



REVISTA
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KRONOS-The Language Teaching Journal, en su nueva temporada 2022, es una revista científica del Instituto Académico de Idiomas de la Universidad Central del Ecuador de frecuencia bianual, que publica en los meses de febrero y agosto 2023. Su objetivo es la divulgación científica, cuyos campos de investigación se concentran, pero no se limitan, a la búsqueda de metodologías alternativas y novedosas en los procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje de lenguas, así como en la investigación y crítica del corpus teórico y práctico alrededor de la pedagogía, didáctica, tecnología y cultura. Kronos está dirigida a investigadores, docentes, estudiantes, profesionales, y público interesado en el quehacer educativo.

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Una vez más, nos complace presentarles una nueva edición de la revista *Kronos* «The Language Teaching Journal», un espacio dedicado a la exploración y difusión del conocimiento a través de la investigación. En esta ocasión, nos llena de entusiasmo la diversidad de perspectivas y descubrimientos que ofrece el volumen cuatro, versión número dos, misma que cuenta con ocho artículos académicos, en donde cada página está impregnada con la pasión y el rigor intelectual de aquellos que buscan comprender, cuestionar y mejorar nuestro mundo a través del conocimiento.

Partiendo de esta premisa, en el primer artículo titulado «The effect of the PQ4R strategy on EFL learners' reading comprehension at a middle high school in Cuenca, Ecuador», William Chuquiguanga nos revela el impacto que tiene la estrategia de lectura PQ4R en las habilidades de comprensión de lectura de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) de décimo grado. El artículo explora cómo la aplicación de esta técnica no solo incidió de manera significativa en la mejora de la habilidad de lectura del grupo control, sino también en su comprensión general del contenido.

En el segundo artículo titulado «Role-play as a didactic strategy enhancing the speaking skills, in high-school students», las autoras, Alisson Cruz y Mónica Vaca, proponen el juego de roles como estrategia didáctica para mejorar las habilidades orales en estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera en nivel secundario en Bahía de Caráquez. Los resultados destacan que el juego de roles permite a los estudiantes explorar situaciones auténticas, enfocarse en la comunicación en lugar de la gramática y reducir el estrés. Además, se sugiere que los maestros pueden crear un entorno de apoyo para que los estudiantes practiquen el habla, evalúen sus habilidades orales y fomenten la diversidad lingüística y la sensibilidad cultural. En conclusión, los profesores de inglés en Bahía de Caráquez emplean el juego de roles como una estrategia didáctica efectiva para mejorar las habilidades orales de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera en secundaria.

El tercer artículo, titulado «The influence of comics in learning english language during the post-pandemic period», aborda los cambios en los hábitos de aprendizaje de estudiantes ecuatorianos después de la pandemia. Los investigadores, Erika Tenezaca, Paula Cisneros, Mateo Solórzano, Gabriela Escobar y Nicolás Barriga, destacan la utilidad de las tiras cómicas en la enseñanza de idiomas. El estudio se llevó a cabo en una escuela privada en una de las principales ciudades de Ecuador, con la participación de 50 estudiantes. Los resultados señalan la efectividad de los cómics en la enseñanza de vocabulario y gramática, así como en la introducción de conceptos como modales y pronombres. Además, demuestran la transformación de la voz directa a indirecta en los diálogos.

Verónica Herrera, Jéssica Ochoa, Carmen Morales y Axel Calle, autores del cuarto artículo titulado «Pilot testing of three english texts at the National University of Education», llevaron a cabo una comparación entre tres textos de inglés (Touchstone, English File y Headway) en el contexto de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL). La investigación, un estudio cuasiexperimental, recopiló datos cuantitativos y cualitativos mediante pruebas previas y posteriores a los estudiantes, encuestas y listas de verificación para los profesores. Los resultados indicaron que English File fue la opción más efectiva, ya que los estudiantes demostraron un mejor aprendizaje y aumento en sus conocimientos de inglés en comparación con los otros dos libros de texto. Además, los profesores coincidieron en que English File resultó más útil debido a la variedad de recursos que reducen el tiempo de planificación.

Carlos Díaz, autor del quinto artículo titulado «Morphological awareness for the development of the lexical competence of the english language», aborda las limitaciones en el dominio del vocabulario de estudiantes de inglés como segunda lengua. Su investigación examina la relación entre la conciencia morfológica y la competencia léxica mediante enfoques socioeducativos y bibliográficos. La revisión, basada en análisis de bases de datos y filtros manuales, revela que la conciencia morfológica impacta significativamente en la mejora de la competencia léxica en inglés, abordando aspectos de amplitud, profundidad y organización del vocabulario. La comprensión de formas flexivas, derivativas y compuestas contribuye al reconocimiento y comprensión de palabras, facilitando su clasificación y orden. Los resultados indican que los educadores pueden aplicar técnicas centradas en la inflexión, derivación y composición léxica para elevar la competencia léxica de los estudiantes y mejorar su dominio del inglés, aprovechando así la conciencia morfológica.

En el sexto artículo, el investigador Boris Vásconez, en su estudio titulado «Classroom management influence on english acquisition in EFL A2 students», examina el impacto de una nueva metodología de gestión académica en la adquisición del nivel de inglés A2 en el entorno educativo. La investigación se fundamenta en un enfoque constructivista y utiliza la metodología Suggestopedia, centrándose específicamente en estudiantes que no logran alcanzar la certificación A2 Key (KET). El estudio sigue un diseño cuasiexperimental con dos grupos, experimental y de control, seleccionados de manera aleatoria. Los resultados indican la necesidad de incorporar un modelo de gestión de aula que contemple elementos como motivación, gestión del tiempo y diseño físico para potenciar el rendimiento de los estudiantes.

En el séptimo artículo, «Action research: promoting speaking in EFL college students», Evelyn Almeida y Andrea Rosero lideran un proyecto de investigación de acción para mejorar la participación y fluidez en la expresión oral en inglés. Implementaron cuatro estrategias: trabajo grupal colaborativo, estrategia de entrada, actividades interactivas y retroalimentación correctiva. Los resultados indican un aumento en la confianza y fluidez de los estudiantes al expresar opiniones y compartir sentimientos, con una reducción de errores de pronunciación en temas específicos durante el curso de siete semanas.

Finalmente, el octavo artículo titulado «The rise of AI in language education: a game changer for teaching english as a foreign language in Ecuador», Jorge Quijano examina el impacto de la inteligencia artificial (IA), específicamente ChatGPT, en la enseñanza de inglés como lengua extranjera en Ecuador. Destaca la importancia del pensamiento crítico y de orden superior en el aprendizaje de idiomas, explorando tanto los beneficios como las limitaciones de la IA en el aula, con énfasis en conceptos técnicos de la IA generativa. Quijano resalta la necesidad de profesores capacitados para adaptarse a la tecnología y brindar experiencias de aprendizaje significativas. El artículo plantea interrogantes sobre el futuro de la educación en un entorno impulsado por la IA, destacando el potencial de la IA para mejorar la enseñanza y el aprendizaje. Aunque la IA puede hacer que la enseñanza sea más eficiente, se enfatiza que los profesores siguen siendo indispensables. Aunque la IA en la educación lingüística está en sus primeras etapas en Ecuador, se están desarrollando iniciativas prometedoras con el potencial de mejorar la calidad educativa.

Once again we are pleased to present a new edition of *Kronos* («The Language Teaching Journal»), a place dedicated to the exploration and sharing of knowledge through research. On this opportunity, we are excited by the diversity of perspectives and discoveries offered in volume four, version two, which includes eight academic articles, where each page is marked with the passion and intellectual rigor of those who seek to understand, question, and improve our world through knowledge.

Considering the previous, the first article titled «The Effect of the PQ4R Strategy on EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension at a Middle High School in Cuenca, Ecuador», William Chuquiguanga shows the impact of the PQ4R strategy on the reading comprehension skills of tenth graders in English as a foreign language learners (EFL). The article explores how the application of this technique not only had a significant impact on the improvement of the reading skills of the control group but also their overall comprehension of the content.

In the second article titled «Role-play as a Didactic Strategy Enhancing the Speaking Skills, in High-School Students» the authors Alisson Cruz and Mónica Vaca present role-play as a didactic strategy to improve speaking skills in secondary-level ESL students in Bahía de Caráquez. The results highlight that role-playing allows students to explore authentic situations, focus on communication instead of grammar, and reduce stress. In addition, it is recommended that teachers create a supportive environment for students to practice speaking, assess their oral skills, and foster linguistic diversity and cultural sensitivity. In conclusion, English teachers in Bahía de Caráquez employ role-playing as an effective teaching strategy to improve secondary ESL students' speaking skills.

The third article, called «The Influence of Comics in Learning English Language During the Post-Pandemic Period», addresses changes in the learning habits of Ecuadorian students after the pandemic. The researchers, Erika Tenezaca, Paula Cisneros, Mateo Solorzano, Gabriela Escobar, And Nicolás Barriga, highlight the value of comic strips in language teaching. The study was carried out in a private school in one of the main cities of Ecuador, with the participation of 50 students. The results point to the effectiveness of comics in teaching vocabulary and grammar, as well as in introducing concepts such as manners and pronouns. Moreover, they demonstrate the transformation from direct to indirect voice in dialogues.

Verónica Herrera, Jessica Ochoa, Carmen Morales, and Axel Calle, authors of the fourth article titled «Pilot Testing of Three English Texts at The National University of Education», conducted a comparison of three English texts (Touchstone, English File, and Headway) in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The research, a quasi-experimental study, collected quantitative and qualitative data through student pre and post-tests, surveys, and teacher checklists. The results showed that English File was the most effective option, with students demonstrating better learning and increased English proficiency compared to the other two textbooks. In addition, teachers agreed that English File was more useful because of the variety of resources that reduce planning time.

Carlos Díaz, the author of the fifth article titled «Morphological Awareness for the Development of the Lexical Competence of the English Language», addresses the limitations in the vocabulary proficiency of English as second language learners. Their research explores the relationship between morphological awareness and lexical competence through socio-educational and bibliographic approaches. The review, based on database analysis and manual filters, reveals that morphological awareness impacts significantly improving lexical competence in English addressing aspects of vocabulary range, depth, and

organization. Understanding inflectional, derivational, and compound forms contributes to word recognition and comprehension, facilitating their categorization and ordering. The results show that educators can apply techniques focused on inflection, derivation, and lexical compounding to raise students' lexical competence and improve their English proficiency, thereby taking advantage of morphological awareness.

In the sixth article, the researcher Boris Vásquez, in his study entitled «Classroom Management Influence on English Acquisition in EFL A2 Students», examines the impact of a new academic management methodology on the acquisition of A2-level English in the educational environment. The research is based on a constructivist approach and uses the Suggestopedia methodology, focusing specifically on students who failed to achieve A2 Key (KET). The study follows a quasi-experimental design with two randomly selected groups, the experimental and the control one. The results show the need to include a classroom management model that considers elements such as motivation, time management, and physical design to enhance students' performance.

In the seventh article, «Action Research: Promoting Speaking in EFL College Students», Evelyn Almeida and Andrea Rosero lead an action research project to improve participation and fluency in English speaking. They applied four strategies: collaborative group work, lead-in strategy, interactive activities, and corrective feedback. Results show an increase in students' confidence and fluency in expressing opinions and sharing feelings, with a decrease in pronunciation errors on specific topics during the seven-week course.

Finally, in the eighth article called «The Rise of AI in Language Education: A Game Changer for Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Ecuador», Jorge Quijano considers the impact of artificial intelligence (AI), specifically ChatGPT, on the teaching of English as a foreign language in Ecuador. He highlights the importance of critical and higher-order thinking in language learning, exploring both the benefits and limitations of AI in the classroom, with an emphasis on technical concepts of generative AI. Quijano emphasizes the need for skilled teachers to adapt to the technology and provide meaningful learning experiences. The article raises questions about the future of education in an AI-driven environment, highlighting the potential of AI to improve teaching and learning. While AI can make teaching more efficient, it is emphasized that teachers remain essential. Although AI in language education is in its early stages in Ecuador, promising initiatives are being developed with the potential to improve quality education.



REVISTA KRONOS

The effect of the PQ4R strategy on EFL learners' reading comprehension at a middle high school in Cuenca, Ecuador

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ABSTRACT This research paper aims to investigate the impact of the PQ4R reading strategy on the reading comprehension abilities of tenth-grade EFL students. The study involved thirty-two middle high school students and used a quantitative experimental approach with a pre-experimental design that involved a one-group pre-test-post-test design. The students were administered a Cambridge A2 reading test as a pretest and post-test. A pretest was conducted before administering the PQ4R reading strategy, and a post-test was conducted after the intervention to evaluate the strategy's effectiveness and measure the learners' progress. The results were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The pretest results showed a low English reading performance among the participants, but after the intervention, the post-test results revealed a significant improvement in their reading skills. The t-test for paired samples showed a significant difference between the mean scores of the pretest and post-test. Cohen's d effect size value indicated a large effect of the PQ4R strategy on learners' reading comprehension. These findings demonstrate the potential benefits of incorporating practical language teaching methods, such as the PQ4R strategy, into EFL classes to enhance language acquisition and comprehension in a foreign language context.

KEY WORDS English learning, PQ4R reading strategy, students' reading comprehension.

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El efecto de la estrategia PQ4R en la comprensión lectora de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera en una escuela secundaria en Cuenca, Ecuador

RESUMEN Este trabajo de investigación tiene como objetivo establecer el impacto de la estrategia de lectura PQ4R en las habilidades de comprensión de lectura de los estudiantes de EFL de décimo grado. El estudio involucró a treinta y dos estudiantes de secundaria y utilizó un enfoque experimental cuantitativo con un diseño preexperimental que involucró un diseño de prueba previa y posterior de un grupo. A los estudiantes se les administró una prueba de lectura Cambridge A2 como prueba previa y posterior. Se realizó una prueba previa antes de administrar la estrategia de lectura PQ4R y una prueba posterior después de la intervención para evaluar la eficacia de la estrategia y medir el progreso de los alumnos. Los resultados se analizaron mediante estadística descriptiva e inferencial. Los resultados de la prueba preliminar mostraron un bajo rendimiento de lectura en inglés entre los participantes, pero después de la intervención, los resultados de la prueba posterior revelaron una mejora significativa en sus habilidades de lectura. La prueba t para muestras pareadas mostró una diferencia significativa entre las puntuaciones medias del pretest y del postest. Además, el valor del tamaño del efecto d de Cohen indicó un gran efecto de la estrategia PQ4R en la comprensión lectora de los alumnos. Estos hallazgos demuestran los beneficios potenciales de incorporar métodos prácticos de enseñanza de idiomas, como la estrategia PQ4R, en las clases de EFL para mejorar la adquisición y comprensión del idioma en un contexto de idioma extranjero.

PALABRAS CLAVE Aprendizaje de inglés, estrategia de lectura PQ4R, comprensión lectora de los estudiantes.

INTRODUCTION

Learners must become proficient in reading comprehension to learn English as a foreign language (EFL) effectively. Several studies, including those by Saeedi *et al.* (2016), Brooks *et al.* (2021), and Ruipérez (2022), have emphasized the importance of this skill. This particular skill equips learners with the means to access and assimilate vital information and knowledge, expand their lexicon and language skills, apply acquired abilities, attain academic success, and foster a culture of continuous learning and self-improvement.

Learning a new language can be difficult, particularly for students learning English as a foreign language. According to Mickan *et al.* (2023), learning a foreign language and a new language can have different meanings depending on the context. However, based on the search results, learning a «foreign language» refers to a language that is not native to the speaker and is typically learned in a classroom setting. In contrast, learning a «new language» refers to any language being learned for the first time, regardless of whether it is native or foreign. Learning a new or foreign language involves acquiring new language skills, such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and cultural understanding. This often requires formal instruction, practice, and exposure to the language through reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

At the middle high school level, the EFL Ecuadorian curriculum (2016) emphasizes the importance of active strategies and collaborative group work to allow learners to construct their learning rather than relying solely on direct instruction. The curriculum highlights the need for EFL teachers to apply active strategies in reading classes to enhance comprehension since students are expected to understand the main points in short, straightforward texts on familiar topics and recognize shared vocabulary items between their first language (L1) and English (L2). However, despite the support for using the most updated teaching approaches and methodologies in the EFL Ecuadorian curriculum, Ecuadorian EFL teachers mainly focus on using a structural approach (Burgin & Daniel, 2017; Álvarez & Ha, 2022).

Álvarez and Ha (2022) point out that Ecuadorian EFL teachers still design their curriculum by focusing more on teaching vocabulary words and grammar structures. The use of this structural approach leaves apart the utilization of current and innovative teaching methods, approaches, and strategies. This limited use of active and innovative strategies when reading could explain why learners' English reading comprehension remains minimal. For this reason, the need to improve the current reading skill level by implementing active and innovative learning strategies is increasingly widespread. In line with these challenges, teachers require an effective strategy to allow students to comprehend what they read and enjoy their learning process.

One effective strategy teachers can implement to improve the learning process is the PQ4R strategy. According to Dakhiel and Al sulami (2021), the PQ4R strategy introduced by Thomas E. L. and Robinson H. A. in their book «Improving Reading in Every Class: A Sourcebook for Teachers» in 1972 is an effective method for enhancing reading abilities. The acronym PQ4R stands for Preview, Question, Read, Reflect, Recite, and Review. This strategy improves learners' understanding, enhances their reading skills, helps them understand and remember what they read, and stimulates their prior knowledge. By applying the PQ4R strategy, students can understand and retain information more effectively.

Furthermore, according to Fitriani and Suhardi (2019), the PQ4R strategy combines previewing, questioning, reading, reciting, reflecting, and revising the reading material. The preview step involves previewing the text to activate prior knowledge and establish an overview of the content through scanning headings, subheadings, and visual aids. Learners generate their own questions during the question step, which enhances their comprehension and focus. In the reading step, learners read the text aiming to answer their questions and comprehend the material in-depth while taking notes. The reflecting step involves attempting to understand the reading material by making connections to already familiar concepts.

The reciting step involves learners summarizing the text's main points in their own words, reinforcing their understanding and retention. The reviewing step implicates revisiting the material to consolidate learning and transfer the knowledge to long-term memory.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

Many studies have explored how effective the PQ4R strategy is in enhancing reading comprehension. For instance, Al-Qawabeh *et al.* (2018) conducted a study to determine the effectiveness of the PQ4R strategy in teaching reading comprehension to ninth-grade Arabic students in Jordan. A survey and an achievement test for reading comprehension were used with 104 male and female students randomly selected into two experimental and two control groups. The study found that using the PQ4R strategy led to notable improvements in the experimental group, especially for female students. Therefore, the study recommended incorporating the PQ4R strategy into EFL classes as it is valuable to enhance reading comprehension.

Similarly, a classroom action research study by Zuriah (2020) aimed at improving the reading comprehension achievement of 11th-grade students at SMAN 19 Palembang using the PQ4R strategy. The study was conducted in three cycles of classroom action research to assess both effectiveness and student perception toward the PQ4R strategy. Based on the results, it was found that utilizing the PQ4R reading strategy resulted in a significant improvement in the students' reading comprehension ability. In addition, it was inferred that learners had positive perceptions toward the implemented strategy.

Likewise, another study was carried out by Dakhiel and Al sulami (2021) to assess the efficacy of the PQ4R strategy in enhancing the reading comprehension abilities of students in the second-intermediate grade. The study employed a quasi-experimental design and divided students into an experimental (using PQ4R) and a control (using the traditional method) group. The findings indicated that implementing the PQ4R strategy can positively impact students' reading comprehension. As a result, the researcher recommended using this strategy to improve EFL students' reading comprehension skills.

Previous studies show that using the PQ4R strategy can significantly enhance reading comprehension. The literature indicates that by previewing, questioning, reading, reflecting, reciting, and reviewing texts, learners can enhance their comprehension and vocabulary acquisition, leading to remarkable success in their language learning journey.

JUSTIFICATION

Students often struggle with understanding and retaining the vast amount of information presented in class due to their limited vocabulary, lack of background knowledge, and inadequate reading strategies, as reported by Burgin & Daniel (2017), Nanda & Azmy (2020), and Hezam *et al.* (2022). To overcome these obstacles, teachers and students must adopt effective study strategies that facilitate information processing and retention. However, according to Alvarez and Ha (2022), Ecuadorian EFL teachers prioritize teaching vocabulary words and grammar structures when designing their curriculum. Teachers must implement an effective strategy for students to comprehend what they read and enjoy the learning process. One effective strategy teachers can implement to improve the learning process is the PQ4R strategy.

Despite the proven effectiveness of the PQ4R strategy in various EFL contexts, further research is needed in Ecuador to determine its impact on the English reading comprehension of Ecuadorian learners. In order to fill the knowledge gap and contribute to the

existing literature, the present pre-experimental research study was conducted using the PQ4R strategy as an intervention in reading classes. Therefore, this research paper aims to answer the following research question: What is the effect of applying the PQ4R strategy on the tenth-grade EFL learners' reading comprehension at a middle high school in Cuenca, Ecuador? In addition, the study proposed the null and alternative hypotheses as follows:

H_N = the PQ4R strategy does not affect tenth-grade learners' reading comprehension skills.

H_A = the PQ4R strategy does affect tenth-grade learners' reading comprehension skills.

METHOD

This study seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of the PQ4R strategy in enhancing the reading comprehension skills of middle-high school EFL learners. The researcher employed a quantitative experimental method and utilized a pre-experimental design to determine the impact of the PQ4R strategy on EFL students' reading comprehension achievement. Thyer (2012) states that pre-experimental designs concentrate on analyzing a single group of individuals who have undergone a particular social work intervention, which is the main focus of the study and are identified as the treatment group.

As only one tenth-grade classroom was available during the morning session at the high school where the study was conducted, the researcher designated this class as the treatment group. Therefore, a one-group pretest-posttest design was employed to gather and analyze data since no control group was available for comparison. According to Thyer (2012), Fernández and Baptista (2013), and Creswell (2013), this design involves assessing participants on two separate occasions, the initial assessment (pretest) and the subsequent evaluation conducted after undergoing treatment (post-test). Ultimately, the post-test results were compared to the pretest outcomes to identify any changes.

PARTICIPANTS

This research was conducted at a public high school in Cuenca, Ecuador, in the academic year 2022-2023. Thirty-two tenth-grade students aged 15-16 participated in the present pre-experimental research study. A contextualization journal determined that all participants were homogeneous in terms of ethnicity, native language, exposure to English, and educational and cultural background.

INSTRUMENTS

The primary research tool used in the study was a reading test administered before and after the intervention to measure students' reading comprehension. Specifically, a Cambridge A2 reading test (KET reading test), consisting of parts one to five, was used as both the pretest and post-test. The researcher chose the KET reading test since this standardized exam reflects real-life language skills and the understanding of specific information, such as getting the main message and idea from text and correctly using vocabulary words. Finally, students were evaluated using the same criteria as the international exam.

PROCEDURE

Before the pre-experimental study began, a pre-reading test was applied to the participants. This first test aimed to measure the initial ability of students. Then, during eight weeks and three hours of English instruction each week, the EFL instructor utilized lesson plans guided by the PQ4R strategy. These lesson plans incorporated pre-, while, and post-reading discussions and exercises focusing on enhancing reading comprehension abilities, such as predicting text content, skimming and scanning for answers, reading for detail, summarizing main points, identifying the meaning of the text, and making inferences. Lastly, at the end of the study, another reading test was administered to the control and experimental group. This test served as a means of measuring the students' progress and provided valuable data for further analysis and interpretation.

DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher analyzed and interpreted the pre- and post-reading comprehension test data using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Minitab software. First, descriptive statistics such as mean scores, minimum and maximum scores, and standard deviations of the pre and post-test were used to determine the effects of the PQ4R strategy on reading comprehension. Second, the researcher conducted an inferential analysis that included a t-student test for paired samples to determine any significant differences between the pretest and post-test mean scores. The decisions were made with a significance of 5% ($p < 0.05$). Lastly, to quantify the effectiveness of using the PQ4R strategy, the effect size of the difference between the pre and post-test scores was calculated and reported using the effect size «d» suggested by Cohen (1992). The effect size was then interpreted based on the guidelines by Fernández and Baptista (2013), where a 0.20 value indicates a small effect, 0.50 shows a medium effect size, and 0.80 represents a large effect.

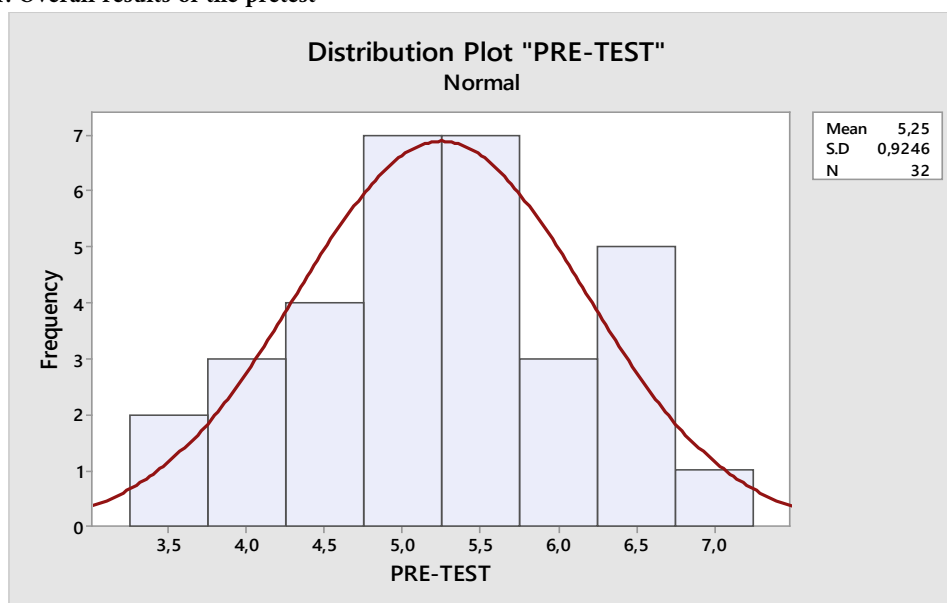
RESULTS

This study aimed to investigate the effect of using the PQ4R strategy on reading comprehension among EFL students. In addition, the study aimed to test the alternative hypothesis, which states that the use of the PQ4R strategy does affect reading comprehension. Conversely, the null hypothesis was proposed to test if the PQ4R strategy does not affect learners' reading comprehension skills.

PRETEST AND POSTTEST RESULTS

Before implementing the PQ4R strategy, the pretest was administered to determine and measure the initial learners' reading performance. As shown in Figure 1, all participants' pretest results showed a mean score of 5.25 (out of 10) with a standard deviation of 0.92. In addition, the pretest results indicated that the minimum score was 3.50 and the maximum score was 7.0. All this indicated that the group was in similar reading conditions; in other words, they had low English reading performance before implementing the PQ4R strategy (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Overall results of the pretest



Note. Mean, Standard Deviation, Minimum, and Maximum scores for the pretest.

On the other hand, the post-test was taken a week after the end of applying the PQ4R strategy, and it was taken to measure to what extent learners improved their reading comprehension ability. The post-test results showed that the experimental group's mean was 7.25 (out of 10), with a standard deviation of 1.00. Moreover, the results showed a minimum score of 5.50 and a maximum score equal to 9.0, as shown in figure following (see Figure 2).

Before conducting inferential statistical analysis, it is important to assess the normality and homogeneity of the data. The data must meet specific criteria, such as autonomy of subjects, paired measurements from the same individual, and adherence to a normal distribution. These criteria are especially important for smaller sample sizes. Parametric tests can only be used when the data fulfills these prerequisites.

For these previous reasons, two tests were conducted before analyzing the data to compare the initial situation to the final situation. The first test was the Anderson-Darling normality test, which determined whether the data was normally distributed. The second test, Levene's test, was used to determine if the data was homogenous.

NORMALITY TEST

Table 1 displays the Anderson-Darling normality test results, which aimed to determine if the scores were normally distributed. All p-values ($p > 0.05$) were above the level of significance ($p = 0.05$), indicating that the pretest and post-test scores are normally distributed. Therefore, it would be appropriate to perform any parametric test to determine if there is a significant difference between the mean scores (see Table 1).

HOMOGENEITY TEST

In Levene's test, the p-value ($p > 0.05$) is greater than the selected level of significance ($p = 0.05$), as shown in Table 2. Thus, it demonstrates that the data variances are statistically equal, and any parametric test can be performed (see Table 2).

Table 1. Normality test of Anderson-Darling

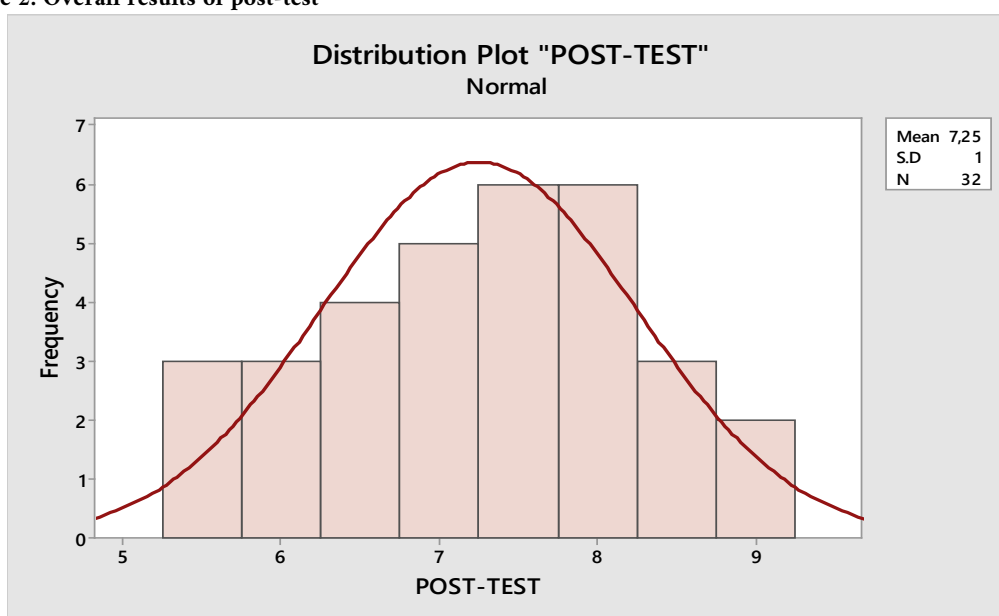
GROUP	VARIABLE	N	MEAN	SD	TEST STATISTIC	P-VALUE
Tenth-grade	Pretest	32	5.25	0.92	0.51	0.186
	Post-test		7.25	1.00	0.47	0.232

Note. All p-values ($p > 0.05$) demonstrate that the data were normally distributed.

Table 2. Levene test for equality

GROUP	VARIABLE	N	S.D.	VARIANCE	LEVENE STATISTIC	DF 1	DF 2	P-VALUE
Tenth-grade	Pretest	32	0.92	0.85	0.19	1	64	0.664
	Posttest		1.00	1.0				

Note. P-value ($p > 0.05$) demonstrated that the data are statistically equal.

Figure 2. Overall results of post-test

Note. Mean, Standard Deviation, Minimum, and Maximum scores for the pretest.

After knowing that the data is normally distributed and homogenous, the researcher analyzed the data by using parametric tests. Since a t-test determines whether or not the difference between the means of samples is significant (Creswell, 2013; Fernández & Baptista, 2013), one t-test for paired samples was performed. The t-test for paired samples was conducted to determine how far each group performed from the pretest and post-test and to state whether there was any significant difference between them.

PAIRED SAMPLE T-TEST

The effectiveness of the PQ4R strategy in improving English reading comprehension among EFL learners was evaluated using a paired sample t-test. On the one hand, the pretest results demonstrated that the group had a mean of 5.25 (out of 10) with a standard deviation of

0.92. On the other hand, the post-test results showed a mean of 7.25 (out of 10) with a standard deviation of 1.00, as seen in Figure 3. The difference between the means of the pretest and post-test was 2 points, which means that learners of this group had an improvement of 20% in their English reading comprehension (see Figure 3).

The data in Table 3 displays a noticeable difference in the mean scores between the pretest and post-test. Specifically, the mean score of the post-test (7.25) is higher than the mean score of the pretest (5.25). Additionally, the t-test value is -23.81, and the p-value is 0.000, with a level of significance (α) of 0.05. These results indicate that the p-value is smaller than the level of significance (α). These results indicate a noteworthy contrast in the mean scores before and after the PQ4R strategy was implemented by the researcher (see Table 3).

COHEN'S D VALUE

The previous results provide evidence of an improvement in scores in all participants. There was an increase of 2 points between the pretest and post-test scores. Therefore, to determine the effect size of using the PQ4R strategy on learners' reading comprehension, Cohen's d was calculated. The effect size was calculated through the equations below.

$$\text{Cohen's } d = \frac{M_2 - M_1}{SD_{pooled}}$$

M1 and M2 stand for the mean of groups 1 (pretest) and 2 (post-test). SD pooled stands for pooled standard deviation. The SD pooled was calculated using the equation below.

$$SD_{pooled} = \sqrt{\frac{(N_1 - 1)SD_1^2 + (N_2 - 1)SD_2^2}{N_1 + N_2 - 2}}$$

N1 and N2 stand for the size of groups 1 (pretest) and 2 (post-test), while SD1 and SD2 stand for the standard deviation of groups 1 (pretest) and 2 (post-test), respectively. Finally, the criteria for interpreting Cohen's «d» effect size was as follows: 0.20 is considered a small effect, 0.50 is a medium effect size, and 0.80 is considered a large effect size (Creswell, 2013; Fernández & Baptista, 2013). Thus, the results revealed an effect size of 2.08, interpreted as a considerable effect size of the PQ4R strategy on learners' reading comprehension (see Table 4).

In addition, Figure 4 shows the strength of using the PQ4R strategy on the total score of the reading test, where the value of Cohen's d was greater than 0.80, which means that the use of the PQ4R strategy in improving students' reading comprehension has a considerable effect size. It was responsible for 20% of the improvement of the learners' reading comprehension skills (see Figure 4).

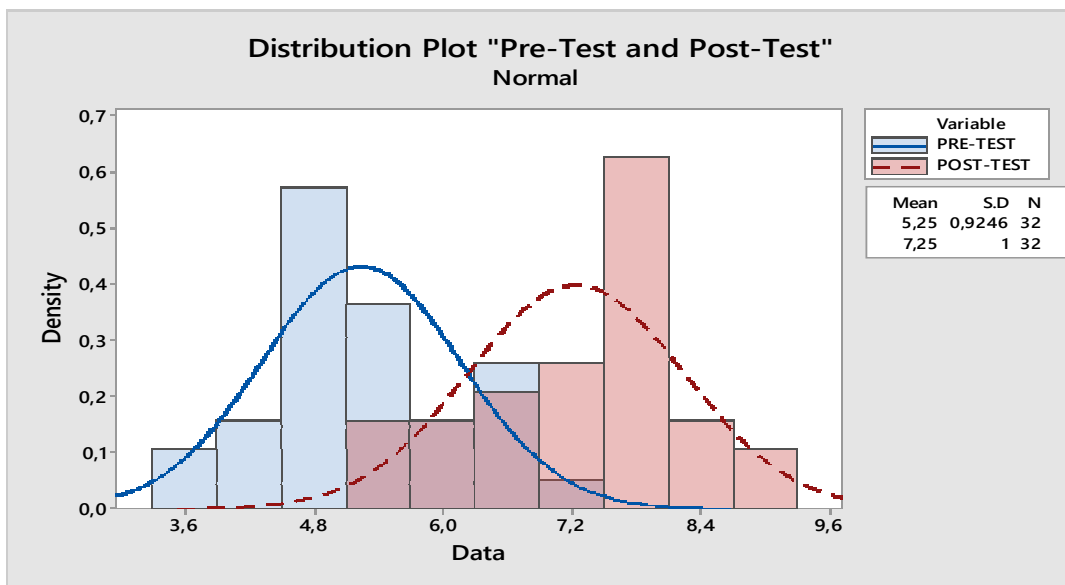
DISCUSSION

The present study revealed positive outcomes regarding middle-high school students' reading comprehension skills. Implementing the PQ4R strategy led to a noteworthy enhancement in the English reading abilities of the EFL students. This fact was evident from the variation in the mean scores before and after the application of the strategy, which was statistically significant at a 0.05 significance level. The results were analyzed and discussed in light of

Table 4. Cohen's d value

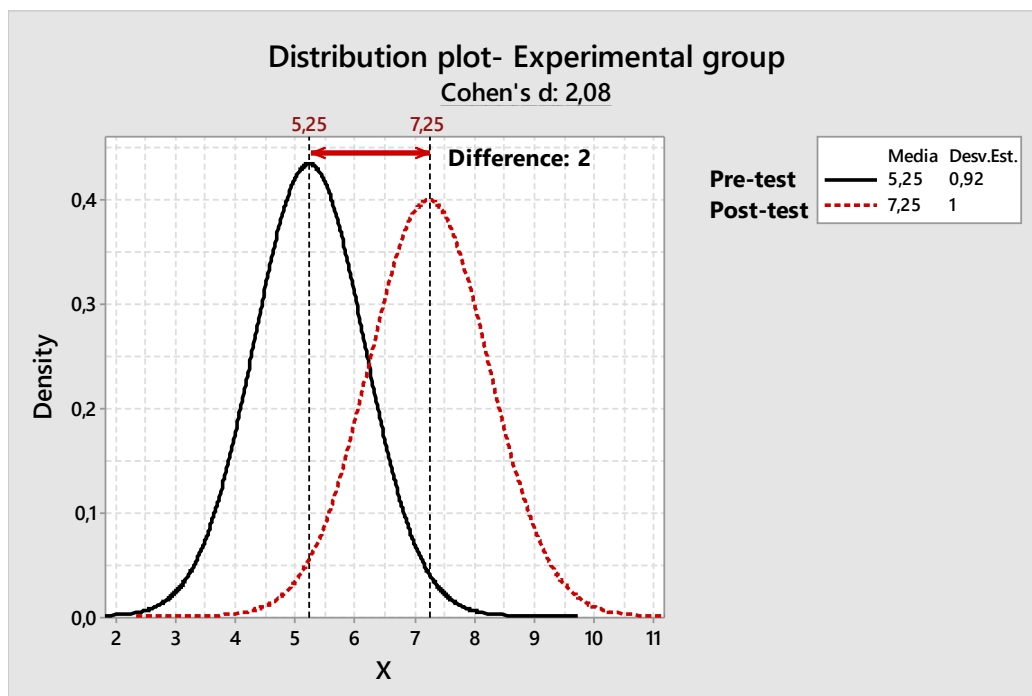
VARIABLE	VALUE	SD	COHEN'S D	INTERPRETATION
N1	32			
M1	5.25			
SD1	0.92		2.08	Large effect
N2	32			
M2	7.25			
SD2	1.0			

Figure 3. Difference between the means of the pretest and post-test



Note. The difference between the means of the pretest and post-test was 2 points.

Figure 4. The effect size of the PQ4R strategy



Note. Two points of difference between the mean scores indicate a large effect size of the PQ4R strategy

the main research question. The main research question aimed to determine whether the PQ4R strategy improves Ecuadorian middle-high school learners' English reading comprehension skills in the academic year 2022/2023.

The results showed that students in the tenth grade who were taught using the PQ4R strategy enhanced their English reading comprehension abilities. After the PQ4R strategy was introduced as a teaching-learning strategy in reading classes, there was a significant positive score difference between the pretest and post-test results. This finding is consistent with the results of Rahmadia and Fatimah (2020), which showed that the PQ4R learning model had more influence on reading comprehension than the conventional learning model (lecture method). Alike/Similarly, Khusniyah (2018) found that the PQ4R strategy significantly improved EFL learners' reading ability since this strategy fosters a range of skills, including active participation, critical thinking, higher-order thinking, motivation, reading comprehension, and vocabulary acquisition.

Using the PQ4R strategy was beneficial for Ecuadorian EFL students to improve their reading comprehension. This teaching-learning strategy promoted higher-order thinking skills and critical thinking abilities, encouraging students to reflect on the content they read and express it in their own words. Additionally, the strategy prompted students to actively participate in the reading process by previewing, questioning, and reflecting on the text. Previewing the text allowed students to acquire new vocabulary before reading, while the strategy's structured approach helped students read and learn more effectively.

In addition, the present study showed that utilizing the PQ4R technique led to positive outcomes in English reading comprehension. In this regard, studies by Agustiani (2019) and Amaya and Salinas (2021) demonstrated that learners can enhance their English reading proficiency through the PQ4R strategy. This enhancement is due to increased student engagement and a better understanding of the material, resulting in improved scores. Using the PQ4R method as a teaching strategy, students' English reading comprehension and proficiency can be promoted. The present study's findings indicate that introducing the PQ4R strategy in EFL classes will benefit Ecuadorian middle-high school students by improving their reading abilities.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study conducted during the academic year 2022/2023 sought to demonstrate the effectiveness of implementing the PQ4R strategy in improving the reading comprehension skills of middle-high school students. The descriptive results revealed a significant improvement in the mean score of students, from 5.25 (out of 10) in the pretest to 7.25 (out of 10) in the post-test. These results signify the positive impact of the PQ4R strategy on middle-high school students' reading ability.

Furthermore, the inferential results support the effectiveness of the PQ4R strategy in enhancing reading comprehension skills. Cohen's *d* value of 2.08 indicated a large effect size, and the paired sample *t*-test yielded a *p*-value of 0.00, which is less than the level of significance of $\alpha = 0.05$. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that teaching students using the PQ4R strategy successfully improves their English reading comprehension abilities.

The PQ4R reading strategy is not commonly used in Ecuador, where recent studies have shown that other metacognitive strategies such as SQ3R, Question-Generation, Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR), Look, Think and Predict, Guided Retelling, Response Journal, and Thinking Along with Strategy are effective in enhancing reading comprehension for EFL learners at both high school and university levels. Thus, the findings in the present research study demonstrated that by previewing, questioning, reading, reflecting,

reciting, and reviewing texts, middle high school EFL learners can also enhance their reading comprehension abilities.

In summary, the findings in the present pre-experimental research study demonstrated that the PQ4R strategy can enhance the reading comprehension skills of EFL learners in Ecuador. Teachers can provide a better learning experience to students by using the PQ4R strategy since it helps students improve their reading comprehension, vocabulary, critical thinking skills, and ability to learn independently. Using this strategy, students can achieve greater success in their personal and professional lives by better understanding, analyzing, and engaging with English texts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The PQ4R reading strategy yielded positive outcomes, but it is important to consider certain recommendations to improve the technique's effectiveness for future research studies. One limitation of the study was the lack of a control group, as there was no other tenth-grade classroom available for comparison during the morning session at the high school. Therefore, it is highly recommended that future researchers include a control group with similar characteristics to ensure the replication of the study and comparison of outcomes. Additionally, it is recommended that researchers pilot their instruments, such as the reading test, with participants before implementing them to improve the accuracy of future studies. Adapting and editing study material to fit the specific context of each study can also lead to more reliable results. Lastly, due to dropouts and schedule changes, the study had a smaller sample size than intended (32 instead of 40). Therefore, it is recommended that future studies have a larger sample size to increase the accuracy and reliability of results.

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REVISTA KRONOS

Role-play as a didactic strategy enhancing the speaking skills in High-School students

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ABSTRACT Role-play has emerged as a valuable didactic strategy for enhancing the speaking skill in students, as it immerses them in language-rich contexts, prompting active communication. Therefore, in this study aims to analyze role-play as a didactic strategy for enhancing the speaking skills of EFL high school students of Bahía de Caráquez city. A qualitative research design was employed drawing upon the insights of three expert English teachers in first year of high school, from three public schools in Bahía de Caráquez city. 40 relevant scientific articles were also reviewed, sourced from reputable databases, including Google Scholar, Redalyc, and Scielo. The main results showed that role-plays allow students to explore authentic situations, focus on communication rather than grammar, and reduce stress and anxiety. Teachers can create a supportive and safe environment for students to practice speaking, assess and evaluate their speaking skills, incorporate technology, and promote language diversity and cultural sensitivity. It is concluded that public English teachers in Bahía de Caráquez city use role-play as a didactic strategy for enhancing the speaking skills of EFL high school students.

KEY WORDS Role-play, didactic strategy, speaking skill, English as a Foreign Language, teaching and learning.

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El juego de roles como estrategia didáctica que mejora las habilidades orales en las estudiantes de secundarias

RESUMEN El juego de roles ha surgido como una valiosa estrategia didáctica para mejorar la habilidad de hablar en los estudiantes, ya que los sumerge en contextos ricos en el lenguaje, lo que fomenta la comunicación activa. Por lo tanto, en este estudio se pretende analizar el juego de roles como estrategia didáctica para mejorar las habilidades orales de estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera de nivel secundario de la ciudad de Bahía de Caráquez. Se empleó un diseño de investigación cualitativo basándose en los conocimientos de tres profesores expertos de inglés de primer año de secundaria, de tres escuelas públicas de la ciudad de Bahía de Caráquez. También se revisaron 40 artículos científicos relevantes, provenientes de bases de datos acreditadas, incluidas Google Scholar, Redalyc y Scielo. Los principales resultados mostraron que los juegos de roles permiten a los estudiantes explorar situaciones auténticas, centrarse en la comunicación en lugar de la gramática y reducir el estrés y la ansiedad. Los maestros pueden crear un entorno seguro y de apoyo para que los estudiantes practiquen el habla, evalúen sus habilidades orales, incorporen tecnología y promuevan la diversidad lingüística y la sensibilidad cultural. Se concluye que los profesores públicos de inglés de la ciudad de Bahía de Caráquez utilizan el juego de roles como estrategia didáctica para mejorar las habilidades orales de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera de secundaria.

PALABRAS CLAVE Juego de roles, estrategia didáctica, habilidad para hablar, inglés como lengua extranjera, enseñanza y aprendizaje..

INTRODUCTION

The mastery of the English language enables individuals to effectively communicate with people from diverse linguistic backgrounds and opens up new opportunities for personal and professional growth (Susanti *et al.*, 2022). The whole world has become a global village and people communicate with each other in a common language, i.e., English. The English language is spoken all over the world and it has attained the status of the global language (Umar *et al.*, 2020). It is the language widely used in the field of scientific research, education, business, the internet, travel and tourism, media and newspapers, software, medicine, engineering, information and technology, entertainment, banking, and so on (Wicaksana *et al.*, 2019).

The modern media world demands a good command of spoken English. Effective communication in the English language enables individuals to participate in international business, engage in cultural exchange, and access information from a wider range of sources (Rankin *et al.*, 2006). Consequently, English language teaching has been recognized as a crucial aspect of modern educational systems. In this context, teachers play a critical role in promoting oral competence and ensuring that students develop the necessary skills to effectively communicate in the language (Susanti *et al.*, 2022). In Ecuador, English is taught as a mandatory subject in schools, starting from primary education (Ministerio de Educación, 2015).

Despite its importance, developing oral competence in English can be challenging, particularly for students who are learning the language as a second or foreign language (Yuliana *et al.*, 2014). Effective speaking skills are essential for success in education and life; unfortunately, many students struggle with speaking, particularly in large classroom settings. Speaking is considered one of the most difficult aspects of language learning. Many language learners have difficulty expressing themselves orally and they often have difficulty using a foreign language to express their thoughts effectively (Mandasari, 2017; Mulyana & Anugrahgusti, 2020). Additionally, students stop speaking because they encounter psychological obstacles or because they cannot find the right words and expressions (Ampatuan *et al.*, 2016).

As a result, educators are constantly seeking new and effective strategies to help students develop their speaking abilities (Thi *et al.*, 2017). One strategy that has received increasing attention in recent years is role-play. Role-play is a technique in which students take on the roles of characters and engage in simulated scenarios, such as debates, negotiations, or conversations (Russell & Shepherd, 2010).

Role-play is a valuable didactic strategy for improving speaking skills worldwide, since it helps students develop their language skills through immersion in a situation similar to real life (Vaca-Cárdenas *et al.*, 2017). It provides an engaging and dynamic learning experience that fosters language development, communication skills, and interpersonal abilities (Umar *et al.*, 2020). Nevertheless, the efficacy of role-playing in improving the speaking abilities of high school students of English as a foreign language has not been extensively examined (Jakob, 2018). Therefore, this study aims to analyze role-play as a didactic strategy for enhancing the speaking skills of EFL high school students in Bahía de Caráquez city.

LITERATURE REVIEW

SPEAKING SKILL

The complexity of the speaking process can vary greatly depending on various factors such as the speaker's language proficiency, the topic being discussed, the audience, and the

purpose of the communication (Thanyalak, 2012). However, some common components of the speaking process include: planning and organizing the content, selecting words and constructing sentences, pronunciation, articulation, and prosody (the rhythm, stress, and intonation of speech) (Anandan, 2011). These components interact and influence each other, making the speaking process complex (Rajah Kumaran, 2017).

A SUCCESSFUL SPEAKING LESSON

A successful speaking lesson in teaching English can be a memorable and impactful experience for both the teacher and students (Kürüm, 2016). To create such a lesson, a few key components must be present. First and foremost, the lesson should have clear and achievable objectives. This could include improving pronunciation, increasing vocabulary, or encouraging students to speak in complete sentences (Gusmuliana *et al.*, 2021). Having specific goals in mind will help guide the teacher's lesson plan and give students a sense of direction (Thi *et al.*, 2017).

Secondly, the lesson should be engaging and interactive. Speaking activities, such as role-plays, debates, and group discussions, allow students to practice their speaking skills naturally and authentically. Using games and other fun activities can also help keep students motivated and interested (Yusuf *et al.*, 2020).

Thirdly, the teacher should provide positive and constructive feedback to students. Encouragement and praise can help build students' confidence and self-esteem, while constructive criticism can help them identify areas for improvement (Bhatti, 2021). The teacher should also create a supportive and non-judgmental classroom environment where students feel comfortable taking risks and making mistakes (Dinapoli, 2009).

Fourthly, the teacher should incorporate a variety of teaching methods and materials to cater to different learning styles (Gusmuliana *et al.*, 2021). For example, visual aids such as pictures and videos can help students understand new vocabulary, while audio recordings can help them improve their pronunciation (Susanti *et al.*, 2022). The teacher should also encourage students to use English as much as possible during the lesson and provide opportunities for individual and group speaking activities (Kürüm, 2016).

Finally, the teacher should regularly assess students' progress and provide opportunities for them to reflect on their speaking abilities. This can be done through self-reflection exercises, oral presentations, or written evaluations (Wicaksana *et al.*, 2019).

DIDACTIC STRATEGY

A didactic strategy is a plan or approach that is used to teach or instruct a particular subject or skill (D. Lestari, 2015). It involves the selection and organization of teaching methods, materials, and activities that support learning and achievement of the desired learning outcomes (D. Lestari, 2015). The goal of a didactic strategy is to effectively transfer knowledge and skills to the learners in a way that is engaging, meaningful, and relevant to their needs (F. Lestari & Andini, 2020).

Didactic strategies can vary widely depending on the subject matter, the age and ability level of the learners, and the teacher's teaching style (Dinapoli, 2009). Some common didactic strategies include lecture-style instruction, hands-on activities, discussion-based learning, problem-based learning, and project-based learning (Duong, 2014). The choice of didactic strategy should be based on the specific learning objectives and the needs of the learners (Rahimy & Safarpour, 2012).

ROLE-PLAY AS A DIDACTIC STRATEGY

Role-play is a widely recognized didactic strategy that provides learners with opportunities to practice language skills in a communicative and interactive context (Thanyalak, (2012). Role-plays help to improve speaking skills, as well as listening, communication skill, and creativity (Rajah Kumaran, 2017). Role-playing involves participating in simulated social situations that are intended to illustrate real-life roles and contexts (Platt, 2001). Role-play is a method of facilitating learning that is effective in achieving learning outcomes in three main areas: affective, cognitive, and behavioral, which is why it is seen as a teaching strategy to help develop speech in first-year high school students (Stokoe, 2014).

On the other hand, Stokoe (2014) states that Role-playing is a form of experiential learning so that they can make mistakes and learn from them. Therefore, students adopt different characters and work together in a given scenario interacting in the roles they have assumed and work together in a given scenario interacting in the roles they have assumed (Burns, 1998). Role-playing is effective for learning about complex social and human systems (Ajleaa binti Abdul Rahman *et al.*, 2018). As mentioned above, role-play is an activity exploited by different approaches to language teaching (Kreuter & Valliant, 2007). It is a useful tool because through this activity, says more cognitive demands are placed on the comprehension system and learners' ability to instantly incorporate pragmatics and sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics into the interaction. This technique is practically one of how we can allow our learners to practice in the classroom and also give them the confidence to express themselves and develop their skills (Maher & al Nakhalah, 2016a).

It is a teaching technique in which students act out a scenario or simulation, usually in small groups or pairs, to practice using the language in a realistic context (Hardan, 2013). In the context of English language teaching, role-play can be used to promote the development of speaking skills by providing students with opportunities to practice using the language in a variety of real-life scenarios, such as ordering food in a restaurant, making a complaint, or asking for directions (Soraya *et al.*, 2018). This type of immersive learning experience can help students to build their confidence in using the language and to develop their ability to think on their feet, as they must respond to the language needs of the scenario in real-time (Castro & Villafuerte, 2019).

TYPES OF ROLE-PLAYS

According to Thanyalak, (2012), there are different types of role-play activities that teachers can use to teach English, such as:

- a) **Situational Role-Play:** This type of role-play involves creating scenarios that reflect real-life situations where learners can practice language skills relevant to the situation. For example, a hotel check-in, ordering food at a restaurant, or a job interview. 4
- b) **Interactive Role-Play:** Interactive role-play involves learners in a more dynamic and spontaneous conversation, where they must use a wide range of communicative skills. This type of role-play encourages learners to ask questions, give opinions, negotiate, and respond appropriately to a variety of social situations.
- c) **Problem-Solving Role-Play:** Problem-solving role-play involves learners working in groups to solve a problem or complete a task using English (Stokoe, 2014). This type of role-play enhances collaborative learning and promotes the use of language in a purposeful context.
- d) **Simulation Role-Play:** This type of role-play creates a simulated environment where learners can practice specific language skills in a realistic context. For example, a simu-

lated courtroom trial, a press conference, or a police interrogation (Jackson & Back, 2011). In addition, using different types of role-play activities as a didactic strategy in teaching English provides learners with a communicative and interactive context to practice language skills. These role-play activities can be adapted to the learners' level of language proficiency and promote language acquisition, as well as critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative skills (Castro & Villafuerte, 2019).

BENEFITS OF ROLE-PLAY TO IMPROVE SPEAKING SKILL

By assuming different roles and engaging in simulated conversations, learners can practice and develop their speaking abilities dynamically and interactively (Maher & Al Nakhalah, 2016a). The use of role-play as a didactic strategy has a range of benefits for students' speaking skills (Ureta Santos, 2022).

Role play should be used as a didactic strategy to improve speaking skills in students for several reasons:

Confidence and fluency: first and foremost, it provides students with opportunities to practice speaking in real-life contexts, which can help to build their confidence and fluency in using the language (Pulido et al., 2022).

Authentic practice: Role-play provides students with an authentic language-learning experience that simulates real-life situations. This helps students become more confident and comfortable using the language in real-life settings (Jackson & Back, 2011).

Active engagement: Role-play requires students to be actively engaged in the language-learning process, which can increase their motivation and interest in learning.

Development of communicative competence: Role-play helps students develop their communicative competence, which includes not only their language proficiency, but also their ability to understand cultural norms, use appropriate nonverbal cues, and adjust their language use to different social situations (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010).

Encourages collaboration and teamwork: Role-play often involves working in groups, which helps students develop teamwork and collaboration skills and encourages them to support each other in their language learning (Gilakjani, 2011).

Improves interpersonal skills: Role-play can also help students improve their interpersonal skills, such as active speaking, effective communication, and empathy (Anandan, 2011).

Development of interpersonal skills: Additionally, role-play can also promote the development of interpersonal skills, as students must interact with their classmates and engage in negotiations and problem-solving activities (Kuśnierek, 2015).

Improvement of pronunciation and intonation: Moreover, role-play can also help students to develop their pronunciation and intonation, as they must imitate the speech patterns of native speakers to be understood (Mei & Masoumeh, 2017).

CHALLENGES OF ROLE-PLAY

Despite its benefits, the use of role-play as a didactic strategy also presents several challenges (Mei & Masoumeh, 2017). For example, students may be intimidated by the prospect of speaking in front of their classmates or may struggle to understand the instructions and expectations of the role-play scenario (Rao, 2019). To overcome these challenges, teachers need to provide clear instructions and guidance and create a supportive and inclusive

learning environment (Jackson & Back, 2011). Additionally, teachers may also need to provide additional support for students who are less confident in their speaking skills, such as through individualized feedback or one-on-one coaching (Jackson & Back, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

This research had a qualitative approach because it uses qualitative data collection techniques to explore teachers' opinions. A qualitative approach in research explores phenomena through subjective understandings, focusing on rich, non-numerical data, for getting a deep understanding of participants' experiences (Vaca-Cárdenas *et al.*, 2017). It emphasizes context, social interactions, and individual perspectives to understand complexities, offering valuable insights into the researched subject (Hernández-Sampieri, Fernández, & Baptista, 1997).

PARTICIPANTS

The research was conducted in public schools of the Bahía de Caráquez city, located in Sucre canton, Manabí province. Three English Teachers of first year of high school from the three public schools of the city were chosen to participate in this study. The criteria for participation were:

1. To be an English teacher
2. The wish to participate voluntarily in the study.
3. To belong to one of the 3 public schools of Bahía de Caráquez.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

This section describes the data collection procedures used in a qualitative study that aimed to explore the opinions of three English teachers in Bahía de Caráquez city about the use of role-play in the classroom. The technique used in this research was an interview and the instrument was a semi-structured questionnaire, which was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interview questions focused on the effectiveness, benefits, and challenges of using role-play in English language teaching.

DATA ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The data collection procedure allowed for a rich and nuanced exploration of the teachers' opinions and experiences with role-play in the classroom.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

DEFINITION OF ROLE-PLAY BY THE PARTICIPANTS

The interviewed teachers define role-play as an interactive activity involving acting out scenarios. It can be used in an educational context to provide students with opportunities for practice, skill development, and a deeper understanding of real-life situations.

According to the interviewees, a role-play is an engaging activity where students act out scenarios to practice skills, develop abilities, and understand real-life situations in an educational setting. Burns (1998) agrees that role-plays engage students, helping them practice skills and understand real-life situations.

PARTICIPANTS USE ROLE-PLAYS IN THE ENGLISH CLASS TO HELP STUDENTS IMPROVE THEIR SPEAKING SKILLS

The three teachers use role-plays in the English class to assist students in improving their speaking skills. Role-plays provide a context for students to employ English in a more natural and interactive manner, aiding in the development of their confidence and ability to communicate in real-life situations. These role-plays are effective in practicing various language functions, including giving and receiving directions, making requests, negotiating, and expressing opinions. Furthermore, they can be adapted to suit different levels of language proficiency, making them a versatile tool for language teachers.

Role-plays in English classes enhance speaking abilities by providing a realistic and interactive setting, allowing the practice of language functions. Their adaptability makes them invaluable. Role-plays help to improve communication skills, and creativity (Rajah Kumaran, 2017). They involve participating in simulated social situations that are intended to illustrate real-life contexts (Platt, 2001).

HOW ROLE-PLAYS HELP STUDENTS IMPROVE THEIR SPEAKING SKILLS

Role-plays can help students improve their speaking skills in several ways: By providing a realistic context, encouraging interaction, Practicing specific language functions, Feedback, and reflection. Overall, role-plays can be a fun and effective way for students to practice and improve their speaking skills in English. On the other hand, Role-plays use real-life situations and gives a chance to practice pronunciation, oral expression, grammar, and vocabulary.

Using role-plays alleviates stress and enhances communication skills, providing a more natural and interactive language engagement. Similarly, Jackson (2011) states that utilizing role-plays creates a supportive and natural language engagement, alleviating stress and enhancing communication skills.

HOW PARTICIPANTS USE ROLE-PLAYS IN ENGLISH CLASSES

They use role-plays to focus on the target topic in situations like job interviews and ordering food in a restaurant. They also use role-play based on a scenario, dialogue-based role-play, and problem-solving role-play, among others. However, depending on what they are learning they have telephone conversations, order things in a restaurant, meet people, or

do other everyday activities. Furthermore, the specific type of role-play used will depend on the learning objectives and needs of the students.

Similarly, Ureta Santos (2022) states that role-play activities centered on real-life situations, such as job interviews and restaurant scenarios, cater to specific learning objectives, focusing on real-life situations and scenarios.

HOW IMPORTANT PARTICIPANTS CONSIDER USING ROLE-PLAYS IN ENGLISH CLASS TO HELP STUDENTS IMPROVE THEIR SPEAKING SKILLS

When teachers speak, students are stressed thinking about grammar structure.

Role-plays:

- Avoid students getting worried about mistakes and ensure they feel confident when using role-plays.
- Encourage active learning,
- Provide a safe environment for practice.
- Develop communication skills.
- Provide students with the confidence to communicate with others and develop their other language skills.
- Overall, using role-plays in the English class can be an effective way to help students improve their speaking skills, develop confidence, and engage with the language in a more natural and interactive way.

DETERMINING WHICH ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITIES ARE APPROPRIATE FOR SPECIFIC STUDENTS AND THEIR LANGUAGE ABILITIES

It depends on students' ages, English levels, and preferences. It is possible to determine which role-play activities are appropriate for specific students and their language abilities in several ways: assessing students' language proficiency, considering students' interests and needs, adapting activities to meet students' abilities, and providing feedback and guidance. By considering these factors, appropriateness in role-plays is determined by factors such as age, proficiency, and preferences, enabling a focused approach (Anandan, 2011).

CREATING A SUPPORTIVE AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR STUDENTS TO PRACTICE THE SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITIES

Creating a supportive and safe environment is essential for students to feel comfortable practicing their speaking skills through role-play activities. Here are some strategies that teachers can use to create such an environment: Build a positive classroom culture, establish clear guidelines, encourage risk-taking, provide feedback and support, respect cultural differences, and create a supportive and safe environment that encourages students to practice their speaking skills through role-play activities, leading to greater confidence and fluency in the English language.

As the interviewees indicated, a supportive and safe environment is vital, achieved through strategies such as clear guidelines and feedback. According to Duong (2014), a vital and supportive environment for role-plays is achieved through strategies like clear guidelines and feedback. Similarly, Hardan (2013) argues that implementing successful

role-play activities, such as simulating a doctor's office visit, fosters confidence in English communication.

ASSESSING AND EVALUATING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS DURING ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITIES

It is important to provide constructive feedback to students and encourage them to continue practicing and improving their speaking skills. Teachers can create a rubric that outlines the different aspects of speaking skills that they want to assess, such as pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and grammar. Teachers can use this rubric to grade students' performance during the role-play activity.

As reported by the interviewers, Constructive feedback, rubrics, and assessments improve speaking skills during role-play activities. Along the same lines, Maxwell (1997) Constructive feedback, rubrics, and assessments play a crucial role in improving speaking skills during role-play activities.

INCORPORATING THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY, SUCH AS AUDIO AND VIDEO RECORDING, IN YOUR ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS

Before students produce the language, they need to receive lots of input (Listening and Reading) in order to get experience. By asking students to record their role-play performances using their smartphones or a recording device. This allows them to listen to their performance and identify areas where they can improve their pronunciation, intonation, and fluency. Additionally, using online platforms such as Zoom or Teams to conduct role-play activities and record students' performances.

Rao (2019) claims that role-play activities can be enhanced by incorporating technology, recording performances, and utilizing online platforms.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES USING ROLE-PLAY AS A TEACHING STRATEGY TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS

The participants' opinion is that role-play is a good technique for students to speak without hesitation. In most cases, it is a good way to have students obtain practice. Students like to do role-plays and have fun doing them. One of the most important benefits of using role-play is that it encourages collaboration and teamwork among students. When students work together to create and perform role-plays, they can learn from each other and provide constructive feedback. This can help to create a positive learning environment and improve students' interpersonal skills.

Amptuan *et al.* (2016) state that role-plays are effective in improving speaking skills, promoting fluent expression, enjoyment, and collaboration.

PROVIDING INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT AND FEEDBACK TO STUDENTS TO HELP THEM IMPROVE THEIR SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITIES

Students role-play according to what is being taught. No matter the size of the group, feedback should be done immediately, by using peers (a student evaluates their activities with

a rubric) or self-assessment (They monitor their own knowledge using a Likert scale). In addition, by identifying their strengths and weaknesses and setting goals.

According to Dinapoli (2009), individual support, feedback, and goal setting contribute to enhancing speaking abilities during role-plays.

INCORPORATING LANGUAGE DIVERSITY AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY IN YOUR ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS AND BACKGROUNDS

Incorporating language diversity and cultural sensitivity in role-play activities is essential to support all students' speaking skills and backgrounds. Here are some ways to do this:

- By incorporating different accents and dialects.
- By using inclusive language.
- By encouraging cultural sharing.
- By fostering a safe and inclusive learning environment.
- By providing materials in different languages, and encouraging cultural sharing, students can feel more engaged and motivated to participate in role-play activities, leading to improved speaking skills and cultural understanding.

Kreuter (2007) claims that cultural sensitivity and language diversity are crucial considerations in role-play activities.

THE BENEFITS OF USING ROLE-PLAYS IN THE ENGLISH CLASS

Students get motivated and get an effective filter down from each student. Role-plays help students practice their different skills and abilities making it less difficult for them to use the language in a real-life situation.

Additionally, role-plays:

- Provides real-life practice.
- Develops fluency.
- Builds vocabulary.
- Improves pronunciation.
- Encourages collaboration.
- Enhances cultural understanding.
- Makes learning fun and engaging.

As stated by Lestari (2020) Role-plays offer numerous benefits, including motivation, skill practice, fluency development, and cultural understanding.

THE DISADVANTAGES OF USING ROLE-PLAYS IN ENGLISH CLASS

Role-plays serve as a valuable pedagogical tool for English language learners, facilitating language acquisition and communicative competence. However, their implementation in the classroom presents certain drawbacks, including:

- the potential for being time-consuming,
- eliciting shyness and anxiety among learners,

- instigating discomfort and self-consciousness,
- limiting language use,
- lacking authenticity in communication scenarios, and
- posing challenges in terms of teacher supervision during interactions.

Educators need to be mindful of these limitations while effectively using role-plays to optimize language-learning outcomes.

Furthermore, Jakob (2018) states that despite advantages, role-plays may have disadvantages, such as time consumption and limited supervision.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SUCCESS OF USING ROLE-PLAYS TO DEVELOP SPEAKING SKILLS

The successful utilization of role-play for enhancing speaking skills in the English classroom is contingent upon several key factors. These factors encompass the establishment of clear learning objectives, the creation of relevant and engaging scenarios, the provision of adequate preparation and support, the integration of authenticity in role-play activities, the cultivation of a positive and inclusive classroom environment, and the incorporation of variety and flexibility to cater to diverse learner needs. By judiciously considering and implementing these factors, educators can effectively harness the potential of role-play as a powerful instructional strategy in fostering communicative competence among English language learners.

Moreover, Lestari (2015), success factors for role-plays include clear objectives, engaging scenarios, preparation, authenticity, a positive environment, and flexibility.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE FAILURE OF USING ROLE-PLAY TO DEVELOP SPEAKING SKILLS

Role-play, as a pedagogical approach for enhancing speaking skills, holds potential. However, its effectiveness can be hindered by various factors contributing to its shortcomings. Among these factors are the absence of well-defined learning objectives, usage of inappropriate or unengaging scenarios, inadequate preparation and support for learners, lack of authenticity in scenarios presented, the establishment of a negative classroom environment, limited variation and flexibility in role-play exercises, and insufficient feedback and assessment mechanisms. Addressing these limitations is crucial for optimizing the benefits of role-play and promoting successful language acquisition and communication in the academic setting.

Reiners (2016) says that certain factors can hinder role-plays, such as unclear objectives, unengaging scenarios, and lack of feedback.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that integrating role-plays into the English class is a highly effective and engaging method to enhance language learning. It not only provides valuable practice in communication but also helps students develop essential social skills and boosts their overall motivation and enjoyment in the learning process. Through role-plays, students can

experience language in meaningful contexts, making their language skills more practical and applicable to real-life situations.

However, while role-plays offer advantages, they also come with drawbacks, so teachers need to take them into consideration for balancing the teaching strategies. However, the teachers underscored that with diligent planning and preparation, the advantages of role-play surpassed the encountered challenges, emphasizing its significance as an enriching pedagogical approach for language learning.

The use of role-plays brings benefits such as fostering a real-life context for language practicing, improving language functions, and promoting cultural awareness. Moreover, the text underscores the significance of creating a supportive classroom environment, integrating technology, offering personalized support and feedback, and taking into account language diversity and cultural sensitivity.

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REVISTA KRONOS

The influence of Comics in learning English language during post pandemic period

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ABSTRACT El coronavirus ha producido cambios en los estilos de vida y el virus se ha convertido en una parte integral de nuestra vida cotidiana, especialmente para los estudiantes. Con las nuevas prácticas de enseñanza emprendidas, se están haciendo nuevas reformas en los estudiantes de las escuelas secundarias. Este artículo presenta información sobre los cambios en los hábitos de aprendizaje de los estudiantes ecuatorianos. Estudios recientes han argumentado que el uso de tiras cómicas en la enseñanza de idiomas son herramientas útiles en la adquisición de un idioma durante la situación pospandemia. El presente estudio profundizará en el uso de las tiras cómicas como medio de aprendizaje, sus beneficios y los desafíos en su implementación. La investigación se llevó a cabo en una escuela privada de una de las ciudades más grandes de Ecuador con 50 participantes. Los hallazgos se basan en los resultados de encuestas y artículos relacionados con la implementación de tiras cómicas para la enseñanza de idiomas después del período pandémico. Los resultados mostraron que el uso de los comics es efectivo para la enseñanza de vocabulario y gramática, así también, los comics son usados para introducir conceptos como modales y pronombres y también para demostrar la transformación de voz directa en voz indirecta dentro de los globos de diálogo.

KEY WORDS Comic strips, acquisition of a language, benefits, challenges.

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La influencia de los comics en el aprendizaje del idioma inglés durante el periodo de pospandemia

RESUMEN El coronavirus ha producido cambios en los estilos de vida y el virus se ha convertido en una parte integral de nuestra vida cotidiana, especialmente para los estudiantes. Con las nuevas prácticas de enseñanza emprendidas, se están haciendo nuevas reformas en los estudiantes de las escuelas secundarias. Este artículo presenta información sobre los cambios en los hábitos de aprendizaje de los estudiantes ecuatorianos. Estudios recientes han argumentado que el uso de tiras cómicas en la enseñanza de idiomas son herramientas útiles en la adquisición de un idioma durante la situación pospandemia. El presente estudio profundizará en el uso de las tiras cómicas como medio de aprendizaje, sus beneficios y los desafíos en su implementación. La investigación se llevó a cabo en una escuela privada de una de las ciudades más grandes de Ecuador con 50 participantes. Los hallazgos se basan en los resultados de encuestas y artículos relacionados con la implementación de tiras cómicas para la enseñanza de idiomas después del período pandémico. Los resultados mostraron que el uso de los comics es efectivo para la enseñanza de vocabulario y gramática, así también, los comics son usados para introducir conceptos como modales y pronombres y también para demostrar la transformación de voz directa en voz indirecta dentro de los globos de diálogo.

PALABRAS CLAVE Tiras cómicas, adquisición de un idioma, beneficios, desafíos.

INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 became the great 2020 pandemic by March 2020. As a response, adjustments are being made to language classrooms, including training initiatives aimed at empowering teachers to effectively resume their tasks. In her study titled «Teaching with Technology: What is at Stake?», Furstenberg highlights the role of technology in granting learners the ability to make choices, thus fostering autonomy, empowerment, and active engagement in language learning (Furstenberg, 1997). It is important to point out that Furstenberg underscores technology's value not as a definitive solution for language teaching and learning, but as a tool that can facilitate the evolution of novel pedagogical approaches. Moreover, the author suggests that comic strips have the capacity to stimulate students' creativity.

English could be boring for teenagers in the post-pandemic situation because electronic devices present information in a short time and it is more attractive than genially presentation. Additionally, during this period, most of the learners studied in isolation at home and in an inappropriate learning environment and lack of self-discipline (Bao, 2020). However, schools and teachers should create opportunities to build students' interest in learning a target language. For this reason, the teacher becomes the main key in the classrooms in the post-pandemic situation because teachers must deliver materials, tasks, and lessons which facilitate that learners improve their minds, social factors, motivation, and creativity.

Consequently, comics are an interesting task because comics engage teenagers to continue studying a new language. Students need to comprehend the materials and the teachers share them using appropriate media which aims to make the students feel comfortable and easy to understand the materials. People use sophisticated media to do everything, including teaching and learning a second language through comics.

Finally, the present study was undertaken to elucidate the impact of comic strips on the learning of the English Language in the aftermath of the pandemic. Furthermore, the research aimed to address key research inquiries, including: What do learners and teachers know about the definition and elements of comic strips? What are the pros and cons of using comics in learning English language during post-pandemic situations? Should comics be recommended for teaching a second language in an asynchronous environment? Is there an appropriate procedure for using comic strips in the classrooms? Consequently, the present study could find a solution to improve the learning of a foreign language through comic strips in foreign language classrooms after the pandemic period. Furthermore, the outcomes of this study hold the potential to serve as a source of inspiration for educators, students, curriculum planners, content creators, researchers, and various stakeholders. These findings may encourage them to embrace the integration of comics as a fundamental element in their educational endeavors.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The covid-19 pandemic has impacted various aspects of society, with education experiencing notable transformations (Flores & Gago, 2020). According to Rahiem (2021), the shift towards remote work and learning accured swiftly, leading to a significant digital revolution in the field of education. This revolution encompassed online lectures, workshops, teleconferencing, digital open resources, online examinations, and engagement within virtual environments (Strielkowski, 2020, cited in Kapasia *et al.*, 2020). However, the post-pandemic period has brought different challenges which produce stress, depression, anxiety, and an unfavorable study environment. Learning at school can be made difficult by students and teachers.

On the other hand, the studying habits created during the pandemic period will never go away completely. The teachers have to understand and handle significant issues in the classrooms during face-to-face period after the pandemic era. Loveless (2021) said that after the outbreak, learners show minimal effort to attend classes, do homework and misunderstand topics that they reviewed in the previous level and this situation generates in students' and teachers' stress. It happens because learners attended a short period of classes, when they come back to face-to-face classes, they need to accomplish a schedule. This approach leads to condensing all study time into lengthy days, which is not always effective and often induces stress.

Consequently, utilizing comics as a tool for teaching a second language proves beneficial in enhancing language skills. This approach prevents students' disinterest, as the materials captivate their attention and provide an enjoyable learning experience. Previous research supports this notion, demonstrating that incorporating comics can heighten students' motivation to learn English (Hasanah, 2021).

According to Rokhayani and Utari (2014), printed materials remain a viable medium when an electrical connection is unavailable, offering the advantage of accessibility in any location or at any time. The inclusion of visual aids, such as images and text, aids in the dissemination of educational content from teachers to students. The success of education can be evaluated by assessing the outcomes of the teaching and learning processes themselves.

Therefore, comic strips hold readers' interest due to their sequential and humorous storytelling, combining professionally crafted visual with text. With this background in mind, the objective of this article is to introduce comic strips as an alternative method for instructing English to baccalaureate students, addressing their vocabulary limitations and English proficiency.

DEFINITION AND ELEMENTS OF COMIC STRIPS

Comics are well-known as comic books or comic strips. They are a popular form of sequential art that uses a combination of text and drawings to tell funny and interesting stories entertainingly and visually. The author and cartoonist Scott McCloud defines comics as «juxtaposed images and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and produce an aesthetic response in the viewer» (1995, p. 34).

According to McCloud (1995), there are some important elements of a comic strip that learners need to know such as panels, dialogues, graphics, plot, and gutter (see Figure 1).

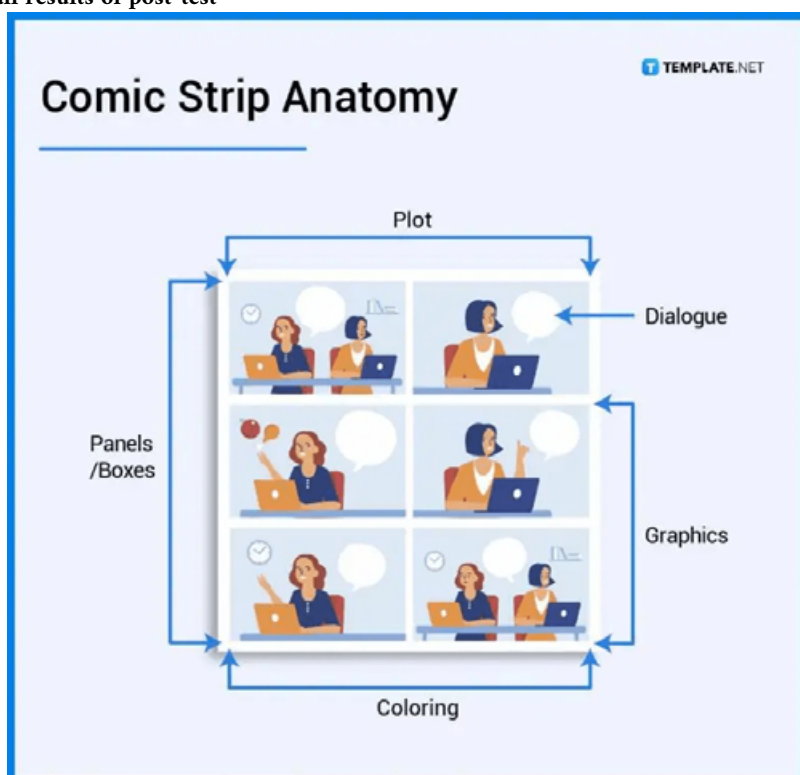
The first important element of a comic book is the image. The images in a comic can be simple or complex, but they must always be visual and tell a story clearly and effectively. Images can be freehand drawings, digital illustrations, photographs, and black and white colors, depending on the author's preference.

The second important element of a comic book is the text. Text in a comic can be used to provide additional information, develop characters, and explain the plot. In addition, the text can be in the form of dialogue among characters where they can express their thoughts or narratives.

The third important element of a comic is the sequence. It is the way that the images and text are organized to tell a story. The sequence can be linear, with the images and text arranged in chronological order, or non-linear, with images and text arranged non-sequentially. The sequence can also be manipulated to create dramatic effects or to surprise the reader.

Another important element of a comic is the frame. The frame is the border that surrounds each image in a comic. The frame helps separate the images and text and helps

Figure 2. Overall results of post-test



Note. Mean, Standard Deviation, Minimum, and Maximum scores for the pretest.

the reader understand the sequence. Frames can also be manipulated to create dramatic effects and to direct the reader's attention.

Finally, McCloud stresses the importance of the space between panels in the comic. The space between panels, also known as «gutter», is the white space that separates images and text. The gutter is important because it allows the reader to fill in the blanks and create a visual narrative in their mind (1995).

Many students feel inspiration from the comics, and they enjoyed reading in their earlier years. Comic strips play a significant role in fostering creativity, largely due to the diverse range of genres one encounters while reading them. This exposure contributes to the enhancement of learners' drawing and writing abilities. Furthermore, these comics can also boost motivation and interest in reading a second language. Beyond their entertainment value, they facilitate comprehension of various scenarios and plotlines through the incorporation of images. In conclusion, comics are a unique and fascinating form of storytelling through the combination of images and text. The important elements of a comic include image, text, sequence, frame, and gutter. By understanding these elements, comic creators can tell stories in an exciting and visually appealing way.

TYPES OF COMIC STRIPS

Comics, featuring vibrant illustrations, compelling narratives, and relatable characters, possess the ability to inspire students across all age groups (Sudjana and Rivai, 2009). The inclusion of colorful visuals within comics invokes a sense of enjoyment, piquing the reader's interest and encouraging them to delve deeper into the storyline. When readers are motivated to engage with the entire comic, the underlying objectives of reading, be it for entertainment or educational purposes, become readily achievable. Particularly for children,

colorful comics prove to be a highly captivating medium. Thus, the comic strips are divided into two types: printed material comic strip and digital comic strips.

1. Printed comic strips

Comic strips are recognized as valuable educational media. Educators employ comic strips as both instructional content and media tools. Comics weave narratives that revolve around everyday school environments, allowing students to mimic the language spoken by the characters, thereby enhancing their English-speaking proficiency. In this context, teachers play a pivotal role in ensuring the correct pronunciation of the language, making them indispensable contributors to the language-learning process.

Printed materials continue to serve as valuable educational resources, their versatility allows for utilization in diverse settings and at any time. The incorporation of visuals, encompassing both images and text, enhances the dissemination of educational content from teachers to students. To ensure educational success through printed material comic strip, educators must fulfill four key competencies: pedagogical, personal, social, and professional (Rokhayani and Utari, 2014). These competencies collectively strive to facilitate an efficient and impactful teaching and learning experience, both within and beyond the confines of the classroom.

2. Digital comic strip

As asserted by Jacobs (2013), comics are often regarded as a distilled form of text, enhanced by visual elements to facilitate comprehension for readers. In the construction of specific meanings, comics harmonize written content with visual imagery, effectively functioning as multimodal texts. Consequently, the act of engaging with comics is deemed a manifestation of multimodal literacy, transcending the confines of traditional print literacy.

The evolution of the internet, the concept of «digital comics» has also come to the forefront. Aggleton (2019), in her research, elucidates several fundamental principles governing digital comics, encompassing their defining characteristics and attributes. There are three salient characteristics that encapsulate the essence of digital comics.

- Digital form: the comic strips must exclusively exist in digital format or originate as digital-born comics, created with the intent of digital publication.
- Single panel: digital comics either comprise single-panel images or are composed of a sequence of interconnected images.
- Semi-guided Reading: comic strips should possess a semi-guided reading pathway, as they incorporate both written content (representing the guided reading pathway) and images (representing the unguided reading pathway), thereby situating comics within the interplay of these two modes.

Regarding their essential aspects, comics must incorporate visible frames, iconic symbols, and a distinctive handwriting style. Conversely, they should not be construed merely as moving images or audio recordings.

LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

As already mentioned, the covid-19 pandemic raised many additional obstacles and challenges for students and teachers. These aspects make a difficult teaching-learning process in

the classrooms. However, there are a lot of techniques and methods that help learning a foreign language such as the translation method, bilingual method, direct method, and so on.

Thus, the teachers should create learning situations to engage in the learning of some new words. One of the basics of learning a language is learning vocabulary and it is one of the complex components that learners need to master in language learning. Cabrera, Castillo, González, Quiñónez, and Ochoa (2018) argue that vocabulary is the bridge to using and understanding the language and skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening. In this case, comic strips are the perfect tool to learn a language. In addition, motivation is relevant in that part of learning. Some studies demonstrate that incorporating new elements into theoretical classes helps the motivation of the student.

The achievement of learners in learning a foreign language within an educational setting is directly influenced by the effectiveness of their teacher (Gomleksiz 2001). Also, they say that the study of a language begins when the student wants to communicate something to someone, and technology could be part of this learning process. Technology is everything people do, so it should improve the teaching and learning of a language. It can help us with interactive tasks on web pages, audiovisual platforms, and software on the internet to improve our vocabulary and grammar with other learners, while sharing ideas, experiences, new words, and expressions (Chapelle, 2007).

In conclusion, integrating comic strips into the learning process enhances its significance and enjoyment. This approach fosters higher level thinking skills such as analytical abilities, achieved by comparing panels. Cabrera *et al.* (2018) and Kohnke (2018) endorse this concept, asserting that comics positively influence second language acquisition. As a result, incorporating comics empowers students to exercise creative control while experiencing a heightened sense of enjoyment.

LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE USING COMICS

All audiences, including discursive media, facilitate the transmission of sensitive and complex information, and genres facilitate the expression of emotions, and the understanding of specialized contents that require visual and informative personalization; for example, post-pandemic comics show the prevention rules that people need to follow. See Figure 2. This is the case for cartoons and comics, which, in addition to their creativity, expressiveness, and joviality, are also used as a means of scientific communication, especially in medicine, due to their didactic, illustrative, and didactic potential (García Sánchez and García Sánchez, 2020; Guerra-Zúñiga and Segovia-Chamorro, 2020; Lalanda, 2019; Mayor Serano, 2021; and Negrete Yankelevich, 2011) (see Figure 2).

As a result, a private school has chosen to harness the educational potential of comics as a pedagogical instrument to teach a wide array of reading techniques. These encompass deciphering the import of visual elements in media content, fostering interactive and dialogic reading practices, and honing the ability to recognize problem-solution frameworks within narrative structures. The educational framework instituted by this private school includes the development of lesson plans that advocate the establishment of a club christened «Comic». This club aims to afford students an immersive opportunity to delve deeper into the world of comics, unraveling their intricate structures and narrative techniques.

Consequently, the utilization of comics as educational tools for learning a language underscores their efficacy as didactic materials. Comics not only furnish captivating and motivating content but also offer invaluable visual support to facilitate the process of learning to read and write.

Based on this study, it can be inferred that comics hold potential for classroom application in acquiring fresh vocabulary, enhancing understanding, and fostering reading

Figure 2. Overall results of post-test



Note. Mean, Standard Deviation, Minimum, and Maximum scores for the pretest.

routines during the period following the pandemic. Although comics traditionally target younger readers, they present a wellspring of novel and demanding terminology for university students. The level of sophistication within a comic can markedly differ based on factors such as its title, target audience, and underlying goals. This wide array of comic genres includes adventure, fantasy, romance, humor, and superheroes, among others.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study aimed to know the influence of comics on the acquisition of the English language in post-pandemic period. Hence, this investigation will employ descriptive, contrastive, and quali-quantitative approaches. The primary objective of descriptive research is to methodically gather data to depict a phenomenon, circumstance, or population. To be precise, it aids in addressing inquiries related to what, when, where, and how concerning the research subject, as opposed to the question of why. Furthermore, it aids in ascertaining the modification that arise during the implementation of any given activity.

This investigation was conducted in a private high school in Quito, Ecuador. The participants were 50 students (male and female, aged 14-16 years old) who were taking EFL classes as part of the study plan established by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education. The participants received one period (90 minutes per period) of English classes per week and were enrolled in the first, second, and third year of High school baccalaureate.

In accordance with the guidelines set forth by Cambridge English in 2016, four fundamental assessment principles have been established, encompassing validity, reliability, impact, and practicality. The first principle, validity, underscores the imperative of assessments yielding scores or outcomes that faithfully reflect the true level of ability possessed by the test taker. The second principle, reliability, emphasizes the necessity for assessment results to exhibit stability, consistency, and immunity from measurement errors, ensuring that they can be depended upon as accurate representations of a test taker's capabilities.

Lastly, the practicality principle considers various logistical factors, including the availability of resources, financial constraints, time limitations, ease of administration, and the interpretability of test results. All of these assessment principles were meticulously considered in the design of the survey to ensure its effectiveness and fairness.

In addition, there was a survey which was conducted to collect the data and it was administered to 50 students from the baccalaureate level. The questionnaire was designed based on the objectives and research questions of the study. The survey was designed in forms given by Gmail, with three sections and 12 questions. The first section has information about the course and year of study. The second section used closed questions and the last section had open questions related to the use of comics and learners' experience using them during English classes.

Finally, this research carries out quali-quantitative methods because we want to combine the interpretation and understanding of the data. The first one is based on understanding concepts, thoughts, or experiences through a literature review that exploring and explaining definitions and theories. The second one is based on numbers and graphs through an Excel program to test and confirm theories and assumptions.

RESULTS

To interpret the data, it was necessary to see the different results. Once the information was compared, the analysis of the results was stated. The following results were obtained from a survey applied to the students to determine the comic strips perspective on the learning a language after the covid-19 pandemic.

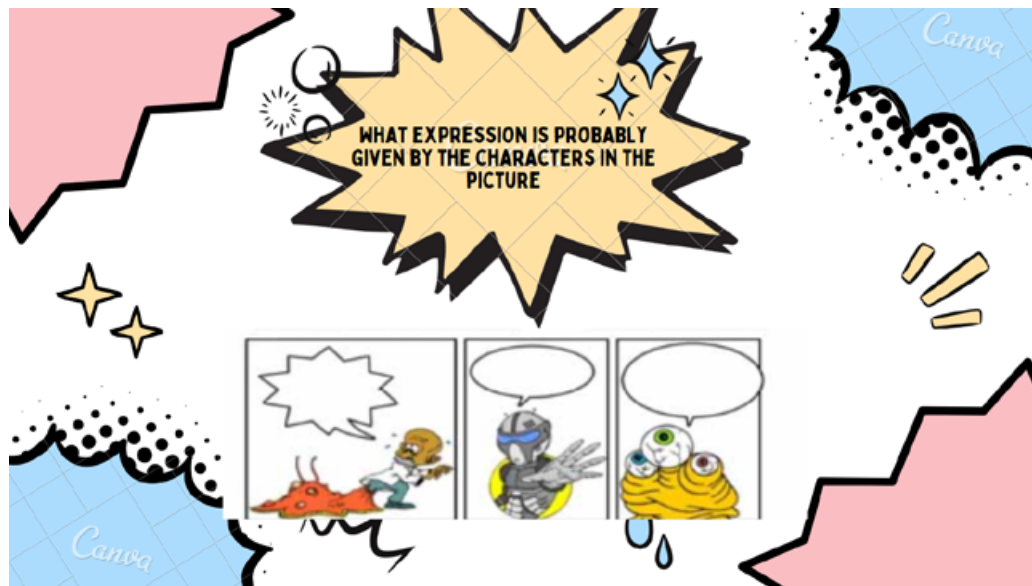
The first question shows the results of a survey asking baccalaureate students whether they like reading comics and the participants had two possible answers: yes and no. Most of the participants like to read comics (78.6%). However, a few students (21.4%) do not like this activity. Most of them were aware that graphic novels serve as engaging resources within classrooms, and some educators have effectively integrated graphic novels into their teaching. In a recent article, Nancy Schneider (2007) illustrates how comic books serve as a bridge to enhance the reading abilities of struggling students and establish rapport with disheartened learners. Schwartz (2002), a university professor, contends that graphic novels can act a means to «introduce students to literature they might never otherwise encounter» (p. 262).

Comics were incorporated into the English curriculum as class project where students participating in this activity every Friday. During the initial session, students exhibited curiosity in learning more about comics. Following these informative sessions, the teacher proceeded to elucidate the components of a comic strip. Among the activities was the presentation of images, prompting students to converse and share potential expressions to complete the panels of the strip (see Figure 3).

The 62.5% of the students mentioned that they often read comics. While another group of students (37.5%) remarked they never read comics. This phenomenon occurs due to the fact that many readers find comics to be a captivating method for delving into particular cultures, such as the manga style, and for gaining proficiency in a second language. As outlined by the research, individuals who read manga are considered “engaged readers”, as they must devise techniques to navigate the structured layout and amalgamation of visuals with diverse textual elements. In other words, manga can be used «to develop students' awareness and understanding of multiple literacies» and to teach reading strategies, «such as word recognition and problem solving» (Allen & Ingulsrud, 2003, p. 680).

There was another question about how students learn English through comic strips. Most of the students (57.1%) mentioned that they believed that comics help to learn a foreign language. Several students stated that English may be taught through comics (35.7%). Only 7.1% believe that comics cannot help to learn English. In this regard, Budiman, Sada, & Wardah (2018) along with Cabrera, Castillo, González, Quiñónez, & Ochoa (2018), argue that vocabulary stands as a pivotal component that students must proficiently grasp

Figure 2. Overall results of post-test



Note. Mean, Standard Deviation, Minimum, and Maximum scores for the pretest.

in the process of language learning. This is primarily because vocabulary serves as the conduit enabling individuals to effectively employ and comprehend a language, facilitating the development of crucial skills encompassing reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Consequently, it is imperative for teachers to establish a conducive learning environment that motivates students to acquire new words.

At the same time a question mentioned that comics help to learn more vocabulary in a second language and the results show that students can learn more vocabulary using comics (71%). Meanwhile, the 16.2 % percent of the people voted maybe and the rest with no sure. Drawing from the data, several compelling arguments in favor of the notion that comics serve as a valuable tool within the classroom for learning a language. Specifically, comic strips prove advantageous for vocabulary acquisition. Moreover, in addition to enhancing vocabulary, grammar, and reading skills, comic strips also contribute positively to the development of writing skills. This connection arises from the fact that vocabulary, grammar and reading proficiency are inherently interconnected with writing skills. As articulated by Chaikovska (2018), efficacy stems from the learning process's engagement with visual aids, including images, photographs, maps, cartoons, and video clips.

DISCUSSION

This investigation highlights several advantages associated with the utilization of comics in English learning. These benefits are evident in the use of comic strips to enhance various language components and skills, including vocabulary, grammar, reading proficiency, and writing skills. Nonetheless, it is important to know the challenges that both educators and learners may encounter during the teaching-learning process.

Comic strips play a crucial role in vocabulary improvement, as they reinforce traditional grammar and vocabulary tasks (Chaikovska, 2018). Furthermore, Megawati (2012) states that comic strips are effective in helping students grasp vocabulary by using images and dialogue to convey character expressions. Annex C shows that students complete a comic strip which uses vocabulary related to Crime. It uses words such as charges, thief, officer, and commit a crime and so on. This implies that comics contribute to 1) vo-

cabulary instruction, 2) vocabulary enhancement, and 3) making the learning process engaging and meaningful.

On the other hand, there are challenges when incorporating comics into the teaching process. Using comic strips to teach grammar could be seen as an unconventional strategy in language learning, leading to resistance, as noted by Fischer (2012), who argues that comic strips are primarily associated with entertainment. Another challenge is the diverse ways in which comic strips can be applied in language classrooms. Therefore, teachers must employ creative approaches to align the use of comic strips with their learning objectives (Budiman *et al*, 2018).

Finally, the integration of comics into language learning makes the process more enjoyable and engaging for students. Comic strips not only stimulate students' creativity but also serve as a medium for developing and practicing their target language. Moreover, this investigation supports the hypothesis that comics have a positive impact on English language acquisition among baccalaureate students. Comics could be used effectively to teach various aspects of language, including vocabulary, grammar, reading skills, and writing skills, such as teaching modals and pronouns and transforming direct speech into indirect speech within speech bubbles.

CONCLUSIONS

Numerous studies have provided compelling evidence regarding the efficacy of incorporating comic strips into language teaching, shedding light on both their advantages and challenges. The consensus among these studies is that the utilization of comic strips in language education yields significant benefits. The use of comic strips helps to express their thoughts and ideas through visual imagery while simultaneously facilitating language components, including vocabulary and grammar, and contributes to the refinement of their reading and writing skills.

Based on the information provided, it can be inferred that the use of both printed and digital comic strips serves as an effective English teaching medium for improving vocabulary among Junior High School students. This conclusion is supported by the survey results, which indicate that learners responded positively to the use of comics in their language learning experience.

Furthermore, comic strips are deemed suitable and efficient as teaching media due to their capacity to facilitate the seamless delivery of instructional materials by teachers. They are also found to be effective in aiding students' comprehension of the expressions conveyed by characters within the comics. For instance, comic strips are an effective tool for teaching vocabulary and grammar, as they can be employed to introduce concepts like modals and pronouns and even demonstrate the transformation of direct speech into indirect speech within speech bubbles. Additionally, comic strips provide valuable support for words and grammar featured in dialogues, rendering the text more comprehensible and aiding students in their pursuit of written language skills. Further research might be in comic strip strategies for children and its effect in affective filter in learning a foreign language environment.

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REVISTA KRONOS

Pilot testing of three English texts at the National University of Education

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ABSTRACT This study aimed to compare three English textbooks to demonstrate their advantages and disadvantages in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context and determine the best option to use. The three English textbooks used were Touchstone, English File, and Headway. The participants were 187 students from the National University of Education (UNAE) in Ecuador. This was a quasi experimental study where quantitative and qualitative data were collected. A pre-test and post-test were administered to the students at the beginning and end of the study. In addition, a survey was conducted with the students and a checklist was given to the teachers to collect quantitative data. A survey with open-ended questions was used to gather qualitative data from the teachers. The results suggested that English File was the best option for our context because the students learned better and increased their English proficiency compared to the other two textbooks. Furthermore, the teachers agreed that the English File is more useful because it offers a variety of resources that reduce teachers' planning time.

KEY WORDS Textbook, evaluation, EFL, university

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Pilotaje de tres textos de inglés en la Universidad Nacional de Educación

RESUMEN Este estudio tuvo como objetivo comparar tres libros de texto de inglés para demostrar sus ventajas y desventajas en un contexto de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) y determinar la mejor opción a utilizar. Los tres libros de texto de inglés utilizados fueron Touchstone, English File y Headway. Los participantes fueron 187 estudiantes de la Universidad Nacional de Educación (UNAE) en Ecuador. Este fue un estudio cuasi experimental donde se recopilaban datos cuantitativos y cualitativos. Se aplicó una prueba previa y una prueba posterior a los estudiantes al inicio y al final del estudio. Además, se aplicó una encuesta a los estudiantes y una lista de verificación a los profesores para recopilar datos cuantitativos. Se utilizó una encuesta a los profesores con preguntas abiertas para recopilar los datos cualitativos. Los resultados sugirieron que English File fue la mejor opción para nuestro contexto porque los estudiantes aprendieron mejor y aumentaron sus conocimientos de inglés en comparación con los otros dos libros de texto. Además, los profesores estuvieron de acuerdo en que English File es más útil porque tiene una variedad de recursos que reducen el tiempo de planificación de los profesores.

PALABRAS CLAVE Libro de texto, evaluación, EFL, universidad.

INTRODUCTION

Selecting the right tools for an English lesson is a significant part of teaching English. One of the most used tools in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom is the textbook. According to Hutchinson and Torres (1994), no teaching environment is complete without a relevant textbook, and both teachers and students tend to acknowledge its usefulness, especially if it is presented as a package, namely, it is accompanied by multimedia and online resources.

Since 2016 the Universidad Nacional de Educación (UNAE) has been teaching English in its Language Center using the Touchstone series. However, not all teachers at the University were satisfied with the Touchstone course book so they decided to consider other options for a textbook to use to teach English in their classes. Choosing a book that matches the teachers and students' needs was fundamental for the University.

Selecting a textbook is a complex task and over the past decades a number of methods have been created for their evaluation. Many rubrics have been in circulation, but the way Chambers (1997) lists down some of the pedagogical factors that need to be considered still seems to be valid: «suitability for the age group, cultural appropriateness, methodology, level quality, number and type of exercises, skills, teacher's book, variety, pace, personal involvement, and problem solving» (pp. 29-30).

Three textbooks were chosen for the evaluation process of this study: Touchstone, American English File, and American Headway (see the References section for the editions used). In Ecuador, university students need to reach a B1 level of English in order to graduate (with the exception of those who train to become English teachers, who need to reach a B2 level); this is stated by the Reglamento de Régimen Académico (2019) (Ecuadorian Academic Regulation) and in the Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior (2014) (LOES - the Law on Higher Education). Therefore, the aim of the present research project was to establish which of the three suggested textbooks would fulfill the requirements of creating the best conditions for our university students to successfully achieve the prescribed level.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The effective evaluation of teaching materials is of paramount importance for EFL teachers (McDonough, Shaw & Masuhara, 2013). The term 'evaluation' is best understood as defined by Tomlinson (2003): «Materials evaluation is a procedure that involves measuring the value (or potential value) of a set of learning materials» (p. 15).

Richards and Renandya (2002) summarize the advantages and disadvantages of the use of textbooks. Some advantages are: they provide structure and a syllabus for the program, help standardize instruction, maintain quality, and provide a variety of learning resources. Furthermore, they are efficient, can provide effective language models and input, can train teachers, and they are visually appealing. However, there are also some disadvantages, for example, they may contain inauthentic language, may not meet students' needs, they can deskill teachers, and are usually expensive (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

The evaluation process usually takes place in two stages. The first is an 'impressionistic overview', while the second is an in-depth evaluation. In McDonough and Shaw's interpretation (2003), an external evaluation is based on the overall organization of the course book as well as the statements that the author makes about it. An internal evaluation involves a deeper analysis of the units and requires the evaluator to reflect on aspects like the presentation of skills, sequencing and the appropriateness of the texts included. Course book assessment can be a subjective activity, therefore, Tomlinson (2003) stresses

that this element can be reduced by using a principled and systematic process which applies a criterion-referenced evaluation.

EVALUATIVE CHECKLISTS

Course book evaluation has been going on for decades now; see especially Mukundan and Ahour's work (2010), which contains a review of textbook evaluation checklists for nearly four decades (1970–2008). Cunningsworth (1995) and McDonough and Shaw (2003) have created checklists which are based on the understanding that course books should match learners' needs and help them learn how to use the language effectively.

Mukundan, Hajimohammadi and Nimehchisalem (2011) provide an exhaustive overview of how an English language textbook evaluation checklist can be created. They start out by defining the terms to be applied as follows: pre-use or predictive evaluation, which «helps teachers in selecting the most appropriate textbook for a given language classroom»; in-use evaluation, which «aids the teacher to explore the weaknesses or strengths of the textbook while it is being used»; and finally, «post-use, or retrospective evaluation, which helps the teacher reflect on the quality of the textbook after it has been used in a particular learning-teaching situation» (p. 21).

Mukundan *et al.* (2011) suggest the following criteria: 'general attributes' and 'learning-teaching content' with the first category divided into five sub-categories: Relation to syllabus and curriculum, Methodology, Suitability to learners, Physical and utilitarian attributes, and Supplementary materials. The second category has the following subdivisions: General (task quality, cultural sensitivity, linguistic and situational realism), Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Vocabulary, Grammar, Pronunciation, and Exercises.

The authors emphasize that an ideal checklist needs to be economical as they remind us of Cunningsworth's warning: «it is important to limit the number of criteria used, and the number of questions asked to manageable proportions; otherwise, we risk being swamped in a sea of detail» (1995, p. 5).

RECENT SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH STUDIES

Gutiérrez Bermúdez (2014) carried out an exercise in course book evaluation by looking at the strengths and weaknesses of the course book *New English File: Elementary* used in Colombia. He emphasizes that teachers should develop their own evaluation criteria instead of relying on checklists that might have been created for contexts that are different from theirs (p. 103). He suggests a structured qualitative evaluation arranged under five headings: book design, curricular and material design, task design, usability and versatility. Each of these criteria is formulated as a question with brief instructions for the evaluators and a rather detailed description of the considerations that should be considered. The result is exactly the type of assessment that Mukundan *et al.* (2011) have warned against: a rather unwieldy and verbose qualitative description resulting in the verdict that the book in question «has a very solid and verifiable curricular foundation» (p. 109).

In the Vietnamese context, Tu, Trang and Phuong (2013) carried out an in-use evaluation of *American English File*, which is also one of the course books that was evaluated by the Ecuadorian English teachers who wrote the present paper. The empirical study involved asking 14 teachers and 103 students to answer the statements of two checklists (one for the teachers and another one for the students). The authors used a Likert-type five-point scale to measure attributes like the match of the course book to the specifications of the syllabus, the learning-teaching content, the appropriateness of the tasks and

the development of various learning styles. Overall, both the teachers and the students of Ho Chi Minh City University were satisfied with the course book, with the exception of the development of writing skills, which is, apparently, somewhat neglected.

Shahmohammadi (2018) employed an eclectic checklist to evaluate the textbook series called *Prospect*, which is used in junior high schools in Iran. The course book was written by a team of six Iranian authors: Moghaddam, Khodaparastan, Kheirabadi, Sarab, Foruzndeh and Ghorbani. While *Prospect* was overall deemed better than the series used before, the 34 EFL teachers gave low marks on many of the 38 items included in the checklist, such as the authenticity of the materials, the recycling of the vocabulary and the presentation of pronunciation. A high proportion of the respondents were dissatisfied with the tasks and activities presented in the course book claiming that they do not sufficiently motivate and challenge learners.

Lisna (2016) carried out a retrospective (post-use) evaluation of the course book *Speakout Intermediate* by creating two questionnaires for four teachers and 21 students, thereby carrying out a 'micro-analysis' based on a fairly small sample of adult learners in Ukraine. The one for the teachers comprised 30 criteria split into five categories, while the one for the students was less specific and contained only 15 criteria. Both the teachers' and the students' evaluations reflected a high level of satisfaction (no results below 70% agreement). Nevertheless, there was mixed feedback regarding the virtual workbook, and the criteria related to using the learnt language in real life situations also received a relatively low score.

Another retrospective evaluation of an ELT course book, *Fifty-Fifty Book One* (Wilson & Barnard, 2007) was carried out by Jones (2009), who assessed its effectiveness and appropriacy for a conversation course at a South Korean university. The conversation program, which is run by native speaker instructors, focused on speaking and listening skills. Jones adopted McDonough and Shaw's framework (2003) but eliminated several criteria that she considered irrelevant. Her main findings are as follows:

- The topics have an appeal to a wide range of learners.
- The material is tailored to the needs of Asian students aspiring to learn American English.
- The dialogues and tasks are culturally Western, owing to a 'Western' focus, they need some adaptation for Asian students.
- The listening scripts are semi-authentic, and mimic possible real-world interactions.
- Active student interaction is encouraged.

The textbook evaluation criteria applied by the researchers for the present study are based on an adapted version of McDonough and Shaw's (2003) criteria, which is aimed at exploring and explaining the weaknesses and strengths of each textbook and selecting the best option for the university.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

The research population of the current study involved all pre-service teachers (who, by default, take English classes) from the Universidad Nacional de Educación (UNAE) in Ecuador. The sample consisted of 187 students from the different majors, such as early childhood education, elementary education, special education, intercultural bilingual education,

science education, arts and humanities pedagogy, and national and foreign language pedagogy. The students were attending their first level of English classes with four hours of English every week for 16 weeks. All the participants were Spanish native speakers and the students from this semester were going to use the textbooks for the first time, which we hoped would provide a fresh perspective on the advantages and disadvantages of each textbook.

After selecting the sample, the three textbooks were examined to decide which grammatical structures and vocabulary were going to be taught during the semester so that all first-level students learned the same grammar and vocabulary. Also, collaborative lesson planning was used to make sure that the conditions in each classroom were similar.

As for the team working on the evaluation, it included 3 English teacher researchers who designed the research and taught using the 3 textbooks. The textbooks that were used during this research were Touchstone 1 (TS), American English File Starter (EF), American Headway Starter (HS). Teacher researcher 2 (T2) and teacher researcher 3 (T3) used all three textbooks; however, teacher researcher 1 (T1) only used English File and Headway.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND INSTRUMENTS

The research project adopted a quasi-experimental method approach to accomplish a comparative study of the three English textbooks. Data gathering was carried out by administering a pre-test, a post-test, and a survey to the students, as well as a textbook checklist (for quantitative data) and a survey (for qualitative data) for the teachers.

Students took a pre-test and post-test which was an adapted version of the Macmillan Straightforward beginner and elementary placement test (Kerr, Jones, Clandfield, Norris, & Scrivener, 2012). The test consisted of thirty multiple-choice questions. The first twenty-five were grammar questions and the final five were vocabulary questions. Students gave both tests in person, in a hard-copy format. The pre-test was taken at the beginning of the semester and aimed to identify the students' English level. The post-test was used to measure students' learning at the end of the semester. Applying a pre-test and a post-test not only allowed teachers to gauge how much students increased their knowledge and understanding of the English language but also to compare students' progress in the classes that were using the three textbooks.

As mentioned above, data collection also included two surveys and a checklist. Firstly, at the end of the semester, an online survey was administered to the students by google forms. Students were asked to provide their answers on a scale of four options (1 = standard, 2 = good, 3 = very good, and 4 = excellent). The survey was given to the students in their native language (Spanish) so that they could have a better understanding of the questions. It consisted of three parts with four questions in each. The first part focused on the content and vocabulary of the textbook. The second part of the survey referred to the exercises and the physical aspect of the textbook. The last part of the survey asked students for their opinion about the virtual platform of the textbook that they were using. The questions of our survey were based on McDonough and Shaw's (2003) criteria.

A textbook checklist, which was adapted from Mukundan *et al.* (2011) was administered to the teacher researchers. This checklist asked for the evaluation of general attributes, methodology, suitability for learners, physical and utilitarian attributes, efficient layout of supplementary materials, and the learning-teaching content. All the teacher researchers filled in the checklist for each of the textbooks they used during the treatment.

Additionally, a survey was filled out by the teacher researchers. The survey consisted of six open questions about the different English textbooks they were using. These ques-

tions were also based on Mukundan *et al.*'s (2011) checklist. This survey was applied to gather the teacher researchers' more in-depth points of view.

RESULTS

A total of $N = 187$ students participated in the tests and were divided as follows: Touchstone 45, English File 73 and Headway 69. Table 1 shows the pretest and posttest ratings of the different texts: Touchstone, English File and Headway. It also shows that there was a 5.71 improvement in the students that used Touchstone, 6.68 improvement with English File, and a 5.85 improvement with Headway. Although the differences in the test results are minimal, students using the English File course book seem to have achieved a marginally better score.

Table 1 presents relevant results for the pretest analysis, as it shows that the 3 groups are very similar when comparing their mean and median values. However, a better mode value in the pretest rating is displayed in the Touchstone group, with a rating of 13, compared to the other 2 groups with ratings of 9 and 10. The standard deviation values suggest that the pretest scores are more clustered around the mean in the 3 groups. Additionally, the pretest rank values are high in the English file and Touchstone groups, with very low scores of 2 and 4, respectively.

On the other hand, this chart presents aspects of the posttest that suggest improvement in all groups. The similarity of improvement is on par in the 3 groups, highlighting the groups that used Headway and Touchstone by the mode value in the posttest with a rating of 21 equally, and much lower for the English file group with a posttest rating of 18. The standard deviation values have decreased in the groups, denoting a clustering closer to the mean compared to the pretest, which was more slightly dispersed, reflecting the intervention of each of the texts used by the teachers. Overall, it can be said that the 3 groups have improved their English skills, since when analyzing the range of minimum and maximum scores compared to the pretest and posttest, they have raised their ratings.

In the next section, we will review the online survey filled out by the students. Table 1 and 2 touch upon the topics presented in the three textbooks, and Table 4 presents questions related to the virtual platform of each textbook.

Let us first look at how students evaluated the topics and content of the textbooks.

The data shown in table 2 demonstrate that students' level of interest in the topics presented in each textbook is similar for English File and Touchstone. However, English File's content seems to be the most relevant to students' needs and it also appears to present the most adequate amount of vocabulary. Furthermore, when we look at both the Very Good and Excellent scores, the textbook that contains the easiest topics to understand is English File.

Table 3 illustrates students' perspective on the exercises, activities, and presentation of the textbooks.

As the results of this table show, Touchstone appears to have the right amount of variety of exercises in line with the topics learned. Students can practice exercises that have clear instructions and require no guidance. It needs to be pointed out that English File has grammar exercises that are followed by vocabulary and pronunciation activities and every unit ends with a communicative activity where students apply the content of the whole unit. The students believe that Headway provides the right amount of practice. Finally, English File has the highest level of acceptance regarding the presentation of the textbook because it has some videos with appropriate content to improve English proficiency.

Table 4 presents the data on the virtual platform and multimedia resources of each textbook.

Table 1. Pre- and post-test results

	Pretest Headway	Post test Headway	Pretest English file	Post test English file	Pretest Touchstone	Post test Touchstone
Valid	N = 69	N = 69	N = 73	N = 73	N = 45	N = 45
Mean	13,90	19,75	13,40	20,08	13,33	19,04
Median	13,00	21,00	13,00	20,00	13,00	19,00
Mode	9,00a	21,00	10,00	18,00	13,00	21,00
Std. Deviation	4,11	4,31	4,38	3,45	5,34	4,03
Range	18,00	18,00	25,00	14,00	21,00	16,00
Minimum	7,00	11,00	2,00	13,00	4,00	10,00
Maximum	25,00	29,00	27,00	27,00	25,00	26,00

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown.

Source: Data gathered by the authors

Table 2. Content and topics

CATEGORIES	STAN- DARD	GOOD	VERY GOOD	EX- CEL- LENT
1. Level of interest				
2. Level of relevance				
3. Level of comprehension				

Table 3. Practice and presentation

CATEGORIES	TS	EF	HW	TS	EF	HW	TS	EF	HW	TS	EF	HW
	STANDARD (%)			GOOD (%)			VERY GOOD (%)			EXCELLENT (%)		
5. Variety of exercises				10	6	9	31	37	33	59	57	58
6. Helpful activities				7	4	4	38	65	51	61	31	44
7. Sufficient practice	3	2	0	3	4	2	41	45	51	52	49	47
8. Textbook presentation	7	0	0	10	4	0	24	29	40	59	67	60

Source: Data gathered by the authors

Table 4. Virtual platform and multimedia resources

CATEGORIES	TS	EF	HW	TS	EF	HW	TS	EF	HW	TS	EF	HW
	STANDARD (%)			GOOD (%)			VERY GOOD (%)			EXCELLENT (%)		
9. Relevance of videos in the textbook	3	0	2	10	8	16	21	37	44	55	49	36
10. Ease of use of the virtual platform	3	10	9	17	10	13	41	31	51	38	49	27
11. Level of practice on the virtual platform	0	4	4	14	10	9	48	27	47	38	59	40
12. Level of interactive exercises	0	1	0	14	15	7	38	38	7	48	46	40

Source: Data gathered by the authors

The results show that Touchstone has the most relevant videos. However, English File is perceived as the most useful platform where students could learn doing a variety of exercises to improve their English. Also, students viewed the virtual platform of English File as the one with the most appropriate level of practice, whereas Touchstone provided students with the largest number of interactive exercises.

TEACHERS' SURVEY

After the instruction process, the teacher researchers filled in a survey questionnaire containing a series of open-ended questions comparing the three books. The questions were adapted from McDonough and Shaw (2003) and aimed at collecting the teachers' impressions and evaluations of the textbooks. The layout of the survey helped the teacher researchers organize their reflections methodically.

English File and Touchstone were considered easy to use by all teachers, as they contain clear objectives and many different types of activities that are well-linked. The teachers had more difficulty using Headway as the objectives were not that clear and it was more difficult to understand the activities. The main characteristics evaluated in the survey are listed below. For easy reference, the books' names are abbreviated: English File (EF), Headway (HW) and Touchstone (TS).

EASE OF USE AND PLANNING LESSONS, ACTIVITIES, AND UNIT OBJECTIVE CLARITY

Teacher researchers 1 and 2 agreed that all three textbooks are easy to follow. Teacher researcher 3 stated that HW was somewhat harder to handle since the contents were not well-connected with the grammar points, and some topics were difficult to explain.

All teacher researchers believed EF presents many carefully designed activities that are easy to understand both for teachers and students. However, the vocabulary and grammar activities are inconveniently located at the end of the textbook.

Concerning unit objectives, teacher-researchers 2 and 3 found HW's objectives not as clear as those of the other two textbooks, while teacher researcher 1 thought that the unit objectives were very clear in all three textbooks.

PLATFORM USE (USER-FRIENDLY/DIFFICULT/NON-EXISTENT)

Students worked with the virtual platforms that EF and HW provided, whereas teachers decided not to work with the TS platform because of its price and, therefore, students only worked with the student's book. The virtual platforms presented several inconveniences: some students' grades did not register properly in the teachers' grade books, and another issue was that students often forgot their passwords, making it difficult to send them the activities as homework.

EXTRA PREPARATION NEEDED TO DELIVER LESSONS

All teacher researchers said that EF contains enough materials to deliver the lessons. What is more, it provides extra materials that are useful for tutorials. As opposed to this, when using the HW textbook, the teacher researchers were required to find complementary materials to

explain grammar and provide extra practice. As for the Touchstone textbook, they agreed that looking for additional material proved time-consuming. This became necessary because they had to find different resources to reinforce the grammar presented.

BOOK ORGANIZATION (PICTURE, GRAMMAR PRESENTATION, SKILLS, TOPICS SEQUENCE)

As teacher researcher 1 worked only with EF and HW, she did not comment on TS in the remaining part of the survey.

All teacher researchers agreed on EF being a textbook that progresses gradually and presents grammar in chunks in an easy way to teach beginners. Teacher researchers 2 and 3 thought that HW's main drawback is the way grammar is presented since it is integrated into the book without any explicit explanation or practice, leading to the opinion that its contents are not well-organized.

Considering skills, teacher researchers 2 and 3 stated that although HW is communication-oriented, its tests are grammar-based, which constitutes a contradiction. They also agreed that the TS textbook is presented in a well-organized fashion. However, one clear disadvantage is its lack of meaningful listening activities.

The teacher researchers stated that they prefer real images, over cartoons, as used in HW and TS.

DO THE TOPICS ALIGN WITH STUDENTS' INTERESTS AND CONTEXT?

All teacher-researchers considered the topics contained in EF and HW suitable for beginners; most of them are interesting and contextualize English culture. TS also has some engaging topics, however, some of them are not relevant for students, because several topics are probably more appropriate for mature learners.

ACCESS TO THE BOOK'S EVALUATIONS, TESTS, AND QUIZZES

Teacher researchers mentioned that EF has a wide range of evaluation tools available on the Assessment CD, and these are easy to download and edit. They also agreed on how they judged HW's evaluation resources, which are not as vast as EF's resources and nor are they editable. TS provides fewer evaluation resources than the other two textbooks, and the Test Crafter is not user-friendly.

DISCUSSION

The pre-test and post-test comparative statistics show that students' initial proficiency scores were congruent in the three groups with slight variation between them, this means that the groups' starting bases were similar. Furthermore, they were evidenced subtle differences between data of the three books, the use of English File helped students to make a marginally greater progress in test performance, EF obtained the highest mean of the three and the lowest range of variance and standard deviation; however, we cannot claim that these results in themselves are conclusive evidence to declare that English File is more effective because of several limitations that will be discussed later on.

The results of the students' survey showed that all three textbooks were generally well-received. Nevertheless, the English File textbook had the most positive responses overall, on the grounds that it has the most relevant topics presented in the most appealing manner. As for the linkages between grammar, vocabulary and exercises, the variety of exercises and how interactive and interesting the exercises are, the students' responses showed that there was little difference between the three books. Even though the students' opinions are important, since their views are crucial in deciding which textbook would be most suited to their needs, the students did not have the opportunity to examine and use all three textbooks. This means that they could not compare the books, since they were only exposed to the textbook that was assigned to their particular group.

According to the findings of the checklist, the features encountered in English File stand out over the other textbooks. These results overlap with the students' choice. We consider that in the teaching-learning process it is important that, as suggested by McDonough and Shaw (2003), both students and teachers agree on the textbook that fits their needs and interests.

Results from the teachers' survey showed an agreement that English File provided the largest amount of appropriate material, meaning that it was easier and quicker for teachers to plan classes. At the other end of the scale, Touchstone does not provide enough communicative activities to use in the class and its topics were deemed more suitable for mature learners. It needs to be pointed out, though, that, as mentioned earlier, students were not given either Touchstone's workbook or its platform, consequently they did not have the experience of working with the complete Touchstone material. In terms of content, English File received the most positive responses. The teachers liked the fact that the grammar was taught in small, manageable chunks and the students were given lots of practice. English File applies a solid scaffolding process which has proven beneficial to the students.

From all these findings, it is clear that all three textbooks have their advantages and disadvantages, and there is no perfect option. However, overall, the students' online survey, the teachers' checklists, and their survey, showed that English File would be the most suitable textbook at UNAE. A more recent consideration in favor of EF is that it is also compatible with the current context of online learning because its lessons have enough material that can be adapted to remote lessons. Considering the wide range of resources that English File provides for students and teachers to contribute to their English instruction and learning, teachers from UNAE's Language Center decided to change the actual textbook (namely, Touchstone) to English File.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study had to deal with some drawbacks and limitations. Firstly, the pre-test and post-test applied were multiple choice and therefore the students' results were subject to an element of luck, although the chance factor would have applied to all learners and could have distorted the results in equal measure. Secondly, several other factors such as teachers' effectiveness and learners' individual characteristics, for example, motivation and learning styles can also affect students' achievements and progress. Furthermore, most students involved in the study were first-semester students that had studied at public high schools where either no course books or only low-quality textbooks provided by the government were used. This means that, for the majority of the students, this was their first experience using an English textbook from a world-renowned publisher (Oxford or Cambridge). These factors limited the students' ability to evaluate any of the three textbooks in a sophisticated manner.

CONCLUSION

Teaching English as a Foreign Language at university level in Ecuador is not an easy task, students from different ethnic and language backgrounds come together in the first year of university and working with that wide range of cultures and backgrounds make the experience challenging. However, standardizing the instruction with the help of high-quality English textbooks is a possible solution to cope with this challenge. Testing the three textbooks gave teacher researchers the opportunity to reflect on their own teaching practices and how textbook contents fulfill learners' needs and interests.

The teacher-researchers' experiences during the carrying out of this study was rewarding and satisfactory since they had the opportunity to analyze several textbooks and, therefore, they functioned not just as practitioners but also as curriculum designers.

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REVISTA KRONOS

Morphological awareness for the development of the lexical competence of the English language

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ABSTRACT This study centers on second language English learners and their limited vocabulary proficiency. Morphological awareness is acknowledged as crucial for developing lexical competence. This review explores the implications of morphological awareness (structure, analysis, and decoding) on lexical competence (vocabulary breadth, depth, and organization). The methodology employed is socio-educational, bibliographic, descriptive, and documentary. The transfer technique facilitated gathering and analyzing relevant bibliographic records. Databases such as ERIC, Scopus, Wiley Online Library, ABELL, Google Scholar, university repositories, and international journals were utilized, in turn, manual filters and keywords enhanced information gathering. Findings demonstrate that morphological awareness significantly enhances lexical proficiency in English across all dimensions. Grasping inflectional, derivational, and compounded forms enhances vocabulary breadth, depth, and organization. This awareness aids word recognition, comprehension, relationships, nuances, and meanings. Appreciating morphological patterns assists in word classification and arrangement and its pivotal role in increasing lexical proficiency benefits vocabulary organization, depth, and breadth. Educators can implement effective teaching techniques, emphasizing inflection, derivation, and lexical compounding, to enhance students' lexical competence and English proficiency, leveraging the scope of morphological awareness.

KEY WORDS Morphological awareness, lexical competence, inflection, derivation, lexical compounding, vocabulary breadth, vocabulary depth, vocabulary organization, language learning.

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Conciencia morfológica para el desarrollo de la competencia léxica del idioma inglés

RESUMEN Este estudio se centra en los estudiantes de inglés como segunda lengua y su limitado dominio del vocabulario. Se reconoce que la conciencia morfológica es crucial para el desarrollo de la competencia léxica. Esta revisión explora las implicaciones de la conciencia morfológica (estructura, análisis y decodificación) en la competencia léxica (amplitud, profundidad y organización del vocabulario). La metodología empleada es socioeducativa, bibliográfica, descriptiva y documental. La técnica de transferencia facilitó la recopilación y el análisis de los registros bibliográficos pertinentes. Se utilizaron bases de datos como ERIC, Scopus, Wiley Online Library, ABELL, Google Scholar, repositorios universitarios y revistas internacionales; a su vez, los filtros manuales y las palabras clave mejoraron la recopilación de información. Los resultados demuestran que la conciencia morfológica mejora significativamente la competencia léxica en inglés en todas sus dimensiones. La comprensión de las formas flexivas, derivativas y compuestas aumenta la amplitud, profundidad y organización del vocabulario. Este conocimiento facilita el reconocimiento, la comprensión, las relaciones, los matices y los significados de las palabras. Aprender los patrones morfológicos ayuda a clasificar y ordenar las palabras, y su papel fundamental en el aumento de la competencia léxica favorece la organización, la profundidad y la amplitud del vocabulario. Los educadores pueden aplicar técnicas de enseñanza eficaces, haciendo hincapié en la inflexión, la derivación y la composición léxica, para mejorar la competencia léxica de los estudiantes y su dominio del inglés, aprovechando el alcance de la conciencia morfológica.

PALABRAS CLAVE Genetic Conciencia morfológica, competencia léxica, flexión, derivación, composición léxica, amplitud de vocabulario, profundidad de vocabulario, organización del vocabulario, aprendizaje de idiomas.

MORPHOLOGICAL AWARENESS

As a linguistic awareness skill, morphological awareness refers to the capacity to identify and comprehend the smallest elements of meaning in language (Apel, 2014). This ability is often seen as a sort of metalinguistic awareness, which entails the capacity to consider language as a system, according to research (Li & Wu, 2015). Students learning English as a second language benefit from discerning complex English expressions (Newton, 2018), improving vocabulary, reading, writing, and overall communication.

The term «ability» here alludes to a metalinguistic capacity to comprehend, consider, and change morphemic qualities, which enables one to expand words into more intricate and nuanced forms. In contrast to morphological awareness, which involves a more comprehensive grasp of morphemic aspects in words (Carlisle *et al.*, 2010), morphological knowledge includes an explicit understanding of the meaning of a root word (Pacheco & Goodwin, 2013). Students that possess morphological awareness abilities can identify distinctions in meaning between words that have the same root but various affixes (such as help, helpful, helpless, and unhelpful). Numerous research supports the idea that morphological awareness is crucial for vocabulary learning, teaching, and general reading competency.

ASPECTS OF MORPHOLOGICAL AWARENESS

Research has delved into three aspects of morphological awareness, namely structure, analysis, and decoding (Deacon *et al.*, 2017; Kuo & Anderson, 2006; Levesque *et al.*, 2021; MacKay *et al.*, 2017), which offer a basis for comprehending how learners acquire knowledge about the organization and purpose of English language, especially in relation to reading and expanding their vocabulary.

The structure aspect involves understanding the complexity of the writing system and how spelling affects inflection, derivation, and lexical compounding (Berg *et al.*, 2014). Analysis, the second aspect, involves dissecting unfamiliar words into free and bound morphemes (Wagner *et al.*, 2007). Decoding, the third aspect, entails identifying morphemic units in words, pronouncing them, and blending them, combining orthographical and phonological features in word reading (Levesque & Deacon, 2022; Deacon *et al.*, 2017; MacKay *et al.*, 2017). Language teachers can gain a better grasp of the facets of morphological awareness and how they affect the learning of the English language through the study of these aspects.

Structure

English writing is influenced by morphological information, aiding readers in understanding the writing system (Levesque & Deacon, 2022). Research emphasizes studying word formation processes, like inflection, derivation, and compounds, as part of morphological awareness (W. Choi *et al.*, 2018). It involves recognizing morphemes as units of meaning (Varga *et al.*, 2020), crucial for lexical competence (McCutchen *et al.*, 2022). Lack of understanding can lead to vocabulary mistakes (Apel, 2014; Brandes & McMaster, 2017). Recognizing word structure helps correct vocabulary errors, leading to a richer vocabulary (Lubliner & Hiebert, 2011). Morphological awareness is especially beneficial for bilingual students (Lubliner & Hiebert, 2011). Understanding word processes facilitates effective communication and vocabulary acquisition (Varga *et al.*, 2020). This knowledge

contributes to their overall morphological awareness, facilitating effective language communication and vocabulary acquisition.

Inflection. Comprehending word structure and meaning is essential (Carlisle, 2000). Inflection adds morphemes to a word's root for tense, number, or degree in English (Berns & Brown, 2010). Understanding English inflection is crucial for morphological awareness (Hurrel, 2019). It leads to better vocabulary and reading comprehension (Deacon *et al.*, 2007). Inflectional morphemes change word form and definition, like regular verbs with tense (e. g., call-called, work-worked) and nouns with plurality (e. g., dog-dogs). Reading ability correlates with morphological competence (Deacon *et al.*, 2007). Inflectional morphological awareness affects word reading and comprehension (Müller & Brady, 2001; Rothou & Padeliadu, 2015). Derivational morphology links to decoding and comprehension. Lack of inflection knowledge leads to errors in sentence structure and meaning.

Derivation. Derivation is vital for morphological awareness (Ke *et al.*, 2021), forming new words by modifying the base lexeme (e. g., walk, walk-er). It involves adding prefixes and suffixes to base words (Oz, 2014), strengthening word arrangement and connections. Derivational morphology aims to create new words with related meanings, being lexical and less influenced by grammatical context (Deng *et al.*, 2016). Exposure to words like actuality, typical, and dehumanization enhances morphological knowledge (Kieffer & Box, 2013), allowing learners to deduce meaning by identifying constituent morphemes. Derivational morphology in Spanish and English is similar but lacks research in L2 theory (Deng *et al.*, 2016). Learners must grasp relational, syntactic, and distributional knowledge. Relational morphology recognizes shared morphemes and meanings, while syntactic morphology identifies suffixes' syntactic categories (e. g., -th in «length») (Wu & Juffs, 2022). Distributional morphology involves stem-suffix combinations (e. g., -er in «player») (Wu & Juffs, 2022).

Errors may occur in vocabulary usage, such as word form confusion and affix misuse (Kusumawardhani, 2018). Empowering learners with morphological awareness aids EFL instruction (Badawi, 2019), enhancing vocabulary depth and establishing a solid foundation for lexical competence and English language comprehension.

Lexical compounding. Morphemes are small language units with distinct meanings. Comprehending their combination and rules is crucial for morphological awareness (X. Sun *et al.*, 2022). Lexical compounding combines words to form new ones (Berns & Brown, 2010). It's a common method in many languages, categorized into open, hyphenated, and closed compounds (Berg *et al.*, 2014).

Compounds fall into endocentric and exocentric types (Ten Hacken, 2017). Endocentric compounds have a clear head word (e. g., darkroom), while exocentric ones don't (e. g., skinhead) (Ten Hacken, 2017). Lexical compounding aids vocabulary development. It helps understand unfamiliar words and read accurately (Carlisle, 2000; P. D. Liu & McBride-Chang, 2010). Errors may occur in word combinations or identifying compounds. Learning compounding rules enhances language flexibility and expression. Knowing compound patterns improves overall vocabulary usage.

Analysis

Analysis is vital for breaking down lexical items into free and bound morphemes to deduce meanings (Deacon *et al.*, 2017). Morphological analysis aids vocabulary development, improving writing and speech expression (Nagy, 2014). Lexical categories (open-class) and functional categories (closed-class) are crucial components of the theory (Kaplan, n.d.). Students can determine unfamiliar word meanings based on relevant stems and suffixes (McCutchen & Logan, 2011), enhancing language production through building semantic networks. English has two main morpheme types: free and bound (Brown *et al.*, 2010).

Free morphemes stand alone with distinct meanings (e. g., «dog», «run»), while bound morphemes require attachment (e. g., «re-» in «rearrange», «-ful» in «successful») (Brown *et al.*, 2010). Analyzing words into their constituent morphemes, free and bound (Wagner *et al.*, 2007), helps language learners see how structural variations result in changes in meaning, producing lexical units that share a similar one.

Free morphemes. The English morpheme boundaries may have an impact on grapheme-phoneme mappings (Levesque & Deacon, 2022). In the words «father» and «fathead», for instance, the letters «t» and «h» represent one phoneme in the former and two in the latter, making it easier to recognize the terms. The identification of word class through the knowledge of free morphemes plays a crucial role in word formation and lexical competence (Goodwin *et al.*, 2017). «A free base (often called a free morpheme) can stand on its own».

Free morphemes stand alone, classified into open-classed (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) and closed-class (conjunctions, prepositions, determiners) (Coch *et al.*, 2020). Knowing free morphemes helps form new words by combining them meaningfully (Henry, 2019). Interaction with bound morphemes creates new lexical items, enriching English vocabulary (Henry, 2019). Understanding word class characteristics expands learners' vocabulary and language skills (Berninger *et al.*, 2010). Analyzing these morphemes allows predicting new words and inferring meanings (Coch *et al.*, 2020).

Bound morphemes. Bound morphemes are essential for word formation but cannot function independently (Brown *et al.*, 2010). They are divided into affixes (inflectional and derivational) and roots. Inflectional morphemes change grammatical category (e. g., 'run' to 'ran' or 'running') (Carlisle, 2000), while derivational morphemes create new words with altered class or meaning (Coch *et al.*, 2020). Understanding their role aids vocabulary expansion and effective communication.

The analysis of bound morphemes is crucial for enhancing vocabulary development in English as a second language (Henry, 2019). By analysing the meaning and function of bound morphemes, language learners can more easily recognize the meaning of lexical items, which can in turn help expand their vocabulary. Additionally, the knowledge of bound morphemes can help learners to predict the meaning of unfamiliar words and to identify word relationships and patterns, which can be beneficial for their reading comprehension skills. In this sense, in accordance with Pastizzo and Feldman (2004) «Morphologically complex words are composed of multiple morphemes; therefore, some researchers have proposed that in the course of recognition, a lexical “processor” parses complex words into constituent morphemes, and that lexical access then proceeds via the stem» (p. 31). Thus, the analysis of bound morphemes can lead to a more sophisticated understanding of English language and facilitate its learning.

DECODING

Decoding is vital for morphological awareness, using word structure to accurately pronounce words (Levesque *et al.*, 2017). It aids learners in reading complex lexical items through written symbol manipulation and identifying phonological patterns (Levesque *et al.*, 2017). Phonological and orthographic metrics (Deacon *et al.*, 2017; MacKay *et al.*, 2017) assess word reading progress, forming the referential framework for morphological awareness (Levesque & Deacon, 2022). To improve decoding abilities, teachers should provide tools like transcription, syllabic segmentation, and text-to-speech software (Deacon *et al.*, 2017; MacKay *et al.*, 2017).

Children may read more slowly in complex orthographies like English due to challenging decoding (Varga *et al.*, 2020). Deep orthographies require morphological knowl-

edge, while shallow orthographies like Spanish have clear spelling-sound links (Varga *et al.*, 2020). Learners use sound-letter correspondence and morphological structure to decode words. Phonology and orthography are crucial in decoding (Berninger *et al.*, 2010; Deacon *et al.*, 2017). Phonological features involve language sound patterns, while orthographical features refer to word spelling (Berninger *et al.*, 2010). Decoding aids accurate and fluent reading, improving vocabulary acquisition and comprehension, building a strong foundation for English language proficiency and lexical competence (Berninger *et al.*, 2010).

Phonological features. English is a morphophonemic language, meaning that the sound of words is influenced by the presence or absence of certain morphemic units. In other words, English spelling and pronunciation can change based on morphological awareness factors, such as the knowledge of affixes or word roots (Kuo & Anderson, 2006). Phonological features play a crucial role in morphological awareness, especially in the aspect of decoding in English, which is a morphophonemic language. The sound of words can be influenced by the presence or absence of certain morphemic units, such as affixes or word roots (Kuo & Anderson, 2006). Phonological features refer to the sounds of speech, including phonemes, syllables, stress, and intonation (Berns & Brown, 2010). When learners decode words at the morpheme level, phonological processes come into play. Stress patterns, syllable sounds, and speech intonation can all impact how words are pronounced (Berninger *et al.*, 2010). Additionally, phonological processes like assimilation and deletion can influence word pronunciation, making it challenging for learners to decode complex words accurately (Berns & Brown, 2010).

For English, being an alphabetic language, mastering alphabetic orthography involves creating a graphic model of the phonological system and mapping graphemes to phonemes (Schiff & Calif, 2007). Understanding how phonological processes work and applying them correctly is crucial for effective decoding of morphologically complex words (MacKay *et al.*, 2017). Learners who lack decoding skills may make phonological mistakes, struggle to recognize syllable boundaries, blend sounds, or stress syllables correctly (Berninger *et al.*, 2010). This can lead to mispronunciations of words and hinder their reading comprehension and overall vocabulary development.

Orthographical features. An orthographic feature refers to a specific aspect of spelling, such as letter arrangement, vowel sounds, or stress patterns (Berns & Brown, 2010). These features can be understood as the graphical representation of the sounds (graphemes) and their combinations are crucial to understanding why spelling in English may differ from pronunciation (Kuo & Anderson, 2006). An example of orthographic features in English is the representation of vowel sounds such as «a», «e», «i», «o», «u», and «y», as well as consonant combinations like «th», «sh», «ch», and «ph».

Learners who struggle with decoding may find it challenging to identify and comprehend orthographic features, leading to spelling errors (Levesque *et al.*, 2021). For instance, they might misspell words by omitting or replacing certain letters, such as writing «diference» instead of «difference» or «separate» instead of «separate». These mistakes are often a result of not recognizing the specific letter combinations that make up the morphemes in words. By learning and recognizing common spelling patterns and orthographic features (Spalding, 2002), non-native English speakers can better predict how words will be spelled, leading to more successful decoding and comprehension.

WORD READING

When it comes to morphological awareness, word reading refers to the ability to read unfamiliar words by sounding out the letters and blending the sounds together (Tong *et al.*, 2017). The process of sight word reading is characterized by the formation of systematic

visual-phonological connections between spellings and pronunciations of words in memory, facilitated by the knowledge of letter-sound relations (Tong *et al.*, 2017). It enables readers to recognize words quickly, without the need for decoding, unless the word is new to them (Ehri, 2017; Menard & Wilson, 2014). This process is essential in English, as it is a morphophonemic language where the spelling of words can be quite different from their pronunciation (Kuo & Anderson, 2006). This skill becomes even more important as the learner encounters more complex words that contain multiple morphemes, such as «uncomfortably» or «unpredictable».

LEXICAL COMPETENCE

The term «lexical competence» refers to one's ability to use and understand language effectively (Rychka & Lisovska, 2022). It encompasses understanding the meaning of words, their appropriate usage in different contexts, and their interactions within the language (Zhou & Dai, 2016). Lexical incompetence may lead to misunderstandings and ineffective communication (Polatovna & Qizi, 2020). Enhancing English lexical competence involves recognizing and comprehending the form and meaning of words, known as morphological awareness (Spencer *et al.*, 2015). This metalinguistic skill also aids EFL learners in pronouncing complex words correctly, using grapheme-phoneme correspondences in morphemic units (morphological decoding) (Spencer *et al.*, 2015).

DIMENSIONS OF LEXICAL COMPETENCE

Among three to four dimensions of lexical competency have been posed in the overarching literature (Chapelle, 1999; Nation, 2001; Qian, 2002; Zareva *et al.*, 2005); however, this study will only comprise the most important three: vocabulary breadth, vocabulary depth, and vocabulary organization. The range and diversity of words' form, meaning and usage that a student is familiar with is referred to as vocabulary breadth (Rashidi & Khosravi, 2010), whereas vocabulary depth refers to the amount of understanding of each lexical unit, including its many syntactic, semantic, collocational properties, etc. (Rychka & Lisovska, 2022). The final dimension, vocabulary organization, is how lexical items are stored, connected, and retrieved in the learner's mind (Webb, 2020). Knowing these factors can aid in the methodical development of lexical competence in learners as well as the construction of more effective teaching methods by teachers.

Vocabulary breadth

Vocabulary breadth involves more than word quantity; it encompasses form, meaning, and usage (Harkio & Pietilä, 2016; Kezhen, 2015; Ordóñez *et al.*, 2002; Rashidi & Khosravi, 2010). Learners with a wide vocabulary can accurately express thoughts on diverse topics (Qian, 2002; Kezhen, 2015). Expanding vocabulary involves understanding word implications, collocations, and word games (Rashidi & Khosravi, 2010).

Developing a wide vocabulary requires extensive practice and morpheme manipulation (Rashidi & Khosravi, 2010). Learners need to comprehend form-meaning connections and contextual usage (Schmitt, 2014). Morpheme manipulation aids word inference and relationship identification, improving language proficiency (Harkio & Pietilä, 2016).

Word form. Word form knowledge encompasses understanding the morphological and orthographic characteristics of words (Hong *et al.*, 2011). Vocabulary breadth involves

more than mere memorization; it includes knowledge of both written and spoken forms, surface meanings, and everyday usage (Leonard & Deevy, 2020). A large vocabulary is beneficial, but comprehension of word forms and their common applications is critical for reading fluency, spelling precision, and listening comprehension (Kezhen, 2015).

The aspect of structure in morphological awareness is essential in determining word forms through the addition of prefixes and suffixes to base words, altering their appearance and indicating grammatical information (Manolitsis *et al.*, 2017). For example, the suffix «-s» pluralizes nouns, while the prefix «un-» creates antonyms (e. g., «happy» to «unhappy»). The acquisition of word form knowledge is influenced by frequency, regularity, transparency, and exposure to lexical units (Leonard & Deevy, 2020). Technology-enhanced and multimodal learning materials, along with explicit and implicit instruction, feedback, and practice (Chapelle & Sauro, 2017), can aid learners.

Word meaning. Word meaning is crucial in Vocabulary Breadth, encompassing semantic and pragmatic properties like denotations, connotations, collocations, and figurative uses (Eguchi *et al.*, 2022). A deep understanding of word meaning enables precise communication, comprehension, and interpretation in different contexts (Webb, 2020). Breaking down words into morphemes aids in understanding their structure and meaning derivation (Mussar *et al.*, 2020). Morphological analysis identifies how morphemes combine to form the word's overall meaning and reveals relationships between words with shared morphemes.

Various factors influence word meaning acquisition, including word frequency, complexity, learners' prior knowledge, exposure, and motivation (I. S. P. Nation, 2001). Language educators can promote word meaning knowledge through pedagogical activities like word maps, semantic gradients, word associations, and semantic clusters (Eguchi *et al.*, 2022). Providing feedback and encouraging learners to use new words in their communication and writing further enhances their word meaning knowledge and vocabulary breadth.

Word usage. Word usage, a crucial aspect of Vocabulary Breadth, involves effective and appropriate use of words in various contexts and genres (Caro & Mendinueta, 2017). It encompasses knowledge of collocations, idioms, phrasal verbs, and multi-word units, along with linguistic characteristics like grammar, syntax, discourse, and register (I. S. P. Nation, 2001).

Morphological analysis and accurate pronunciation of morpho-phonemic correspondences enhance language proficiency, enabling learners to use lexical items effectively in English (Webb, 2020). This is especially valuable for second language learners facing unfamiliar words and structures. Word usage proficiency can be developed through exposure to real-world language input, explicit instruction, feedback, practice, and reflection (Zhou & Dai, 2016). Language teachers can use various techniques like communicative activities (Loewen & Sato, 2017), task-based learning, and corpus-based analysis to encourage learners' word usage and vocabulary diversity.

Vocabulary depth knowledge

Vocabulary depth, a crucial dimension of lexical competence, involves a deep understanding of a lexical unit, encompassing its meaning, pronunciation, spelling, frequency, and morphological, syntactic, and collocational features (Rashidi & Khosravi, 2010; Qian, 2002). Learners with a broad vocabulary are aware of all aspects of a word, including its multiple meanings and relationships with other terms in the language, enabling them to use it accurately in various situations.

Morphological awareness plays a vital role in developing vocabulary depth. Understanding word structure and formation helps learners acquire new words and expand their vocabulary (Rychka & Lisovska, 2022). Familiarity with roots and affixes allows learners

to break down words and deduce their meanings, thereby enhancing word comprehension. To fully increase vocabulary depth knowledge, it is essential to examine phonemic, graphemic, morphemic, syntactic, semantic, and collocational features of lexical units (H.-Y. Choi, 2013; Qian, 2002). These features can be categorized into two groups (Zareva *et al.*, 2005): the micro level, which includes phonemic, graphemic, and morphemic features, and the macro level, covering syntactic, semantic, and collocational features.

Phonemic features. Language learners' vocabulary depth is significantly influenced by phonemic elements. The ability to understand spoken language accurately and recognize word variations like plurals, verb tenses, and word endings, which can dramatically impact a word's meaning, depends on the capacity to differentiate between different sounds in words. Phonological features pertain to the individual sounds and sound characteristics of words, while lexical features involve the holistic combination of sounds in words and their resemblance to other words (Farquharson *et al.*, 2014).

Graphemic features. Graphemic elements play a significant role in learners' acquisition of a deeper understanding of words, contributing to vocabulary depth. As Venezky (2011) highlights, there are complexities in the spelling units beyond the basic twenty-six graphemes. Learning to detect and decode words using graphemes, the visual representations of written language, proves beneficial when encountering new terms. Understanding graphemic aspects allows learners to identify spelling patterns, leading to the development of a larger vocabulary. For example, recognizing common suffixes or prefixes helps students determine the meaning of novel words, enhancing both depth and breadth of vocabulary (Cleary, 2014). This knowledge enables learners to swiftly grasp and effectively use new vocabulary (Spencer *et al.*, 2015), enhancing their comprehension of the reading they engage in.

Morphemic features. Morphemic characteristics play a fundamental role in vocabulary depth knowledge, providing the ability to understand the detailed meaning and structure of words. Morphemes, being the smallest units of meaning in language, allow students to comprehend more than just the spelling-to-sound relationship; they also aid in identifying morpheme boundaries (Hurrel, 2019; Venezky, 2011). Understanding the meaning of prefixes, suffixes, and roots, and how they combine to create new words, is facilitated by a working knowledge of morphemic characteristics.

Syntactic features. Vocabulary depth knowledge of lexical units is significantly influenced by understanding syntactic features, which govern the arrangement and combination of words to form sentences (Wu & Juffs, 2022). By grasping how words function in context and how their meanings can change based on sentence structure, learners can develop a deeper understanding of syntax and enhance their vocabulary depth knowledge (Farrow *et al.*, 2020).

Semantic features. The development of vocabulary depth is influenced by the semantic properties of words, which describe their meaning, category, properties, and relationships to other words (Robert & Rico Duarte, 2016). Understanding semantic features allows individuals to communicate ideas more effectively and with greater variety in their writing, which is especially beneficial for language learners.

Collocational features. Collocations play a crucial role in developing a solid vocabulary depth knowledge of the English language. They are expressions of words that frequently occur together and significantly influence the meaning of sentences (Nesselhauf, 2006). Collocations are characterized by fixedness and commutability, with transparency and commutability being two key features. Transparency refers to whether the combination's elements and the combination itself have a literal or non-literal meaning, while commutability pertains to whether the substitution of the elements is restricted (Nesselhauf, 2006).

Vocabulary organization

The systematic storage and representation of words and morphemes in the learner's brain through vocabulary organization is a crucial component of English lexical competence. Some scholars define lexical competence as the organization of lexical units based on the degree of familiarity (Sevara *et al.*, 2021). Learners with high vocabulary proficiency are assumed to have dense and more organized networks of words and morphemes, allowing them to quickly locate words and understand word relationships, thus enhancing their communicative skills (Choudhury, 2015).

Morphology greatly influences the structure of English vocabulary. Morphological knowledge enables learners to recognize morphemes and understand how they combine to form new words. This understanding allows learners to systematically classify, and store words based on their morphological components, leading to more effective and precise word recall (Schmitt, 2014). For example, knowing the morpheme «-ness» helps learners grasp the relationship of deadjectival nominalization (e. g., happy-happiness, sad-sadness).

Storage, connection and retrieval. Examining the storage, connection, and retrieval of lexical items provides a deeper comprehension of vocabulary organization (Chapelle, 1999; Qian, 2002; Rashidi & Khosravi, 2010). Storage pertains to how words are stored in the mental lexicon, considering usage frequency, word relationships, and the strength of these connections (Webb, 2020). Connection refers to the arrangement of words in the mind's lexicon, involving associations and relationships (Webb, 2020). Retrieval is the ability to recall words quickly and accurately from memory (Webb, 2020). Examining these elements helps researchers understand the intricate network of word and morpheme relationships in the mental lexicon, influencing vocabulary organization and lexical competence.

Storage. Word storage involves mentally representing and organizing lexical units, creating semantic networks where words connect based on shared characteristics (Ferrer-Xipell, 2020). Relationships among morphological, semantic, and syntactic components influence this organization (Ferrer-Xipell, 2020). The quantity and accessibility of links in the semantic network influence the mental lexicon's arrangement (Holmström *et al.*, 2016). Word frequency, familiarity, and personal experience impact word organization and storage. High-frequency words are stored more effectively and accessed faster than low-frequency words.

Morphological awareness is crucial for word storage as affixes, roots, and stems are part of a word's mental representation (Farahian, 2011). Learners aware of morphological norms can efficiently infer new word meanings and store them (Gabryś-Barker, 2005). Vocabulary organization differences affect lexical access precision and speed (Pranoto & Afrilita, 2019). Some rely on holistic storage, while others use an analytical approach, breaking words down. Individual storage strategies play a role in vocabulary organization.

Connection. To comprehend word connection and its role in vocabulary organization, semantic networks play a crucial role (Sevara B. *et al.*, 2021). These networks consist of linked words and ideas in the mind's vocabulary (Sevara B. *et al.*, 2021). Word associations are formed based on shared meaning or grammatical characteristics, strengthened through exposure and use (Ferrer-Xipell, 2020). Students' cognitive development involves transitioning from simpler syntagmatic associations to more complex paradigmatic connections.

Morphological awareness strengthens word connections in the mental lexicon by recognizing the morphological structure of words (Gabryś-Barker, 2005). For example, knowing that «act» denotes action enables understanding words like «action», «actor», and «react». Recognizing morphological similarities builds a network of related lexical units, facilitating retrieval and use in spoken and written language (Embick *et al.*, 2021).

Words with similar meanings or frequent use are more tightly connected, enabling quicker access from the mental lexicon (Choi, 2013). A well-connected vocabulary network allows rapid word access in various contexts, while a poorly linked network may

lead to slower retrieval and production. Associations are influenced by usage, similarity, and frequency (Pranoto & Afrilita, 2019). High-frequency words are strongly associated with others. The exposure to language and how learners interact with lexical forms and structures influence word connections in the mental lexicon (Holmström *et al.*, 2016). The strength of relationships between lexical units and ideas depends on the speaker's proficiency in both first and second languages.

Retrieval. Word retrieval involves recalling information from the mental lexicon when encountering a word (Qian, 2002). To enable retrieval, students activate related terms in the semantic network, starting with word recognition and followed by retrieval (Gabryś-Barker, 2005). Characteristics such as word frequency, familiarity, and contextual information can impact retrieval speed and accuracy (Cui, 2009). Phonologically-based linkages in the mental lexicon can hinder fast word retrieval in natural conversation, leading to non-native-like vocabulary usage. Restructuring the L2 mental lexicon based on semantic or conceptual associations is crucial to improve retrieval. Interference from other words or concepts can also affect retrieval (Navarrete *et al.*, 2014). Multiple meanings of a word may create interference, slowing down retrieval (Webb, 2020).

Context influences word retrieval. A sentence's context can activate and recall words syntactically or semantically related to the target word. Morphological awareness aids in recalling words with similar structures and meanings (Palmovi & Marii, 2008). Efficient word retrieval is essential for lexical competence, enabling quick and accurate access to words in various contexts (Ferrer-Xipell, 2020). Vocabulary instruction with word retrieval strategies improves retention and usage (Nation, 2015). Understanding the processes and factors influencing word retrieval is vital for effective vocabulary training and enhancing lexical competence in EFL learners.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The literature review on morphological awareness and English lexical competency produced numerous significant findings. To begin with, morphological awareness can be explained through three distinctive aspects: structure, analysis and decoding (Deacon *et al.*, 2017; Levesque & Deacon, 2022; MacKay *et al.*, 2017). This framework serves for a fundamental understanding of the relationship between lexical competence and morphological awareness. Besides, the aspects in which this variable has been circumscribed account for both production (analysis and decoding) and reception (structure and analysis).

Furthermore, Morphological Awareness and English lexical proficiency consistently showed a good cross-linguistic association in students' biliteracy (S. (Echo) Ke *et al.*, 2021). For instance, one study discovered that children who got specific instruction in morphology fared better than their classmates on vocabulary exams (Brandes & McMaster, 2017). Similarly, a different study by Varga *et al.* (2020) discovered that morphological knowledge positively predicted reading comprehension in both English native speakers and English as a Second Language (ESL) students. Second, consciousness of morphemes might have a stronger impact on word reading in English. According to one study, children who got education in morphology enhanced their English vocabulary more than older children who received the same instruction (Levesque *et al.*, 2021). Besides, explicit teaching in morphemes may help second language learners. A meta-analysis conducted by Ke *et al.* (2021) revealed that morphological training increased ESL students' reading comprehension and vocabulary development.

Although the results were generally encouraging, there were some contradictions in the literature. For instance, some research discovered that English native speaker's morphological awareness outperforms that of non-natives, yet a study conducted on L2

learners from a morphologically more complicated L1 unveiled that even with much lesser ability in the target language, they could exceed native speakers in their understanding of relational morphology (Wu & Juffs, 2022). Different studies employed different tasks to test knowledge on word formation knowledge; some used morpheme isolation tasks and others utilized inflectional tasks (McBride-Chang *et al.*, 2005; Sparks & Deacon, 2015). The methods employed to measure English lexical proficiency varied as well, with some research employing vocabulary tests and others using reading comprehension exams. Morphological analysis and decoding was found to be more strongly associated to middle school pupils' reading comprehension than word knowledge in some studies (Deacon *et al.*, 2017; MacKay *et al.*, 2017). These discrepancies indicate that additional study is required to fully understand the connection between word structure knowledge and English lexical competence, taking into consideration various age groups, task kinds, and vocabulary measures. The results of this research study have major implications for teaching languages.

First, teachers ought to think about include explicit teaching in morpheme consciousness in their curricula (Alsaedi, 2017; Hurrel, 2019). The link between English lexical proficiency and morphological analysis is favourable, indicating that education in this area may improve students' vocabulary breadth and word reading comprehension abilities (Azad & Ahmadian, 2021). Second, teachers should be mindful that training along the different dimensions of morphology may be more beneficial for students. Therefore, while developing and implementing teaching on morpheme knowledge, greater consideration should be given to learners (Henry, 2019). Lastly, the results imply that specific morphological decoding instruction is something that educators should think about doing given the rising number of ESL students in classrooms throughout the world.

There are numerous limitations on the literature review. It is challenging to demonstrate a causal link between morphological awareness and English lexical proficiency because many of the research examined were correlational. Further limiting the generalizability of the results are some of the studies' limited sample sizes or concentration on certain populations. Last but not least, the majority of the studies were carried out in academic contexts, which might not accurately represent language use in everyday life.

The research review on the relationship between morphological awareness and English lexical competence concludes by highlighting the significance of knowledge on morphemes in lexical competence in English and reading overall (Ibrahim Rabadi, 2019; Spencer *et al.*, 2015). The results imply that morphological structure, analysis, and decoding are crucial skills when it comes to teaching and may increase vocabulary learning and reading comprehension abilities (Deacon *et al.*, 2017; Levesque & Deacon, 2022; MacKay *et al.*, 2017). Nonetheless, further research is required to fully comprehend the connection between morphological awareness and English lexical competence, especially when different age groups, task kinds, and measures of English lexical competence are considered.

CONCLUSIONS

The inclusion of morphological awareness in language teaching can facilitate and hasten language learning. It is possible to learn and practice morphological analysis techniques to increase one's capacity for novel word recognition and analysis, word formation, and vocabulary development. By looking at the structure of unfamiliar lexical units, educators can also urge children to use their morphological abilities to improve reading comprehension. EFL students can improve their lexical competence and gain a deeper grasp of the subtleties of the English language by means of the development of these skills.

Comprehension of the internal structure of words can greatly increase vocabulary depth knowledge in a variety of ways. First of all, learners can guess the meaning of ex-

pressions they don't know by studying the internal structure of them. Second, it enables students to identify and evaluate various word forms, which aids in their deeper and more accurate apprehension of their meaning and usage. Thirdly, word connections, understanding word relationships, and word collocations are all made possible by morphological awareness. An individual's vocabulary depth knowledge and language command can be greatly improved by all of these elements. As a result, learners are better able to detect and produce a wider variety of words when they have a solid understanding of morphological structure, which includes rules and patterns for word construction such as prefixes, suffixes, and compounding.

By creating meaningful links and paradigms based on morphological relations, morphological structure also helps students organize their vocabulary. For example, realizing that «-er» creates nouns denoting «someone who does something» enables the creation of words like «teacher», «writer», or «driver», while the understanding that «un-» signifies negation can provide insight into words such as «unhappy», «clear», or «unfair».

Morphological analysis can enhance vocabulary knowledge in a variety of ways. At first glance, by delving into the inner workings of lexical units, it can aid in identifying and comprehending less frequent lexical items. They will be able to recognize and comprehend words they may not have come across before, broadening their vocabulary in the process. Inferring the meaning of unfamiliar terms using morphological analysis, instead, enables students to acquire new expressions more rapidly and with less effort. A deeper knowledge of word form, meaning, and usage in a variety of contexts is facilitated by this ability. Learners can infer the meaning of words like «impossible» by breaking them down into their individual morphemes, «im-», «possible», and «-ble». The fact that «happiness» is made up of the morphemes «happy» and «-ness» also aids students in understanding that it refers to «the state of being happy».

For EFL learners who have difficulty reading and spelling, morphological decoding can be especially helpful. It can boost recognition, retrieval effectiveness, discrimination, vocabulary accuracy, and reading fluency; in turn, this aspect enables students to employ morphological hints to determine the pronunciation of unknown words, especially in languages with complicated spelling as English proves to be. This ability is extremely useful for enhancing word reading and reading comprehension by making use of the particular phonological and orthographical features. Understanding the structure of morphologically complex lexical items helps pupils read more quickly and effectively, discriminate between terms that appear similar but have distinct meanings, organize and retrieve morphemes more effectively in their mental lexicon, and recognize and understand lexical units more readily.

According to the analysis presented, it has been proved feasible the relationship between Morphological Awareness and Lexical Competence of the English language through a set of aspects (structure, analysis, and decoding) in the case of MA, and dimensions (vocabulary breadth, depth and organization) for LC. Morphological awareness plays a vital role in enhancing lexical competence by expanding vocabulary breadth and depth, improving word recognition, comprehension, and organization, and promoting effective reading strategies. The acquisition of morphological awareness equips learners with a valuable set of skills that unlock the potential for a richer and more nuanced understanding of the English language.

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REVISTA KRONOS

Classroom management influence on English acquisition in EFL A2 students

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ABSTRACT The aim of this article is to analyze how classroom management influences the acquisition of English language proficiency at the A2 level through a new academic management methodology. The relevance of the study lies in the number of students who fail to achieve certification of knowledge and skills through the application of the standardized A2 Key (KET) exam. The study utilizes a quasi-experimental research methodology involving the inclusion of two distinct groups: an experimental group and a control group, both of which were selected through a random process. Additionally, the Suggestopedia learning method has been used, which requires optimal and continuous communication between the educator and students. This set of techniques also allows for the implementation of various artistic components in the classroom, thus achieving greater interaction and better student performance. The study employs a quasi-experimental research methodology with the participation of two randomly selected groups: an experimental group and a control group. Finally, using a pre and post-test design, the difference in the development of skills achieved in each group is established, where the results indicate the need for a classroom management model with elements such as motivation, time management, and physical design.

KEY WORDS Motivation, time management, decision making, physical design.

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Influencia de la administración de aula en la adquisición del inglés con estudiantes EFL A2

RESUMEN El objetivo de este artículo es analizar cómo la administración de aula influye en la adquisición del nivel del idioma inglés A2 por medio de una nueva metodología de gestión académica. La pertinencia del estudio radica en el número de estudiantes que no alcanzan la certificación de conocimientos y destrezas a través de la aplicación de la prueba estandarizada A2 Key (KET). La presente investigación está realizada sobre una base constructivista que genera la reestructuración cognitiva, al integrar conocimientos nuevos y modificar los preexistentes. Asimismo, se ha utilizado el método de aprendizaje conocido como Suggestopedia, que demanda de una óptima y permanente comunicación entre el educador y los alumnos. Este conjunto de técnicas permite también la implementación de varios componentes artísticos en el aula, logrando de este modo mayor interacción y mejor desempeño de los estudiantes. El estudio posee una metodología de investigación cuasiexperimental con la participación de dos grupos seleccionados de manera aleatoria: uno experimental y otro de control. Finalmente, utilizando un diseño de pre y postest se establece la diferencia en el desarrollo de destrezas alcanzadas en cada grupo, donde los resultados apuntan a la necesidad de un modelo de gestión de aula con elementos como motivación, gerencia de tiempo y diseño físico.

PALABRAS CLAVE Motivación, gestión de tiempo, toma de decisiones, diseño físico.

INTRODUCTION

Social relationships and learning are integral parts of human development, which require the development of cognitive abilities as well as emotional capacities. Consequently, academic results will only be achieved if they are built upon a foundation of personal and affective competencies. It should be considered that individuals will only learn something if they are willing to acquire that knowledge. According to Herrera (2010), the sociocultural dimension reflects students' lives and those things that bring them love and laughter. In other terms, this dimension encompasses the things that matter most to students.

One of the mechanisms to achieve higher levels of interest and increase intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in students is the implementation of a Classroom Management model through various elements such as time management, timely decision-making, and optimizing physical design and environments. Iglesias (2012) suggests that the classroom management has four intimately related dimensions: physical dimension, functional dimension, temporal dimension, and relational dimension.

English language learning is certainly not exempt from the development of a Classroom Management model. Therefore, the present study aims to determine the degree of impact that the application of such a management mechanism has on the improvement of language skills in this language.

The application of classroom management methodologies to enhance educational standards has been extensively considered in various studies and research, where the relevance of implementing a classroom management model with different elements is evident. These elements range from student motivation to the organization of classroom furniture. Freeman & Freeman (2008) state that when educators use a variety of methods and techniques to give understandable input and generate an appropriate environment; pupils obtain a new language in a very similar way they acquired their first language.

The study conducted by Villalobos (2011) in the *Ibero-American Journal of Education for the Organization of American States for Education, Science, and Culture (OEI-CAEU)* suggests that designing activities using different strategies and efficiently managing classroom work to achieve higher levels of learning among students recognizes the role of the teacher as an agent of change and acknowledges the complexity of teaching and learning processes.

Similarly, there are several manuals available for consistent classroom management. One of them was presented in July 2013 by the Dirección General de Currículo del Ministerio de Educación de Guatemala. It emphasizes once again the importance of classroom management aspects, including architectural design and environment decoration. It mentions that proper management and a harmonious atmosphere enhance the learning effect.

Regarding English language teaching, studies such as the doctoral thesis by Palenzuela (2012) can be mentioned. In this study, an Integrated Foreign Language Learning Program aims to achieve the A1 level and subsequently progress towards reaching the A2 level. The objective is to enhance language competencies as a second foreign language.

Rodríguez (2014) mentions the need to investigate the strategies that ESL students employ outside the classroom to improve their English proficiency. Through the findings of these studies, it is possible to determine the number of students who reach the A2 level of proficiency.

Therefore, it can be concluded that attempts to optimize classroom management processes vary depending on each nation, which considers them as a solution to different educational issues. Thus, it is affirmed that a harmonious context strengthens the development of skills, critical thinking, and the formation of values.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Classroom management is a critical aspect of education that focuses on creating an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning. To conduct research in this area, it is necessary to understand the underlying pedagogical principles that inform instructional practices and student engagement. Good classroom managers are teachers who recognize and use specific methods and techniques (Oliver & Reschly, 2007).

Constructivism asserts that the world is the result of human relationships, with the stimuli from nature and society being processed in the mind. Therefore, knowledge is not generated passively but actively constructed as the individual adapts to the environment (Vásquez, 2012). Therefore, from the constructivist approach, classroom management should be understood as a process in which its material and immaterial elements must be manipulable, dynamic, and useful for students to interact with them and engage in concrete operations.

Similarly, classroom management allows for the resolution of conflicts that arise during class in a way that does not cause dissatisfaction or hinder the normal progression of learning. It is important to understand that conflict is a natural process within human groups and should be addressed constructively by offering proposals that promote a warm and welcoming atmosphere, as well as a positive classroom environment that supports the learning of all students. According to Vaello (2003), conflict can be a wonderful opportunity to resolve a problem creatively and formatively through the collaborative effort of the teacher and students, as achieving a satisfactory solution produces gratifying effects for everyone.

However, to build an appropriate classroom climate, the elements that make up classroom management must be considered. These include motivation, time management, decision-making, and physical design, all of which should meet criteria of effectiveness, simplicity, and variety. Each element should be effective in the sense of preventing problems, simple to ensure ease of implementation, and varied to provide alternative options when a strategy does not yield the desired result (Vaello, 2003).

Additionally, it is imperative to free the learner from all negative suggestions that diminish the true potential of their abilities. To accomplish this, it is necessary to strengthen the individual's motivation by using a methodology that helps them to reduce the affective filter. Herrera & Murry (2015) state Suggestopedia was planned to place as much language teaching emphasis on learner personality and enthusiasm as that typically placed on understanding.

According to Richards & Rodgers (2001), the main characteristics of Suggestopedia include decoration, furniture, music, classroom arrangement, and the primary objective of quickly achieving advanced conversational proficiency. Therefore, this is the most suitable method to reach a state of maximum relaxation of the mind, aiming to achieve better retention of knowledge.

MOTIVATION

Motivating means directing the student's interest towards meaningful learning, prioritizing the improvement of their skills over other activities that may distract their attention, as well as the development of student interest through the creation of a positive emotional climate within the classroom.

Intrinsic motivation is understood as the direct interest that a student has in the subject, without the need for any external stimulus to foster the desire to learn. This type of motivation can be achieved through the selection of content to be taught during lessons.

Similarly, extrinsic motivation is defined as any external factor that generates greater interest in the student to acquire new knowledge. There are various ways to awaken this type of motivation, such as creating diversified evaluation criteria that are not solely based on the textbook or written exams. Assessment elements such as collaborative groups, interactive groups, projects, portfolios, observation, dramatizations, etc., can be used to foster extrinsic motivation.

According to Kort & Reilly (2001), the new generation of educators should first train teachers to become experts in recognizing the emotional state of students and based on their observations, take actions that positively contribute to the educational framework. The feeling of satisfaction is a crucial factor when determining a student's academic success and motivation in the classroom. This will enable the learner to feel pleased with their academic progress.

The appropriate use of motivation strategies will enable students to achieve autonomy in their learning process, develop a healthy sense of self-esteem, and be self-critical of their performance inside and outside the classroom (Pizarro & Josephy, 2010). For example, to believe that making mistakes is risky when someone is learning a new language or that boys are not as good as girls in learning a second language (Rubin, 2005). These kinds of beliefs can significantly affect the learning process.

TIME MANAGEMENT

Effective time management helps individuals increase productivity, reduce stress, and achieve a better work-life balance. Some common techniques for managing time include creating to-do lists, setting deadlines, prioritizing tasks, eliminating, or delegating non-essential activities, and practicing good time estimation skills. Indeed, it is essential to have well-defined and formulated goals for each semester, particularly in higher education (Castro & López, 2009).

The design of learning units should be elaborated within the context of each academic period, as each semester has its own characteristics in terms of time distribution. To achieve this, it is necessary to designate a planning committee within educational institutions with defined roles for each member. By having a designated committee, the process of designing learning units can benefit from diverse perspectives, expertise, and collaboration. This collaborative approach helps to foster objectivity, consistency, and coherence in the design of the units, ultimately enhancing the quality of education provided within the institution.

DECISION-MAKING

When teachers make decisions about their instructional practices, they should consider the learning needs and goals of their students. This includes selecting appropriate teaching methods, materials, and assessments that align with the desired learning outcomes. By incorporating a variety of pedagogical strategies, such as active learning, cooperative learning, and differentiated instruction, teachers can engage students and enhance their understanding and retention of knowledge.

Teachers serve as guides and coordinators of educational decisions within a group or classroom setting. They become a point of reference for the children, adolescents, or young people under their care (Saumell, Alsina & Arroyo, 2011). Overall, the teacher's role extends beyond simply imparting knowledge. They have the responsibility to guide,

support, and inspire their students, playing a pivotal role in their educational journey and personal development.

PHYSICAL DESIGN

Upon entering the classroom, it's important to initiate the lesson in a manner that captures the students' attention and encourages their active participation. Whenever feasible and suitable, we will communicate to the students the tasks ahead or engage in conversations about the potential outcomes stemming from their upcoming activities.

Therefore, appropriate importance should be given to the distribution of environments and the architectural design of learning spaces at all levels of education, as they are fundamental elements for the execution, development, and achievement of educational purposes. It is also desirable to improve the classroom environment to increase the disposition of students to learn. When they arrive in the classroom, it is important to start the lesson in a way that the pupils' attention is stimulated, and they get engaged with their own learning (Harmer, 2009).

The workspace should be arranged according to the purposes pursued in each activity. Additionally, it should ensure that all students have equal opportunities to participate democratically; likewise, it should contribute to the development of intrapersonal relationships. However, improving the classroom environment is not only the best exploitation of physical spaces, but also the creation of an ideal atmosphere. Vásconez & Verdezoto (2007) state that it is relevant to allow students to bring their own stories, anecdotes, and thoughts into the classroom. This provides them with the opportunities to work together, to learn from each other, and to respect each other's differences.

DIDACTIC MATERIALS

A didactic material is a tool that facilitates both the process of teaching and the process of learning. It is characterized by arousing the student's interest and sensory memory. The teacher should provide a varied and stimulating range of materials that offer multiple opportunities to manipulate concepts and vocabulary in their working memory. Then the students will be able to elaborate upon their connections through a balance of illustrations and words (Herrera, Kavimandan & Holmes, 2011).

In other words, language learners get linguistic structure by experiencing the environmental features, therefore they acquire a language incidentally and not in an intentional way (Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1997).

For a didactic material to be effective and promote a successful learning situation, it requires more than just being a good material or the latest technology. It should have objective quality and be able to capture the students' interest. The proper selection of possible ways to use the material will allow the efficient design of learning activities and didactic methodologies that ensure effectiveness in achieving the intended learning outcomes. Nation (2001) remarks that task knowledge is very important because learners need to have sufficient comprehension of what is needed to achieve results. However, it is always necessary to state feasible objectives to avoid frustration among L2 learners.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for this study was a mixed-methods design because it combines quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative because it involves the collection of numerical data, and qualitative because it seeks to understand a social phenomenon. According to the research design, the study is quasi-experimental since English language skills are complex and cannot be measured solely through a survey, but rather through practice. Additionally, the study involves two groups that are not randomly selected: an experimental group and a control group. In the qualitative part, an observation form was conducted, this form should be framed within the model of the pedagogical-didactic hexagon: objectives, content, methodology, resources, schedule, and evaluation. This instrument was also validated by three specialists, and it was only applied to the experimental group. In the quantitative part, the standardized test Cambridge English: Key (KET) was applied. It is important to mention that this instrument will be applied as a pre-test at the beginning of the research in both groups, and similarly as a post-test at the end of the study.

The research question that this study aimed to answer was: How classroom management influences in the A2 level (CEFR) acquisition of English students?

PARTICIPANTS

The group that participated in the study was made up of sixty-two A2 students who have approved prior level A1. Students are young adults, age range 18 to 23 years old. All students agreed to participate in the project. The sample used throughout the research was a non-random sample that considers the criteria of the investigator. There were thirty-one students that belong to the experimental group composed of 9 male students and 22 female students. The control group also consists of thirty-one students, with 10 being male and 21 being female. All participants completed the pretest and post-test stages and contributed to the classroom management intervention.

RESULTS

Quantitative results refer to pretest and post-test students' scores on the standardized test Cambridge English: Key (KET). The KET exam individually assesses each language skill, so bar graphs have been created, which facilitate the interpretation of the information and provide comparative data of the two groups in a simple form. The obtained data is displayed through graphs for each language skill, as well as an overall graph showing the consolidated results of the entire assessment. The total score of the instrument is 100 points, divided as follows: reading 35 points, writing 25 points, listening 25 points, and speaking 15 points (see Figures 1-5).

DATA ANALYSIS

Once the pre-test and post-test have been administered to the students in the control and experimental groups, the results are organized and tabulated for subsequent statistical analysis using frequency distribution, percentages, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and variance (see Tables 1, 2).

Figure 1. Comparative chart of Reading results

	Control group	Experimental group
Pre-test	23,29	24,77
Post-test	26,58	27,58

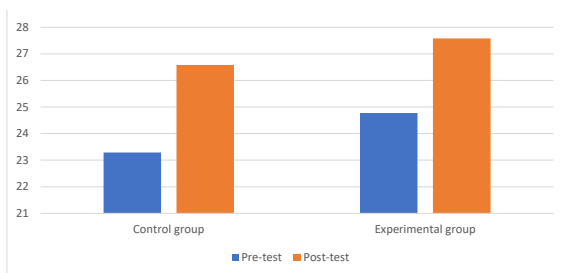


Figure 2. Comparative chart of Writing results

	Control group	Experimental group
Pre-test	10,45	11,83
Post-test	12,48	16,06



Figure 3. Comparative chart of Listening results

	Control group	Experimental group
Pre-test	10,25	11
Post-test	13,61	14,64

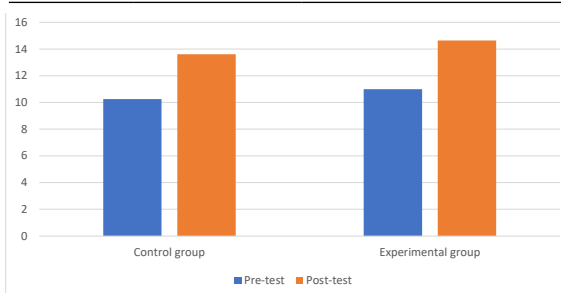


Figure 4. Comparative chart of Speaking results

	Control group	Experimental group
Pre-test	6,61	6,77
Post-test	7,06	11,09

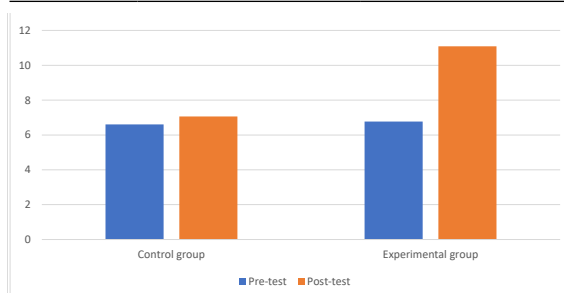


Figure 5. Comparative chart of overall results

	Control group	Experimental group
Pre-test	50,61	54,38
Post-test	59,74	69,38

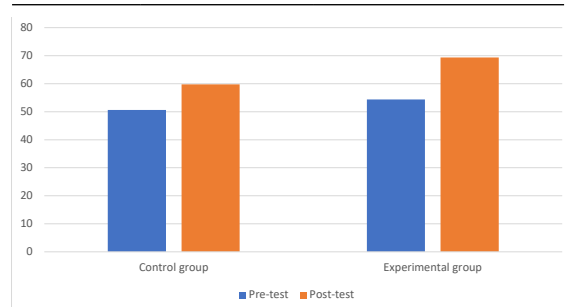


Table 1. Pretest statistical analysis

	CONTROL GROUP	EXPERIMENTAL GROUP
Media	50.61	54.38
Variance	172.14	189.71
Standard deviation	13.12	13.77

Table 2. Post-test statistical analysis

	CONTROL GROUP	EXPERIMENTAL GROUP
Media	59.74	69.38
Variance	181.45	150.77
Standard deviation	13.47	12.27

Next, critical values and rejection regions are determined, and the calculation of the z -score is performed to demonstrate the effectiveness of the independent variable. In the context of statistical hypothesis testing, critical values and regions of rejection are determined according to the selected level of significance (typically represented by α). The critical values are thresholds that determine whether the obtained test statistic falls within the rejection region or not. When the test statistic lies within the rejection region, the null hypothesis is discarded in favor of the alternative hypothesis. The z -score serves as a standardized measure indicating how many standard deviations a given data point or test statistic deviates from the mean. The calculation involves subtracting the mean from the observed value and then dividing the result by the standard deviation. Through this computation of the z -score, it becomes possible to contrast the observed outcomes of the pre-test and post-test against the anticipated outcomes as per the null hypothesis. If the z -score falls within the rejection region, it indicates that the independent variable had a significant effect on the dependent variable.

In the given context, Z_T represents the theoretical value of z (-1.96 or 1.96) for a significance level of 5%, where $\alpha = 0.05$. This means that the research will have a 95% confidence level for a two-tailed test. When the calculated z -score extends beyond the critical value in either tail of the distribution, the null hypothesis is dismissed in support of the alternative hypothesis. In this case, the alternative hypothesis would suggest that the independent variable has a significant effect on the dependent variable.

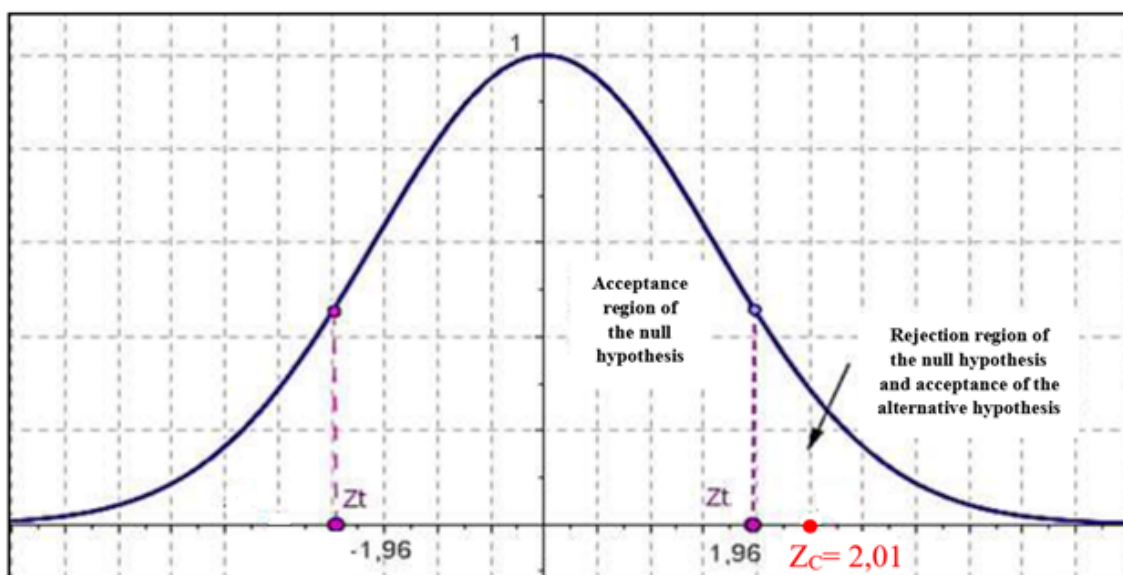
When comparing the calculated z -value and the theoretical z -value: $z_C = 2.01 > Z_T = 1.96$, it can be observed that z_C has a value of 2.01, which falls within the acceptance region of the alternative hypothesis. This outcome signifies the rejection of the null hypothesis and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis in the research, indicating a positive influence (see Figure 6).

DISCUSSION

Once the pre-test was administered to both groups, it was observed that the students had an insufficient level of proficiency in terms of their language skills. This level of proficiency did not meet the requirements for achieving a passing score on the standardized international test known as the A2 Key (KET).

On the other hand, when the methodology was completed and the post-test was administered, it was evident that both groups had made significant progress in terms of their language skills. However, only the experimental group managed to reach the passing

Figure 6. Z-score calculation



average score of seventy points required to obtain certification of proficiency at this level on the standardized evaluation. They had increased their average score by fifteen points between the pre-test and the post-test.

Even though the control group showed an increase of just over nine points between the pre-test and post-test, it remains far from reaching an acceptable average score for the standardized test. There is a gap of at least ten points separating them from the minimum score required for certification, with only eight students surpassing this minimum score.

Consequently, the obvious improvement in the control group is attributed to the teacher's work throughout the academic period, meanwhile, the accelerated progress achieved by the experimental group is evidently due to the implementation of the classroom management process maintained during the experimentation phase.

CONCLUSION

Classroom management could be an inspirational experience, as long as the objectives and purposes become a concrete reality. However, that is not always true if all the variables around the learning process are not considered. Aspects like motivation, discipline, and resources, among others, could influence the development of a lesson. Having enough space and the necessary graphic stimuli within a classroom could even influence the students' attitude toward the language. The great variety of visual material does not have limits and it can even be designed by the students. Resources like flip charts, maps, puppets, puzzle boards, costumes, etc. are precious visual aids that could be created during lessons while the scholars learn by doing.

According to the findings of statistical analysis, learners' abilities substantially improved between the pretest and post-test stages. The pretest results showed that students were not able to obtain the A2 certification. The post-test results confirmed that these conditions changed positively, and students learned the importance of graphic material, time management, and physical design. In addition, by means of classroom management implementation, the number of students passing the A2 level increases by 22.5%.

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REVISTA KRONOS



Action research: promoting speaking in EFL College students

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ABSTRACT This research study is an action research project carried out by two EFL teachers and a group of ten university students who have taken English as a requirement in college. This project aimed to promote participation, accuracy, and fluency in speaking ESL students. The researchers used four strategies: Collaborative Group Work, Input Strategy, Interactive Activities, and Corrective Feedback in a seven-week course. In the end, students showed more confidence and fluency when expressing their opinions and feelings as well as sharing their comments with their classmates while interacting in class. The researchers also observed that they reduced their pronunciation mistakes when talking about specific topics.

KEY WORDS Speaking, action research, collaborative work, input strategy, corrective feedback.

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FECHA DE APROBACIÓN 22/08/2023

Investigación-acción: motivando la expresión oral en estudiantes universitarios de inglés como lengua extranjera

RESUMEN Este estudio es un proyecto de investigación de acción realizado por dos maestros de inglés como idioma extranjero y un grupo de diez estudiantes universitarios que han tomado inglés como requisito en la universidad. Este proyecto tiene como objetivo promover la participación, precisión y fluidez al hablar inglés. Se usó cuatro estrategias: trabajo grupal colaborativo, estrategia de entrada, actividades interactivas y retroalimentación correctiva en un curso de siete semanas. Al final, los estudiantes mostraron más confianza y fluidez para expresar sus opiniones y sentimientos y compartir sus comentarios con sus compañeros de clase. También se observó una disminución en sus errores de pronunciación al hablar sobre temas específicos.

PALABRAS CLAVE Producción oral, investigación acción, trabajo colaborativo, estrategia de entrada, retroalimentación correctiva.

INTRODUCTION

As English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, the professors-researchers had the opportunity to work with a group of 10 university students after a short oral diagnostic assessment inside the classroom. The teachers could see that most of the learners had difficulty with speaking skills. All of them were at the A1.2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), which means that students can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to fundamental personal and family information, shopping, location, and food. Learners also manage to communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Students can describe in simple terms aspects of their background (Council of Europe, 2001).

Concerning their speaking ability, students can interact simply and directly. They can exchange information with difficulty where they must repeat or rephrase words or phrases and speak at a slow rate with some accuracy (Council of Europe, 2001).

The group of students, the researchers worked with, struggled the most with speaking skills. Researchers found three significant weaknesses: fluency, shyness, and accuracy. After a short interview with the students, they mentioned that other subskills or aspects than learning grammar and vocabulary to be competent in the target language were needed. Students felt that they needed to practice speaking to communicate. They mentioned that after acquiring this skill, they would feel encouraged to learn more every day and be able to use English for life. It means to have English in their long-term memories. So, after this action research project, the teachers-researchers feel proud of their accomplishments with the group they worked with.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question is how to improve speaking skills in EFL learner. The sub questions are:

- a. How to promote participation in speaking activities in a foreign language learner?
- b. How to promote accuracy in speaking in a foreign language learner?
- c. How to promote fluency in speaking in a foreign language learner?

METHODOLOGY

Action research is a methodology that includes a learning cycle emphasizing logical reflection so that students can effectively learn. As Stringer (2013) mentions, action research is a participative methodology that helps to develop an understanding between teachers and students. For this research project, the teachers used action research as the methodology because it studies a social situation, in our case, a classroom problem, with the view to improving students speaking skills. They decided to use this methodology because it is a flexible approach that helps teachers look for solutions to their everyday classroom problems. Additionally, working directly with their students encourages researchers to be aware of what they are doing, how they are doing it, and how they can improve. This flexible methodology helps teachers and students. In the first stage, the teachers-researchers used a diagnostic test and an interview to collect data. After using the strategies, they used an observation checklist and a speaking rubric to assess the activities performed by

the students. After assessing the students using the different strategies, teachers analyzed the information provided by students and made an improvement plan to be applied in the next academic period.

IV. DISCUSSION

To improve students speaking skills in English, the researchers used four types of strategies with different activities. These strategies were used to foster oral communication considering our students' weaknesses. Students needed to speak English more fluently, accurately, and confidently.

1. STRATEGY ONE: COLLABORATIVE GROUP WORK

Collaborative group work is a teaching strategy that offers a supportive and secure learning environment where students can become active participants. They learn cooperative working, respecting each other, their ideas, and their weaknesses (Gödek, 2004). In this action research study, the teachers used collaborative group work to promote participation and fluency in the students. Learners were asked to get together in pairs or groups of three. The task was to create a recipe and make an oral presentation, including ingredients, steps, and the final recipe. For this activity, the researchers already introduced new vocabulary and expressions using mind maps and input charts. Additionally, they modeled some examples of recipes.

The main activity in this strategy was JIGSAW GROUPS with a minor modification. Each group became an expert on each recipe. As each group had a different recipe. The students did not regroup; however, they had to present their own recipes to the whole class. Students became experts on their recipes, had to report on how to prepare a typical dish from different parts of Ecuador, presented to the class and answered questions from the professors and their classmates. Teachers used some techniques suggested by Gibbons (2015) to make group work effective: Clear and explicit instructions were provided as in the aspects described below.

- a. Talk was necessary for the task.
- b. There was a clear outcome for the group work.
- c. The task was cognitively appropriate to the learners.
- d. The task was integrated with a broader curriculum topic.
- e. All students in the group were involved.
- f. Students had enough time to complete the task.

To evaluate this strategy with the students an observation check list was developed as shown in table (see Table 1).

Students' response

Students were enthusiastic about working together to create a recipe they liked eating or enjoyed making. They spent some time trying to choose the perfect recipe. Students shared information about ingredients, quantities, recipients, measurements, and ways of cooking. They also debated the correct way of preparing the recipes. It was interesting to see that

Table 1. Observation checklist

N.º	PARAMETERS	YES	NO	NOT OBSERVED
1	Students have enthusiasm to participate in discussion			
2	Students can pronounce English well			
3	Students can identify new vocabularies and use a lot of vocabularies when they speak English			
4	Students become active in the classroom			
5	Students ask and answer the question bravely			
6	Students respond to talk moves			
7	Students ask and answer the question bravely			
8	Students work in group			
9	Students participate actively in the group			
10	Students speak accurately			
11	Students complete the task			
12	Students can be confident to speak in front of class			

Adapted from Gödek, Y. (2004). Research on group Work and Collaborative Work and its Implications for primary School teachers.

each student had their own way of making things depending on where they lived and the food type they ate.

Students could create their own recipes with poster papers, markers, and magazine pictures. They finally presented each recipe, and the teachers and the rest of the class asked questions about it. They thought it was a fun activity for everyone, and the most relevant task, while students had the opportunity to participate in the oral presentation and practice English (see Figure 1).

2. STRATEGY TWO: INPUT STRATEGY

The teachers-researchers' input was an INPUT CHART (see Figure 2) related to restaurants and menus to improve participation and accuracy. With the information provided in the input chart, students were required to talk about their favorite restaurant. They also had to use word cards to recycle information and practice using the vocabulary and expressions related to the «at the restaurant» input chart.

Learners were also encouraged to talk and connect with what they acquired in class and heard from their classmates by using TALK MOVES. Chapin, O'Connor, and Anderson (2003) stated that there are five productive talk moves:

1. *Revoicing*: So, you are saying that ...
2. *Asking students to restate one else's reasoning*: What you repeat what he just said in your own words?
3. *Asking students to apply their own reasoning to some else's reasoning*: Do you agree or disagree and why?
4. *Prompting students for further participation*: Would someone like to add one?
5. *Using wait time*: Take your tie... we'll wait.

Figure 1. Students group presentations

Data: Students presentations about different menus.

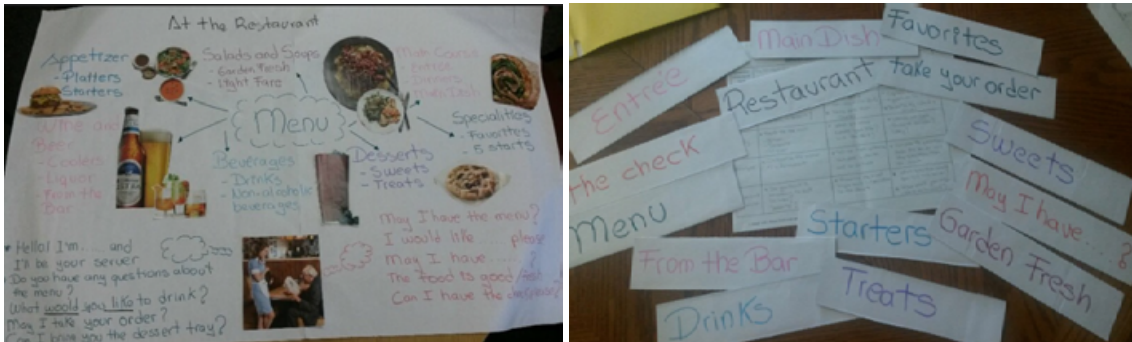
Figure 2. Input chart

Chart data: restaurant vocabulary and menu.

In this action research study, the teachers asked: What did your partner say? Who can rephrase what ____ said? Why do you think that? How did you arrive at that conclusion? were approached in class. As the project for that week, students had to role-play a restaurant event, in which they had to include the information provided in the input chart they had been working on for several weeks. A speaking rubric was used to grade this activity, as shown in table (see Table 2).

Students' response

With these activities, students could practice pronunciation and accuracy, using the vocabulary and expressions related to restaurants. Learns enjoy this activity because they can use authentic material and for a real purpose, which was to communicate in a restaurant. The students usually go to restaurants; therefore, vocabulary, expressions, and conversations were beneficial to them. Additionally, all the learners in the class had the opportunity to interact and become familiar with the topic and discussion. Talk moves were a convenient tool to develop participation among the students. Their final task was to role-play a restaurant situation where students performed an excellent job using and recycling the vocabulary, expressions, and structures used in class.

3. STRATEGY THREE: INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES

Different interactive activities were used in class to promote speaking among the students. Learners could express their feelings, emotions, and opinions in groups and in front of the

Table 2. Speaking rubric

	4. Distinguished	3. Proficient	2. Apprentice	1. Novice
Fluency: Clarity and volume.	Appropriate volume throughout presentation. Varied volume when appropriate. Proper inflection throughout presentation. Spoke clearly and understandably.	Spoke at an appropriate volume for most of presentation. Good inflection and enunciation. Occasionally sounded monotone.	Spoke quietly. Increased volume briefly after being asked. Spoke with little inflection.	Barely audible, even after requests to speak up. No inflection. Sounded bored or uninterested. Paid little attention to proper pronunciation.
accuracy: Related to topic, detailed, and accurate.	All content directly related to topic. Content was thoroughly developed and demonstrated detailed knowledge of the topic. Options were supported by fact wherever possible.	Content directly related to topic. Included many details that demonstrated knowledge of the topic. Most opinions were supported by facts.	Hardly difficulty explaining how the content and topic relate. Many opinions were not factually supported.	Presentation did not relate to topic. Included few details and relied heavily upon unsupported opinion.
Vocabulary: Relevant to the topic	Entire presentation focused on the topic. Able to answer audience questions without straying from subject.	Majority of presentation was on-topic. Made effort to return to topic when presentation or audience questions strayed.	Some material was unrelated to the topic, or presenter used unrelated material to pad the presentation.	More than half of the presentation did not directly address the topic.
Oral Presentation-Pauses: Pauses to collect thoughts or organize materials.	Used pauses to emphasize points or to elicit audience response. Did not need to pause to shuffle papers, organize materials or gather thoughts.	Did not pause for more than a couple of seconds to adjust notes or materials. Pauses between sentences and topics were occasional and very brief.	Paused one or more times to find place in presentation or to look through notes. Paused two or more times to gather thoughts while speaking.	Repeatedly stopped to look through notes. Paused repeatedly to form sentences.

Adapted from rubric-maker.com (2019).

whole class. One of the activities used in class was DONUT CIRCLES to promote fluency and participation. The participants gather in two circles. The outer circle faces inward, and the inner circle faces outward, so each student faces someone in front of the other circle. The pairs talk in turns to each other for a minute or two about a specific topic (Gibbons, 2015). Each pair of learners was asked to discuss a particular question: What is your favorite food? Where do you like to go when you eat out? Which is your favorite restaurant? For this strategy students had the opportunity to interact with their peers in the target language, take turns and speak freely and fluently.

Students' response

Interactive activities in the class develop intrinsic motivation in students. This activity «allows for practice and rehearsal of an idea or a sentence structure since the student can repeat the same thing to each of the new partners as the circle moves on. It allows for peer scaffolding». Gibbons, 2015, p. 67). Students repeatedly practiced questions and answers until, at one point, they were fluent and accurate when speaking about specific topics related to restaurants and food choices. Finally, they were aware of their improvement, which was their intrinsic motivation (see Figures 3, 4).

4. STRATEGY FOUR: CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK

Corrective feedback is one of the options for improving accuracy in ESL students. Teachers-researchers used RECASTING as a way of corrective feedback to help students develop their accuracy in speaking. «Recasts involve the teacher's implicit provision of a correct reformulation of all or part of a student's ill-formed utterance» (Lyster & Ranta, 1997, p. 46). Using recast, the teachers can correct grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation mistakes only when necessary, trying not to affect the students' confidence in speaking English. Recast was very casual by correctly rephrasing words, words, or phrases. It is imperative to mention that recasting was carried out in class in several instances and with all the students during the entire course. For this strategy to be evaluated, a Can-do checklist was used (see Table 3).

Students' response

Students respond to corrective feedback positively. They corrected their mistakes when they noticed them with the help of the teachers by using recasting. As Scrivener (2005) stated, «If the objective is accuracy, then an immediate correction is likely to be useful; if the aim is fluency, then lengthy, immediate correction that divers from the flow of speaking is less appropriate» (as cited in Ellis & Shintani, 2014, p. 251). Students corrected themselves on multiple occasions with the help of recast. Teachers rephrased the words, expressions, or sentences that needed correction, and then students repeated them correctly. Corrective feedback is an ongoing process, and not because the instructors correct it once, students will automatically remember it again. Teachers had to repeatedly correct the same error until students no longer made the same mistakes.

CONCLUSIONS

By carrying out this action research project, the teachers-researchers learned that the best ways of learning are by combining several strategies. This action research project used collaborative group work and interactive activities, working with input strategies, talk moves, and appropriate feedback. Students had more opportunities to interact with other speakers, so they increased their use of the English language. Another benefit was that the learners improved their English language comprehension because they could ask, answer, clarify, and exchange information to accomplish their tasks. In addition, as Gibbons (2015) says, «Learners who are not confident in English often feel more comfortable working with peers than performing in a whole-class situation» (p. 50). The teachers-researchers believe this is one of the strengths of this study because, in the process, students helped and supported each other to complete the task and improve their English language.

Table 3. Oral examination

n.º	QUESTION	CORRESPONDING «CAN DO» STATEMENT	YES/NO	OBSERVATIONS
1	What's your name? How do you spell your surname?	I can spell my name		
2	Where are you from?	I can say countries and nationalities.		
3	Did you learn English at school? For how many years?	I can talk about things that happened in my life.		
4	What do you do now? Do you work or are you a student?	I can talk about jobs.		
5	What do you do in your free time?	I can talk about my free-time activities and say when I do them.		
6	Do you like football? What sports do you like?	I can say what I like and don't like		
7	What do you do every day? What time do you get up/start work?	I can describe my daily routine.		
8	What subjects did you study at school? What exams did you take?	I can talk about exams and studying.		
9	Tell me something you could do well at school. And something you can do well now	I can talk about things I can do in the present and could do in the past.		
10	Tell me about your favorite food	I can talk about food and describe what I like and what I don't		
11	Tell me about the weather in your country.	I can talk about the weather.		

Adapted from Cambridge University press, face2face (2013).

Figure 3. Flash cards

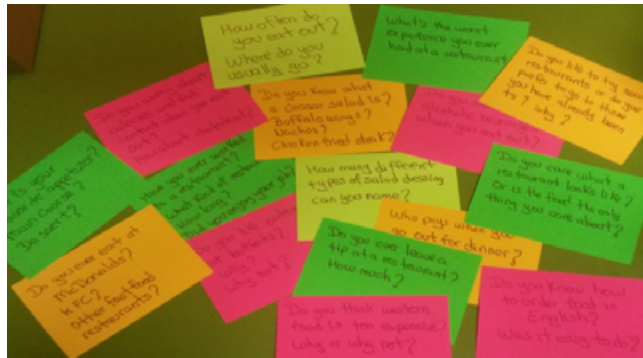


Figure 4. Donut circle



As Ellis & Shintani (2014) mentioned, «group-work is a means of increasing students' participation and self-reliance in the classroom» (p. 22) because there are more opportunities for language practice, there is a range of language functions, and learners are engaged in self-corrections. Additionally, students can negotiate meaning, which is one of the most crucial communication skills. In this regard, it was evident that students improved their speaking skills. In the last activities students performed in class, they were more confident when expressing their opinions and feelings. Additionally, they are not as shy as they used to be, they are not afraid of speaking or making mistakes either. They also speak more fluently and accurately at beginning level. However, students must continue practicing becoming even more fluent in English. Finally, this action research study helps teachers identify our students' weaknesses and understand their needs so that teachers can work with them to develop their speaking language skills.

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REVISTA KRONOS

The rise of AI in language education: a game changer for teaching English as a foreign language in Ecuador

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Preparing for AI involves ensuring that all citizens are prepared for the possible impacts of AI on their lives, helping them to go beyond the hype in order to understand issues such as AI ethics, data biases, surveillance, and the potential impact on jobs.
Holmes et al. (2022).

ABSTRACT This paper discusses the rise of AI in language teaching and its impact on the teaching of English as a foreign language in Ecuador. The author shares his experience as an EFL teacher in an international graduate program and highlights the importance of critical thinking and higher order thinking in language learning. The use of AI, particularly ChatGPT, in the classroom is explored, as well as potential benefits and limitations. It also creates an insightful exploration through technical concepts that entail the meaning of a generative AI and its ramifications until today. The author emphasizes the need for well-trained teachers who can adapt and innovate with technology to provide meaningful learning experiences for students. The author explores in depth how teaching English in Ecuador has presented constraints to overcome in order to accomplish a well understanding of how it is actually learnt by the citizens and how AI could aid that task. The paper raises questions about the future of education and the role of teachers in an AI-driven world. It concludes by highlighting the potential of AI to dramatically enhance teaching and learning experiences, but also highlights the importance of using AI tools effectively and ensuring that they align with student needs and course objectives. The paper highlights that AI can make teaching more efficient and effective, but Teachers are not interchangeable. The use of AI in language education is still in its infancy in Ecuador, but promising initiatives are being developed, with the potential to equalize all students and improve the quality of education.

KEY WORDS AI in language education, English as a foreign language, Ecuador, ChatGPT, teaching English, Critical thinking skills, higher-order thinking skills, EFL teacher.

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FECHA DE APROBACIÓN 22/08/2023

El auge de la IA en la educación de idiomas: un punto de inflexión para la enseñanza de inglés como lengua extranjera en Ecuador

RESUMEN Este artículo analiza el auge de la IA en la enseñanza de idiomas y su impacto en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera en Ecuador. El autor comparte su experiencia como profesor de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) en un programa de bachillerato internacional y destaca la importancia del pensamiento crítico y el pensamiento de orden superior en el aprendizaje de idiomas. Se explora el uso de la IA, en particular ChatGPT, en el aula, así como sus posibles beneficios y limitaciones. También se realiza una exploración perspicaz a través de conceptos técnicos que implican el significado de la IA generativa y sus ramificaciones hasta hoy. El autor enfatiza la necesidad de profesores bien formados que puedan adaptarse e innovar con la tecnología para brindar experiencias de aprendizaje significativas a los estudiantes. El autor explora en profundidad cómo la enseñanza del inglés en Ecuador ha presentado restricciones que superar para lograr una buena comprensión de cómo lo aprenden realmente los ciudadanos y cómo la IA podría ayudar en esa tarea. El artículo plantea preguntas sobre el futuro de la educación y el papel de los profesores en un mundo impulsado por la IA. Concluye destacando el potencial de la IA para mejorar drásticamente las experiencias de enseñanza y aprendizaje, pero también destaca la importancia de utilizar las herramientas de IA de manera eficaz y garantizar que se alineen con las necesidades de los estudiantes y los objetivos del curso. El artículo destaca que la IA puede hacer que la enseñanza sea más eficiente y efectiva, pero los profesores no son intercambiables. El uso de la IA en la educación lingüística aún se encuentra en sus inicios en Ecuador, pero se están desarrollando iniciativas prometedoras, con el potencial de igualar a todos los estudiantes y mejorar la calidad de la educación.

PALABRAS CLAVE IA en la educación de idiomas, inglés como lengua extranjera, Ecuador, ChatGPT, enseñanza del inglés, pensamiento crítico, habilidades superiores de pensamiento, docentes EFL

INTRODUCTION

As educators, we certainly knew almost nothing on AI and its uses for our field, nevertheless, its blowing appearance in our daily contexts has undoubtedly modified our perception of this now-living scenario. Now, our task seems to be addressed to explore and get as much information as possible about it, but it is not an easy business; there are constraints that we must take into account like inclusiveness, personalization, flexibility, and engagement (Schmidt & Strassner, 2022). As many others related to our local situations and how EFL is studied and taught. Let me show you then, my perception and experience, as my findings using these newbie functions for teaching English as a foreign language in Ecuador.

TEACHING EFL/ESL AS A HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER IN ECUADOR

First, it is paramount to delineate my professional experience as a high school English teacher and lately discuss how that experience is contrasted with Ecuador's reality in the educational field, specifically for ESL and EFL teaching.

My career as an EFL/ESL teacher was focused on teaching English for the international baccalaureate program. The subject was English B Higher Level. This subject entails more than a traditional transmission of knowledge about grammar, and the famous four skills that every language learner must acquire in order to be a competent user of it (The European Council, 2023). In consequence, it works with those skills to transform the content delivery into a context where each individual produces the language to a major extent interacting with its peers and showing critical thinking, reflecting, and higher-order thinking capacities in the L2 (Dp-Language-B-Guide, 2020).

Let me set you into a deeper understanding of how this subject works and lately share the importance it had for my profession to know the huge incoming impact that the appearance of AI's had in the early stages of 2023.

First of all, it is needed to establish that according to (Dp-Language-B-Guide, 2020), «The Diploma Programme is a rigorous pre-university course of study designed for students in the 16 to 19 age range. It is a broad-based two-year course that aims to encourage students to be knowledgeable and inquiring, but also caring and compassionate». It means that the nature of the course is broadly based on a different basis if it is compared to the traditional language acquisition set ups where aspects like grammar, and vocabulary are the cores of teaching and thus, the objective for obtaining an international certification from Cambridge, The British Council, and so on. In consequence, it is also stated that «Language ab initio and language B are language acquisition courses designed to provide students with the necessary skills and intercultural understanding to enable them to communicate successfully in an environment where the language studied is spoken» (Dp-Language-B-Guide, 2020, p. 16).

After the previous introduction to the subject as the matter of experience for this article, it is highly important to state that this component of the IB curriculum, also has a collection of approaches to teaching and learning that are the basis of the course itself. Among them, and as (Dp-Language-B-Guide, 2020), states, we may find the upcoming list:

1. Empower teachers as teachers of learners as well as teachers of content.
2. Empower teachers to create clearer strategies for facilitating learning experiences in which students are more meaningfully engaged in structured inquiry and greater critical and creative thinking.
3. Promote both the aims of individual subjects (making them more than course aspirations) and linking previously isolated knowledge (concurrency of learning)

4. Encourage students to develop an explicit variety of skills that will equip them to continue to be actively engaged in learning after they leave school, and to help them not only obtain university admission through better grades but also prepare for success during tertiary education and beyond.
5. Enhance further the coherence and relevance of the students' Diploma Programme experience.
6. Allow schools to identify the distinctive nature of an IB Diploma Programme education, with its blend of idealism and practicality (p. 14).

These approaches are meant to highlight the learner as the center of the teaching-learning process and as a former instructor for this subject, I consider that it is paramount to be clear that not all the routines and repetitive actions that come from the traditional way an English teacher uses for its classes, actually, work. We have to imagine this class a moment for reflection over the content that is delivered and ask the learners to produce their thoughts using the L2. They may dive into interesting themes like identities, social organization, human ingenuity, sharing the planet, and experiences (Philpot, 2018) and also complementing them with even more sources of information like the ones found in McGowan, M., Owen Jung, H., & Deupree, A. (2019), Janning, P., & Mertin, P. (2019), Saa'd Aldin, K. & Morley, K. (2018). Furthermore, add these themes with different text-types as they learn how to write extensively. This may include how to prepare and write essays, news reports, letters (informal and formal), brochures, proposals, reviews, blogs, social media posts, and almost everything they may find nowadays (Owen, 2020).

On the other hand, keeping up with a content-driven class might become difficult to grasp and imagine, the challenge was to think out of the box and face different procedures to convey a communicative content which function could delineate a better outcome in the students' language performance. In this section, I must agree that as an EFL or ESL teacher, your cognitive knowledge, must be rich and understand a variety of voluble situations in the classroom that require your resourceful approach to solve them instead of repeating routines, actions, and moreover, traditional views on teaching and learning (Al-Seghayer, 2017).

These kinds of classes work with a dynamic that is mostly understood as conversational and seek different ways of thinking from the learners' perspectives. Not all of them are developed using a proper and adequate level of English. According to the (Dp-Language-B-Guide, 2020), the optimal management of the language considering the CEFR for languages is B1 or B2, therefore, it is also another aspect to take into account when all the content comes to the moment of being studied and comprehended. According to De Angelis (2022), this aspect is an important paradigm that as English teachers we must know because in Ecuador, it is nationally spread the idea that most of the population has a low level of English (El Universo, 2019). And recalling my experience teaching this demanding subject, I agree on that claim. Nevertheless, it is also remarkable to position in our minds, that Ecuador has had a constant evolving process in this field and contrary to EF education first (2021a), the company that publishes these studies yearly; our country responds to a better qualification, however, the core of the methodological process which is used to measure this data, seems to be biased as De Angelis (2022) assures promoting that EF education first (2021a), is not taking into account many other factors that are more linked to our reality. De Angelis (2022) mentions «...the EF EPI does not distinguish between a total lack of language skill in English, the ability to use some basic expressions in the language, and the ability to adequately communicate about concrete topics in English, since all of these would appear as 'very low proficiency'. It is worth noting that the distinctions between pre-A1, A1, and A2 can be very significant in contexts like Ecuador». In the end, my position as an educator on this field, takes these last claims as truth, but conditioned for another reality that in the classrooms all over the country happens, and

that is that our students scarcely handle the language to a significant extent, and it brings the need to make a huge difference in the instructional methods we use as EFL/ESL teachers. Around this aspect, the AI created the first step for this change.

CHATGPT AND THE APPEARANCE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE EDUCATIONAL FIELD

This concept of AI appeared through a now well-known name, chatGPT. This name sounded harder when we started to know that it could handle different tasks using responsive human language based on prompts that the user could write easily asking for a text, chart, table, information, or a simple conversation and lately obtain an answer that was mostly well-driven and logically created. Students noticed it too and their work production upgraded in terms of readability, coherence, logical constructions, etc. This was something to be worried about, but mostly a shocking reality that none was prepared to face or even understand.

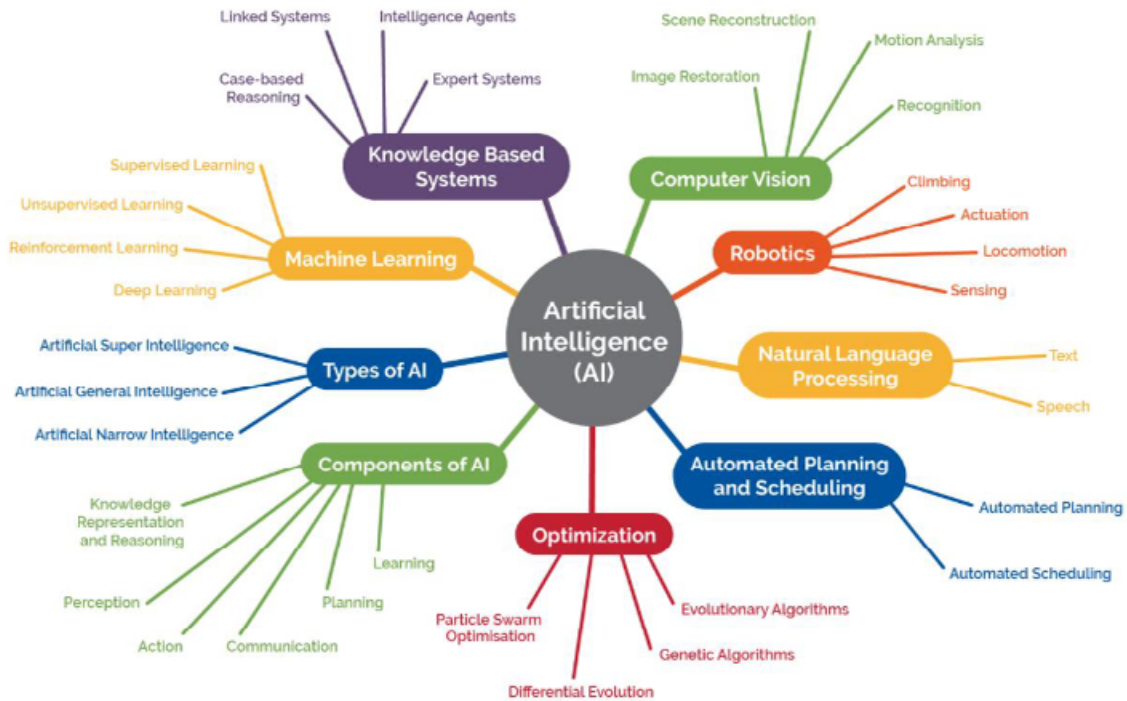
On the course of actions, it was necessary to comprehend first that AI was much more than chatGPT, it was a complex language structure that engineered constructions like learner-facing AI tools, teacher-facing systems, and system-facing AI tools (Schmidt & Strassner, 2022). Nonetheless, keeping up with the mentioned concepts is yet a constraint to depict and beat in the long term, thus it creates the need to contrast what we perceive as plausible using AI in the educational context and what could not be done.

One of the main understandings about AI in the educational practice, is its urgency for the users (students, teachers, and stakeholders). According to (Cardona *et al.*, n. d.), teachers are suggested to use AI for many different situations which aim to save time, reduce workload, help students, and furtherly, provide feedback for those in need. This situation is agreed by (Schmidt & Strassner, 2022), whose concept of AI implementation relies on three relevant pillars, adaptivity, assistance, and dynamism. Consequently, if we take into account that this new technology is shaping notably the way in which we attend to classes, it is not a surprise that our path as educators is now changing, and we must strive for creating new ways to implement AI in the near future and lastly innovate our lessons, test, materials, and authentic production for learners of EFL.

Besides all the knowledge you consider you have learned about AI and its functionalities; it is riveting to depict and review what is it and how we may use it properly as a result of our previous educational knowledge. Therefore, glance the map below about AI and its definitions as (Regona *et al.*, 2022) share (see Figure 1).

Grasping from the map presented, Artificial Intelligence appears to be more than what we appreciate at the first sight. It shows a wide range of possibilities for educators and students. One of those relies in the framework of automated planning and scheduling saving many hours a day, mainly by adjusting a content given instead of creating it from scratch. Online tools like chatGPT and Bard AI are magnificent on this task, however, they require from you a correct language presentation as they understand input delivered using texts or what we actually call, prompts. The very prompts that may enlighten you with more knowledge or lead you to confusion. It all depends on how you as the user may write properly and clearly. As an example, you may ask to a generative AI like chatGPT or Bard AI to write a lesson plan. If your prompt is just 'write a lesson plan', then your outcome given will be any lesson plan that the AI may grasp from its database, otherwise, if you write something more detailed like 'write a lesson plan for teaching comparatives to a group of twenty students whose age goes from 10 to 12 years old and their language skills stand for an A2 level according to the CEFR', you will for sure obtain a meaningful result. These essays are based on natural language processing and machine learning.

Figure 3. Flash cards



On this basis, teaching EFL is also a matter of understanding that generative AIs are not the solution for everything we are meant to do in our job as educators. Those might provide us with different and varied results, texts, charts, plans, evaluations, etc. Nevertheless, it is our duty to decode what is correct and what is not. Cardona *et al.* (n. d.) states that these software solutions do not have the needed ‘common sense’ and neither the same judgment that as humans we possess. Consequently, relying on them blindly is undoubtedly an error that will also prevent us from academic creation which will meaningfully help students to climb the ladder.

Following the aforementioned words, ‘common sense’ is the key besides judgment that clearly enhances the language production our learners might demonstrate lately with their teachers’ instructions. In our solely Ecuadorian context, portraying this aspect is quite complicated and such a challenge due to our cosmovision and inherited way of thinking about life, discipline, and love for knowledge and learning. Apart from these constraints, teaching in a country like this, is also a source of challenging situations where you as an educator will learn and adapt yourself. Consequently, for me, after eight years of teaching, it is paramount to keep learning and discovering ways and methods to understand how our students learn and especially, how to reach their minds with meaningful experiences based on reasoning and not just on pursuing a certificate from Cambridge or any other company. On the other hand, it differs from other students around the globe, I mean, we could not expect to have ideal classroom settings as we perceive in most of the teaching books we learn along our professional formation. Our contexts, settings, experiences, political and cultural issues, make our labor even more complex and intricate, therefore, keeping up with AI tools will unequivocally support our work efforts substantially (Al-Seghayer, 2017).

In all of these aspects mentioned previously, there is a question that immediately pops up to our minds, of course, if you dedicate your life to elaborate on educational purposes. This interrogation stands for the usefulness teachers have in the future of education. Will our continuity be affected by AI development? Or are we going to be replaced by robots,

androids or even different generative tools that could help students to learn faster and better without our onsite assistance?

For better answering this question, let me recall some information mentioned by (Schmidt & Strassner, 2022), whose statements acknowledge the need of teachers in a utopia they set in the year 2040 where most of the materials used by our learners will be interactive, multimedia settled, able to be connected to internet everywhere they go and decide to work on, adapted to the needs they could face, like onsite or online classes. This need comes from reflecting over the concept of well-trained teachers. Instructors whose main purpose would be to know, evolve, innovate, adapt, use technology and moreover, set scenarios where individuals might learn significantly from the critical thinking skill their teachers show.

In addition, we do not only possess information about AI and its full range of advantages and disadvantages spread all over the web. As educators, it is our responsibility to answer some important questions and reflections over the application of them in our specific contexts of teaching and learning. Let's bullet point them for a better understanding of their implications:

- Is our learning system able to use AI and learn about it?
- After deciding on using AI, is the tool(s) chosen aligned to students that have specific educational needs?
- How our students are able to interact with others if any AI is included in their curriculum? (Cardona *et al.*, n. d.).
- Is all the information shared on the web through AI's safe and secure? And moreover, how our students are protected? (Cardona *et al.*, n. d.).
- How could teachers interact with AI's so that they could feel it as an advantage and not as their replacement?
- How willing are our teachers for learning and adapting themselves to the new loops of teaching and learning that AIs bring within them?
- Is our context ready for this transition?

As complex as it seems to be, it also brings opportunities for enhancement and improvement. We might then infer that our educational system has to evolve as new tools do every day and consequently offer teachers a new perspective for sharing knowledge, content, experiences, methods, approaches, practices, and even more; to center their efforts on students as always. This new comprehension of AI should break the wall and bring calm to those who consider that their jobs are running in danger, because it is far from the current reality. Instead, we perhaps change people's mindset and show them how resilient we might become and teach them too that we could design, create, and evaluate, prepare and reflect on our teaching, and actually do our teaching (Cardona *et al.*, n. d.).

HOW AI CHANGED MY OVERVIEW OF TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

In the last months using different tools related to artificial intelligence and its plugins; it has been really impressive how the time management now goes around the concept of 'saving' instead of 'consuming'. What I mean is that before knowing the existence of different AI's capable of solving routinary activities, like planning, creating exercises, or merely a PowerPoint presentation, the teachers' duties were complicated and time 'consuming' due to the long hours needed to think, process, and later produce the content needed for each class session. Consequently, having a great base of information and a program to solve it based on a generative algorithm, is actually a game changer and precisely talking, it moved

from using ChatGPT to alternatives that based on this language, they sort the information to set a really useful outcome. In this list of alternatives, I have found apps like Gamma ai, that works creating documents, presentations, and even landing web pages based on the same concept of writing a prompt that fits the needs of the user. Another of the endless apps there found on the web, we have Diffit for teachers ai, and what makes special the use and application of this website, is the capacity it has to make a differentiation and adaptation of the content and texts you input in order to lower the vocabulary complexity it has and moreover the tone, style, aim, and even the text-type. In addition, here my favorite by far, Twee ai, this artificial intelligence is basically something different, but keeping the same fundamentals as the core. Using this AI, any EFL or ESL teacher may create using generative text and a predefined bot, to create activities like fill in the gap, word formation, YouTube video exercises, summaries, and many others that are found in the standardized tests of English.

In the overall, using these tools, makes the administrative and lesson planning hours, more adequate to fulfill them with more analysis, reflection, and critical thinking exercises. It has, in my opinion, all the assets that I need to make the teaching-learning process easier and more complete, meaningful, and fostering the feedback time for more students. In the end, it even helps each one of my students to be assessed faster and with more information embedded in the process.

CONCLUSION

The rise of AI in language education has the potential to be a game-changer for teaching English as a foreign language in Ecuador. AI-powered tools can help to personalize learning, provide students with immediate feedback, and automate tasks such as grading and lesson planning. This can free up teachers to focus on more strategic aspects of teaching, such as providing support to students who need it most.

However, it is important to note that AI is not a silver bullet. It is important to use AI tools in a thoughtful and intentional way, and to ensure that they are aligned with the specific needs of students and the learning objectives of the curriculum. Additionally, it is important to be aware of the potential biases that can be embedded in AI tools, and to take steps to mitigate them.

In Ecuador, the use of AI in language education is still in its early stages. However, there are a number of promising initiatives underway around the world that promise to make this educational change a reality that will start on teachers later in the upcoming years to a huge amount of students.

As a professional educator with experience teaching English as a foreign language in Ecuador, I am excited about the potential of AI to improve the quality of education for all students. I believe that AI has the potential to level the playing field and give all students the opportunity to succeed in learning English.

Here are some specific ways that AI can be used to improve language education in Ecuador:

- Personalized learning: AI can be used to create personalized learning plans for each student. This can be done by tracking student progress and identifying areas where they need additional support. AI can then provide students with targeted instruction and practice activities to help them improve their skills.
- Immediate feedback: AI can provide students with immediate feedback on their work. This can be especially helpful for students who are struggling, as it can help them to identify their errors and make corrections quickly.
- Automated tasks: AI can automate tasks such as grading and lesson planning. This can

free up teachers to focus on more strategic aspects of teaching, such as providing support to students who need it most.

- Adaptive learning: AI can be used to create adaptive learning materials that adjust to the student's individual needs and learning style. This can help to ensure that all students are challenged and engaged in their learning.

I believe that AI has the potential to make a significant positive impact on language education in Ecuador. By using AI tools in a thoughtful and intentional way, teachers can create more personalized and effective learning experiences for their students.

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- Con énfasis en el texto, cuya secuencia esquemática es: cita en párrafo independiente, punto, (Apellido, año, página). Ejemplo:
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Tabla 1. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit

EXPLICACIÓN	CATEGORÍA	CATEGORÍA	CATEGORÍA
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Variable	xxx	xxx	xxx

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Figura 1. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit

EXPLICACIÓN	CATEGORÍA	CATEGORÍA	CATEGORÍA
Variable	xxx	xxx	xxx
Variable	xxx	xxx	xxx

Nota: Morbi dolor sapien, venenatis bibendum. Fuente: Morales (1995, p. 3).

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