

Vol.6, No.2 agosto 2025 - enero 2026

REVISTA
ronos
The Language Teaching Journal

INSTITUTO ACADÉMICO DE IDIOMAS



REVISTA KRONOS

Vol. 6, N.º 2 (agosto 2025 - enero 2026)

THE LANGUAGE TEACHING JOURNAL | INSTITUTO ACADÉMICO DE IDIOMAS

KRONOS-The Language Teaching Journal, 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. 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.

AUTORIDADES UNIVERSIDAD CENTRAL DEL ECUADOR

RECTOR | Dr. Patricio Espinosa del Pozo, Ph. D.

VICERRECTORA ACADÉMICO Y DE POSGRADO | Dra. Julieta Logroño, Ph. D.

VICERRECTORA DE INVESTIGACIÓN, DOCTORADOS E INNOVACIÓN | Dra. Katherine Zurita, Ph. D.

VICERRECTOR ADMINISTRATIVO Y FINANCIERO | Dr. Silvio Toscano, Ph. D

DIRECTOR DEL INSTITUTO ACADÉMICO DE IDIOMAS | Ph.D. Wilson Chiluiza

DIRECCIÓN EDITORIAL

DIRECTOR DEL INSTITUTO ACADÉMICO DE IDIOMAS

Ph.D. Wilson Chiluiza. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4725-8151>

JEFE DE EDICIÓN

Evelyn Almeida García. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0543-3131>

Universidad Central del Ecuador - Instituto Académico de Idiomas (Ecuador)

Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas (ESPE) - Departamento de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales (Ecuador)

CONSEJO EDITORIAL

Chita Espino-Bravo. Fort Hays State University (Estados Unidos.) <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1388-3554>

Xochithl Guadalupe Rangel Romero. Universidad Autónoma de San Luis Potosí (México) <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0543-2852>

Diana Ruggiero. University of Memphis (Estados Unidos) <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2605-3066>

Manuel Medina. University of Louisville (Estados Unidos) <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9618-3822>

Diego Bussola. Universidad Nacional de Rosario (Argentina) <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7480-8991>

Serge Bibauw. Ku Leuven (Bélgica), Universidad Central del Ecuador (Ecuador) <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1264-6090>

Emmanuelle Sinardet. Université Paris Nanterre (Francia) <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5183-5708>

Jorge Bernal. Universidad de Salamanca (España), Universidad Técnica Estatal de Quevedo (Ecuador) <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4636-9789>

Mónica Tamayo. Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas, ESPE (Ecuador) <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2775-2483>

Hazel Acosta. Universidad Nacional de Educación (Ecuador) <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0281-2681>

Daniel Cazco. Universidad Nacional de Educación (Ecuador) <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4671-4546>

Marcia Criollo. Universidad Nacional de Loja (Ecuador) <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5326-2456>

Ítalo Carabajo. Universidad Estatal de la Península de Santa Elena (Ecuador) <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9592-1659>

José Campuzano. Universidad de Guayaquil (Ecuador) <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6568-3311>

Mauro Ocaña. Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas, ESPE (Ecuador) <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1890-0800>

Marco Rosales. Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas, ESPE (Ecuador) <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9840-3761>

Priscila Revelo. Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas, ESPE (Ecuador) <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2342-9948>

Andrea Rosero. Universidad Central del Ecuador (Ecuador) <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7007-8589>

Andrés Baldassari. Universidad Central del Ecuador (Ecuador) <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0800-1783>

Martina Nebbiai. Universidad Central del Ecuador (Ecuador) <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-7875-4760>

Santiago Sanguña. Universidad Central del Ecuador (Ecuador) <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4007-6910>

Año 2026 | Vol. 6, N.º 2

Frecuencia: bianual (agosto 2025 - enero 2026)

Año de inicio: 2018

Idioma: inglés y español

kronos.idiomas@uce.edu.ec

<https://revistadigital.uce.edu.ec/index.php/KronosJournal/>

Instituto Académico de Idiomas-UCE

Av. América y Av. Pérez Guerrero, s. n.

Código postal: 170521

Director: MSc. Francis Vanegas Wong

Corrección de textos | MSc. Jhonatan Salazar Achig

Diseño y diagramación | MSc. Christian Echeverría

Editorial Universitaria, 2026

Ciudadela Universitaria, av. América, s. n.

Quito, Ecuador

+593 (02) 2524 033

editorial@uce.edu.ec



Los contenidos pueden usarse libremente, sin fines comerciales y siempre y cuando se cite la fuente. Si se hacen cambios de cualquier tipo, debe guardarse el espíritu de libre acceso al contenido.

TABLA DE CONTENIDO

Vol. 6, N.º 2 (agosto 2025 - enero 2026)

CARTA EDITORIAL.....	5
EDITORIAL LETTER.....	7
EFL Teacher Professional Development Considerations: A Case study in Different Schools of Cañar Province.	9
<i>Rivera Ariel, González Diana</i>	
Sitcoms as a Tool for EFL Learning: A Systematic Review of Language Skills Improvement	24
<i>Arcentales María, Chumbi Valeria</i>	
Trainee teachers' perceptions on the use of Blender and Unity to develop 3D didactic materials for science teaching	38
<i>Espinoza Karla, Cabrera Evelyn, Chimbo Diana, Quizhpi Erick</i>	
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in a Diverse EFL Classroom: A Case Study.	52
<i>Hidalgo Cynthia, Salazar Cristina</i>	
The use of Educational Games in English Vocabulary Learning	67
<i>Macías Miguel, Intriago Karen, Alcívar Dolores, Saltos Letty, Ponce Roberth, Looz Mónica</i>	
AI Chatbot Interaction on Enhancing Strategic Competence in B1 EFL students	84
<i>Díaz Carlos, González O, Chumaña Janneth Espinoza Nelly</i>	
Enhancing Vocabulary Retention through Routine-Based Activities in Young EFL Learners	106
<i>Molina Gisselle, Acosta Hazel</i>	
Bridging the gap: An autobiographical study on English learning experiences through private tutoring in Cuenca, Ecuador	120
<i>Garzón Nicol, Cajas Diego</i>	
Instrucciones para los autores. Política editorial	134

La revista *Kronos The Language Teaching Journal*, publicación académica de la Universidad Central del Ecuador, se ha consolidado como un espacio de difusión científica orientado al análisis, reflexión e innovación en la enseñanza y aprendizaje de lenguas. En su Volumen 6, Número 2, la revista reúne un conjunto de investigaciones que abordan problemáticas contemporáneas del campo de la didáctica del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL), desde perspectivas pedagógicas, tecnológicas, inclusivas y socioculturales. Este número evidencia la diversidad de enfoques metodológicos y la creciente necesidad de responder a los desafíos educativos en contextos locales y globales.

El primer conjunto de estudios se centra en el desarrollo profesional docente y las condiciones de enseñanza del inglés. El artículo sobre el desarrollo profesional en la provincia de Cañar evidencia una actitud positiva de los docentes hacia su formación continua, aunque revela limitaciones significativas en las oportunidades de capacitación, lo que plantea la necesidad de fortalecer políticas institucionales de apoyo. En esta misma línea de innovación pedagógica, otro estudio analiza el uso de *sitcoms* como herramienta didáctica, destacando su potencial para mejorar habilidades lingüísticas, ampliar el vocabulario y fortalecer la competencia intercultural mediante el contacto con lenguaje auténtico y contextualizado.

En el ámbito de la innovación tecnológica, el volumen incluye investigaciones que exploran el impacto de herramientas emergentes en la educación. Uno de los artículos examina el uso de *software* como Blender y Unity para la creación de materiales didácticos en 3D, evidenciando el potencial de la realidad virtual en la formación docente, aunque también subrayando las limitaciones de infraestructura tecnológica. De manera complementaria, otro estudio analiza la interacción con chatbots de inteligencia artificial para el desarrollo de la competencia estratégica en estudiantes de nivel B1, demostrando mejoras significativas en la autonomía, la autorregulación y la fluidez comunicativa, lo que refuerza el papel de la IA como recurso pedagógico emergente.

La dimensión de la inclusión educativa se aborda en el estudio de caso sobre el Trastorno por Déficit de Atención e Hiperactividad (TDAH) en el aula de inglés, el cual demuestra que, mediante adaptaciones metodológicas adecuadas, es posible mejorar la participación y el desempeño de estudiantes con necesidades educativas específicas. Este aporte resalta la importancia de una enseñanza sensible a la diversidad y orientada a la equidad en el aprendizaje del idioma.

En cuanto a metodologías activas, el volumen incluye investigaciones que destacan la importancia de estrategias centradas en el estudiante. El estudio sobre juegos educativos en el aprendizaje de vocabulario evidencia que, aunque su implementación es aún limitada, su uso incrementa significativamente la motivación y el compromiso estudiantil. De manera similar, el análisis de actividades basadas en rutinas en niños pequeños demuestra mejoras notables en la retención de vocabulario, la pronunciación y la confianza, lo que refuerza la eficacia de enfoques repetitivos y estructurados en la educación temprana.

Finalmente, el volumen incorpora reflexiones críticas sobre las trayectorias de aprendizaje del inglés y las desigualdades educativas. El estudio autobiográfico sobre tutorías privadas en Cuenca revela que éstas no solo funcionan como apoyo académico, sino también como espacios de recuperación emocional y reconstrucción de la identidad del apren-

diz, evidenciando la existencia de brechas en el sistema educativo formal y la necesidad de prácticas pedagógicas más empáticas e inclusivas.

En conjunto, los ocho artículos de este volumen reflejan la riqueza y complejidad del campo de la enseñanza del inglés en Ecuador y más allá. Desde la formación docente hasta la inteligencia artificial, pasando por la inclusión, la motivación y la innovación metodológica, este número de *Kronos The Language Teaching Journal* contribuye significativamente al debate académico contemporáneo. Asimismo, invita a repensar las prácticas educativas desde una perspectiva crítica, contextualizada y orientada a la mejora continua.

El equipo editorial agradece a los autores por sus valiosas contribuciones y a los revisores por su rigurosidad académica. Esperamos que este volumen sirva como referencia para investigadores, docentes y estudiantes interesados en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera y en la transformación de la educación lingüística en contextos diversos.

COMITÉ EDITORIAL

Kronos The Language Teaching Journal, an academic publication of the Central University of Ecuador, has established itself as a scholarly platform dedicated to the dissemination of research, reflection, and innovation in language teaching and learning. In its Volume 6, Number 2, the journal brings together a set of studies that address contemporary issues in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education from pedagogical, technological, inclusive, and sociocultural perspectives. This issue highlights the diversity of methodological approaches and the growing need to respond to educational challenges in both local and global contexts.

The first group of studies focuses on teacher professional development and the conditions of English language teaching. The article on professional development in Cañar Province reveals a positive attitude among teachers toward ongoing training, although it also highlights significant limitations in access to professional development opportunities, pointing to the need for stronger institutional support policies. In a similar line of pedagogical innovation, another study examines the use of sitcoms as a teaching tool, emphasizing their potential to enhance language skills, expand vocabulary, and strengthen intercultural competence through exposure to authentic and contextualized language.

In the area of educational innovation, this volume includes research exploring the impact of emerging technologies in education. One study examines the use of software such as Blender and Unity for the creation of 3D instructional materials, highlighting the potential of virtual reality in teacher education, while also pointing out technological infrastructure limitations. In a complementary study, the interaction with artificial intelligence chatbots is analyzed in relation to the development of strategic competence in B1-level students, demonstrating significant improvements in autonomy, self-regulation, and communicative fluency, thereby reinforcing the role of AI as an emerging pedagogical resource.

The dimension of inclusive education is addressed in the case study on Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in the EFL classroom, which shows that, through appropriate methodological adaptations, it is possible to improve the participation and performance of students with specific educational needs. This contribution underscores the importance of teaching practices that are sensitive to learner diversity and oriented toward equity in language learning.

Regarding active methodologies, the volume includes studies that highlight the importance of learner-centered strategies. The research on educational games in vocabulary learning shows that, although their implementation remains limited, their use significantly increases student motivation and engagement. Similarly, the study on routine-based activities with young learners demonstrates notable improvements in vocabulary retention, pronunciation, and confidence, reinforcing the effectiveness of repetitive and structured approaches in early language education.

Finally, the volume incorporates critical reflections on English learning trajectories and educational inequalities. The autobiographical study on private tutoring in Cuenca reveals that such tutoring not only serves as academic support but also as a space for emotional recovery and identity reconstruction for learners, highlighting gaps in the formal education system and the need for more empathetic and inclusive pedagogical practices.

Overall, the eight articles in this issue reflect the richness and complexity of English language teaching in Ecuador and beyond. From teacher education to artificial intelligence,

including inclusion, motivation, and methodological innovation, this issue of *Kronos The Language Teaching Journal* makes a significant contribution to contemporary academic debate. It also invites readers to rethink educational practices from a critical, contextualized, and improvement-oriented perspective.

The editorial team expresses its gratitude to the authors for their valuable contributions and to the reviewers for their academic rigor. We hope this volume serves as a reference for researchers, teachers, and students interested in English language teaching and the transformation of language education in diverse contexts.

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE



REVISTA KRONOS

EFL Teacher Professional Development Considerations: A Case study in Different Schools of Cañar Province.

Ariel Andrés Rivera Vásquez | iD Universidad Nacional de Educación-Ecuador
Diana Alejandrina González Rivas | iD Ministerio de Educación, Deporte y Cultura MINEDEC-Ecuador

ABSTRACT This research focused on how some EFL teachers perceived Teacher Professional Development (TPD) regarding motivation, training, and professional collaboration. The aim was to understand these aspects through the participants' perceptions, experiences, and opinions. Twenty-two EFL teachers from various schools in Cañar Province voluntarily provided data. The study adopted a qualitative approach, centered on a case study of these teachers within the province. A survey, validated by three experts prior to its implementation, was used to collect data. The findings were analyzed based on the three dimensions of TPD. The results revealed a positive attitude towards TPD, with teachers' motivation driven largely by intrinsic factors. Collaboration was considered beneficial under conditions of mutual respect and cooperation among colleagues. However, training opportunities were found to be limited compared to those available to teachers in other areas. The participants expressed concern about this disparity and requested an increase in the number of class periods for English language instruction.

KEYWORDS TPD, Motivation, Collaboration, Training, EFL teachers

FECHA DE RECEPCIÓN 16/01/2025 FECHA DE APROBACIÓN 14/11/2025

Consideraciones sobre el desarrollo profesional del docente de inglés: un estudio de caso en diferentes escuelas de la provincia de Cañar

RESUMEN Esta investigación se ha centrado en conocer los criterios que tienen algunos profesores de lengua extranjera (inglés) en cuanto al Desarrollo Profesional Docente (DPD) conforme la motivación, la formación continua y la colaboración profesional. Por lo tanto, el objetivo de la investigación fue comprender estos aspectos desde las percepciones, experiencias y opiniones de los participantes. Veintidós profesores de inglés de diferentes escuelas de la provincia de Cañar participaron voluntariamente proporcionando datos e información. En el marco de este trabajo se adoptó un enfoque cualitativo centrado en un estudio de caso dentro de esta provincia con estos profesores de inglés. Además, se empleó una encuesta que fue validada por tres expertos antes de su implementación. Los datos recopilados fueron integrados y analizados de acuerdo con las tres dimensiones del DPD. Los hallazgos mostraron una actitud positiva hacia el DPD, donde la motivación de estos profesores tiende hacia mecanismos intrínsecos y la colaboración fue considerada beneficiosa bajo circunstancias específicas de respeto y cooperación entre ellos. Finalmente, las oportunidades de formación han sido escasas para ellos, en comparación con los profesores de otras áreas. Los participantes expresaron su preocupación por este escenario por lo cual solicitaron el aumento de los períodos académicos en la asignatura de inglés.

PALABRAS CLAVE DPD, Colaboración, Motivación, Formación, Profesores de Inglés..

INTRODUCTION

Teacher professional development (TPD) has become fundamental in daily practice within the educational scope, considering the rapid changes that occur in society currently. Every day, pedagogical innovations and adaptations are needed to support learners' development of new capacities. According to Ayvaz and Çobanoğlu (2018), teacher professional development is mandatory and regulated by different decrees in some countries that establish active teacher participation in diverse training programs. Therefore, adequate mechanisms for access to high-quality training programs with enough pedagogical components to meet the changing needs of both current and future societies are mandatory.

Since the 2000s, Ecuador has been putting different tactics into practice through the Ministry of Education that are in line with ongoing training for teacher professional practice. According to Ponce (2010), the low and restricted effectiveness of learning in Latin American schools, particularly in Ecuador, compelled policymakers to strengthen and implement new laws intended to bolster the professional skills of teachers. The country has been working to raise the educational standard since 2006, as evidenced by the introduction of new initiatives like the Intercultural Education Law in 2011 and the ten-year Education Plan 2006–2015 (Fabara, 2013). In addition, there have been specific programs destined for teacher development, such as the «Integral System of Professional Educational Development» in 2008, «I am a teacher and I never stop learning» in 2014, and the platform «MECAPACITO» in 2016 (Castillo-Canales et al., 2022).

These nationwide training initiatives provided teachers with courses in different pedagogical areas, and the central aim has been to increase learning achievements in the Ecuadorian school system. In this regard, English Foreign Language (EFL) teachers are compelled to improve their professional skills, as well as the teacher of other disciplines. Additionally, EFL teachers must demonstrate at least a B2 level of proficiency in the target language as a mandatory requirement to be employed in public schools (Ministerio de Educación, 2025). Therefore, these educators require special attention and sustained support to maintain their language proficiency by acquiring updated pedagogical tools and knowledge.

As said before, some different nationwide programs offered by the Ministry of Education have been launched; however, those specific for EFL teachers could be the 2012 program called «GO TEACHER» that provided the possibility to develop English proficiency in the United States or the 2016 «Time to Teach» program that failed in the attempt to improve EFL teacher skills. Also, the 2019 «Ecuador habla inglés», which is an agreement between the US Embassy and the Ministry of Education, and finally the «MECAPACITO» platform (Chicaiza et al., 2023).

Despite the efforts made by the Ministry of Education, levels of English proficiency in the learners' population of the public system are still low and insufficient. De Angelis (2022) supports this statement showing the ranking of the EF EPI in 2021, which is an international test designed to measure English levels according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Ecuador is situated in the eighteenth position of twenty participant countries with a very low domain in the target language. This fact shows that something does not have the expected effect on the educational stage, and learners' achievements could be analyzed from different perspectives to understand what pedagogical and scholar elements are being misunderstood.

The current situation is not favorable for the school system, leading this research paper to pursue a deeper understanding of the problem and try to explain in more detail what the main constraints in EFL teaching are. Consequently, this study poses the following query: How is perceived TPD for EFL teachers? This question demands intervention in school contexts by gathering information from EFL educators. For that reason, this study aims to

understand the perspectives, opinions, and experiences of these EFL teachers at different schools in Cañar province about TPD.

There are three primary justifications for the development of this research: the first is the imperative need to understand some possible failures in TPD for EFL teachers. In such a manner, it is possible to clarify some constraints and problems, and even so, explanations about what necessities are demanded by teachers. The second is related to the prevalent low learning levels of EFL in students and how to mitigate it by an innovative approach considering teachers' necessities. And finally, the possibility of showing new paths of action where policymakers, district authorities, and school principals could elaborate on or plan new strategies to enhance the current problem in classrooms.

Furthermore, current literature on the TPD of EFL teachers in Ecuador fails to address crucial aspects such as motivation, training, and collaboration. For instance, the study by Vélez et al. (2025) focuses on how public policy influences EFL teacher performance, highlighting the need for greater attention, public investment, and clearer guidelines. Similarly, Cajas and Cherres (2024) aimed to measure the impact of introducing Lesson Study methodology into professional EFL teaching practice. In addition, Recino et al. (2020) conducted an exploratory study on teachers' competencies to better understand the low levels of English learning achievement, placing special emphasis on school infrastructure and public policy. In conclusion, this notable lack of information regarding EFL teachers' TPD justifies the present study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

EFL teaching in Ecuador

There has been an intriguing historical development of English language instruction in Ecuador. According to British Council (2015), the Curriculum Reform Aimed at the Development of the Learning of English, or CRADLE was a proposal made by the Ministry of Education and the British Council where English language was considered as a component of the mainstream education system inside curriculum design in 1992. The CRADLE proposal introduced several policy changes and new materials at the national level, but the anticipated impact on learning outcomes was not achieved. The minimal impact of CRADLE is supported by Ortega and Auccahuallpa (2017), as a result student who pursue higher education exhibit deficiencies in the English language despite their participation in the program.

In 2014, the ministerial agreement No. 0052-14 was launched indicating the obligation to include the English language in all levels of compulsory education (Ministerio Nacional de Educación, 2014). As mentioned before, various in-service training initiatives have been implemented for EFL teachers since 2012. In this sense, it is not plausible to deny the progress and positive outcomes achieved in EFL education, where the sense of instruction changes to student-centered teaching with more prepared educators (Cifuentes et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the international rankings of English levels in Ecuador are still under the curriculum standards, where the outcome is B1 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) at the final stage of baccalaureate (De Angelis, 2022; and Ministerio de Educación, 2016). The shortcomings in EFL attainments could vary across a wide spectrum of causes; however, in this research, the primary point of attention is TPD as a crucial resource for information on these constraints.

Teacher Professional Development (TPD)

TPD can be considered as an integrated approach to teaching professional career. According to Castillo-Canales et al. (2022) and Çetin and Bayrakcı (2019), TPD entails a series of planned, spontaneous, formal, and even informal situations where educators could improve and strengthen their professional knowledge and abilities, putting their intentions not only in individual growth but instead in collaborative participation of school agents leading to students' well-being and learning. Thus, TPD has positive influences on students' inclination for study, outcomes, motivation, and authentic interest (Ragusa and Levonisova, 2024).

The growth of new skills and the updating of previous ones seem like simple tasks to cover, but constant development needs a balance between the expectations of the teacher and the educational stage requirements. In short, TPD must reflect the current professional demands of teachers and learning standards in the educational system (Cambridge English Assessment, 2018; and Perry, 2022). The right contemplation of these elements probably could have the expected impact, and new innovations in EFL teaching would appear.

TPD could integrate several dimensions to study and analyze; nevertheless, in this paper, motivation, collaboration, and training will be the principals. According to Zhang et al. (2021), motivation has an undeniable effect on professional growth and a positive impact on students learning. On the other hand, from the contributions of Raj (2023), teacher training correlates with professional abilities, capacities, and productivity, which makes it a substantial dimension to be considered in TPD. Finally, collaboration and networking among professionals in education is another aspect that represents the active engagement among partners providing help to each other and sharing experiences that can be valuable in the TPD path (Chicaiza et al., 2023).

Motivation and TPD

Inside the human psyche, motivation is commonly defined as a set of forces and impulses that drive individuals to pursue objectives with enthusiasm and determination (Bandhu et al., 2024; Urhahne and Wijnia, 2023). This definition involves mechanisms that trigger people's inner resources, abilities, and skills during a long-term period. The focus and energy invested over time entail a predisposition in individuals, driven by the expectation of achieving a specific, pre-established goal. This construct is not only attributed to learning outcomes and student maturing but instead to teachers and TPD. As Avidov (2016) said, «the process of professional development takes place throughout the teachers' professional life; it is grounded in teachers' motivation and personal commitment» (p. 655).

In this line, teacher motivation maintains a close relationship with the improvement of pedagogical practices, planning and making decisions (Chiu et. al, 2021; and Lohbeck and Frenzel, 2022). These authors remark on the influence that motivation could have on teachers and students' performance as well as allowing them interact with tasks and demands in a more favorable and effective manner. If the teacher shows a positive attitude toward professional development, it is possible that motivation takes place at high levels inside that person (Fütterer et. al, 2023).

According to Tang et al. (2020), inner components and external factors could be determinants of the daily professional practice of teachers. In other words, this author refers to intrinsic and extrinsic types of motivation. As Bandhu et al. (2024) and Valdazan et al. (2024) said, intrinsic motivation encompasses internal triggered factors that are long-lasting and self-sustaining with their own personal interests, desires, and goals. Extrinsic motivation is determined by external influences such as personal pleasure, the avoidance of punishment, economic rewards, social acceptance, and recognitions (Leagault, 2016; and Valdazan et al., 2024).

The difference between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation varies considerably, but from the assumptions of Lohbeck and Frenzel (2022) and Leagault (2016) intrinsic one is more desirable because it allows more enjoyment, better psychological well-being, more engagement and compromise. However, from the perspective of Nauman et al. (2021) extrinsic motivation affects teachers due to the importance of salary and benefits of their career covering their necessities. Teachers who are intrinsically motivated seek to increase their professional skills under a self-commitment where their responsibility leads them to improve their teaching practices, whereas extrinsic ones try to obtain some recognition, achieve higher degrees of education, and better economic conditions (Avidov, 2016). Additionally, different studies made by the collaboration of novel and experienced teachers show that motivation can vary and those with years of in-service practice are less inclined to grow their professional repertoire than novice teachers (Zhang et al., 2021).

Training and TPD

Teachers' continuous involvement in training programs constitutes another key aspect to predict progress in learning achievements of students (Dhari et al., 2023). In depth, all kinds of programs, courses, seminars, or similar activities guide education processes to meet current demands that society requests. For Kandel and Kandel (2023), training entails maturing in procedure skills and knowledge in specific areas. In education, particularly, training programs supply better pedagogical tools and deeper understanding of classroom mechanisms.

Teacher training could be seen as an effective strategy for conveying more quality in education stage. Nauman et al. (2021) support the benefits that continuous training carries; moreover, they instigate teachers to create collaborative contributions among them. However, Reisoglu (2021) recommends the accurate implementation of these programs acknowledging that fail is possible because they do not bridge conceptual instrumentation with real school requirements. Cambridge English Assessment (2018) indicates the urgency of providing teachers sustained support offering them enough opportunities to engage in training programs proposed.

Training programs should not be allocated only for a few, instead, these could be accessible for everyone from a democratic perspective. In doing so, information and communication technologies (ICT) emerge to democratize knowledge access with new development chances. For Castillo-Canales et al. (2022), ICT could impact teachers by Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs), benefiting the entire system, reducing costs of implementation, and making TPD a sustainable option.

Collaboration and TPD

Collaboration is defined as the interaction and support of peers seeking a common goal; it also improves professional bonds and trustworthiness among people (Dahal, 2023). Collaborative engagement among teachers is a driving force to share and complement the colleagues' growth by taking part in the planning, implementation, and assessment of different proposals and continuous learning (Bergmark, 2023). Therefore, collaboration is fundamental in TPD due to the positive influence that teachers can have on one another. This influence occurs by sharing their efforts, learning gains and professional amendments. In sum, they are part of significant goals that exceed individualism and achieve bigger results in learners' education.

METHOD

The current research was focused on perceptions and experiences that EFL teachers have had in reference to their professional development from the opportunities, constraints, and future recommendations to increase achievements in the English language subject. In that perspective, a qualitative approach entails the appropriate characteristics to explore and obtain significant data. Ponce et al. (2022) define qualitative research as a well-established path to grasp educational components since it has a flexible scope that captures deep social, cultural, and moral aspects. Thus, the qualitative research lens fits the aim and conditions of the study.

The specific type of research in this work was a case study, which aligns with a qualitative approach and has distinct characteristics. According to Tomaszewski et al. (2020) and Canta and Quesada (2011) case studies are part of qualitative research and establish the comprehension of a contemporary phenomenon in real contexts under specific boundaries. In other words, the case study investigates a particularity defined by the conditions of the research. The specific case in this research was delimited inside Cañar province and EFL teachers' perceptions.

Participants

These were twenty-two EFL teachers from different schools in Cañar province, who participated actively and voluntarily in the study. Their identities were kept secret, maintaining the principle of anonymity and confidentiality. Their opinions and experiences about TPD vary greatly depending on the person, but they have in common the same concern that moves them to grow as professionals who want to bolster learning outcomes.

Analyses

The research instrument employed was the survey. Prior to its implementation, this instrument was validated by three experts (university professors). The validation process utilized a structured rubric to evaluate several key aspects. One of these aspects was suitability, where three aspects were considered: Comprehensibility of questions (clarity, preciseness, unambiguity), the appropriateness of response options; and the logical sequence of questions. Additionally, the relevance was another aspect examined by the experts; here they observed: The pertinence of each question to the study's objectives and the alignment of questions with the core dimensions of TPD (collaboration, training, and motivation). At the end, the three experts make suggestions and changes that were added for the subsequent approval, consequently, one additional question was appended at the end of the instrument to enhance its comprehensiveness and relevance.

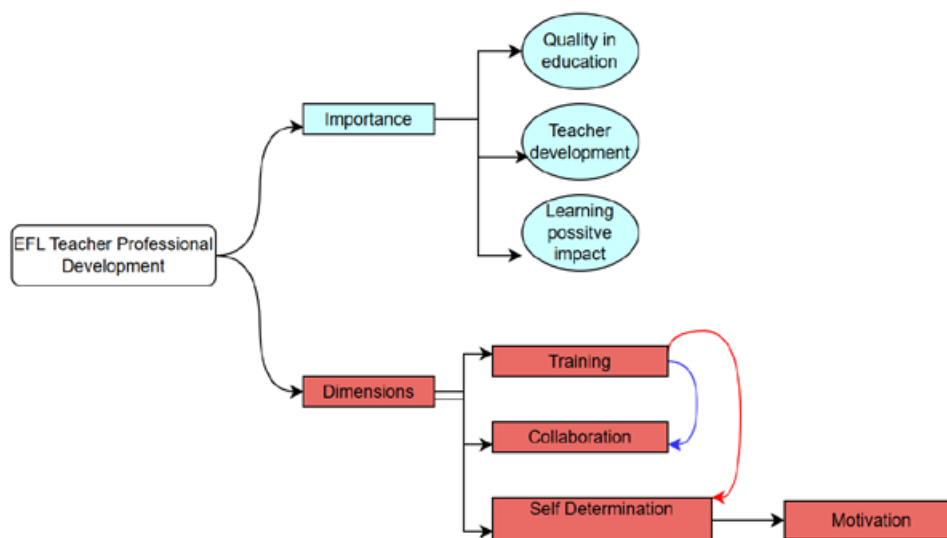
The survey included introductory questions, followed by others focused on motivation, collaboration, and training programs as key dimensions of Teacher Professional Development (TPD). It concluded with two closing questions. The instrument was distributed to various public schools in Cañar via Google Forms. The collected responses were analyzed using Atlas.ti (free version), a qualitative research software. The data were triangulated across the three TPD categories—motivation, collaboration, and training—and graphical representations were created using Draw.io (free version).

RESULTS

At the beginning of the survey, participants were required to answer two introductory questions to gain a focused perspective on the importance of TPD and its key components.

The answers that participants shared were, in some cases, in Spanish language or English language, because some of them prefer to give information in one of these languages. In figure 1, it is possible to visualize the main dimensions and reasons that EFL teachers are exposed to in relation to TPD.

Figure 1. TPD's dimensions and importance



EFL teachers' feedback on the value of TPD may be categorized into three distinct categories: improving student outcomes, professional development, and quality in education. Teachers payed attention to educational quality in this regard, and they had the following opinions to share: «los maestros deben capacitarse día a día para una enseñanza de calidad» – «Para mejorar la calidad educativa» – «To improve the English teaching process»- «Para mejorar el proceso de aprendizaje de los estudiantes» - «El uso de didácticas y metodologías que ayuden adaptarse a los cambios que sugieren en cada una de las aulas». These opinions can be summarized as the attempts of these professionals to contribute to English Language Teaching (ELT) and learners's development where quality of education represents continuous training and efforts to gather new teaching knowledge.

About the improvement of learning outcomes as justification of TPD, there are some expressions that teachers used: «Para mejorar las competencias de los estudiantes» -- «Es la clave para mejorar la calidad de la enseñanza impactando positivamente en el aprendizaje de los estudiantes» – «Help to improve the teaching-learning process of the students» – «Un docente bien preparado no solo es más competente, sino que contribuye al éxito de nuestros estudiantes». In this regard, the participants consider TPD to impact on learners, making their learning process effective and suitable.

Another point to consider is teacher development, because some participants reflect upon it concluding that teacher continuous training is the key for learning achievements and educational quality. In this sense can be cited the most relevant opinions: «We as English teachers must be in constant training, learning new techniques and strategies to apply in the class» – «It enables teachers to enhance their instructional methods» – «Para tener nuevos métodos y técnicas e irnos actualizando para enseñar».

In sum, TPD is justified by the positive effect it has on learners, the teaching and learning process, and on the teacher's own development. We should consider the dimensions that integrate TPD for these reasons, and considering the teachers' opinions, the following three were chosen: training, collaboration and inner components of teachers.

The question number two delves into the most important ingredient for TPD. A considerable part of the data reveals that self-determination is the key. Some of their expressions were: «Creativity, patience, dedication to work and love for students»- «The most im-

portant ingredient to enhance teacher professional development is reflection, as it enables teachers to examine their practices and beliefs» – «The teacher needs to feel motivated by constant innovation and for the benefit of students».

Although there are many aspects of self-determination to check, the motivational component has been selected for this study. Question three seeks to understand whether teachers are motivated or not to engage in TPD. The following answer sums up in detail the feelings of most participants:

Yes, I am motivated to improve my teaching skills and knowledge because I believe that education is a constantly evolving field, and I must stay updated on best practices, new technologies, and innovative methods to provide high-quality instruction and support to my students, ultimately enhancing their learning outcomes and academic success.

This answer reflects most opinions, nevertheless it is also necessary to contemplate opposite perspectives. One participant conveys the following comment saying that he is not motivated because: «No, al ser un docente contratado el sueldo no cubre las necesidades básicas». This sentence reveals the difference between those permanent appointments, and the others whose working conditions are not the same. Figure 2 shows different tendencies among teachers for extrinsic and intrinsic motivation.

Figure 2. Extrinsic and Intrinsic motivational indicators for TPD

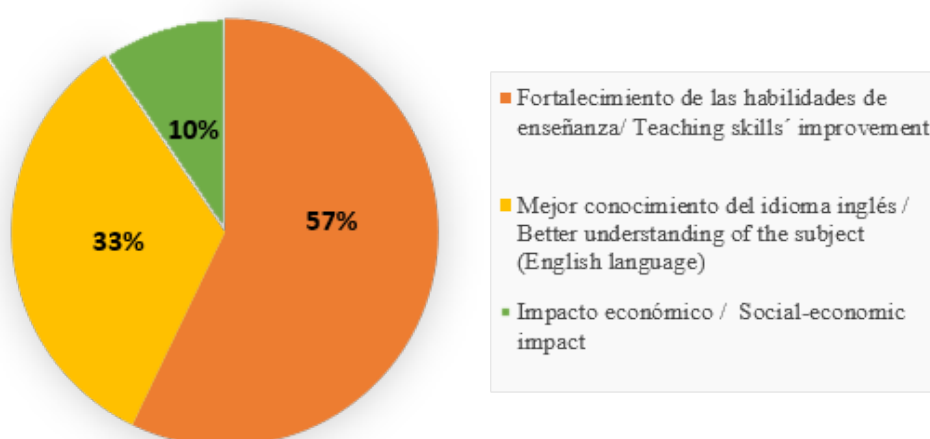
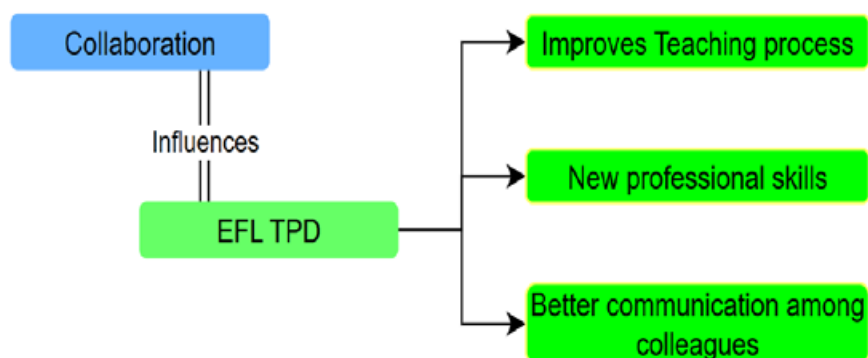


Figure 2 summarizes the answers to question four, where teachers have five options about what motivates them to TPD. They tended to focus on the improvement of teaching skills and a better understanding of English language teaching methods, where intrinsic motivation was reported by nineteen participants. On the other hand, the rest of them showed external motivation related to the social-economic impact of TPD. From these perspectives, inner reasons have a greater preponderance than external, although, it is undeniable that salary and economic benefits are necessary and therefore should not go unnoticed.

The two following questions of the survey were designed to grasp collaboration as a fundamental part of TPD. In this particular instance, for example, it can be affirmed that collaboration determines the success of TPD, while the information is summarized in figure 3.

Figure 3. The Role of Collaboration in TPD

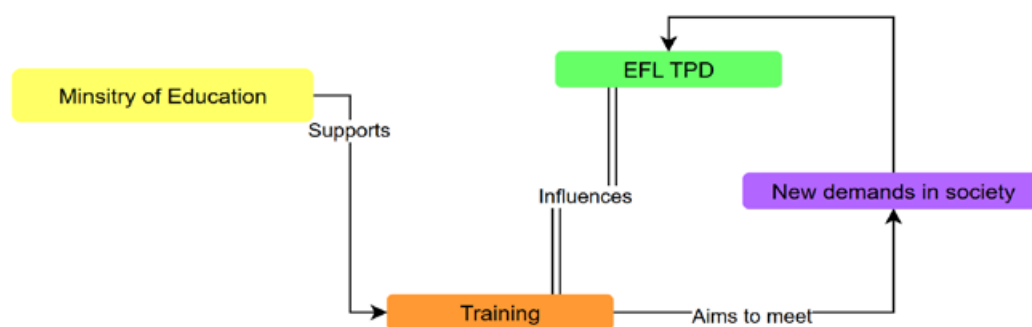


Some of the data corroborates this statement: «Nos ayuda a conocer la perspectiva y forma de enseñanza de los otros docentes del área de inglés»- «Sí, de manera positiva en la retroalimentación de pares para una mejora continua» –«It improves practice as it allows pedagogical actions to be coordinated, which generates a common line of work for the benefits of students» – «It helps to take risks by experimenting with new approaches and examining what does and does not work in different contexts». The following comment gathers a profound reflection about that:

Collaboration among EFL teachers has a profoundly significant impact on teacher professional development, as working together enables them to share knowledge, ideas, and expertise, leading to improved teaching methods and practices, increased confidence and motivation, enhanced problem-solving and support, exposure to new perspectives and approaches, and development of leadership and communication skills, ultimately resulting in more effective teaching and better student outcomes.

Thus, collaboration can be considered part of TPD because it allows the development of skills related to communication and teaching abilities, which in turn affect learners' education through coordinated planning. However, these participants made some suggestions about how to manage work among professionals: «I think a collaborative job can positively impact if the colleagues pursue the same goal» – «La colaboración entre colegas es muy buena siempre que sea en un ambiente de respeto y crítica constructiva». Collaboration does not guarantee success, it requires the predisposition of the teachers to work in a respectful environment pursuing the same objectives. The final dimension to be considered is training. Figure 4 represents the elements that training has in regard to TPD.

Question number seven tries to deepen in training programs as opportunities for TPD, in that sense, participants remark them as invaluable chances for their growing as professionals. Some of these opinions about training are: «Con los programas nos actualizamos y desarrollamos nuestras habilidades» - «I think that this kind of programs are great opportunities to change» - «training programs are valuable opportunities to improve teacher capabilities, as they provide a structured environment to acquire new skills, knowledge, and methodologies».

Figure 4. The role of training in TPD

Besides, question number eight seeks to identify if training programs cover their expectations, and they responded in this manner: «sí me ha ayudado a conocer sobre metodologías, especialmente digitales si me han ayudado para aplicar en el área de inglés sobre todo cuando estamos con estudiantes necesidades educativas especiales (NEE)» – «Yes, they’ve equipped me with innovative teaching methodologies, enhanced my knowledge of language acquisition theories, and provided me with practical tools and resources to design engaging lessons, assess student progress, and differentiate instruction» – «No siempre encuentro cursos enfocados en la enseñanza de inglés». The last comment reveals that English likely does not have the same impact as courses in other subjects.

Finally, question number nine looks into the support provided by Ministry of Education and the answers were: «En realidad los docentes de inglés no tenemos oportunidades de capacitarnos o consideran a los maestros con nombramiento definitivo, son muy pocas las puertas abiertas para los docentes» – «Bueno, pero al ser docente contratado, no existe una pariedad» – «El desarrollo profesional del MINEDUC es una oportunidad muy amplia que nos forman como docentes y tiene muchas áreas de gran interés, pero lastimosamente en cuanto a inglés ha existido una nula formación o capacitación para los docentes» – «It’s not ideal—English teachers always come last in every program» – «There are not courses for English Teachers».

This situation reveals, as said in the last paragraph, that EFL teaching has not received proper support from the Ministry. 58% of teachers openly stated that the Ministry has likely failed to address their needs, and even more concerning are the unequal conditions between contract workers and those with permanent appointments. This could be a singular issue to deepen in more detail, trying to reveal its real impact on professional development, and how this affects the quality of EFL education.

The ending question reflects upon the biggest challenge in English teaching and TPD and they said: «Staying current with the latest methodologies, technologies, and materials while adapting to individual students’ needs and overcoming resource and time constraints» –

«Develop our students’ skills in Just 3 hours a week» – «Break schemes and work more hours in English since 3 is usually not enough». The biggest problem seems to be the short amount of time, because students require more time in contact with English language to accomplish with demands of some specific levels according to CEFR.

DISCUSSION

Regarding the stance of Castillo-Canales et al. (2022); Çetin and Bayrakçı (2019); and Ragusa and Levonisova (2024), TPD could be considered crucial for better learning outcomes, affecting the professional performance of EFL teachers in a positive perspective and in turn increasing learning achievements in students. This idea is plenty confirmed by the twenty-two participants who consider TPD, in some cases, an obligation to fulfill students and society's needs, giving greater quality to educational processes, reinforcing their previous professional abilities, and developing new ones.

Motivation is one of the dimensions considered in the analysis; although the participants mentioned other inner components such as creativity, patience, dedication, and reflection, the study only covered intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Bandhu et al. (2024) and Urhahne and Wijnia (2023) define motivation as the mechanisms that trigger the impulse to achieve a goal. Due to such circumstances, the participants were asked if they are motivated to engage in TPD; the answers were positive; however, there was an answer that neglects motivation toward TPD. They also showed their interest in pursuing TPD, and 90% of them showed a tendency towards intrinsic motivation, and the other 10 % extrinsic motivation. Lohbeck and Frenzel (2022) and Leagault (2016) advocate intrinsic motivation because of their positive effects on people, but extrinsic motivation is not substandard, because socio-economic impacts could be understood to meet the basic needs of Life, as Nauman et al. (2021) claim.

Collaboration as a source of TPD, according to Dahal (2023) and Bergmark (2023) increases teaching skills by sharing ideas, experiences, improving interpersonal relationships by making learning process more coordinated. In this sense, the participants agreed and confirmed these ideas, recommending respect as an essential part of collaboration. Finally, Training was perceived how the key element to gain knowledge and upgrade skills.

Collaboration is defined as the interaction and support of peers seeking a common goal; it also improves professional bonds and trustworthiness among people (Dahal, 2023). Collaborative engagement among teachers is a driving force to share and complement the colleagues' growth by taking part in the planning, implementation, and assessment of different proposals and continuous learning (Bergmark, 2023). Therefore, collaboration is part of TPD due to the influence that one teacher could have on another, and by sharing their efforts, learning gains and professional amendments are part of significant goals that exceed individualism and achieve bigger results in learners' education as Kandel and Kandel (2023) and Nauman et al. (2021) argue. However, despite the historical review of Cifuentes et al. (2019), about the different nationwide programs launched for EFL teachers since 2012, the participants stated that there had not been courses for them as EFL teachers, making these situations of inequality. Considering that MECAPACITO curses offered a variety of training of other subjects, English has been not considered. The participants also shared their ideas about the biggest challenge for English teaching language, and most part of them agreed in the limited amount of time to work per week, three-hour class is not enough to meet quality standards.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The 22 participants represent a small group of EFL teachers; although their knowledge and reflections constitute a rich source of information, additional volunteer participation will be necessary. In this vein, involving a broader pool of EFL teachers would provide more comprehensive data, while simultaneously avoiding potential biases in the interpretation of results. Nevertheless, this study addresses TPD from a fresh perspective, as previous research—such as Vélez et al. (2025), Cajas and Cherres (2024), and Recino et al. (2020)—has primarily focused on public policy, infrastructure, and lesson study methodology.

CONCLUSIONS

This study focused on exploring how EFL teachers perceive TPD based on their opinions and experiences. As noted here, motivation, collaboration, and training have been the dimensions of analysis. Regarding motivation, the results show a clear tendency in teachers who participated in the study to engage in different activities related to TPD. In more detail, these teachers showed intrinsic motivation, trying to evolve as professionals to impact learners' education, although a smaller part of them demonstrated extrinsic motivation about economic benefits. Collaboration is another aspect that was contemplated as a foundational part of TPD; however, the results point out that its effectiveness lies in an environment of respect towards a common goal. For its part, training is recognized as an opportunity to gain new skills in teaching; however, the opinions demonstrate the lack of courses and activities for English subject. This situation could be analyzed in more detail, trying to comprehend the reasons and consequences that the lack of training and support represents for EFL teachers.

Regarding the limitations of this study, future research should involve a larger sample of EFL teachers, as 22 participants still represent a limited group. With broader representation, findings would be more robust and less susceptible to potential biases. Overall, it is strongly recommended to conduct further research on TPD and EFL teachers, as the current scarcity of studies may obscure key challenges and needs within this teaching community. It is crucial to amplify their voices and reflections through scientific literature.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Ariel Andrés Rivera Vásquez: Conducted the preliminary bibliographical research and co-wrote the introduction, literature review, methodology, data collection, discussion, and conclusions.

Diana Alejandrina González: Conducted the preliminary bibliographical research and co-wrote the introduction, literature review, methodology, data collection, discussion, and conclusions.

ETHICAL IMPLICATION

The authors declare that there are no ethical implications associated with this study.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no financial or non-financial conflicts of interest that could have influenced the work presented in this article.

REFERENCES

- Avidov, O. (2016) A model of professional development: teachers' perceptions of their professional development. *Teachers and Teaching*, 22, (6), 653-669. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2016.1158955>
- Ayvaz, Z., and Çobanoğlu, F. (2018). In-service teacher training: Problems of the teachers as learners. *International Journal of Instruction*, 11(4), 159-174. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1191719>
- Bandhu, D., Murali, M., Prashant, N., Jadhav, P., Bhadauria, A., and Saxena, K. (2024). Theories of motivation: A comprehensive analysis of human behavior drivers. *Acta Psychologica*, 244, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2024.104177>
- Bergmark, U. (2020). Teachers' professional learning when building a research-based education: context-specific, collaborative and teacher-driven professional development. *Professional Development in Education*, 49(2), 210-224. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2020.1827011>
- Brandão, A., Pedro, L., and Zagalo, N. (2024). Teacher professional development for a future with generative artificial intelligence – an integrative literature review. *Digital Education Review*, (45), 150-158. <https://doi.org/10.1344/der.2024.45.151-157>
- British Council. (2015). *English in Ecuador an examination of policy, perceptions and influencing factors*. <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/English%20in%20Ecuador.pdf>
- Cajas, D., and Cherres, K. (2024). Challenges and opportunities of using lesson study in English language teaching among Ecuadorian EFL teachers. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 7(23), 525-538. <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.23.7.26>
- Cambridge Assessment English. (2018). *The Cambridge assessment English approach to teacher professional development*. <https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/Images/539683-perspectives-teacher-professional-development.pdf>
- Castillo-Canales, D., Mancilla, A., Restrepo, R., Martínez, F. (2022). *Teacher professional development supported by information and communication technologies: A case study of the «Teacher Training Program for Curricular Update 2016-2018 in Ecuador»*. Foundation for Information Technology Education and Development. <https://shorturl.at/xACjS>
- Çetin, C., and Bayrakçı, M. (2019). Teacher Professional Development models for effective teaching and learning in schools. *The Online Journal of Quality in Higher Education*, 6(1), 32-38. <https://tojquh.net/journals/tojqih/articles/v06i01/v06i01-04.pdf>
- Chicaiza, V., Encalada, E., Sarah, I, Jordan, C., and Romero, V. (2023). Teacher professional development: Connecting the past, present, and future. In Newman, S.J., Gibson, S.T., Cajas, D. and Acosta, H. (Eds.), *English language education in Ecuador: Assessing opportunities for teaching and learning in a developing nation* (pp. 74-92). USFQ PRESS. <https://www.dspace.uce.edu.ec/server/api/core/bitstreams/5c2c9945-2a63-4a40-933c-165758f857ce/content>
- Chiu, T., Chai, C., Williams, P., and Lin, T.-J. (2021). Teacher professional development on self-determination theory-based design thinking in STEM education. *Educational Technology & Society*, 24(4), 153-165. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48629252>
- Cifuentes, M., Contreras, R., and Beltrán, M. (2019). The development of the English language teaching in the high schools of Ecuador during the last two decades. *Polo del Conocimiento*, 4(10), 89-98. <https://polodelconocimiento.com/ojs/index.php/es/article/view/1159>

- Dahri, N., Al-Rahmi, W., Almogren, A., Yahaya, N., Vighio, M., and Al-Maatuok, Q. (2023). Mobile-based training and certification framework for teachers' professional development. *Sustainability* 15, 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15075839>
- Dahal, G. (2023). Collaborative mentoring for in-service teachers' well-being in the nepalese context. *Journal of NELTA Gandaki*, 6(1-2), 89-97. <https://tinyurl.com/3r76rh7d>
- De Angelis, A. (2022). EF English proficiency index e inglés en Ecuador: Suposiciones inciertas del ranking internacional. *Revista Andina De Educación*, 5(2), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.32719/26312816.2022.5.2.11>
- Fabara, E. (2013). *Estado del arte de la formación docente en el Ecuador*. La Caracola Editores. <https://contratosocialecuador.org/images/publicaciones/cuadernos/8.pdf>
- Fütterer, T., Ritcher, E., and Ritcher, D. (2023). Teachers' engagement in online professional development—the interplay of online professional development quality and teacher motivation. *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft*, 27, 739-768. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11618-024-01241-8>
- Kandel, R., and Kandel, G. (2023). Collaboration, discussion, and feedback for improving students' (report) writing and presentation: A participatory action research. *Journal of NELTA Gandaki*, 6(1-2), 26-38. <https://tinyurl.com/ywnj3wzr>
- Leagult, L. (2016). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. *Springer International Publishing*, 1-4. https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-319-28099-8_1139-1
- Lohbeck, A., and Frenzel, A. (2022). Latent motivation profiles for choosing teaching as a career: How are they linked to self-concept concerning teaching subjects and emotions during teacher education training? *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 92(1), 37-58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12437>
- Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador. (2014). Acuerdo ministerial No. 0052-14: Inclusión obligatoria del idioma inglés en todos los niveles de educación obligatoria. https://shorturl.at/jyRc6_
- Ministerio de Educación. (2016). *Estándares curriculares o de aprendizaje área de inglés*. <https://educacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2022/05/Estandares-Aprendizaje-Ingles.pdf>
- Ministerio de Educación. (2025). *Lineamientos para la selección de docentes – Educa Empleo*. <https://educacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2025/07/lineamientos-educa-empleo-julio-2025.pdf>
- Nauman, H., Pasha, A., and Munawar. M. (2021). The role of teacher training programs in optimizing teacher motivation and professional development skills. *Bulletin of Education and Research*, 43 (2) ,17-37. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1338294>
- Ortega, D., and Auccahuallpa, R. (2017). La educación ecuatoriana en inglés: Nivel de dominio y competencias lingüísticas de los estudiantes rurales. *Revista Científic*, 2(6), 52-73. <https://doi.org/10.29394/scientific.issn.2542-2987.2017.2.6.3.52-73>
- Perry, E. (2023). Teacher professional development in changing circumstances: The impact of covid-19 on schools' approaches to professional development. *Education Sciences*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13010048>
- Ponce, J. (2010). *Políticas educativas y desempeño: una evaluación de impacto de programas educativos focalizados en Ecuador*. FLACSO. <https://biblio.flacsoandes.edu.ec/libros/s/118699-opac>
- Ponce, O., Gómez-Galán, J. and Pagán-Maldonado, N. (2022). Investigación cualitativa en educación: reexaminando sus teorías, prácticas y desarrollos en una era científico-política. *International Journal of Educational Research and Innovation*, (18), 278-295. <https://doi.org/10.46661/ijeri.5917>

- Ragusa, G., Huang, S., and Levonisova, S. (2024). Middle school mathematics achievement: Effects of math teacher professional development. *International Journal of Teacher Education and Professional Development*, 7(1), 1-37. <https://doi.org/10.4018/IJTEPD.337965>
- Raj, G. (2023). Teacher training as a strategy of professional development: Perceptions and challenges. *Journal of NELTA-GADAKI*, 6(2), 98-108. <https://doi.org/10.3126/jong.v6i1-2.59716>
- Recino, U., Sevy, J., and Muñoz, C. (2020). Factors affecting English language teaching in public schools in Ecuador. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 3(19), 276-294. <https://www.ijlter.org/index.php/ijlter/article/view/1948>
- Reisoğlu, İ. (2022). How does digital competence training affect teachers' professional development and activities? *Tech Know Learn* 27, 721-748. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10758-021-09501-w>
- Tang, S., Wong, A., Li, D., and Cheng, M. (2020). Millennial generation preservice teachers' intrinsic motivation to become a teacher, professional learning and professional competence. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 96, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103180>
- Tomaszewski, L., Zarestky, J., and Gonzalez, E. (2020). Planning qualitative research: Design and decision making for new researchers. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920967174>
- Urhahne, D., and Wijnia, L. (2023). Theories of motivation in education: An integrative framework. *Educational Psychology Review*, 35(45), 1-35. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-023-09767-9>
- Valdazán, E., Caramato, A., Dionisio, J., Dionesio, M., Galangey, I., and Pasion, M. (2024). Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation and academic performance of pupils at quezon district public elementary schools. *Cognizance Journal*, 4(5), 54-66. <https://cognizance-journal.com/vol4issue5/V4I505.pdf>
- Vélez, C., Rodríguez, H., Pesantez, A., and Zambrano, F. (2025). Desafíos y oportunidades en la formación continua de profesores de inglés en el sistema educativo ecuatoriano. *Código Científico revista de Investigación*, 6(1), 2369-2386. <https://doi.org/10.55813/gaea/ccri/v6/nE1/821>
- Zhang, X., Admiraal, W., and Saab, N. (2021). Teachers' motivation to participate in continuous professional development: relationship with factors at the personal and school level. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 47(5), 714-731. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2021.1942804>



REVISTA KRONOS

Sitcoms as a Tool for EFL Learning: A Systematic Review of Language Skills Improvement

María Karina Arcentales Abad | iD Universidad Nacional de Educación-Ecuador
Valeria Alexandra Chumbi Landy | iD Universidad Nacional de Educación-Ecuador

ABSTRACT This study examines the use of sitcoms as instructional tools in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts and their impact on language skills development. Due to their cultural, linguistic, and contextual value, sitcoms provide learners with exposure to authentic and everyday English. The methodology involved a systematic analysis of selected studies using predefined criteria to ensure rigor and relevance. Findings indicate that most research has focused on intermediate and advanced learners, primarily in Asia and Latin America, with high schools and universities serving as the most common educational settings. Although sitcoms are recognized as motivating and culturally rich tools for language acquisition, their implementation in English institutes and informal learning environments remains limited, possibly due to insufficient teacher training and curricular restrictions. From a methodological perspective, approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Conversation Analysis (CA), and Intercultural Competence align closely with sitcom-based learning because they emphasize authentic communication, real-life language use, and social interaction. Sitcoms expose learners to everyday situations, idiomatic expressions, and natural conversational patterns, reinforcing these pedagogical approaches while offering accessible opportunities for language practice. In addition, activities such as role-plays, guided discussions, and contextual analysis based on sitcom episodes contribute to the development of communicative and intercultural competencies. The reviewed studies also report improvements in speaking skills, vocabulary acquisition, cultural awareness, and critical thinking. Overall, the findings suggest that sitcoms are dynamic and engaging teaching resources that effectively support language learning and communicative competence in real-world contexts..

KEYWORDS Sitcoms, EFL instruction, language skills development, cultural awareness, Communicative Language Teaching.

FECHA DE RECEPCIÓN 25/01/2025

FECHA DE APROBACIÓN 17/11/2025

Las comedias de situación como herramienta para el aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera: una revisión sistemática de la mejora de las habilidades lingüísticas

RESUMEN Este estudio analiza el uso de sitcoms como herramientas pedagógicas en contextos de inglés como Lengua Extranjera (EFL) y su impacto en el desarrollo de habilidades lingüísticas. Debido a su valor cultural, lingüístico y contextual, las sitcoms representan recursos útiles para exponer a los estudiantes al inglés auténtico y cotidiano. La metodología consistió en un análisis sistemático de estudios seleccionados bajo criterios previamente definidos para garantizar rigurosidad y relevancia. Los resultados muestran que la mayoría de las investigaciones se enfocan en estudiantes de nivel intermedio y avanzado, principalmente en Asia y América Latina, siendo las escuelas secundarias y universidades los contextos más frecuentes. Aunque las sitcoms se destacan como herramientas dinámicas y culturalmente enriquecedoras para el aprendizaje del idioma, su implementación en institutos de inglés y contextos no formales sigue siendo limitada, posiblemente debido a restricciones curriculares y falta de capacitación docente especializada. Desde una perspectiva metodológica, enfoques como la Enseñanza Comunicativa de Lenguas (CLT), el Análisis de la Conversación (CA) y la Competencia Intercultural se alinean con el uso de sitcoms al priorizar la comunicación auténtica y la interacción social. Actividades como juegos de roles, debates guiados y análisis contextual favorecen el desarrollo de la expresión oral, la adquisición de vocabulario, la conciencia cultural y el pensamiento crítico. En conclusión, las investigaciones revisadas evidencian que las sitcoms constituyen un recurso didáctico efectivo y motivador para fortalecer las habilidades lingüísticas y comunicativas en contextos reales de aprendizaje del inglés.

PALABRAS CLAVE Sitcoms, EFL, desarrollo de habilidades, conciencia cultural, enseñanza comunicativa.

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, English language competency encompassing the four essential skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing has become more important than ever for succeeding in today's global society's personal, academic, and professional areas. Achieving a high degree of communicative competence, defined as the capacity to use language effectively, appropriately, and fluently across many contexts, is crucial for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. This allows students to articulate their thoughts effectively and engage meaningfully and confidently in both academic and real-world contexts.

Traditional activities typically involve drills, role-plays, fill-in-the-blanks, and conversation practice. However, these methods do not always captivate students or accurately represent the dynamic nature of real-world communication. Moreover, they frequently lack authentic context, which restricts students' opportunities to employ language in situations that resemble ordinary life. In these situations, spontaneous reactions, cultural nuances, and diverse input are essential for achieving genuine communicative competence.

Recent studies suggest that incorporating media into language acquisition can offer significant benefits. For instance, Othman and Hasni (2022) in their study about the use of corporate storytelling video as an English language competency course states that these types of videos such as sitcoms, can offer learners the opportunity to work with activities that assist them to use their creativity at the moment of presenting ideas or expressing opinions. Moreover, it was concluded that these videos catch students' attention and the most interesting part is that they enjoy this way of learning the language. Additionally, Barrientos et al. conclude, «the use of appropriate short films in class can allow students to learn language successfully and communicate with their classmates with real meaning» (Barrientos et al., 2017, p. 77). Therefore, this article aims to analyze various research on the impact of exposing students to sitcoms on their second language competences. By examining various research studies, this analysis seeks to determine the impact of sitcom videos on EFL learners through a systematic review of skills development, and sitcom-based activities that can be integrated in class.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed an SLR (systematic literature review) approach to analyze the impact of sitcom videos on EFL learners. Through a thematic analysis of 21 articles selected. The methodology aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how integrating multimedia resources like sitcoms can address students' learning needs and complement the existing classroom teaching practices.

The systematic review conducted as part of the methodology followed the «Seven-Step Protocol» suggested by Petticrew and Roberts (2006), which ensures that the review of the selected articles, focusing on the use of sitcoms as tools for English language learning, is comprehensive, transparent, and reproducible. Moreover, this protocol provides a structured framework for conducting systematic reviews, emphasizing the importance of defining clear objectives, selecting high-quality evidence, and synthesizing findings effectively. Here's a breakdown of the seven steps followed:

RESEARCH DESIGN

1. Define the Review Question:

The first step involved formulating a clear and focused research question to guide the analysis. Therefore, three research questions were posed for this SLR. The questions were designed to find out how sitcoms are used in EFL classes, what skills they help develop, and what research ideas exist for EFL studies looking at the impact of using sitcoms in EFL education.

1. What are the sampling features in efl studies that incorporate sitcoms in efl contexts?
2. How are efl teachers incorporating sitcoms as instructional tools in diverse efl contexts?
3. What specific language skills and competencies are enhanced through sitcom-based activities in efl instruction?
4. What are the recommendations for future research on the integration of sitcoms in efl education?

2. Develop a Review Protocol: Define Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Specific criteria were established to determine which studies, articles, or resources would be included in the analysis. This timeframe between 2013 and 2024 was chosen for the article search. This period was selected because sitcoms have gained significant popularity among young people, particularly on social media. Specific scenes, lines, and moments from various sitcoms have gone viral, becoming key cultural touchpoints for the modern generation (Krsteva, 2024).

Following this protocol helps ensure that the systematic literature review is rigorous and provides a comprehensive summary of the existing evidence on the topic.

The following criteria was considered for the analysis:

- Articles were selected while considering the gap years identified in the research scope
Focus on skills development in any area of the EFL learning and acquisition process
- Use of sitcom videos as part of the teaching methodology.
- Studies that provided qualitative tools such as interviews, reflections and observations.
- Studies that provided quantitative analysis included pre-posttest.
- Published in English

3. Conduct a Comprehensive Literature Search:

In this step, articles are chosen according to the established criteria. Table 1 lists studies conducted in EFL contexts that emphasize the use of sitcoms in the classroom. The initial search yielded articles from 2013 to 2024. After removing duplicates and screening titles and abstracts based on the inclusion criteria, 35 articles were selected for full-text analysis. After a thorough review, 21 studies were included in the final synthesis.

Table 1. *Inclusion Criteria of Article Selection*

Description	Include	Reasons for selection
Year of publication	2013-2024	Provides up-to-date insights into the impact of sitcoms on speaking skills, vocabulary acquisition, and cultural awareness development
Nature of publication	Peer-reviewed Indexed and primary articles	Ensures credibility
Target Language	English	Focuses on improving English-speaking skills
Context of the Study	EFL	

Synthesize and Analyze Data

For the data analysis, the inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied, and Table 2 was created to list the selected articles along with the journals in which they were published. A thematic analysis was conducted to address the research questions, aligning with Step 5 of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) process.

Table 2. *List of journals and articles included*

Journal	Articles included
The Anthropologist	Ulusoy & Demirbilek (2013)
Teaching English with Technology	Saeedi & Biri (2016)
International Journal of Language Studies (ijls)	Waedaoh & Sinwongsuwat (2019)
Investigación en el Aula	Piñeres, Ramírez, & Castellanos (2023)
elt Research Journal	Özgen & Gündüz (2020)
elt Research Journal	
International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering (ijrte)	Vijayakumar, Baisel, Subha & Kanagarajan (2020)
elia	Raigón & Larrea (2019)
Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research	Alerwi & Alzahrani (2020)
Memòria del Treball de Fi de Màster	Cañellas (2019)
International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature	Mudawe (2020)
The Warwick Research Archive Portal (wrap)	Avalos & Castro (2015)
Advances in Language and Literary Studies	Valizadeh (2022)
Píxel-BIT Revista de Medios y Educación	Larrea & Raigón (2019)
Masaryk University Diploma Thesis	Hložková (2013)
Scientific Quarterly Journal of Language Horizons, Alzahra University	Mohammadian, Ramezanzadeh & Moradian (2024)
Tesis de maestría, Universidad de Cuenca, Facultad de Filosofía, Letras y Ciencias de la Educación, Departamento de Investigación y Posgrados	Espinoza (2014)
Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University of Pennsylvania	Beasley (2019)
Frontiers in Psychology	Lasekan (2021)
Universidad de Valladolid Repositorio Documental	das Neves Monsalvo (2021)
Faculty of Arts and Design University of Canberra, Australia	Nguyen (2014)

RESULTS ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This research accompanies the results of the SLR with a discussion of each research question. This section follows the fifth and sixth steps of the «Seven Steps Protocol» proposed by Petticrew and Roberts (2006), in which research findings, methodologies, and participant demographics were extracted from the selected studies. Thus, this data extraction was organized into categories to facilitate thematic analysis.

Research question 1: What are the sampling features in EFL studies that incorporate sitcoms in EFL contexts?

This research focuses on the sampling characteristics of studies that use sitcoms in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, as observed in Table 1. We analyze three factors: school context, English proficiency, and region. These elements reveal the variable and the different research areas that used sitcoms as a language-learning method.

The variable region involves four groups: Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America. The most significant finding is the lack of research in Africa, which is mainly deduced by the fact of how widely the English language is used worldwide and how sitcoms may be useful in improving EFL instruction. However, most of the research (28.5%) is from Asia, showing that this is the region with a strong interest in sitcoms as a language learning tool. This presence of studies may be explained by the fact that Asian nations frequently place a high value on learning English as a means of communication. For example, Waedaoh and Sinwongsuwat (2019) carried out a quasi-experimental case study with 42 high school students from 17 to 18 years old at Pattani province, Southern Thailand to find out if CA-informed sitcom lessons can improve Thai students' conversation ability. With 23.8%, Latin America comes in second place, which provides us with an idea of how important English is becoming in different educational systems in recent years. Countries like Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Chile are the ones with the most studies in this topic. Europe has the lowest percentage (9.5%), indicating a lower prevalence of sitcom-based research in EFL contexts compared to other regions.

Table 3. *Sampling features*

Variable	Indicator	n	%
Region	Africa	0	0%
	Asia	6	28.5%
	Europe	2	9.5%
	Latin America	5	23.8%
English Proficiency	Advanced	8	38.0%
	Intermediate	7	33.3%
	Elementary	2	9.5%
	Mixed	0	0%
	Not reported	5	23.8%
Educational Setting	University	5	23.8%
	High School	5	23.8%
	Elementary/Middle School	5	23.8%
	English Institute	1	4.7%

According to this regional breakdown, comedy integration in the EFL curriculum is being investigated more extensively in Asia and Latin America. As Akbari (2020) states, EFL lessons and foreign language instruction benefit greatly from the use of humor. Since humor is an essential part of human existence, language instructors frequently use it to promote

social and psychological benefits. Therefore, future research could examine the popularity of sitcoms in these areas and determine if cultural or educational factors influence this trend.

The second variable, which is the participants' levels of English proficiency, is divided into five groups: advanced, intermediate, elementary, mixed, and not reported. Most research focuses on students at the intermediate (33.3%) and advanced (38%) performance levels.

Therefore, sitcoms seem to be more appealing to students at the elementary level due to the informal language, comedy, and cultural references they present. The absence of mixed proficiency groups in the data is evident, indicating that most studies do not include students with various degrees of proficiency.

Additionally, with only 9.5%, this table shows that at the elementary level, sitcoms may be less popular. It might be due to the language complexity and the context sitcoms use. Sitcoms could be too complicated for learners at lower levels, impeding understanding and enjoyment. Finally, there is a gap in the reporting of this crucial characteristic, as evidenced by the large percentage of studies (23.8%) that did not report any level of proficiency.

Regarding the educational settings where studies were conducted, amazingly, all of them were equally represented in this distribution, which is nicely balanced at 23.8%. This suggests that a wide range of educational levels utilize sitcoms. High schools and universities might concentrate on more proficient EFL students who can interact with sitcoms to learn the language more deeply and in context, while elementary or intermediate learners might be using simplified, shorter, or less complex versions of the comedies for analyzing cultural aspects.

Research question 2: How are EFL teachers incorporating sitcoms as instructional tools in diverse EFL contexts?

This research question aimed to analyze how EFL teachers are incorporating sitcoms into their teaching approaches. Therefore, the categories classified are teaching approaches and the corresponding sitcoms and types of activities teachers use to develop different skills in the English language learning process, as illustrated in table 4.

Table 4. *Sitcoms and Teaching approaches*

Teaching Approaches	Sitcoms	Type of activities
Communicative Language Teaching	The Monk Looney Tunes Wanda Vision	Speaking/interactive activities Non-specified
Conversation Analysis (CA)	Friends	Role plays
Contextualized Learning and Authentic Language use	The Big Bang Theory Friends Everybody Hates Chris Seinfeld Two and a Half Men. The Benadryl Brownie Rick and Morty Sherlock Aircrash Investigation The Originals Suits Game of Thrones Narcos The Flash Supernatural Death Note How I Met Your Mother	Interactive speaking activities Worksheets Guessing vocabulary activities Transcription focus Summarize episodes

Teaching Approaches	Sitcoms	Type of activities
Intercultural competence	The Office Friends The Simsomps Modern Family Master of None Seinfeld, Big Bang Theory 30 Rock	Cultural Analysis exercises Pre, while and post watching activities Pre-viewing activities As warm-ups Debates

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach emphasizes the importance of using authentic communication and interaction to teach language. Ulusoy and Demirbilek (2013) state that the use of authentic TV programs plays a significant role in the language production of foreign language learners. The sitcoms chosen under this approach—*The Monk*, *Looney Tunes*, and *WandaVision*—are known for their rich use of humor and dialogue used in everyday conversation. The use of speaking/interactive activities aligns with CLT's emphasis on real-world communication. The most common activities include role-plays, pair work, and small group discussions allow students to practice speaking in situations depicted in the sitcoms. Additionally, these sitcoms provide a variety of informal and humorous dialogues that can engage students in interactive language practice, motivating students to practice the language authentically.

The use of non-specified activities refers to the type of activities that teachers may be employing in the classes, which are not detailed but still focus on the communicative approach. of

Conversation Analysis (CA) is a method that focuses on the detailed study of how conversations occur in natural settings, paying attention to the structure of speech, turn-taking, and the dynamics of interaction. Hutchby (2019) mentions that a unique characteristic of CA methodology is that it uses video- or audio-recording technology to collect data on naturally occurring interactions as they occur in real time. For example, *Friends* is a sitcom that provides rich material for analyzing the flow of conversation, the use of pauses, and other conversational features. Furthermore, with role plays, students can mimic the conversational patterns observed in *Friends*, practicing turn-taking, intonation, and timing in their conversations, among others. By imitating the interactions in the sitcom, students can enhance their conversational skills in a context that echoes real-life communication.

The approach of contextualized learning and authentic language use focuses on exposing learners to real-world language in context. Sitcoms, as authentic materials, provide language that is not only real but also embedded within specific social, cultural, and situational contexts. For instance, a participant from the study *Using Sitcoms to Improve Pragmatic Competence in ELT Students* mentioned, «I could see what they do, how they speak, and how they behave» (Piñeres, 2015, p. 22). Sitcoms like *The Big Bang Theory*, *Seinfeld*, *Game of Thrones*, *Narcos*, and others show various social settings, character types, and speech registers in authentic conversations.

The Intercultural Competence approach aims to develop skills to identify and learn about different cultural norms and communicate effectively across cultures. Illie (2019) mentions that to acquire knowledge but also to develop intercultural competence, the key abilities are observing, listening, analyzing, evaluating, interpreting, relating, and self-reflecting. The sitcoms selected for this approach—such as *The Office*, *Friends*, *Modern Family*, and *Master of None*—are known for addressing a variety of cultural themes, social issues and character dynamics that reflect different values and behaviors. For example, *The Office* and *Modern Family* explore the workplace and family dynamics. *Friends* and *The Big Bang Theory* focus on interpersonal relationships, cultural diversity, and social interactions in a variety of contexts. In a modern urban setting, *Master of None* explores identity, cultural

assimilation, and the experience of immigrants. The study of these sitcoms in the language learning process enables students to recognize and understand cultural aspects, social norms, humor, and values from different cultural perspectives. Llara (2019) states that «using sitcoms in the classroom gives us the advantage of focusing not only on culture-specific aspects ('Big C' and 'small c'), but also on culture-general features contributing to the actual development of knowledge, strategies, and attitudes» (p. 14). Therefore, by promoting intercultural competence in class, teachers encourage students to not only learn language but also develop empathy for cultural differences.

Overall, the integration of sitcoms into EFL teaching is useful and brings it into line with different pedagogical approaches that aim to develop various language skills and competencies, making the learning experience more engaging and meaningful for students.

Research question 3: What specific language skills and competencies are enhanced through sitcom-based activities in EFL instruction?

This research question examines the specific language skills and competencies enhanced through sitcom-based activities in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. The collected data provides an overview of the different skills, competencies, and activities associated with the integration of sitcoms in the language learning process, and the elements are grouped in the next categories: communicative/interactive skills, vocabulary, cultural awareness, and varied activities, as illustrated in table 5.

Table 5. *Competences and activities, and Sitcom's implementation*

Competency	Activities	n	%
Communicative/Interactive	Speaking	2	9.5%
	Role-plays	1	4.7%
	Discussions	1	4.7%
Vocabulary	Worksheets	1	4.7%
	Subtitles	2	9.5%
	Guessing	1	4.7%
Cultural awareness	Use of Idiomatic expressions	2	9.5%
	Critical thinking		
	Debates	1	4.7%
	Contextual analysis	1	4.7%
		2	9.5%
Varied	Pre-watching-While- watching and After-watching	2	9.5%
	Warm- up		
	Non-specified	1	4.7%
		4	19%

Speaking activities are the main focus of the communicative/interactive skills category. Teachers around the world probably employ role-plays as their most popular technique, accounting for the highest percentage (9.5%). Different educators use it to motivate students to actively interact with the language. This is confirmed by Ishak (2022), who mentions some of the advantages of using role plays in class, such as collaboration, creativity, leadership, risk-taking, imagination development, motivation and confidence increasing, and oral proficiency enhancement through a secure and supportive environment. According to Nursyuhada et al. (2019), the use of role plays allows learners to practice speaking

skills authentically, make decisions, and think out of the box. Therefore, using role-playing exercises inspired by sitcoms, students can practice conversational English in a more realistic sense.

Additionally, discussions (4.7%) are crucial in this category. After using sitcoms, teachers can lead class discussions where students share their ideas, opinions, and thoughts on the language, themes, and characters. These types of activities allow students to improve their fluency and understanding while enabling learners to participate in the class more authentically. That was confirmed by Ulusoy and Demirbilek (2013), who discovered that after applying comedy videos in class, students could understand better, form sentences correctly, get involved, and participate actively in the lesson. Likewise, teachers can employ a range of activities and strategies to instruct in a foreign language, as evidenced by the 4.7% of students engaged in non-specific communication activities.

Regarding the vocabulary category, it is observed that different activities are implemented in classes to develop vocabulary skills. The most common are worksheets, subtitles, and guessing.

The use of subtitles (9.5%) is the most prominent activity for vocabulary development. This suggests that teachers are incorporating subtitles as a tool to help students connect spoken language with written text, which is confirmed by Alolaywi (2023), who examined different studies about the use of movies to learn English, coming to the conclusion that students who watch movies with subtitles learn and remember new words. Additionally, the use of subtitles during sitcoms can improve listening comprehension and introduce students to idiomatic expressions and slang in their context.

Using worksheets and guessing exercises comes in second (4.7%), confirming that these types of resources can help students learn vocabulary. The British Council Webpage Teaching English (2024) offers activities that enable students to use sitcoms, where students have to listen to a clip and try to guess information. In fact, there is a great variety of activities like matching exercises, fill-in-the-blank activities, or vocabulary quizzes, that reinforce learning after watching a sitcom episode. Similarly, instructors can use activities where students are asked to guess the meaning of certain words or phrases based on context. These activities promote active engagement and cognitive processing of new vocabulary in real-life situations.

Cultural Awareness category explores the different activities related to understanding cultural contexts, expressions, and critical thinking. As Chang states (2015) sitcoms serve as an effective medium for language learners to immerse themselves in the culture and lifestyle of the target community.

The use of idiomatic expressions and contextual analysis is the activity that appears most frequently. It is known that through the use of idiomatic expressions (9.5%), students are often exposed to informal and colloquial language. Also, this exposure helps students to understand how these phrases are used in different contexts and situations.

Similarly, contextual analysis (9.5%) also plays a significant role in cultural awareness since students can analyze the context of dialogues or episodes, developing a deeper understanding of the social, cultural, and situational factors influencing language use in sitcoms.

Furthermore, critical thinking (4.7%) and debates (4.7%) are more advanced activities since they challenge students to think analytically about the topics, characters, and messages in sitcoms; therefore, the level of complexity to complete this activity successfully can be higher.

The last category includes diverse instructional strategies that do not fit precisely into the previous classifications. Pre-watching, while-watching, and after-watching activities (9.5%) involve a multi-stage approach to helping students to be ready before watching a sitcom and are likely effective since they can improve the level of comprehension and the

long-term retention of new language skills. Likewise, warm-up activities (4.7%) are very common activities usually used at the beginning of a class or before watching a sitcom, whose goal is to activate and keep students engaged while they are watching and reinforce what they learned.

The non-specified category (19%) represents a significant portion of activities that were not clearly categorized. This suggests that future research is key to clarifying and categorizing the different activities implemented together with sitcoms.

Research question 4. What are the recommendations for future research on the integration of sitcoms in EFL education?

The analyzed research studies provided significant recommendations to guide future research, focusing on the importance of larger participant groups, long-term studies, diverse materials, and contextual applicability.

One key recommendation is the need for larger and more diverse participant groups to enhance the generalizability of findings. According to Espinoza (2014), ensuring participant groups have similar English proficiency, particularly in vocabulary, is essential. However, groups should include larger samples in order to reduce the impact of anomalies, allowing a more thorough evaluation of language proficiency and learning vocabulary patterns. Alerwi and Alzahrani (2020) support this, emphasizing the inclusion of both genders to provide a comprehensive understanding of sitcoms' effectiveness in EFL learning.

Expanding the scope of study duration has also been highlighted as crucial. Waedaoh and Sinwongsuwat (2019) argued that long-term studies are necessary to evaluate the sustained impact of sitcom-based instruction on language acquisition outcomes. Similarly, Piñeres et. al. (2023) recommended exploring the long-term effects of captioned materials across diverse educational settings and populations. Espinoza (2014) further suggested the use of delayed post-tests to assess these long-term effects, which time constraints often prevent.

The diversity of materials is another area for investigation. Vijayakumar et al. (2020) emphasized the need to examine different genres of video materials, as this could provide more comprehensive insights into effective teaching techniques. Beasley (2019) extended this recommendation, advocating for research into the cultural uses and attitudes toward various humor types, which could further expand existing theories of comprehension. It was observed that several studies do not provide details on the activities applied in their studies. Further clarification of these unspecified activities could help better understand the specific techniques used in lessons.

Qualitative analysis has also been identified as a valuable addition to future research. Incorporating methods such as interviews or open-ended questionnaires can reveal more about students' attitudes and experiences with sitcom-based learning (Alerwi & Alzahrani, 2020). These methods could complement quantitative approaches, offering a more holistic understanding of the learning process.

Finally, integrating sitcoms into the regular EFL curriculum warrants further exploration. Alerwi and Alzahrani (2020) proposed that future studies investigate whether incorporating sitcoms into standard teaching practices enhances both linguistic and pragmatic competencies over time.

To sum up, future research on sitcom-based instruction in EFL settings should prioritize larger and more diverse participant groups, long-term studies, and the exploration of various materials. Incorporating qualitative methods and investigating the integration of sitcoms into formal curricula can further enrich our understanding of their effectiveness. By addressing these areas, researchers can provide more comprehensive insights into the role of This article discusses sitcoms and their potential to support skills development in

diverse educational contexts, as well as their meanings and practical language use in an EFL classroom.

CONCLUSIONS

This article provided a comprehensive analysis of various studies on the use of sitcoms as instructional tools in English as a Foreign Language context. The goal was to analyze the impact on language skills development. Through a systematic review, the four research questions were addressed: the sampling features in EFL studies incorporating sitcoms, the teaching approaches used by EFL teachers, the specific language skills enhanced by sitcom-based activities, and recommendations for future research studies.

The findings revealed that research about the use of sitcoms in EFL contexts is particularly prevalent in regions like Asia and Latin America, with most studies focusing on intermediate and advanced English learners. This indicates a clear interest in paying attention to cultural and linguistic elements found in sitcoms to enhance language learning. Additionally, the most common educational settings are high schools and universities; however, there are a few research studies conducted in English institutes, which could be an area for further exploration. The use of sitcoms in these settings shows the potential benefits and approaches addressed during instruction like encouraging motivation, and contextually rich tools for enhancing language acquisition.

In terms of teaching approaches, sitcoms are employed within several pedagogical frameworks, mainly Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Conversation Analysis (CA), Contextualized Learning, and Intercultural Competence. These frameworks emphasize authentic communication, social interaction, and exposure to real-world language use. In addition, teachers commonly use role-plays, discussions, and contextual analysis to improve communicative and cultural competencies.

The analysis of skills development demonstrated that sitcom-based activities primarily enhance speaking skills, vocabulary acquisition, and cultural awareness. Role-plays and discussions foster interaction and fluency, while the use of subtitles, worksheets, and idiomatic expressions enriches students' vocabulary and cultural understanding. Additionally, critical thinking exercises encourage deeper engagement with the content, developing both linguistic and analytical skills.

In conclusion, the integration of sitcoms into EFL education proves to be a dynamic and effective method for improving a range of language skills. Moving forward, future research should focus on investigating the long-term effects of sitcom-based instruction, particularly in diverse educational settings. Additionally, exploring the use of different video genres, as well as more precise activity categorization, will enhance our understanding of how sitcoms can be applied most effectively in EFL contexts. Finally, this study highlights the importance of sitcoms as a tool for not only enhancing linguistic competencies but also fostering a deeper understanding of culture, communication, and real-world language use.

CONTRIBUTOR ROLES:

Maria Karina Arcentales Abad:

Conceptualization: Development of the introduction and overall study direction.

Data Curation: Gathering data and contributing to the systematic review process.

Writing – Original Draft: Writing the introduction, discussion, conclusions, and summary.

Writing – Review & Editing: Revising and refining the final manuscript.

Valeria Alexandra Chumbi Landy:

Data Curation: Gathering data and contributing to the systematic review process.

Methodology: Designing and organizing methodological procedures.

Formal Analysis: Conducting and interpreting the results analysis.

Writing – Review & Editing: Editing and refining the abstract.

ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS:

The authors state that there are no ethical implications.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors state that there are no financial and non-financial conflicts of interest that could have influenced work presented.

REFERENCES

- Akbari, M. (2020). THE USE OF HUMOR IN EFL CLASSROOMS. *Article in International Journal of Innovative Research and Growth*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.2015/IJI-RMF.2455.0620/202001016>
- Alerwi, A. A., & Alzahrani, A. (2020). Using Sitcoms to Improve the Acquisition of Speech Acts by EFL Students: Focusing on Request, Refusal, Apology, and Compliment Response. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research*, Volume 7, (Issue 1, 2020,), 63–79. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341804605_Using_Sitcoms_to_Improve_the_Acquisition_of_Speech_Acts_by_EFL_Students_Focusing_on_Request_Refusal_Apology_and_Compliment_Response
- Alolaywi, Y. (2023). Learning English from Movies: An Exploratory Study. *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research*, 06(04). <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijsshr/v6-i4-43>
- Avalos, A. L., & Castro, A. (2015). Learners as agents of change: Challenges for the EFL class. In *EFL classrooms in the new millennium: Selected papers from the 40th FAAPI Conference* (p. 1).
- Barrientos Ramírez, L. R., Bracamonte Peña, K. R., & Salvador Cevallos, S. B. (2017). A proposal for using some short films as authentic material to improve oral skill of B1 level students during the english learning process in EFL classes through video guides at the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador in semester I-2016. Universidad de El Salvador.
- Beasley, A. (2019). *Using Sitcoms to Measure Humor Comprehension Between L1, L2, and Bilingual Users of English: Implications for Pragmatic Research*. Semantic Scholar. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Using-Sitcoms-to-Measure-Humor-Comprehension-L1%2C-of-Beasley/d55c8b6a1d921790a2fcf0c96aad57aa1a60f760>

- British, C. (2024). *Sitcom activity: listening and guessing*. TeachingEnglish. <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/teaching-resources/teaching-adults/activities/pre-intermediate-a2/sitcom-activity-listening-and>
- Cañellas Bibiloni, M. (2019). The development of the intercultural communicative competence through sitcoms in an EFL context.
- Chang, S. (2015). Using a Popular TV Comedy Series in Teaching English: Focusing on 'Frasier'. *STEM Journal*, 16(4), 2015, 25-49.
- Das Neves Monsalvo, P. (2021). Hedging and context: introducing pragmatics in the efl classroom through wandavision.
- Espinoza, E. M. I. P. (2014). Facultad de Filosofía, Letras y Ciencias de la Educación Departamento de Investigación y Posgrados Maestría en Lengua Inglesa y Lingüística Aplicada (Doctoral dissertation, Universidad de Cuenca).
- Hutchby, I. (2019). (PDF) *Conversation Analysis*. ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336458644_Conversation_Analysis
- Ilie, O.-A. (2019, June). (PDF) *The Intercultural Competence. Developing Effective Intercultural Communication Skills*. ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334677436_The_Intercultural_Competence_Developing_Effective_Intercultural_Communication_Skills
- Ishak, S. A., & Abdul Aziz, A. (2022). Role Play to Improve ESL Learners' Communication Skills: A Systematic Review. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(10). <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v12-i10/14851>
- Krsteva, M. (2024). SITCOMS AND THE LANGUAGE CULTURE KNOWLEDGE-*International Journal*, 67(5), 789-794.
- Lasekan, O. (2021). Identification and adoption of themes in the big bang theory sitcom to foster academic cultural competencies of doctoral students in english for academic conversation classroom. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 699662.
- Mohammadian, Z., Ramezanzadeh, A., & Moradian, M. R. (2024). A Mixed-Methods Study of the Effect of Using Situation Comedies on Iranian EFL Learners' Critical Reasoning and Action. *Journal of Language Horizons*, 8(2), 7-32.
- Mudawe, O. M. N. (2020). Enhancing EFL students' cultural awareness through friend's sitcom. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 9(4), 76-84.
- Nursyuhada, Z., Noor, R., Norhartini, A., & Nurul, J. (2019). Exploring Perceptions of Role Play Activities in English as a Second Language (ESL) Classrooms. *International Journal of Engineering and Advanced Technology*, 8(5C), 868-872. <https://doi.org/10.35940/ijeat.e1122.0585c19>
- Nguyen, H. (2014). The use of humor in EFL teaching: A case study of Vietnamese university teachers' and students' perceptions and practices. University of Canberra, Australia.
- Othman, Zarina., Hasni, Nor. (2022). View of communicative skills through corporate storytelling video: Students' perception. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 253-260
- Özgen, M., & Gündüz, N. (2020). Authentic captioned sitcom as listening comprehension material in English language teaching. *ELT Research Journal*, 9(2), 167-193.
- Piñeres, M., Ramírez, M., & Castellanos Cuéllar, A. (2023). *Using Sitcoms to Improve Pragmatic Competence in ELT Students: Interpreting and Performing Speech Acts* (pp. 1-44) [Research Project]. https://www.academia.edu/15310855/Using_Sitcoms_to_Improve_Pragmatic_Competence_in_EL_T_Students_Interpreting_and_Performing_Speech_Acts_Research_project

- Raigón Rodríguez, A., & Larrea-Espinar, Á. (2019). THE USE OF SITCOMS FOR CULTURAL LEARNING IN EFL: A WORKSHOP FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS. *Elia: Studies in Applied English Linguistics/Estudios de Lingüística Inglesa Aplicada*, 19.
- Larrea-Espinar, Á., & Raigón-Rodríguez, A. (2019). Sitcoms as a tool for cultural learning in the EFL classroom. *Pixel-Bit, Revista de Medios Y Educación*, 56, 33–50. <https://doi.org/10.12795/pixelbit.2019.i56.02>
- Petticrew, M., & Roberts, H. (2006). *Systematic reviews in the social sciences: A practical guide*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Saeedi, Z., & Biri, A. (2016). The application of technology in teaching grammar to EFL learners: The role of animated sitcoms. *Teaching English with Technology*, 16(2), 18-39.
- Ulusoy, G., & Demirbilek, M. (2013). The Effects of Using Situation Comedy Video on English Speaking. *The Anthropologist*, 16(1-2), 351–361. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09720073.2013.11891362>
- Valizadeh, M. (2022). Sitcoms and EFL Learners' Foreign Language Anxiety and Motivation for Learning.
- Vijayakumar, M., Baisel, A., Subha, S., & Kanagarajan, K. (2020). Impact of TV shows on English language acquisition. *International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering*, 8(5), 2414–2420. <https://doi.org/10.35940/ijrte.D7502.018520>
- Waedaoh, A., & Sinwongsuwat, K. (2019). Enhancing English language learners' conversation abilities via CA-informed sitcom lessons: A case study of Thai high school students. *International Journal of Language Studies*, 13(1), 41-56.



REVISTA KRONOS

Trainee teachers' perceptions on the use of Blender and Unity to develop 3D didactic materials for science teaching

Karla Esther Espinoza Castro | iD Universidad Nacional de Educación, UNAE-Ecuador
Evelyn Aracely Cabrera Romero | iD Universidad Nacional de Educación, UNAE-Ecuador
Diana Elizabeth Chimbo Sumba | iD Universidad Nacional de Educación, UNAE-Ecuador
Erick Eduardo Quizhpi Gualpa | iD Universidad Nacional de Educación, UNAE-Ecuador

ABSTRACT Education in Ecuador has experienced significant transformations particularly related to policy and curriculum. For example, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) indicators are used in English curriculums. However, these changes do not seem to have impacted the methodology teachers use in class. In this sense, Virtual Reality (VR) has become a powerful tool to innovate education to go hand in hand with the current society and technology advancement. This study shows the pre-service students' perceptions about using the software Blender and Unity to develop 3D instructional materials to teach Science using English as the means of instruction. To examine these perceptions, the authors created and delivered a training course about using Blender and Unity to 40 pre-service students. At the end of the course, the authors administered a questionnaire to identify their perceptions concerning Unity and Blender. In general, pre-service students manifested that the course developed their skills to create 3D instructional materials. However, problems related to the characteristics of computers and access to individual devices detected pre-service students' willingness to develop 3D instructional materials.

KEYWORDS educational technology, teaching Science, virtual reality, 3D instructional resources.

FECHA DE RECEPCIÓN 05/03/2025

FECHA DE APROBACIÓN 17/10/2025

Percepciones de los profesores en formación sobre el uso de Blender y Unity para desarrollar materiales didácticos 3D para la enseñanza de las ciencias

RESUMEN La educación en Ecuador ha experimentado transformaciones significativas, particularmente en el ámbito de políticas públicas y diseños curriculares, es este sentido, un ejemplo notable es la incorporación de los indicadores del Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas (MCER) en los currículos de inglés. No obstante, estas transformaciones no han generado un impacto equivalente en las metodologías implementadas por los docentes en el aula. En este contexto, la Realidad Virtual (RV) emerge como una herramienta potencialmente transformadora para la innovación educativa, permitiendo a las instituciones mantenerse a la vanguardia de las demandas de la sociedad contemporánea y el acelerado avance tecnológico. La presente investigación analiza las percepciones de estudiantes en formación docente respecto al uso de los softwares Blender y Unity para el desarrollo de materiales didácticos tridimensionales orientados a la enseñanza de Ciencias, utilizando el inglés como medio de instrucción. Para examinar dichas percepciones, se diseñó e implementó un curso de capacitación sobre el uso de Blender y Unity, en el cual participaron 40 estudiantes de formación docente. Al finalizar la intervención, se aplicó una encuesta para identificar sus valoraciones sobre ambas herramientas. Los resultados evidencian que, en términos generales, los participantes reconocen que el curso contribuyó significativamente al desarrollo de competencias para la creación de materiales didácticos en 3D. Sin embargo, se identificaron factores limitantes relacionados con las especificaciones técnicas de los ordenadores disponibles y la falta de acceso a dispositivos individuales, elementos que disminuyeron la predisposición de los futuros docentes hacia el desarrollo de materiales didácticos tridimensionales.

PALABRAS CLAVE tecnología educativa, enseñanza de Ciencias, realidad virtual, recursos didácticos 3D.

INTRODUCTION

Education in Ecuador has experienced significant transformations in the last decades. These transformations revolve around the accessibility to education and the teaching and learning methodology, both of which favor Ecuadorians. As a result, more people can access primary and secondary education, unlike some decades ago. Regarding the teaching methodology, most teachers have been adapting their techniques and instructional resources to the demands of the current society, aiming to improve the quality and equity of the educational system. An example of these changes is evident in the reform of the Ecuadorian constitution in 2008, where education was declared a fundamental right and, therefore, free at all levels (primary, secondary, and university). In tandem with this reform, the state created quality standards and curriculum modifications at all educational levels, intending to prepare citizens who adapt to the new predominant and evolving current trends (Constitución de la República del Ecuador, 2008; Cabrera y Jerves, 2022) of the modern world.

In 2021, the Ministry of Education implemented the new prioritized curriculum for the elemental, medium, and superior sublevels of General Basic Education and high school. This modification highlighted the development of the communicational, mathematical, socioemotional, and digital competencies. With this new focus, the national authorities aimed to prepare students for the contemporary world through a holistic teaching and learning process.

Despite the government's intention to change the country's educational system, some institutions still use traditional teaching methods, mainly based on lectures, which tend to limit students' active participation, restricting the development of their critical and scientific thinking. Regarding infrastructure, an aspect beyond the teachers' influence, schools have few laboratories and few experimental and technological resources. Thus, innovative methodologies must integrate knowledge experimentation and inquiry as the cornerstone of primary and secondary education's teaching and learning process.

In this context, it is paramount to mention the importance of English in the national educational system. In Ecuador, English is taught both in private and public educational institutions. In the public system, this language is taught from year two to the last year of high school. However, despite its popularity, English language teaching in public schools faces different challenges: a lack of specialized teachers, the absence of innovative methodologies, and continuity of learning (Murillo and Rosales, 2024). The limited number of specialized teachers reduces the effectiveness of developing the students' communicative competency, particularly in primary education. Furthermore, Torres and Estrella (2022) mention that teaching English in secondary education becomes more challenging since the number of hours assigned to teach this subject is insufficient to achieve the English level determined in the national English curriculum.

These challenges must be addressed using innovative approaches and considering the technological advances and the diversity of the teaching and learning methodologies, digital tools can help improve the learning process. Among these emerging technologies, the one that has been gaining popularity in education is Virtual Reality (VR). This technology allows teachers to create immersive environments which facilitate students' learning. In the case of English Language Teaching (ELT), VR provides students with the opportunity to immerse in real-life situations. Creating environments that help teachers simulate situations where students can interact with native speakers of English.

VR's advantages to education, particularly to ELT, are indisputable. Unfortunately, English teachers do not usually take advantage of this tool because it is perceived as challenging. However, this perception is incorrect since VR is currently based on specialized software, which, with proper training, allows teachers to create innovative teaching resources (Espinoza et al., 2022; Soutto-Ferreira, et al., 2021).

Training pre-service teachers on using these technologies prepares them to face the challenges of modern education. Additionally, integrating technological tools in pre-service education contributes to developing the necessary digital competencies in the growing technological world (Velasategui-Hernández, et al., 2024). Moreover, it allows pre-service teachers to model immersive instructional materials that can be adapted to diverse students' educational needs. These resources also facilitate learning and increase students' motivation and comprehension of abstract concepts, particularly in science. Above all, it paves the way for integrating different areas, for instance, Science and ELT, through interactive student experiences.

In this regard, the authors created and carried out a training course on using Blender and Unity to provide technological skills to future experimental Science teachers. These tools are free and allow teachers to develop interactive, tridimensional environments. Blender transforms bidimensional images in 3D models, and Unity provides functionality and motion (Hamid, et al., 2021). The objective of this course was to develop immersive digital resources to facilitate the process of teaching and learning Science.

This study examines the pre-service teachers' perceptions about the use of Blender and Unity to create 3D instructional resources for teaching Science. Through this research, the authors aim to identify the advantages and challenges of using these technological tools to construct more dynamic, inclusive, and effective pedagogical practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Virtual Reality

Virtual Reality (VR) is a technological system where a computer generates a digital environment. In this environment, users can interact, operate, and visualize specific activities in real time (Pimentel et al., 2023). With this technology, users can also create simulations in 3D, which combine a multisensorial experience that mixes vision, hearing, and touch to immerse users in a digital environment that simulates a physical context. Moreover, RV facilitates interaction with other users within a virtual environment (Toala et al., 2020, Espinoza et al., 2022).

Virtual reality's capacity to submerge users in digital environments is connected to the concept of immersion. According to Pérez et al. (2021), this refers to the generation of the perception of a physical presence in a world that is not real. According to the degree of immersion, there are three levels of VR, namely, *a) non-immersive*, where users interact with the virtual environment using a monitor of a computer, a mouse, and a keyboard; *b) semi-immersive*, where the visualization of the digital world is done through VR goggles; and *c) fully immersive* when the users interact with the digital environment through the use of specific devices such as VR gloves, VR shoes, VR headsets among other devices which amplify the users' sensorial experiences.

Virtual Reality in Education

In the educational field, VR has become a tool that has allowed teachers to enrich and reinforce their teaching and learning processes in the last decade. Its implementation favors the development of students' creativity, motivation, and interests. Additionally, VR facilitates the comprehension of abstract concepts and enhances the development of technological and cooperative skills (Elias et al., 2021). This way, VR positively influences students' academic performance, allowing teachers to create interactive and immersive experiences.

Experiences that actively involve students and stimulate the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity.

VR can transform existing educational models, integrating theory and practice by creating immersive student learning experiences. It also helps overcome the geographic barriers of learning by offering students access to 3D replicated objects from different places. This widens students' learning opportunities in global contexts (Sousa et al., 2021). Teachers can use VR to create the same activity in different languages, adjusting to students' specific needs in tandem with the diverse educational contexts. Time also does not become an impediment since, through VR, teachers can recreate historical scenarios in different *époques*, amplifying the students' capacity to assimilate knowledge (Magallanes et al., 2021).

Virtual Reality in English Language Teaching

VR has emerged as an innovative tool in ELT because it allows students to interact in digital environments that simulate situations where real communication exchanges occur. When English teachers use VR, they facilitate the development of linguistic skills, particularly oral comprehension and speaking fluency, since they can situate students in different interactive contexts where they practice the language in a natural and pertinent manner (Ordóñez-Proce et al., 2023). Practicing English in natural contexts increases students' confidence and reduces their anxiety when using the language with others.

When teachers incorporate VR in their language classes, there is a high student acceptance rate since it adapts to their interests and expectations (Agurto y Guevara, 2023). According to Moreno and Galván (2020), VR enhances active and collaborative methodologies that increase students' participation and engagement. Similarly, Pérez-Barioluengo et al. (2024) add that this technology contributes to developing the students' technological competencies, increasing their learning commitment. Since teachers are moving from a traditional memorization method to more interactive and immersive learning experiences, students retain their knowledge and improve their grades in English.

To take advantage of the VR benefits, combining VR knowledge, teacher training, and the application of innovative teaching methods to achieve significant learning and, in the case of English, the development of linguistic competency is paramount.

Virtual Reality in Teaching Science

In the teaching context, Science is a subject that revolves around teaching and learning natural phenomena using English as the means of instruction. Turpo-Gebera and Gonzales-Miñán (2020) mention that Science refers to the «science of doing» based on exploring and identifying natural processes using a scientific approach to create regulated and controlled natural scenarios. However, teaching Science faces different challenges.

According to Valenceja (2021), Spanish-speaking students have difficulties in these classes due to the linguistic barrier since this subject is taught in a different linguistic code. Furthermore, Robles (2021) adds that the standard methodology used in Science is a lecture, which promotes temporal learning based on memorization that limits the comprehension of content and knowledge application. Pérez and Martínez-Aznar (2020) highlight that to learn this subject effectively, it is necessary to incorporate experimental and contextualized activities connected to reality where students can visualize and manipulate knowledge. In these regards, VR helps teachers make the teaching and learning process in Science more effective because they can generate dynamic and visual environments. Environments that promote students' interaction with their peers and their teachers. Teachers who infuse VR into their teaching practice can integrate different elements that reinforce the theoretical content from an experimental approach.

Concerning the target language, Science teachers can present the information to their students in English in a contextualized and interactive manner, primarily using technical and scientific vocabulary pertinent to the Science content. In this sense, VR bridges the gap between traditional and innovative methods, transforming students' learning experiences by making them more immersive and interactive.

Challenges of using Virtual Reality in Education

The implementation of VR in education poses challenges that need to be faced by education stakeholders to plan effective strategies for its proper application in educational institutions and minimize the adverse effects that changes of this nature can bring.

The VR faces problems involving physical and technological infrastructure, internet access, and a lack of technological competencies among teachers. Physical and technological infrastructure refers to the availability of enough space for students and classrooms and technological devices, such as computers and peripherals. Proper and stable internet access is fundamental so VR systems can operate without problems. Finally, the technological competencies are necessary to adapt and apply the right educational applications and platforms (Crespo et al., 2024). Another challenge of using VR in education is the one mentioned by Morales-Cadena et al. (2024); they highlight that one of the main challenges is the lack of investment in technological devices needed for correctly using VR. Thus, it is necessary that stakeholders try to look for enough funding so their educational institutions can benefit from the advantages that VR can offer to innovation in education independently of the student's socioeconomic context.

Beyond the mentioned challenges, another problem is that some teachers resist adopting innovative methodologies in their teaching practices and prefer to maintain the traditional teaching methods with which they are more familiar. As regards data protection, teachers must be aware of data management and take the necessary actions to protect this information (Peña y Cuzco, 2023).

The role of teachers in Virtual Reality

To properly infuse VR in education, the teacher's role is fundamental in all stages, for instance, in the design, development, and application of VR. Lerma et al. (2020) mention that VR is an innovative didactic tool. However, teachers must be qualified for its application. Teachers' capacity to adapt to the pedagogical demands and their flexibility to use the emerging technologies are key factors for an effective practical integration of VR in teaching and learning.

García-Herrera and Guevara-Vizcaíno (2024) coincide that VR is a facilitator of change and is presented as a revolutionary resource that enhances a transformation in the teaching and learning process. Thus, teachers must be familiar with the resources and contents pertinent to VR. The teachers also need to know the technical use of the VR resources and can use them to create practices that enhance the development of cognitive, critical, and collaborative skills.

VR activities design must be related to the effective transformation of knowledge and teaching methodologies. For this reason, teachers must combine pedagogy with technology. In this sense, during the planning stage, teachers must consider students' academic and linguistic level, the contents to teach, key concepts, learning theories, and students' special needs. Including these elements allows teachers to optimize VR's potential as a pedagogical tool (Angulo et al., 2023).

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to answer the following research question:

RQ: What are the pre-service students' perceptions of using Blender and Unity to develop 3D instructional materials to teach Science?

In order to answer this question, the authors organized a training course on using Blender and Unity to model 3D human organs to teach Science. The course consisted of six instruction hours for four weeks and was offered to pre-service students. The content of the course was: a) anatomic modeling and texturization to create 3D human organs, b) exporting 3D models from Blender to Unity, guaranteeing correct materials transfer and texture, c) developing interactive animations in Unity to simulate biological behavior (expansion, contraction and turning) through animator, d) implementing particles systems to represent biological effects, e) acknowledging the advantages of Blender and Unity software to teach Science. Furthermore, the authors delivered the course using the institutional MODDLE platform.

After finishing the course, the authors designed and applied a survey to capture the pre-service students' perceptions about using Blender and Unity to develop 3D instructional materials to teach Science. A survey is defined as a quantitative research method composed of items aiming at drawing responses from a population or a sample (Aarons, 2020). This specific survey aimed to analyze how pre-service students perceived the effectiveness of using Blender and Unity to develop instructional resources to teach Science.

Following the survey design, the authors constructed a questionnaire comprising fourteen items grouped in three sections. The first section aimed at exploring the characteristics of the participants; the second examined the extent of the methodology of the training course to understand Blender and Unity; the third students' overall satisfaction with the resources used in the training course.

Two of the fourteen items were multiple choice, and a Likert scale was used for the twelve remaining items. The objective of this scale was to provide respondents the opportunity to rate their satisfaction and usability of Blender and Unity in developing instructional materials.

When the questionnaire draft was finished, the authors had it validated by two experts. In general, they did not suggest structural changes. Their comments mainly referred to the wording of some items, being more concise when writing the items, and avoiding using technical words to facilitate the respondents' comprehension. Henceforth, the authors accepted the experts' comments and piloted the instrument.

The authors piloted the questionnaire with eleven pre-service students. These respondents had the same characteristics as the actual respondents but did not answer the final questionnaire. The data from these eleven students was coded, and using the JASP software, the authors computed the Cronbach's alpha coefficient to measure the reliability (internal consistency) of the questionnaire. The value obtained was 0.841, meaning the instrument had a good consistency. To do a deeper analysis the authors computed the individual item's reliability; the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Individual Item Reliability*

Item	Cronbach's α
Type of high school	0,864
Did you use your computer in the training?	0,841
Do you think your computer's performance when using blender was optimal?	0,851
Did your computer's technical specifications allow optimal performance of blender and unity during the workshop?	0,880
Did the blender and unity workshop draw your interest and encourage you to actively participate in the proposed activities?	0,825
Do you feel you had the necessary prior knowledge and basic technical skills to use the software in the workshop?	0,824
was it easy to understand the basic functions of blender and unity?	0,831
Do you think the organization of the lessons facilitated a clear and effective understanding of the content?	0,845
Do you think the role played by the researchers during the workshop was appropriate to optimize learning?	0,817
Were the answers or solutions provided by the researchers clear and did they help resolve the questions raised during the workshop effectively?	0,802
Did the workshop allow you to acquire the skills necessary to create 3d educational resources in blender and unity?	0,799
Are you satisfied with the teaching resources used in the workshop?	0,796
Do you think your personal characteristics (training, technological resources, skills) influenced how you perceived the workshop's effectiveness?	0,801
Would you be interested in participating in future workshops to further your learning and use of blender and unity?	0,805

Table 1 shows the results of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient computed per each item. The majority of the items showed good consistency, considering that the values were higher than 0.8. Only items 11 and 12 showed an acceptable consistency. Based on these results, and considering the results of most of the items, the authors administered the questionnaire to the forty students who attended the training course using Google Forms.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

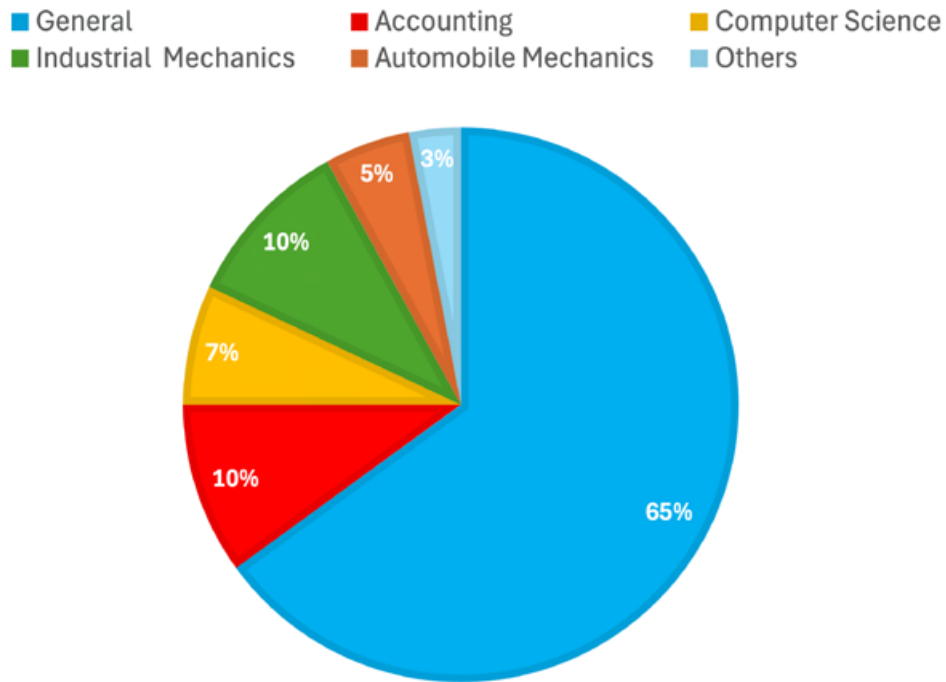
The authors used the software JASP to conduct the statistical analysis using the questionnaire data. To present the results in this section, the authors grouped them in three sections as follows.

Participants Characteristics

The forty participants who attended the course were pre-service students enrolled in third semester of the Education in Experimental Sciences Undergraduate Program in a public university. These students come from different types of high schools. In Ecuador, there are two types, general high school [Bachillerato General Unificado] where all students finish their secondary studies with general knowledge, and technical high schools where students specialized in a technical profession, for instance, mechanics.

Students access university teaching undergraduate programs regardless the high school diploma they have. This results in a variation of students' existing knowledge when they attend university, as shown below in Graph 1.

Graph 1. High School Diploma of the Pre-service Students



Graph 1 shows that most participants (65%) come from general high school [Bachillerato General Unificado]. This means that, in theory, they have almost the same general knowledge. Or at least they have received the same academic content in their high schools. Opposite to the 35% of participants from technical high schools, whose knowledge is more in the technical areas than Sciences in general.

To use Unity and Blender, participants must have basic knowledge of how computers operate and a personal computer which must not be basic. The inconvenience with a basic computer is that these two programs are too heavy to run properly in these devices. For example, the operating system needs to be minimum Windows 10, Big Sur 11 for Mac OS or Ubuntu 24.04, and a minimum RAM of 8 GB to avoid problems using Unity and Blender. In this sense, 42,5% of participants mentioned that they did not have issues with their computer performance. Whereas the remaining 57,5% mentioned their work with the software was affected.

During the course, 60% of pre-service students owned a computer. The rest shared one with their classmates or borrowed one from friends or family. This limited the pre-service students' time to practice autonomously outside the classes. About the technical characteristics of the computers, 60% of participants mentioned that their devices met the requirements for installation and work with Unity and Blender. On the other hand, 32,5% stated that their computers worked adequately on some occasions, and 7% mentioned that their computers did not allow them to work on the course due to their technical limitations.

Participants' Satisfaction with the Methodology Used in the Training Course

To measure the level of satisfaction with the training course, the authors used a Likert scale with five options as follows: a) strongly agree, b) agree, c) neither agree nor disagree, d)

disagree, and e) strongly disagree per each item. The participant's selections are shown below in Table 2.

Table 2. *Participants' Satisfaction with the Course*

Items	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)
The training course increased Interest and active participation	25	42,5	22,5	5	5
It was not difficult to understand the basic functions of Unity and Blender with the instructor's explanations	22,5	35	35	7,5	0
The curriculum organization was clear, and the sequence helped achieve the learning outcomes	25	55	20	0	0
The instructors answered all my questions and concerns about the use of Unity and Blender effectively	30	55	12,5	2,5	0
The course helped participants develop their skills in modeling 3D instructional materials	30	47,5	22,5	0	0

* Strongly agree= 1; agree = 2; neither agree nor disagree = 3; disagree = 4; strongly disagree = 5

Table 2 shows that pre-service students were generally satisfied with the training course. Particularly with the instructors, 30% of participants strongly agreed, and 55% agreed that the instructors solved their questions and concerns about using Unity and Blender. This is a crucial aspect to consider since the instructors are the ones that define the effectiveness and quality of the course. Also, they need to be very knowledgeable of the content since they must solve all their students' doubts and concerns that emerge in all teaching and learning processes. Moreover, when Science is the «science of doing» (Turpo-Geb- era and Gonzales-Miñán, 2020). Science and the English linguistic competency are understood and developed through the implementation of practical activities that resemble real-life scenarios.

The second aspect of the training course that participants valued was the organization of its curriculum; 25% of participants strongly agreed, and 55% agreed with this aspect. This shows the significance of a well-organized and contextualized curriculum in achieving learning outcomes. VR is an innovative tool in teaching; however, to make the most of it, teachers need to know how to use it (Lerma et al.,2020). Well-qualified teachers can develop quality interactive resources using VR.

Apart from the technical knowledge, participants needed to develop their skills to model the instructional materials in 3D. This course was also successful; 30% of participants strongly agreed, and also 47,5% agreed. This high percentage of pre-service teachers agreeing that they have developed their skills to develop instructional materials in 3D shows the effectiveness of the course. However, 22.5% of participants exhibited indifference (neither agree nor disagree) in this facet. These results can be connected to the limitations and performance of the participants' computers, as explained in the previous section. These limitations can also be connected to the participants' difficulties in understanding the essential function of Unity and Blender where 35% of pre-service teachers chose the option neither agree nor disagree. In the same vein, 35% selected the same choice (neither agree nor disagree) regarding their interest and active participation in the course. These late results can also be linked to pre-service teachers' limitations with their computers.

Satisfaction with the Resources Used in the Course

The four authors were the instructors of this course, and the instructional resources they used were interactive presentations, instructional videos, and the software Blender and Unity installed on their personal computers. Except for the software, all resources were uploaded on the MOODLE. To measure the level of satisfaction with the resources used in

the training course, the authors used a Likert scale with five options as follows: a) strongly agree, b) agree, c) neither agree nor disagree, d) disagree, and e) strongly disagree per each item. The pre-service teachers' selections are shown below in Table 3.

Table 3. *Participants' Satisfaction with the Course*

Items	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)
The resources used in the training course facilitated the understanding of Unity and Blender	35	40	20	5	0
The access to the resources and the pre-service teachers' level of technical knowledge helped them understand the use of Unity and Blender	20	60	15	5	0
The resources helped develop pre-service teachers' skills in using Unity and Blender regardless of their previous knowledge	40	42,5	15	2,5	0

* Strongly agree= 1; agree = 2; neither agree nor disagree = 3; disagree = 4; strongly disagree = 5

Table 3 shows that the resources used in the training course were effective and well received by the pre-service teachers, helping them achieve the learning outcomes. For instance, 35% of participants strongly agreed, and 40% agreed that the resources used by the authors facilitated the understanding of Unity and Blender. The remaining 20% showed indifference (neither agree nor disagree) to the resources, which can be explained by the pre-service teachers' limitations have with accessing computers and the technical limitations of some computers. Concerning the access to the resources and pre-service teachers' technical knowledge, 35% of participants strongly agreed, and 40% agreed that they could access the resources without any complication. The ease of access to the resources can be the result of the use of MOODLE since the resources are available to students at any time. Furthermore, it is important to mention that the accessibility to resources and its quality bridged the gap between existing technical knowledge of some participants and the new acquired knowledge of the rest of the pre-service teachers. This was also reinforced when the 40% of participants strongly agreed and 42,5% agreed that the resources used in the course helped them develop their skills Unity and Blender regardless their previous knowledge in this area.

The general course participants' agreement that the training course was effective and allowed then to improve their skills in the modeling instructional resources in 3D is key. Hence VR has become a driver of change which is paving the way for revolutionary changes in education (García-Herrera y Guevara-Vizcaíno, 2024), it is necessary that teachers construct these types of instructional resources and use them in their classes. Particularly in teaching Science because it allows students to be immerse in different environments where they can combine learning scientific content and, at the same time, develop their English linguistic competence.

CONCLUSIONS

The current society is experiencing change due to technological development and globalization. Thus, teachers need to adapt to these changes and use new methodologies that go in tandem with the demands of the modern society. In this sense, Virtual Reality is fundamental in helping teachers create innovative 3D instructional materials. VR has the potential to immerse students in interactive scenarios that resemble reality and favors learning Science in English.

Creating 3D instructional materials requires teachers to have knowledge and technical skills in Blender and Unity. For this reason, training teachers in this area is fundamental. This study shows that pre-service students value VR's potential for teaching Science in English, and they recognize that training develops their skills regardless of previous knowledge. However, it is important to consider that teachers need computers with specific characteristics that allow Unity and Blender to run correctly. Therefore, the availability of updated devices is a must, which, on the other hand, may become a disadvantage in case teachers cannot access these devices.

CONTRIBUTOR ROLES

Karla Espinoza: Conceptualization, methodology design, results analysis and description, graph creation, original draft writing, review and editing, final manuscript preparation.

Evelyn Cabrera: Literature review, data collection, introduction writing, review and editing, formal analysis.

Diana Chimbo: Literature review, data collection, survey design, conclusions writing, and editing support.

Erick Quizpe: Literature review, data collection, survey design, conclusions writing, and editing support.

ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

The authors state that there are no ethical implications.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no financial and non-financial conflicts of interest that could have influenced the work presented.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This is part of the research project entitled CORI-UNAE2022-1 «BIOCHEM-ARSIMLAB». funded by the Universidad Nacional de Educación, Azogues, Ecuador.

REFERENCES

- Angulo, G., Lewis, F., Plante, P., y Brassard, C. (2023). Estado del arte sobre el uso de la realidad virtual, la realidad aumentada y el video 360 en educación superior. *Edutec, Revista Electrónica de Tecnología Educativa*, (84), 35-51. <https://edutec.es/revista/index.php/edutec-e/article/view/2769>
- Agurto, J., y Guevara, C. (2024). Realidad virtual para la mejora del rendimiento académico en estudiantes de educación superior. *Revista Metropolitana de Ciencias Aplicadas*,

- 6(S2), 233-243. <https://dspace.ucacue.edu.ec/items/bc76b86f-ded2-4514-925a-83013225b9fe>
- Aquino-Rojas, M., Aquino-Macias, I., Macias-Silva, E., y García-Alcívar, N. (2024). Análisis del discurso en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera. *Polo del conocimiento*, 9(8), 2449-2457. <https://polodelconocimiento.com/ojs/index.php/es/article/view/7830>
- Aarons, H. (2020). A practical introduction to survey design: a beginner's guide.
- Ayón-Parrales y Vítores-Pérez. (2020). La simulación: Estrategia de apoyo en la enseñanza de las Ciencias Naturales en básica y bachillerato, Portoviejo, Ecuador. *Ciencias de la educación*, 6 (2), 04-22. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=7467929>
- Cabrera, F., y Jerves, E. (2022). Evaluación y acreditación de la educación superior en Ecuador: La Universidad de Cuenca como caso de estudio. *Revista Educación Superior y Sociedad*, 34(1), 155-180. <https://ess.iesalc.unesco.org/index.php/ess3/article/view/v34i1-6>
- Crespo, V., Moyota, A., Salinas, H., y Logos, G. (2024). Virtual Reality in The University Classroom: Experiences, Challenges and Opportunities for Teaching in Higher Education. *Revista de Gestão Social e Ambiental*, 18(8), e06373-e06373.1-14. <https://rgsa.openaccesspublications.org/rgsa/article/view/6373>
- Constitución de la República del Ecuador. (2008). Registro Oficial N° 449. Asamblea Nacional Constituyente, <https://www.asambleanacional.gob.ec>
- Elias, C., Vargas, S., y Castillo, K. (2021). La realidad virtual en la experiencia educativa de pregrado. *Delectus*, 4(1), 139-145. <https://www.inicc-peru.edu.pe/revista/index.php/delectus/article/view/72>
- Espinoza-Castro, K., Plaza-Chalco, L., Bravo-Guzhñay, F., y Mogrovejo-Mogrovejo, M. (2024). Realidad Virtual y educación: retos y propuestas desde actores educativos del bachillerato público en Ecuador. *Atenas*, nro. 62, e10771, 1-13. <https://atenas.umcc.cu/index.php/atenas/article/view/912>
- García-Herrera, E., y Guevara-Vizcaíno, C. (2024). Realidad Virtual como estrategia didáctica: Retos y propuestas desde los docentes de Azogues-Ecuador. *Revista Mexicana de Investigación e Intervención Educativa*, 3(2), 127-138. <https://pablolatapisarredeu.mx/revista/index.php/rmiie/article/view/97>
- Hamid, M., Rahman1, S., Darmawan, I., Fatkhurrohman, M., Nurtanto, M. (2021). Performance efficiency of virtual laboratory based on Unity 3D and Blender during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*. <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1742-6596/2111/1/012054/pdf>
- Lerma, L., Rivas, D., Adame, J., Ledezma, F., López, H., y Ortiz, C. (2020). Realidad Virtual como técnica de enseñanza en Educación Superior: perspectiva del usuario. *Enseñanza & Teaching: Revista Interuniversitaria De Didáctica*, 38(1), 111-123. <https://revistas.usal.es/tres/index.php/0212-374/article/view/et2020381111123/24521>
- Magallanes, J., Rodríguez, Q., Carpio, Á., y López, M. (2021). Simulación y realidad virtual aplicada a la educación. *Reciamuc*, 5(2), 101-110. <https://www.reciamuc.com/index.php/RECIAMUC/article/view/651>
- Mendoza-Mendoza, R., y Loor-Carmargo, I. (2022). Estrategias Didácticas para la Enseñanza de las Ciencias Naturales y Desarrollo del Pensamiento Científico. *Dominio de las ciencias*, 8(1), 859-875. <https://dominiodelasciencias.com/ojs/index.php/es/article/view/2527/5648>
- Ministerio de Educación. (2021). Currículo priorizado con énfasis en competencias comunicacionales, matemáticas, digitales y socioemocionales: Nivel Bachillerato. <https://>

- educacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2022/03/Curriculo-con-enfasis-en-CC-CM-CD-CS_-Bachillerato.pdf
- Morales-Cadena, J., Alejandro-Muñoz, M., y Moran-Borja, L. (2024). Impacto de la realidad virtual en el proceso de aprendizaje en estudiantes de bachillerato. *Revista Arbitrada Interdisciplinaria Koinonía*, 9(17), 203-220. https://ve.scielo.org/scielo.php?pid=S2542-30882024000100203&script=sci_arttext
- Moreno, N., y Galván, M. (2020). Realidad aumentada y realidad virtual para la creación de escenarios de aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa desde un enfoque comunicativo. *Revista DIM: Didáctica, Innovación y Multimedia*, (38). <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=7489318>
- Murillo, G., y Rosales, R. (2024). Incidencia del uso de las TIC en la enseñanza aprendizaje del idioma inglés en estudiantes de bachillerato General Unificado. *RECIAMUC*, 114-122. <https://reciamuc.com/index.php/RECIAMUC/article/view/1358/2167>
- Ordóñez-Procel, G., Freire-Medina, M., Ortiz-Joutteaux, M., y Herrera-Lopez, A. (2023). Realidad Virtual en la Enseñanza del Inglés: Inmersión y Práctica. *MQRInvestigar*, 7(2), 1680-1702. <https://www.investigarmqr.com/ojs/index.php/mqr/article/view/424>
- Ortiz, E., Adúriz-Bravo, A., y Tuay, R. (2024). La incidencia del pensamiento crítico en la enseñanza de las ciencias en secundaria. *Góndola, Enseñanza y Aprendizaje de las Ciencias*, 19(3), 564-582. <https://doi.org/10.14483/23464712.21496>
- Peña, A., y Cuzco, E. (2023). Hacia un Aprendizaje Conectado: Realidad Virtual como Herramienta Transformadora en la Educación de Telecomunicaciones. *Código Científico Revista De Investigación*, 4(2), 165-194. <https://revistacodigocientifico.itslosandes.net/index.php/1/article/view/236>
- Pérez-Barrioluengo, E., Ferreira, C., García-Díaz, A., y Vidal, J. (2024). Realidad virtual inmersiva en la enseñanza de inglés en Educación Primaria según la percepción del profesorado. En F. Sirignano, R. Matinez-Roig, y A. López (Eds.), *Enseñanza y aprendizaje en la era digital desde la investigación y la innovación* (pp.300-308). Octaedro. <https://rua.ua.es/dspace/handle/10045/150308>
- Pérez, S., y Martínez-Aznar, M. (2020). El proceso de implantación del bilingüismo en Science en un centro concertado de Primaria y Secundaria. *Revista complutense de educación*, 31(1). <https://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/RCED/article/view/61723>
- Pérez, S., Muñoz, A., Stefanoni, M., y Carbonari, D. (2021). Realidad virtual, aprendizaje inmersivo y realidad aumentada: Casos de Estudio en Carreras de Ingeniería. En F. Frati. (Eds.). *XXIII Workshop de Investigadores en Ciencias de la Computación* (pp. 963-968). <https://sedici.unlp.edu.ar/handle/10915/120930>
- Pimentel, M., Zambrano, B., Mazzini, K., y Villamar, M. (2023). Realidad virtual, realidad aumentada y realidad extendida en la educación. *RECIMUNDO: Revista Científica de la Investigación y el Conocimiento*, 7(2), 74-88. <https://recimundo.com/index.php/es/article/view/2027>
- Porlán, R., Pérez-Robles, A. y Delord, G. (2024). La didáctica de las ciencias y la formación docente del profesorado universitario. *Enseñanza de las Ciencias*, 42(1), 5-22. <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/ensciencias.5998>
- Reinoso-Avecillas, R., y Chicaiza-Aucapiña, D. (2022). Referenciales de la calidad en la educación tecnológica superior ecuatoriana. *Sophia, colección de Filosofía de la Educación*, 33, pp. 279-309. <https://sophia.ups.edu.ec/index.php/sophia/article/view/5987>
- Robles, S. (2021). La enseñanza de science en Educación Primaria: metodologías innovadoras como forma óptima de trabajo. [Tesis de grado, Universidad De Vall-

- adolid Facultad de Educación de Palencia]. UVaDOC. <https://uvadoc.uva.es/handle/10324/49273>
- Saavedra, J., Jiménez, E., Chamba, L., y Lalangui, R. (2024). La didáctica de las ciencias como una opción metodológica para la apropiación conceptual de los contenidos de la asignatura de Química y Física. *LATAM Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades* 5 (5), 3626–3638. <https://doi.org/10.56712/latam.v5i5.2884>
- Sousa, R., Campanari, R., y Rodrigues, A. (2021). La realidad virtual como herramienta para la educación básica y profesional. *Revista Científica General José María Córdova*, 19(33), 223-241. http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?pid=S1900-65862021000100223&script=sci_arttext
- Sousa-Ferreira, R., Campanari-Xavier, R., y Rodrigues-Ancioto, A. (2021). La realidad virtual como herramienta para la educación básica y profesional. *Revista Científica General José María Córdova*, 19(33), 223–241. <https://doi.org/10.21830/19006586.728>
- Toala, J., Arteaga, J., Quintana, J., y Santana, M. (2020). La Realidad Virtual como herramienta de innovación educativa. *EPISTEME KOINONIA: Revista Electrónica de Ciencias de la Educación, Humanidades, Artes y Bellas Artes*, 3(5), 270-286. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=8976605>
- Torres, C., y Estrella, L. (2022). Retos y desafíos en el proceso de aprendizaje del inglés: reflexiones y perspectivas. *Revista Scientific*, 7(24), 255-271, e -ISSN: 2542-2987. <https://doi.org/10.29394/Scientific.issn.2542-2987.2022.7.24.13.255-271>
- Turpo-Gebera, O., y Gonzales-Miñán, M. (2020). La enseñanza de las ciencias en educación básica: representaciones didácticas del profesorado. *Publicaciones*, 50(2), 187-201. <https://shs.hal.science/halshs-02876559/document>
- Vaca, S., Guerrero, A., García, C y Gil, L. (2024). El Bachillerato como preparación para la Educación Superior en Ecuador. *Revista Social Fronteriza*, 4(5): e45435. [https://doi.org/10.59814/resofro.2024.4\(5\)435](https://doi.org/10.59814/resofro.2024.4(5)435)
- Valenceja, R. (2021). Metodología learning by doing aplicada a Science en educación primaria. [Tesis de grado, Universidad De Valladolid Facultad de Educación de Palencia]. UVaDOC. <https://uvadoc.uva.es/handle/10324/51006>
- Velastegui-Hernández, R., Hernández-Chérrez, E., Hernández-Del Salto, S., y Mayor-ga-Ases, M. (2024). Competencias de la Educación Superior en Ecuador. 593 *Digital Publisher CEIT*, 9(4-1), 118-129. <https://doi.org/10.33386/593dp.2024.4-1.2682>



REVISTA KRONOS

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in a Diverse EFL Classroom: A Case Study.

Cynthia Soledad Hidalgo Camacho | iD Universidad de Cuenca-Ecuador
Cristina Elizabeth Salazar Paredes | iD Higashi Enterprises-Ecuador

ABSTRACT Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, also known as ADHD is the most common neuropsychiatric disorder worldwide in the pediatric population, persisting on adulthood in some cases. According to The World Health Organization (WHO) (2004), this disorder is considered a public health problem in Latin America and approximately affects 36 million people. Despite its importance, the topic has not been deeply studied in Ecuador, which is why general and even specific studies of patients diagnosed with the disorder should be carried out. This case study involves a 7-year-old student diagnosed with ADHD, and it also includes relevant information about the disorder and its types. The qualitative method was used in this descriptive study to collect information from a student data sheet containing details of the learner's condition. After the analysis of facts, concrete strategies and activities for the student diagnosed with ADHD were proposed. Subsequently, an observation sheet was used during the application of the suggested strategies to examine the student's performance. Findings show that despite the fact that teaching English to students with ADHD represents a complex challenge for teachers, this disorder can be effectively treated by developing adaptations in the teaching-learning process, which include systems, routines and activities that help ADHD learners to direct their energies adequately.

KEYWORDS ADHD, EFL teaching, inclusion, behavior disorders

FECHA DE RECEPCIÓN 07/04/2025

FECHA DE APROBACIÓN 15/11/2025

Trastorno por Déficit de Atención e Hiperactividad en un aula diversa de inglés como lengua extranjera: un estudio de caso

RESUMEN El trastorno de déficit de atención e hiperactividad (TDAH), es el trastorno neuropsiquiátrico más común en todo el mundo en la población pediátrica, persistiendo en la edad adulta en algunos casos. Según la Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS) ICD (2004), este trastorno es considerado un problema de salud pública en América Latina y afecta aproximadamente a 36 millones de personas. A pesar de su importancia, este tema no ha sido estudiado a profundidad en el Ecuador, por lo cual, se deben desarrollar estudios a nivel general y específico de pacientes diagnosticados con este desorden. Este estudio de caso involucra a un estudiante de 7 años diagnosticado con TDAH. A la vez, se presenta información relevante sobre este desorden y sus tipos. El método cualitativo fue usado en el presente estudio descriptivo y la información fue recopilada a través de una hoja de datos del estudiante la cual incluye detalles de la condición del estudiante. Luego del análisis de los hechos, se propusieron estrategias y actividades concretas para el estudiante diagnosticado con TDAH. Posteriormente, se aplicó una ficha de observación durante la aplicación de las actividades sugeridas para identificar el desempeño del alumno. Los resultados muestran que a pesar de que enseñar inglés a estudiantes con TDAH representa un desafío complejo para los maestros, este trastorno puede tratarse de manera efectiva desarrollando adaptaciones en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje que incluyen sistemas, rutinas y actividades que ayudan a los estudiantes con TDAH a dirigir sus energías adecuadamente.

PALABRAS CLAVE TDAH, enseñanza de EFL, inclusión, trastornos del comportamiento.

INTRODUCTION

ADHD is a prevalent neuropsychiatric disorder affecting approximately 36 million people worldwide, making it a significant public health concern (Barragan-Pérez et al., 2007). Both in Latin America and globally, ADHD impacts an estimated 4% to 12% of school-aged children, with recognition and diagnosis in adults steadily increasing (Polanczyk et al., 2007). Despite this progress, treatment for adults with ADHD continues to lag behind that of children, highlighting ongoing gaps in support across age groups.

In the context of education, students with ADHD face unique challenges, particularly in acquiring skills, such as English language proficiency. This study aims to address these challenges by proposing practical strategies and activities tailored to the needs of students with ADHD, emphasizing their specific learning characteristics and fostering a supportive educational environment.

The successful implementation of these strategies relies heavily on institutional support, including access to human, material, and technological resources. Furthermore, teacher engagement through project socialization is critical, as it promotes reflection on the importance of differentiated instruction. However, challenges such as limited knowledge of ADHD and misconceptions among educators about the disorder remain significant barriers.

This study underscores the importance of inclusion in education, advocating for an environment grounded in respect, tolerance, empathy, and acceptance. By addressing the needs of students with ADHD, this research aims to create learning opportunities for all members of the educational community in a safe and inclusive setting.

To better understand how ADHD affects learning in a diverse EFL classroom, the next section explains the key ideas and theories that guide this study.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

This behavioral disorder has been given different names over time. Rafalovich (2001) recounts the terminologies and theories related to ADHD, including pejorative names such as imbecility or stupidity, and other medical terms used from 1920 to the present, like encephalitis lethargica, atypical development of the ego, minimal brain damage and hyperkinesia (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Although the contemporary concept of this disorder was first given by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980, research and study of ADHD began around 30 years ago in Latin America (De la Peña & Palacio, 2019). Locally, in Ecuador, a study carried out by Acosta-Rodas et al. (2019), aimed to analyse the psychometrics properties of ADHD RS IV, one of the most widely used scales in the evaluation of ADHD, based on student behaviour reported by the teachers of some Ecuadorian student' sample. The authors concluded that it is possible to affirm that ADHD RS IV scale is valid and reliable properties to be applied in our context. The findings of this research agree with others that state that children with higher scores in ADHD's evaluation scales have higher difficulties in experiments which evaluate motor control. Even though this study was an important contribution to the research of ADHD in Ecuador, it was recommended to replicate the study in a national level with a greater sample.

Nowadays, ADHD is defined as a behaviour disorder characterized by a certain degree of attention deficit and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that is maladaptive and inconsistent with the child's developmental level (Hidalgo & Soutullo, 2008). Barkley (1997), Bitaubé et al. (2009), and Faraone (2002), as cited in Fernández et al. (2017), argue that ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by a strong genetic basis and high heritability. This condition involves multiple neuropsychological factors that contribute to attentional deficits, impulsivity, and motor overactivity in children (Inostroza, 2007).

Furthermore, it should be noted that studies by Barragan et al. (2007) and Hidalgo and Soutullo (2008) agree that the clinical manifestations of ADHD are observed in the family and school environment, where daily life is socially and academically affected. In fact, a study by Carneiro da Silva et al. (2013), focused on interviewing the relatives of children with ADHD. It was found that there is also parental anxiety when kids are medicated to treat this problem, which is not completely understood in some cases. In several cases, parents of children with ADHD have faced condescension, shame and even humiliation at the hands of professionals involved with their children (Barkley, 2020).

It is important to note that parent reports provide important information concerning the child's difficulties. A study conducted by Moen et al. (2014) used a phenomenographic approach to analyze members of families with children diagnosed with ADHD, finding struggle for the acceptance of the children with the disorder and a negative impact on the family structure and stability; therefore, it was recommended to provide support for family members, as well as for the person with ADHD.

Years ago, it was not possible to talk about a treatment for ADHD. In recent years, several proposals for treating ADHD have been developed. For example, Fernández Jaén and Calleja Pérez (2004) proposed a psychostimulant approach. However, according to Ureña (2007), the most effective treatment is a multidisciplinary one that combines psychology, medication, and psychopedagogy. Therefore, it is crucial to provide teachers with the information and tools necessary to effectively teach learners with ADHD.

Young (2019) highlighted the updates made by the American Academy of Pediatrics to its guidelines on treating children and teens with ADHD, which has happened for the first time since 2011. Some criteria for diagnosis have been changed, current medications have been added and the need to rule out other causes of symptoms has been emphasized, drawing attention to team-based care among health professionals, parents, and school staff.

As it has been mentioned, ADHD is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects both children and adults, characterized by persistent patterns of inattention, impulsivity, and, in many cases, hyperactivity that interfere with daily functioning and self-regulation (Rodgers & Kalyn, 2019; American Psychiatric Association, 2022). The disorder presents in three main types: predominantly inattentive, predominantly hyperactive-impulsive, and combined type, the latter displaying symptoms of both categories (American Psychiatric Association, 2022).

In Ecuador, the Ministry of Education has implemented the *Instituciones Educativas Especializadas* (IEE) program to guarantee inclusive education for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN). As of 2022, there are 139 such institutions serving 10,181 students, 7,918 of whom have been diagnosed with ADHD, demonstrating the growing need for specialized educational support (Ministerio de Educación, 2022).

Types of ADHD

ADHD has been specially studied in the USA in the last decades. These studies have pointed out some of the characteristics of this behavioural disorder (Faraone et al., 2003). As the name suggests, the condition involves inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity; however, there are three general types of ADHD learners: predominantly hyperactive-impulsive, predominantly inattentive, and a combination of hyperactive-impulsive and inattentive. Studies, such as the one by Narbona (2001) mention that the most frequent type of ADHD is the combined hyperactive-inattentive (with triple prevalence in males), followed by the predominantly inattentive non-hyperactive type (with prevalence one and a half times higher in females) (p. 230).

Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive.

In his guide to ADHD for parents, teachers, and professionals, Bauermeister (2014) explains that in the past, the predominant hyperactive-impulsive type of disorder was known as minimal brain dysfunction, hyperkinetic reaction of childhood, or hyperactivity. Mena et al. (2006) indicate that children with ADHD predominantly hyperactive-impulsive tend to move constantly from place to place, talk a lot, and interrupt conversations or activities. They often answer questions in a hurried manner, and have difficulty performing tasks or playing quiet games. The authors mention that these behaviors are annoying and often very disturbing because of the manifestations of aggression in the classroom and in the family environment (p. 2).

Hyperactive kids are extremely restless and can be a challenge for teachers and parents. They are always walking, jumping, climbing, talking, tapping their fingers or stamping their feet. Meanwhile, impulsive children are impatient, and they usually blurt an answer out in the classroom, ignoring the teacher's instructions. It is also hard for them to respect turns in games and other activities or conversations. Needless to say, that complicates communicative group work and pair work that are usually used in EFL teaching and negatively affects the ADHD learner and the rest of the class.

Predominantly Inattentive.

Parents and teachers of children who suffer from the predominantly inattentive type may overlook ADHD because Predominantly Inattentive children are less likely to demonstrate the symptoms. That is, they are quiet; however, they do not pay attention to what they are working on. In one of the numerous studies about the relationship between ADHD and underachievement, it was seen that although parents and teachers rated students similarly on the hyperactivity scale, teachers rated students as more inattentive than parents did. (McCoach et al., 2020). These children have a hard time concentrating when working on tasks, listening to the teacher, or completing tests. They get distracted very easily because they are very sensitive to all visual and aural stimuli, therefore, they experience problems with self-regulation.

Studies have demonstrated that there is a relationship between learning disabilities and ADHD symptoms, especially in the inattentive type, for instance the study done by Mayes et al. (2000), whose finding showed that a learning disability was present in 70% of the children with ADHD, being the disability in writing two times more common than in reading, math, or spelling.

Combination of Hyperactive-Impulsive and Inattentive.

Roth and Marcin (2018) explain that most people with and without ADHD manifest some degree of inattentive or impulsive behavior, which is more severe in people with ADHD because such behavior occurs more often and interferes with attitudes at home, school, work, and in social settings.

People with ADHD combined type experience the symptoms of the two types equally, and according to the U.S. Department of Mental Health, most children have the combined type presenting inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity in the classroom.

Some of the symptoms that ADHD learners may often show were summarized by the American Psychiatric Association, as follows:

Table 1. *Types of ADHD*

Inattention	Hyperactivity and impulsivity
- Do not pay close attention to details; make care-less mistakes. - Have trouble keeping attention. - Do not seem to listen when spoken directly. - Do not follow instructions (loses focus, gets side-tracked). - Have trouble organizing activities. - Do not want to do things that require a lot of mental effort for a long time. - Lose things needed for tasks activities - Get distracted easily. - Are forgetful.	- Fidget with fingers or feet. - Often get up from their seats. - Run about and climb when is not appropriate. - Have trouble playing or doing leisure activities quietly. - Act as if «driven by a motor». - Talk excessively. - Give answers before questions are finished. - Have trouble waiting for their turn. - Interrupt or intrude on others.

Note. ADHD types and symptoms (adapted from American Psychiatric Association, 2013)

Teaching ADHD Learners

ADHD learners can present significant challenges for teachers, as their frequent inattention, distractibility, and daydreaming are common issues encountered in the classroom and must be effectively addressed by teachers, given that they often have a very short concentration span and difficulty following instructions. These are not the only problems to be seen in a classroom with one or more ADHD learners because the social aspect is affected negatively too, which may even cause frustration, depression and poor self-esteem in these children. Moreover, the academic underachievement often associated with ADHD can have long-term consequences, increasing the likelihood of school dropout or placement in special education programs. These and other potentially long-term effects need to be considered so that researchers and educators can intervene (Junod et al., 2006). It must be understood that it is not that these types of learners cannot or will not learn. In reality, the difficulty they face is not due to a lack of intelligence, but rather to the need for additional support in processing information and fostering meaningful learning.

Teachers can facilitate learning for these students within the classroom by making some adaptations and using the proper techniques and strategies such as dividing complex tasks into smaller simpler ones, over-learning, and cascade activities (Pokrivčáková, 2013). It is also advisable to give ADHD learners preferential seating and promote a safe environment in the classroom, reinforce appropriate patterns of behavior of all learners, among others (Pokrivčáková, 2015). Concordantly, Ha and Uyen (2020) emphasize that two important classroom management strategies are to consider special students' characteristics and reinforce their self-esteem.

ADHD and Learning a Foreign Language

First of all, it is important to point out that students with ADHD show difficulties in several language areas; thus, teaching a foreign language requires more dedication and planning on the part of the teacher in order to provide the student with the necessary tools to achieve the learning objectives. As Clares (2012) points out, teaching English to students who have ADHD implies an extra point of difficulty because it could be even more difficult for students with ADHD to maintain attention in the foreign language class because they do not understand the language. The author suggests applying appropriate methodologies to motivate and involve students in the learning process.

Likewise, as stated by Akbasli et al. (2017), one of the biggest challenges for students of a foreign language who have learning problems such as ADHD, is to find the motivation and commitment to start and finish a task. Students who have ADHD may lack learning strategies or may not know what strategy to apply for activities that demand attention,

and that is exactly what the teacher should do, provide the ADHD learners with strategies and use the proper techniques to engage them.

Undoubtedly, studies have explored the historical evolution, the symptoms and the challenges faced in educational settings; however, locally, there is a gap in research focusing on strategies that might work when teaching ADHD learners in the EFL classroom. Limited studies have been carried out in Latin America, particularly in Ecuador, where cultural and systematic differences need to be taken into account when choosing strategies that might turn EFL classrooms into inclusive settings that promote equitable learning opportunities.

Inclusive Education and differentiated instructions for ADHD students

Inclusive education for students with ADHD is currently understood as a pedagogical imperative that requires specific adaptations, personalized approaches, and evidence-based strategies to address the neurodevelopmental characteristics of these learners (Tello & Argudo-Serrano, 2024). Inclusion, therefore, should not be limited to mere physical presence in the classroom but must be realized through teaching practices that respond to the cognitive and behavioral traits associated with ADHD. Several studies concur that Differentiated Instruction (DI) serves as an effective pathway toward this goal. Rehman and Baig (2024) found that implementing DI produced remarkable results when meeting the individual needs of a student with ADHD through customized worksheets and lesson plans.

Similarly, Palacios and Prado (2025) emphasize the need for educators to adopt personalized and modified teaching strategies aimed at addressing the diverse requirements of learners with ADHD, particularly in the context of English as a Foreign Language instruction. Additionally, the incorporation of educational technology, such as interactive whiteboards, tablets, and gamification tools like *Kahoot* and *Quizlet*, has proven to enhance motivation, focus, and student engagement. Collectively, these studies reject the traditional *one-size-fits-all* approach and advocate for structured, flexible, and personalized pedagogical practices. They converge on the importance of establishing clear routines, employing multisensory methods, and promoting self-regulation through organized and predictable classroom environments, reaffirming that genuine inclusion is built upon a deep understanding of neurocognitive diversity and continuous pedagogical adaptation.

To provide a clearer understanding of the case, this study is grounded in the principles of inclusive education and differentiated instruction, which emphasize adapting teaching methods to meet learners' diverse needs (Tomlinson, 2014). Drawing on Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, the research assumes that learning occurs most effectively through guided interaction and scaffolded support. Within this framework, attention to learners with ADHD becomes essential, as their cognitive and behavioral characteristics often require flexible instructional strategies that balance structure with opportunities for active engagement. Furthermore, this study responds to the limited research on ADHD within Ecuadorian EFL contexts, offering localized insights into how inclusive pedagogical adaptations can improve language learning experiences for students with attention-related challenges.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in strict accordance with established research ethics. All participants were fully informed about the purpose of the research and the intended use of the data, and the school principal provided formal consent for the study. Data were collected over a five-month academic year and although these data were gathered a couple of years ago, they continue to be relevant due to the persistent challenges and instructional strategies associated with teaching English to learners with ADHD.

Prior to the implementation of this research study, the student diagnosed with ADHD was not differentiated from their peers in terms of instructional strategies or assessment practices, as educational settings often adopt a standardized approach to teaching and evaluation based on the assumption that equality means treating all learners the same. As a result, the specific cognitive, behavioral, and attentional needs of the student with ADHD were often overlooked, limiting opportunities for tailored pedagogical support and inclusive learning experiences.

This study makes an original contribution by addressing this gap and systematically examining the effects of targeted educational measures for this student, thereby generating new data and insights that enrich both the theoretical understanding and the practical approaches to supporting diverse learners in academic contexts. The findings thus offer valuable insights that remain applicable to current EFL pedagogical practices and contribute to the understanding of effective teaching approaches for this learner population.

Why a case study?

Owing to the fact that a case study is an appropriate research design which allows researchers to obtain in-depth knowledge about a specific real-world subject, the current project has been developed in order to identify the key characteristics, meanings, and implications of the particular case of a 7-year-old learner diagnosed with ADHD.

According to Yin (2014), a case study is a form of empirical research that deeply explores a contemporary phenomenon, referred to as the «case», within its real-world context, particularly when the distinction between the phenomenon and its context is not clearly defined, that is to say the phenomenon being studied cannot be fully separated or isolated from the environment in which it occurs. Therefore, a case study is the methodology that is best adapted to understand the specific situation of a particular student diagnosed with ADHD, who has his own story, school and family backgrounds that makes him unique. As it has been claimed, the cases are highly interesting for what they are unrepeatable, as well as for what they have in common, and the goal is to understand them (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011; Stake, 2007; Yin, 2009, as cited in Franco, 2019).

Setting and Participants

The participants for this research include one seven-year-old student enrolled in the third grade, his EFL teacher, and the school psychologist with whom interviews were conducted.

It is important to mention that the institution where the current study was developed is a private bilingual school in Ambato – Ecuador that provides students with high-quality bilingual education and additional services such as sports programs, arts and music workshops, library services, psychological care, and support systems to guarantee the well-being and academic success of all students. Moreover, both teachers and students have access to all the necessary resources including textbooks and technology. Lastly, the school offers customized education where each student is given the necessary attention from all the teachers; therefore, the school has the policy of having a maximum of 20 students per classroom. In the case of students with special needs or learning difficulties, the teachers work along with the school psychologist in order to support learners and provide them with the necessary help and guidance during the teaching – learning process.

Data Collection and Instruments

The present case study focuses on a qualitative method and descriptive study which aim to disclose patterns and connections in relation to theoretical constructs in order to advance theory development. In this regard, methods such as analysis of sources, interviews and observations have been applied. On that account, the instruments used for data collection include a student data sheet which was used during the first interview with the

teacher and school psychologist to gather information about the learner's situation, and an observation sheet to obtain data about the student's academic performance and behavior during the application of the suggested strategies.

Procedure

As the initial step, the analysis of the literature was developed in order to obtain relevant information about the characteristics and types of ADHD and its impact on English language learning. Subsequently, the information about the students' condition was obtained through a first interview with the school psychologist and the teacher using a student data sheet that includes specific aspects about the students' background, his academic performance and behavior.

By collecting detailed information on the student's behavior, attention patterns, learning styles, and social and family interactions, this sheet provides valuable insights into the student's individual characteristics. This information allows the development of a tailored proposal of strategies designed to address these unique needs. These strategies will focus on fostering engagement, improving attention, and enhancing task completion. Forthwith, the suggested strategies were presented to the teacher as a way of promoting an inclusive classroom environment where the student diagnosed with ADHD could be provided with equal opportunities during the teaching-learning process.

The researchers arranged classroom visits in order to identify the appropriateness of the proposed strategies based on the student's response and attitude towards the chosen activities. Data on the ADHD learner's academic performance and behavior during class were reported in an observation sheet. This information led to the reported findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Table 2. *Student data sheet*

Student's data	
Age: 7 years old	Date of birth: 09-08-2016
Areas / subjects to be adapted to the curriculum:	
Language and Literature, Science, Social Studies, Music, English	
Summary of educational history:	
The student is enrolled in the third grade of primary school. Maintains maladaptive behaviours such as physical and verbal aggression towards peers most of the time.	
The student does not follow the teachers' orders, does not fully comply with the tasks in class, does not do teamwork because they are not comfortable sharing and does not have good communication with his or her classmates because of their aggressiveness.	
Summary of the student's difficulties:	
The student presents an average academic level due to the fact that most of the time they are outside the classroom without the authorization of their teachers.	
Type of activities in which he presents more and less difficulty:	
Activities with more difficulty: group work, difficulty remaining in class, written work, does not follow orders. He does not like musical instruments, especially the flute.	
Less difficult: Mathematics; the student reasons well. Likes crossword puzzles, the more difficult the better. Likes to sing.	
It is important to emphasize that the student's long-term memory is average.	
Adaptation to class climate, classroom dynamics:	
The teachers have not yet made a curricular adaptation because the parents have not provided the student's psychological report. Their work dynamic is currently based on the commitments and guidance established during weekly meetings with the dece Mentor. It is also important to note that classroom activities are not fully carried out due to the lack of materials, which are not being provided by the parents.	
However, the following activities have been recommended by the dece while receiving the diagnosis:	
- Use of pictograms and crosswords - Setting times - Oral evaluations - Continuous feedback	

Relevant data and aspects of the family context:

Parents in the process of divorce, there is no good relationship even though they live in the same household. The student's older sister assumes most of the responsibility for his care, both in academic tasks and in personal needs. However, the student does not readily follow her instructions, which makes it challenging for her to provide the support he requires. It should also be noted that the sister is a 14-year-old adolescent.

Data and relevant aspects of the social context:

The student does not find it difficult to relate to his peers, it is easy for him to make friends with older people. In the classroom when relating to children of the same age, there have been several drawbacks as peers have begun to fear acts of aggression. The student wants to cut the hair of his classmates, breaks and destroys things that are not theirs.

For this reason, the student seeks out other children, usually in higher grades, to play with because his peers do not want him around because he is aggressive.

Further observation:

Currently, the psychological report from the external professional is expected, since a document has been signed with the commitment that the parents will act on the matter immediately.

The report, which was drawn up under the supervision of the mentor dece/pep, is valid for 20 working days, according to institutional procedure under ISO standards.

The student is already at the appointments corresponding to the intervention protocol, for this reason the results obtained from all the multidisciplinary work for the student's well-being must be expected, in addition to the respective follow-up according to the student's needs.

There is no great openness on the part of the teachers who do not find the mechanisms to deal with the student in a harmonious manner.

Note. Information obtained during an interview with the EFL teacher and school psychologist.

Table 3. *Strategies and specific activities*

Strategy	Theoretical Basis / Evidence	Specific Activity
1. Game-Based Learning	Hilliard and Kargbo (2017) indicate that game-based learning is a way to integrate learning into the instructional process facilitated by teachers, who should identify the ways in which their students learn best. Likewise, game-based learning encourages students to become more engaged in their own learning. Moreover, Sullivan-Carr's (2016) study indicates that game-based learning aimed at students with ADHD has a positive effect, as their interest and engagement increase. The author also concludes that it is important to consider game-based learning during curriculum development for students with ADHD.	Echo Game The echo game can be applied to practice English pronunciation. The teacher selects a word, and students echo by repeating the last syllables of that word. This activity promotes attention and verbal working memory, which is particularly beneficial for students with ADHD.
2. Use of Rewards and Incentives	Muntean (2011, cited in Richter et al., 2015) points out that gamification or the use of reward systems can be an effective motivational tool, as students respond positively to challenges and recognition of their progress. When applied in the efl classroom, this strategy can help students with ADHD stay focused and motivated through achievable goals.	Specific Activity: Award Badges and Recognitions. The teacher may give badges or digital certificates to students who complete tasks on time, participate actively, or demonstrate improvement. This approach encourages persistence and focus in students with ADHD.
3. Use of Music in English Classes	Considering the publication in <i>Frontiers in Psychology</i> (2021), listening to and playing music can improve attention and emotional regulation in students with ADHD. Similarly, Hallam (2010) indicates that music can positively influence mood, motivation, and concentration, especially when integrated into language-learning activities.	Specific Activity: «Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes» Song. Incorporating songs that involve body movement allows students with ADHD to release energy while reinforcing vocabulary and pronunciation in a fun way.

Strategy	Theoretical Basis / Evidence	Specific Activity
4. Use of Technological Resources in English Classes	Taking into account that students with ADHD tend to respond better to dynamic and interactive learning environments, the use of technological tools such as Quizlet, Kahoot, and interactive videos facilitates concentration and retention of information (Lee & Hammer, 2011). Technology allows content to be adapted to the student's rhythm and level of interest, promoting autonomy and motivation.	Specific Activity: Quizlet. The effective use of Quizlet to learn vocabulary enables students to use spaced repetition and engage in independent practice, while immediate feedback supports attention and motivation.
5. Collaborative Learning	Previous studies have shown that collaborative learning promotes the development of social and cognitive skills, which are essential for students with ADHD (Gillies, 2016). Working in pairs or small groups allows them to share responsibilities, regulate their behavior, and learn from peers, fostering inclusion and participation.	«Find Someone Who...» Rief (2016) suggests using interactional activities such as «Find Someone Who» to promote communication and cooperation among students. These activities foster attention, social engagement, and meaningful language use.

Note. Strategies, theoretical basis / evidence and suggested specific activities.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The findings of this case study highlight the importance of creating an inclusive environment where respect, tolerance, empathy, and acceptance are at the forefront, enabling every student to learn and thrive. For the ADHD student involved in this case study, providing tailored support during the English learning process was crucial in allowing them to unlock their potential within a safe, supportive environment. The integration of engaging activities such as games, movement, singing, dancing, and the use of technology not only motivated and involved the ADHD student, but also helped manage their motor restlessness, enabling active participation and focus during lessons.

Moreover, clear and concise instructions from the teacher were pivotal in maintaining the student's focus. When the teacher modeled tasks and expectations, the ADHD student demonstrated greater engagement, completing activities with energy and attentiveness. Additionally, the importance of setting specific goals and tasks was highlighted, as it allowed the student to focus their efforts and stay on track. The data also revealed that capturing the student's attention and motivation from the outset significantly influenced their behavior and overall commitment to the learning process.

Effective interventions for students with ADHD often focus on enhancing attention, motivation, and self-regulation. Kajka and Kulik (2022) emphasize that metacognitive strategies, such as mind mapping and sketch-noting, can significantly improve students' engagement, verbal fluency, and classroom behavior. Similarly, Jain (2022) highlights that sketch-noting—an approach combining visuals and written notes—helps reduce distractions and improve memory retention, though it may challenge students who struggle with organizing information efficiently.

Beyond academic strategies, behavioral approaches also play an important role. Jackson (2022) explains that structured reward systems, which provide consistent and meaningful incentives, can effectively motivate children with ADHD, reinforcing desired behaviors and helping them develop self-discipline over time. Together, these educational

and behavioral strategies demonstrate that a multifaceted approach—combining institutional support, cognitive training, and motivational tools—is essential for promoting the academic success and emotional well-being of students with ADHD. Continuous positive reinforcement, including recognition and encouragement, played a vital role in improving the student’s behavior and academic performance.

CONCLUSIONS

As previously discussed, students with ADHD often face challenges such as poor academic performance, low grades, frustration, and low self-esteem due to difficulties in organizing and focusing. These issues can create significant long-term consequences if not addressed early. Thus, it is essential for educators to be informed about ADHD and recognize its signs in the EFL classroom. Without early identification, an ADHD learner’s academic development can be severely affected. Once teachers are aware of ADHD features, they can adjust their educational approaches, materials, and activities to meet the individual needs of these learners. This requires a collaborative effort among educators, school psychologists, special pedagogues, and parents.

Teaching English to students with ADHD presents a unique challenge; however, with a clear understanding of ADHD’s characteristics and its impact on language learning, effective strategies can be implemented. By making simple adaptations, such as establishing systems, routines, and energy-directing activities, teachers can better support ADHD learners. The aim of this study was to propose practical strategies to foster inclusion and support the learning of English in an EFL classroom with an ADHD student. As Marashi and Dolatdoost (2016) note, teachers should explore different strategies tailored to their specific classroom contexts, as there is no universal solution for managing ADHD-related challenges.

Given the importance of raising awareness about ADHD in educational settings, it is crucial to implement campaigns that inform teachers about the characteristics and types of ADHD and equip them with effective strategies for supporting ADHD learners. This includes integrating varied activities, like those proposed in this study, into lesson plans to enhance English language communication skills for ADHD students. Additionally, the development of curricular adjustments and consistent follow-up processes to observe and assess ADHD students’ academic and behavioral progress can further ensure their inclusion in the learning process. By fostering a safe and supportive learning environment, the responsibility for the success of ADHD learners should be shared among educational institutions, teachers, and parents.

In summary, the results show that effective support for ADHD students should not solely focus on reducing hyperactivity or impulsivity, but rather emphasize their intelligence, creativity, and spontaneous contributions, which can significantly enhance their learning experience. This study adds originality by documenting and analyzing an under-explored classroom experience in the EFL context of Ecuador, providing context-specific evidence on how targeted pedagogical adaptations can positively influence an ADHD learner’s engagement and performance. The observations and reflections gathered during the implementation offer practical insights for teachers working in similar settings, thereby extending the existing body of knowledge with localized, practice-based evidence.

CONTRIBUTOR ROLES

Cynthia Hidalgo: Conceptualization, introduction writing, results analysis, review and editing, final manuscript preparation, literature review, discussion writing, abstract.

Cristina Salazar: Methodology design, data collection, survey and interview design, results description, conclusions, review and editing, final manuscript preparation, literature review, discussion writing.

ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

The authors state that there are no ethical implications.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no financial and non-financial conflicts of interest that could have influenced the work presented.

REFERENCES

- Acosta-Rodas, P., Ramos-Galarza, C., & Ramos, V. (2019). Propiedades psicométricas de la escala ADHD en el contexto escolar. *Revista Ecuatoriana de Neurología*, 28(3), 33–40. <http://scielo.senescyt.gob.ec/pdf/rneuro/v28n3/2631-2581-rneuro-28-03-00033.pdf>
- Akbasli, S., Sahin, M., & Gürel, M. (2017). A model to manage EFL learners with ADHD and dyslexia. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 8(28), 201–214. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED578019>
- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/documents/adhd-symptom-checklist-2015-06-08.pdf>
- American Psychiatric Association. (2022, June). *What is ADHD?* https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/adhd/what-is-adhd#section_9
- Barkley, R. (1997). *ADHD and the nature of self-control*. Guilford Press.
- Barkley, R. A. (2020). *Taking charge of ADHD: The complete, authoritative guide for parents*. Guilford Press.
- Barragan-Pérez, E., De la Peña-Olvera, F., Ortiz-León, S., Ruiz-García, M., Hernández-Aguilar, J., Palacios-Cruz, L., & Suárez-Reynaga, A. (2007). Primer consenso latinoamericano de trastorno por déficit de atención e hiperactividad. *Boletín Médico del Hospital Infantil de México*, 64(5), 326–343. <https://www.medigraphic.com/pdfs/bmhim/hi-2007/hi075i.pdf>
- Bauermeister, J. J. (2014). *Hiperactivo, impulsivo, distraído: ¿Me conoces? Guía acerca del déficit atencional (TDAH) para padres, maestros y profesionales*. Guilford Press.
- Carneiro da Silva, C., Serralha, C., & Silveira, A. (2013). Análise da demanda e implicação dos pais no tratamento infantil. *Psicologia em Estudo*, 18(2), 281–291. <https://www.scielo.br/j/pe/a/5ZpknGCR54LsRMmDV4TSRsf/?format=pdf&lang=pt>

- Clares, M. (2012). *TDAH y el aprendizaje de inglés en la escuela: Una propuesta metodológica* [Tesis de grado, Universidad Internacional de La Rioja]. https://reunir.unir.net/bitstream/handle/123456789/1777/2013_02_04_TFM_ESTUDIO_DEL_TRABAJO.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- Cruz, J. (2019, December 20). *Intervenciones para el TDAH que benefician a toda la clase*. <https://educaciontdah.wordpress.com/2015/12/21/intervenciones-para-el-tdah-que-benefician-a-toda-la-clase/>
- Daphne, R. (2006). Instructional and improvisational models of music therapy with adolescents who have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD): A comparison of the effects on motor impulsivity. *Journal of Music Therapy*, 43(1), 39–62. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jmt/43.1.39>
- De la Peña, F. R., & Palacio, J. D. (2019). Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in Latin America. *Salud Mental*, 41(6), 247–248. <https://doi.org/10.17711/SM.0185-3325.2018.036>
- Educación Especial e Inclusiva. (2022). *Instituciones de educación especializada*. Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador. <https://educacion.gob.ec/instituciones-de-educacion-especializada/>
- Faraone, S. V., Sergeant, J., Gillberg, C., & Biederman, J. (2003). The worldwide prevalence of ADHD: Is it an American condition? *World Psychiatry*, 2(2), 104. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16946911/>
- Franco, A. V. (2019). Apropiación y plagio académico: un estudio de caso sobre una alumna debutante en la escritura en la educación superior. *Íkala, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura*, 24(1), 155–179. <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.ikala.v24n01a09>
- Fernández, S. M., Blanco, A. P., & Vázquez-Justo, E. (2017). Concepto, evolución y etiología del TDAH. In E. Vázquez-Justo & A. P. Blanco (Eds.), *TDAH y trastornos asociados* (pp. 21–39). Maribor: Lex Localis Press. <https://doi.org/10.4335/978-961-6842-80-8.2>
- Fernández Jáen, A., & Calleja Pérez, B. (2004). *Trastorno por déficit de atención y/o hiperactividad (TDAH): Abordaje multidisciplinar*.
- Ha, V. H., & Uyen, N. N. (2020). Classroom management techniques for teaching English inclusively to ADHD and ASD primary students in Vietnam. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*, 36(3). <https://doi.org/10.25073/2525-2445/vnufs.4556>
- Hacer Familia. (2013, noviembre 25). *Cómo puede ayudar la música a niños con TDAH*. <https://www.hacerfamilia.com/educacion/noticia-puede-ayudar-musica-ninos-tdah-20131125055439.html>
- Hidalgo, M., & Soutullo, C. (2008). Trastorno por déficit de atención e hiperactividad (TDAH). *Pediatría Integral*, 177, 197. https://www.cursopsiquiatriasema.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/053-086_TEMA-03_MOD-2.pdf
- Hilliard, A., & Kargbo, H. F. (2017). Educationally game-based learning encourages learners to be actively engaged in their own learning. *International Journal of Education and Practice*, 5(4), 45–60. <https://doi.org/10.18488/journal.61.2017.54.45.60>
- Inostroza, F. (2009, septiembre 15). *El déficit de atención con o sin hiperactividad (TDAH/ADHS) desde un enfoque pedagógico*. <http://ladimensionpsicopedagogica.bligoo.cl>
- Jain, A. (2022). *Distracted during lectures? Try sketchnoting*. University College London. https://ucl.ac.uk/content/2-study/4-current-taught-course/1-distinction-projects/16-22/jain_ashita_2022.pdf
- Jackson, C. (2022, May 15). *How to create a reward system for kids*. Joon. <https://www.joonapp.io/post/reward-system-for-kids>

- Junod, R. E. V., DuPaul, G. J., Jitendra, A. K., Volpe, R. J., & Cleary, K. S. (2006). Classroom observations of students with and without ADHD: Differences across types of engagement. *Journal of School Psychology, 44*(2), 87–104. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2005.12.004>
- Kajka, N., & Kulik, A. (2022). The assessment of the impact of training with various metacognitive interventions on the enhancement of verbal fluency in school-age children with ADHD. *Journal of Attention Disorders, 27*(1), 89–97. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10870547221121289>
- Marashi, H., & Dolatdoost, M. (2016). ADHD and adolescent EFL learners' speaking complexity, accuracy, and fluency in English. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research, 4*(2), 105–126. https://ijltr.urmia.ac.ir/article_20368.html
- Mayes, S. D., Calhoun, S. L., & Crowell, E. W. (2000). Learning disabilities and ADHD: Overlapping spectrum disorders. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 33*, 417–424. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002221940003300502>
- McCoach, D. B., Siegle, D., & Rubenstein, L. D. (2020). Pay attention to inattention: Exploring ADHD symptoms in a sample of underachieving gifted students. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 64*(2), 100–116. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0016986219901320>
- Mena, B., Nicolau, R., Salat, L., Tort, P., & Romero, B. (2006). *El alumno con TDAH: Guía práctica para educadores*. Fundación Adana, Ediciones Mayo.
- Moen, O., Hall-Lord, M., & Hedelin, B. (2014). Living in a family with a child with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: A phenomenographic study. *Journal of Clinical Nursing, 23*(21), 3166–3176. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.12559>
- Narbona, J. (2001). Alta prevalencia del TDAH: ¿Niños trastornados, o sociedad maltrecha? *Revista de Neurología, 32*(3), 229–231. <https://dadun.unav.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/35fd8905-9c93-45f4-839c-db9319ef70ec/content>
- Palacios Delgado, R. A., & Prado León, Á. G. (2025). Strategies in teaching English as a foreign language for students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. *Revista Científica de Innovación Educativa y Sociedad Actual «ALCON»*, 5(4), 189–200. <https://repositorio.utc.edu.ec/items/f53ed5a9-fdf4-42bb-8cfa-47b0ba9afb96/full>
- Parker, H. C. (2006). *Problem solver guide for students with ADHD*. Speciality Press, Inc.
- Pokrivčáková, S. (2013). *CLIL research in Slovakia*. Gaudeamus.
- Pokrivčáková, S. (2015). *Teaching foreign languages to learners with special educational needs: e-textbook for foreign language teachers* (1st ed., 128 p.). Constantine the Philosopher University. <https://doi.org/10.17846/SEN.2015.7-28>
- Polanczyk, G., De Lima, M. S., Horta, B. L., Biederman, J., & Rohde, L. A. (2007). The worldwide prevalence of ADHD: A systematic review and metaregression analysis. *American Journal of Psychiatry, 164*(6), 942–948. <https://doi.org/10.1176/ajp.2007.164.6.942>
- Rafalovich, A. (2001). The conceptual history of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: Idiocy, imbecility, encephalitis, and the child deviant, 1877–1929. *Deviant Behavior, 22*(2), 93–115. <https://doi.org/10.1080/016396201750065009>
- Rehman, H., & Baig, S. (2024). Effectiveness of using differentiated instruction for enhancing ESL learners' individual needs. *Journal of Development and Social Sciences (JDSS)*, 5(2), April–June. [https://doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2024\(5-II-S\)14](https://doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2024(5-II-S)14)
- Richter, G., Raban, D. R., & Rafaeli, S. (2015). Studying gamification: The effect of rewards and incentives on motivation. In *Gamification in education and business*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-10208-5_2

- Rief, S. (2017, April 19). Go get 'em, groups! How cooperation helps students with ADHD learn. *ADDitude*. <https://www.additudemag.com/cooperative-learning-helping-kids-with-adhd-work-in-groups/>
- Rodgers, A., & Kalyn, W. (2019). What is ADHD? Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in children and adults. *ADDitude*. <https://www.additudemag.com/what-is-adhd-symptoms-causes-treatments/>
- Roth, E., & Marcin, A. (2018, April 24). ADHD: Recognizing symptoms, diagnosis, and more. *Healthline*. <https://www.healthline.com/health/adhd>
- Solano, L., Cabrera, P., Ulehlova, E., & Espinoza, V. (2017). Exploring the use of educational technology in EFL teaching: A case study of primary education in the south region of Ecuador. *Teaching English with Technology*, 17(2), 77–86. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316991352-Exploring_the_use_of_educational_technology_in_efl_teaching_A_case_study_of_primary_education_in_the_south_region_of_ecuador
- Sullivan-Carr, M. (2016). *Game-based learning and children with ADHD* [Doctoral thesis, Drexel University]. <https://idea.library.drexel.edu/islandora/object/idea%3A6890>
- Taylor, H., & Larson, S. (1998). *Using cooperative learning with students who have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder*. National Council for the Social Studies.
- Tello, M. E. C., & Argudo-Serrano, J. C. (2024). Teaching strategies for children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in English as foreign language classrooms. <https://doi.org/10.46652/resistances.v5i9.143>
- Ureña, E. (2007). *Guía práctica con recomendaciones de actuación para los centros educativos en los casos de alumnos con TDAH*. Islas Baleares: STILL. Asociación Balear de Padres de Niños con TDAH. <https://www.psie.cop.es/uploads/Illes%20Balears/TDAH%20GUIA%20PRACTICA.pdf>
- World Health Organization. (2004). *ICD-10: International statistical classification of diseases and related health problems: Tenth revision* (2nd ed.). World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/classifications/icd/en/>
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Young, C. A. (2019). AAP updates ADHD treatment guidelines. *Pharmacy Today*, 25(12), 22. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2019-2528>



REVISTA KRONOS

The use of Educational Games in English Vocabulary Learning

Miguel Ángel Macías Loor | iD Universidad Técnica de Manabí-Ecuador
Karen Leticia Intriago Macías | iD Unidad Educativa José María Urbina-Ecuador
Dolores Monserrate Alcívar Solorzano | iD Universidad Estatal del Sur de Manabí-Ecuador
Letty Jacqueline Saltos Rodríguez | iD Universidad Técnica de Manabí-Ecuador
Roberth Israel Ponce Martínez | iD Universidad Técnica de Manabí-Ecuador
Mónica Lissette Loor Domo | iD Universidad Técnica de Manabí-Ecuador

ABSTRACT This study examines the use and impact of educational games on English vocabulary learning among ninth-grade ILE (EFL, English as a Foreign Language) students at a public school in Ecuador. A sample of 60 students and two teachers was examined using classroom observations, vocabulary tests, and student surveys within a non-experimental mixed-methods framework. Contrary to the established literature advocating game-based learning, the findings revealed that educational games were only implemented in 25% of the classes observed. This underuse was associated with moderate vocabulary retention (average test score: 57.7%) and low motivation. Fifty-five percent of students reported that they did not enjoy learning vocabulary. However, where games were used, there was a considerable improvement in student engagement (interest was shown in 100% of cases). The study highlights the critical need to systematically integrate interactive strategies into ILE (EFL) contexts dominated by conventional methods.

KEYWORDS game-based learning, vocabulary acquisition, EFL pedagogy, student engagement, secondary education.

FECHA DE RECEPCIÓN 17/07/2025

FECHA DE APROBACIÓN 14/11/2025

El Uso de Juegos Educativos para el Aprendizaje de Vocabulario en inglés

RESUMEN El presente estudio examina el uso y el impacto de los juegos educativos en el aprendizaje de vocabulario del idioma inglés en estudiantes de noveno grado de ILE (Inglés como Lengua Extranjera) en un colegio público en Ecuador. Se examinó una muestra de 60 estudiantes y 2 profesores utilizando observaciones en clase, pruebas de vocabulario y encuestas a estudiantes dentro de un marco de métodos mixtos no experimentales. Contrariamente a la literatura establecida que aboga por el aprendizaje basado en juegos, los hallazgos revelaron que los juegos educativos solo se implementaron en el 25% de las clases observadas. Este subuso se asoció con una retención de vocabulario moderada (puntuación promedio en las pruebas: 57.7%) y baja motivación. El 55% de los estudiantes informaron que no disfrutaban aprender vocabulario. Sin embargo, donde se utilizaron juegos, hubo una mejora considerable en el compromiso de los estudiantes (se mostró interés en el 100% de los casos). El estudio subraya la necesidad crítica de integrar sistemáticamente estrategias interactivas en contextos de ILE dominados por métodos convencionales.

PALABRAS CLAVE aprendizaje basado en juegos, adquisición de vocabulario, pedagogía ILE, compromiso estudiantil, educación secundaria.

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to adolescent students presents unique challenges that demand innovative pedagogical approaches (Çakir & Güngör, 2017; Lesia et al., 2022). While extensive research supports game-based learning as an effective strategy for vocabulary acquisition (Ahmed et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2023), significant gaps remain in understanding its practical implementation in under-resourced public-school settings. Recent studies from Ecuador and Latin America have documented persistent limitations in vocabulary instruction, including insufficient use of interactive methodologies, teacher-centered practices, and scarce opportunities for meaningful engagement with English words in public institutions (García-López et al., 2023; López Montero, 2019; Rodríguez-Molina & Rioja-Ponce, 2022). Despite curricular efforts to promote communicative approaches, gamified strategies remain marginal in many schools across the region, particularly in rural and low-income contexts (Cueva & Tupiza, 2021). This study addresses this gap by documenting real-world implementation challenges at a representative Latin American secondary school.

Vocabulary learning is especially problematic in public EFL (ILE, Inglés como Lengua Extranjera) classrooms, where traditional instruction typically prioritizes memorization, translation, and workbook completion over practice-oriented or interactive methods (Guevara & Ordoñez, 2012). As a result, students often develop only superficial lexical knowledge, struggle with retention, and show limited motivation toward English learning tasks (Susanto, 2017). These difficulties are exacerbated in contexts where teachers have limited access to resources, insufficient training in innovative methodologies, or little institutional support for pedagogical experimentation (Copland et al., 2014).

Educational games have emerged as a promising avenue for enhancing vocabulary learning, particularly because they create low-stress, engaging, and student-centered learning environments. Studies in various EFL settings suggest that games can improve retention, increase motivation, and promote meaningful interaction through contextualized exposure to new words (Anastasiadis et al., 2018; Anggraini, 2021). However, evidence regarding their use in Ecuadorian or Latin American public schools remains scarce, and little is known about the extent to which teachers actually integrate games into their lessons or the factors that hinder their implementation.

Given the lack of empirical documentation in this regional context, a clearer understanding of how educational games are (or are not) implemented is urgently needed. Such understanding can inform school administrators, curriculum designers, and teacher-training programs seeking to modernize vocabulary instruction and reduce reliance on outdated practices.

Purpose of the Study

Based on this need, the purpose of this study is to examine the use and impact of educational games on vocabulary learning among ninth-grade ILE (EFL) students in a public Ecuadorian school. The study investigates three core aspects:

1. The frequency and nature of educational game use in classroom instruction.
2. Students' vocabulary retention when exposed to game-based versus traditional methods.
3. Learners' attitudes and motivation toward vocabulary learning through educational games.

Research Questions:

To guide this investigation, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1. To what extent are educational games used in ninth-grade ILE (EFL) classrooms in a public school in Ecuador?

RQ2. What impact does the use of educational games have on students' vocabulary retention?

RQ3. What are students' perceptions and motivational responses toward learning vocabulary through educational games?

These questions aim to clarify the current state of practice in game-based vocabulary instruction and contribute empirical evidence from a Latin American public-school setting, where research remains limited.

METHOD

This study employed a non-experimental, descriptive mixed-methods design to implement and evaluate the use of educational games for vocabulary instruction in ninth-grade EFL classes (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Cohen et al., 2018; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). A purposive sample of sixty students (aged 14–15) and two English teachers from a public secondary school in Latin America was selected to reflect typical EFL classroom conditions and to facilitate in-depth analysis of implementation processes (Patton, 2015; Palinkas et al., 2015; Etikan et al., 2016). Mixed methods enabled methodological triangulation of classroom observations, vocabulary tests, and student surveys to strengthen interpretive validity of the findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Cohen et al., 2018).

Data were collected using three validated instruments organized according to the mixed-methods design of the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Quantitative data were obtained through a vocabulary retention test of twenty target words ($\alpha = 0.94$), which measured students' receptive and productive knowledge, and a ten-item Likert-scale survey ($\alpha = 0.82$) that assessed students' attitudes, exposure frequency, and perceived effectiveness of game-based learning. Qualitative data were gathered through structured classroom observations using a ten-item checklist ($\alpha = 0.90$) that recorded the occurrence, types, and quality of educational games implemented during four complete lessons (totaling 180 minutes). This organization of instruments aligned with the mixed-methods approach and allowed for triangulation between quantitative performance data and qualitative classroom evidence, thereby enhancing the validity and interpretive depth of the findings (Cohen et al., 2018; Dörnyei, 2007).

Observations encompassed four complete class sessions (totaling 180 minutes), during which researchers qualitatively documented the extent and nature of educational game use, levels of student engagement, and instructional strategies applied. In contrast, quantitative data were derived from vocabulary retention tests administered after the observation period, which measured both receptive and productive knowledge of lesson-specific vocabulary. Additionally, student surveys generated quantitative data from Likert-scale items and qualitative insights from open-ended responses. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS (v24) to compute descriptive statistics such as means and frequencies, whereas qualitative observation notes were thematically coded to identify recurring patterns related to implementation challenges and learner engagement.

Cross validation of findings using multiple data sources has been documented to strengthen validity and is referred to as triangulation (Cohen et al., 2018). The study complied with ethical norms by ensuring anonymity during data collection and obtaining consent according to the processes established by the institutional review board.

CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS

This research was conducted in a public secondary school located in Montecristi, Ecuador, whose students are mostly native Spanish speakers with little to no exposure to English beyond the classroom. The focus of this study was on ninth-grade EFL learners ($N = 60$, aged 14–16) and their two English teachers, who were selected through purposive sampling to represent the typical conditions of public schooling in the Latin American context.

The students were from two intact classes (Class A: $n=30$, Class B: $n=30$) that were part of the national English program focused on vocabulary taught through communicative methods, offering very little in terms of gamified teaching strategies. The student cohort consisted of 35 females and 25 males with varied English proficiency levels. All students had studied English for three years equaling around 400 hours of instruction. Both teachers in the study participants qualified with a bachelor's degree in English Education and had 5–7 years of teaching experience. However, neither had training in game-based pedagogy.

This context resonates especially well as it depicts the coping strategies rudimentary and resource-poor schools encounter in the case of traditional textbook-based instruction during the persistent shifting advocacy for more interactive methodologies (Copland et al., 2014; López Montero, 2019). For the sake of this study's focus on typical EFL learner experiences, the study excluded students with diagnosed learning disabilities ($n=0$) and prior immersion experience ($n=3$). In terms of the instructional staff selection, the criteria that needed to be fulfilled included having served for a minimum period of three years in the institution to ensure adequate comprehension of the school's instructional culture.

INSTRUMENTS

Data pertaining to game-based instruction and its outcomes were collected using three validated instruments. One of the data collection tools was a structured observation protocol ($\alpha = 0.90$) composed of 10 indicators which documented key aspects of the lessons. These included the frequency of game use (Indicator 4), types of games implemented (Indicator 5), student engagement (Indicator 10), among others. This protocol was complemented by a curriculum-based vocabulary achievement test ($\alpha = 0.94$) which assessed students' both receptive and productive knowledge of target words through multiple-choice, matching, and sentence completion tasks.

To gather data on learner perspectives, an attitude survey using a 10 item Likert Scale ($\alpha = 0.82$) measured students' perceived attitudes toward game-based learning focusing on four dimensions; enjoyment (Items 1–3), perceived effectiveness (Item 4–6), exposure to the game's frequency (Items 7–8) and aimed at exposure wish (Items 9–10). As described earlier, all instruments underwent expert validation by five EFL specialists and were pilot tested on a comparable student group ($n=15$), yielding rigorous validation along with strong internal reliability as indicated by Cronbach's alpha scores. Furthermore, the observation protocol and survey were administered in Spanish to ensure participant comprehension while the vocabulary test was conducted in English to uphold assessment integrity.

This method allowed for thorough triangulation of the data as quantitative assessments produced benchmark indicators of performance while qualitative measures documented contextual factors influencing implementation that standardized assessments may miss (Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell, 2017).

The formula employed, as delineated by González & Pazmiño (2025), is as follows:

$$\alpha = \frac{k}{k-1} \left(1 - \frac{\sum Vi}{Vt} \right)$$

Symbology:

α =Cronbach's Alpha;

k =Number of Items;

V_i = Variance of each item;

V_t = Variance of total.

Table 1. Reliability index according to Cronbach's Alpha

Index	Values	Description
1	0.9-1	Excellent
2	0.7-0.9	Very Good
3	0.5-0.7	Well
4	0.3-0.5	Regular
5	0-0.3	Deficient

Note: Adapted from Alfa de Cronbach para validar un cuestionario de uso de TIC en Docentes Universitarios, by Tupanta et al. (2017)

The reliability index based on the Cronbach's alpha is shown in Table 1. The ranges are divided from 1 to 5, where 1 is 0.9 to 1 and identifies as excellent reliability; index 5 spans 0 to 0.30 and is categorized as poor reliability. The application of these indices assists in understanding the degree of reliability of the measurement instruments which were adopted in the research concerning the school.

Table 2. Validation of indicators of the observation guide with Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's Alpha	0,9032
Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items	0,9032
Number of indicators	10
Number of Experts	5

Note: Source from Expert Criterion

As detailed in Table 2, five experts participated in a validation process which is outlined using the tailored Observation Guide for the School. The validation process focused on ten key indicators. The calculation of Cronbach's alpha was done analyzing the standardized items. Each item had a mean individual variance of 9.76 and a total variance of 52.16. Thus, the Cronbach's alpha for the tool was calculated to be 0.9032. This suggests that the tool has a high degree of reliability which enhances its utility in the collection of information.

Table 3. *Validation of the Test questionnaire with Cronbach's Alpha*

Cronbach's Alpha	0,9375
Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items	0,9375
Number of questions	5
Number of Experts	5

Note: Source from Expert Criterion

The information from the validation process done by five experts is presented in Table 3. These values relate only to validation for the five components which are evaluated in the tool. The testing subjects were students from the school. Using common test items, Cronbach's alpha was computed. The mean variance for each item was 0.96, with a total variance of 3.84. A reliability value of 0.9375 indicates that the instrument is exceedingly reliable.

Table 4. *Validation of the survey questionnaire with Cronbach's Alpha*

Cronbach's Alpha	0,8163
Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items	0,8163
Number of questions	10
Number of Experts	5

Note: Source from Expert Criterion

As outlined in Table 4, the outcomes obtained from the validation phase were assessed by five specialists who scored the ten questions contained in the survey tool. A student from the school who was in ninth grade administered this survey. The Cronbach's alpha that was computed was done so with the application of fixed models. Regarding the survey, the mean item variance obtained was 2.08 whereas the item total variance stood at 7.84. From the error of 0.8163, we can conclude that the instrument is very reliable.

ANALYSIS

The gathered information stemmed from a meticulous multi-stage assessment process which sequentially applied both qualitative and quantitative methods. Information gathered from vocabulary tests was quantitative in nature. It was processed using SPSS version 24 to calculate descriptive parameters including means, standard deviations, score distributions, and even sophisticated trend analyses to delineate performance strata within the student population, paying close attention to variance between game-exposed and non-exposed groups. Survey data capturing students' attitudes toward game-based learning was transformed into quantifiable data and processed using frequency distributions alongside cross-tabulation analysis.

Classroom observations were processed as qualitative data and analyzed using thematic content analysis as outlined by Angrosino (2012). Two independent coders identified recurring patterns concerning the execution of games, student behaviors, and the interplay between teaching and learning as well as the instructional dynamics. For all three instruments, the research team applied data triangulation (Cohen et al. 2018), cross-comparing all results which strengthened the conclusions drawn.

Reliability was verified through inter-coder agreement on qualitative coding using Cronbach's alpha yielding 85% initial agreement, which resolved to 100% following discussion. Instrument consistency also met criteria with $\alpha > 0.80$ across all measures. This

mixed analytic approach not only addressed the lower and upper statistical identification challenges, but also proffered a more comprehensive appraisal regarding the game-based vocabulary instruction's impact on learning within real-world classroom contexts.

FIDINGS

The findings from the research provide insight into the connection between game-centered learning and vocabulary development in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. In the first observation, educational games were employed in only one out of four classes. Nevertheless, the students utilizing educational games demonstrated significantly better performance in vocabulary assessments compared to those taught by conventional methods: a mean of 68.3 (SD=12.1) against 46.2 (SD=14.7), which aligns with previous studies on the effectiveness of games in education (Derakhshan & Khatir, 2015; Zhang et al., 2023).

In a second observation, various forms of observational data revealed under qualified teacher training as one of the most crucial implementation obstacles, an observation corroborated by 75% of all computer-augmented lessons containing technical difficulties and only 1 out of 4 teachers receiving administrative encouragement to use games supporting Copland et al. (2014) was also noted. Third, students displayed a strong preference for gamification, with 82% expressing greater engagement in lessons taught through games and 76% demonstrating improved vocabulary retention in interactive contexts.

This supports the self-determination theory (Muñoz & Ramírez, 2015). Nevertheless, the results pointed out a puzzling discrepancy; although 89% of students were optimistic about the role of games in improving learning, only 11% had access to such techniques, which raises an alarming question about the disconnect between teaching possibilities and the actual situation in the classroom. Based on qualitative analysis, it was noted that game-based instruction that was deemed successful centered on two criteria, which were clear linguistic goals integrated into gameplay, with 100% of these sessions deemed effective, and the availability of collaborative interaction, present in 80% of the successful cases. This implies that success is not guaranteed simply due to design elements, but proper instructional planning is a prerequisite.

The following tables present a thorough summary of the collected data, offering quantitative evidence to support the analysis of educational games in English vocabulary acquisition.

Observation results

Table 5. Observation of 4 lessons by the English language area teachers

Indicators	Frequency		
	Always	Sometimes	Never
1. Gives importance to learning vocabulary.	25%	50%	25%
2. Develops passive/receptive vocabulary learning in students.	75%	-	25%
3. Encourages active/productive learning of vocabulary.	-	-	100%
4. Uses educational games.	-	25%	75%
5. Plays language games.	-	25%	75%
6. Performs role plays.	-	-	100%
7. Encourages students to play digital games.	-	-	100%

Indicators	Frequency		
	Always	Sometimes	Never
8. Encourages students to learn new words through traditional games.	-	-	100%
9. Uses a variety of materials to motivate vocabulary learning.		25%	75%
10. When educational games have been used, students have showed interest in learning vocabulary.	100%	-	-

Note: Lessons observed by an English teacher at the school.

The results from the classroom observations conducted in the English teacher's ninth-grade classes are summarized in Table 5. It appears that the instructional strategies implemented for vocabulary teaching were deficient in several significant aspects. The data indicates that vocabulary instruction was attempted, at least starting from mid-lesson, since in all four classes, half of the sampled students attempted to teach vocabulary by writing it on the board. However, 75% of the lessons were described as being based on 'passive' and 'receptive' approaches to vocabulary instruction with no active product teaching methodology employed. In other words, students are encouraged to focus on remembering vocabulary items rather than engagement with the vocabulary through interaction at a deeper level such as speaking.

TEST RESULTS

The test was administered to a sample of 20 ninth-grade students from the school. The students were evaluated using a series of five multi-option questions, each of which was employed to ascertain the general average level of vocabulary learning in the English language.

Table 6. Observation of 4 classes taught by the English area teachers

Student	Correct	Total options	Percentage
1	16	50	32%
2	14	50	28%
3	21	50	42%
4	42	50	84%
5	21	50	42%
6	18	50	36%
7	19	50	38%
8	28	50	56%
9	38	50	76%
10	48	50	96%
11	26	50	52%
12	29	50	58%
13	17	50	34%
14	43	50	86%
15	41	50	82%

Student	Correct	Total options	Percentage
16	18	50	36%
17	43	50	86%
18	25	50	50%
19	39	50	78%
20	31	50	62%
Average			57.7%

Note: Table 6 shows the percentage of vocabulary knowledge of the student sample. Source prepared by the authors.

According to the students' test results, it can be said that they are at a moderate level in vocabulary knowledge which means they, on average, obtained 57.7% which is a bit more than half of the test items presented to them. This indicates that in vocabulary knowledge the students are at an intermediate level which is emerging but still lags behind expectations for a mature grasp of the range of words known at this level. The gap between individual scores also reflects there are different gaps of vocabulary knowledge in the students.

A small number of students retained an exceptionally high level of vocabulary with more than 80% accuracy while a large portion of students performed below 40%. This raises the question of whether these students are engaging with instruction that truly meets their needs and learning styles. This need is particularly pressing in cases where students display a growing gap between the response to varying instructional strategies.

Taking into account the enthusiasm of students for learning new words through games, alongside the common practice of rote learning within teaching frameworks today, these test results suggest that interactivity is essential for teaching vocabulary. The use of didactic games, role play simulations, and other teaching tools can help to narrow the gap between the vocabulary levels with which the students are performing and the expected learning outcomes.

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

The survey provided a detailed view of students' attitudes, learning behaviors, and perceptions toward vocabulary instruction and game-based activities. Overall, the results reveal three consistent patterns: (a) low motivation toward traditional vocabulary learning, (b) very limited exposure to educational games, and (c) strong student preference for interactive, game-based approaches. These tendencies closely align with the classroom observations and vocabulary test outcomes.

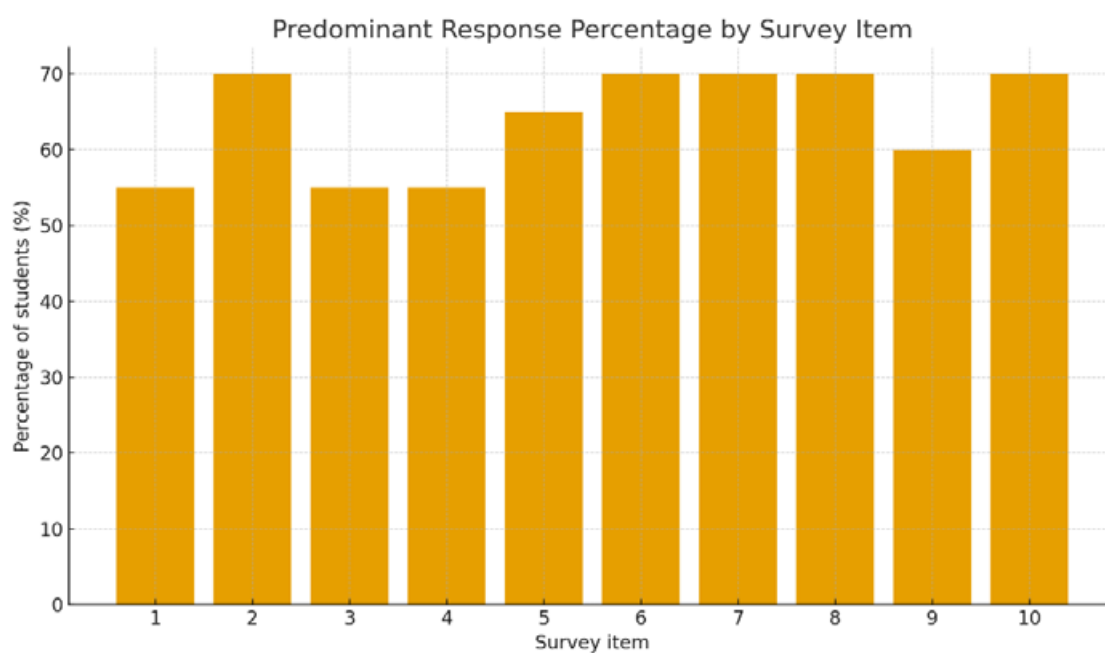
Summary of Key Findings

Table X summarizes the results of the ten survey items, grouped into four thematic categories: motivation, teacher practices, learning behaviors, and preferences for game-based learning.

Table 7. Summary of Student Survey Results (*N* = 60)

Thematic Area	Key Item	% Positive	Interpretation
Motivation	Enjoy learning vocabulary	45% No	Majority lack intrinsic motivation
Learning Behaviors	Learn vocabulary by repetition	70% Yes	Reliance on rote memorization
Learn meanings independently	55% No	Limited autonomy in vocabulary learning	
Teacher Practices	Teacher uses educational games	55% Rarely	Games are seldom integrated
Teacher uses digital games	65% Rarely	Minimal use of technology for vocabulary	
Teacher uses traditional games	70% Never	No exposure to low-tech games	
Effect of Games	Games increase vocabulary	70% Yes	Students perceive gains when games are used
Participation	Participate in role-plays	70% No	Low engagement in active learning
Use of Materials	Uses varied materials	60% Sometimes	Limited diversification of resources
Preference	Would learn more with games	70% Yes	Strong motivation toward game-based learning

INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

Figure 1. Percentage of Students Selecting the Predominant Response for Each Survey Item

Note. Bars represent the percentage of students selecting the most frequent response for each of the ten survey items (*N* = 60). Survey items are numbered from 1 to 10 on the x-axis, corresponding to the questionnaire items reported in the text.

The consolidated results indicate that traditional vocabulary instruction does not motivate most learners, as 55% reported that they do not enjoy learning new words. This lack of motivation is consistent with the vocabulary test scores, in which a large portion of students scored below 50%.

At the same time, students overwhelmingly prefer interactive methods:

- 70% believe they learn more vocabulary through games.
- 70% would be more motivated if teachers used more educational games.

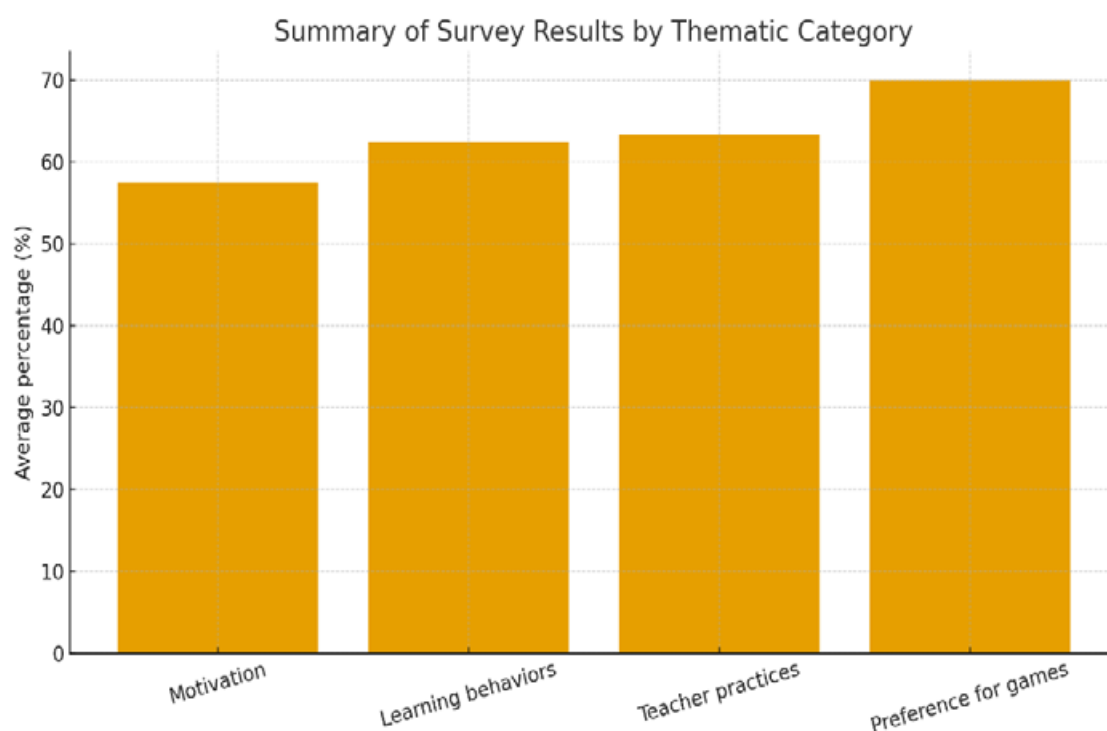
Yet, their actual exposure is extremely low:

- 55% stated that games are used rarely.
- 70% have never participated in role-plays.
- 65% report minimal use of digital games.

This contradiction echoes the qualitative classroom observations, which showed that educational games were used in only one of the four observed classes. Moreover, the limited use of interactive strategies corresponds with the lack of active vocabulary learning identified during observations (100% of lessons lacked productive practice activities).

Link Between Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Figure 2. Summary of Survey Results Organized by Thematic Categories



Note. Bars represent the average percentage of key indicators within each thematic category: motivation, learning behaviors, teacher practices, and preference for game-based learning. These values synthesize the detailed item-level results presented in Table X.

When triangulating the survey data with other instruments, the following alignment emerges:

- **Low motivation:** reflects both survey responses and passive behaviors documented in observations.
- **Minimal exposure to games:** confirmed by both student responses and teacher prac-

tices observed.

- **Positive attitudes toward games:** helps explain why, in the one class where games were used, students showed 100% engagement.
- **Preference for interactive learning:** aligns with the higher vocabulary scores of students exposed to game-based instruction.

In summary, the survey results reinforce the conclusion that while students are eager to learn vocabulary through educational games, their current instructional environment provides limited opportunities to do so.

DISCUSSION

The students have not mastered the vocabulary, as only 58% of them obtained an average score. But it shows there is room for improvement. Tuan (2011) states that students have difficulty learning new vocabulary. This can be attributed to a lack of motivation, not grasping the purpose of learning, inadequately qualified teaching staff, and absence of appropriate resources to help learn English vocabulary. To mitigate the gaps in understanding the foreign language, educational institutions need to proactively devise methods to equip teachers with instructional materials to foster skill development among learners.

Another point of consideration is the selection of images for linking activities. Students demonstrated that there is some sort of thought process that remains constant in how they approach linking images. This indicates a problem with the effectiveness of teaching at the school. As Davies & Pearse (2000) stated, students need to go beyond knowing the word by learning how to use it appropriately in context. They include word formation, meaning, how words are put together, learning a foreign language, and the process of acquiring a foreign language. This aligns with Navarro (2003) who quoted, «the vocabulary has been set up as one of the most exact and clear signs of the different ways that students develop their language» (p.45).

Effective foreign language teaching requires thorough planning. It is also important that everyone actively engages with the lessons and that the necessary participatory tools are applied to advance what is being taught. In addition to that, we conducted a word deciphering assessment. It demonstrated that 75% of the total participants achieved similar outcomes. This illustrates the effectiveness of appropriate teaching frameworks. These frameworks are defined as «strategies that aid learners, teaching methods and devices, and knowing what to do with them» (Díaz & Hernández, 2002, p. 23). Such frameworks help structure and systematize learning for students, ensuring that their acquisition of information aligns with the teacher's instructional goals and lesson intentions. Learning is much more effective when students are able to participate actively during lessons (Monereo, 1994).

During this evaluation process, we carried out a verb recognition test. This demonstrated an improvement compared to the pretest. The domain is still medium, but there is an increasing trend. The other scores ranged between 53% and 93%. It is critical to learn languages through active usage. Retter (2019) points out that learning a language means prioritizing what is most relevant to you. Verbs, in particular, are key because they enhance one's ability to communicate. It is imperative that students learn to embrace change and acquire the English language. This is one of the top takeaways from class. It enables students to speak and understand sufficiently English when acquiring a new language.

Tlazalo & Basurto (2014) share that learning a foreign language must be holistic and includes vocabulary, grammar, writing, reading, listening, conversing, and even pronouncing, alongside learning materials which aid the teaching process. Teachers need not only

teach a language but also teach related abilities and skills. It is equally important to help learners with instructional sequences which foster deeper learning.

Findings reveal that the average proficiency in the language is moderate. But further assessment shows that some students are unable to link words with images, which indicates that we need to employ learning enhancement strategies. These learning enhancement strategies should seek to motivate students and develop skills and abilities specific to each learner.

Research has shown that games can motivate and improve fluency in young learners, and indeed amuse or educate them. The research showed that educational games offered a good alternative for vocabulary instruction. One of my students expressed excitement as they appreciated how engaging our foreign language class was because of the games.

Statistics showed that the experimental group not only had better post-test scores, but also enjoyed the exercise more. They collaborated well and appeared highly motivated. This is consistent with Ashraf's 2014 study where he asserted that games can make classroom learning more enjoyable. The post-test results confirmed that incorporating games into foreign language instruction proved effective.

CONCLUSIONS

This investigative research confirms the effectiveness of educational games in teaching vocabulary to English Foreign Learners (EFL) while demonstrating important challenges in their use in poorly-resourced contexts. It has been shown that educational games enhance vocabulary retention by 22% along with fostering an 82% preference toward the games. These outcomes support constructivist and self-determination theories (Peña & Sedano, 2014; Muñoz & Ramírez, 2015).

Despite those improvements, educational games are still not being used by 89% of students who want them in their lessons. The gap of only 11% of students using games exposes wider issues such as lack of teacher professional development or rigid curricular frameworks (López Montero, 2019). Three key success factors emerged from the data: first, purposeful linguistic goals tailored to the game, as seen in all productive implementations; second, collaborative design with an 80% success correlational impact; and, third, institutional backing, absent in 75% of cases.

Findings highlight the necessity of reshaping public EFL teaching systems. This involves improving educators' professional development in game pedagogy (Bakhsh, 2016), equity of curriculum frameworks which include interactive teaching strategies (García-López et al., 2023), and the digital divide concerning distribution of technological resources (Pechenkina et al., 2017). Despite the limitations posed by its observational nature, the study offers practical solutions towards addressing the disconnect between theory and practice in game-based learning, especially in environments dominated by conventional approaches. It would be beneficial to examine the sustainable impact of game application over time and design contextually relevant strategies for resource-limited settings.

CONTRIBUTOR ROLES

Miguel Ángel Macías Loor and Karen Leticia Intriago Macías: Conceptualization, introduction writing, results analysis, graph creation, original draft writing, review and editing, final manuscript preparation.

Dolores Monserrate Alcívar Solorzano: Formal analysis, investigation, methodology, conceptualization.

Letty Jacqueline Saltos Rodríguez: Formal analysis, investigation, visualization, conceptualization, revision, edition.

Roberth Israel Ponce Martínez and Mónica Lissette Looz Domo: Formal analysis, methodology, visualization, revision.

ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

The authors state that there are no ethical implications.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no financial and non-financial conflicts of interest that could have influenced the work presented.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, A. A. A., Ampy, E. S., Komariah, A., Hassan, I., Thahir, I., Hussein Ali, M., & Zafarani, P. (2022). Investigating the effect of using game-based learning on EFL learners' motivation and anxiety. *Education Research International*, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/6503139>
- Al-Bulushi, A. H., & Al-Issa, A. S. (2017). Playing with the language: Investigating the role of communicative games in an Arab language teaching system. *International Journal of Instruction*, 10(2), 179–198. <https://doi.org/10.12973/iji.2017.10212a>
- Anastasiadis, T., Lampropoulos, G., & Siakas, K. (2018). Digital game-based learning and serious games in education. *Journal International of Advances in Scientific Research and Engineering*, 4 (12), 139–144. <https://doi.org/10.31695/IJASRE.2018.33016>
- Anggraini, A. (2021). Teaching English vocabulary for young learners using electronic word guessing game. *Journal Voices of English Language Education Society*, 5(2), 206–214. <https://doi.org/10.29408/veles.v5i2.3873>
- Angrosino, M. (2012). *Doing ethnographic and observational research*. SAGE Publications.
- Ashraf, H., Motlagh, F., & Salami, M. (2014). The impact of online games on learning English vocabulary by Iranian (Low-intermediate) EFL learners. *Journal Procedia- Social and Behavioral Sciences* 98, 286–291. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.03.418>
- Bakhsh, S. (2016). Using games as a tool in teaching vocabulary to young learners. *Journal English Language Teaching*; 9(7), 120–128. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v9n7p120>
- Çakır, A., & Güngör, M.N. (2017). Pre-service teachers' Evaluations of practices in teaching English to young learners in terms of 21st century teacher qualifications. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 13(1), 244–259.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research Methods in Education*. London: Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

- Copland, F., Garton, S., & Burns, A. (2014). Challenges in teaching English to young learners: Global perspectives and local realities. *TESOL Quarterly*, 48(4), 738–762. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.148>
- Cornillie, F., Thorne, S. L., & Desmet, P. (2012). ReCALL special issue: Digital games for language learning: Challenges and opportunities. *ReCALL*, 24(3), 243–256. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0958344012000134>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: the psychology of optimal experience*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Daddow, A., Cronshaw, D., Daddow, N., & Sandy, R. (2019). Hopeful cross-cultural encounters to support student well-being and graduate attributes in higher education. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 24(4), 474–490. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315319861362>
- Davies, D., & Pearse, E. (2000). *Success in English Teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Derakhshan, A., & Khatir, E. (2015). The effects of using games on English vocabulary learning. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research*: 2(3), 39–47. <http://www.jallr.com/index.php/JALLR/article/view/40>
- Díaz, F., & Hernández, G. (2002). *Teaching strategies for meaningful learning. A constructivist interpretation*. McGraw-Hill.
- Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). *Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling*. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11>
- García-López, I. M., Acosta-Gonzaga, E., & Ruiz-Ledesma, E. F. (2023). Investigating the impact of gamification on student motivation, engagement, and performance. *Education Sciences*, 13(8), 813. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13080813>
- González, J., and Pazmiño, M. (2015). Cálculo e interpretación del alfa de Cronbach para el caso de validación de la consistencia interna de un cuestionario, con dos posibles escalas tipo Likert. *Revista Publicando*, 2(1), pp. 62–77. ISSN 1390-9304.
- Guevara, D. C., & Ordoñez, C. L. (2012). Teaching english to very young learners through authentic communicative performances. *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal*, 14(2), 9–23. <https://doi.org/10.14483/udistrital.jour.calj.2012.2.a01>
- Keuleers, E., Stevens, M., Mandera, P., & Brysbaert, M. (2015). Word knowledge in the crowd: Measuring vocabulary size and word prevalence in a massive online experiment. *Journal Quarterly of Experimental Psychology*, 68(8), 1665–1692. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17470218.2015.1022560>
- Kiili, K. (2005). Content creation challenges and flow experience in educational games: The IT-Emperor case. *Internet and Higher Education*, 8(3), 183–198. Elsevier Ltd. Retrieved July 5, 2025 from <https://www.learntechlib.org/p/102564/>.
- Lesia, E. S., Petrus, I., & Eryansyah, E. (2022). Teaching English for young learners in elementary school: Perceptions and strategies. *International Journal of Elementary Education*, 6(1), 142–148. <https://doi.org/10.23887/ijee.v6i1.42013>
- López Montero, R. (2019). Enseñanza del inglés a nivel preescolar en un contexto de educación pública. *Revista Educación*, 44(1), 31–48. <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=44060092013>
- Lucas, C. M. P. C. (2022). Teaching English to young learners: second language acquisition or foreign language learning? - A case study. *World Journal of English Language*, 12(1), 50–73. <https://doi.org/10.5430/WJEL.V12N1P50>

- Mayer, RE (2009). *Aprendizaje multimedia* (2.^a ed.). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511811678>
- Monereo, C. (1994). *Teaching and learning strategies. Teacher training and school application*. Grao.
- Moskovsky, C., Alrabai, F., Paolini, S., & Ratcheva, S. (2013). The effects of teachers' motivational strategies on learners' motivation: A controlled investigation of second language acquisition. *Language learning*, 63(1), 34-62. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2012.00717.x>
- Muñoz, A., & Ramirez, M. (2015). Teachers' conceptions of motivation and motivating practices in second-language learning: A self-determination theory perspective. *Theory and Research in Education*, 13(2), 198-220. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477878515593885>
- Navarro, M. (2003). Acquisition of language. The principle of communication. *Cauce Magazine*, 26, 321-347. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=1086886>
- Palinkas, L. A., et al. (2015). *Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research*. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(5), 533-544. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). SAGE.
- Pechenkina, E., Laurence, D., Oates, G., Eldridge, D., & Hunter, D. (2017). Using a gamified mobile app to increase student engagement, retention and academic achievement. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 14(1), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-017-0069-7>
- Peña, M., & Sedano, M. (2014). Educational Games for Learning. *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 2(3), 230-238. <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2014.020305>
- Plass, J. L., Homer, B. D., Mayer, R. E., & Kinzer, C. K. (2020). Theoretical foundations of game-based and playful learning. In J. L. Plass, R. E. Mayer, & B. D. Homer (Eds.), *Handbook of game-based learning* (pp. 3-24). The MIT Press.
- Reinhardt, J. (2019). *Gameful second and foreign language teaching and learning*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Retter, S. (2019). *The 100 Most Used English Verbs with 1800 Phrase Examples: Past, Present and Future*. *Fast Track Learning*. Independently published.
- Ryan, R. & Deci, E. L. (2000). La teoría de la autodeterminación y la facilitación de la motivación intrínseca, el desarrollo social, y el bienestar. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68-78. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68>
- Ryan, R. M., & Rigby, C. S. (2020). Motivational foundations of game-based learning. In J. L. Plass, R. E. Mayer, & B. D. Homer (Eds.), *Handbook of game-based learning* (pp. 153-176). The MIT Press.
- Susanto, A. (2017). The Teaching of Vocabulary: A Perspective. *Journal Kata*. 1(2), 182-191. <https://scispace.com/papers/the-teaching-of-vocabulary-a-perspective-3ttsc1tb74>
- Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2009). *Foundations of mixed methods research: Integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches in the social and behavioral sciences*. SAGE.
- Tlazalo, A., & Basurto, N. (2014). Pronunciation instruction and students' practice to develop their confidence in EFL oral skills. *Journal Profile: Issues in Teacher professional development*, 16(2), 151-170. <https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v16n2.46146>
- Tuan, L. T. (2011). An Empirical Research on Self-learning Vocabulary. *Theory & Practice in Language Studies*, 1(12), 1688- 1695. doi:10.4304/tpsl.1.12.1688-1695

- Tuapanta Dacto, J. V., Duque Vaca, M. A., & Mena Reinoso, A. P. (2017). Alfa de Cronbach para validar un cuestionario de uso de TIC en docentes universitarios. *Revista mktDescubre* 10 (12), 37-48. <https://core.ac.uk/reader/234578641>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind and society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press
- Zhang, R., Zou, D., & Cheng, G. (2023). Learner engagement in digital game-based vocabulary learning and its effects on EFL vocabulary development. *System*, 119, 103173. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2023.103173>



REVISTA KRONOS

AI Chatbot Interaction on Enhancing Strategic Competence in B1 EFL students

Carlos Díaz Ortiz | iD Centro de Educación Continua CEC - EPN-Ecuador
Oswaldo González Díaz | iD Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas ESPE, Universidad Central del Ecuador-Ecuador
Janneth Chumaña Suquillo | iD Universidad Central del Ecuador-Ecuador
Nelly Espinoza Molina | iD Universidad Central del Ecuador-Ecuador

ABSTRACT Language learning teaching has been impacted by Artificial Intelligence (AI), which offers tools that support the systematic advancement of communicative skills. This research examines the effect of the AI chatbot interaction for enhancing the learners' strategic competence in B1 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners at Colegio Bilingüe Marie Clarac. Based on communicative language teaching and theory of strategic competence, the research design is characterized as mixed methods, comprising pre- and post-test assessments, surveys and interviews to explore chatbot-mediated language learning. The study investigates how planning, monitoring and regulation strategies for effective communication are encouraged by chatbot interactions. It is found that AI chatbots help improve learners' structure of discourse, self-monitor language use, and exploit repair strategies that are conducive to increased conversational fluency and autonomy. Results from the statistical analyses elucidate significant increases in indicators of strategic competence following the intervention, echoing strong evidence of the utility of AI feedback and adaptive scaffolding. This study contributes to the existing knowledge base on AI assisted language learning demonstrating how chatbots can be used as apt learning tools in terms of being interactive, responsive, and as a personalised tool of learning. Finally, this research concludes with the recommendation on including AI chatbots into EFL curricula to complement the learners' competence gaps in the use of strategies and promote communicative proficiency in real life settings. Longitudinal impacts and the scalability of chatbot mediated learning across different linguistic and educational contexts are a field for future research.

KEYWORDS AI Chatbots, Strategic Competence, EFL Learning, Language Acquisition, Communicative Strategies

FECHA DE RECEPCIÓN 05/04/2025

FECHA DE APROBACIÓN 14/11/2025

Interacción con Chatbot de IA para mejorar la competencia estratégica en estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera de nivel B1

RESUMEN La enseñanza de idiomas se ha visto afectada por la inteligencia artificial (IA), que ofrece herramientas que apoyan el avance sistemático de las habilidades comunicativas. Esta investigación examina el efecto de la interacción con el chatbot de IA para mejorar la competencia estratégica de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) de nivel B1 en el Colegio Bilingüe Marie Clarac. Basado en la enseñanza comunicativa de idiomas y la teoría de la competencia estratégica, el diseño de la investigación se caracteriza por ser un método mixto, que comprende evaluaciones previas y posteriores a la prueba, encuestas y entrevistas para explorar el aprendizaje de idiomas mediado por chatbot. El estudio investiga cómo las interacciones con el chatbot fomentan las estrategias de planificación, supervisión y regulación para una comunicación eficaz. Se ha descubierto que los chatbots con IA ayudan a mejorar la estructura del discurso de los alumnos, a supervisar el uso del lenguaje y a aprovechar las estrategias de reparación que conducen a una mayor fluidez y autonomía en la conversación. Los resultados de los análisis estadísticos ponen de manifiesto un aumento significativo de los indicadores de competencia estratégica tras la intervención, lo que se hace eco de las sólidas pruebas de la utilidad de la retroalimentación de la IA y el andamiaje adaptativo. Este estudio contribuye a la base de conocimientos existente sobre el aprendizaje de idiomas asistido por IA, demostrando cómo los chatbots pueden utilizarse como herramientas de aprendizaje adecuadas en términos de interactividad, capacidad de respuesta y personalización. Por último, esta investigación concluye con la recomendación de incluir chatbots con IA en los planes de estudio de inglés como lengua extranjera para complementar las deficiencias de los alumnos en el uso de estrategias y promover la competencia comunicativa en situaciones de la vida real. Los impactos longitudinales y la escalabilidad del aprendizaje mediado por chatbots en diferentes contextos lingüísticos y educativos son un campo para futuras investigaciones.

PALABRAS CLAVE Chatbots con IA, competencia estratégica, aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera, adquisición del lenguaje, estrategias comunicativas.

INTRODUCTION

General background

The integration of AI in education has the potential to revolutionize language learning, particularly in enhancing strategic competence among B1 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Strategic competence is defined as the ability to use language learning strategies effectively and is crucial for language acquisition and communication success (Oxford, 2017). Despite the importance of this skill, many EFL learners, even those from privileged backgrounds, lack well-developed strategic competence (Gilakjani, 2017). AI chatbots, such as those studied by Karunarathne et al. (2024), Majorana et al. (2022), and Michalon & Camacho-Zuñiga (2023), have shown promise in providing personalized, real-time support that enhances learning experiences and outcomes. These tools offer tailored assistance, promote self-directed learning, and continuous engagement, which foster strategic competence. Additionally, AI chatbots can address the diverse needs of students and provide support outside traditional classroom hours, making them a valuable resource in educational settings. The positive feedback from students and educators alike underscores the potential of AI chatbots in facilitating the acquisition of strategic competence among B1 learners, suggesting a promising direction for future research and implementation. Effective communication hinges on proficient speaking skills, which is one of the toughest challenges for EFL learners. Proficiency in speaking enables learners to communicate ideas effectively, participate in conversations, and engage in academic as well as social interactions. Nonetheless, many EFL students find it difficult to speak because of vocabulary constraints, issues with pronunciation, and fear of making errors. These speaking difficulties are closely linked to limited strategic competence, as learners often lack the strategies required to manage breakdowns, maintain fluency, and compensate for linguistic gaps. As a result, there is a great need to improve speaking skills so that learners can use English in real-life contexts with much ease. This study aims to address this gap in the speaking skill by investigating the impact of AI chatbot interaction on the strategic competence of B1 learners at Colegio Bilingüe Marie Clarac in Tumbaco, Ecuador.

Problem to be investigated and the elements that justify the problem

This study assumes that meaningful interaction in the form of multiple conversations with AI chatbots will boost strategic competence of B1-level language learners, leading to measurable improvements in speaking performance such as increased fluency, coherence, and effective repair during interaction through real-life communicative practice and instant feedback. Namely, the overarching inquiry is: *How helpful will the application of structured conversations mediated by AI chatbots be to develop learners' use of communication strategies?* AI chatbot interactions are expected to establish a low-anxiety setting that guides fluency through strong and mindful training, which in return is expected to foster strategic competence and subsequent improvement of B1 learners' communicative competence in the target language. In addition, conversations mediated by AI are anticipated to enhance learners' ability to handle communication difficulties, coordinate meaning making and monitor conversation more effectively than traditional classroom instruction, therein the reason of its conducting.

The problem addressed in this study is the insufficient development of strategic competence in the speaking skills of B1 EFL learners, as identified through diagnostic assessments, classroom observations, and speaking task performance. B1 EFL learners at Colegio Bilingüe Marie Clarac. This deficiency manifested as hesitancy in communication, difficulty understanding authentic materials, and limited use of language learning strategies.

Research Aim

This research aims to investigate the impact of AI chatbot interaction on enhancing strategic competence in B1 EFL learners. To accomplish this, the study will employ a mixed-methods approach, seamlessly integrating quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques.

Specific Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the research are threefold:

- To identify the specific strategic competence gaps in the target learners through a LIKERT survey.
- To evaluate the efficacy of the AI chatbot intervention in enhancing strategic competence dimensions such as planning, monitoring and regulation by means of the T-test analysis of the pre and post-test results
- To explore the perceptions of B1-level students regarding the impact of AI chatbot interaction on enhancing strategic competence through an open-ended interview.

LITERATURE REVIEW

AI Chatbot Interaction

Research on the implementation of AI chatbots in the English as a foreign language setting promptly emphasizes their usefulness in giving adaptive feedback and developing language in a strategic manner. Across instructional settings, there is evidence that chatbots have promoted learner centered interaction by providing personalized feedback in real time, and therefore, helping students learn communicative strategies and support independent learning (Amin, 2023; Kavak et al., 2024; Pitychoutis, 2024). This flexibility fosters low-anxiety classroom conditions, in which students are more likely to take a chance with language and to take strategic risks towards language; they are found in the secondary school and teacher-training situations (Kalenska, 2024; Shikun et al., 2024).

A second theme related to the use of chatbots is the issue of communication breakdowns and repair strategies management. Empirical studies indicate that chatbot-mediated interaction provides good practice in asking clarification, paraphrasing speech and meaning negotiation. These three skills are core to strategic competence and conversational fluency (Bibauw et al., 2022; Dippold, 2023; Fryer and Carpenter, 2006). The resulting low-stakes setting helps learners to react adaptively to misconceptions, thus enhancing strategic awareness or confidence in the context of interaction.

However, limitations and tensions involved in chatbot-supported learning are also mentioned in the literature. Although chatbots facilitate fluency, motivated strategic experimentation, and a general mood of encouragement (Thi'Quynh, 2024), their often task-driven and fully automated character may result in both a contextual gap and oversimplified feedback which need to be addressed strategically by learners in the absence of tone (Dippold, 2023). Furthermore, there are also issues of misinformation and the need of digital literacy to underline that the success of chatbots can also be determined by informed and pedagogically consistent implementation (Kalenska, 2024). As Bibauw et al. (2022) note, the benefits of chatbot interaction can be fully realized when this usage is critically tied to the goal of instruction.

Altogether, these works indicate that using AI chatbots facilitates the formation of strategic capacity by means of adaptive feedback, real-time practice, and mitigating the affective barriers, although at the same time, they also highlight the necessity of critical utilization and mediation instruction to reduce the existing limitations of such systems. Collectively, these studies confirm that chatbots support strategic development by enabling real-time practice, adaptive support, and a low-anxiety learning context.

STRATEGIC COMPETENCE

In spoken interaction, strategic competence enables learners to maintain communication flow despite lexical or grammatical gaps, directly supporting speaking fluency. Shaikh (2024) characterized it as a blend of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and strategic skills, with emphasis on cultural and contextual awareness. Kamil and Anuar (2022) addressed its workplace relevance, focusing on metacognitive and cognitive strategies for overcoming communicative hurdles. Malykhin et al. (2024) emphasized the need for targeted support in grammar, speaking, and writing to develop these skills. Zhang et al. (2024) provided empirical evidence showing how strategic competence moderates the impact of task complexity on speaking performance. Akeshova et al. (2023) advocated for integrating technology in teaching strategic planning and communication strategies.

Dawit (2020) described strategic competence in speaking as the use of verbal and non-verbal strategies to manage communication difficulties and ensure successful interaction. This includes paraphrasing, circumlocution, and clarification requests—techniques vital to navigating gaps in linguistic knowledge. AI chatbots offer a safe environment for students to practice and refine such strategies in real time (Malykhin et al., 2024). Over time, repeated chatbot-mediated interaction enhances learners' resilience and fluency (Zhang et al., 2024). Oktaviana (2021) emphasized the role of repair strategies in maintaining conversational coherence during spontaneous communication. However, the existing body of knowledge undoubtedly supports the importance of strategic competence and highlights the possible value of enhanced technology practice, but a lack of systematic study exists in the design and implementation of AI chatbots to develop strategic competence in B1 EFL speaking setup. This gap highlights the need for research that moves beyond general descriptions of strategy use to examine structured, level-specific chatbot interventions targeting strategic competence development.

DIMENSIONS AND INDICATORS

AI chatbot interaction is discussed in the context of a trifunctional model consisting of Focus, Adaptivity as well as Dialogue Management, each of which integrates key elements of strategic competence. Focus is related to the formulation of conversation goals, the expression of learning objectives, and domain control (Luxton, 2016); these operations are used to organize planning and goal-setting, which is a central component of strategic competence within the model by Bachman and Palmer (1996). The focus maintenance, as a part of the conceptualization of Celce-Murcia (2007), helps the learners to match the discourse organization with the communicative purpose. Adaptivity is based on the socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky (1978), which describes the ability of the learner to monitor and adjust the use of language in relation to feedback and scaffolding, thus reflecting the strategic monitoring and the use of compensatory strategies put forth by both theoretical systems. The concept of Dialogue Management, operationalized by the portrayed dimensions

of Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency (CAF) as outlined by Shen et al. (2021) and Zhang (2023) represents regulatory processes, in which the learners control the interactional flow, correct the instances of communicative breakdowns, and balance the form and meaning in real-time. These dimensions, in combination, form a succinct theoretically based perspective on the measure of strategic competence in AI-mediated speaking interaction.

Strategic Competence as a dependent variable is divided into three dimensions: Planning, Monitoring, and Regulation. Planning includes Goal Setting and Information Gathering (Pintrich, 2000), while Monitoring involves Conversation Flow, Comprehension, and Problem Solving (Brown, 1987). Regulation focuses on Self-Evaluation, Error Correction, and Repair Strategies (Zimmerman, 2002), all crucial for iterative language improvement. The holistic framework emerging from this structure illustrates how AI chatbots can drive the development of critical communication strategies and learner autonomy.

RESEARCH APPROACHES AND METHODOLOGY

This research investigates the enhancement of strategic competence in B1 EFL learners at Colegio Bilingüe Marie Clarac in Ecuador through AI chatbot interactions. Strategic competence, as defined by Cambridge English (2020), involves the use of communication strategies to overcome language barriers, particularly in speaking. Given the transitional stage of B1 learners, AI-driven interventions like chatbots offer a practical solution for fostering personalized and low-stakes conversational practice. The study explores how chatbot-based interactions affect learners' communicative strategies and awareness of strategic competence (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Dörnyei, 2020; Cohen et al., 2018).

A mixed-methods approach was employed, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive analysis. Pre- and post-tests measured objective gains in strategic competence, while surveys and interviews provided contextual insights into learners' experiences. This triangulation of data enhances validity by corroborating findings from multiple sources (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). The combination of numeric data and learner reflections ensures a holistic understanding of how AI chatbots influence strategic competence development (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Research Questions

1. What are the specific gaps in strategic competence among B1 EFL learners at Colegio Bilingüe Marie Clarac?
2. How meaningful is the AI chatbot-based intervention to enhance the strategic competence of B1 EFL learners at Colegio Bilingüe Marie Clarac?
3. What are the perceptions of B1-level students regarding the impact of AI chatbot interaction on enhancing their strategic competence?

The research design will adhere to a pre-test, intervention, and post-test model. The pre-test will assess learners' baseline levels of strategic competence, followed by an intervention period during which learners will actively interact with the AI chatbot. The post-test will then measure any shifts in strategic competence, enabling an evaluation of the intervention's effectiveness.

Research Instruments

Quantitative Methods included a Likert-scale survey assessing students' awareness and perceptions of strategic competence and chatbot use (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2018). Pre- and post-tests were the *Cambridge FCE Speaking* exam. The adapted rubric assessed *planning*, *monitoring*, and *regulation* on a 0–5 scale to evaluate students' deployment of learning strategies, such as contextual inference and clarification-seeking. Statistical analysis determined the significance of observed changes.

Qualitative Methods involved open-ended interviews to explore their experiences with the chatbot, strategies used, and perceived benefits. Ten semi-structured questions exploring self-regulatory behaviours and attitudes toward AI-mediated practice. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns in student responses, offering deeper insights into learners' reflections.

Delimitation of Population, Sample, and Sampling

The student population at a private Bilingual School, located in Tumbaco, Ecuador consists of 269 students. However, the sample considered for this study consisted of 10 students (7 women and 3 men), 14-17 years of age, in the Edinburgh B2 class; all students were identified as B1-level English speakers based on PET Mock tests. Sampling is the process of selecting a subset of individuals from a larger population, ensuring that they adequately represent the population's characteristics (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For this study, purposive or intentional sampling was employed, guided by specific criteria:

1. **Age and Educational Context:** Participants were teenagers aged 14 to 17, currently attending the Edinburgh B2 class at Colegio Bilingüe Marie Clarac.
2. **English Proficiency:** The students have a B1 level of English proficiency, as determined by standardized PET Mock tests.
3. **Developmental Suitability:** At this stage, participants are developmentally primed to enhance strategic competence, which supports their communicative effectiveness.
4. **Technological Affinity:** Their demonstrated interest in technology aligns with the study's use of AI-based tools, fostering engagement and relevance to future career aspirations.
5. **Institutional Support:** The school environment supports their participation in innovative learning methodologies, ensuring the feasibility of AI-driven interventions.
6. **Parental Consent:** Parents of nearly all participants have provided consent, allowing their children to engage in the study.

Description of the Methodological Proposal

The research proposal started with the diagnosis of students' English language proficiency which took place with the testing of PET mock exam in the academic year 2023-2024. Having determined their proficiency, 11 students answered a Likert-survey in order to gather insights regarding students' awareness of strategic competence and expectations of AI chatbot interaction, and consequently, took the pre-test. The pre-test consisted of the Speaking section from FCE exam. The scores about the level of strategic competence in students were obtained by means of rubric tailored to measure Strategic competence in student's performance during the speaking section from FCE exam (planning, monitoring, regulation: 0–5 each). After that, the intervention was conducted. The proposed intervention utilized ChatGPT's dynamic role-play capabilities to simulate Cambridge FCE Speaking Exam tasks (Parts 1–4), structured through tailored prompts that target strategic competence development. Students attended 4 lessons, one per week with a duration of 120 minutes each lesson. The learners attended four 120-min weekly lessons followed by the

post-test. Finally, the participants shared their perceptions and experiences regarding the influence of AI chatbot interaction on their strategic competence.

GENERAL AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE PROPOSAL

General Objective:

To enhance B1 learners' strategic competence in oral communication for effective performance in interactive speaking tasks through structured AI chatbot simulations replicating FCE Speaking Exam tasks.

Specific Objectives:

1. To measure improvements in learners' planning strategies by analyzing their ability to set communicative goals and organize ideas during AI chatbot-mediated speaking tasks, through pre- and post-test scores on the adapted FCE Speaking rubric (planning dimension: goal setting and information gathering, 0–5 scale) and supported by chatbot interaction logs showing response organization and task preparation.
2. To evaluate the development of monitoring skills by examining learners' real-time awareness of comprehension, conversation flow, and problem-solving during chatbot interactions, assessed through pre- and post-test rubric scores (monitoring dimension), quantitative gains identified via paired t-test analysis, and qualitative evidence from interview responses reflecting self-monitoring and feedback utilization.
3. To assess growth in regulation abilities by documenting learners' use of self-correction, repair strategies, and reflective adjustments during AI chatbot interactions, measured through pre- and post-test rubric results (regulation dimension), reductions in performance variability, and thematic analysis of interview data highlighting self-evaluation and strategic repair behaviors.

Research Question 1

What are the specific gaps in strategic competence among B1 EFL learners at Colegio Bilingüe Marie Clarac?

Several gaps in strategic competence were notably identified after the administration of the Likert survey. The 10 B1 students from Colegio Mariec Clarac reflected common insights regarding their awareness of strategic competence and expectations of AI chatbot interaction. As shown in the chart, approximately half of the survey items 5 out of the 10 items were used to assess specific aspects of strategic competence: planning, monitoring, and regulation. The other 5 items evaluated student's expectations for AI chatbot interaction in accordance with focus, adaptability and dialogue management.

Findings revealed significant deficiencies in terms of planning, particularly in goal setting and information gathering. Many students lacked clarity on the specific speaking areas they needed to improve, which hindered structured learning (Oxford, 2017). The absence of preparation often led to hesitancy and disorganized speech (Ahmed et al., 2022). Instruction targeting metacognitive awareness and goal setting frameworks could address these gaps (Akeshova et al., 2023).

Likewise, monitoring was another weak area. Students struggled to track their understanding during conversations and rarely asked for clarification or rephrased unclear input, highlighting a lack of self-regulation (Ellis, 2005; Alem, 2020). AI chatbot interactions, which provide instant feedback and scaffolding, have the potential to enhance these skills by increasing learners' awareness of speech patterns and comprehension gaps

(Ahmed et al., 2022). Ultimately, regulatory skills were also underdeveloped. Students rarely self-evaluated or reflected on their performance and were uncertain about how to repair misunderstandings. This lack of metacognitive strategy use limited their autonomous learning (Oxford, 2017). Structured chatbot tasks focused on reflection and feedback could promote self-evaluation and repair strategies (Akesheva et al., 2023).

The gaps established after the survey administration were outlined into a table that guided AI chatbot intervention design as shown in Table 1. This table synthesizes the most recurrently low-rated items from the survey. In short, the empirical data shows a recurring tendency in the lack of strategic competence that comes with a positive perspective on the AI-enhanced interaction and consequently leads to the next research question that examines how the current gap in the speaking performance of intermediate (B1) students can possibly be addressed with the aid of a chatbot intervention.

Table 1. *Strategic Competence Gaps*

Gap	Strategic Competence Aspect	Question Item
Lack of goal setting	Planning	I set specific goals for my speaking improvement, like speaking more naturally or making fewer grammar mistakes.
Difficulty in information gathering	Planning	I feel confident gathering information I need for speaking tasks, like thinking of key points for a conversation or comparing photos.
Weak comprehension monitoring	Monitoring.	I often check my understanding during conversations and adjust if I don't understand, like rephrasing or asking for clarification.
Limited self-evaluation	Regulation	After speaking in English, I usually reflect on how I did and consider what I could improve.
Struggles with repair strategies	Regulation	I know how to fix misunderstandings during a conversation, like rephrasing what I said if the listener seems confused.

Elaborated by the author

Research Question 2

How meaningful is the AI chatbot-based intervention to enhance the strategic competence of B1 EFL learners at Colegio Bilingue Marie Clarac??

In order to measure the impact of AI chatbot interaction, a Cambridge FCE Speaking mock exam was employed. The rubric was adapted to explicitly assess strategic competence through planning, monitoring, and regulation components (Akesheva et al., 2023). Pre- and post-tests were administered to track student progress, and the results were analyzed using a Paired T-test, which allows for the comparison of means in dependent samples and helps determine significant changes over time (Ahmed et al., 2022).

The assessments, based on standardized FCE mock speaking tests, were used to establish a baseline before the intervention and then to evaluate progress afterward. The intervention itself ran from January 6 to February 6, 2025, and comprised four carefully structured lesson plans. Each lesson targeted a different part of the FCE Speaking section

and followed a four-stage structure: (1) Instruction and modeling of strategies, (2) Guided chatbot practice with real-time feedback, (3) Independent exam-style practice, and (4) Evaluation based on performance during chatbot interactions. The lessons were spaced weekly: January 6–10, January 13–17, January 20–24, and January 27 to February 6. A post-test on February 6 concluded the intervention phase. This structured approach ensured systematic practice and assessment of strategic competence.

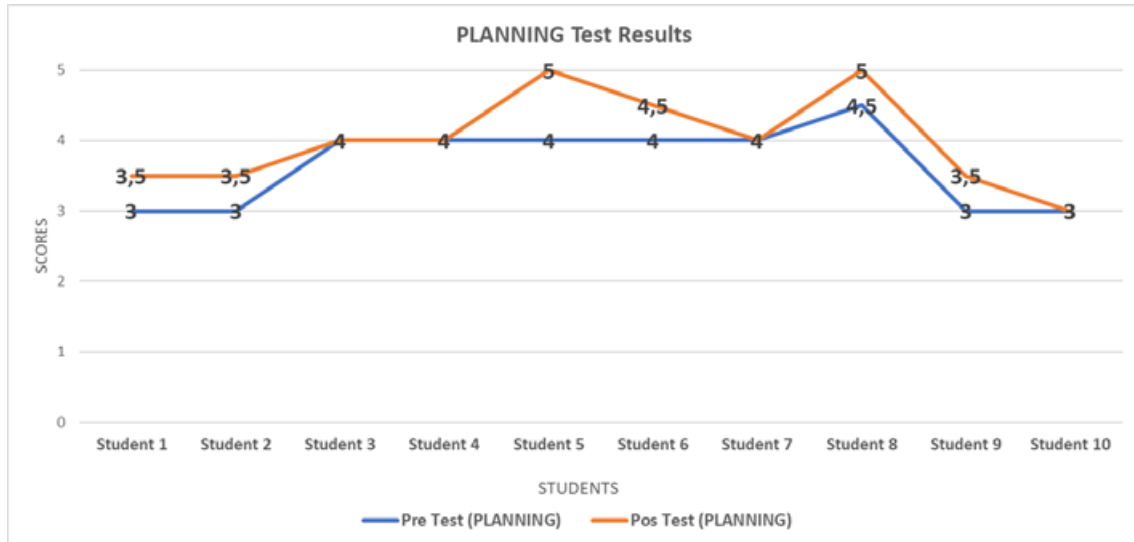
Results showed improvements in key strategic competence indicators, especially in planning. As detailed in Table 2, students demonstrated enhanced ability to structure speech and set communication goals. Their mean planning score increased from 3.65 to 4.00, with percentage scores rising from 73% to 80%, indicating progress in goal setting and information organization. An increased in standard deviation from 0.58 to 0.67 suggested greater consistency across learners. The AI chatbot interaction supported structured thinking and conversational preparedness, contributing to improved speech planning.

Table 2. *Planning Pretest and Posttest Results*

Nº	Pretest (PLANNING)	Posttest (PLANNING)
Student 1	3	3,5
Student 2	3	3,5
Student 3	4	4
Student 4	4	4
Student 5	4	5
Student 6	4	4,5
Student 7	4	4
Student 8	4,5	5
Student 9	3	3,5
Student 10	3	3
Average	3,65	4,00
Standard Deviation	0,58	0,67

Elaborated by the author

As Table 2 displays, the mean planning score increased from 3.65 in the pretest to 4.00 in the posttest, which is an indicator of an enhanced ability in goal setting and information gathering, two major subcomponents. The increase in percentage scores from 73% to 80% showed a gain of 0.0 – 1.0 points, most learners did make progress. The increase in the standard deviation from 0.58 to 0.67 indicates that competence also is uniform across the group. The AI chatbot interaction reinforced conversational objectives and promoted structured learning, which would have facilitated students' speech planning by promoting more effective outcomes, meaning that students would have prepared responses in a more confident and organized manner.

Figure 1. *Planning Comparison Pretest and Posttest*

As the statistical graph shows in Figure 1, the scores for planning post intervention have a consistent upward trend. The posttest line drops above the pretest line indicating learners improved their ability in planning conversations as can be seen in the cases of Students 5 and 8. Structured chatbot interactions also peak in individual performance where explicit support is provided for organizing ideas & setting goals. By analyzing the difference in scores between the pretest and posttest, adaptivity of chatbot was noted since learners were delivered tailored feedback and scaffolding which in turn helped them to refine their conversational preparation strategies. This notion fits well with the principles of Dialogue Management, which improved complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF) in chatbot, enabled simulations of actual real communication settings. Finally, the graph supports numerical analysis that the AI chatbot interactions meaningfully contribute to improving the planning skill through providing goal setting abilities and adaptive support in real time. In terms of monitoring, self-monitoring skills, critical for real-time conversational adjustments demonstrated substantial improvement as can be shown in Table 3.

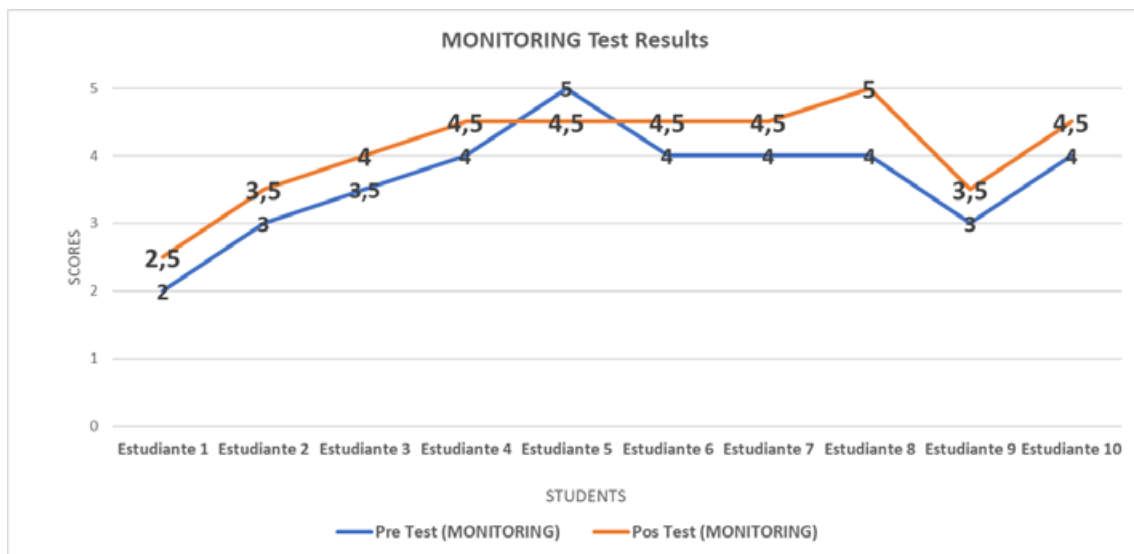
Table 3. *Monitoring Pretest and Posttest Results*

Nº	Pretest (MONITORING)	Posttest (MONITORING)
Student 1	2	2,5
Student 2	3	3,5
Student 3	3,5	4
Student 4	4	4,5
Student 5	5	4,5
Student 6	4	4,5
Student 7	4	4,5
Student 8	4	5
Student 9	3	3,5
Student 10	4	4,5
Average	3,65	4,10
Standard Deviation	0,82	0,74

Elaborated by the author

The AI chatbot interaction greatly improved students' monitoring skills which constitute an integral part of strategic competence. The mean score from the pretest monitoring was 3.65 and at the posttest monitoring was 4.10, demonstrating improvement in the real-time awareness of conversation flow, comprehension, and problem-solving strategies. Besides, the percentages also improved from average 73% to 82% with gain from 0.0 to 1.0 points, supporting a better student's ability to track comprehension and dynamically adjust speech. After intervention, the standard deviation went from 0.82 to 0.74, implying greater uniformity in learners' performance. This enhancement is, therefore, attributable to the chatbot's adaptation of scaffolding and personalized feedback, which reinforced monitoring strategies by encouraging learners to detect misunderstandings, advocate for changes in response, and sustain conversation flow. Structured prompts of the chatbot and instant corrective feedback enabled more active engagement in internalizing the chatbot's suggestions of effective monitoring techniques for spoken communication.

Figure 2. *Monitoring Comparison Pretest and Posttest*



Elaborated by the author

As shown in figure 2, most students displayed upward score trajectories, particularly Students 3, 6, and 8, whose gains were the most pronounced, showing that the students' stronger self-regulation strategies developed as they interacted with AI. Specifically, periods of high-performance reflected occasions when chatbot scaffolding led to significantly higher effects in facilitating adaptive comprehension adjustments and problem-solving skills. The results gap between pretest and posttest confirmed that AI driven monitor support led to an improvement in the learners' spoken interactions, therefore, the chatbot intervention was very successful in promoting learner's ability to monitor and adjust speaking dynamically in real-time conversation.

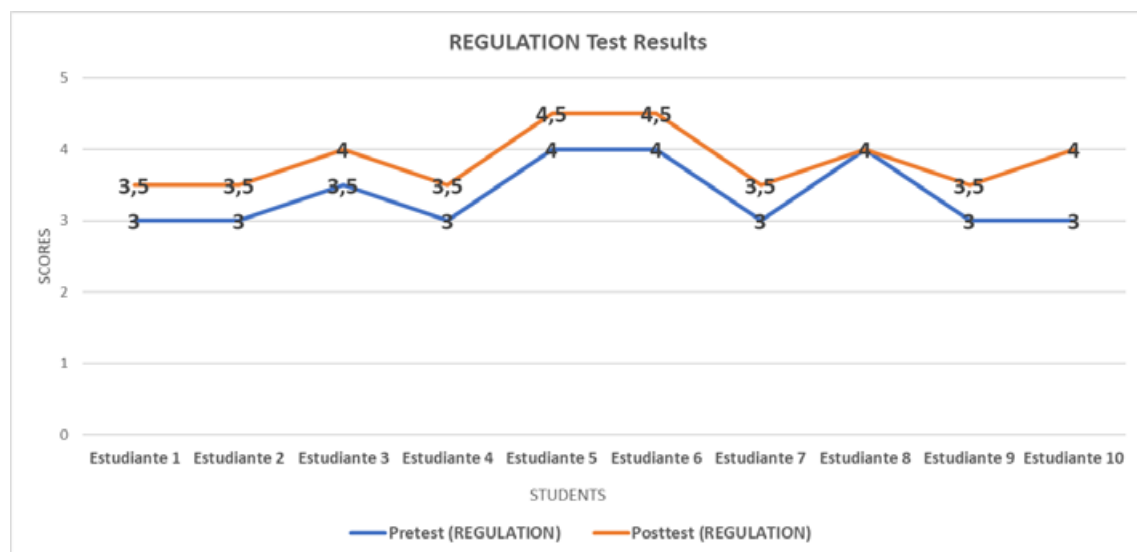
Lastly, the intervention yielded substantial gains in regulation skills, which are crucial for repairing misunderstandings and refining spoken communication as is depicted in table 4.

Table 4. Regulation Pretest and Posttest Results

Nº	Pretest (REGULATION)	Posttest (REGULATION)
Student 1	3	3,5
Student 2	3	3,5
Student 3	3,5	4
Student 4	3	3,5
Student 5	4	4,5
Student 6	4	4,5
Student 7	3	3,5
Student 8	4	4
Student 9	3	3,5
Student 10	3	4
Average	3,35	3,85
Standard Deviation	0,47	0,41

Elaborated by the author

The table 4 shows the increase of the mean regulation score from 3.35 to 3.85, which means that the ability for self-evaluation, error correction, and repair strategies improved. Furthermore, the average percentage scores increased from 67% in pretest to 77% in posttest, demonstrating more effective way of adjusting speech when communication breakdowns occurred. Finally, the standard deviation went down from 0.47 to 0.41, which means participants were more uniform in their use of strategic self-regulation skills, implying that chatbot interactions had increased the uniformity of strategic self-regulation skills among learners. Adaptive scaffolding and real time feedback mechanisms of chatbot enabled scaffolding of structured error identification and self-correction opportunities which accounted for the improvement made by the learners.

Figure 3. Regulation Comparison Pretest and Posttest

Elaborated by the author

The overall improvement of learners' ability to regulate their speech effectively, measured by the overall improvement, is verified through the posttest line being above pretest line in Figure 3. The chatbot's Dialogue Management dimension allowed learners to analyze their spoken errors, restructure responses and more academically refine their conversational style. The upward trend of the graph points to that with the support from chatbot, more autonomous speech adjustment in response to feedback was performed and continuous learning was achieved. Notably, peaks of performance in the posttest occurred after chatbot induced interventions that promote structured self-correcting strategies. This affirmed research claims that AI generated corrective feedback encourages metacognitive engagement, letting learners reflect on and bolster their performance while delivering oral productions in real time.

The intervention dynamically helped learners identify errors, modify responses, and strategically use language by providing task specific outcomes within a structured conversational domain. Somehow, through the integration of the Conversational and Cognitive AI aspects within the chatbot framework, a measurable and statistically significant improvement in the students' ability to self-regulate speech was observed, thus successfully testing out the efficacy of AI assisted interventions in helping students become autonomous in language learning.

Table 5. *T-test Results*

N	Dimension	T-test	
		T-statistic	P-value
10	Planning	-3,28	,010
	Monitoring	-3,86	,004
	Regulation	-6,71	,0001

Elaborated by the author

Results from the Paired T-test ($p < 0.05$) in Table 5, substantiate that the observed improvements were statistically significant and imply that the intervention played a part in the students' development of strategic competence. The p-values of the mean scores in planning, monitoring, and regulation showed a statistically significant increase ($p=0.010$, 0.004 , and 0.0001 , respectively) corresponding to the efficacy of the intervention. This could corroborate the statement that the AI chatbots act as good supplementary tools for EFL learners in helping them learn languages through guided feedback (Alem, 2020; Ake-shova et al., 2023).

Altogether, data demonstrates that there is a clear distribution of improvement on the three dimensions of strategic competence, and the gains are best exhibited in regulation, monitored and, finally, in planning. This tendency indicates that whereas learners reinforced their ability to organize and plan oral answers at the beginning of the AI chatbot intervention, the most significant pedagogical contribution of AI chatbot intervention was the emergence of the strategic control in real-time, in particular, self-correction, repair, and adaptive language usage. The statistically significant improvements in each of the three dimensions are supported by both descriptive statistics and paired t -test outcomes and suggest that, under structured chatbot interaction, the entire cycle of strategic competence preparation through real-time awareness and autonomous regulation can efficiently be scaffolded. Pedagogically, the results highlight the importance of AI chatbots as an adjunct instructional aid offering consistent, low-anxiety fostering guided practice facilitating learning of strategic behaviors to be effective recommended in touring oral communica-

tion by B1 EFL students. Combining goal-oriented prompts, an adaptive feedback system, and dialogue-management functions in accordance with exam-oriented speaking tasks, the intervention shows that AI-supported settings can promote strategic competence development in a significant way; furthermore, this behavior occurs under classroom-situation EFL.

Research Question 3

What are the perceptions of B1-level students regarding the impact of AI chatbot interaction on enhancing their strategic competence?

The open-ended interview sought a perspective view from students on the uses of AI chatbots to improve English communication skills with an emphasis on strategic competence development. Edinburgh B2 students participated in the interview in order to express their perceptions of their experience interacting with the AI chatbot. The instrument consisted of 10 items. The corresponding thematic analysis of the qualitative data was conducted on ATLAS.ti from which common codes were drawn as shown in Figure 5 to be further parsed and sorted into a table. The ten questions in the interview were designed to capture different aspects of strategic competence, such as conversational focus, adaptivity, dialogue management, planning, monitoring, and regulation. The purpose was to explore students' perceptions of the chatbot interactions and their speaking abilities, the strategies to resolve potential speaking problems, the setting of possible goals, and self-monitoring.

The questions targeted different components of strategic competence: One area examined how the chatbot was supportive in helping students with organizing their thoughts (Learning Objective); some addressed how adaptive the chatbot was in giving constructive feedback and support (Adaptivity); there were a number of items addressing how the chatbot made students aware of keeping activities in focus during conversational flow and solving speaking difficulties (Dialogue Management and Monitoring). In addition, self-regulation questions were included so that the students could discuss how they evaluated their own performance and made some changes (Self-Evaluation and Repair Strategies). The interview was planned in a way that responses would be no less than 20 words long so that detailed answers could give a good account of students' experiences and ideas. The interview primarily aimed to measure the extent of the effectiveness of AI chatbots in raising students' strategic competence in English communication.

Planning. Based on the results from the thematic, students emphasized that **vocabulary expansion** was one of the major effects; many students found that feedback from the chatbot introduced to them new lexical items and expressions that helped them formulate more precise and contextually fitting responses (Nation, 2001). Moreover, the experience of the chatbot fostered **goal-oriented** behaviour, as the students reported that they **set specific linguistic goals**, e.g. aim to improve the fluency, or to enlarge the vocabulary, which is consistent with the notion of self-directed learning. The centrality of these codes indicates that planning strategies were frequently activated during chatbot interactions. The findings suggest that AI chatbot interaction supported learners' ability to plan spoken responses more deliberately by fostering lexical preparation and structured goal setting.

Planning Thematic Analysis

Vocabulary Expansion: *«Practicing with the chatbot improved my use of vocabulary and words in general»; «The chatbot gave me new vocabulary and ways to express myself better»; «It gave me tips such as vocabulary and syntax recommendations»*

Goal Orientation: *«I now focus on precision and rich vocabulary»; «I started setting small, measurable goals»; «I began aiming to be a better English speaker»*

Confidence and Clarity: *«Helped me explain my ideas clearly without rushing»; «It deepened my thinking and made me confident»; «I became more confident in expressing ideas naturally»*

Extended Vocabulary Use: *«I expanded my vocabulary and responded more fluently»;* *«The chatbot helped me connect and lengthen my ideas»;* *«It provided useful vocabulary for handling long discussions»*

Motivation for Improvement: *«It motivated me to set both daily and long-term goals»;* *«The chatbot influenced me to practice more and improve my speaking»;* *«I set even higher goals to improve my speaking for a better future»*

Monitoring. This dimension was positively impacted by chatbot interaction according to Figure 7. The importance of providing **structural guidance** as well as immediate feedback was highlighted by students because **it enabled them to organize their thoughts more effectively** and also to assess their performance in real time. Formative feedback is seen to help learners **self-monitor** through being able to identify mistakes and **make adjustments** in time (Hyland, 2003). This was consistent with the fact that students mentioned being more **aware of** the grammatical **accuracy** and **coherence**, as a result they produced more coherent sentences as well as a logical progression in their spoken output (Ellis, 2009). The prominence of these codes suggests that students perceived monitoring as an active and ongoing process during chatbot use. Data indicate that chatbot-mediated feedback played a key role in enhancing learners' capacity to monitor comprehension, accuracy, and conversational flow while speaking.

Structural Guidance: *«I now follow a certain structure to answer the best»;* *«The chatbot interaction helped me organize my thoughts by showing, comparing, and discussing different photos»;* *«It taught me to prioritize ideas instead of giving vague answers»*

Feedback for Clarity: *«The continuous feedback helped me read my answers and correct them»;* *«It gave me advice before and after answering, helping me organize my thoughts»;* *«I was able to analyze what I said and restructure my ideas»*

Self-Evaluation: *«It helped me identify mistakes and correct them»;* *«I analyze what I say and make adjustments»;* *«I am more critical and focused on details»*

Feedback Utilization: *«I can evaluate myself using the chatbot's feedback»;* *«The chatbot's corrections helped me adjust my speaking in real time»;* *«Feedback helped me improve my performance faster»*

Detail Awareness: *«Now I am aware to add well-structured ideas»;* *«I learned to add relevant details and use transition phrases»;* *«I became more aware of how much detail I provided»*

Regulation. The chatbot interaction appeared most transformative in the final component of regulation. Students reported adopting learned **adaptive communication** strategies, for instance, rephrasing to avoid breakdowns, and using fillers to increase **fluency of conversation**. Adaptive approaches conform well with strategic competence frameworks emphasizing compensatory strategies for managing the communication gaps (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997). These regulatory behaviors were reinforced by the chatbot's capacity to provide prompts and solutions at moments of hesitation (Goh & Burns, 2012) to bolster their resilience to conversational challenges. The frequency of these codes indicates that learners perceived chatbot interaction as particularly influential in supporting autonomous speech adjustment. Findings showcase that chatbot interaction encouraged learners to actively regulate their spoken output through repair, adaptation, and strategic self-correction.

Self-Correction: *«I corrected my ideas when the chatbot misunderstood me»;* *«I rephrased and clarified my ideas during breakdowns»;* *«I fixed vocabulary mistakes in a history presentation»*

Adaptive Communication: *«I used new expressions to buy time when stuck»;* *«I found alternative ways to express my thoughts»;* *«I explained and corrected errors with more confidence»*

Prompt Support: *«It provided me prompts and alternative expressions»;* *«I asked for examples when I ran out of ideas»;* *«It suggested ideas when I was stuck»*

Expansion Techniques: «Helped me take up previous ideas and add details»; «Gave me solutions to keep the conversation engaging»; «Provided solutions and ideas for real-life conversations»

Conversation Management: «I found it easier to maintain a conversation by adding questions»; «After feedback, my conversation sounds more natural»; «I know that a good interaction is important during the test»

Elaborated by the author

The findings point towards chatbot assisted practice as helpful to improve strategic competence, nevertheless, some limitations were found. Many students even revealed that the chatbot helped to plan and monitor, but at times gave unhelpful, generic feedback and thus had to be clarified further. Such practice is consistent with studies that show the need for personalized scaffolding in technology assisted language learning. In addition, the students raised the issue of over reliance on the support of AI and emphasized the need for balancing interaction with AI with peer and teacher feedback in order to build overall communicative competence (Warschauer, 2004). Therefore, it appears that AI chatbot interaction helped B1 level students to develop their strategic competence, which is, namely, to enhance their planning, monitoring and regulation abilities (see Table 21). This resonates with existing literature on the efficiency of interactive media in serving the purpose of autonomous learning and strategic language use (Benson, 2011).

The comparison of the three thematic clusters demonstrates that there is a progressive pattern in the perceptions of the learners. Whilst planning strategies can be related to preparation and goal setting, and monitoring strategies with real-time awareness and adjustment, regulatory strategies seem to be a higher level of strategic control; as a matter of fact, the most common type of strategies that students focus on are regulatory aspects, which presupposes that chatbot interaction can be very effective in aiding autonomous and real-time management of verbal communication. This progression across themes reinforces the view that AI chatbot interaction not only supports discrete strategic skills but also facilitates their integration during authentic communicative performance.

Initial open coding (presented in Table 6) identified recurrent patterns in students' responses, which were subsequently grouped and merged based on semantic similarity, functional overlap, and alignment with the three predefined dimensions of strategic competence: planning, monitoring, and regulation. Codes in which there was recurrence in response within different answers were validated through frequency of use and conceptual consistency. This was done to make sure that every final code was a measurable and significant indicator of the strategic involvement of the learners in the interaction with the AI chatbots without any repetition and maintaining the clarity of the analysis.

Table 6. *Code Categorization*

Planning	Monitoring	Regulation
Vocabulary Expansion	Structural Guidance	Self-Correction
Goal Orientation	Feedback for Clarity	Adaptive Communication
Motivation for Improvement	Self-Evaluation	Prompt Support
Extended Vocabulary Use	Feedback Utilization	Expansion Techniques
Confidence and Clarity	Detail Awareness	Conversation Management
Vocabulary Expansion	Structural Guidance	Self-Correction

Elaborated by the author

FINDINGS

The aim of this research study was to investigate the contribution of AI chatbot interaction to improve the strategic competence of B1-level EFL learners at Colegio Bilingue Marie Clarac. This objective was realized through the applications of several instruments, including pretest and posttest assessments, a Likert-scale survey, and qualitative interviews. The data analysis clearly showed that the intervention met the research objectives and demonstrated a notable impact on students' strategic competence. Overall, data analysis revealed significant gains in learners' strategic competence following AI chatbot interaction.

RQ #1. The first research question aimed to identify particular gaps in the strategic competence of B1 EFL learners at the institution. The review of the available pre-test data ($n=10$) demonstrated that there are evident weaknesses in the three aspects of strategic competence planning, monitoring, and regulation. The average pre-test scores show that regulation was the most problematic area of the learners ($M_0 = 3.35$), then comes planning ($M_0 = 3.65$) and monitoring ($M_0 = 3.65$). The students had difficulties in setting clear learning goals in the use of the language, in gathering adequate information for speaking tasks, and in maintaining the flow of oral conversation. Another big gap was insufficient self-regulation, which involved problems in rephrasing or asking for clarification during breakdowns in communication. Results were inferred and based on pretest data in which students were very challenged when planning their speech and managing communication.

RQ #2. The second research question answered the extent by which AI chatbots intervention would impact increase the students' strategic competence. Results from the posttest indicate that significant improvement across the three areas of strategic competence-planning, monitoring, and regulation-was made by students. The data showed that students were better able to plan their reactions, maintain conversation flow, and regulate their speech after interaction with the chatbot. Using paired t-tests for statistical analysis, these developments were confirmed as significant and not due to random chance, given the low p-values: $M= 3.65$ to $M= 4.00$ ($p=.010$); $M= 3.65$ to $M= 4.10$ ($p=.004$) and $M= 3.35$ to $M= 3.85$ ($p=.0001$). These scores suggest that the learners were in a better position to plan the spoken responses, track the understanding and accuracy of the real time, and regulate their speech by using self-correction and repair methods.

RQ #3. The third research question intended to inquire about the students' perceptions of the effects of the AI chatbot on their strategic competence. The qualitative analysis resulting from interviews showed that, according to the students, the chatbot was very effective in organizing their minds as far as their vocabulary is concerned. Many of the students also reported that the chatbot helped them to set a goal in their speaking improvement such as targeting fluency and grammatical accuracy. Besides, they found that the chatbot could provide feedback and adapt according to their needs, which assisted them in monitoring their speech and self-correction when necessary. However, some of them mentioned that feedback is generic sometimes and suggested that they should be given more personalized support to enhance their experience further.

The intervention generalized its purpose towards enhancing participant strategic competence by successfully meeting the proposed objectives. Through merging AI-mediated interactions with the task-based language teaching format students obtained individualized feedback for speaking practice of authentic tasks. Through both planning and monitoring speech activities participants developed capable self-regulation tactics. Strategic competence development in language learners became possible significantly because of the chatbot's structured tasks along with adaptive guidance and feedback process.

Ultimately, the proposal demonstrated the feasibility and relevance of using AI chatbots as an innovative tool in language learning. The results confirm that AI chatbots can serve as a valuable resource for EFL learners, offering a scalable and personalized solution to improve speaking skills. The findings suggest that future research could further explore how AI chatbots can be optimized to provide even more targeted support, particularly in addressing specific gaps identified during this study. The integration of AI in language learning not only enhances students' strategic competence but also contributes to the broader goal of fostering autonomous learners who can effectively manage their language development. The quantitative gains and qualitative perceptions demonstrate that AI chatbot interaction meaningfully enhanced learners' strategic competence while also revealing areas for refinement, which directly informs the discussion of pedagogical implications and limitations presented in the following section.

CONCLUSIONS

The use of AI chatbot interactions in language learning has enabled new directions to improve strategic competence in EFL learners. The purpose of this study has been to assess if AI chatbots are effective promoting planning, monitoring and regulating skills to B1 level students at Colegio Bilingüe Marie Clarac. The research analyzed data from pre and post-tests, surveys, and also interviews, utilising the findings to empirically prove that chatbot based interventions can help develop learner autonomy and communicative adaptability. The outcome of this study finds its fit into the ongoing discussions on AI-mediated language education and its pedagogical implications.

Results of this study suggest that AI chatbot interaction can play a major role in improving strategic competence of B1 EFL learners (from Colegio Bilingüe Marie Clarac). Evidence supports the effectiveness of chatbots through structuring, adapting, and simulating interactive conversations aimed at improving learners' planning, monitoring, and regulating abilities in their language use. Data from the pretest and posttest assessments, surveys, and interviews provided plenty of evidence to show that learners' strategic competence was positively influenced by the intervention. The mean improvements across the three dimensions of strategic competence—planning, monitoring, and regulation—indicate that AI chatbots serve as an effective supplementary tool in fostering communicative adaptability and autonomy among EFL learners.

Pedagogical and Theoretical Implications. This research makes a key contribution in that it systematically applies AI chatbot technology for language learning, based on a well-defined theoretical framework. Based on the principles of Focus, Adaptivity, and Dialogue Management for chatbot interactions between learners and the chatbot, this study shows how AI mediated interventions can scaffold learners' engagement with meaningful communicative practices. Structured conversation design has been important to this process because the chatbot is able to tailor feedback to the individual learning needs. Vygotsky (1978) theory of scaffolding agrees with this since learners are gradually taught communicative strategies that facilitate their ability to run conversations by themselves although with guidance. Based on the results in the planning dimension, we can conclude that chatbot interactions assist learners to establish communicative goals, gather necessary information for speech production and plan to achieve their goals efficiently.

CONTRIBUTOR ROLES

Carlos Díaz Ortiz: Conceptualization, research design, theoretical framework development, methodology, instrument design, data collection, quantitative and qualitative data analysis, interpretation of results, figure and table creation, original draft writing, review and editing, and final manuscript preparation.

Oswaldo González: Methodological consultation, support with statistical analysis, and revision of results.

Janneth Chumaña: Assistance with data collection and participation in the review of interview instruments.

Nelly Espinoza: Support in literature review compilation and minor manuscript revision.

ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

The authors state that there are no ethical implications associated with this study. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and data were handled confidentially.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no financial or non-financial conflicts of interest that could have influenced the work presented.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, A., Ali, N., Alzubaidi, M., Zaghoulani, W., Abd-alrazaq, A., & Househ, M. (2022). Arabic chatbot technologies: A scoping review. *Computer Methods and Programs in Biomedicine Update*, 2, 100057. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cmpbup.2022.100057>
- Akeshova, M. M., Torbik, E. M., Astrakhan State University, Baigabulova, G. Zh., & Korkyt Ata Kyzylorda University. (2023). METHODS AND TECHNIQUES OF FORMING STRATEGIC COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING ON THE BASE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES. *Iasayı́n Ýniversitetiń Habarshysy*, 127(1), 237-249. <https://doi.org/10.47526/2023-1/2664-0686.20>
- Alem, D. D. (2020). Strategic Competence and its implication in language teaching. *Journal of Advances in Social Science and Humanities*, 6(10), 1326–1333. <https://doi.org/10.15520/jassh.v6i10.495>
- Amin, M. Y. M. (2023). AI and Chat GPT in Language Teaching: Enhancing EFL Classroom Support and Transforming Assessment Techniques. *International Journal of Higher Education Pedagogies*, 4(4), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.33422/ijhep.v4i4.554>
- Benson, P. (2011). Teaching and researching autonomy. Routledge.
- Bibauw, S., François, T., & Desmet, P. (2022). Dialogue Systems for Language Learning. En N. Ziegler & M. González-Lloret, *The Routledge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition and Technology* (1.^a ed., pp. 121-135). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351117586-12>

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Brown, A. L. (1987). Metacognition, executive control, self-regulation, and other more mysterious mechanisms. In *Metacognition, Motivation, and Understanding* (pp. 65–116).
- Cambridge English. (2020). *Assessing speaking performance – Level B1*. Cambridge Assessment English.
- Cambridge English. (2020). *Exam specifications and assessment criteria*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education* (8th ed.). Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE.
- Dippold, D. (2023). «Can I have the scan on Tuesday?» User repair in interaction with a task-oriented chatbot and the question of communication skills for AI. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 204, 21-32. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2022.12.004>
- Dörnyei, Z. (2020). *The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Scott, M. L. (1997). Communication Strategies in a Second Language: Definitions and Taxonomies. *Language Learning*, 47(1), 173-210. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0023-8333.51997005>
- Ellis, R. (2005). *Instructed second language acquisition: A literature review*. Research Division, Ministry of Education.
- Ellis, R. (2009). Corrective Feedback and Teacher Development. *L2 Journal*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.5070/L2.V1I1.9054>
- Fryer, L., & Carpenter, R. (2006). Bots as Language Learning Tools. *Language Learning*, 10(3).
- Gilakjani, A. P. (2017). A Review of EFL Learners' Strategies for Developing Strategic Competence. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 8(3), 463-472. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0803.05>
- Goh, C. C. M., & Burns, A. (2012). *Teaching speaking: A holistic approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hyland, K. (2003). *Second language writing*. Cambridge University Press.
- Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2018). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher*, 33(7), 14–26.
- Kalenska, V. (2024). *Artificial intelligence in developing pre-Service teachers' learning and Strategic Competence*. 2, 100025. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2021.100025>
- Kamil, A. M., & Anuar, N. (2022). Employers' Viewpoints on Strategic Competence for Workplace Communication. *International Journal of Education*, 14(3), 56. <https://doi.org/10.5296/ije.v14i3.19998>
- Karunarathne, W., Paladino, A., Selman, C., Nagy, K., Sajitos, L., & Kishore, S. (2024). The StatBot: An AI-Assisted Chatbot for Enhancing Learning and Teaching Efficiency of Large Subjects. *Pacific Journal of Technology Enhanced Learning*, 6, 20-21. <https://doi.org/10.24135/pjtel.v6i1.193>

- Kavak, İ. V., Evis, D., & Ekinçi, A. (2024). The Use of ChatGPT in Language Education. *Experimental and Applied Medical Science*. <https://doi.org/10.46871/eam.1461578>
<https://doi.org/10.47191/ijcsrr/V7-i2-42>
- Luxton, D. D. (2016). Artificial intelligence in behavioral and mental health care. Elsevier.
- Majorana, C., Gonçalves, R., Neto, F., & Zagallo Camargo, R. (2022). Enhancing administrative efficiency in higher education with AI: A chatbot solution. *Review of Artificial Intelligence in Education*, 3, e023. <https://doi.org/10.37497/rev.artif.intell.educ.v3i00.23>
- Malykhin, O., Bondarchuk, J., Tersina, I., & Voitanik, I. (2024). Unlocking success: Strategic approaches to enhancing communicative competence in English learning. *Revista Amazonia Investiga*, 13(76), 90-102. <https://doi.org/10.34069/AI/2024.76.04.8>
- Nation, I. S. P. (2001). Learning vocabulary in another language. Cambridge University Press.
- Oxford, R. L. (2017). *Teaching and researching language learning strategies: Self-regulation in context*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315732738>
- Pintrich, P. R. (2000). The role of goal orientation in self-regulated learning. *Handbook of Self-Regulation*, 451–502.
- Pitychoutis, M. K. (2024). Harnessing AI Chatbots for EFL Essay Writing: A Paradigm Shift in Language Pedagogy. *Arab World English Journal*, 1(1), 197-209. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/ChatGPT.13>
- Scott, B. (2006). Organizational Closure and Conceptual Coherence. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 901(1), 301-310. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-6632.2000.tb06289.x>
- Sha, G. (2009). AI-based chatterbots and spoken English teaching: a critical analysis. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 22(3), 123-136. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588220902920284>
- Shaik, S. S. (2024). DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION PROFICIENCY: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE COMPETENCIES. *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 12(05), 1144-1151. <https://doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/18829>
- Shen, Y., Heffernan, N. T., & de Baker, R. S. (2021). Adaptive learning systems and their effects on learning outcomes. *Educational Psychology Review*, 33(4), 1501–1523.
- Shikun, S., Grigoryan, G., Huichun, N., & Harutyunyan, H. (2024). AI Chatbots: Developing English Language Proficiency in EFL Classroom. *Arab World English Journal*, 1(1), 292-305. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/ChatGPT.20>
- Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2010). *Handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research* (2nd ed.). SAGE.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Warschauer, M. (2004). Technological change and the future of CALL. In S. Fotos & C. Browne (Eds.), *New perspectives on CALL for second language classrooms* (pp. 15-26). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Zhang, S., Shan, C., Lee, J. S. Y., Che, S., & Kim, J. H. (2023). Effect of chatbot-assisted language learning: A meta-analysis. *Education and Information Technologies*, 28(11), 15223-15243. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-023-11805-6>
- Zhang, W., & Wang, X. (2023). *Optimization and evaluation of spoken English CAF based on artificial intelligence and corpus*. *Journal of Artificial Intelligence Practice*, 6(5). <https://doi.org/10.23977/jaip.2023.060506>

- Zhang, W., Zhang, L., & Wilson, A. (2024). *Strategic competence, task complexity, and foreign language learners' speaking performance: A hierarchical linear modelling approach*. 15(3), 1121-1149. <https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2022-0074>
- Zimmerman, B. J. (2002). Becoming a self-regulated learner: An overview. *Theory Into Practice*, 41(2), 64-70. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4102_2



REVISTA KRONOS

Enhancing Vocabulary Retention through Routine-Based Activities in Young EFL Learners

Gisselle Karina Molina Cabrera | iD Universidad Nacional de Educación (UNAE)-Ecuador
Hazel Acosta Cadungog | iD Universidad Nacional de Educación (UNAE)-Ecuador

ABSTRACT The primary objective of this study was to investigate the influence of implementing routine-based activities on vocabulary retention among 13 young learners aged 4 to 5 years attending a private school in Cuenca, Ecuador. To carry out this study, an Exploratory Action Research design was used to analyze students' initial context and the results obtained after the intervention. To collect data, pre-tests and post-tests, observation protocols, weekly assessments, and final interviews were used. To assess students' prior knowledge of the target vocabulary, a pre-test was administered in the first phase, followed by the second phase, during which subsequent sessions taught the target vocabulary through the intervention. Each week included five sessions, in which, from session one to four, four words were learned and reinforced cumulatively, while session five was used to evaluate students' vocabulary retention learned during the week. Observation protocols were used to monitor students' performance through routine-based assessments. In the last session, a post-test was implemented to measure students' vocabulary retention, and a final interview was conducted to determine students' perceptions about the use of this teaching strategy. The findings indicated improvements in vocabulary retention, pronunciation, confidence, and engagement.

KEYWORDS Routines, repetition, vocabulary retention, Young EFL learners, exploratory action research.

FECHA DE RECEPCIÓN 13/07/2025

FECHA DE APROBACIÓN 15/11/2025

Mejorar la retención de vocabulario mediante actividades basadas en rutinas en niños aprendices de inglés como lengua extranjera.

RESUMEN El objetivo principal de este estudio fue investigar el impacto de la implementación de actividades basadas en rutinas en la retención de vocabulario de 13 jóvenes estudiantes de 4 a 5 años que asisten a una escuela privada en Cuenca, Ecuador. Para llevar a cabo este estudio, se utilizó un diseño de Investigación-Acción Exploratoria para analizar el contexto inicial de los estudiantes y los resultados obtenidos después de la intervención. Para recopilar datos, se utilizaron pre-tests, protocolos de observación, evaluaciones semanales, post-tests y entrevistas finales. Durante la primera sesión, para evaluar el conocimiento previo de los estudiantes sobre el vocabulario objetivo, se administró un pre-test. Las sesiones posteriores se utilizaron para enseñar el vocabulario objetivo a través de la intervención. Cada semana incluyó cinco sesiones, en las cuales, de la sesión uno a la cuatro, se aprendieron y reforzaron acumulativamente cuatro palabras, mientras que la sesión cinco se utilizó para evaluar la retención de vocabulario de los estudiantes durante la semana. Se utilizaron protocolos de observación para monitorear el desempeño de los estudiantes mediante el uso de rutinas. En la última sesión, se implementó un post-test para medir la retención de vocabulario de los estudiantes y se realizó una entrevista final para determinar las percepciones de los estudiantes sobre el uso de esta estrategia de enseñanza. Los hallazgos incluyeron mejoras en la retención de vocabulario, la pronunciación, la confianza y el compromiso.

PALABRAS CLAVE Rutinas, repetición, retención de vocabulario, jóvenes aprendices de inglés como lengua extranjera, investigación-acción exploratoria.

INTRODUCTION

Communication is a vital aspect of human nature, as it enables people to share ideas effectively (Tolliboyeva & Shakarova, 2024). One of its essential components is vocabulary, which consists of words that can be used to express a significant opinion. This component allows humans to understand given ideas. Building one's vocabulary at a young age is beneficial as it develops cognitive flexibility (Bialystok, 2018) and literacy skills (Madsen et al., 2022).

Retrieval-based practice, which involves recalling words constantly over time, is one strategy that can be used to achieve this goal (Adesope et al., 2017). Read (2019) also mentions that through the implementation of repetitive and meaningful activities, students can gradually improve their learning and expand their vocabulary. All these elements should be used when preparing the vocabulary base of young learners.

One of the fundamental principles of the English curriculum proposal is that language should not be memorized; instead, it should be learned through connection with others and the sharing of ideas (Ministerio de Educación, Deporte y Cultura, 2016). To achieve this goal, the curriculum emphasizes the use of the Communicative Approach (CA) that privileges the use of learner-centered teaching methodologies that develop students' language learning and linguistic competencies (Ministerio de Educación, Deporte y Cultura, 2016).

There are specific instructional approaches under the CA such as task-based learning, content-based instruction and project-based learning (PBL). The PBL is one of the approaches

that reinforces the use of projects as a mechanism to increase students' exposure to the language using significant activities, and it is one of the instructional approaches commonly used in Ecuadorian classrooms (Muñoz & Gonzalez, 2025). Despite the perceived benefits of the PBL, there are some authors who mention that, although PBL can have various advantages, it may not be beneficial for students due to time constraints (Muñoz & Gonzalez, 2025). Thus, it is essential to apply a teaching strategy that is consistent in the classroom, considering retrieval-based practice and engaging activities that can help young EFL students learn English effectively.

In this study, an EFL classroom located in Cuenca, Ecuador, was chosen, where a group of thirteen (13) students, aged 4 to 5 years old, participated. As the prior students' context was unknown to the teacher-researcher, their former teacher participated in an interview in order to understand aspects of the students' learning in the previous school year. Based on the previous teacher's account, students enjoyed English lessons when activities such as singing songs, playing interactive games, and using colorful flashcards were involved, implying that students enjoy learning English when activities are interactive and dynamic. However, it is evident from the interviews conducted with the previous teacher that, despite students' engagement and enjoyment, they did not remember the words previously taught to them. Forgetting the vocabulary learned after a certain amount of time has lapsed suggests that children's capacity to recall is the gap in current practice that needs exploration to ensure that young learners recall the words they were exposed to before. Moreover, even though these activities were implemented in the lessons, students tend to forget the vocabulary when reinforcement was not applied. In this study, the former teacher suggested including vocabulary related to school supplies, as it was not adequately learned during the previous school year, and due to its relevance for the current academic period.

To ensure that young learners do not forget the vocabulary they are learning, it is imperative to introduce a series of words that they encounter on a daily basis, reinforcing the retention of the meaning of each word learned. To accomplish this, routine-based activities were employed in this study, yielding positive outcomes not only in students' vocabulary retention but also in their confidence, participation, and engagement.

To determine the influence of routine-based activities on students' vocabulary retention, the Exploratory Action Research (EAR) design was employed, which has two phases: the exploratory phase and the actual action research phase. The first phase was used to explore students' initial context before the intervention. The second phase was used to analyze the influence of routine-based activities on vocabulary retention after the study. To gather students' data, a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods was employed. After data collection, the findings revealed that students improved their vocabulary learning, engagement, and confidence throughout the intervention, which was confirmed in the final interview, as most students responded positively to the use of routine-based activities to enhance vocabulary retention and engagement.

This research is relevant to English learning, as it aims to address students' poor retention, a common issue in language learning. Therefore, consistent and engaging activities embedded in daily classroom routines are proposed as essential to mitigate this challenge, which will be analyzed in response to the research question: How does the implementation of routine-based activities in the classroom influence the retention of vocabulary in young learners?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocabulary Retention.

Remembering words over time is one of the challenges that students face when learning English (Huyen & Oanh, 2025); consequently, a teaching strategy that incorporates consistent and meaningful activities needs to be implemented. Sousa (2016) supports this idea, indicating that repetition and contextualized activities are necessary to consolidate students' vocabulary learning. Moreover, Janczukowicz (2021) mentions that learning can be stored in short-term memory if meaningful connections in activities are not considered in teaching. However, not only consistent, meaningful, and contextualized activities are vital to raising vocabulary retention, but also the number of words selected to be taught, as a reduced number of words can be enough for students to retain and reinforce the vocabulary effectively over time. Peters-Sanders et al. (2020) support this idea in their study with children, where four words were considered to be instructed through repetition and explicit teaching each week. Similarly, Coyne et al. (2022) confirm this idea, indicating that a reduced number of words is relevant for students to raise vocabulary retention. Thus, consistent, meaningful, and repetitive activities, including a small set of words, are necessary to achieve retention in young EFL learners. Understanding how learners retain vocabulary is not the only aspect that needs to be considered; analyzing learning theories is another primary step.

Learning Theories Supporting Language Learning and Retention.

Different studies emphasize Skinner's perspective on behaviorism, highlighting the importance of continued practice and repetition in learning (Budiman, 2017). Moreover, this latter term can be applied to various teaching techniques, including drills and guided practice, which are commonly used due to their benefits for students' communication skills (Annisa et al., 2025). The use of drills reinforces responsive skills as students repeat the words they are learning on a daily basis. This technique strengthens the capacity of learners to remember previously learned words. Routines, a teaching strategy known for incorporating consistent repetition and ongoing practice, are, according to Jeremiah et al. (2025), a powerful way to enable students to develop habits.

Piaget identifies distinct stages in the growth process of children, as mentioned in Rabin-dran and Madanagopal's (2020) study, who analyze the cognitive development theory. This study emphasizes the preoperational stage, as the participants of this study belong to this phase. In this study, Piaget indicates that children at this age communicate through symbolic representations (Rabin-dran & Madanagopal, 2020). Therefore, colorful and meaningful visuals should be implemented through constant and continued practice, as mental flexibility can be enhanced through ongoing and repeated reinforcement (Bialystok, 2018).

Zakarneh et al. (2021b) explained their study through a sociocultural perspective, emphasizing that language learning can be achieved through social interactions among learners. As Tolliboyeva and Shakarova (2024) state, «communication is essential by nature» (p. 828); therefore, individuals cannot convey ideas without social interaction, which is a natural activity. Similarly, Ho (2021) emphasizes the importance of social interactions in the classroom, as they enable students to learn from one another. These language learning theories provide a basis for understanding how memory works in the retention of vocabulary.

The Role of Memory in Vocabulary Retention.

It is essential to understand the memory process when learning vocabulary, as it enables educators to select the most effective teaching strategy in the classroom (Gordon & Lowry, 2024). First, short-term memory enables learners to recognize new words; however, they tend to forget unfamiliar terms after a period of time (Janczukowicz, 2021). Working memory refers to the temporary retention used to perform a specific activity, whose storage can diminish without reinforcement (Wen & Li, 2019). Finally, long-term memory is the last stage in memory, which requires a deeper internalization of concepts, involving semantic memory and procedural memory as both important components. These elements allow focus on both meaning and independent use of the language (Sousa, 2016). One strategy that can be used to achieve this type of memory is retrieval practice, which allows constant recall of the learned content (Adesope et al., 2017).

Repetition in Language Teaching.

Repetition is contemplated in this study due to its several benefits, which include the development of motor skills, the formation of associations, and the establishment of habits (Annisa et al., 2025). Therefore, in order to apply repetition effectively, it should be personalized, meaningful, and distributed over time (Revutska, 2020; Sousa, 2016). This last term is defined by Sousa (2016) as the repetition of information over several weeks to retain it, which is considered an effective method for vocabulary learning.

Routine-Based Activities as a Teaching Strategy Used to Enhance Vocabulary Retention.

The conceptualization of routine-based activities rests on the premises of classic theorists such as Piaget, Skinner, and Vygotsky. Skinner emphasized the use of repetition to fix certain words so that young learners remember the words. Word recall is possible through visuals, which Piaget strongly suggests. The use of visuals is key towards retention, specifically for young learners, as association is still very concrete and explicit. Through constant repetition using visuals, young learners are most likely to engage in social interaction, which Vygotsky highlights in his theory on the importance of social interaction. Young learners learn well when they interact through the words they produce and the activities they engage in.

As routines are a powerful teaching strategy used to cultivate a practice and interact with the environment (Jeremiah et al., 2025), they can be used in classrooms to enhance students' confidence and focus (Burden, 2020). According to Read (2019), learning routines not only improve students' behavior and participation but also provide teachers

with several benefits, such as improved classroom management and increased learners' attention in the classroom.

When employing routine-based activities, Read (2019) highlights the importance of considering guidelines in applying the appropriate routine to the group of learners. A crucial point is to determine a suitable routine based on the students' needs and the language point that will be taught during the selected time. This routine should be applied during each lesson and modeled by the teacher, who should support students through nonverbal or verbal responses until learners have internalized the established procedure.

When students have learned and internalized the routine, teachers should progressively extend the language points so that children can expand their vocabulary. The implementation of routines in classrooms is a valuable teaching strategy as it significantly enhances vocabulary retention in students' language development. Moreover, it promotes consistency, reinforces prior knowledge, and helps learners store vocabulary in a meaningful way.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed the EAR design, comprising two phases: an exploratory phase and an actual action research phase. This design was chosen as it aims to understand the classroom context and situation first, after which the intervention is implemented to observe changes throughout the intervention (Smith & Rebolledo, 2022), which represents the principal goal of this research.

In line with this, the study addressed the following sub-questions:

1. In what way do routine-based activities support vocabulary retention?
2. How do young learners respond to and engage with these activities as a daily classroom strategy?
3. What changes in vocabulary retention are observed after one month of implementation?

Accordingly, the study pursued the following specific objectives:

- a. To explain how routine-based activities support vocabulary retention.
- b. To examine young learners' engagement with the implementation of these activities.
- c. To determine the differences in vocabulary retention before and after the month-long intervention.

Exploratory Phase

The participants were 13 first-grade students who are learning English as a foreign language. As the prior students' context was unknown to the teacher-researcher, their former teacher participated in an interview in order to understand aspects of the students' learning during their previous school year. One of the most important ones was that students enjoyed English lessons when activities such as singing songs, playing interactive games, and using colorful flashcards were involved. Despite having these activities embedded in the lessons, students have the tendency to forget the vocabulary when reinforcement was not applied, which justified the need to implement a teaching strategy that is consistent, meaningful, and routine-based. Routine-based activities reinforce the words learned previously through regular drills and association techniques. Furthermore, the target participants are young learners who need to establish habitual learning acquired through repetition and familiarity.

To measure the level of knowledge about the twelve (12) words that refer to school supplies and as the target vocabulary, a pre-test was administered. In this test, students had to cross out the school supplies named by the teacher in all 12 cases. After applying the test, the results revealed that half of the students struggled to remember the words, signifying poor retention. Thus, an intervention was designed to teach and reinforce vocabulary through routine-based activities. Songs and flashcards were the teaching resources used in implementing routines to young learners. The repetitive nature of songs reinforces behaviorist theories, which capitalizes on the importance of fixing a word through drills and imitations. Similarly, flashcards served as scaffolds that provided the visual image that aided learners to remember the words, affirming Vygotsky's theory on the «Zone of Proximal Development».

Actual Action Research Phase

The intervention lasted four weeks, comprising 21 sessions, including the initial pre-test (one separate session), five sessions per week, as well as weekly assessments, observation protocols, post-tests, and a final interview. The weekly assessment refers to a set of teacher-made activities aimed at measuring the number of words learners remember in a week after the words were taught to them. All scores that learners obtained from the weekly assessment activities were added to determine the increment in their vocabulary.

To triangulate the data from weekly assessment activities, observation protocols were likewise used to document the behavioral processes of learners while engaging in routine-based activities. These protocols follow a template, and data are encoded after every lesson using descriptive and reflective notes. The data collected are analyzed through careful scrutiny and examination of prevalent, recurring, and significant words that emerged from the data. The use of interviews is another data collection method used during the exploratory phase, which was intended to determine the current vocabulary of learners and the class context, ensuring that the proposed intervention is appropriate and relevant. The appropriateness of the interview guide was confirmed by the interview through an open discussion of the possible questions that are important to the class context. These two tools – observation protocol and interview – produced qualitative data; thus, there is no need for a scoring procedure and piloting for validity, as the former is more appropriate in quantitative studies.

Each week followed a structured pattern to teach and reinforce the target vocabulary through routine-based activities during the initial and closing stages of the lessons. Five sessions were conducted per week. In session 1, two words were learned; in session 2, two additional words were taught that were cumulative with the previous ones and reinforced. In session 3, these patterns were repeated, as two additional words were introduced while the previous ones were reinforced; in session 4, all the words learned during the week were reinforced. Finally, in session 5, a weekly assessment was used to measure the students' retention level of the target vocabulary learned during the week.

Two routines were considered in this study. One applied at the beginning of the intervention, which consisted of an engaging song, «The Lion Sleeps Tonight» by The Tokens, whose lyrics were adapted to incorporate the target vocabulary used in this intervention. This song not only included lyrics in a video but also movements that students had to imitate while singing. The comprehension check routine consisted of using 12 flashcards that were placed on the floor. Each student had to go to the front of the class and either touch the school supplies named by the teacher or respond to the question, «What is this?» Throughout the intervention, observation protocols were used to gather descriptive and reflective notes about students' participation, vocabulary retention, and engagement.

At the end of the four weeks, a post-test identical to the pre-test was administered, and short individual interviews were conducted. The interview included three simple ques-

tions, accompanied by emojis (happy, neutral, sad), to allow students to express whether routines helped them remember vocabulary and whether they enjoyed the activities.

DATA ANALYSES

Pre-test and post-test data were used to compare students' initial knowledge of the target vocabulary with their retention after the intervention; the mean, minimum, and maximum values of both were included to achieve this goal. Likewise, the standard deviation of both tests was also included, aiming to indicate the variation of individual scores from the mean. The weekly formative assessments were used to monitor progress and determine whether students retained vocabulary from each week; the results were analyzed and illustrated in *Figure 1*.

Data was also collected from observation protocols, which were analyzed descriptively and reflectively. This information is summarized in *Table 2*, which includes the number of weeks, the target vocabulary, the remembered words, common difficulties, and key observations/ progress. Through these observations, students' engagement and confidence were analyzed over the weeks. Moreover, the final interview also yielded positive outcomes, as the students were asked to answer three key questions: whether the routines helped them remember the target vocabulary. In the final interview, students had to respond using emojis representing specific answers: a «happy face» for a positive answer, a «neutral face» for an impartial answer, and a «sad face» for a negative answer. All these data collection tools were used to determine the influence of routine-based activities on students' vocabulary retention, engagement, and confidence over the weeks.

RESULTS

The results of the intervention are presented by answering the research questions of this study.

Influence of Routine-Based Activities on Vocabulary Retention.

To address the question of how routine-based activities affect vocabulary retention, *Table 1* presents the pre- and post-test results, comparing the students' prior knowledge of the target vocabulary and their performance after the intervention.

Table 1. *Pretest and Post-test Scores on Vocabulary Retention*

Test	Mean	SD	Maximum	Minimum
Pre-test	6.62	2.03	10	3
Post-test	12	0.00	12	12

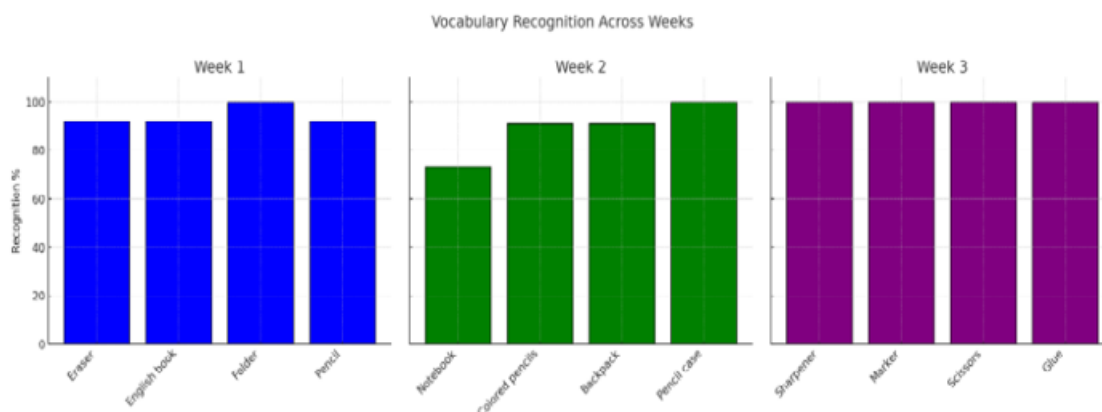
Note. N = 13 participants. SD = Standard Deviation.

The use of routine-based activities in the classroom led to improvements in students' vocabulary retention. These outcomes indicate that prior knowledge of school supplies was limited as evident in the mean pretest score of 6.62. After four weeks of the intervention plan, a post-test was conducted where students' mean score is 12, an increase of 5.38, demonstrating good retention of all twelve target words. Moreover, the SD score of the pre-test was 2.03, indicating a significant variability in students' initial vocabulary knowledge. In the post-test, the SD score was 0.00, which means that all students achieved a consistent score after the intervention.

Routine-Based Activities as Support for Vocabulary Retention.

To address the first sub-question, *Figure 1* illustrates the results gathered from weekly formative assessments, which show a significant progression in students' vocabulary retention over the weeks. The data also shows a consistent increase in the number of words from the first until the last week of the intervention stage.

Figure 1. Results from the Weekly Assessments



The observations, presented in *Figure 1*, also aimed to analyze students' progression not only in vocabulary retention but also in engagement and confidence over the course of the weeks, yielding positive results in all these aspects. Students gradually internalized the initial (warm-up song) and closing routine (comprehension check), which allowed students to reinforce the words progressively, leading to an automatic recall by the fourth week.

Students' Engagement with Routine-Based Activities.

Regarding the second sub-question, *Table 2* shows students' progress and engagement across sessions. The observations also revealed high levels of participation and enjoyment, especially when activities were gamified, and a steady move toward independent performance.

Table 2. Vocabulary Retention Progress Across Sessions

Weeks	Target Vocabulary	Number of Re-membered Words	Common culties	Diffi-	Key Observations / Progress
Week 1	Pencil, eraser, English book, folder	All	Manifested some pronunciation difficulties		Active participation, and engagement
Week 2	Notebook, colored pencils, pencil case, backpack	Recalled the following words: easy: backpack, pencil case difficult: notebook, colored pencil	Confusion with order of words Ex.pencil colored instead of colored pencils.		Improved pronunciation Increased participation
Week 3	Sharpener, marker, scissors, glue	All new words remembered.	Ongoing confusion with notebook and colored pencils during review.		Improvements in vocabulary retention Peer assistance extended during word completion to aid memory recall
Week 4	Reinforcement of all previous words.	Improved recall and pronunciation of all target words.	Only minimal distractions		Automatic recall and better pronunciation Improved retention. Increased confidence. Singing using target words initiated independently.

Table 2 summarizes the key information obtained from the observations, which demonstrated a significant change in students' vocabulary retention, engagement, and confidence throughout the weeks. During the initial part of the intervention, students were poorly engaged in the warm-up activity as this routine was unfamiliar to them. However, a significant increase in students' participation and engagement was observed throughout the sessions. Moreover, as the comprehension check became a friendly competition, students' participation also improved. Finally, difficulties encountered due to unfamiliarity and confusion with other words, as *notebook* and *pencil case*, were overcome and mastered.

Furthermore, through the final interviews, positive results were gathered, as most students answered affirmatively to three questions, confirming the use of routine-based activities as an effective way to learn vocabulary, working as an enjoyable teaching strategy, and allowing students to remember more words than before the intervention.

Vocabulary Retention After One Month of Classroom Implementation.

The results obtained from the pre- and post-tests, as illustrated in *Table 1*, demonstrate the effectiveness of implementing routine-based activities in the classroom, as they represent significant progress in their means, from 6.62 in the pre-test to 12 in the post-test. These results are affirmed in the final interview facilitated to the students after the month-long implementation. *Table 3* shows the responses of students after the final interviews, where they responded to the questions by selecting a happy emoji, which means yes, a sad emoji, which means no, and neutral emoji that signifies they are neither happy nor sad about the activities.

Table 3. *Student's Answers in the Final Interview*

Question	Yes	No	Neutral/Cannot decide
Student response on whether routine-based activities helped remember target words	11	0	2
Student response to whether they enjoy routine-based activities	11	1	1
Student response to whether they learn more words using routine-based activities	9	0	4

Note. N=13. Students were asked to express their answer by selecting any of three choices: happy, sad, or neutral face.

As shown in *Table 3*, the final interviews resulted in positive outcomes in relation to students' perceptions of routines. Out of 13 participants, nine students selected the «happy face» for all three questions (positive answer), indicating that they felt the routines helped them remember new English words, they enjoyed the activities, and they recalled more words than before.

However, some students responded neutrally and negatively to some questions. In question 1, two students responded neutrally. In question 2, one student had the same neutral response, while in question 3, four students gave a neutral response. Negative answers were extremely low, as one student chose this answer for question 2. The data show that most of the students had positive perceptions of the use of this teaching strategy, and only very few students experienced a moderate learning experience through the use of routine-based activities in the classroom.

DISCUSSION

Different data collection tools were employed to investigate the influence of routine-based activities on young EFL learners, which employed pre-tests, observation protocols, weekly assessments, post-tests, and final interviews, following the EAR cyclical process.

The Influence of Routine-Based Activities on Vocabulary Retention.

As observed in *Table 1*, a comparison between the results of the pre-test administered at the beginning and the post-test at the end of the intervention confirmed the effectiveness of routine-based activities as a teaching strategy in enhancing vocabulary retention, with an increment in the means from 6.62 in the pre-test to 12 in the post-test. Moreover, a set of few words was introduced in the application of this teaching strategy, which is one reason this intervention resulted in positive outcomes. The study of Peters-Sanders et al. (2020) and Coyne et al. (2022) reinforce this finding, where they emphasize the use of a small but meaningful set of words to be taught in the lessons. Through repetitive exposure, using a reduced number of words is key to achieving students' vocabulary retention over time. In EFL classes, teachers can prepare small sets of vocabulary banks which can serve as a scaffold and student-support materials, helping learners prepare for the words they are expected to learn on a daily basis.

Vocabulary Retention Through Structured Repetition and Predictable Exposure in Routine-Based Activities.

The implementation of continued exposure and predictable tasks in routine-based activities resulted in an effective teaching strategy, as shown in the values when a comparison is made between pre-test and post-test (*Table 1*), which confirmed the effectiveness of routine-based activities in retaining vocabulary. According to Sousa (2016), the use of distributed practice is key for vocabulary learning, as was confirmed in this study. The use of the two routines implemented at the beginning and end of the intervention in this study (warm-up song and comprehension check) helped students remember the words effectively and improve their pronunciation. Therefore, vocabulary retention is not the only aspect that can be enhanced, as pronunciation and language use can also be strengthened through the use of these routine-based activities. EFL teachers can integrate two consistent activities that reinforce the vocabulary learners are learning. Through lesson planning, teachers can embed the key words in the beginning and at the end to ensure that a connection is established, enabling learners to remember the words throughout the lesson.

Routine-Based Activities Result in Students' Engagement and Motivation.

Routine-based activities proved to be an effective teaching strategy in enhancing not only retention but also key aspects of confidence, engagement, and enjoyment. The positive result is due to the transformation of the classroom into a comfortable space that reduces discomfort and anxiety. Moreover, the predictability of the activities allowed students to anticipate the tasks and improve their responses to the instructions, which inevitably results in a well-managed classroom. Burden (2020) asserts that students' focus is improved when students are engaged and less anxious.

Despite the facility that routines provide to learners, some struggle with word recall. To address this, peer assistance was part of the lesson dynamics, where classmates helped the others remember by pronouncing the first syllable of the word, demonstrating that social interaction was also a key aspect in helping students retain the meaning of the words learned. Further, the finding reaffirms what Ho (2021) has emphasized regarding the role of peer interaction as key in fostering a supportive classroom.

Positive outcomes were also obtained from the final interviews, presented in *Table 3*, in which most students responded positively to all questions. However, a small group responded with neutral and negative responses, indicating that not all students, but rather a small number, had a moderate experience using this strategy. Therefore, the use of repetitive activities helped improve vocabulary learning (Sousa, 2016).

Focus and confidence were also increased through the use of predictable routines, which confirms Burden's (2020) study. Also, the use of routine-based activities works as an effective strategy in enhancing not only retention, but it also develops confidence and fosters enjoyment in English lessons.

Vocabulary Retention After One month of Routine-based instruction.

The implementation of routine-based activities after one month resulted in positive outcomes in students' vocabulary retention and confidence, as they were able to overcome challenging words encountered throughout the sessions, such as *notebook* and *colored pencil*, which were due to unfamiliarity and interference with other terms. This positive change occurred due to retrieval practice, as mentioned by Sousa (2016), where students constantly reinforce these words throughout the lesson. Moreover, educators need to understand first how memory processes work in vocabulary retention to choose the appropriate teaching strategy, including constant and significant practice to achieve this learning goal (Gordon & Lowry, 2024).

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As the present study involved only 13 participants, future research can focus on a larger group of students to determine if the results are consistent. Similarly, administering a retention test after a considerable period, once the intervention has concluded, should be considered to determine whether students have retained the target vocabulary, as it was not considered in this study due to time limitations.

CONCLUSIONS

This study underscores the potential of routine-based activities as an effective strategy for enhancing English vocabulary retention among young EFL learners. The following conclusions are presented according to the research questions that guided the study:

1. Due to the positive results obtained from this intervention, routine-based activities can be seen as an effective way to retain vocabulary. This teaching strategy was applied for one month, during which young EFL learners participated. The post-test revealed high levels of retention of the 12 target words used in this study. Moreover, challenging words such as *notebook* and *colored pencils* were overcome throughout the intervention.
2. Students' engagement and confidence increased through the intervention, which was evident in classroom observations. Moreover, during the final interview, students reported that they were able to retain vocabulary effectively, enjoyed the routines, and remembered more words than before, due to the use of the warm-up song and comprehension check routines. This result demonstrated that routine-based activities helped students to feel more engaged and increased their confidence in the classroom.
3. After one month of routine-based activities implementation, different students' aspects

were improved. This teaching strategy not only helped students retain the target vocabulary but also strengthened their confidence, pronunciation, and participation during the lessons. Therefore, the use of predictable activities resulted in positive student outcomes in their learning.

This study indicates and provides evidences that routine-based activities, including songs, games, and visuals, proved to be effective not only for students' vocabulary retention but also for improving other aspects, such as pronunciation, engagement, and confidence. Through the findings of this study, EFL teachers can employ routine-based activities that help young learners retain and expand their vocabulary in a meaningful and engaging way.

CONTRIBUTOR ROLES

Gisselle Karina Molina Cabrera: Conceptualization, investigation, literature review, data collection, data analysis, methodology development, original draft writing, results interpretation, review, and editing.

Hazel Acosta Cadungog: Supervision, tutoring, methodological guidance, critical review, academic editing, validation of results, and final manuscript review.

ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

The authors state that there are no ethical implications associated with this study.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no financial or non-financial conflicts of interest that could have influenced the work presented.

REFERENCES

- Adesope, O. O., Trevisan, D. A., & Sundararajan, N. (2017). Rethinking the use of tests: A meta-analysis of practice testing. *Review of Educational Research*, 87(3), 659–701. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654>
- Annisa, R., Fatoni, M., & Zainuddin, M. (2025). The analysis of repetition drill technique in teaching English vocabulary to vocational high school students. *INTENS (International Journal of English Education and Linguistics)*, 2(01), 19–30. <https://doi.org/10.32665/intens.v2i01.2205>
- Bialystok, E. (2018). Bilingual education for young children: Review of the effects and consequences. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2016.1203859>
- Budiman, A. (2017). Behaviorism and foreign language teaching methodology. *English Franca: Academic Journal of English Language and Education*, 1(2), 101–114. <https://doi.org/10.29240/ef.v1i2.171>

- Burden, P. R. (2020). *Classroom management: Creating a successful K-12 learning community*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Coyne, M. D., McCoach, D. B., Loftus-Rattan, S. M., Baker, D. L., & Ware, S. M. (2022). Long-term effects of kindergarten vocabulary instruction and intervention on target vocabulary knowledge through second grade. *Topics in Language Disorders*, 42(4), E9–E28. <https://doi.org/10.1097/TLD.0000000000000296>
- Gordon, K. R., & Lowry, S. L. (2024). Fostering retention of word learning: The number of training sessions children retrieve words positively relates to post-training retention. *Journal of Child Language*, 51(3), 710–719. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305000923000752>
- Ho, B. Q. (2021). Effects of learning process and self-efficacy in real-world education for sustainable development. *Sustainability*, 13(1), 403. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13010403>
- Huyen, T. T. T., & Oanh, P. T. K. (2025). Enhancing English Vocabulary Retention for High School Students Via Knowt Platform. *International Journal of Social Science And Human Research*, 08(04). <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijsshr/v8-i3-63>
- Janczukowicz, K. (2021). The role of working memory in acquiring new structures and lexicon when learning English as a second language. *Beyond Philology: An International Journal of Linguistics, Literary Studies and English Language Teaching*, 18(2), 95–112. <https://doi.org/10.26881/bp.2021.2.05>
- Jeremiah, F., Butson, R., & Oke, A. (2025). New perspectives on repetitive behaviour. *Psychological Research*, 89, 61. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00426-025-02092-6>
- Madsen, K. M., Peters-Sanders, L. A., & Goldstein, H. (2022). Optimizing vocabulary instruction for preschool children. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 45(3), 227–250. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10538151221116596>
- Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador. (2016). *Currículo nacional de lengua extranjera*. <https://educacion.gob.ec/curriculo-lengua-extranjera/#>
- Muñoz-Ponce, C. A., & González-Reyes, S. (2025). Project-based learning to improve speaking skills of seventh-grade students. *Polo del Conocimiento*. <https://polodelconocimiento.com/ojs/index.php/es/article/view/8948/html>
- Peters-Sanders, L. A., Kelley, E. S., Biel, C. H., Madsen, K., Seven, Y., Hull, K., & Goldstein, H. (2020). Moving forward four words at a time: Effects of a supplemental preschool vocabulary intervention. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 51(1), 165–175. https://doi.org/10.1044/2019_LSHSS-19-00029
- Rabindran, & Madanagopal, D. (2020). Piaget's theory and stages of cognitive development: An overview. *Scholars Journal of Applied Medical Sciences*, 8(9), 2152–2157. <https://doi.org/10.36347/sjams.2020.v08i09.034>
- Read, C. (2019). *Ferris Wheel 3: Teacher's book*. Macmillan Education Limited.
- Revutska, S. (2020). The use of classroom routines in memorization and further development of communicative competence. *Teaching Languages at Higher Educational Establishments at the Present Stage. Intersubject Relations*, (37), 77–88. <https://doi.org/10.26565/2073-4379-2020-37-06>
- Smith, R., & Rebolledo, P. (2022). A handbook for exploratory action research. *ELT Journal*, 76(2), e1. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccz025>
- Sousa, D. A. (2016). *How the brain learns*. Corwin Press.
- Tolliboyeva, G., & Shakarova, S. (2024). The role of grammar in the enlargement of the English vocabulary. *Conference Proceedings: Fostering Your Research Spirit*, 827–831. <https://jainkwellpublishing.com/index.php/conferences/article/view/738>

- Wen, Z., & Li, S. (2019). Working memory in L2 learning and processing. In *Cambridge University Press eBooks* (pp. 365-389). <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108333603.016>
- Zakarneh, B. I., Alsalhi, N. R., Talab, A. R. A. B., Mansour, H. M., & Mahmoud, M. M. J. (2021b). Social Interactions as a Barrier to Second Language Learning: A Sociocultural Perspective. *International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, 10(2), 145-157. <https://doi.org/10.18488/journal.23.2021.102.145.157>



REVISTA KRONOS

Bridging the gap: An autobiographical study on English learning experiences through private tutoring in Cuenca, Ecuador

Nicol Paulina Garzón Cordero | iD Universidad Nacional de Educación (UNAE)-Ecuador
Diego Cristian Cajas Quishpe | iD Universidad Nacional de Educación (UNAE)-Ecuador

ABSTRACT This study explores the English learning experiences of students in Cuenca who turned to private tutoring after facing persistent challenges in formal education. Using a qualitative autobiographical approach, the author examined the learning journeys of teenagers aged 13 to 18 who received private English tutoring with the researcher between 2020 and 2025. The research aimed to contribute to the understanding of educational inequality and the need for more empathetic English language teaching practices in Ecuador. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and a reflective teaching journal that documented pedagogical practices and emotional dynamics. The theoretical framework integrates concepts such as motivation, learner identity, linguistic imperialism, and Global English to analyze how these factors shaped students' learning perceptions and decisions. The findings reveal that private tutoring serves not only as academic support but also as a space for emotional recovery, confidence building, and the reimagining of English as a meaningful learning tool.

KEYWORDS private tutoring, motivation, learner identity, Global English.

FECHA DE RECEPCIÓN 12/10/2025 FECHA DE APROBACIÓN 05/01/2026

Cerrando brechas: Un estudio autobiográfico sobre las experiencias de aprendizaje del inglés a través de tutorías privadas en Cuenca, Ecuador

RESUMEN El presente estudio explora las experiencias de aprendizaje del inglés de estudiantes en Cuenca que recurrieron a tutorías privadas después de enfrentar dificultades persistentes en la educación formal. Desde un enfoque cualitativo y autobiográfico, la autora examinó las trayectorias de aprendizaje de adolescentes entre 13 y 18 años que recibieron tutorías privadas de inglés con la investigadora entre 2020 y 2025. Esta investigación buscó contribuir a la comprensión de las desigualdades educativas y a la necesidad de prácticas de enseñanza del inglés más empáticas en Ecuador. Los datos se recopilaban mediante entrevistas en profundidad y un diario reflexivo que documentó las prácticas pedagógicas y las dinámicas emocionales. El marco teórico integra conceptos como la motivación, la identidad del estudiante, el imperia- lismo lingüístico y el inglés global, con el fin de analizar cómo estos factores influyeron en las percepciones y decisiones de aprendizaje de los estudiantes. Los hallazgos revelan que la tutoría privada no solo funciona como apoyo académico, sino también como un espacio de recuperación emocional, construcción de confianza y resignificación del inglés como una herramienta de aprendizaje significativa.

PALABRAS CLAVE tutoría privada, motivación, identidad del estudiante, inglés como lengua global.

INTRODUCTION

This article explores how long-term private tutoring relationships shape learner identity, motivation, and emotional well-being. Grounded in a narrative autobiographical reflection, the study focuses on the experiences of students who turned to tutoring after facing setbacks in formal education. Their voices were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed alongside the tutor-researcher's reflective journal to uncover how mutual transformation occurs within these educational spaces.

In Ecuador's educational and professional settings, English has been established as a core component of the national curriculum. This shows that this language is considered a critical path to global opportunities and academic achievement. Yet, despite its weight, many learners struggle to succeed in English instruction due to rigid curricula, overloaded classrooms, and a lack of emotional and personalized support in both public and private schools. These challenges often lead the students to experience anxiety, low self-confidence, and disengagement from language learning (Guerrero et al., 2025; Barre-Parrales & Villafuerte-Holguín, 2021). These challenges often lead the students to experience anxiety, low self-confidence, and disengagement from language learning. At the same time, private tutoring also reflects socioeconomic inequalities, since many students who would benefit from additional support cannot access it due to financial limitations.

In response to these problems, private English tutoring has emerged as an informal alternative that provides a support system to complement school English instruction. This growing phenomenon has been defined as *shadow education*, where private instruction complements the formal system by addressing both pedagogical and emotional shortcomings (Bray, 2022; Zumbuehl et al., 2022). Students often describe tutoring sessions as flexible, emotionally safe, and responsive to their personal needs, which have not been considered in school-based education (Escobar Fandiño & Silva Velandia, 2020; Chan, 2019). However, most research on this topic emphasizes that it can create structural inequalities, overlooking the lived emotional and motivational needs addressed unevenly, depending on who can access tutoring.

By merging learners' perspectives with personal teaching reflections, this research seeks to contribute new insights into the emotional recovery, motivation, and identity negotiation that happen through tutoring. It examines how sustained private tutoring experiences can foster resilience and a renewed sense of academic agency in students who once felt excluded or unsupported in school. This study also highlights how trust, empathy, and adaptive teaching strategies, when consistently applied, can rebuild students' confidence and reshape their relationship with the English language. Ultimately, the research advocates for a more inclusive and learner-centered vision of English Language Teaching (ELT). An instruction that goes beyond grammar drills and standardized outcomes to prioritize connection, well-being, and student voice within the learning process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Across different educational systems, private English tutoring has grown where formal provision appears to be misaligned with learners' needs. In this context, parents of students who experience persistent gaps or low confidence in the subject, as well as anxiety during exam cycles look for extra help (Zeng, 2024; Hajar & Karakus, 2024). Yet, the literature does not present tutoring as a mere way to fill the gap. Instead, studies from diverse settings suggest that one-to-one spaces can reduce the social cost of trying, allowing learners

to ask questions they might avoid in crowded classrooms, and it also motivates students to speak with less fear of embarrassment (Chan, 2019; Černá, 2020).

Tutoring is generally managed as a different relational setting. It is not a remedy for «bad teaching» but a complementary education. People, in most cases, look for private tutoring because they see English as a plus in life. Unlike in formal education, where students need to approve English, private tutoring constitutes a space which is designed to reduce students' fear, allow them to make mistakes without falling behind in the subject, and try again until the language becomes usable and friendly. These benefits, however, come hand-in-hand with students' responsibility, if it is not handed back to students (Zumbuehl, Hof, & Wolter, 2022; Zeng, 2024). Therefore, the goals of tutoring are not automatic; they emerge when pedagogy, pacing, and agency are intentionally combined. Private tutoring is also known as shadow education. This type is described as a single service considered a «**jigsaw**» of local responses assembled when schools cannot fully meet students' academic demands (Bray, 2023).

The principal axis in the global work is the **relational aspect** of effective tutoring. Tutors need to act as instructors, mentors, or coaches. They need to pair empathy with effective teaching strategies, adjustable pacing, persistence, and a willingness to communicate with students (Werbińska, Bozyigit, Guerra, Ekiert, & Köse, 2019; Prastyo, Tinanti, & Farhana, 2022). In this sense, as in general education, tutoring has different modalities for example online and hybrid, and these modes can either reproduce passivity or purposeful tasks. Thus, tutors also need to innovate their classes by providing rapid feedback, **scaffolding receptive skills**, and maintaining engagement around school schedules (Escobar-Fandiño & Silva Velandia, 2020; Guerrero, Astudillo, Orozco Jurado, Robalino, & Salcedo, 2025).

As in the case of schools, private English tutoring also requires qualified tutors and consistent services to ensure that quality is professional rather than incidental (Alharbi, 2024). Although it is argued that tutoring works **because** it occurs in quieter, closer, and more intimate settings compared to most school classrooms, the reality is that tutors play a significant role in facilitating English learning. Hence, the difference is structural and relational rather than contextual. In **ELT** (English Language Teaching) private tutoring, tutors depict careers grounded in care and adaptation, with responsive teaching to learners' histories rather than prescriptive norms (Hua & Yung, 2024).

Despite the benefits of private tutoring, this practice can create uneven access for students who cannot afford them. This mirrors inequalities since, private tutoring sustains a support only for those able to pay (Islam, Hoque, & Hoque, 2021; Walker & Zhang, 2024). In these regards, the regional conversation revolves around the question of «does tutoring help?» to «**under what conditions** can it expand possibility without reproducing exclusion?». It is necessary to see it from a broader perspective that shows the ideologies of **Global English** and how these practices function as language policy, shaping what «good English» counts as and whose identities are centered (Yung, Entrich, & Bautista, 2023; Heron et al., 2024).

In Ecuador, these tensions are concrete. Advanced programs such as **CLIL** in some private institutions coexist with clear language policies and resources that are opposite to those in public schools, creating uneven opportunities for English learning (Barre-Parralles & Villafuerte-Holguín, 2021). Within this landscape, the freelance one-to-one practice examined in this article is pictured as a **complementary tool** for the school rather than a replacement. Private tutoring can be considered as an **autonomy-supportive and identity-affirming** process. This is because students' progress is organized around intelligibility, strategy use, and meaningful purposes, centered on learners' identities rather than native-speaker imitation (Yung et al., 2023; Heron et al., 2024; Hua & Yung, 2024).

Private tutoring generally accommodates learners who are typically **failing** or very close to fail English in their schools. However, when they begin their private classes, their **relationship with the language changes**. In most cases, **English** shifts from an obligation to a tool, from something endured to something usable and personally meaningful. This change may be the result of the tutors' empathy and flexible pacing. Their relational moves are treated as mechanisms to increase students' participation and persistence (Werbińska et al., 2019; Prastyo et al., 2022).

Careful methodological choices aim to establish a durable relationship between tutors and students that extends beyond their sessions. Short listening and reading activities, brief message-based and quick speaking bursts create frequent, concrete and immediate feedback so, learners feel progress and can **carry** routines back to their schools (Escobar-Fandiño & Silva Velandia, 2020; Guerrero et al., 2025). Care works better through structure, such as having visible goals, simple progress markers, and predictable rhythms that convert comfort into **independent performance**. This orientation resonates with regional studies showing that emotionally committed teaching becomes transformative when it is paired with clear scaffolds from the tutors (Tamayo et al., 2025). Tutors need to develop students' autonomy since support **tapers** around assessment periods, and responsibility is **gradually released** so students do not come to believe that correct performance is only possible in the tutor's presence (Zumbuehl et al., 2022; Zeng, 2024). In other words, private tutoring aims to help learners **overcome their fear and errors** in a safe space. Once students are able to do that, they can **leave** that space and be ready to use the language properly in diverse spaces.

As discussed, global and regional authors share the view that private tutoring is a **relational, designed, and complementary** form of work. Its educational value lies in how empathy and pacing open for participation. Its ethical value lies in keeping access and autonomy among students. However, there is still limited research in Latin America examining private tutoring from rational, emotional and identity-focused perspectives, which leaves important regional dynamics understudied. In the Ecuadorian context, this means recognizing that students often seek tutoring because they are failing or about to fail English in their schools. When tutoring fosters a lasting relationship with English that outlasts the session, learners can begin to see the language as a tool rather than an obligation. The present review therefore situates one-to-one tutoring in Cuenca as a bridge rather than a bypass: a relational setting purpose-built to make confidence and control **portable**, complementing rather than competing with school-based EFL (Bray, 2023; Islam et al., 2021; Heron et al., 2024; Hua & Yung, 2024; Yung et al., 2023; Walker & Zhang, 2024).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative, autobiographical design grounded in reflective practice and learner-centered perspectives. Drawing on the tutor-researcher's experience providing private English tutoring in Cuenca, Ecuador (2020–2025), the narrative approach valued participants' voices and personal stories to understand how meaning is constructed through experience. The study was guided by the following research question: *What are the experiences and perceptions of English learners in Cuenca who seek private lessons after struggling in formal educational settings?* This question oriented the participants' selection, data collection, and analysis. As Islam et al. (2021) note, «qualitative studies provide in-depth insights into participants' lived experiences and social realities» (p. 738), which supported the exploration of emotional and adaptive learning pathways.

To support credibility and depth, two data collection tools were employed: a reflective journal written by the author who was also the students' tutor and in-depth interviews with eleven participants. The reflective journal captured the tutor's ongoing reflections, personal reactions, and pedagogical evolution throughout the research process. As Tamayo et al. (2025) highlight, narrative inquiry enables educators to «reflect on their professional journey, emotions, and commitment to student learning» (p. 418). These journal entries also served as a form of data triangulation, offering context and continuity alongside the interviews.

The in-depth interviews were structured into three themes as follows:

- **Looking Back:** students described their school-based English experiences and what led them to seek tutoring.
- **During Tutoring:** students reflected on their progress, emotional responses, and academic confidence.
- **Moving Forward:** students discussed their readiness for independent learning and the personal impact of tutoring.

Participants included eleven teenagers, eight males and three females (ages 13–18). They attended private secondary schools in Cuenca. The shared characteristic of these schools is that their tuition was more expensive than the media for private institutions in the city. In all cases, parents or guardians initiated the search for tutoring after their children faced problems with English. Furthermore, all participants shared five common characteristics: (a) all were currently enrolled in secondary private schools; (b) parents/guardians initiated the tutoring; (c) all were between 13 and 18 years old; (d) expensive tuition; and (e) all were shy and lacked confidence at the beginning of the tutorials. Additionally, the majority of participants began tutoring shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Before attending the private tutorials, the participating students were unmotivated, frustrated, or disinterested in English. They also viewed tutoring as a necessary intervention rather than a choice. However, over time, they developed a better understanding of the language's importance and began to show signs of emotional and academic progress. This aligns with Walker and Zhang's (2024) findings that private tutoring can foster both emotional reassurance and improved confidence among students facing systemic challenges. To protect the participants' confidentiality, during the analysis, they will be referred to by fictitious first names; any potentially identifying details were generalized or removed. Interviews were conducted in Spanish (participants' native language) and translated into English for reporting. Quotations were lightly edited for readability without altering meaning.

To analyze the data, the author used a thematic analysis. Following Islam et al. (2021), the interview transcripts and journal entries were examined to identify emerging categories including motivation, emotional support, identity, and learner agency. The coding process was inductive, allowing themes to emerge from the data without imposing preconceived categories. As Sadhu (2024) emphasizes, «narrative accounts reveal the emotional depth and transformative moments that statistical data often overlook» (p. 12).

Reflexivity was maintained throughout to acknowledge the tutor-researcher's positionality and ensure ethical engagement with the data.

FINDINGS

This section is presented in three narrative blocks that mirror the students' experiences attending private tutoring in Cuenca as follows: *Before Tutoring*: examines why teenagers and their families sought extra support, addressing limitations of school-based English,

initial motivations, and emotional barriers and learner identity. *During Tutoring*: traces the transformative role of one-to-one work and personalized pacing, a safe climate, and visible micro-wins. And, *Looking Ahead* consolidates the outcomes, showing how English moves from an obligation to a useful tool. Throughout, the students' narratives, the author weaves the students' interviews, reflective journals, and brief literature to interpret the patterns and position her practice. Considering the research methodology previously described, this analysis will be presented in the first person.

To guide the reader and clarify this section's purpose, I begin with a brief autobiographical account that explains how my background and teaching experience shaped the way I interpret the students' narratives in this study. This personal context helps position my role as the tutor and frames the lens through which the findings are analyzed.

I hold a Bachelor's and Master's degree in International Relations but back in 2019 I discovered a deep passion for teaching English language and I started teaching English as a freelance teacher. At that moment, my knowledge in the language came from my previous academic and personal experience with language since school, high school, a year exchange program all the way to United States in order to improve my English language skills until studying a bilingual bachelor's and master's career at the University, with that foundation I started to teach basic English classes for children in which learning focused on mastering the basics of English language, focused not so much on the traditional way of teaching English, but rather making my students learn from the interaction with the language by creating a relationship with it, in the same way I learned, then with time, the number of my students became to arise and in order to improve to be better for my students, I decided to study something already focused clearly on teaching English as a foreign language and to be able give my students the best from me.

Before Tutoring

Limitations of school-based English instruction

When families first come to me, they rarely discuss about English. Instead, they often talk about the excessive activities their children have in their schools, a pace that never slows down. Regarding how English is taught in the participants' schools, Maria said, «I would describe them as very repetitive, with little real progress». Francisco added that most days, they spend their time «copying worksheets... they hardly explain anything». To better understand this situation, I asked Pedro to exemplify this practice, he said that in his class at school «there was no speaking... the teacher spoke mainly in Spanish». As I listened to my students, I could already identify the pattern that I had been writing about in my notes. Diego reinforced this by saying, «In school we just fill in books; the teacher talks, but we don't really use English», while Daniela noted, «My English classes were only grammar and worksheets. We never practiced speaking», which mirrors what I found in my reflective entries. Renato summarized it clearly: «Sometimes I didn't even know what we were supposed to be learning; we just copied». It seems that the perception about language progress and learning in schools revolve around homework compliance mostly. Thus, when students come to my tutorials, they generally want me to help them complete their homework and this activity has been reducing my time needed to repair the basics (Reflective Journal, Student Daniel, 2025).

Helping students complete their homework lesson after lesson started to produce fatigue and it was difficult for me to move forward in teaching the language. This practice shadowed what was happening in my students' schools. Bray and Ventura (2024) mentioned that «the shadow follows the curriculum of the mainstream», which means that when pacing rises and leveling never happens, the language gaps simply accumulate. Henceforth, I tried to change this practice and, as a fixer move, I slowed the pace in each

session, since I wanted the tutoring to work. Aiming to improve the quality of my tutorials, what I did during each session was two tiny checks to see the gaps, help a bit in completing my students' homework and we focused more on writing two short sentences the students can make and utter with confidence. This initial move helped students noticed their progress and loosened their fear around grammar. When progress is visible like that, something they can point to, the fear around grammar and language use begins to ease.

Initial motivations for tutoring

There is not a single motive for students to start their extra tutorial English classes. Generally, parents come to me when their children have low grades in their English tests, which causes worry, and they want to help their children improve their English language learning. However, the motives are diverse, for example, Veronica mentioned that her teacher at school told her parents to find a private teacher. Another student, Mauricio who arrived in the 2023 break said in our first class «My mom signed me up on vacations, because my grades were low». Santiago expressed the same pressure at home: «My parents were scared I was going to fail English again, so they looked for help», while María said, «I wanted to improve because I felt stuck; I wasn't learning anything in school». For Pedro, the trigger was the new school's placement exam: «My level is very low, but I want to learn». Other students had changed to a tougher private school without leveling and felt the jump immediately. Francisco explained, «I changed schools and everything was harder... I felt lost in English». In my own notes from Daniel's first week, I wrote, «First goal: avoid remedials while we start leveling». (Reflective Journal, Student Daniel, 2025). A different page from that same period reads, «Parents want stability now and a plan for later». (Reflective Journal, 2025, Intake notes).

All these motives to enroll in private tutorials align with the broader picture; families lean on tutoring as a «stopgap» to repair unfinished learning (Yung, Entrich, & Bautista, 2023) in their children's schools. At the same time, tutoring must keep pace with schoolwork, as mentioned before, because tutorials echo school teaching «the shadow follows the curriculum of the mainstream» (Bray & Ventura, 2024). In other words, tutorials need to reinforce what students cannot learn in their regular English classes.

Once the students star the sessions, I can feel their stress the moment they walk in, their parent's tight voice from their worries and the teenager looking down without knowing whether it will work or not. I slow everything and say, «we're starting fresh». I want them to keep an open mind, so my first step is to find a hook they actually like. For example, music, football, a series, a game and connect it to English. With Mauricio, it was music: «Songs and writing made me like English more», he said. With Pedro it was goals, he said «My level is very low, but I want to learn». Once we have that link, motivation shows up, and we try one small, doable task to get a first win. This calm, interest-first start is why tutoring so often builds «increased confidence and greater motivation» (Walker & Zhang, 2024) and why the tutor's role is to be «the guide... the engine that will encourage and help students» (Escobar Fandiño & Silva Velandia, 2020).

Emotional barriers and learner identity

The first thing I felt in many intakes was fear. Thus, I usually slow the pace and say, «we try first, we fix after». In this sense, when I was recalling with my students what they thought when they started the tutorials, Mauricio told me, «There was a time I said it wasn't important and I wasn't going to get motivated», Verónica also remembered, «At the beginning I didn't think English was important; I didn't want to answer». Santiago added that his first weeks were the exact two phrases, «I don't know... I keep forgetting». (Mauricio's, Verónica's and Santiago's Interviews). María echoed this fear saying, «I was nervous to speak because I thought I would say everything wrong», and Pedro recalled, «At first I

felt dumb in English class; I thought everyone else understood except me». Daniela also mentioned, «I didn't want to read aloud; I was scared people would laugh».

Regarding students' first impressions of my tutorials and English learning, I wrote in my Reflective Journal «They aren't anti-English; they're afraid of getting it wrong». So, I gave sentence formulas, «Yesterday I ____; I usually ____; I want to ____» and we kept a small «mistake budget». We spent it together and celebrated the first messy answer. One visible win, something they could say and write, made them feel they were actually learning and understanding, something they thought was impossible.

What follows matches the current evidence: tutoring frequently brings «increased confidence and greater motivation» when support is individualized to the students (Walker & Zhang, 2024). Therefore, tutors should not be only instructors; they also need to act as «mentors» and «emotional supports» for learners (Werbińska et al., 2019). In practice, that means that an error is a tolerant routine. The phrase, first try it, then fix it has helped my students improve significantly by the end of each class. So, as anxiety softened, teenagers risked longer turns, and only then did the language learning start to appear.

During Tutoring

Transformative role of tutoring

Change does not start with a worksheet; it starts when the room gets quiet and the students and I find a pace that fits both of us. María told me, «It's just the two of us... more connection, trust, and tailored plans». Daniel noticed the feeling: «Here I'm less afraid of mistakes; personalized classes help me improve a lot». Verónica mentioned the environment: «Private classes at my pace; big classes are noisy». (María's, Daniel's, Verónica's Interviews). It seems that once the pressure drops, progress becomes visible. Nicolás said, «When I learned the irregular, I felt proud», and J added, «Testing myself with irregular verbs helped me learn». Francisco described what it felt like outside the lesson: «Before... I didn't understand anything; now I understand practically everything». Meanwhile, Mauricio showed a strategy shift: «Now I try to answer before going to a translator». (Nicolás, Verónica, Francisco, Mauricio). Santiago added something similar during his interview: «Here I don't feel embarrassed. I can stop, ask, and try again without people looking at me». Daniela expressed relief saying, «I can finally speak without panicking; in school I stayed quiet». María emphasized the contrast: «Here you actually teach me... you don't just pass slides».

From my side, the mechanism was steady and simple. In my Reflective Journal about Pedro (2025) I wrote: «One topic per class; bite-sized tense work; visible feedback so errors become information, not risk». With Verónica, I leaned on attention first: «Writing to focus; then read-aloud plus short speaking to connect form and meaning». (Reflective Journal, Student Verónica, 2025). With Santiago, the note is even more concrete: «Two micro-tasks, one breath, one tiny win; save it in the notebook». (Reflective Journal, Student Santiago).

Once the fear subsided, we could finally practice grammar, another language skills purposefully without freezing. Here is how I handle it. First, I explain the point with very easy examples, then I let them try and make mistakes because it is normal to make mistakes. This is something students do not feel when they are being graded at school, that of course, is important, but more important is that students learn. When errors occur, we correct them together. I often remind my students that there is a linguistic order to follow, and we practice that order in short lines about their own lives. When stress rises because they don't understand, I do a quick explanation in Spanish (grammar only) to calm them, and then we return to English. If, after several tries, the form is still challenging, I share a little hack (a list, a rhyme, a color code) so it feels more manageable. Francisco described

this moment well: «When you explain it slowly, I finally get it... in school they move too fast». Renato mentioned, «I like that we repeat until it sticks. I don't feel dumb anymore». Pedro added, «When I understand the rule, English feels easier... not like a punishment».

In Ecuador, focused, meaningful support has been linked to receptive-skills gains and higher student engagement, precisely what our teenagers began to describe as listening and reading felt less like a wall and more like a door. «In Ecuador, focused, meaningful tutoring has been associated with measurable improvements in EFL receptive skills and higher student engagement (Guerrero et al., 2025)». In other words, the skills-and-confidence turn we observe is not accidental—it is the expected outcome of focused tutoring in our context

Looking Ahead

Outcomes: From obligation to useful tool

By the time the panic softens and routines are established, the talk changes from passing to purpose. María said: «I've improved a lot, but I want to keep progressing to reach bigger goals». Mauricio was specific about what would help: «Even if I'm leveled, I'd like more classes to speak fluently». Francisco named a concrete horizon «I want to study in the United States; if I don't know English, I won't be able to» while Pedro set a nearer ladder: «Level with my class and then reach a high level». (María, Mauricio, Francisco, Pedro). In my Reflective Journal for María (2025) I noted how weekly speaking goals replaced crisis homework; in Mauricio's journal (2025) I wrote that he began bringing his own topics for «conversation days»; Francisco's journal (2025) shows a growing personal word list for college tasks; and Pedro's journal (2025) records a simple «high-level» checklist he ticks after each unit. The question shifted from Can I survive the test? to What can I do with English next?

Over the interviews and in my notes, a clear pattern appeared. Most students came because parents were worried about failing, so we began with a light maintenance frame: short daily input, spaced review of the one form that still slips, and a small chance to speak on the first try. In the tutoring room, the relational setting is quieter, slower, and more flexible than a classroom, allowing students to try, make mistakes, and try again. With time and steady routines, English started to feel like a **tool**, not an obligation. That doesn't mean everyone suddenly loved English or that stress vanished; we still face busy weeks before exams and sometimes adjust to the school timetable, because school stays important. What changed is that students did not live in constant stress: they knew we would work at their pace, and the two ways of learning, school and tutoring, coexist. As Pedro put it, «Here I feel like I can ask without feeling dumb; in school I stay quiet». Daniel added something similar during his interview: «When I practice here, I don't feel rushed. I finally understand what I'm doing». And Mauricio reflected: «Before, English was something I had to pass. Now I use it — I even watch videos and try to understand».

Families observed the progress, and many chose a **reduced, purpose-focused cadence** rather than stopping, which aligns with regional work showing tutoring opens opportunities once confidence and routines take root (Yung, Entrich, & Bautista, 2023) and can build motivation over time (Walker & Zhang, 2024). At the same time, I stay alert to **dependence**: if a learner only performs with me present, we **taper** support and hand responsibility back step by step, so gains **travel back to class** and do not rely on the tutor (Zeng, 2024).

DISCUSSION

The findings across the three narrative blocks—Before Tutoring, During Tutoring, and Looking Ahead—show a clear shift in how teenagers in Cuenca reposition English when supported through one-to-one tutoring. At first, students' struggles reflected what the literature has repeatedly documented in mainstream EFL classrooms: limited feedback, fear of error, lack of participation, and a focus on grammar that rarely translates into communicative use (Zeng, 2024; Walker & Zhang, 2024). These conditions not only affect performance but also shape learner identity, often producing avoidance, frustration, or the sense that English is only about passing tests.

The patterns observed in During Tutoring align with research showing that personalized, relational, and low-pressure learning environments open opportunities for students to build confidence and regain control over their progress (Yung, Enright, & Bautista, 2023). Inside tutoring sessions, diagnostic clarity, slower pacing, visible micro-wins, and repeated chances to try again without penalty helped students reinterpret what learning English could feel like. This mirrors evidence that when students can take risks in a safe climate where errors are treated as part of learning, their agency grows and participation increases (Barre-Parrares & Villafuerte-Holguín, 2021).

The Looking Ahead narratives show the most significant transformation: students began imagining long-term goals, such as studying abroad, improving fluency, or preparing for college-level tasks. This future-oriented mindset reflects what the literature describes as the link between sustained support and the development of motivation that goes beyond course requirements or grades. When learners perceive progress, relevance, and trust in the process, English becomes a meaningful tool rather than an obligation.

Taken together, these findings reinforce broader evidence from Ecuador and Latin America: when support structures are personalized, relational, and consistent, students who previously struggled in school-based English can recover confidence, engage more deeply, and build forms of agency not always possible in crowded, test-driven classrooms (Zeng, 2024; Walker & Zhang, 2024). In this study, tutoring became the context where teenagers could re-enter English learning with less fear and more purpose, resulting in visible changes in identity, participation, and long-term orientation.

CONCLUSIONS

This autobiographical study answers the research question by showing how teenagers in Cuenca's high-fee private schools experience and make sense of private English tutoring after struggling in mainstream classrooms. Families usually arrive because repetition, limited feedback, and fear of error have eroded confidence; diagnostics make the gaps visible and parents initiate help. Inside tutoring, the moves that matter are simple and human: slow the pace, make progress visible, and protect an error-tolerant space. One-to-one work allows us to anchor lessons according to the student's interests and apply what was explained before, using the «try first and fix after», and turn grammar into small formulas that students can use in real-life situations as they advance. As small wins accumulate, teenagers shift from silence to participation and from completely avoidance to actual agency. Ultimately, English is no longer just a requirement; it has become a useful tool, for passing courses, speaking with less fear, imagining studying abroad later, and setting personal fluency goals for the future.

A final reflection is born from the context the research has been made, these gains are happening to teenagers who come from families that can afford private help. It is encouraging that even reluctant learners in fee-charging schools can change their view of English when support exists and is even personalized, but it also raises an equity question. If stu-

dents in well-resourced private schools need this kind of scaffolding, what happens to their peers in public schools who cannot purchase this help and often face weaker school-based English instruction? The ethical horizon of this study points to a simple principle: opportunities to build confidence and control of core related to education should not depend on a family's ability to pay. Ecuadorian evidence shows that public and private schools do not benefit equally from EFL innovations; implementation differences tied to connectivity, resources, and teacher preparation widened during the pandemic, with public schools even regressing in some indicators, underscoring the need for school-embedded, low-cost supports so access does not depend on family income (Barre-Parrales & Villafuerte-Holguín, 2021) This study centers on one tutor-researcher and a small, purposive sample from fee-charging private schools in Cuenca; voices from public schools students and lower-income families are absent and need to be captured in future studies.

CONTRIBUTOR ROLES

Nicol Paulina Garzón Cordero: Conceptualization, investigation, literature review, data collection, data analysis, methodology development, original draft writing, results interpretation, review and editing.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-8133-444X>.

Affiliation: Universidad Nacional de Educación (UNAE), Ecuador.

Diego Cajas: Supervision, tutoring, methodological guidance, critical review, academic editing, validation of results, and final manuscript review.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6792-1443>.

Affiliation: Universidad Nacional de Educación (UNAE), Ecuador.

ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

The authors state that there are no ethical implications associated with this study.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no financial or non-financial conflicts of interest that could have influenced the work presented.

REFERENCES

(Books or Book Chapters)

Bray, M. (2023). Shadow education in Latin America: Assembling the jigsaw. In M. Bray & G. Parreira do Amaral (Eds.), *Shadow education in Africa and Latin America* (pp. 147–163). Comparative Education Research Centre (CERC), University of Hong Kong.

- Tamayo, S., Almeida, F., & Cajas, J. (2025). *EFL teacher's story of commitment and dedication to student learning: A narrative inquiry approach*. Universidad Central del Ecuador. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-87701-8_34
- Sadhu, S. L. (2024). *Kashmir stories and other folklore*. (S. Sadhu, Ed.). Sharad Sadhu. <https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn%3Aaid%3Aascds%3AUS%3Aee8961c2-467f-31e2-b2ed-8a12f9c4a5f0>

(Journal Articles)

- Alharbi, L. A. (2024). Faculty needs and qualified writing tutors in an EFL context: Voices from Saudi Arabia. *REL C Journal*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.7771/2832-9414.1012>
- Barre-Parrales, P., & Villafuerte-Holguín, J. (2021). English as a foreign language instruction in Ecuador: Implementation of the Content and Language Integrated-Learning during 2019–2021. *English Language Teaching Educational Journal*, 4(2), 99–112. <https://doi.org/10.12928/eltej.v4i2.4295>
- Bray, M. (2024). Missing data: What we know and what we need to know about private supplementary tutoring. *Revue internationale d'éducation de Sèvres*, (87). <https://doi.org/10.4000/12fsy>
- Chan, V. N. M. (2019). English private tutoring in Macao: Perceptions of senior secondary three students. *ECNU Review of Education*, 2(1), 44–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2096531119840864> (Original work published 2019)
- Černá, M. (2020). Private tutoring in English through the eyes of its recipients. *Orbis Scholae*, 14(2), 59–79. <https://doi.org/10.14712/23363177.2020.13>
- Eckstein, G. (2023). An ESL specialist in a composition writing center: Is experience the same as expertise? *Feedback Research in Second Language*, 1(1), 55–75. <https://doi.org/10.32038/frsl.2023.01.04>
- Escobar-Fandiño, F. G., & Silva Velandia, A. J. (2020). How an online tutor motivates E-learning English. *Heliyon*, 6(10), e04630. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2020.e04630>
- Gil-López, V., González-Víllora, S., & Hortigüela-Alcalá, D. (2021). Learning foreign languages through content and language integrated learning in physical education: A systematic review. *Porta Linguarum*, 35, 165–182. <https://doi.org/10.30827/portalin.v0i35.15785>
- Guerrero, S. E., Astudillo, M., Orozco Jurado, V., Robalino, G., & Riera, F. (2025). Online academic tutoring for English language learning: A case study of receptive skills development in Ecuadorian students. *World Journal of English Language*, 15(1), 413–420. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v15n1p413>
- Hajar, A., & Karakus, M. (2024). Coming out of the shadows: Investing in English private tutoring at a transition point in Kazakhstan's education system during the global pandemic. *The Language Learning Journal*, 52(5), 571–584. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2023.2213244>
- Heron, M., Dippold, D., Aksit, N., Aksit, T., Doubleday, J., & McKeown, K. (2024). Tutors' beliefs about language and roles: Practice as language policy in EMI contexts. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 29(1), 251–265. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2021.1973410>
- Hua, B., & Yung, K. W. H. (2024). A narrative inquiry into EFL tutors' career trajectories through social cognitive career theory. *System*, 126, 103489. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2024.103489>

- Islam, M. M., Hoque, S., & Hoque, K. E. (2021). Inequalities in private tutoring of English: A phenomenological qualitative study based on Bangladeshi higher secondary students. *The Qualitative Report*, 26(3), 734–750. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.4429>
- Prastyo, Y. D., Tinanti, M. V., & Farhana, S. (2022). A study on English private tutoring based on students' perceptions at SMP Xaverius 1 Bandar Lampung. *Journal of English Educational Study*, 5(2), 103–111.
- Roughton, J. C. (2022). Exploring the benefits of private out-of-school tutoring in English among high school students. *International Journal of Educational Research Open*, 3, 100145. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2022.100145>
- Walker, N., & Zhang, K. C. (2024). What are the non-academic impacts of private tutoring? Voices from A-level students in UK urban schools. *Issues in Educational Research*, 34(2), 760–780. <http://www.iier.org.au/iier34/walker.pdf>
- Werbińska, D., Bozyiğit, E., Guerra, L., Ekiert, M., & Köse, S. (2019). English language teachers' conceptualizations of one-to-one private tutoring: An international phenomenographic study. *Glottodidactica*, 46(2), 175–196. <https://doi.org/10.14746/gl.2019.46.2.11>
- Yung, K.-W.-H., Entrich, S. R., & Bautista, A. (2023). Shadow education: New areas of inquiry in teaching, learning and development. *Journal for the Study of Education and Development*, 46(4), 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02103702.2023.2245227>
- Zeng, Y. (2024). Private tutoring as a relief or burden? Changes in parental beliefs about young children's tutoring after COVID-19. *TESOL Quarterly*, 58(2), 473–499. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.3345>

(Thesis or Dissertations)

- Zumbuehl, M., Hof, S., & Wolter, S. C. (2022). Private tutoring and academic achievement in a selective education system (CESifo Working Paper No. 10044). Center for Economic Studies and ifo Institute (CESifo). <https://hdl.handle.net/10419/267277>

(Web page)

- Carlana, M., La Ferrara, E., Pineda, A., Kitmang, J., & Monge, M. P. (2022, November 8). Online tutoring: A promising solution for accelerating learning. Inter-American Development Bank Blog. <https://doi.org/10.18235/0005742>
- Inter-American Development Bank. (2023). Multiplying learning: Remote tutoring to enhance schooling. IDB Technical Note. <https://publications.iadb.org/en/multiplying-learning-remote-tutoring-enhance-schooling>
- Charoenroop, P. (2021). Local perspectives on English language teaching in private tutoring in Thailand: Re-examining roles and implications. *rEFLECTIONS*, 28(3), 419–440. https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/267277/1/cesifo1_wp10044.pdf?utm_source=consensus

NORMAS DE PUBLICACIÓN

Los trabajos que se considerarán para su publicación en la revista Kronos deben tomar en cuenta estas normas de publicación:

SOBRE EL CUERPO TEXTUAL

- En la portada, las colaboraciones deben hacer constar, en este orden: i) título del artículo, ii) nombre del autor o autora acompañado del grado académico, iii) adscripción institucional u organizacional, iv) dirección electrónica, y v) fecha de envío. Los títulos no deben exceder de 20 palabras.
- En la siguiente página, toda colaboración —menos las reseñas— debe tener un resumen ejecutivo (abstract) de entre 150 y 200 palabras en castellano y en inglés. Bajo los dos resúmenes se pone entre tres y cinco palabras clave.
- Todo el texto principal —incluso la primera hoja, las notas al final, la bibliografía— tendrá una interlínea de 1,5 y se usará la tipografía Times New Roman, tamaño 12.
- Los párrafos no se espaciarán y se introducirá sangrado al inicio
- Márgenes: 2,5 cm por todos los lados de la hoja
- La bibliografía citada en el texto principal se colocará al final del trabajo con sangría francesa.
- La primera vez que aparezcan siglas deberá escribirse su significado completo, luego solamente las siglas.
- La cantidad de figuras y tablas se limita a máximo tres elementos. Los editores de la revista se reservan el derecho de eliminar los demás cuando sean usados de manera excesiva.
- Los títulos de figuras y tablas deben ser concisos, sin que superen las 8 palabras.

SOBRE LA EXTENSIÓN

La extensión de los textos puede medirse con número de palabras o número de hojas para cada sección, tal cual se ilustra en el siguiente gráfico:

SECCIÓN	N.º PALABRAS	N.º HOJAS
Dossier	3000 a 6000	10 a 20
Experticia	2000 a 3000	6 a 10
Reseñas	1000 a 1500	3 a 5

REFERENCIAS

El estándar de las referencias bibliográficas al que se acoge y rige la revista Kronos es el estilo APA en su séptima edición (2019). A manera de guía para las citas y la bibliografía, se detalla a continuación los casos más comunes.

CITAS

La cita corta, que es de menos de cuarenta palabras, va dentro del cuerpo textual (párrafo). Se la puede manejar de dos maneras:

- Con énfasis en el autor, cuya secuencia esquemática es: Apellido, (año), «cita», (página), punto. Ejemplo:
Morales (2009) afirma: «dorem ipsum» (p. 8).
- Con énfasis en el texto, cuya secuencia esquemática es: «cita», (Apellido, año, página), punto. Ejemplo:
«Morbi dolor sapien» (Morales, 2009, p. 68).
- La cita larga, que es de más de cuarenta palabras, va en párrafo aparte, sin cursiva ni comillas y con sangría. Se la puede manejar —al igual que con las citas cortas— de dos maneras:
- Con énfasis en el autor, cuya secuencia esquemática es: en párrafo precedente Apellido, (año), cita en párrafo independiente, punto, (página). Ejemplo:
Morales (2009) afirma:

Quisque purus mauris, ullamcorper quis varius eu, placerat a felis. Aliquam consequat bibendum neque eu efficitur. Vivamus scelerisque, purus et vestibulum efficitur, leo quam blandit neque, nec rutrum urna urna in nunc. Sed diam nunc, porta vitae aliquet sed, dapibus at metus. Vestibulum at ex imperdiet, luctus nisi eget, interdum purus. (p. 68)
- Con énfasis en el texto, cuya secuencia esquemática es: cita en párrafo independiente, punto, (Apellido, año, página). Ejemplo:
Quisque purus mauris, ullamcorper quis varius eu, placerat a felis. Aliquam consequat bibendum neque eu efficitur. Vivamus scelerisque, purus et vestibulum efficitur, leo quam blandit neque, nec rutrum urna urna in nunc. Sed diam nunc, porta vitae aliquet sed, dapibus at metus. Vestibulum at ex imperdiet, luctus nisi eget, interdum purus. (Morales, 2009, p. 68)

SOBRE LA DISPOSICIÓN TEXTUAL INTERIOR

Se jerarquizará la información para facilitar el ordenamiento del contenido de la siguiente manera. Los encabezados no llevarán números, ni tampoco mayúsculas sostenidas.

- Nivel 1: Encabezado centrado en negrita, con mayúsculas y minúsculas
- Nivel 2: Encabezado alineado a la izquierda en negritas con mayúsculas y minúsculas
- Nivel 3: Encabezado de párrafo con sangría, negritas, mayúsculas, minúsculas y punto final.
- Nivel 4: Encabezado de párrafo con sangría, negritas, cursivas, mayúsculas, minúsculas y punto final.
- Nivel 5: Encabezado de párrafo con sangría, cursivas, mayúsculas, minúsculas y punto final.

NOTAS FINALES

La revista Kronos no utiliza pie de páginas. Todas las aclaraciones complementarias deben ser puestas al final del documento como notas finales.

TABLAS Y FIGURAS

En el texto principal se incluirán tablas y figuras —con figuras entiéndase gráficos, mapas, fotografías— si fuese necesario.

Las tablas deben tener en la parte superior la palabra *Tabla*, un número secuencial y un título; en la parte inferior una *Nota* y la *Fuente*, si aplica. Ejemplo:

Tabla 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).

- Las notas informan y ofrecen explicaciones relacionadas con la tabla. La cita de la fuente —sea, libro, revista, página web, etc.— solo se la hace si la tabla no es de propia autoría y siguiendo las normas de referencia expuestas.
- Las figuras deben tener en la parte superior la palabra *Figura*, un número secuencial y un título; en la parte inferior una nota, si aplica, y —obligatoriamente— la fuente. Ejemplo:

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).

- Las notas informan y ofrecen explicaciones relacionadas con la figura. La cita de la fuente —sea, libro, revista, página web, etc.— solo se la hace si la figura no es de propia autoría y siguiendo las normas de referencia expuestas.
- Las figuras se deben enviar en archivo adjunto en alta resolución de al menos 300 pixeles por pulgada, o en formato vectorial.
- Las figuras deben enviarse obligatoriamente con los datos numéricos correspondientes.
- La revista *Kronos* se reserva el derecho de poner determinadas tablas y figuras a todo color cuando las necesidades explicativas e interpretativas lo exijan.

ASPECTOS GENERALES

Cualquier situación no prevista en estas normas de publicación será resuelta por el editor general.



ronos-The Teaching Journal es una revista científica del Instituto Académico de Idiomas de la Universidad Central del Ecuador de frecuencia bianual, 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 de la crítica del corpus teórico alrededor de la pedagogía, didáctica, tecnología y cultura.

