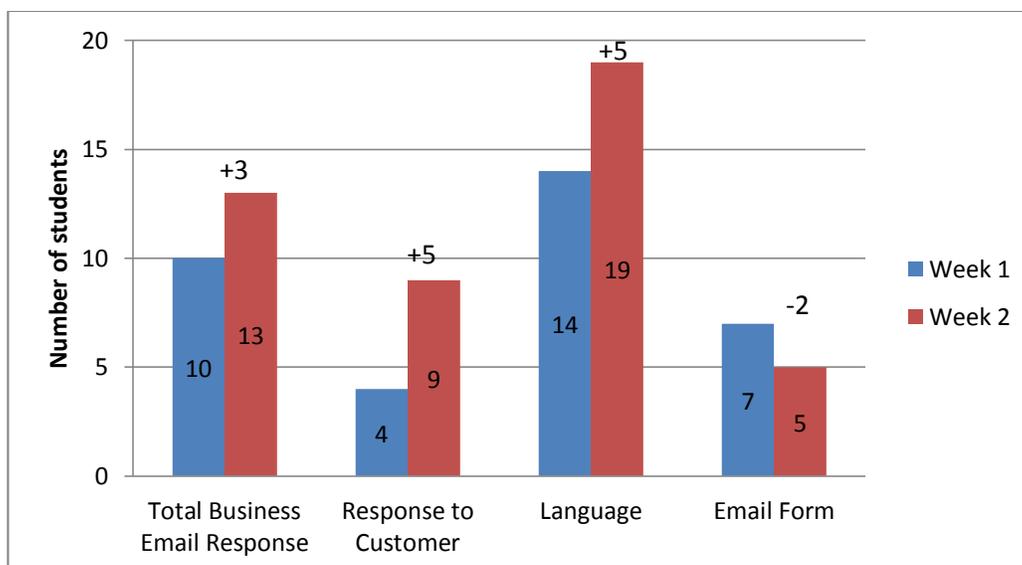


Figure 2 shows the difference between week 1 and 8 for the total business Email responses which indicates that three more students increased their performance by the end of the process. As for the subcategories, five more students increased the performance in the Responses to Customer and Language subcategory. As for the Email Form subcategory, it can be seen that seven students reached the expected level 2 at the beginning of the process while on week 8; five students were on level 2. This indicated that two students decreased their email form performance by the end of the process.

Aspects that Facilitated and Impeded Learning

Based on the teacher's field notes during the eight week innovation one important aspect that facilitated learning was teacher feedback using Spanish (L1) in which students seemed pleased hearing explanations and kept working on how to improve email response (Field Notes: December 2, 2015). Teammate collaboration was also valued. Learners seemed comfortable having someone within the group that knew more English for clarifying customer's emails and had some sales experience to figure out the whole email idea and contribute with the best solution for the complaint (Field notes: December 9 and 16, 2015). The frequent use of the

available resources made the task more manageable. Students did not ask too many questions to the teacher, they took risks and sent email without too much previous peer approval or consensus. Words became more familiar to them than before so their time spent on dictionaries and translators were a little bit reduced. They were working faster writing emails. (Field notes: January 13 and 20, 2015).

As for the aspects that impeded learning, students' lack of vocabulary and experience writing letters and emails made it difficult to understand and answer emails rapidly. Students found many unknown words on every customer email that demanded the frequent use of dictionaries to translate words and other students used Google translator to translate the whole idea they wanted to understand or to translate each email response. Also, students didn't have basic writing skills expected for the level such as the ability to write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked to simple connectors like "and", "but" and "because". Based on these notes, it can be said that students' existing skills did not correspond to the level they were enrolled in. (Field Notes: December 9, 2015). Another aspect that impeded learning observed starting from fifth week was students' distraction from the task. Several students were absent to prepare for the Business School Open House. Interest in the Online Customer Service project decreased due to the missing teammates. End of semester extra-credit projects and examinations for other subjects also distracted students from their English tasks. (Field Notes: January 6, 13, and 20, 2015)

Participants' Perspective of the Innovation

Results from eight interviews regarding the use of authentic tasks in the class, showed that most positive perspectives were related to the usefulness of the task, its novelty and dynamic nature, teacher L1 feedback, classmates' collaboration, and material resources. Some of

the students' comments referring to that were : “It is applicable to our labor practice...something that is frequently used in companies nowadays” (S1), “It was new...there hasn't been any teacher that helped us creating such interaction among students” (S8), “I liked the different solutions we had to give...we had to be in the role as the owner of the company to solve problems”, “I liked teacher explanations...not all the time in English because sometimes we didn't understand what she was trying to say. She changed into Spanish for us, so we could have a better understanding” (S4), “Working in groups helps a lot because each one has a personal idea and way of interpreting things and that helps us acquire more knowledge” (S1), “I learned through the use of the guidelines because it showed step by step to write an email... also internet searching and dictionaries” (S7).

On the other hand, some of the main challenging aspects experienced by the students were the demanding nature of the task and their lack of dedication at the end of the process. Some comments of the students referring to that were: “At the beginning it was tedious... We are used to fill in the book. It was also difficult know how to answer adequately...later we could perform in an excellent way” (S7), “The most difficult part was to respond to requests from many customers” (S1), “The most difficult was to structure the emails, know how to engage a customer...we didn't know what sequence to follow...later with the use of the guidelines I understood” (S4), “During second term I had lots of assignments from other subjects. I neglected and dedicated less time to the task. At the beginning I took time to write in details” (S7), “At the beginning I was more committed on writing emails. At the end I had less time...I knew I could have given more but didn't dedicate” (S4).

Discussion

What was the impact of using an authentic task on learning to respond to business emails on pre-intermediate business students of an EFL course from a public university?

After eight weeks of innovation, quantitative results reported as means show that students increased 2.27% in their business email responses. These results indicate that students improved a little bit more on their quality of responses to customer, the language, and the email form. As for the business email responses subcategories, results show that the subcategory that succeeds in terms of results was Language since 19 out of 20 students could successfully use language with errors that did not confuse meaning. Results also show that the subcategories that succeed the most in terms of progress were Response to Customer and Language since five more students were able to respond to all customer inquiries, adding one additional piece of information that could anticipate further customer needs; and they were also able to use language including errors that did not confuse meaning.

Even though quantitative data do not reflect significant improvement on learning to respond business emails, results from teacher observations and students' perceptions indicate that students found the activity new, purposeful, challenging and collaborative. It was a new experience in which students could employ several skills required to accomplish the task as it happens in real business context. They were able to experience what is to be a staff member from a business company, play the role of customer service assistant, read customer emails and solve problems with the collaboration of peers. All these types of task execution is what Ordoñez (2006) considered as truly authentic task, activities in which students earlier understand what is to be a professional in their career.

Task was considered challenging especially at the beginning of the process, but students felt they could understand more about how to structure email adequately after exchanging ideas with teammates and receiving assistance from the teacher. Vygotsky (1979) confirmed this positive outcome by claiming that social interactions are the vehicle by which individuals reach learning. From week 6, learning was particularly seen since students needed less guidance and worked more independently. According to Lantolf (2015), evidence of development is not restrained to the actual linguistic performance of the learner, which might not change very much from one time to another. However, what count as evidence is the “frequent and quality of mediation needed by a particular learner to perform appropriately in the new language.” (p. 213)

The use of L1 was also beneficial when dealing with the demands of the task. Whenever students didn't have clear idea of what to do, teacher provided explanations in mother language. After receiving feedback students felt encouraged and kept trying hard to accomplish the goal. This outcome confirmed what researchers said regarding the supportive functions of L1 which is “the fostering and maintenance of interest in the task in addition to the development of strategies and approaches for making difficult task more manageable” (Pan & Pan, 2010, p.90)

Even though the rubric was presented for providing reflection and learning, a more frequent analysis of different business responses with the whole class may have been implemented to increase students' performance. Andrade (2001) suggested that handing out and explaining rubric does not guarantee students' knowledge increase of the criteria for the assignment. She suggested involving students in analyzing and critiquing examples of strong and weak pieces of student work (Andrade, 2008). In addition, researchers also believe that teachers should also help students be aware of the value of self-assessment, give feedback on their self-assessment and provide sufficient time for revision after self-assessment (Ross, 2006; Andrade &

Valtcheva, 2009). For the majority of the participants of this study it was their first time using analytical rubric, and therefore a more adequate preparation to support students' self-assessment was needed to obtain the most of the advantages when using rubric.

Timing is one of the limitations of this study. A total of twelve hours seems too little time for low English level students to obtain a great increase on authentic performances. Playing two different roles such as online customer service assistant and customer in order to simulate business environment, learning to respond to different types of emails to different customers, handle with a variety resources available in English and Spanish version and to incorporate a careful self- assessment monitoring may be too demanding for such a short time period. For further application it should also be considered to execute such challenging task in times of the year in which innovation process is not being suspended by holiday breaks or interfered by other subject demands. Students recognized themselves dedicating less time to the task because they were worried about other subject mandatory assignments and final exams in the last weeks of the innovation.

Another limitation that might impede all students to reach expected level was probably the fact they didn't possess the level of language proficiency required for the enrolled course. The task was designed for students who had some basic writing skills such as the use of linking words (and, but, because) in order to combine ideas more easily. Perkins (1999) claimed that learning difficulties would become apparent unless the task is presented as possible to address. Before innovation initiate, a deeper students' needs analysis should have taken place in order to be aware of all students existing skills and then adapt the task to more attainable objective especially for this short period innovation.

Conclusion

Can adding real life tasks to an English program enhance learning? Yes, adding real life tasks to English program provoke learning. At the beginning of the process it might generate concept misunderstandings especially for students with low level of language proficiency, but later on with the appropriate use of resources and time, less guidance will be needed to perform the task.

This study had a mixed group uncontrolled design which is appropriate for exploratory studies. Nevertheless, for future studies a good recommendation would be to have a control group design. This design requires two groups with similar characteristics such as ages or grade level in which one group could use authentic performance and the other do not use it, so that business email responses can be compared with or without the authentic task intervention.

Future research should include participants' perspectives about the subcategories for the email responses. More information about the reasons some categories did not increase as much as the others could help improving rubric and task design for further application.

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appendix

APPENDIX A

BUSINESS E-MAIL RESPONSE RUBRIC

	EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS 3	MEETS EXPECTATIONS 2	APPROACHES TO EXPECTATION 1	LITTLE EVIDENCE OF LEARNING 0
RESPONSES TO CUSTOMER	The e-mail responds to ALL customer inquiries and add Two or Three pieces of additional information (more than one action to do) that might anticipate further customer questions, requests, needs, interests or wishes	The e-mail responds to ALL customer inquiries and adds one additional piece of information (an action to do) that might anticipate further customer questions ,requests, needs, interests or wishes.	The e-mail responds to at least one OF ALL customer inquiries.	The e-mail does not respond to customer inquiries.
LANGUAGE	Spelling, grammar, word choice and punctuation are professional with few errors. Will give an excellent impression.	Language errors do not confuse meaning	Language errors sometimes confuse meaning	The email is difficult to understand and should not be mailed.
EMAIL FORM	The email shows ALL SEVEN of the e-mail parts including additional features such as logo or email stationery.	The email shows ALL SEVEN e-mail parts	The email shows SIX out of the seven e-mail parts	The email shows 5 or LESS out of the seven e-mail parts.

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. ¿CUÁL FUE TU **EXPERIENCIA** TRABAJANDO EN ESTE DEPARTAMENTO DE SERVICIO AL CLIENTE?
2. ¿QUÉ FUE LO QUE MÁS **DISFRUTASTE** DE ESTE PROCESO?
3. ¿QUÉ FUE LO MÁS **DIFÍCIL**?
4. ¿**QUÉ APRENDISTE** DE ESCRIBIR CORREOS ELECTRÓNICOS?
5. ¿**CÓMO APRENDISTE** A ESCRIBIR CORREOS ELECTRÓNICOS?
6. ¿**QUÉ RECURSOS** UTILIZASTE PARA ESCRIBIR EL CORREO ELECTRÓNICO?
7. ¿A QUÉ LE ATRIBUYES EL HECHO DE QUE AL INICIO Y AL FINAL DEL PROCESO OBTUVISTE EL MISMO PUNTAJE(**RESULTADO**)?
8. ¿CUAL ES TU OPINION ACERCA DEL RESULTADO QUE OBTUVISTE AL FINAL DEL PROCESO CON RESPECTO AL INICIO? ¿A QUÉ LE ATRIBUYES ESE RESULTADO?

APPENDIX C

LESSON PLANS

Subject : ENGLISH	Module: 4 th (A2 – pre intermediate level) 29
Unit 7: There are too many stores. (Smart Choice Book 2)	Teacher: Viviana Velasco

B A C K W A R D D E S I G N P L A N

Stage I - Desired Results

Established goals

Institutional (General) Goals: be able to conduct international negotiations and e-commerce activities. (The graduation profile of Business students)

Unit Goals: be able to reply emails of complaint.

Essential Questions

What inconvenience customer might have when shopping online? What do customers complain about regarding online shopping?

What elements are important to take into account when replying emails of complaint?

What type of goods might customers be interested in purchasing?

What experiences have you faced when going shopping? What are your shopping preferences as a customer?

Have you ever worked selling goods or services? What experiences have you had when selling?

Have you ever shopped online? What inconvenience might customers have when shopping online?

What do customers complain about regarding online shopping?

Imagine you work for a specific sales

Understand that...

Shopping online is a commercial activity that may bring dissatisfied clients and as a solution center department, Assistants need to write professional emails to provide solutions for the inconvenience. to the customers

When responding emails, assistants should be aware of some professional aspects: content of response, language and e-mail form.

<p>company. What inconvenience do you think your customers might have?</p> <p>What elements are important to take into account when replying emails of complaint</p> <p>What elements are important to take into account when replying emails of complaint?</p>	
<p>To know (knowledge):</p> <p>a) Response to customer: an adequate business email response should respond to all customer inquiries and should add at least one additional piece of information to anticipate further customer needs or interest.</p> <p>b) Language: an adequate use of Spelling, word choice, punctuation and grammar will give an excellent impression of professionalism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spelling: <u>forming</u> words with the <u>correct letters</u> in the <u>correct order</u>. Use capital letter when naming proper nouns, abbreviations or acronyms and at the beginning of a sentence. • Punctuation: <u>special symbols</u> that you <u>add</u> to writing to <u>separate phrases</u> and <u>sentences</u> to show that something is a <u>question</u>, etc. • Grammar: the use of too many, too much, enough/ not enough <p>-If we have the perfect amount and we do not want/need more or less, then we have enough.</p> <p>-If we want/need more, then we do not have enough. There is not enough.</p> <p>-If we want/need less, then we have</p>	<p>Be able to (skills):</p> <p>a) To reply a satisfying email to a customer.</p> <p>b) to response a well-presented business e-mail by taking into consideration the language</p>

<p>too much or too many.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word Choice: The appropriate selections or words according to context and audience. <p>C) Email Form: A professional email should be organized in a way that shows all seven of the following parts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Subject Line: “Clearing Your Concerns” 2. Greetings: Dear Mr. Brown., Dear Sir..., etc 3. Thank you line/ Good Note: “Thank you for contact us...”, “Thank you for your letter regarding...”, etc 4. State your purpose: “I am writing to inquire about ...” or “I am writing in reference to ...”. 5. Closing remarks: “Thank you for your patience and cooperation” or “Thank you for your consideration...”, etc 6. Ending business letters with a Closing: “Best regards”, “Sincerely”, “Thank you”, etc 7. Adding contact Information: Name, title, phone number. 	<p>C)To response a well-organized business e-mail</p>
<p>Stage 2 Assessment Evidence</p>	
<p>Performance task</p>	
<p>Student will simulate being part of an Online Customer Service Department and they will reply customer e-mails. Those responses will be graded using the “Business Email Response Rubric” that will measure the development of its professional email writing based on the criteria: response to customer, language and email form.</p>	
<p>Other Evidences</p>	
<p>Self-assessment of the performance task using the “Business Email Response Rubric”.</p>	
<p>Learning Plan</p>	

Wednesday, Nov 18 (13h00- 14h30 / 90 min)

Understanding the authentic performance task:

- Students will be told about the objectives and duration of the Innovation. They will sign the consentment paper. They will be told that the result of this project will not be taken into consideration for the first term grades.
- Creating an Online Customer Service Department and Publicize a product online: Students make groups of 4 simulating being members of the online customer service department a company they want to create. As a group they think of the name and product that their company will sell online. They send an advertisement email to all their potential customers (classmates will simulate the role of the potential customers). In the advertisement they include the products their company offers including pictures and price.
- Students read the sample email response to customers.
<http://www.business2community.com/strategy/how-to-answer-emails-professionally-with-examples-0197518#4WcEHqWUPI1xBRTI.97>
- Students compare and contrast sample mails and mention characteristics and give opinion about it.
- Students read the business email response rubric (English and Spanish Version) and they analyze each criterion. They use rubric use to grade the sample e-mails.
- Students read “Writing Business Letter Useful Phrases” sheets <http://www.learn-english-today.com/business-english/business-letters.html> and say the meaning of each phrase on it. Sts write down the meaning of each phrase.

Week 1 - Wednesday, Nov 25 (13h00- 14h30 / 90 min)

Customer writes an email of complaint. By playing the role of customers, each student open the advertisement emails and select a product which they pretend they will purchase. After that they will image they had an inconvenience with the purchased product and write and send an email complaining to the Online Customer Service Department (OCSD) of that company. They write 2 or 3 emails of complaint to different companies.

OCSD assistant responds to customers’ email of complaint. By playing the role of the assistant the OCSD of a particular company, each student receives one or several emails of complaint. As a group they come up with a solution or answer for that customer email and one member of the group department will be in charge to write the response that solve the inconvenience. In order to write the response they should use the rubric (when working on the language criteria they should use the some of the grammar and vocabulary of the book unit7), samples emails, useful

business phrases , digital resources such English- Spanish dictionaries, translators and electronic devices in order to send the email response. (**AUTHENTIC PERFORMANCE TASK-Observation #1**)

Week 2- Wednesday, Dec 2 (13h00- 14h30 / 90 min)

OCSD assistant responds to customers' email of complaint. By playing the role of the assistant the OCSD of a particular company, each student receives one or several emails of complaint. As a group they come up with a solution or answer for that customer email and one member of the group department will be in charge to write the response that solve the inconvenience. In order to write the response they should use the rubric (when working on the language criteria they should use the some of the grammar and vocabulary of the book unit7), samples emails, useful business phrases, digital resources such English- Spanish dictionaries, translators and electronic devices in order to send the email response. (**AUTHENTIC PERFORMANCE TASK-Observation #1**)

Subject : ENGLISH

Module: 4th (A2 – pre intermediate level)

Unit 8: I like guys who are smart.
(Smart Choice Book 2)

Teacher: Viviana Velasco

B A C K W A R D D E S I G N P L A N

Stage I - Desired Results

Established goals

Institutional (General) Goals: be able to conduct international negotiations and e-commerce activities. (The graduation profile of Business students)

Unit Goals: to Respond to customer email by describing characteristic or features of the product they offer.

Essential Questions

Before shopping online, what are the possible inquiries that customers might ask to Customer Service Department?

What elements are important to take into account when replying this type of email?

Understand that...

Before purchasing a specific product online, customers might have some inquiries regarding the product features or usage.

Assistant of Online Customer Service department might provide them with more specifications of the product offered online and add other product features might interest the customer

	<p>When responding emails, assistant should be aware of some professional aspects: content of response, language and e-mail form.</p>
<p>To know (knowledge):</p> <p>c) Response to customer: an adequate business email response should respond to all customer inquiries and should add at least one additional piece of information to anticipate further customer needs or interest.</p> <p>d) Language: an adequate use of Spelling, word choice, punctuation and grammar (relative clauses and others) will give an excellent impression of professionalism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spelling: <u>forming</u> words with the <u>correct letters</u> in the <u>correct order</u>. Use capital letter when naming proper nouns, abbreviations or acronyms and at the beginning of a sentence. • Punctuation: <u>special symbols</u> that you <u>add</u> to writing to <u>separate phrases</u> and <u>sentences</u> to show that something is a <u>question</u>, etc. • Grammar: the use of Relative Clauses. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We use relative clauses to identify, define or classify a thing or a person. - We use the relative pronouns who, which, and that to introduce relative clauses. <i>Who</i> is for people, <i>which</i> is for things, <i>that</i> is for people or things • Word Choice: The appropriate selections or words according to context and audience. 	<p>Be able to (skills):</p> <p>b) To reply a satisfying email to a customer.</p> <p>b) to response a well-presented business e-mail by taking into consideration the language</p>

<p>C) Email Form: A professional email should be organized in a way that shows all seven of the following parts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Subject Line: “Clearing Your Concerns” 9. Greetings: Dear Mr. Brown., Dear Sir..., etc 10. Thank you line/ Good Note: “Thank you for contacting us...”, “Thank you for your letter regarding...”, etc 11. State your purpose: “I am writing to inquire about ...” or “I am writing in reference to ...”. 12. Closing remarks: “Thank you for your patience and cooperation” or “Thank you for your consideration...”, etc 13. Ending business letters with a Closing: “Best regards”, “Sincerely”, “Thank you”, etc 14. Adding contact Information: Name, title, phone number. 	<p>C)To response a well-organized business e-mail</p>
Stage 2 Assessment Evidence	
<p>Performance task</p> <p>Student will simulate being part of an Online Customer Service Department and they will reply customer e-mails describing characteristic or features of the product they offer. Those responses will be graded using the “Business Email Response Rubric” that will measure the development of its professional email writing based on the criteria: response to customer, language and email form.</p>	
<p>Other Evidences</p> <p>Self-assessment of the performance task using the “Business Email Response Rubric”.</p>	
Learning Plan	
<p>Week 3 - Wednesday, Dec 9th (13h00- 14h30 / 90 min)</p> <p><u>Customer writes an email of complaint.</u> By playing the role of customers, each student open the advertisement emails and select a product which they pretend they will purchase. After that they</p>	

will image they had an inconvenience with the purchased product and write and send an email complaining to the Online Customer Service Department (OCSD) of that company. They write 2 or 3 emails of complaint to different companies.

OCSD assistant responds to customers' email of complaint. By playing the role of the assistant the OCSD of a particular company, each student receives one or several emails in which the customer ask for a specific feature of the product sold online. Customers add their specifications and preferences. . As a group they come up with a solution or answer for that customer email and one member of the group department will be in charge to write the response by describing characteristic or features of the product they offer. In order to write the response they should use the rubric (when working on the language criteria they should use the some of the grammar and vocabulary of the book unit8), samples emails, useful business phrases , digital resources such English- Spanish dictionaries, translators and electronic devices in order to send the email response. **(AUTHENTIC PERFORMANCE TASK- Observation #3)**

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Week 4- Wednesday, Dec 16th (13h00- 14h30 / 90 min)

OCSD assistant responds to customers' email of complaint. By playing the role of the assistant the OCSD of a particular company, each student receives one or several emails in which the customer ask for a specific feature of the product sold online. Customers add their specifications and preferences. . As a group they come up with a solution or answer for that customer email and one member of the group department will be in charge to write the response by describing characteristic or features of the product they offer.. In order to write the response they should use the rubric (when working on the language criteria they should use the some of the grammar and vocabulary of the book unit8), samples emails, useful business phrases , digital resources such English- Spanish dictionaries, translators and electronic devices in order to send the email response. **(AUTHENTIC PERFORMANCE TASK- Observation #4)**

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Subject : ENGLISH	Module: 4 th (A2 – pre intermediate level) 37
Unit 9: What were you doing? (Smart Choice Book 2)	Teacher: Viviana Velasco
BACKWARD DESIGN PLAN	

Stage I - Desired Results

Established goals

Institutional (General) Goals: be able to conduct international negotiations and e-commerce activities. (The graduation profile of Business students)

Unit Goals: to respond to customers inquiries regarding the usage of the product.

Essential Questions

What are the issues that customers might deal with after buying products online?
What questions would the customer ask to the Online Customer service department?

What elements are important to take into account when replying this type of email?

Understand that...

When doing e-commerce activities, customers may write emails reporting a past situation with the product and asks for clarifications regarding with the usage of the product.

People working on an Online Customer Service departments should respond to all customers' inquiries regarding the usage of the product, use an adequate language and type the mail in well-organized form.

To know (knowledge):

e) **Response to customer:** an adequate business email response should respond to all customer inquiries and should add at least one additional piece of information to anticipate further customer needs or interest.

f) **Language:** an adequate use of Spelling, word choice, punctuation and grammar (past continuous and others) will give and excellent impression of professionalism.

- Spelling: forming words with the correct letters in the correct order. Use capital letter when naming proper nouns, abbreviations or acronyms and at the beginning of a sentence.
- Punctuation: special symbols that you

Be able to (skills):

c) To reply a satisfying email to a customer.

b) to response a well-presented business e-mail by taking into consideration the language

<p><u>add</u> to writing to <u>separate phrases</u> and <u>sentences</u> to show that something is a <u>question</u>, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar: the past continuous <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -We use the past continuous to talk about something in progress at a specific time in the past. -we often use the past continuous to talk about something in progress when another action (usually in the simple past) took place. • Word Choice: The appropriate selections or words according to context and audience. <p>C) Email Form: A professional email should be organized in a way that shows all seven of the following parts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Subject Line: “Clearing Your Concerns” 16. Greetings: Dear Mr. Brown., Dear Sir..., etc 17. Thank you line/ Good Note: “Thank you for contacting us..”, “Thank you for your letter regarding...”, etc 18. State your purpose: “I am writing to inquire about ...” or “I am writing in reference to ...”. 19. Closing remarks: “Thank you for your patience and cooperation” or “Thank you for your consideration...”, etc 20. Ending business letters with a Closing: “Best regards”, “Sincerely”, “Thank you”, etc 21. Adding contact Information: Name, title, phone number. 	<p>C)To response a well-organized business e-mail</p>
<p>Stage 2 Assessment Evidence</p>	
<p>Performance task</p>	

Student will simulate being part of an Online Customer Service Department and they will reply customer e-mails regarding the usage of a specific product. Those responses will be graded using the “Business Email Response Rubric” that will measure the development of its professional email writing based on the criteria: response to customer, language and email form.

Other Evidences

Self-assessment of the performance task using the “Business Email Response Rubric”.

Learning Plan

Week 5- Wednesday, Jan 6th (13h00- 14h30 / 90 min)

Customer writes an email of complaint. By playing the role of customers, each student open the advertisement emails and select a product which they pretend they will purchase. After that they will image they had an inconvenience with the purchased product and write and send an email complaining to the Online Customer Service Department (OCSD) of that company. They write 2 or 3 emails of complaint to different companies.

OCSD assistant responds to customers’ email of complaint. By playing the role of the assistant the OCSD of a particular company, each student receives one or several emails in which the customer reported a past situation with the product and asked for clarifications regarding with the usage of the product. As a group they come up with a solution or answer for that customer email and one member of the group department will be in charge to respond to all customers inquiries regarding the product usage. In order to write the response they should use the rubric (when working on the language criteria they should use the some of the grammar or vocabulary of the book unit9), sample emails, useful business phrases, digital resources such English- Spanish dictionaries, translators and electronic devices in order to send the email response.

(AUTHENTIC PERFORMANCE TASK- Observation #5)

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Week 6- Wednesday, Jan 13th (13h00- 14h30 / 90 min)

OCSD assistant responds to customers’ email of complaint. By playing the role of the assistant the OCSD of a particular company, each student receives one or several emails in which the customer reported a past situation with the product and asked for clarifications regarding with the usage of the product. As a group they come up with a solution or answer for that customer email and one member of the group department will be in charge to respond to all customers inquiries regarding the product usage. In order to write the response they should use the rubric (when working on the language criteria they should use the some of the grammar or vocabulary of the book unit 9), samples emails, useful business phrases , digital resources such English- Spanish dictionaries, translators and electronic devices in order to send the email response.

Subject : ENGLISH	Module: 4 th (A2 – pre intermediate level) 41
Unit 10: It must be an earthquake. (Smart Choice Book 2)	Teacher: Viviana Velasco
(AUTHENTIC PERFORMANCE TASK- Observation #6)	
----- B A C K W A R D D E S I G N P L A N -----	
Stage I - Desired Results	
Established goals	

<p>Institutional (General) Goals: be able to conduct international negotiations and e-commerce activities. (The graduation profile of Business students)</p> <p>Unit Goals: to respond to customer email apologizing for the delayed product and speculating that it might happen due to weather conditions.</p>	
<p>Essential Questions</p> <p>How customer usually complain when the purchased product online has not arrived on time? What are the possible natural events that can impede the customer to receive the product on time?</p> <p>What elements are important to take into account when replying this type of email?</p>	<p>Understand that...</p> <p>When doing e-commerce activities, customers may complain about the delayed arrival of its product.</p> <p>People working on an Online Customer Service departments should respond to customer email apologizing for the delayed product and speculating that it might happen due to weather conditions. The assistant might estimate the arrival time of the product.</p> <p>A professional email response should bear in mind the quality of response, the language and the email form</p>
<p>To know (knowledge):</p> <p>g) Response to customer: an adequate business email response should respond to all customer inquiries and should add at least one additional piece of information to anticipate further customer needs or interest.</p> <p>h) Language: an adequate use of Spelling, word choice, punctuation and grammar will give and excellent impression of professionalism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spelling: <u>forming</u> words with the <u>correct letters</u> in the <u>correct order</u>. Use capital letter when naming proper nouns, abbreviations or acronyms and at the beginning of a sentence. • Punctuation: <u>special symbols</u> that you 	<p>Be able to (skills):</p> <p>d) To reply a satisfying email to a customer.</p> <p>b) to response a well-presented business e-mail by taking into consideration the language</p>

<p><u>add</u> to writing to <u>separate phrases</u> and <u>sentences</u> to show that something is a <u>question</u>, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar: the use of modals of possibility. We use must, could, might, may, can't +be to talk about degrees of certainty. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Must (almost 100% sure it is true) - May, might (not), could(not) (not sure if it true (but it is possible) - Must not, couldn't , can't (almost 100% it is not true) • Word Choice: The appropriate selections or words according to context and audience. <p>C) Email Form: A professional email should be organized in a way that shows all seven of the following parts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 22. Subject Line: “Clearing Your Concerns” 23. Greetings: Dear Mr. Brown., Dear Sir..., etc 24. Thank you line/ Good Note: “Thank you for contact us...”, “Thank you for your letter regarding...”, etc 25. State your purpose: “I am writing to inquire about ...” or “I am writing in reference to ...”. 26. Closing remarks: “Thank you for your patience and cooperation” or “Thank you for your consideration...”, etc 27. Ending business letters with a Closing: “Best regards”, “Sincerely”, “Thank you”, etc 28. Adding contact Information: Name, title, phone number. 	<p>C)To response a well-organized business e-mail</p>
<p>Stage 2 Assessment Evidence</p>	

Performance task

Student will simulate being part of an Online Customer Service Department and they will reply to customer email apologizing for the delayed product and speculating that it might happen due to weather conditions. The assistant might estimate the arrival time of the product. Those responses will be graded using the “Business Email Response Rubric” that will measure the development of its professional email writing based on the criteria: response to customer, language and email form.

Other Evidences

Self-assessment of the performance task using the “Business Email Response Rubric”.

Learning Plan

Week 7- Wednesday, Jan 20th (13h00- 14h30 / 90 min)

Customer writes an email of complaint. By playing the role of customers, each student open the advertisement emails and select a product which they pretend they will purchase. After that they will image they had an inconvenience with the purchased product and write and send an email complaining to the Online Customer Service Department (OCS D) of that company. They write 2 or 3 emails of complaint to different companies.

OCS D assistant responds to customers’ email of complaint. By playing the role of the assistant the OCS D of a particular company, each student receives one or several emails in which the customer complain about the delayed arrival of its product. As a group they come up with a solution or answer for that customer email and one member of the group department will be in charge to respond to customer email apologizing for the delayed product and speculating that it might happen due to weather conditions. The assistant might estimate the arrival time of the product. . In order to write the response they should use the rubric (when working on the language criteria they could use the some of the grammar and vocabulary of the book unit10), samples emails, useful business phrases , digital resources such English- Spanish dictionaries, translators and electronic devices in order to send the email response. **(AUTHENTIC PERFORMANCE TASK- Observation #7)**

Week 8- Wednesday, Jan 27th (13h00- 14h30 / 90 min)

OCS D assistant responds to customers’ email of complaint. By playing the role of the assistant the OCS D of a particular company, each student receives one or several emails in which the customer complain about the delayed arrival of its product. As a group they come up with a solution or answer for that customer email and one member of the group department will be in charge to respond to customer email apologizing for the delayed product and speculating that it might happen due to weather conditions. The assistant might estimate the arrival time of the product.

. In order to write the response they should use the rubric (when working on the language criteria they could use the some of the grammar and vocabulary of the book unit10), samples emails, useful business phrases , digital resources such English- Spanish dictionaries, translators and electronic devices in order to send the email response. (**AUTHENTIC PERFORMANCE TASK #8 - Post Observation**)

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