

Fostering Language learning in Later Life: The Impact of Consciousness-raising Grammar, Multimodal Resources, and Emotion-focused Pedagogy on Elderly Learners

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This study investigates the effects of a holistic approach based on the principles of consciousness-raising grammar (CRG), multimodal resources, and emotion-focused pedagogical strategies on linguistic outcomes, emotional involvement, and self-efficacy among elderly language learners. Conducted within an action research framework over three cycles, the study involved the design and implementation of three didactic units for a group of native Spanish-speaking learners aged 50 to 80 (primarily 70 to 80), with intermediate English proficiency (A2–B1). Data collection methods included reflective journals, surveys, and grammar tests, yielding both quantitative and qualitative data, which were analyzed using statistical, content, and thematic analysis. The results indicate that this integrated approach enhances communicative competence, emotional engagement, and learner confidence. In conclusion, grammar-aware instruction, combined with multimodal resources and delivered in an emotionally supportive environment, has proven effective for elderly language learners. Thus, the combined approach presented in this study underscores the importance of addressing both cognitive and emotional needs in elderly language learning, providing practical insights for creating inclusive and engaging learning environments.

Keywords: *consciousness-raising grammar, action research, multimodal resources, emotion-focused pedagogy, elderly learners.*

Introduction

Emotional challenges, particularly a lack of confidence, are recognized as significant barriers to language learning. Although well-designed lessons are essential, their effectiveness is often compromised if learners do not feel emotionally safe or understood (Liu and Dong 2025). Consequently, it is crucial to create learning environments that prioritize empathy and emotional support in language education. Researchers such as Mercer (2016), Oxford (2017), and Dewaele et al. (2018) affirm that emotional safety and teacher responsiveness are critical for fostering motivation and overcoming affective obstacles. Nevertheless, establishing emotionally supportive classrooms remains particularly difficult within traditional grammar-focused instruction, which can disengage both learners and educators (Cowie 2011; Larsen-Freeman 2015).

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While consciousness-raising grammar (CRG) can help learners notice and understand language forms in context, research suggests that CRG alone may not be sufficient to sustain involvement or promote communicative competence without the integration of additional interactive or meaningful practices (Ellis 2002; Roza 2014). Given the importance of emotionally supportive learning environments and the limitations of CRG by itself, it is essential to enrich lessons with other methodologies or approaches. In this sense, multimodal instruction, which incorporates diverse media such as visuals, audio, and interactive elements, emerges as a promising alternative for implementing CRG lessons while simultaneously providing an emotionally enriched learning environment, as it has demonstrated not only linguistic benefits but also the potential to foster emotional involvement (Guo and Guo 2024).

The need for more inclusive and engaging approaches is further underscored by demographic trends: by 2030, one in six people globally will be 60 or older (World Health Organization 2025). As a result, older adults are increasingly turning to language learning not only for communication but also as a means to support cognitive functioning, enhance quality of life, and foster social interaction—factors which have been shown to delay memory decline and promote healthy aging (Antoniou et al. 2013; Ware 2021).

The study aims to investigate how the integration of CRG-based activities, multimodal resources, and an emotion-focused language learning environment influences language development, emotional involvement, and self-efficacy among elderly learners. The hypothesis of the study is that CRG-based instruction, complemented by multimodal resources and delivered in an emotionally supportive environment, promotes language development, emotional involvement, and self-efficacy among elderly learners. The study addresses the following research question: How does the integration of CRG-based activities, multimodal resources, and an emotion-focused language learning environment affect language development, emotional involvement, and self-efficacy in elderly learners?

Literature Review

This literature review draws on empirical research and theoretical frameworks to identify and examine key factors that shape language learning among older adults. It explores four central themes: (1) language learning in elderly learners, (2) the role of consciousness-raising grammar instruction, (3) the use of multimodal resources in language learning, and (4) the impact of emotional factors on language learning in later life.

Language Learning in Elderly Learners

Various theoretical perspectives, i.e., neurological, sociocultural, psychological, and motivational shape the understanding of language learning in older adults, each offering distinct insights into second language learning in aging populations (VanPatten and Benati 2015; Marinova-Todd et al. 2000; Singleton and Ryan 2004). Although debates persist and stereotypes about aging often complicate the discussion,

researchers are increasingly acknowledging that elderly learners can still acquire new languages effectively by leveraging neuroplasticity, life experience, and metacognitive strategies (Nilsson et al. 2021; Ware et al. 2021).

Neurologically, cognitive functions such as memory, attention, and processing speed may decline with age, compromising language learning (VanPatten and Benati 2015). Though Klimova and de Paula Nascimento e Silva (2024) emphasize the ongoing role of neuroplasticity in adulthood, and Klimova and Pikhart (2020) highlight that intensive foreign language learning can enhance cognitive functions, particularly working memory. Cendoya (2024) suggests that phonological skills may be especially vulnerable to age-related decline. According to D'Acierno (2011), the primary difference between adults and children in learning a foreign language is related to pronunciation, as adults' vocal tract muscles are less flexible for producing unfamiliar sounds.

Others argue that psychological, educational, and social factors often play a more substantial role than biological limitations. Elderly learners compensate for these challenges by leveraging their rich life experience, strong personal identity, and metacognitive awareness (Marinova-Todd et al. 2000; Singleton and Ryan 2004).

According to the World Health Organization (2025), by 2030, one in six people globally will be aged 60 or older, marking a significant shift toward aging populations worldwide. As longevity increases, many older adults pursue second language learning not only as a cognitively stimulating activity but also as a means to foster social connections, enhance cultural participation, and maintain a strong sense of purpose and autonomy (Antoniou, et al. 2013; Brouwer et al. 2024). This growing interest underscores the potential of language education as a valuable tool for promoting healthy and active aging.

The Role of Consciousness-raising Grammar Instruction

Consciousness-raising grammar is founded on the principle that learners gain more from a clear understanding of grammatical rules through meaningful and context-rich input, rather than through rote memorization (Chomsky 1967; Fotos and Ellis 1991). CRG fosters metalinguistic awareness, critical thinking, and retention by encouraging learners to notice and analyze language patterns within authentic communication contexts (Nassaji and Fotos, 2011). It emphasizes learner independence, minimal correction, and collaborative learning, aligning with sociocultural theories that regard language learning as a socially influenced process (Larsen-Freeman 2003; Lantolf and Thorne 2006).

Krashen (1982) distinguishes between implicit knowledge, which is acquired subconsciously through communication, and explicit knowledge, which is obtained through conscious instruction. Ferraro (2020) further elaborates on this distinction by describing interface models that connect implicit and explicit knowledge. This perspective supports the notion that explicit knowledge can enhance the development of implicit competence through processes such as noticing, hypothesis testing, and repeated practice.

For adults, particularly elderly learners, explicit instruction often proves to be more effective due to age-related cognitive changes that affect memory, processing

speed, and attention. Ellis (2021) emphasizes that first language (L1) grammar acquisition is implicit and derived from language usage rather than explicit rules. Simple exposure to linguistic input is sufficient for L1 acquisition, eliminating the need for explicit instruction. Nevertheless, adult second language (L2) learners generally require additional conscious and explicit learning resources to achieve accuracy, as implicit acquisition through communicative contexts is often limited compared to native speaker norms. VanPatten and Benati (2015) argue that adult learners typically rely more heavily on conscious instruction to attain grammatical accuracy, although they still benefit from implicit learning opportunities. Nassaji and Fotos (2011) advocate for a balanced approach that integrates both implicit exposure and explicit guidance, which is particularly suitable for elderly learners who may face cognitive and affective challenges, such as anxiety, reduced working memory, or diminished confidence.

The use of Multimodal Resources in Language Learning

As described by Donaghy (2023), multimodality is defined as the use of multiple modes of communication: linguistic (text or spoken), visual (images, design), aural (sound, tone), gestural (body language, facial expressions), and spatial (layout and arrangement) within a single text to convey meaning. The author emphasized that these modes work together to shape the overall message, reflecting the complex, multimodal nature of human communication. Multimodality plays a crucial role in language teaching by enhancing comprehension, memory, and engagement through the stimulation of diverse sensory channels via videos, images, interactive games, and collaborative tasks (Eisenmann and Summer 2020; Fernández Fontecha et al. 2019; Belabbas 2024). Additionally, Dressman (2019) argues that communication has always been multimodal, even before the digital era, as meaning is conveyed not only through written text but also through elements such as typography, illustrations, and page layout. Similarly, spoken language has consistently relied on both verbal and nonverbal cues.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2021) emphasize that communication is inherently multimodal, involving not only language but also images, layout, gestures, and other semiotic modes. Their work argues that meaning is constructed through the interaction of these modes, and that literacy in the modern world must extend beyond text to include an understanding of how different modes collaborate. In educational contexts, their theory supports the design of learning environments that engage multiple senses and forms of representation, thereby making content more accessible and meaningful. Additionally, technological advancements and a growing awareness of emotional involvement have made multimodality increasingly essential for creating supportive, emotionally responsive learning environments (Guo, 2023).

Kress and van Leeuwen (2021) also emphasize that meaning emerges through the interaction of various modes within cultural contexts. This necessitates interdisciplinary frameworks that integrate social semiotics and pedagogy to support identity and critical thinking. Additionally, multimodal texts extend learning beyond the classroom, fostering inclusivity and addressing social issues, which is particularly valuable in language learning environments (Belabbas 2024).

The Role of Emotions in Language learning for Elderly Learners

Emotions significantly influence language learning outcomes, yet their full impact remains underexplored, especially among older adults. Positive emotions such as enjoyment and self-efficacy enhance motivation and cognitive flexibility, while negative emotions like anxiety and frustration, when constructively managed, can also support learning (Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Słowik-Krogulec 2024; Li and Dewaele 2020).

Li and Dewaele (2020) emphasize the necessity of a comprehensive, context-sensitive approach that acknowledges the full emotional spectrum in language learning. Supporting this perspective, Méndez and Fabela (2014) found that Mexican students were able to transform negative feelings toward teacher feedback into motivation, while Imai (2010) demonstrated how Japanese learners channeled boredom and frustration during group work to enhance engagement.

When considering elderly learners, emotional factors such as self-efficacy and encouragement become particularly critical. Research conducted by Acosta (2024) and other recent studies further demonstrate that affective factors, including motivation and self-efficacy, enhance elderly learners' willingness to engage in communicative tasks and increase their long-term commitment to learning. These findings underscore the central role of emotional motivation and perceived competence in fostering sustained language study among elderly learners.

Geng and Jin (2023) found that among Chinese older adults learning English, motivation is strongly associated with intrinsic emotional rewards. Their study indicates that older adults prioritize enjoyment, social interaction, and personal fulfillment over traditional performance metrics such as grades or test scores. These affective factors—particularly enjoyment—boost their persistence in the face of cognitive or linguistic challenges, underscoring the role of emotional motivation in sustaining engagement in language learning during later life. Nevertheless, anxiety arising from age-related stereotypes can undermine individuals' confidence and motivation, emphasizing the importance of supportive and empathetic learning environments (Trishina 2024; Baran Łucarz and Słowik-Krogulec 2023). Furthermore, age-related differences in emotional regulation affect both communication and pedagogical strategies, highlighting the necessity for tailored approaches that take into account these unique emotional dynamics among elderly learners (Rojas & Riffo 2022).

Methodology

The study utilized both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques, including a reflective journal, emotion survey, and grammar tests, within an action research framework implemented across three cycles. In each cycle, a didactic unit was planned, implemented, and analyzed using statistical, thematic, and content analysis methods. The results from these analyses helped to make adjustments throughout the process and highlighted the principal findings of this study.

Participants and Context

This study focused on a group of 15 elderly native Spanish-speaking learners, ranging in age from 50 to 80, with most participants falling between 70 and 80 years old. They were all attending English classes offered by the *Universidad Permanente de la Universidad de Alicante* (UPUA), a lifelong learning institution dedicated to fostering active aging and encouraging social involvement through ongoing educational opportunities. They represented diverse academic and professional backgrounds, contributing a wide range of life experiences to the classroom dynamic. Their English proficiency ranged from A2 to B1(CEFR), indicating an intermediate level of language competence. Their primary motivations for learning English included social involvement, leisure, and travel, reflecting a desire to connect with others and explore new cultural experiences.

Instruction focused primarily on listening and speaking skills, as these are essential for effective communication in social and travel-related contexts. Age-related health conditions, such as decreased vision and slower mobility, were taken into account, as they could influence learning pace and preferences. Despite these challenges, participants were motivated to improve their communicative abilities. They were participative, approachable, critical, and open to new learning experiences, embodying the values promoted by UPUA in fostering intellectual curiosity and personal development in later life.

Instruments

To collect data, the teacher used a reflective journal and administered an emotion survey and a grammar test to the students. The reflective journal followed a consistent structure throughout all 17 lessons, systematically documenting key details that included the date, place, time, participants, lesson topic, objectives, and classroom activities. It also recorded observations related to learner involvement, emotional responses, multimodal interaction patterns, and the role of the CRG (see Appendix A).

The emotion survey structure also remained the same, being administered at the end of each instructional cycle. It included a multiple-choice question inviting learners to select all adjectives that best described their emotions during the lessons implemented during the cycle. (e.g., confused, embarrassed, ignored, nervous, overwhelmed, confident, connected, curious, engaged, inspired, and joyful). In addition to the multiple-choice question, the survey included an open-ended "Comments" section where learners could describe their emotional experiences in their own words (see Appendix B).

The grammar test varied across the three cycles. Two cycles featured multiple-choice questions, while one cycle used a grammaticality judgment test. Each version was designed to assess learners' understanding of the grammar points targeted in each specific cycle. The tests were administered at the end of each cycle to evaluate the effectiveness of the consciousness-raising activities implemented within a multimodal, emotion-focused learning environment designed for elderly learners (see Appendices C, D, and F).

Procedure

This study followed an action research framework, involving a dynamic cycle of planning, action, evaluation, and reflection, which enabled continuous improvement and adaptation. The researcher, who also served as the teacher, critically assessed and refined teaching strategies over three iterative cycles through ongoing reflection and adaptation to enhance the learning experience. During the planning stage, the teacher designed didactic units that incorporated multimodal and CRG-based activities, with particular attention to the learning needs and experiences of elderly learners. Each didactic unit consisted of five or six lessons, organized as summarized in Table 1 below:

Table 1. *Summary of the Three Units' Design*

Units and themes	Unit 1: The colors of emotions	Unit 2: Hidden talents and lifelong skills	Unit 3: Travel and culture
Duration	5 lessons (60 minutes each)	6 lessons (60 minutes each)	6 lessons (60 minutes each)
General objective	To encourage students to talk about their feelings and emotions when exposed to different situations using various forms of expression.	To guide learners to explore and express their talents and lifelong skills, fostering self-reflection and meaningful emotional connections.	To inspire students to explore global travel destinations and cultural traditions, and to build emotional awareness through reflecting on their experiences.
Main target skills	Listening and speaking	Listening and speaking	Listening and speaking
Linguistic features	Grammar: gerund phrases Vocabulary related to feelings and emotions	Grammar: can, be able to, be good at. Vocabulary related to artistic, physical, intellectual, and social talents	Grammar: past simple Vocabulary related to travel and culture.
Competencies	- Cognitive (critical thinking, visual interpretation) - Linguistic (gerunds, adjectives) - Social and emotional (collaboration, empathy, expressing feelings) - Teamwork and collaboration	- Communicative (discussing talents/abilities) - Linguistic (modals, related vocabulary) - Socio-emotional (confidence, empathy, valuing long-life learning and experiences) - Teamwork and collaboration	- Communication (discussion, presentations) - Cultural awareness (diversity, open-mindedness) - Linguistic competence (correct tenses) - Emotional intelligence (reflection) - Critical thinking and creativity - Teamwork and collaboration
Methodology	Inquiry-based, inductive, implicit grammar, multimodal	Inquiry-based, inductive, implicit grammar, multimodal	Inquiry-based, inductive, implicit grammar, multimodal

Resources and materials	Pictures, audio, tangible objects, and blindfolds	Kahoot, YouTube, photocopies, and body language	Brochures, videos, online games, photocopies, images
Class organization	Individual, pairs, groups, whole class	Individual, pairs, groups, whole class	Individual, pairs, groups, whole class
Teacher's Role	Facilitator, model, observer, feedback provider	Facilitator, model, encourager	Guide, facilitator, feedback provider
Adaptations	Scaffolded for A2–B1 range	Designed for mixed A2–B1 levels	Accessible for A2 with extensions for B1
Sample activities	- Picture analysis - Emotion vocabulary games - Music and emotion blindfold game - Emoji-based gerund expressions	- Video and discussion on talents - Kahoot on intelligences - Bingo game - Talent presentations	- Role-play interviews - Brochure analysis - Travel agent "hot seat" game - Video on Colombian culture
Next steps	More time needed for deeper structural practice	Keep extended lesson duration; reduce the number of grammar structures per cycle.	Maintain lesson count; balance cultural exploration and language structure focus

Source. Own creation

In the first unit, *"The colors of emotions,"* students completed five sixty-minute lessons focused on using gerund phrases to describe feelings and emotions. They participated in activities that encouraged them to express their feelings and emotions in different situations through visual, gestural, auditory, kinesthetic, and linguistic modes. In the second unit, *"Hidden talents & lifelong skills,"* students engaged in six sixty-minute lessons where they practiced using modals of ability (can, could, be able to, be good at) accurately in spoken language. This unit encouraged students to engage in meaningful conversations that helped them recognize and articulate their talents, skills, and abilities, as well as those of others, while further developing their linguistic competence. In the third unit, *"travel and culture,"* students exchanged experiences about travel destinations and cultural traditions around the world to obtain a deeper understanding and appreciation of diversity, fostering open-mindedness and inclusivity. They focused on using the past simple tense as the target grammar structure.

Across all three units, the learning experience implemented a CRG-based, multimodal, emotion-focused pedagogy that integrated diverse resources and communication modes to promote linguistic skills, emotional well-being, and self-accuracy among elderly learners. By embedding grammar instruction in meaningful, discovery-based contexts and incorporating emotion-focused reflective activities and collaborative group work, the approach fostered personal connections, empathy, and intercultural sensitivity, creating a dynamic, supportive environment where learners developed language competence, emotional awareness, and confidence in their abilities.

During the implementation stage, the teacher assumed a dual role as both facilitator and observer, delivering instructional content while carefully monitoring student engagement, comprehension, and emotional responses. After each lesson,

the teacher recorded observations and personal reflections in the reflective journal, which helped track student progress and identify strengths and areas for improvement. At the end of each cycle, the teacher administered an emotion survey (see Appendix B) to assess the emotional impact of the methodologies and activities implemented in the unit. Additionally, the teacher administered a grammar test (see Appendices C, D, and F) to evaluate the effectiveness of the CRG within a multimodal, emotion-focused pedagogy. The collected data was subsequently analyzed using statistical, content, and thematic analysis methods. This process of evaluation and reflection provided a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the didactic unit while highlighting necessary adjustments for the next cycle.

Findings

The following findings draw on data collected from reflective journal entries (17 entries, one per lesson), emotion surveys (three in total), and grammar tests (three in total) administered during the three cycles. These findings provided a foundation for understanding how CRG and multimodality within an emotion-focused learning environment influence language learning outcomes, emotional involvement, and self-efficacy among older adult learners.

Findings from the Reflective Journal

These findings are based on a thematic and content analysis of the journal entries, identifying key patterns in observed student behaviors, teacher involvement, and student reactions for each unit. Table 2 below presents a summary of the main observations recorded across the 17 entities of the journal used during the three instructional cycles. Table 2 illustrates the progression of classroom interactions and learning experiences over time, providing insight into students' emotional and linguistic growth, along with the teaching strategies used to foster and support that development.

Table 2. *Summary of the Main Observations documented in the Reflective Journal Entries*

Unit and Theme	Observed behaviors	Teacher's involvement	Students' reactions
Unit 1: The colors of emotions	- Initial nervousness, reluctance to speak - Some students dominated, others stayed silent - Gradual increase in participation and risk-taking - More laughter and relaxed body language - Active engagement in	- Balanced talking time and space - Approached mistakes as a natural part of learning - Shared personal experiences - Provided emotional and linguistic scaffolding	- Anxiety shifted to gratitude and enjoyment - Confidence steadily rose - Students explicitly noted motivation and comfort (<i>"You made me realize I</i>

	creative, multimodal tasks (music, images, emojis)	- Creative/multimodal lesson design	<i>can also speak English</i> ")
Unit 2: Hidden talents and lifelong skills	- Self-doubt or modesty about personal talents - Reliance on "can" for abilities - Increased engagement through peer/group activities (games, talent mapping) - Growing peer encouragement and support	- Modeled wider language for talents - Broadened definition of abilities - Extended practice time for structure variation - Encouraged positive feedback between peers	- Surprise and pride at discovering their own and others' skills - Grew more supportive of peers - Enjoyed group atmosphere and positive challenge
Unit 3: Travel and culture	- High, self-motivated participation from the start - Authentic exchanges of travel stories and opinions - Consistent use of learned grammar/vocab in real contexts - Energetic role-plays and respectful discussion - Humorous anecdotes and authentic group dialogue	- Facilitated real-life scenarios and cultural comparisons - Provided prompts for question formation and perspective sharing - Modeled cross-cultural respect - Targeted feedback only when needed	- Expressed excitement and independence - Sense of accomplishment in using English "for real" - Valued classmates' stories and input - Pride in their progress

Source. Own creation

Across all units, the integration of visual, auditory, gestural, linguistic, and spatial modes significantly increased both emotional and cognitive involvement among elderly learners. In Unit 1, during the activity *"What is this picture telling me?"*, students analyzed images and inferred emotions using gerund structures such as *"Seeing this picture makes me feel sad."* This visual-linguistic approach not only prompted language production but also encouraged personal reflection. Group work, such as *"Are we seeing the same?"*, allowed students to compare interpretations, reinforcing the idea that emotional responses are diverse and subjective. In another activity, *"Musical Heart Vibes,"* students listened to music blindfolded and described the emotions evoked, with one sharing, *"Listening to this melody makes me think of my childhood."* This aural mode elicited deep emotional responses and authentic language use. The use of emojis in *"The emotions bag"* activity further supported the connection between visual cues and linguistic expression. Throughout these lessons, students naturally used gestures, facial expressions, and body language to reinforce meaning, and spatial arrangements (e.g., group circles, audience-facing presentations) encouraged collaboration and participation.

Grammar instruction was consistently embedded in meaningful, contextualized input rather than delivered through explicit explanation. For example, in Unit 1, the teacher modeled gerund phrases in context *"Talking in front of a large audience makes me feel nervous"* and guided students to use similar structures when expressing emotions. While students often reverted to familiar forms like *"I feel..."*

or “*I am...*,” ongoing scaffolding encouraged them to expand their grammatical repertoire. In Unit 2, activities such as “*Eleven talents*” and “*Connecting skills with multiple Intelligences*” prompted students to use structures like “*I am good at...*,” “*I can...*,” and “*I am able to...*,” with the teacher offering varied examples to promote flexibility in language use. Grammar tests at the end of each unit indicated that most students could recognize and apply the target structures, with scores ranging from 74% to 81%. Only a few students requested explicit grammar explanations, suggesting that the implicit, consciousness-raising approach was generally effective.

The emotion-focused approach encouraged learners to reflect on their feelings, share personal stories, and connect classroom content to their identities. In early lessons, some students expressed nervousness and discomfort, particularly when speaking in front of peers. The teacher addressed this by normalizing mistakes and emphasizing the value of everyone’s contributions, which helped create a supportive atmosphere. In Unit 2, several students initially believed they had no special talents, viewing abilities as exclusive to “special people.” However, after watching a video and engaging in discussion, they began to recognize and appreciate everyday skills, stating, “*We all have something unique and special to share.*” At the end of Unit 1, a student remarked, “*You made me realize I can also speak English.*” Such reflections underscore the positive impact of emotional safety and encouragement on communicative participation and self-confidence.

Group and pair activities played a crucial role in building camaraderie and regulating participation. As lessons progressed, students became more proactive in managing turn-taking and supporting quieter peers. For example, by the end of Unit 3, the teacher noted that almost all students wanted to participate, with many focusing more on communication than on the fear of making mistakes. Activities that required group reflection or comparison of perspectives (e.g., “*Are we seeing the same?*” and “*Comparing responses*”) nurtured mutual respect and empathy. The teacher’s efforts to balance talking time and provide individualized support ensured that all voices were heard.

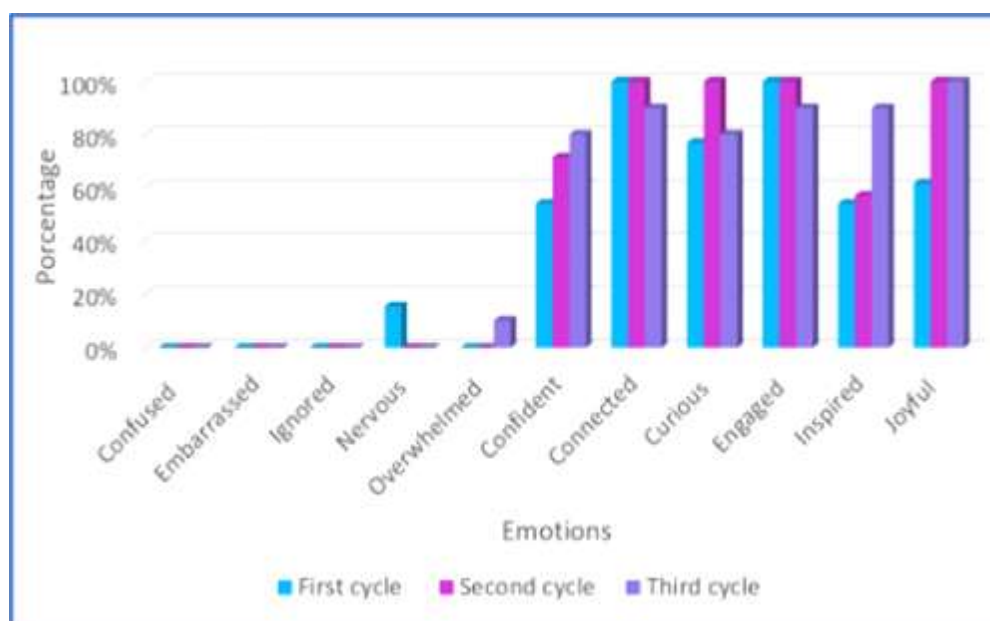
The data consistently indicated that as students became more emotionally engaged, their linguistic confidence and communicative competence grew in parallel. By the second lesson of Unit 2, students appeared more relaxed, laughed more, and even the shyest participants became increasingly willing to contribute. At the end of each unit, students expressed satisfaction and gratitude, describing the activities as “*motivational*” and the classroom environment as “*comfortable enough to participate.*” These outcomes suggest that fostering emotional well-being and self-appreciation directly supports language development and risk-taking in communication.

Findings from the Emotion Surveys

The following findings are based on data collected from the three emotion surveys administered at the end of each instructional cycle. Together, Figure 1 and Table 3 below offer both quantitative and qualitative insights into how students’ emotional experiences evolved throughout the learning process. Figure 1 shows the emotional responses reported by students in the multiple-choice section of the three surveys conducted at the end of each instructional cycle. It represents the percentage

of students who identified with each emotion during their learning experience, ranging from negative emotions such as nervousness and confusion to positive ones like confidence, engagement, and joy. The results reflect students' growing sense of confidence, connection, and enjoyment as they become more comfortable and engaged in the learning process.

Figure 1. *Trajectory of Emotions across the Three Cycles based on the Multiple-choice Section*



Source. Own creation

Positive emotions grew consistently across the cycles. All participants (100%) reported connection in cycles 1 and 2, with a slight decrease to 80% in cycle 3. Involvement followed a similar trend—100% in cycles 1 and 2, and 90% in cycle 3. Curiosity started at 76.9% in cycle 1, rose to 100% in cycle 2, then dipped slightly to 80% in cycle 3. Joy increased from 61.5% in cycle 1 to 100% in cycles 2 and 3. Confidence improved steadily: 54% in cycle 1, 71.4% in cycle 2, and 90% in cycle 3. Inspiration also rose, moving from 54% in cycle 1 to 57% in cycle 2, and reaching 90% by cycle 3. Learners reported minimal negative emotions. Nervousness appeared in 15.3% of learners in cycle 1, and disappeared by cycles 2 and 3. Overwhelm did not appear in cycles 1 or 2 but affected 10% of learners in cycle 3. Learners did not report confusion, embarrassment, or feeling ignored during any cycle.

The increase in confidence and inspiration indicates that learners increasingly believed in their ability to learn and use English meaningfully. The decrease in nervousness and the complete absence of confusion, embarrassment, and feeling ignored highlight the psychological safety that the classroom provided. The high levels of connection, involvement, and joy suggest that learners felt welcomed, valued, and interested throughout the course. Learners' reports of overwhelm in cycle 3, a 10% may stem from the cognitive and emotional demands of the course, personal life circumstances, or the emotional difficulty of ending a rewarding group

experience. The slight decreases in connection, curiosity, and involvement during this final cycle may also reflect emotional fatigue or a reduced sense of novelty, common patterns in the later stages of a program.

Table 3 below presents a thematic and content analysis of students' reflective comments, categorized according to six key emotions identified throughout the course: confidence, connection, curiosity, engagement, inspiration, and joy. The analysis highlights the emotional state of students, revealing how the classroom environment, teacher practices, and instructional design contributed not only to language development but also to emotional growth. Each category captures a distinct aspect of the learners' journey, offering insight into how emotions shaped their motivation, participation, and overall satisfaction with the course.

Table 3. *Trajectory of Emotions across the Three Cycles based on the Comments Section*

Emotion	Representative Comments	Key themes identified
Confidence	- <i>"I believe speaking English is possible."</i> - <i>"It increased my self-confidence..."</i> - <i>"I have learned a lot and felt very good."</i> - <i>"It helped reinforce grammatical structures and learn new ones."</i> - <i>"This is a good way to improve and expand my skills and vocabulary..."</i>	Self-efficacy, linguistic progress, empowerment
Connection	- <i>"The teacher encouraged everyone's participation, balancing speaking time."</i> - <i>"Conversations with our classmates in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere."</i> - <i>"I gained a deeper understanding of how people around me feel."</i>	Classroom community, peer support, emotional connection
Curiosity	- <i>"Very interesting for expanding communication and making progress."</i> - <i>"It made me think more about how I express myself."</i> - <i>"It could help me learn better."</i> - <i>"A good methodology that motivates learning..."</i>	Discovery, reflective thinking, language exploration
Engagement	- <i>"The activities have been very interesting."</i> - <i>"The class is very interesting and practical."</i> - <i>"A very interesting and engaging class."</i> - <i>"The classes were very varied and fun..."</i> - <i>"I like having the opportunity to practice speaking."</i> - <i>"The teacher made the classes very enjoyable and participative."</i>	Task involvement, sustained interest, and active learning
Inspiration	- <i>"A very good and meaningful experience."</i> - <i>"I feel lucky to have met such a great person."</i> - <i>"The teacher is very dynamic."</i> - <i>"I am very happy with this teacher."</i> - <i>"It has been a pleasure to attend your classes."</i> - <i>"It encouraged me to make a greater effort to understand and speak."</i>	Motivational climate, teacher influence, and transformative learning

Joy	- <i>"The teacher creates a joyful and pleasant environment."</i> - <i>"I enjoy English class..."</i> - <i>"The classes were very fun, keeping our attention."</i> - <i>"A joyful and pleasant environment."</i> - <i>"It has been a pleasure to attend your classes."</i> - <i>"I have learned a lot and felt very good."</i>	Positive affect, fun learning, and emotional satisfaction
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Source. Own creation

Table 3 shows that students expressed a strong sense of confidence, noting improvements in their language skills and a reinforced belief in their ability to succeed. This reflects increased self-efficacy, noticeable linguistic progress, and feelings of empowerment. The environment encouraged learners to feel capable and motivated to continue developing their English proficiency. The theme of connection emerged through comments about inclusive teaching practices and supportive peer interactions. Students valued the balanced participation encouraged by the teacher and the relaxed, friendly atmosphere, which fostered a sense of community and emotional bonds within the classroom. This social support network contributed to emotional security and facilitated more open communication.

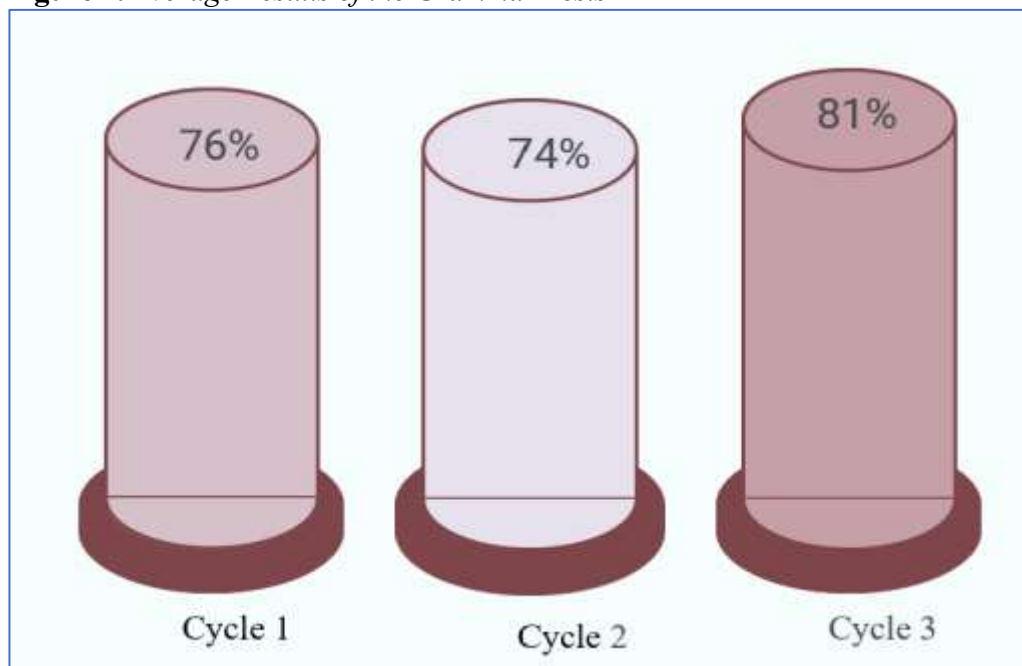
Curiosity was another prominent emotion, as students found the activities interesting and thought-provoking, leading them to reflect on their language use and explore new ways of expressing themselves. This curiosity promoted discovery and metacognitive engagement, essential for deep and lasting language learning. The class environment was described as highly engaging, with varied and enjoyable activities that maintained student interest and encouraged active participation. This sustained engagement highlights the effectiveness of practical, student-centered tasks that involve learners directly in the learning process. Students also felt inspired by the teaching style, describing the teacher as dynamic and motivating. This inspiration created a positive motivational climate that encouraged learners to put forth greater effort, fostering transformative learning experiences that extended beyond mere language acquisition. Finally, the feedback reveals a strong sense of joy associated with the classes. Students appreciated the fun, pleasant atmosphere, which not only made learning enjoyable but also contributed to emotional satisfaction. Such a joyful environment supports effective learning by reducing anxiety and enhancing retention.

Overall, the findings based on the emotional surveys suggest that integrating CRG with multimodal and emotion-focused strategies promotes not only language development but also emotional well-being. For elderly learners, emotional outcomes—such as increased confidence, reduced anxiety, and a strong sense of joy and connection—matter as much as cognitive gains. By fostering an inclusive and emotionally rich classroom environment, the teacher supported both the affective and linguistic development of learners, making the learning experience both effective and meaningful.

Findings from the Grammar Tests

The teacher designed three grammar tests to evaluate the effectiveness of CRG integrated with multimodal and emotion-focused strategies for elderly learners. Thus, the findings were drawn from the three grammar test scores, administered at the end of each unit within its respective cycle. Figure 2 below illustrates the development of grammatical competence among elderly learners across three instructional cycles.

Figure 2. *Average Results of the Grammar Tests*



Source. Own creation

In cycle 1, the teacher implemented five lessons focused on a single grammar structure, resulting in a 76% success rate among learners. Although this outcome was generally positive, the results indicated areas for improvement. To address these issues, the teacher first analyzed potential factors that may have limited success. One identified element was the limited exposure to and practice with the target language. Based on this analysis, the teacher decided to add a lesson in the next cycle. Nevertheless, when designing the didactic unit for cycle 2, the teacher introduced various target grammar structures, unlike in the first cycle.

The grammar test administered at the end of cycle 2 did not yield the anticipated improvement; instead, the success rate decreased by 2% compared to the first cycle. After analyzing and reflecting on the possible causes of this decline, the teacher concluded that the increased grammatical content may have caused cognitive overload for some elderly learners, resulting in a slight drop in performance. In response to this outcome, the teacher made a key adjustment in cycle 3 by returning to a single grammar structure while maintaining the number of lessons at six. This

modification led to a significant improvement in learners' performance, with the success rate rising to 81%.

The data collected across the three instructional cycles reveal a clear and significant pattern in the relationship between instructional design and learner performance in grammar acquisition among older adults. The findings underscore the importance of focused, cognitively manageable instruction combined with sufficient exposure and practice time. In cycle 1, the teacher implemented a targeted approach by concentrating on a single grammar structure over five lessons. This design resulted in a success rate of 76%, indicating that learners responded positively to concentrated instruction. However, despite this relatively strong outcome, the teacher recognized that the limited time for repeated exposure and practice may have hindered learners' ability to fully internalize the target structure. This insight paved the way for further pedagogical refinement.

In cycle 2, the instructional time was extended to six lessons to provide students with additional practice. However, the teacher concurrently introduced multiple grammar structures within the same cycle. While the intention was to enhance grammatical knowledge, the increased cognitive demands may have overwhelmed the learners. As a result, the average performance declined slightly to 74%, which likely indicates cognitive overload. This is particularly relevant for older adults, who often require more time and mental resources to process and retain new linguistic information.

Drawing on insights from previous cycles, cycle 3 maintained the extended six-lesson format while returning to a single grammar structure. This last adjustment resulted in the highest performance outcome, with an average success rate of 81%. The results underscore the importance of balancing instructional time with depth of focus, enabling learners to engage more meaningfully with the material without the distraction or confusion of competing grammatical content.

Despite the significant improvement observed in the third cycle, there remain areas for enhancement that should be addressed in future studies. For instance, the implementation of explicit grammar instruction for specific students and the exploration of alternative methodological strategies in further investigation. Additionally, an important aspect to consider is the evaluation of grammar structures within communicative skills, such as listening, speaking, and writing, in contextualized settings. This includes recording and monitoring learners' use of grammar structures in natural speech to assess their integration into real-life language use.

Discussion

In accordance with the views of Nilsson et al. (2021) and Ware et al. (2021), the findings of this study support the notion that elderly learners can successfully learn new languages by leveraging neuroplasticity, their accumulated life experiences, and metacognitive skills. The observed improvements in communicative competence and learner confidence, as evidenced by journal reflections and emotional surveys, support the arguments made by Singleton and Ryan (2004) and Klimova and de Paula Nascimento e Silva (2024). They assert that elderly learners benefit from

leveraging their life experiences, employing metacognitive strategies, and engaging personally in the language learning process.

Participants' reflections on their growing willingness to speak and a newfound sense of capability reflect psychological assertions that self-efficacy and emotional safety play critical roles in late-life language learning (Acosta 2024; Baran Łucarz and Słowik-Krogulec 2023). Throughout the course, students' transitions from nervousness to confidence and joy align with Geng and Jin's (2023) observation that personal rewards, including enjoyment and social connection, gradually pressures during sustained language engagement.

While the literature frequently emphasizes the importance of explicit grammar instruction for older adults (Ellis 2021; VanPatten and Benati 2015), the findings suggest that grammar presented in meaningful, emotionally engaging, and multimodal contexts can lead to significant improvements, even when explicit rule explanations are minimal. The consistent increase in grammar test scores (from 76% to 81%), coupled with a low demand for direct explanations, indicates that contextualized CRG can enhance grammatical accuracy.

The use of multimodal instructional strategies was essential for promoting emotional engagement. Incorporating images, music, emojis, gestures, and spatial organization facilitated comprehension and authentic use of language, and Van Leeuwen's (2021) assertion that meaning construction relies on multiple, integrated semiotic modes. In agreement with Eisenmann and Summer (2020), classroom activities such as "Musical Heart Vibes" and "The Emotions Bag" were found to elicit deep emotional profound, and genuine communicative intent, enhancing intent, thereby engagement and inclusivity.

Peer interaction, self-expression, and empathy thrived in this multimodal, learner-centered environment, as advocated by Guo (2023) and Belabbas (2024). Survey and journal data consistently indicated an increase in positive emotions, particularly confidence, connection, and joy, alongside a concurrent decline in nervousness. This finding echoes Imai's (2010) theory that constructively addressing initial negative emotions can foster long-term engagement and learning.

Learners' affective responses closely aligned with dimensions emphasized in recent studies, such as engagement, emotional safety, and self-efficacy (Geng and Jin 2023; Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Słowik-Krogulec 2024). Additionally, expressions of pride, joy, and gratitude further support Li and Dewaele's (2020) assertion that emotional factors are central to language development in older adulthood.

The evident presence of peer support, mutual respect, and collaborative reflection fostered by group tasks enhanced both engagement and learners' willingness to communicate. These findings align with sociocultural theories (Méndez and Fabela 2014; Larsen-Freeman 2003; Lantolf and Thorne 2006), which view language learning as an inherently social, collaborative, and emotionally mediated process.

Conclusions

This study examined the impact of integrating CRG-based activities, multimodal resources, and an emotion-focused learning environment on language development, emotional involvement, and self-efficacy among elderly English learners. The findings indicate that this combined pedagogical approach can significantly enhance both linguistic competence and emotional well-being in older adult learners. Participants reported increased confidence, engagement, and motivation, and demonstrated measurable improvements in grammatical accuracy and communicative ability. The supportive, multimodal classroom environment—characterized by empathy, collaboration, and meaningful, context-rich tasks—fostered a sense of connection and joy while reducing anxiety and self-doubt. These outcomes suggest that addressing both cognitive and affective dimensions of learning is particularly beneficial for elderly populations, who often prioritize social interaction, intellectual stimulation, and personal growth as key motivators for language study.

Nevertheless, while the action research design provides rich, context-specific insights, it is susceptible to potential researcher bias and exhibits limited methodological rigor compared to traditional experimental approaches. The absence of a control group, a restricted participant pool, and a brief implementation period further constrain the extent to which the findings can be generalized or sustained over time. These limitations underscore critical directions for future inquiry, including the necessity for longitudinal studies to assess the enduring impact of emotion-focused and multimodal instruction on language retention and learner well-being. Comparative research involving diverse populations and instructional models would enhance the understanding of the generalizability of these findings and identify age-specific challenges and strengths. Furthermore, as digital and hybrid learning environments become increasingly prevalent, further investigation into the role of technology in facilitating emotion-centered, multimodal learning is essential. Future studies should explore the influence of teacher-related factors, such as emotional intelligence and pedagogical adaptability, on classroom dynamics and learner outcomes.

These limitations underscore significant opportunities for future research. Longitudinal studies are essential to assess the long-term effects of emotion-focused and multimodal instruction on language retention and learner well-being. Comparative research involving diverse populations and instructional models would enhance our understanding of the generalizability of these findings and help identify age-specific challenges and strengths. Additionally, as digital and hybrid learning environments become increasingly prevalent, it is crucial to investigate the role of technology in facilitating emotion-centered, multimodal learning. Future studies should also explore the impact of teacher-related factors, such as emotional intelligence and pedagogical adaptability, on classroom dynamics and learner outcomes. By addressing these limitations and pursuing these research directions, the field can cultivate a more comprehensive understanding of how to establish inclusive, effective, and emotionally supportive language learning environments for elderly learners and other diverse groups.

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Appendix A. Reflective Journal used in the 17 Lessons

Reflective journal

 Date: _____
  Place: _____
 Time: _____
  Participants: _____
 Lesson Topic: _____
 Objective: _____
 Main Activities:



Learners' Reaction and Engagement:



Emotional Responses:



Multimodal Interactions:

 Grammar Role:

 Insights and Next Stage Adjustments:

Appendix B. *Emotions Survey used in Units 1, 2, and 3*

Date: _____ **Place:** _____ **Unit:** _____

La siguiente encuesta es completamente anónima y confidencial. Su único propósito es recopilar datos relevantes para el alcance del proyecto relacionado con la Enseñanza y Aprendizaje del Idioma Inglés, manteniendo un enfoque exclusivamente académico.

Check (✓) the adjective(s) that best describe how you felt during the class. You can choose more than one

☐  Confused	☐  Overwhelmed	☐  Engaged
☐  Embarrassed	☐  Confident	☐  Inspired
☐  ignored	☐  Connected	☐  Joyful
☐  Nervous	☐  Curious	

Comments: _____

Appendix C. Grammar test administered in Unit 1

Date: _____

Place: _____

Circle the correct sentence.**1.**

- a) Live in a new country can be both exciting and challenging.
- b) Living in a new country can be both exciting and challenging.
- c) Lived in a new country can be both exciting and challenging.

2.

- a) Make mistakes is a natural part of learning.
- b) Made mistakes is a natural part of learning.
- c) Making mistakes is a natural part of learning.

3.

- a) Work for long hours without breaks can lead to exhaustion.
- b) Working for long hours without breaks can lead to exhaustion.
- c) To work for long hours without breaks can lead to exhaustion.

4.

- a) Starting new hobbies can be a great way to reduce stress.
- b) Start new hobbies can be a great way to reduce stress.
- c) Started new hobbies can be a great way to reduce stress.

5

- a) Learn a second language takes time and dedication.
- b) Learning a second language takes time and dedication.
- c) Learned a second language takes time and dedication.

6.

- a) Receive compliments from her teacher made Emma feel proud.
- b) Receiving compliments from her teacher made Emma feel proud.
- c) Received compliments from her teacher made Emma feel proud.

7.

- a) Win the championship left the whole team delighted.
- b) Winning the championship left the whole team delighted.
- c) Won the championship, left the whole team delighted.

8

- a) Been in a difficult situation can make people feel frustrated.
- b) Be in a difficult situation can make people feel frustrated.
- Ac) Being in a difficult situation can make people feel frustrated.

9.

- a) Visit her childhood home made Sarah feel melancholy.
- b) Visited her childhood home made Sarah feel melancholy.
- Ac) Visiting her childhood home made Sarah feel melancholy.

10.

- a) Walk without an umbrella in the rain left them annoyed.
- b) Walking without an umbrella in the rain left them annoyed.
- c) Walked without an umbrella in the rain left them annoyed.

Appendix D. Grammar Test administered in Unit 2

Date: _____ Place: _____

The following test is entirely anonymous and confidential. Its sole purpose is to gather data relevant to the project's scope in English Language Teaching and Learning, with an exclusively academic focus.

(La siguiente prueba es completamente anónima y confidencial. Su único propósito es recopilar datos relevantes para el alcance del proyecto relacionado con la Enseñanza y Aprendizaje del Idioma Inglés, manteniendo un enfoque exclusivamente académico)

In front of each sentence, write  if it is correct and  if it is incorrect.

1. I am able painting beautiful landscapes with watercolors. _____
2. I am able dance ballet. _____
3. I am able to drive a car. _____
4. I am able can speak three languages fluently. _____
5. I am able to cook different type of food. _____
6. I am able to climb high mountains. _____
7. I am able to speak three languages fluently. _____
8. I am able to speak in front a huge public. _____
9. I am not good at cook Italian food. _____
10. I am good at swim long distances. _____
11. I am good at writing creative stories. _____
12. I can draw beautiful landscapes with watercolor. _____
13. I can sing and play the piano at the same time. _____
14. I can swim very well because I practiced a lot. _____
15. I am able to paint. _____
16. I am able to solve difficult math equations without a calculator. _____
17. I am good at learning new languages quickly. _____
18. I am good at playing the piano and composing music. _____
19. I am good at solving complex math problems. _____
20. I am good at to play the violin. _____

Appendix F. Grammar Test administered in Unit 3

Date: _____

Place: _____

Circle the correct answer

1. What did you do when you were in Paris?

- a) I visit the Eiffel Tower.
- b) I visited the Eiffel Tower.
- c) I am visiting the Eiffel Tower.

2. When did you visit the Great Wall of China?

- a) I visited the Great Wall last year.
- b) I visit the Great Wall last year.
- c) I visitted the Great Wall last year.

3. Who did you travel with to Japan?

- a) I travel with my sister.
- b) I traveled with my sister.
- c) I didn't travel with my sister.

4. How did you get to the beach in Portugal?

- a) I got there by train
- b) I went there by train
- c) I did got there by train

5. Where did you go for your last vacation?

- a) I went to Italy last summer.
- b) I go to Italy last summer.
- c) I am going to Italy next summer.

6. Why did you choose Brazil for your vacation?

- a) I chose Brazil because of its Carnival of Rio de Janeiro
- b) I choose Brazil because of its Carnival of Rio de Janeiro
- c) I choosed Brazil because of its Carnival of Rio de Janeiro

7. Did you try any local food during your trip to Mexico?

- a) Yes, I ate tacos and loved them!
- b) Yes, I eat tacos and loved them!
- c) Yes, I am eating tacos and loved them!

8. Did anything surprising or funny thing happen during your trip to Australia?

- a) A kangaroo jumped into our car!
- b) A kangaroo jumps into our car!
- c) A kangaroo is jumping into our car!

9. What was the most interesting place you visited in New York?

- a) I visited the Statue of Liberty.
- b) I visit Statue the of Liberty.
- c) I wasn't in the Statue of Liberty.

10. What did you take with you on your trip to the Japan?

- a) I take just my passport and my wallet.
- b) I took just my passport and my wallet.
- c) I taken just my passport and my wallet.