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# Guided Discovery approach in CEI Remote Teaching

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## Guided Discovery approach in CEI Remote Teaching

### Introduction

In recent years, it has become evident that the paradigm of successful education has changed. The focus of attention is now placed on the learners themselves, encouraging them to be the protagonists of their own learning. The role of teachers has evolved from lecturers to facilitators, providing learners with tools that will prove useful in the classroom as well as outside. In this article, I will focus on the Guided Discovery approach as a means to develop learners' autonomy and critical thinking in remote learning.

### Remote Teaching and Ceibal en Ingles

Remote teaching education is not an exception as it has become part of this new trend. Remote teaching refers to synchronous lessons through videoconference combined with the use of a platform (blended learning) that can be used synchronously as well as asynchronously. A perfect example of that is Ceibal-en-ingles (CEI), an education program launched in Uruguay many years ago aimed at training primary state school kids to learn English as a foreign language. At one end, a remote teacher (RT), at the other end, a group of 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> form learners accompanied by a classroom teacher (CT). Both parties interact synchronously for 45 minutes once a week. That teaching-learning process is complemented with the use of a carefully designed online platform, called CREA2, which contains the necessary tools to enhance learning (videos, songs, visual aid, activities, games and forums to connect RTs, learners and CTs). This platform articulates pedagogical contents in a progressive linear way according to the groups' levels: 1, 2 or 3 (from beginner level to A1/A2 level on the Common European Framework). It is also fundamental to help learners and RTs connect, interact and bond using the second language within a safe online learning environment.

### Guided Discovery approach: definition

"Guided discovery, also known as an inductive approach, is a technique or approach where a teacher provides examples of a language item and helps the learners to find out the rules themselves" (British Council website). At this point, it is important to differentiate deductive from inductive.

### Deductive vs Inductive approach

In language learning, we find two clear approaches: the deductive approach which refers to the explicit presentation of rules then applied by students and the **inductive** approach which refers to learners working out rules from exposure to the language in use. In other words, deductive implies explicit presentation of rules, while inductive implies implicit learning of rules. At present, the inductive approach is the one used in Ceibal en Inglés remote lessons.

### Advantages of the Guided Discovery approach

- The main advantage of the guided discovery approach is that it fosters learners' autonomy, curiosity and critical thinking. Since GD implies a series of exercises/ questions that bring students to the understanding of the target language, it is extremely learner-centered, encouraging learners' autonomy and critical thinking to grasp TL understanding.

- Even though it is more time consuming during the lesson itself (compared to the deductive approach), it is believed that learners achieve long lasting learning since they discover rules on their own. This is achieved by following hints and relating new content to previous one (activation of schemata). For most people, it is easier to remember something you figured out yourself rather than it being just explained to you by the teacher. Besides, the target language is contextualized in each lesson, making it more meaningful and memorable for learners. As Ellis (2002) states “a rule that has been ‘discovered’ is more memorable than one that has simply been presented”.

## Roles in Remote Teaching

The role of remote teachers (RTs):

- RTs must foster discovery in the learning of English as a foreign language.
- RTs must design and implement lesson plans and tasks in a way that they motivate learners and allow them to learn a new language in a critical way.
- RTs must lead learners to construct meaning and derive rules.

The role of learners:

- Learners are expected to not only grasp and consolidate content but also relate it to existing knowledge and to new contexts.
- Learners are expected to undergo different processes such as awareness, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.
- Learners are expected to incorporate these tools learned during the remote lesson and apply them in different contexts.
- Learners are expected to display curiosity, creativity and motivation during the remote lessons.

## Guided Discovery approach in CEI Remote lessons

At the beginning of the Ceibal program, a PPP (presentation, practice and production) approach was used in CEI remote lessons. This approach follows a deductive paradigm; i.e. teachers providing learners with rules, during the presentation stage, mainly. After some time of trying this approach, there was a need for a change. CEI remote teachers truly believe that learners’ curiosity, creativity and motivation must be encouraged by the tasks provided. It is paramount to guide learners to construct meaning, consolidate content and relate it to existing knowledge. As a result, remote teachers agreed they should move from being the center of attention and place the focus on learners, providing them with more opportunities for discovery, interaction and production. Thus, immediate action was taken and lesson plans and materials underwent a thorough revision where a three-step framework was applied in the presentation stage, turning it from deductive to inductive.

### Three-step framework to make a TL presentation inductive

RTs must follow 3 steps during the TL presentation stage to guarantee that learners will have the opportunity to infer rules:

**Step 1- Setting the Context:** consider a suitable context for your lesson. Content presented in isolation becomes meaningless, difficult to relate to real life and prior knowledge and, as a result, meaning is hard to grasp and will probably end up in failure. The target language should always be presented in context (using

a reading or listening text, a picture, telling a story/ anecdote, own experience, etc.) and following a line of thought throughout the whole lesson.

**Step 2- Drawing out the important language from the text:** target language sentence markers must be extracted for learners to focus on and infer meaning, pronunciation and form on their own.

**Step 3- Clarifying M-P-F:** these are three features of a specific language item (grammar or vocabulary) that are paramount in the learning of a second language during a lesson. Teaching MFP is important to help learners communicate their ideas accurately and clearly and prevent potential problems. For teaching Grammar the suggested order is MFP while for teaching Vocabulary the suggested order is MPF.

After learners have inferred the rules of the target language presented in a carefully scaffolded way, they are ready for the controlled practice stage and the final production stage.

### Techniques to make a Ceibal remote lesson inductive

- ✓ Application of digital tools (spotlight tool, magic ink, sharing and unsharring screen, etc.) to hide the objective of the lesson and just show hints of it to allow learners the opportunity of guessing/ discovering what they are going to learn.
- ✓ Use of prediction strategies (visual aid, questions, etc.) to help learners anticipate the content of reading and/ or listening texts.
- ✓ Elicitation vs providing answers.
- ✓ Implementation of a three-step framework to clarify grammar and vocabulary focusing on Meaning, Form and Pronunciation of the target language presented:

**-Meaning:** eliciting meaning first by activating prior knowledge using timelines, matching, blank filling, etc. and supported by the use of CCQs (Concept Checking Questions or guiding questions such as yes/no or either or questions).

**-Pronunciation:** drilling pronunciation without displaying the written word to avoid the fossilization of mistakes (drilling, backchaining, substitution drilling, mouthing, whispering, group pronunciation, etc. are different ways of practicing pronunciation)

**-Form:** eliciting form by encouraging learners to extract the rule from a marker sentence (example extracted from text) and completing it in a chart, matching activity, blank filling, etc.

- ✓ Implementation of HOTS (high order thinking skills) in tasks and activities to allow learners to study a new language in a critical way where learners need to analyze and evaluate language in order to derive rules. RTs must set up tasks and activities to challenge learners to think more deeply, for example by asking guiding questions instead of providing answers, by encouraging learners to compare and contrast, by encouraging learners to analyze data collected and report results, etc.

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- ✓ Providing learners with enough time to think, reflect, analyze and evaluate potential answers on their own. Then comparing results with a peer. Finally, providing whole class feedback.

## **Conclusion**

Whether a lesson is delivered face to face or remotely, fostering learners' autonomy and critical thinking is crucial to help them develop their learning strategies along their whole life both inside and outside a classroom. Being a lesson remote provides teachers with the valuable opportunity of making use of a wide variety of digital tools that will definitely support learners' discovery of the target language in an easy and engaging way.

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## References

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