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Técnica de  
Cotopaxi



Educación  
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Licenciatura  
Inglés



CIDE  
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Transdisciplinarios Bolivia

# Scientific Report

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# TEACHING CONGRESS

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Educación Continua  
Licenciatura Inglés  
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Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo Ecuador

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1<sup>st</sup>. International English  
Teaching Congress**



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## **PROLOGO**

El presente trabajo está orientado a promover el intercambio a nivel nacional e internacional de las metodologías, herramientas, conocimientos e investigaciones de las ciencias en relación a la enseñanza del idioma inglés, aplicadas en el Ecuador. El texto y la información bibliométrica reflejan al lector un interesante abanico que abarca las inquietudes y perspectivas de los investigadores, intereses en común o complementarios de los grupos de investigación, lecciones aprendidas, líneas de investigación de las universidades, redes de conocimiento en desarrollo, potenciales alianzas, la extensión del conocimiento y, adicionalmente, permitir su apropiación. Las investigaciones están focalizadas a todas aquellas variables personales, metodológicas, sociales y de políticas de estado que impactan en la enseñanza del idioma inglés, abarcando en si un amplio espectro de estudio.

El análisis de la evolución de la producción científica de Ecuador para el periodo 2011-2016, en función de la cantidad de publicaciones y las áreas del conocimiento, evidencia el posicionamiento de la Educación o la Investigación Educativa en el segundo lugar con 365 publicaciones. Es decir, resulta pertinente la convocatoria de un grupo de docentes de la Universidad de Cotopaxi en conjunto con el Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo Ecuador (CIDE) y el Centro de Estudios Transdisciplinarios (CET) Bolivia a un encuentro de docentes-investigadores de la carrera de idioma inglés a fin de visualizar y conocer los desarrollos del área.

En función de los trabajos presentados, el libro está conformado por cuatro capítulos o subcampos de conocimiento a entender Tecnologías de la Información y Comunicación (TIC), Metodologías/Aproximaciones de enseñanza, Desarrollo profesional/Políticas públicas y por último Contexto Social.

Si bien el conocimiento es fuente perenne de crecimiento e invariablemente, bien aplicado resulta en substanciales mejoras en cualesquiera de los campos científicos o sociales, la sumatoria de la enseñanza del idioma inglés depara a los investigadores la superación de barreras naturales dadas por el contexto cultural, geográfico y social y supone un acercamiento asertivo para el cumplimiento de los objetivos planteados.

# **Chapter 1**

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

# **Student-and-teacher perceptions on flipped learning**

## **sessions of Linguistics and Translation**

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### **Abstract**

This research aimed at providing evidence of effectiveness on the flipped classroom approach to spread the use of student-centered instruction and cooperative learning. The study started with the analysis of flipped learning as an alternative method to traditional teaching. Observations were made to collect feedback on the application of the approach. Four classes in the School of English language at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the Catholic University of Santiago de Guayaquil were flipped. The participants of the study were students of Sociolinguistics, Linguistics, Writing, and Inverse translation. None of them had had any previous flipped classroom experience. They were provided instructional videos and presentations of class content, which they watched at home and made notes on. In class they engaged in discussion, analysis and completion of tasks whose outcomes were published for peer assessment. Opinions regarding work made at home and in class, and reflections on the usefulness of the procedure, collected through a survey, showed that 74.1% of the students favored the strategy as one that helped them to learn class content. 91.4% of the instructors surveyed posited that there was a positive change on the students, and 83.3% said that their students were more willing to interact and answer questions in class. Although putting flipped classroom into action adds an extra load to teachers, it is an effective hands-on approach to improving achievement and making students active participants of their own education.

**Keywords:** Flipped learning, flipped classroom, student-centered instruction, cooperative learning, instructional videos.

### **Introduction**

Finding an approach that centers instruction on the needs and styles of the students, maximizing teaching instruction, and involving students in meaningful learning has been the concern of teachers in the last few

decades. In the words of Huba & Freed (2000), in a meaningful learning environment, students construct knowledge by using their skills of inquiry, critical thinking, problem solving, and so on. They mention that in a learner-centered paradigm, the teacher plays the role of a facilitator and a guide working together with students, who are actively involved in the learning process. Learners then, work in groups collaboratively and are engaged in discussions; they ask questions to clarify meaning and learn from errors; they are assessed on their learning process and not only on a set product; and the results of the evaluation of their work are used to diagnose learning and enhance lesson planning. Flipped learning, which is a form of blended learning where students receive instruction at home, and are also involved in face-to face interaction during class sessions, is an approach that has been adopted by teachers in the last few years as a way to maximize teaching and instruction.

Although Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams at Woodland Park High School in Colorado, USA are considered the pioneers of flipped learning, there are several other advocates (Fulton, 2012). “Basically the concept of a flipped class is this: that which is traditionally done in class is now done at home, and that which is traditionally done as homework is now completed in class” (Sams & Bergmann, 2011, p. 13).

The Flipped Learning Network (FLN) (2014) established a formal definition of flipped learning and indicated that it implies that students gain exposure to new material in their own private learning space, thus, turning the classroom into a “dynamic, interactive learning environment where the educator guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter”. They also commented that not every class that is flipped leads to flipped learning. For successful accomplishment of the goals within flipped learning, they suggest that teachers must incorporate four pillars. First, they recommend working in a flexible setting where educators create adaptable spaces for their students to choose the time and the place to learn, and provide adjustable timelines and assessment. Next, FLN suggests educators apply a learner-centered approach where activities are accessible to students through differentiation, and where class sessions are meant to create opportunities for students to get involved in knowledge building. The third pillar holds intentional selection of content that learners can review on their own, maximization of time and use of instructional strategies that suit students’ needs and learning styles. The fourth pillar of flipped learning is working towards becoming educators who are more reflective on their teaching practices, who improve instruction when needed, who encourage critical thinking, and who welcome criticism. The role of the educators is more demanding because they design or adapt their own instructional materials, monitor their students, provide relevant feedback, and assess their work.

Numerous reports of teachers flipping their classroom have been published in the last years. Professor Dan Berret comments that in his Biology flipped class, his students at University of Colorado gather in small groups to solve problems; the chaos that arises from their students talking to each other, walking around, asking questions, looking for support from the teacher and their classmates, is something that he loves because he considers they are “effectively educating each other” (2012, p. 36). Students from Troy Faulkner’s Calculus I

class watch videos where their teacher explains the lesson the night before. As soon as they enter the room, they get ready to work; they turn on their laptops and/or smartphones and start working on key problems proposed by the teacher in an attempt to verify understanding of the video lesson. The teacher walks around to deliver help, and provide extra examples on the board for the whole class whenever necessary. Faulkner's students report that they enjoy flipped learning because at home they can rewind and pause the lectures their teacher sends, and in class they can work on the difficult problems they would not be able to solve on their own; therefore, they have access to contents at home and then master them in class (Fulton, 2012). Another study made in Kyung Hee University in South Korea with college students enrolled in an English Curriculum and Evaluation course in 2014, reported that flipped learning was seen as a constructive approach. Students worked on collaborative activities, discussed questions, and designed an assessment plan with positive results that came from formal and informal course evaluations (Sung, 2015). The results of surveys and observations made on intermediate English proficiency level students taking EFL classes at the university of Macau in China, showed that even though students initially appeared not to support flipped learning, at the end of the 15-week course, they felt more comfortable with the model, embraced it and requested more flipped materials (Webb, Doman & Pusey, 2014).

In English Language Learning, flipping the classroom is much more than just explaining content in videos and doing homework in class. It involves changing teachers and students' way of approaching the teaching-learning process. The trend is making input more comprehensible and language more communicative. Webb, Doman & Pusey (2014) comment that incorporating Computer-assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL), 21<sup>st</sup> century educational techniques, to the flipped classroom model, can help boost students' oral and written language abilities.

In a compilation of strategies for flipping, Bretzman (2013) narrates his experience and gives some useful advice to put it into practice. He mentions that, as teachers, we need to make sure all our students have access to an internet connection to review instructional material at home. He also mentions that it will be necessary to create content hardware, which is most of the times free, and digital media, which is easy to produce. He advises that webcams can supply for that face-to-face interaction that happens in class to have better interaction with the students. He also suggests getting a microphone for high quality content, since built-in computer microphones are not so effective. For editing longer recordings, he suggests using a program called *Camtasia®*, software used to record onscreen activity and narrate power point presentations; for editing short recordings his personal choice is *Screenr*, a program that allows users to capture audio and visual content that appear on a computer screen while relating explanations. For recordings that are fast and unplanned he recommends *ExplainEverything*, a screen casting interactive whiteboard application. For recording audio only, for example a class discussion, or any other thing happening in class, he sponsors *Audacity*, which is a free recording and editing tool.

Another building block that sets the foundations of flipped learning is posited by Brame (2013) who cites Bloom's taxonomy (2001) to argue that flipping the classroom implies that the students move from the lower stages of cognitive work where they understand and remember, to the higher thinking skills of analysis, evaluation, and creation. This means the students will watch videos or audiovisual presentations, read articles, review notes, and then use that information in class to engage in workshops and class discussion; while in class, they will have the support of the teacher and their peers to engage in the creation of new knowledge. In a study carried out with a group of students taking an English course at Taif University in Saudi Arabia, it was reported that the use of a flipped learning approach increased high order thinking skills of foreign language students. The learners welcomed the opportunity to change from the traditional teaching practices to more dynamic autonomous learning where their needs were fulfilled, where technology was used, and where engagement and satisfaction were the result of the teaching process (Alsowat, 2016).

### **Importance of the problem**

Catholic University Santiago of Guayaquil periodically trains faculty on new and innovative practices as a means to enhance academics' skills and, as a result, they can offer quality education services to their students. A workshop in collaborative and cooperative learning was the starting point to this study. Flipped learning was to be implemented with students, and because of the excellent results that arose from the practice in the School of English Language, observation instruments were created to gather punctual perspectives of what was being done well and what needed improvement. There are no previous studies made on this topic in the mentioned school; therefore, changing the traditional teaching approach, where instruction is teacher-centered and students are passive receivers of information, and turning to a more learner-centered approach where meaningful learning takes place, would trigger the emergence of a whole new perspective within the realms in which education at the School of English Language revolves around.

### **Methodology**

This study adopted a deductive reasoning. Through a small-scale evaluative method, the researchers started with the analysis of flipped learning as an alternative approach to traditional teaching and finished with the observations made in class to measure how successful the application of the approach was in local settings. Four classes in the School of Language were flipped for the observations. The participants of the study were students of the Sociolinguistics, Linguistics, Writing and Inverse translation classes of the School of Language. They met weekly for two 120- minute class periods, most of them were aged 19-22 and had been in the School for two years; none of them had had any previous flipped classroom experience. They were provided videos and presentations of the contents to be covered in their following class sessions. They had the chance to examine

the materials and work on simple assignments at home. In class they engaged in discussion, analysis, and completion of more complex tasks. Once they finished, they published their answers on posters that the rest of the students could read. They were encouraged to write their opinions, questions, suggestions and also positive remarks of the things they agreed with or liked. The independent variable of the study was the flipped classroom approach. There were two dependent variables: the first one was the student's performance, measured in a pre-designed rubric that contained indicators for completion of homework, class participation, correctness of answers, and development of a summary of the most relevant points of the contents accessed prior to the class sessions; the second dependent variable was the students' learning attitudes, measured by a post learning experience questionnaire. Additionally, a survey was applied to teachers from other schools within the University to achieve awareness of their experience whenever they applied the flipped learning approach. Qualitative data was analyzed to gain insights into the English language learners' flipped classroom experiences.

## Results

Two data gathering instruments were administered. One aimed at polling students' view on the flipped class experience. A sample of 27 students of the English Language Program that are currently taking Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, Writing and Inverse Translation, yielded a variety of responses that range from partial indifference to high degrees of acceptance of the approach. The second one was a set of open and close questions answered by 39 professors that work in different programs within the University. Most teachers showed themselves positive regarding flipped learning.

Students were asked whether they took the time to watch the videos sent by the instructors via e-mail and loaded on the institutional or some other platform. 81.5% (see graph 1) of them did as prescribed. This highlights students' commitment even when this represented a change to the routine established by the instructors. To assert confidence of the results, 81.4 % (see graph 2) of the students responded that they had devoted a good amount of effort at home to cope with the assigned videos and slide presentations; in addition, while watching the videos they acknowledged taking notes, stopping when needed, and re-watching sections when in doubt (see graph 3). The whole process took them between 15 to 60 minutes. Nevertheless, there was a very small percentage of students who did not proceed as indicated, or did it partially; they recognized not having devoted enough time and effort to the activities, nor paying 100% attention or taking notes when questions arose.

As depicted in graph 2, during class instruction around 96% of students participated actively because they were prepared for class problems and activities; 77% felt confident when solving quests related to the proposed topic of study, and 92.6 % considered the strategy helped them learn class content. This suggests that when students consume lecture materials at their own pace at home their class performance is definitely enhanced. Even so, a small number of students pointed out that the strategy provided almost no help to grasp class content in a successful way.

Students' insights on the other hand are varied. Around 50% (see graph 4) of the learners considered that watching videos at home as homework and working in class on tasks provided by the teacher was helpful and was one of the things they enjoyed the most about flipped learning; the other 50% disagree or do not agree as strongly as the rest of the group. Graph 4 also shows that almost 85% of the students enjoyed working collaboratively with peers in groups; 55.6% of them considered that giving and receiving feedback was one of the things they enjoyed the most in class since they had the opportunity to express opinions, ask questions and comment on the other groups' works published on posters; indeed, 44.4% said that the latter is one of the things they liked the most. This evidence shows that learning is enhanced when students contribute with their own criteria and that peer assessment is important to achieve deep learning; thus, students can learn from their own mistakes and from the success of others.

Graph 5 suggests that 70.4% of the students thought flipped classroom helped them grasp wider understanding of class contents; the rest of the surveyees thought it may have been a way to increase their insights about the topics of study, or assumed it did not help. It is important to reflect that flipped classroom relies heavily on students' motivation; even though the approach acknowledges that students learn at different paces, some students may not be as motivated as others to spare time at home doing classwork, or do not have enough time due to their workload. Additionally, internet is not always available for everyone and this could complicate access to the class material provided by the instructor. Finally, students were asked to assert recommendations and most of them suggested working on shorter tasks, having more time in class to solve exercises, having access to more videos, having more class discussion, and making tasks simpler.

Unlike students, teachers took the survey in Spanish since the approach has been undertaken by several teachers at Catholic University Santiago de Guayaquil who instruct in our mother tongue. Results condensed in Appendix B show that almost 98% of the teachers surveyed are familiar with the flipped classroom approach and 89.5% have flipped their classrooms for some of their lessons. 94.5% of the teachers are very certain that flipping their classrooms yielded positive results in the learning process and 72.7% of them plan to continue using it. Although putting a flipped classroom into action adds an extra load to teachers since they have carefully select the information that is going to be shared and upload their lectures in videos, the challenge has been taken and they still consider flipped classroom an effective hands-on approach to improving achievement and making students active participants of their own education. Additionally, the perception of almost 91.4 % of the teachers is that students demonstrated a positive attitude towards the approach, showed themselves more interested in working in activities when the class was flipped, and were willing to interact and answer questions. The rest of the teachers considered the approach may have caused a positive impact or did not impact their students at all. It should be then considered that flipped classrooms may depend on students' willingness to cooperate by downloading the materials and watching the lectures. In addition, teachers are aware that the

approach demands the provision of videos for students to view at home, so class time is spent interacting; therefore, almost 52 % of them either prepare their own videos or download the ones that are available online to send their students; the rest of the teachers specifically use the ones they find on the Internet.

The main drawback is related to time allocation. 48.6% of the teachers had no complications regarding time for class activities, but the rest of them acknowledged distribution of time has been an issue because tasks take longer than expected and because students have difficulty working collaboratively. Teachers must be advised to plan carefully what activities can be left aside or postponed, since it would not be a good idea to put too much pressure on students to finalize their work earlier than it may take them.

Finally, teachers commented that they applied flipped learning with their students with different frequency that goes from almost every class or with a high frequency, to one to two times a week, or once every fortnight or once a month. 100% of the teachers interviewed would recommend the use of the approach.

### **Discussion**

In view of the results obtained out of the study, it is evident that a flipped classroom approach would contribute to the enhancement of class sessions, trajectorying the focus from teacher-centered to student-centered instruction. Some of the psychological principles of learner-centered instruction published by Johnson (2014) that were evident in the flipped learning sessions of this study were: 1) students came to conclusions on their own; 2) they had the opportunity to review the material at their individual pace and at their own time which gave them choices of how to approach their learning; 3) new knowledge was connected to previous knowledge; 4) social interaction and active engagement were present because students had to work cooperatively to discuss topics, find consensus, and reach conclusions, which is necessary to respond to the tasks provided. It is important to mention that flipped learning was implemented in several areas of study such as psychology, nursery, pedagogy, mathematics in different Schools of Catholic University Santiago de Guayaquil. In the English School the number of students is small, and only two teachers have implemented the method. The results of the effectiveness of the method applied in the schools other than the English school were provided by teachers. Only in the English School were the students surveyed, and although several of them admitted not having been able to cope with thorough revision of the material sent or uploaded, they could manage to work cooperatively with their teams, since their peers provided insights that complemented and made up for the learning they lacked. The challenges of the approach include student engagement in pre-class preparation, working on homework, attendance to class sessions, and design of suitable in-class activities that motivate students to cooperate and make the learning experience rich.

### **Conclusion**

Findings out of students' survey inquiring about their attitude towards flipped learning were mostly positive.

Watching videos at home, reviewing lectures in advance before coming to class, working in class collaboratively with their peers, being able to make comments, asking questions, reflecting on their learning, had a positive impact on them. It is important to mention, that a small number of students in each class (from eight to fifteen) may have had an effect on making the experience more pleasant and easier to handle since the teacher had more time to walk around, clarify meaning, answer questions and give suggestions; nevertheless, the amount of time devoted to each activity would have not varied in more numerous classrooms. Moreover, more-in-depth qualitative analysis may be necessary in the future, incorporating semi-structured interviews which could provide more insight into students' perceptions.

Results from teachers' survey came from the experience of professors who had been trained on the advantages of flipped learning; nevertheless, formal instruction on how to effectively flip a classroom has not been provided by the University. Almost all the teachers felt satisfied with the flipping experience and most of them answered they plan to continue using the approach because their students showed interest when working in flipped classrooms. Nevertheless, only few of the teachers interviewed created their own instructional videos; therefore, teachers may need professional development to learn how to create videos and/or have a list of recommended sites and materials suitable for university level.

Since time allocation was reported as the main drawback of the experience, it can be concluded that planning plays a major role. Nevertheless, teachers and students need time to adjust to the new model and to adjust class contents accordingly.

The researchers of this study want to further use the approach and call on other teachers within the English School to undertake a flipped experiment and add data that can be collected to be shared with other teachers.

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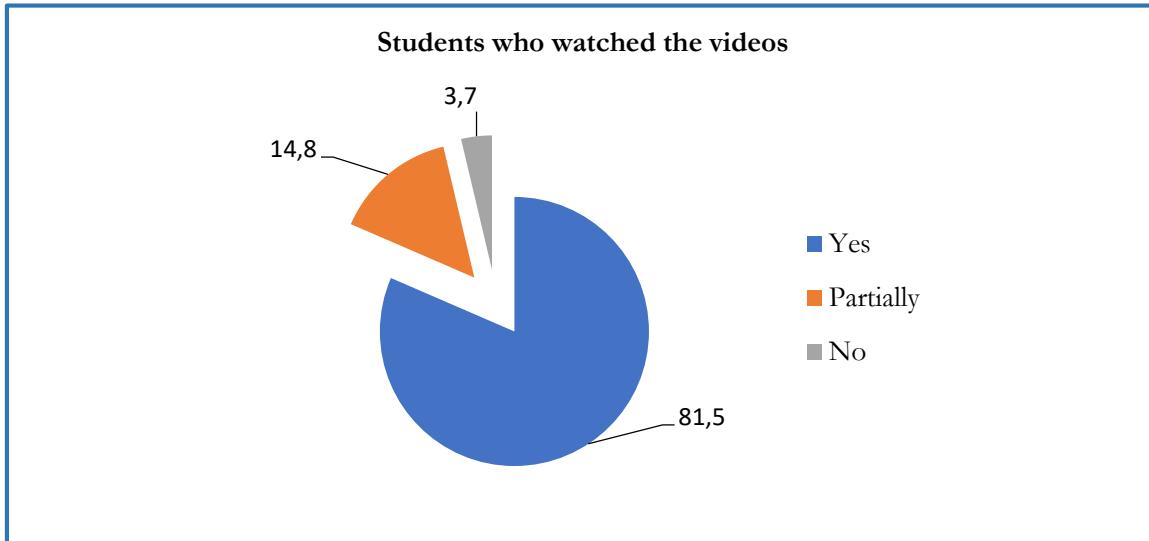
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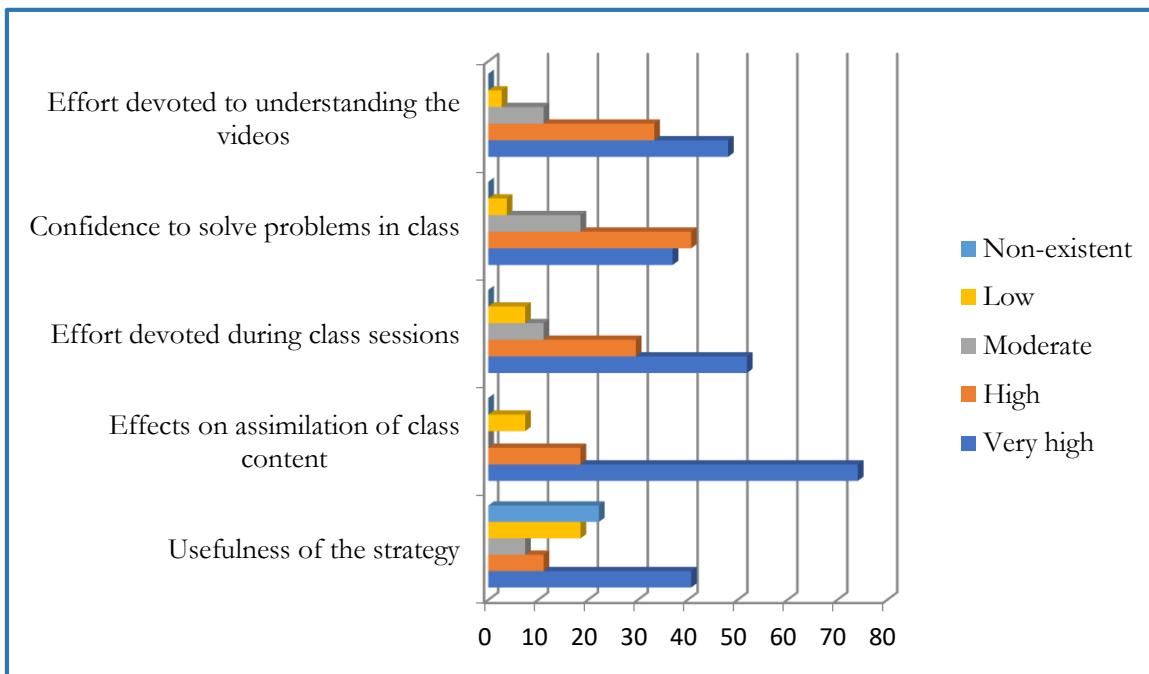
### **Student Survey on Flipped Classroom Process**

**Graph 1:** Percentage of students who devoted time to watching the videos



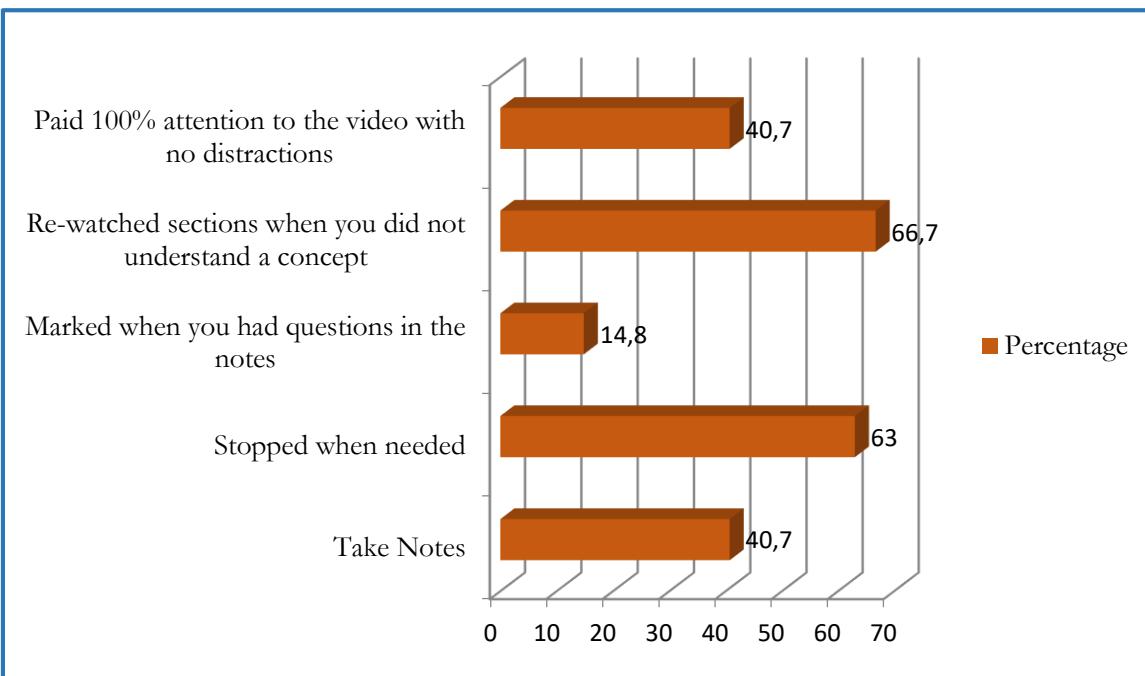
**Source:** Student Survey on Flipped Classroom Process

**Graph 2:** Flipped Classroom Application and Contribution Levels



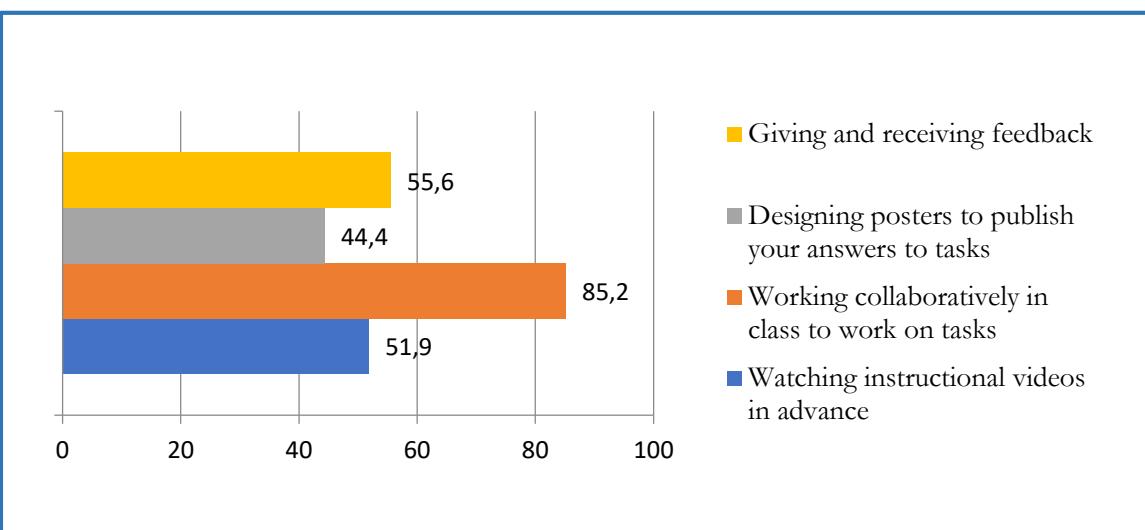
**Source:** Student Survey on Flipped Classroom Process

**Graph 3:** Activities while Watching the Videos



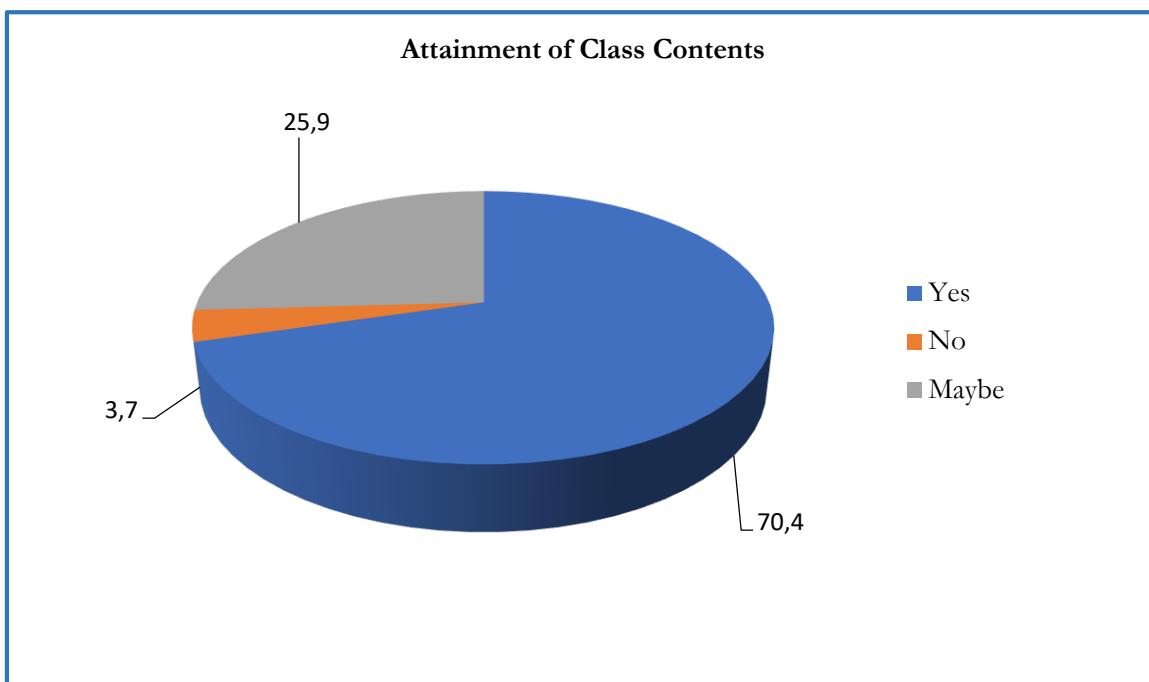
**Source:** Student Survey on Flipped Classroom Process

**Graph 4:** Most enjoyed Process of the Flipped Classroom Approach



**Source:** Student Survey on Flipped Classroom Process

**Graph 5:** Contribution of Flipped Classroom to Student Attainment of Class Content



**Source:** Student Survey on Flipped Classroom Process

## **Appendix B**

### **Encuesta dirigida a docentes acerca de la estrategia "aula invertida"**

1. ¿Está usted familiarizado con el término "aula invertida" (flipped classroom)?
2. ¿Ha invertido usted el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje alguna vez?
3. Si su respuesta fue afirmativa ¿cree usted que los resultados fueron positivos?
4. ¿Sus estudiantes se mostraron más interesados en las actividades llevadas a cabo en el aula?
5. ¿Sus estudiantes estuvieron más dispuestos a interactuar y responder preguntas?
6. ¿Tuvo complicaciones relacionadas con el tiempo disponible para las actividades en el aula?
7. ¿Recomendaría usted esta estrategia a sus colegas?
8. ¿Notó usted algún cambio positivo en la actitud de los estudiantes?
9. ¿Cuántas veces por semana aplica usted la estrategia de "aula invertida"?
10. ¿Utiliza usted sus propios videos o utiliza los que encuentra colgados en la internet?
11. Una vez aplicada la estrategia ¿planea hacerlo nuevamente?
12. Si usted no ha aplicado la estrategia, ¿estaría interesado hacerlo?
13. ¿Le interesaría aprender más acerca de esta estrategia de aula?

## Results

**Chart 1:** Teachers' Perceptions

| <b>Variable/indicator</b>                           | <b>Positive assertion</b> | <b>Neutral</b> | <b>Negative assertion</b> |
|---|---------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Familiarity with flipped classroom terminology      | 97.4%                     | 2.6%           | -                         |
| Application of the approach                         | 89.5%                     | -              | 10.5%                     |
| Positive results on application                     | 94.5%                     | 5.6%           | -                         |
| Interest shown by students                          | 91.7%                     | 5.6%           | 2.8%                      |
| Boosted interaction among students                  | 83.3%                     | 11.1%          | 5.6%                      |
| Application difficulties related to time            | 48.6%                     | 34.3%          | 17.1%                     |
| Endorsement of the approach                         | 100%                      | -              | -                         |
| Perceived positive reactions                        | 91.4%                     | 8.6%           | -                         |
| Willingness to continue applying the approach       | 72.7%                     | 15.2%          | 12.1%                     |
| Willingness to apply the approach for a first time  | 95.7%                     | 4.3%           | -                         |
| Willingness to learn more about the approach        | 97.3%                     | 2.7%           | -                         |
| Disposition to recommend the strategy to colleagues | 100%                      | -              | -                         |

**Source:** Teacher Survey on Flipped Classroom

# **The effect of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) on the Ecuadorian Education System.**

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## **Resumen**

La mayoría de estudiantes ecuatorianos del idioma Inglés como lengua extranjera no pueden practicar este idioma debido a la carencia de oportunidades para interactuar con personas nativas o la escasez de recursos pedagógicos apropiados que faciliten el desarrollo de destrezas comunicativas. Sin embargo, el desarrollo de nuevas tecnologías proporciona al sistema de educación ecuatoriana innovadoras técnicas que los profesores pueden obtener empleando el método de CALL. Este estudio investigó el efecto que causó la implementación del método CALL entre los estudiantes de la Facultad de Psicología de la Universidad de Guayaquil. Esta investigación empleó un análisis descriptivo, valoraciones cuantitativas para la medición de efectividad de CALL en el aprendizaje del Inglés. Fueron dos los métodos de recolección seleccionados: la observación de los estudiantes interactuando con recursos tecnológicos y la encuesta. Los resultados obtenidos revelaron un incremento en el aprendizaje y dominio de las destrezas comunicativas del idioma Inglés y confirman la factibilidad de la implementación de CALL en el aula. Por lo que se concluye que la implementación de la metodología CALL es eficaz como herramienta didáctica y ha beneficiado a estudiantes y profesores de Inglés logrando el incremento del nivel de participación pro-activa dentro y fuera del aula.

**Palabras claves:** CALL, personas nativas, destrezas comunicacionales, participación pro-activa.

## **Abstract**

Most Ecuadorian students of English as a foreign language cannot practice this language due to the lack of

opportunities to interact with native people or the lack of appropriate pedagogical resources that facilitate the development of communicative skills. However, the development of new technologies provides the Ecuadorian educational system with innovative techniques that teachers can obtain using the CALL method. This study investigated the effect of the implementation of the CALL method among the students of the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Guayaquil. This research used a descriptive analysis, quantitative assessments for the measurement of CALL effectiveness in English learning. Two methods of collection were selected: observation of students interacting with technological resources and the survey. The results showed an increase in the learning and mastery of the communicative skills of the English language and confirm the feasibility of the implementation of CALL in the classroom. Therefore, it is concluded that the implementation of the CALL methodology is effective as a didactic tool and has benefited English students and teachers by increasing the level of proactive participation in and outside the classroom.

**Keywords:** CALL, native people, communicational skills, proactive participation.

## **Introduction**

Using technology in Education in Ecuador has spread during the last decades. Many years ago, the Ecuadorian government has begun relevant changes in the Ecuadorian system. One of the most important changes is the creation of the Ecuadorian in-Service English Teacher Standards. These are based on the document developed by TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages).

The Ecuadorian in-Service English Teacher Standards in its third section points up aspects related to planning for standards-based English, implementing and managing, and using resources and technology effectively. The last aspect considered in this document will be developed in this paper. Using technology represents an important issue in the education system; for this reason, many private educational institutions and public secondary high schools have become to implement in the classroom new technological resources according to their possibility.

Certainly, the technology is changed dramatically daily. New ways to apply for educational programs, platforms, software, applications, and web resources in our classroom emerge each day. All these new tendencies are supported the current curricula implemented in the Ecuadorian educational system. However, in isolated cases, its use has been limited due to teacher's refusal to incorporate them in the teaching-learning process caused for lacking knowledge in technology.

The purpose of this study was to describe how effective CALL is for learning English language. If teachers used computer technology in a motivating an interactive way, learning would be even more effective.

## **Importance of implementation of CALL**

The significance of education, technology, and global societal change are linked to the changing contemporary world and they are immersed in the new concept of “*educational technology*”. According to Selwyn (2013)

*“educational technology is not a single entity, but a diverse array of technological devices and technology-based activities and practices.”*

Furthermore, these concerns have been spread gradually across the “globalization” getting a systemic vision of the advance of the educational technology in the classroom.

According to Wang (2015)

*“Digital technologies are multiple and the reasons for their use varied... they include the subset of electronic technologies encompassing hardware and software used by individuals for educational, social and/or entertainment purposes in formal and informal contexts of their everyday lives”*. (p.4).

On the other hand, Wang (2015) states that:

Some reasons provided by educational institutions for the incorporation of any or all of these digital technologies in students’ learning to fall largely into three categories: to support learning for the achievement of successful learning outcomes; to develop twenty-first century skills as part of preparing students for the workplace and (3) to become responsible digital citizens and lifelong learners. (p. 5)

## **theoretical Framework**

CALL is the acronym used for Computer-Assisted Language Learning. According to Thomas, Reinders, and Warschauer, (2013) CALL began in the 1960s and most of the activity took place in the United States.

*“Pedagogically, language instruction was still guided by behaviorist models of cognitive theory, which emphasized learning through repetitive practice and negative and positive feedback. The audio-lingual method had emerged to place new emphasis on oral skills, but this method also emphasized drill-and-practice and reflected the continued belief in the importance of grammar, with roots in grammar translation.”* (p. 21).

However, these approaches are still useful in some cases while the learners begin to learn a second language or use some technological tools that facilitate their learning. On the other hand, the audio-lingual methodology is even today prevalent in some textbook and teaching materials.

Furthermore, according to Chun (2011)

*“Based on the premise that CALL should be discussed in relation to how it can enhance SLA”* (p.663).

It is necessary to structure the type of technologies can be used in CALL. Chun mentions some clear examples that allows engaging the learners in the implementation of the technology in the learning process like “earlier uses of computer as a tutor or a drill-and-test machine, use videodiscs for teaching culture, first generation Web-based tools for computer-mediated communication (CMC 1.0), and more recent Web 2.0 tools for social networking and virtual worlds (CMC 2.0), “edutainment” (p.665). This assumption implies that based on the most updated technology is possible to the usage of the learning and teaching tools.

Another important issue that Chun (2013) points up is that:

As technology continues to be an integral part of academic life in the twenty-first century, it is being used in many ways in second and foreign language teaching. Research has shown that certain multimedia and CMC tools can be effective for facilitating the learning of particular types or levels of learners, but that no one medium or tool is effective for all learners. (p.666).

Even though, the educational system counts with the benefits of the usage of CALL into the classroom there is another important issue that is essential in order to complete the cycle. In late 2008 TESOL, International Association (formerly Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages: [www.tesol.org](http://www.tesol.org)) published the TESOL Technology Standards Framework, the first set of technology standards aimed specifically at teachers and learners of English. The Standards are meant to serve a number of purposes, including the following:

- Lead teachers to learn to use digital technology appropriately and effectively for language learning and ensure their students can do likewise.
- Lay out a clear set of targets for judging technology competencies for language learning;
- Motivate teacher educators and teacher education program to integrate technology training and use into their curricula;
- Guide administrators and policymakers as they develop curriculum, arrange training for in-service teachers, and make new hiring decisions. (TESOL, 2004)

Gruba (2014) points up the possibility that teachers can apply the technological tools to improve the communicative learner’s skills. He states that:

The growing availability of internet access has prompted CALL instructors to move away from stand-alone

workstations and more toward networked computers. Socio-collaborative approaches to teaching and learning are replacing communicative ones, and debates about pedagogy now center on aspects of learner autonomy, collaborative project design, and appropriate assessment practices. (p. 624).

Teachers have an important role in the teaching-learning process. For this reason, Gruba (2014) claims that “*CALL educators are also being challenged to keep pace with rapid change and innovation to meet concerns about evolving technologies, professional development, and rising student levels of electronic literacy.*” (p. 624).

This assumption clarifies that all the people are immersed in the new digital era and the essential component to reaching this goal is to keep a positive attitude face to the changes. However, this trend was observed in the English spoken countries since the 1970s, a good reference for this assumption is that:

The demand for interactive materials on the Web led in turn to a demand from teachers for authoring tools. The Hot Potatoes (Arneil & Holmes, 1998-2009) was a typical example of a Web authoring tool. This template enables the speedy creation of multiple choice, gap-filling, matching, jumbled sentences, crosswords and short text entry exercises.(Thomas, Reinders, and Warschauer, 2013, p.33).

Indeed, according to Gruba (2013) “*The integration of CALL into the classroom has challenged instructors to become familiar with new technologies and redefine their views of teaching*” (p.634).

All these expectations have inspired the Ministry of Education of Ecuador to make a curricular adjustment to improve the Ecuadorian system of education. They decided to work for reaching this goal and under the supporting from TESOL to develop the Ecuadorian English Language Standards. The Ecuadorian English Language Standards are shaped by the (CEFR) Common European Framework Range that is the institution that provides references for languages learning, teaching and assessment. For this reason, they were designed in organized sections called domains that following the most relevant issues allow providing the guide to enhance the Ecuadorian English teachers’ performance.

According to the Ministry of Education in Ecuador, “*this document is organized into five domains that fit with those stated for the general curriculum and of some which are related to English language teaching and learning*”

This study is focused on the third domain which deals with “*Curriculum Development*” and specific aspects related to managing standards and using resources and technology effectively.

The domain three states that “*Teachers are knowledgeable about program models and skilled in teaching strategies for*

*developing and integrating skills. They integrate technology as well as choose and adapt classroom resources appropriate for their students.*" However, in some cases, the accomplishment of these requirements are impossible due to the low economic resources and the lack of the self-management in some educational institutions.

The section C of the third domain refers to the "Using Resources and Technology Effectively in English and Content Instruction" and its sub-section 3.c.3, this document indicates that "*Employ a variety of materials for language learning, including books, visual aids, and realia in addition to the textbook*". On the other hand, the sub-section 3.c.4 explains that "*Use technological resources (e.g., internet, software, computers, and related devices) to enhance language and content-area instruction for students.*"

### **Methodology**

This investigation was descriptive and quantitative study. A questionnaire with six questions (including age and gender) was administered to 55 Psychology students of University of Guayaquil to discover the effects of CALL in English classes. Furthermore, the questionnaire was applied to find out the benefits and limitations that using CALL could cause and the consequences they have gotten using this technological device in the English classes.

The survey was sent to 110 students who belong to second partial. Nevertheless, the response rate was 61% (55 replies). Thirty-six female (63.64%) and twenty males (36.36%) students from the total population. The students who answered the survey are from 18 to more than 40 years old.

### **Results**

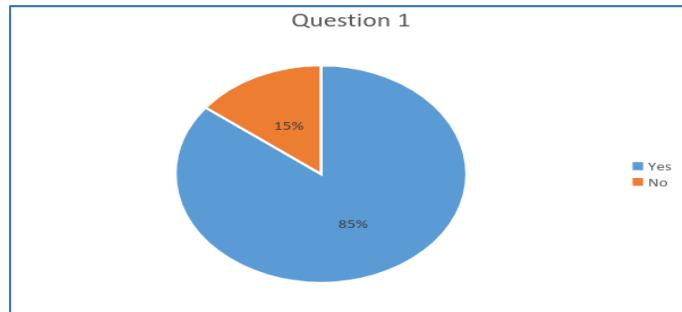
The main research question in this study was: How effective was CALL for learning English language? A subset of six research question guided the study to provide specific, detailed answers to the main question. By examining the previous knowledge and the background of students related to what they know about CALL and their attitudes toward its implementation. The questions for the survey were:

1. Do you know what CALL is?
2. How many new technology devices do you have?
3. Do you think that CALL is a meaningful tool to improve language learning?
4. Does CALL motivate students to learn English?
5. How often is CALL used for learning English language?
6. Do you enjoy using CALL for learning English?

**Question 1:** Do you know what CALL is?

This question was measured to control the effectiveness of the questionnaire. Most of the students (84.45%) know the meaning of

**Figure 1:** Do you know what CALL is?

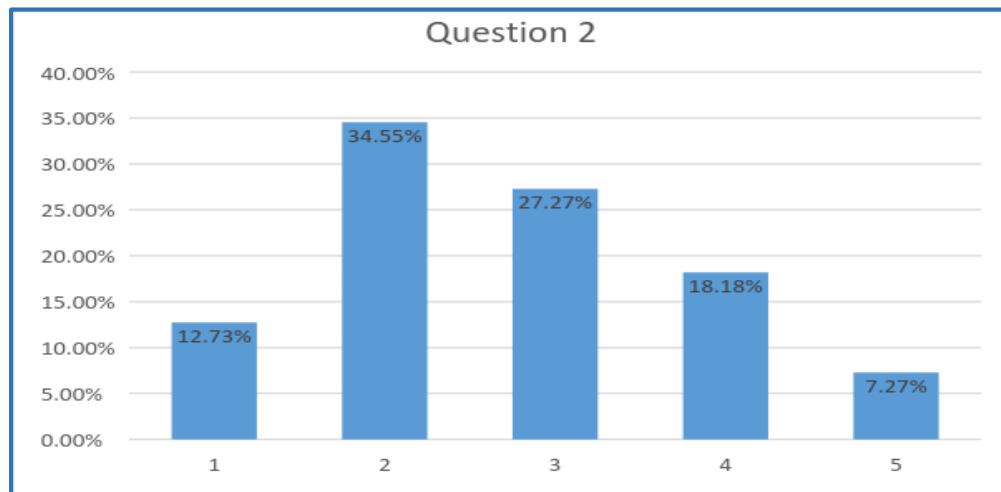


**Source:** Self-elaboration

**Question 2:** How many new technology devices do you have?

All students surveyed have at least one electronic device. Actually, most of the students (39.2%) have 2 of them, which means that all of students possess electronic tools to use in English classes.

**Figure 2:** How many new technology devices do you have?

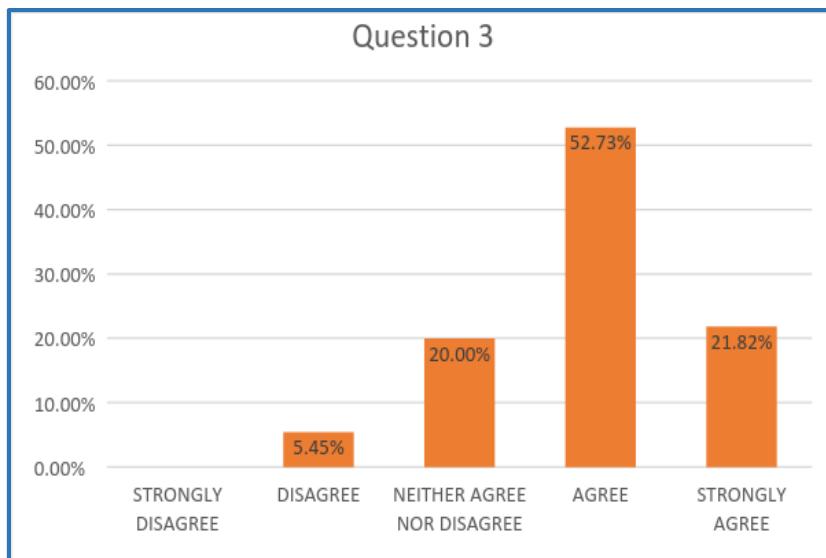


**Source:** Self-elaboration

**Question 3:** Do you think that CALL is a meaningful tool to improve language learning?

This question has 5 different answers: Strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree and strongly agree. Most of the students (52.73%) agree that CALL is a meaningful tool to improve language learning.

**Figure 3:** Do you think that CALL is a meaningful tool to improve language learning?

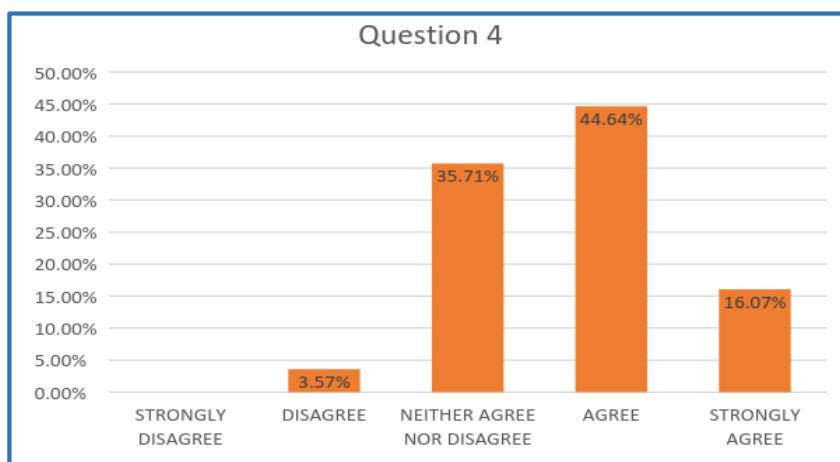


**Source:** Self-elaboration

**Question 4:** Does CALL motivate students to learn English?

Students agree (56.36%) that using computer motivate students to learn English. While 3,57% disagree that the use of CALL helps to learn English.

**Figure 4:** Does CALL motivate students to learn English?

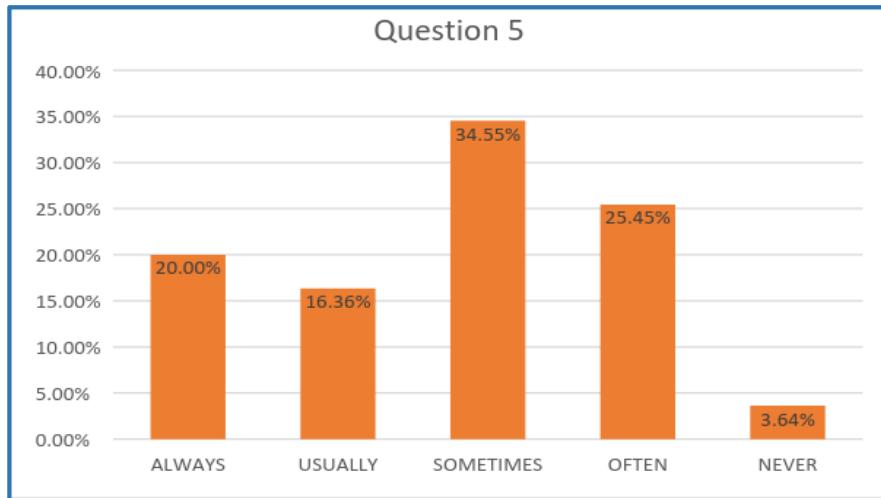


**Source:** Self-elaboration

**Question 5:** How often is CALL used for learning English language?

Interestingly, only 34.55% of students state that CALL is used for English classes. Nevertheless, 3,64% state that CALL is never used for the English classes.

**Figure 5:** How often is CALL used for learning English language?

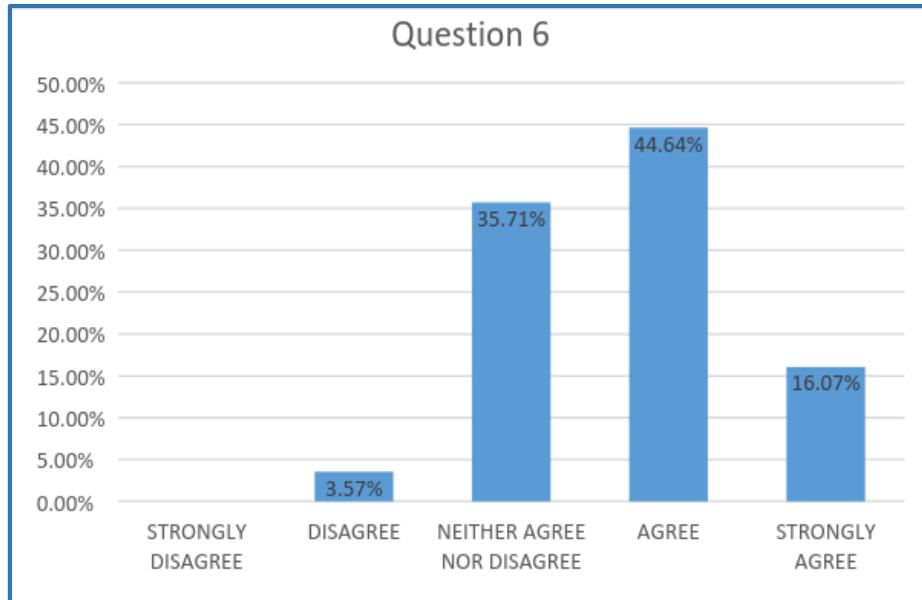


**Source:** Self elaboration

**Question 6:** Do you enjoy using CALL for learning English?

44,64% of students agree that enjoy using CALL for learning English. On the contrary, 3,57% disagree.

**Figure 6:** Do you enjoy using CALL for learning English?



**Source:** Self-elaboration

## **Discussion**

The aim of the research questions was to discover the effect of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) on the Ecuadorian Education System. The first research question found what the students knew about CALL to motivate them toward the application of this tool. Certainly, CALL has been permanently evolving in the pedagogical field and the technological advances are available in all educational areas. Gruba (2014) suggest that “Trends in CALL roughly parallel those in other areas of applied linguistics. Starting with the structural and behaviorist models that manifested in audio-lingual approaches to language learning.”(p. 628)

The second research question was to investigate how many new technology devices they had. The results positively confirmed that they had at least one electronic device. Thus, the implementation of CALL was a success because the learners were motivated with using the technology. Considering that the advance of the technology involves innovations. This study coincided with Schott (2008) who claims that “the innovation itself is important and that individuals are the primary actors, who redefine the innovation as they go through a process of change” (p.4). On the other hand, Schott states that “In the innovation-centered view, innovations are the chief actors. Simply, they need to bring in the right innovation, and it will solve the problems” (p. 4).

The third, fourth, and sixth research question measured the level of the students’ motivation towards the application of CALL. Due to these results, English teachers were aware that using CALL allow students to develop skills and improve in the learning process considerably.

Lastly, the fifth question research enquired the frequency that CALL was used for learning the English language. Though, the application of the survey it was found that the effects on CALL are meaningful on the education system of this faculty. Some students who answered the questions of the survey agree that CALL is not used in all the English classes.

For this reason, they are able to apply CALL more frequently to motivate students to practice the language and use it in real communication according to their needs.

## **Conclusion**

Clearly, the findings of this analysis revealed that the effect caused by the implementation of CALL in the Faculty of Psychology was significant, for different reasons. Firstly, the students belong to this era, they are digital natives and can learn a second language in a meaningful way using technology. Secondly, the results demonstrated that the most relevant factor that causes a great impact was the students’ motivation towards technology. Undoubtedly, a student very interested in the use of technology will have better attitudes. Thus, teachers can provide diverse training courses, tutorials, platforms, MOOCs, and extensive range of web-pages that facilitate the improvement of the communicative skills. Nevertheless, this online training needs to be supported with face to face explanation given by the teachers into the classroom.

To sum, using CALL in classrooms foster a constructivist learning environment as a result, the implementation of CALL has become important in the lives of the Ecuadorian students.

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## Online Resource

<http://web.stanford.edu/~efs/callcourse2/CALL1.htm>

[http://web.stanford.edu/class/e297c/war\\_peace/media/hpsych.html](http://web.stanford.edu/class/e297c/war_peace/media/hpsych.html)

[https://educacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/09/estandares\\_2012\\_ingles\\_opt.pdf](https://educacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/09/estandares_2012_ingles_opt.pdf)

<https://goo.gl/RKRmxt>

# **Effects of mobile learning in the EFL classroom, management, benefits and limitations**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this article was to analyze what were the effects of using mobile learning in the EFL classroom as instructional tool. Most people know that learning English is necessary in countries like Ecuador as a main medium for accessing to last scientific, educational and business world information. An effective and dynamic EFL learning should be simultaneously matched by modern technological support. With the rapid growth of wireless network and mobile learning technology, using mobile phone has nowadays an impressive impact on language learning and teaching, additionally mobile learning is more effective and flexible that overcomes restrictions of time and space enabling learners to study whenever and wherever be possible. These trends have changed the traditional classroom learning to electronic learning to revolutionize the quality of education that learners receive. With the purpose of determining the successful use of cellphone in class and know what applications improved class activities was used the qualitative method, where a whole group of students and teachers from State Technical University of Quevedo were interviewed and observed to collect data. The main goal was to determine if cell phone was a motivating tool for students and if teachers can bolster their classes using it. We concluded some applications like Lonely, Planet, Pleco, Anki, Quizlet, among others offered interesting and innovative activities that improved learning, because mobile devices are powerful, versatile and

useful in our modern life.

**Keywords:** Mobile learning – Virtual learning, EFL, TICs, electronical tools

**Resumen:**

El objetivo de este artículo fue analizar cuáles eran los efectos de usar teléfonos celulares en el aula de clases como herramienta instruccional. La mayoría de las personas saben que el aprendizaje del idioma inglés es necesario en países como Ecuador como un medio para acceder a la última publicación en el mundo relacionado con la educación, negocios y ciencia. Un efectivo y dinámico aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera debe ser simultáneamente enlazado con soportes técnicos modernos. Con el rápido crecimiento de la red inalámbrica y la tecnología de aprendizaje móvil, usar el teléfono celular tiene actualmente un impresionante impacto en el aprendizaje y enseñanza de idiomas, adicionalmente el aprendizaje móvil es más efectivo y flexible que supera restricciones de tiempo y espacio, permitiendo a los alumnos estudiar cuando y donde sea posible. Esta tendencia ha cambiado el aprendizaje de clase tradicional a un aprendizaje electrónico que revoluciona la calidad de la educación que los estudiantes reciben. Con el objetivo de determinar si el uso del celular en la clase es exitoso; conocer además qué aplicaciones mejoran las actividades de clase, se usó el método cualitativo donde un grupo de estudiantes y profesores de la Universidad Técnica Estatal de Quevedo, fueron entrevistados y observados para recabar información. El propósito fue determinar si el celular es realmente una herramienta motivante para los alumnos, y si los profesores pueden dinamizar sus clases usándolo. Se concluyó que algunas aplicaciones como Lonely, Planet, Pleco, Anki, Quizlet, entre otras ofrecieron interesantes e innovativas actividades que mejoraron el aprendizaje porque los aparatos electrónicos son poderosos, versátiles y útiles en nuestra vida moderna.

**Palabras claves:** Aprendizaje Móvil - Virtual learning, EFL, TICs, electronical tools

**Mobile learning technology**

Learning English is necessary in countries like Ecuador as a main medium for accessing to last scientific, educational and business world information, but simultaneously an effective EFL learning should be matched by modern technological support. With the rapid growth of wireless and mobile learning technology, using mobile phone has nowadays an impressive impact on language learning and teaching. These trends have changed the traditional classroom learning to electronic learning to revolutionize the quality of education learners receive.

According to Begum (2011), “many studies have attempted to improve the language learning and teaching using mobile devices like mobile phones, MP3/MP4 players, PDAs and palmtop and computer, concluding that Mobile Assisted Language Learning is more significant for the development of pedagogical sector”. Paradoxically use of cell phone as language learning tool is not yet popular, according the same author. In

addition, Klopfer et al. (2002) claimed five properties of mobile devices which can produce educational benefits. Those are 1) Portability 2) Social interactivity 3) Context sensitivity 4) Connectivity, and 5) Individuality.

### **What is “Mobile Learning”?**

Mobile learning is not simply the combination of “mobile” and “learning” but it is the mobility of the learner, interacting with portable technologies, and learning that reflects a focus on how society and institutions can accommodate and support increasingly mobile population. (Singh, 2010)

However, the cell phones nowadays are so advanced and smart they actually perform almost the same functions and features as personal computers (Cui and Wang, 2008). With wireless Internet cell phones can be used in the classroom as a potential instructional material offering teachers a world of possibilities. However, the main problem, according to Begum (2011) is they don’t know how to implement classroom activities by using cell phone devices for language teaching.

Mobile phone helps us to organize meetings and events at any personalized time. Their main features are: Making and receiving calls; Sending and receiving text messages; and Basic office tools e.g. calculator. Advanced mobile phone features include: Bluetooth; Camera capable of taking stills and more commonly now video; e-book readers, games; Recording audio; GPS / location aware; and Web browser to connect to the internet. (Dhanalakshmi, S. et al. 2014)

### **The value of mobile learning**

Use of mobile devices for language learning is surprisingly complex, and goes beyond just the design of the system or the way in which the mobile component is integrated into the larger teaching and learning context. (Stockwell, G. 2016). Students been digital natives, are more familiar with use of mobile learning technologies and applications, also they have more opportunities to practice listening, reading, speaking and writing in a natural way with their mobile phones, the ability of a mobile device to store or wireless access various media (e.g., text, images, sound, and video) makes it a resource with technology different from a computer, adding as advantage that cell phone go beyond the classes period or the walls of the school.

According to Savill (2010), cited by (Mehdipour Y, & Zerehkafi H., 2013) tutors who have used M-Learning programs and techniques have made the following value statements for M-Learning.

- It is important to bring new technology into the classroom.
- Devices used are more lightweight than books and PCs.
- Mobile learning can be used to diversify the types of learning activities students partake in (or a blended learning approach).

- · Mobile learning supports the learning process rather than being integral to it.
- · Mobile learning can be a useful add-on tool for students with special needs.

Additionally, Mehdipour (2013) claims that mobile technologies facilitate distance learning in situations where access to education is difficult or interrupted for geographical location or due to post-conflict or post-disaster situations.

### **Learning English with cell phones**

A mobile device can be defined as a small handheld computer that has a touch display or a small keyboard for text input. Mobile phones, smartphones, tablet computers, eBook readers, personal digital assistants (PDAs), and other similar devices can all be defined as mobile devices (Kukulska-Hulme, Sharples, Milrad, Arnedillo-Sánchez, & Vavoula, 2009), cited by Robert Chartrand, 2016).

As a handheld computing platform, the cellphone was popular among business managers, educators and journalists, because was easy to use, accessible and versatile. (Chartrand, 2016) Since 1993 with Newton Message Pad, the popularity of cell phones has increased remarkably that adults and children want to have them. Mobile devices can be used to enhance classroom learning. Some useful features include the ability to access information, record data, and create podcasts (Chartrand, 2016).

The possibilities of learning English with cell phones, PDAs, and MP3 players help students and it is a new experience for teachers who could to perform significant tasks using programs including Youtube for watching videos, iTunes for listening to music, Safari for browsing the Internet and others. Having a mobile device like the iPod Touch is an excellent choice of technology since it is small, powerful and cost effective. (Robert Chartrand, 2016). Additionally, there are two awesome teachers' app like Dropbox and Evernote that allows computer and cellphones interact together.

### **Advantages and disadvantage of mobile learning**

In Ecuador for example not all educational institution has enough CALL rooms available, so a mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) is a good option for students. Alternatively, students may record and playback their voices and compare them with native speaker's. It is an excellent learning tool for students, as well as listening to music and watch videos, special mentions is for networking websites including Face-Book and Twitter where students share information, thoughts and ideas on various subjects in words of Robert Chartrand (2016)

One of the advantages of Mobile learning is its versatility that can take place at everyplace like a cinema, museum, classroom, at the dining room table, on a bus, in front of a science exhibit, and anywhere. The learners

can communicate without problems thanks to free Wi-Fi connection existing everywhere.

However, despite its utility some educators disagree that mobile device should be allowed in the classroom. Some concern exists about the distraction caused by using mobile devices. Students may spend time texting, surfing websites or chatting online with their friends, which means they are not paying attention to the teacher, causing problems for classroom management in general. (Tindell & Bohlander, 2012).

## **Methodology**

The research had a qualitative approach non-experimental because it describes details of specific situations using research tools including interviews and surveys. It is limited to describing the present situation in the institution, where is located the problem under study, as well as analyze the position of the teacher in front of using cell phones in classes. According to García J. (2004), descriptive research, works on fact, its fundamental characteristic is to present a correct interpretation of the observed reality, and may include the following instruments: surveys, exploratory issues, and cases, causal, among others, due to the fact that data collection is unique.

### **Participants**

The interview used open ended question for having many details as possible, allowing the informants to answer from their own frame of reference rather than being confined by the structure of pre-arranged questions. Sixty-eight students of State Technical University of Quevedo participated in the studio. Seventeen were male and fifty-one female. The age of the students ranged from 19-25. Five teachers of University of Quevedo also helped the study. All the teachers have more than 15 years of experience in teaching.

### **Instruments**

To investigate the research questions two data collection instruments were applied: questionnaires for students, and teachers' interview. The questionnaire for the students was divided into 4 parts. The teachers' interview was conducted to know their opinions regarding the cell phone use in classroom, and about benefits and challenges of cell phone as language teaching tools in the EFL classroom. The students' questionnaire and questions of teacher interviews are attached in the 'Appendix' (1) and (2).

The research question that arises is: Is cell phone a motivating tool for students? Also, can teachers bolster English classes using cellphone?

### **Specific Objectives**

1. To inquire what is the interest of EFL University of Quevedo' students about study English.
2. To know if cell phone is used in the classroom.
3. To investigate how often students of University of Quevedo use cell phone and the frequency of use those features for learning English.

4. To determine efficacy of cell phones as instructional tools.

**Survey questions:**

The first part mentioned interest of EFL students of University of Quevedo through study English.

The second part included questions regarding student's cell phone use in the classroom.

The third part includes questions regarding the frequency of cell phone use and the frequency of use those features for learning English; and, fourth parts include questions about the efficacy of cell phones as instructional tools..

The teachers' interview was conducted to know about their opinions regarding the cell phone use in classroom, and about benefits and challenges of cell phone as language teaching tools in the EFL classroom.

**Results and Discussion**

Regarding first part of the question was verified 100% of students are interested in their English classes.

Regarding second part of the students' questions, was verified 79.42% of them use cell phone, however 20.58% do not use them.

Regarding third part of the students' questions were determined 75% of them using cellphone for learning English and 25% do not use them.

Regarding fourth part of students' questions 45.58% of them considering use of cellphone effective, 47.05% partly effective and 7.35% not effective.

On the contrary, teachers about questions claimed:

1. 3 of them use cell phone, 2 do not use it.
2. Main problems are large groups; students do not want to write only take pictures, students are not interested in classes for chatting.
3. 3 teachers allow their students use cell phone in class, 1 does not use cell phone and 1 sometimes yes sometimes no.
4. One teacher explained he does not accept using cell phone in class because students using it for chatting also cheating.
5. Teachers expressed yes.
6. Teachers claims that cell phone can be used for learning new languages, socialize language, interact with partners and teachers, and also research different topics.

From the analysis of the received data the following issues were identified:

**Related to students:** From the evaluation of students' questionnaires was verified almost all the students participated in the present study have a mobile phone although not all of them use cell phone for learning English however half of the sample considered cell phone partly effective as a learning English tool.

**Related to teachers:** From interviews was verified not all teachers allow their students use cell phone because they considered students use this mobile devices for activities that not always are academic, instead they asserted that can be used for improving the teaching English process.

Subsequently, students were invited to use their cellphone and taught some applications that they can use in their phones for instance: **Duolingo**, for learning languages, **Google Glass** a wearable technology that interacts with voice commands, takes pictures and videos, and provides a discreet micro screen in front of one eye displaying information from the internet including explanations and translations (Beatty, 2013). **Lonely Planet**, where people can find information about trips planners, audio phrasebook, and travel guides. **eStroke**, for development vocabulary programs on Chinese. **Pleco**, it is a free app for learning Chinese helpful as dictionary, enhanced handwriting recognition, and optical character recognition. **Anki**, for flashcard program. **Quizlet**, allow the users to see/choose definitions that other quiz let users have entered. **Wordreference.com** links to language discussion forums that reference the term searched. **Conjugation Nation** offers apps in various languages for drilling verb forms. Godwin-Jones, R. (2011)

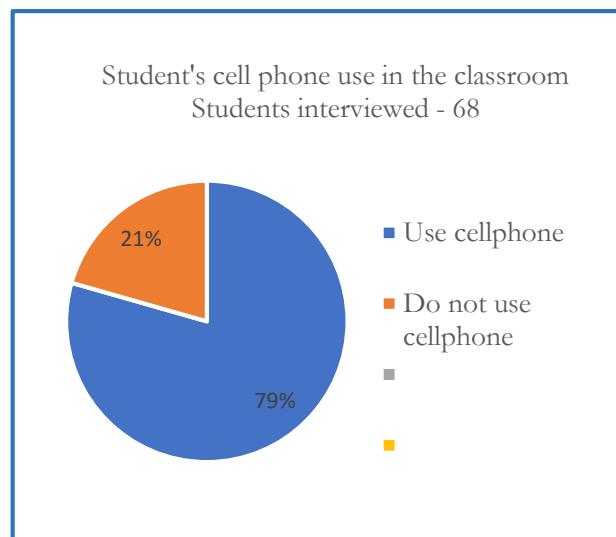
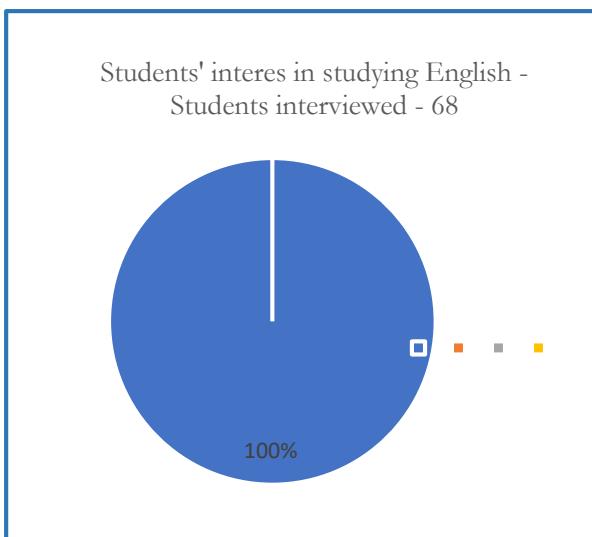
### Conclusion

Begum (2011) asserts there is a change in social value for mobile use in the classroom. In her opinion, teachers should allow students use their favorite technology, as an innovative way for motivate them to learning languages, moreover teachers knowing strategies for using cellphone in classroom should prepare youth for the competitive global society of which they are parts.

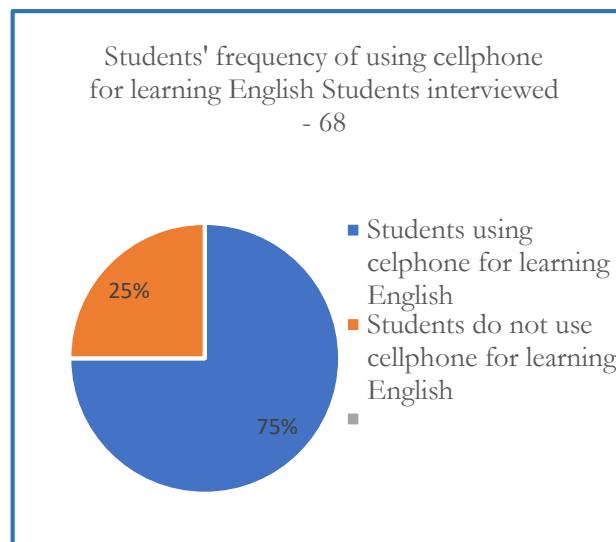
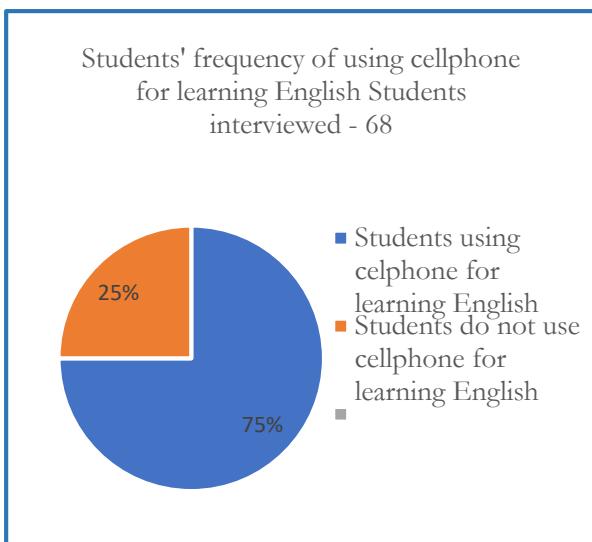
Nowadays mobile devices are powerful and versatile; in addition technological advancement is a must for educational institutions. According to Begum (2011) universities can be a more suitable place to introduce students to the ways that they can use their personal mobile devices to support learning facilities to a greater extent, as almost all the students possess cell phones and now using the mobile devices. Considering the importance students give to their cell phones, the free Wi-Fi at University and some places including Shopping Mall where students pass most of the time, and the trend of using them in education, teachers should take advantage of these aspects also functions and capacities of cell phones to make it a powerful working learning, and research tool.

## Acknowledgement

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**Source:** Self-elaboration



**Source:** Self-elaboration

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QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

NAME OF THE STUDENT: \_\_\_\_\_

GENDER: FEMALE ( ) MALE ( )

AGE: \_\_\_\_\_

OPINIONS REGARDING THE CELL PHONE IN CLASSROOM, AND ABOUT BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF CELL PHONE AS LANGUAGE TEACHING TOOLS IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

Part 1. The interest of EFL University of Quevedo' students for studying English.

1. Do you feel interested in your language class?

Yes ( ) No ( )

2. Your teachers use multimedia in the classroom

Often ( ) Seldom ( ) Never ( )

Part. 2 - Use of cell phone in the classroom

1. Do you use cell phone?

Yes ( ) No ( )

2. Does your teacher permit you to use your cell phones in class?

Yes ( ) No ( )

Part. 3 - Frequency of using cell phone for learning English

1. Do you learn English with your cellphone?

Yes ( ) No ( )

2. Do you listening to English songs with your cellphone?

Yes ( ) No ( )

3. Do you browse web for searching English language learning materials?

Often ( ) Sometimes ( ) never ( )

Part. 4- The efficacy of cell phones as instructional tools.

1. Do you think it is easy to type in mobile phone keyboard?

Yes ( ) No ( )

2. Do you consider receiving feedback from teachers via mobile WhatsApp/sms is more effective than traditional way of receiving feedback?

Yes ( ) No ( )

3. Do you consider use of cell phone in the EFL classroom as a pedagogic tool?

Effective ( ) partly effective ( ) Ineffective ( )

(Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1080334.pdf>)

TEACHERS' INTERVIEWS

FULL NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Teaching experience: \_\_\_\_\_

OPINIONS REGARDING THE CELL PHONE IN CLASSROOM, AND ABOUT BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF CELL PHONE AS LANGUAGE TEACHING TOOLS IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

1. Do you use cell phone? What are the purposes of your using it?

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2. What are the problematic factors you think to create an interactive EFL classroom?

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3. Do you allow your students in using cellphones in the classroom?

Yes      (       )                  No      (       )

4. If the answer is "no", please explain the reasons.

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5. Do you think that cellphone can be a useful tool for language learning? Please show reason for your answer.

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6. What are the benefits and challenges in using cell phones as language learning tools in the EFL classroom of UTEQ' students?

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(Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1080334.pdf>)

# **Influence of technology in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL)**

## **Classroom in Ecuador**

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### **Resumen**

El objetivo de este estudio es identificar cómo la tecnología ha influido en el campo educativo en Ecuador. Este es un artículo de investigación y se emplea una encuesta para recopilar datos. Este estudio se realizó en la Facultad de Psicología de la Universidad de Guayaquil en el año 2016, de los cuales cuarenta y tres mujeres (70,49%) y dieciocho hombres (29,51%) respondieron la encuesta. El resultado encontrado en este estudio fue que el uso de la tecnología ayuda significativamente al aprendizaje, ya que permite a los estudiantes desarrollar habilidades y mejorar su aprendizaje. La mayoría de los estudiantes (78,6%) pensaron que pueden aprender más eficientemente el inglés si los maestros utilizan la tecnología en el aula. Sobre la base de los resultados del estudio, se hacen implicaciones para el uso significativo de la tecnología en contextos EFL

.

**Palabras claves:** efecto de la tecnología, aula EFL, beneficios y limitaciones de Aprendizaje de Idiomas Asistido por Computadora, campo educativo

### **Abstract**

The aim of this study is to identify how the technology has influenced in the educational field in Ecuador. This is an investigative article and a survey is employed to collect data. This study was carried out in the Psychology Faculty of the University of Guayaquil in 2016. Forty three female (70.49%) and eighteen male (29.51%) students answered the survey. The result found in this study was that the technology use helps learning significantly, since it allows students to develop skills and improve their learning. Most of students (78.6%) thought that if English teachers would use technology in all their classes they would learn the language effectively. Based on the findings of the study, implications are made for the meaningful technology use in EFL contexts.

**Keywords:** effect of technology, EFL classroom, benefits and limitations of Computer Assisted Language Learning, educational field

## **Introduction**

The use of technology has been an important part of Education in Ecuador for the last three decades. During this time the incorporation of technology has improved the quality of education in Ecuador. Although, some Ecuadorian teachers still face some obstacles at the moment of integrating technology into the curricula. The previous government made many changes in the Ecuadorian education system. One of them was the implementation of the Ecuadorian in service English Teacher Standards in 2012, which is organized by five domains: language, culture, curriculum development, assessment, and professionalism and ethical commitment.

The third domain “Curriculum Development”, includes some points that are related to the use of resources and technology into the curricula. Nowadays, the use of technology helps students to develop skills and improve their teaching-learning process. However, some teachers do not have good attitudes towards using technology because they think there are other resources that can help achieve their goals.

This paper is focus on the analysis of the effects technology in the EFL classroom. In particular, we focus on mobile learning effects in Ecuador according to INEC of Ecuador (2016). The section that follows reflects on the benefits of technology. One of the benefits of mobile learning according to Maginnis, White & McKenna (2000), the mobile wireless technologies use can overcome the limitation of educational flexibility with wired technology (p.58).

The use of technology in classrooms allows teachers create good environment that encourage students to participate in classrooms sharing ideas or suggestions about the topic of the lesson. Technology has become meaningful for students and teachers; nevertheless, teachers should take advantages of the all resources that can access to help students have better understanding of the class. This paper also argues for the limitations that sometimes present technology use. One of them as Lee states (2017) “*Most devices discharge quickly especially when there are different active apps within the device*” (p.1).

## **Importance of the use of Technology in EFL classroom**

This problem is important because according to David Warlick states “we need technology in every classroom and in every student and teacher’s hand because it is the pen and paper of our time, it is the lens through which we experience much of our world” (as cited in Rao, 2012, p.1). Teachers should be aware that technology plays an important role in the educational field, which helps learners to develop skills and reach their goals. Moreover, according to Jacobs “Teachers need to integrate technology seamlessly into the curriculum instead of viewing it as an add-on, an afterthought, or an event” ” (as cited in Rao, 2012, p.1).

Shyamlee& Phil (2012) Technology makes the learning process interesting and teaching more productive. Educational technology can be used as a tool of creativity. It can provide many devices which make the teaching and learning process more effective (p.156). Teachers should be aware that the integration of the technology in the context of the curriculum allows learners to feel motivated and be successful in their learning process.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Some technology effects in Ecuador according to INEC (2016) are: 36,0 % of Ecuadorian families have access to the internet, 13.5 more than five years ago. At urban area the growth is 13.2 points, while in the rural area 11,6 points. Furthermore, 9 out of Ecuadorian families have at least one cell phone, 8.4 points more than in the 2012. Another point is 36,0 % of Ecuadorian families have access to the Internet but 24,5% access the internet through some wireless means, 4,0 points more than in 2012.

During the last years the application of technology in the English as Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms has given a change in the educational field, since the students have the opportunity to develop skills by using different devices of the new technology. Begum (2011) Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) currently provides the utilization and retention of newly acquired language skills as well as primary source of language education for EFL students to acquire one or more new languages (p.105)

Technology presents some benefits that influences in the EFL classroom. One of the benefits of technology according to Cox (2010),by integrating technology into the classroom, teachers are changing the way they used to teach (lectures six hours a day) and providing students with the tools that will take them into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. (p.1). Another benefit according to Riasati, Allahyar, Tan (2012)

:

*“Incorporation of technology in the classroom enables learners to assess their own work in a more meaningful way, become better aware of the quality of their work and accept feedback more willingly. Moreover, it gives them a chance to undertake a more self-monitoring role, which to a higher chance of fulfilling tasks successfully”* (p.26).

However, technology also has limitations, some of them according to Coghlan, (2004) lack of access to technology resources that requires an internet connection is a major disadvantage for those schools and individuals who can barely afford or do not have access to a computer or an Internet connection. (p. 26).

## **Literature Review**

### **Technology**

Lam (2000) the word 'technology' and its related terms refer to any machines that can be used for L2 teaching (p. 389). Cuban (1986) states that since the mid-nineteen centuries the classroom has become home to a succession of technologies (e.g. textbook, chalk-board, radio, film, and television) that have been tailored to the dimensions of classroom practice (p.2). Moreover, many government and business leaders believe that technology, thoughtfully integrated into the curriculum, provides students with the skills necessary to compete and survive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Fabry, & Higgs, 1997, p. 385). In addition, all the positive aspects of technology create more both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for students. Besides, learning can be anytime and anywhere. The internet does not close; people who have software and computers at home can work at their convenience (Nguyen, 2008. P. 135). Technology allows students feel that they are part of the learning process, according to Bitner & Bitner (2002) technology integration necessarily alters the traditional paradigm of the teacher providing wisdom and the student absorbing knowledge ... and for good reason (p. 95).

### **Methodology**

This paper uses a quantitative approach. A questionnaire with seven questions (including age, gender and career) was administered to 61 Psychology students of University of Guayaquil to find out the ways they use the technological tools to study English. The advantages and limitations that technology could cause and the results they have gotten using the technological components in their classroom.

There were around 90 students in English Classes at Levels 1, 2 and 3. However the response rate was 68% (61 replies). Forty three female (70.49%) and eighteen male (29.51%) students from the total population. Psychology students are from 18 to more than 40 years. Most of them (60.78%) are from 18 to 40 years old.

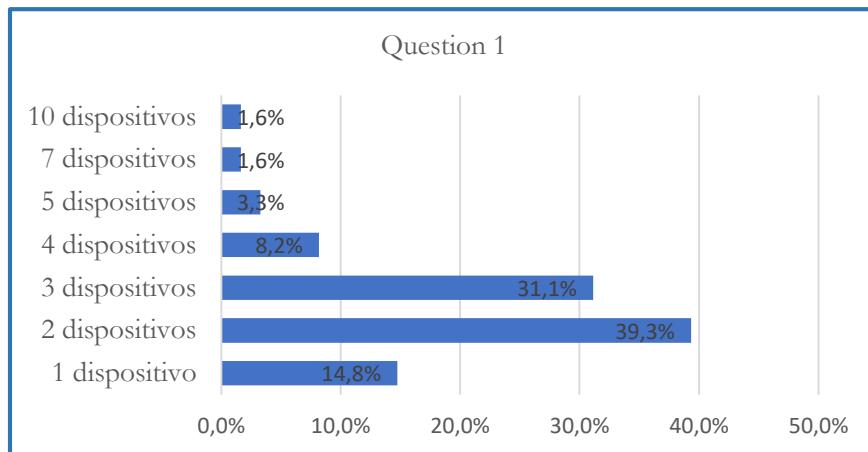
## **Survey Questions**

1. How many electronic devices do you own?
2. Do you think the use of technology improve English language knowledge?
3. Is technology a good motivator in English classes?
4. How often do your teachers encourage you to use technology for learning English language?
5. Do you prefer using technology to learn English language?
6. Do you think the university has a good source of technology for learning English language?

7. Which technological tools do your teachers use in the English classroom?

## Results

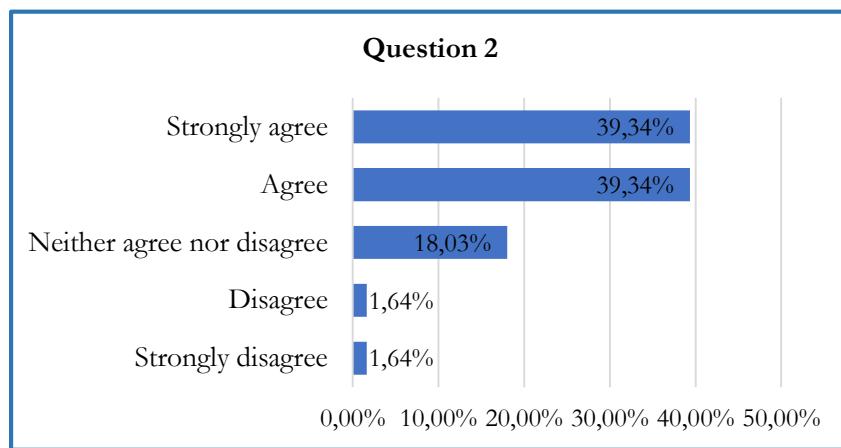
**Figure 1.** How many electronic devices do you own?



**Source:** Self-elaboration

All students surveyed own at least one electronic device. Actually, most of the students (39.2%) have 2 of them, which mean that all students possess electronic tools to use in English classes. 39.2% of students have electronic devices, 78% think that the use of technology allows to learn in an effective way.

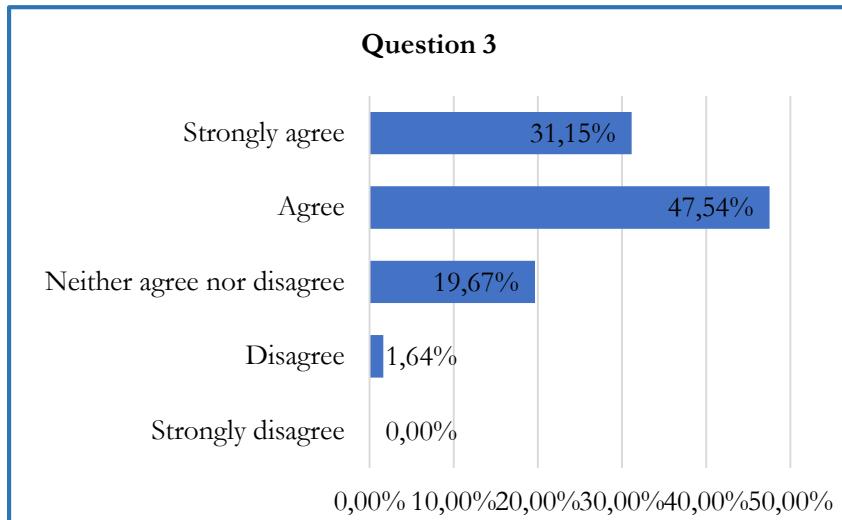
**Figure 2:** Do you think the use of technology allows you to learn English effectively?



**Source:** Self-elaboration

This type of question has 5 different answers: Strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree and strongly agree. Most of students (78.6%) think that if English teachers would use technology in all their classes they would learn the language effectively.

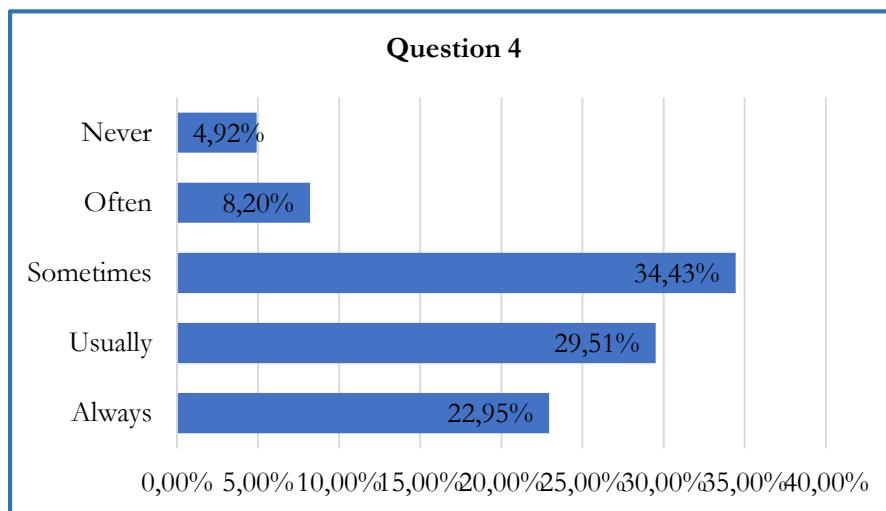
**Figure 3:** Is technology a good motivator in English classes?



**Source:** Self-elaboration

Students agree (47.54%) that the use of technology allows them to feel motivated in English class since they can practice different activities that help them to improve their learning. However, 1,64% of students disagree because they think that it is not necessary to use the technology to feel motivated in learning English.

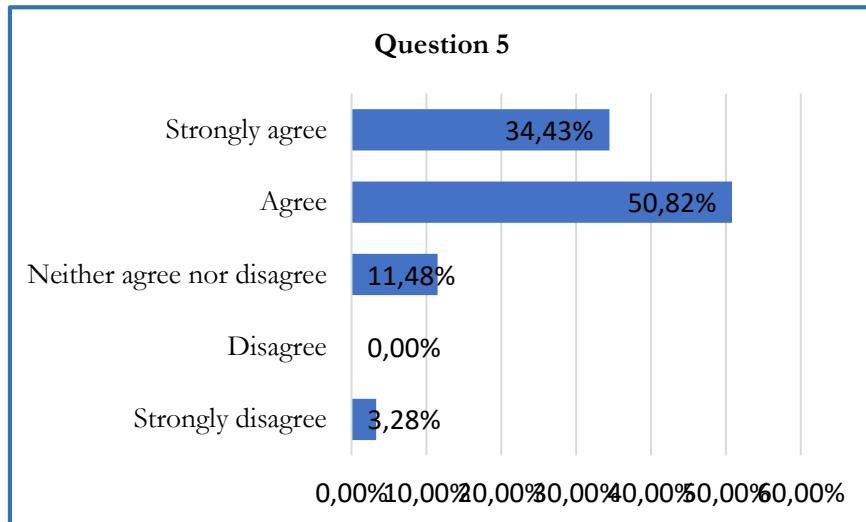
**Figure 4:** How often do your teachers encourage you to use technology for learning English language?



**Source:** Self-elaboration

Interestingly, only 22.95% of students state teachers always encourage them to use technology for learning English. While 34,43% state that teachers sometimes motivate them to learn English using technology devices.

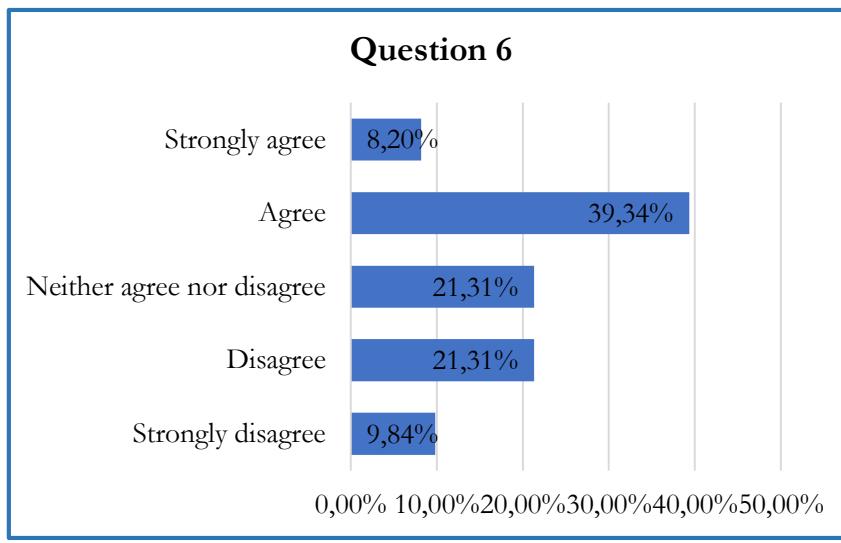
**Figure 5:** Do you prefer to use the technology to learn English language?



**Source:** Self-elaboration

50.83% of students agree that prefer to use electronic devices because they have the opportunity to listen to conversations or watch videos about situations where English is used in real situation. While, 3,28% of students strongly disagree because they prefer to learn the language practicing with native people rather than using the technology.

**Figure 6:** Do you think the university has a good source of technology for learning English language?

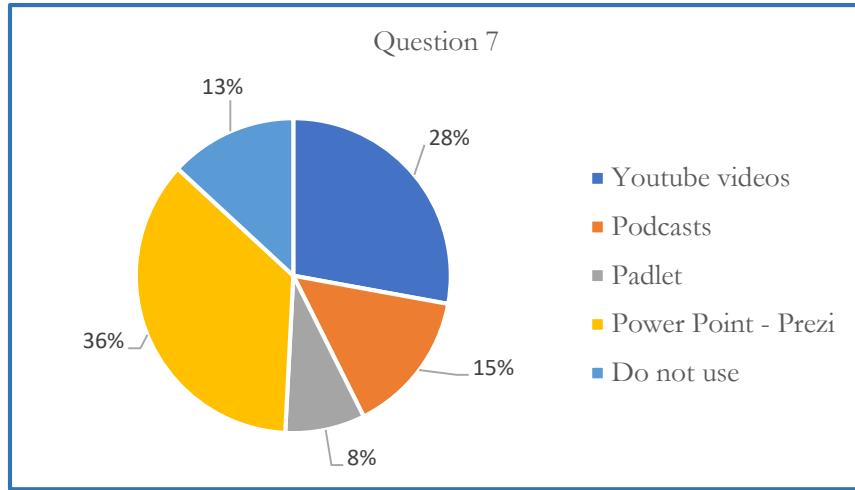


**Source:** Self-elaboration

Although students know that there are some technologies devices do not work perfectly, only 8.20% of them strongly agree that University of Guayaquil does not provide good electronic devices. Nevertheless, 39.34% of

students agree.

**Figure 7:** Which technological tools do your teachers use in the English classroom?



**Source:** Self-elaboration

Most of teachers (36.07%) use power point presentations. Although is a good start, teachers can use other “new technology” like podcasts and internet videos or simulations and so on. 28% state that you-tube videos are the most used by teachers in the English classroom.

## Discussion

Research question was aimed to investigate how using technology influences in the EFL classroom. The findings taken from the survey revealed that technology plays an important role in the educational field. Psychology students agree that technology is important to have an effectively learning of the language, although the University does not have good technologic tools. Over the past ten years the technology use has generated significant changes in many fields for example scientific, medical, among others, but especially in education.

This result is in compliance with findings of a survey on what are the effects of technology in the EFL classroom. Nowadays, teachers are more likely to incorporate the technology in their classroom because they have noticed that the application of technology allows students to learn English effectively. Teachers play an important role in the implementation of technology in the educational field because they can use technology not only to teach but also to encourage students to feel motivated in English class since they can practice activities that allow them to develop skills and improve their learning. Another finding showed that students prefer to use the technology because they can learn the language while they listen to conversations or watch videos in English because the language is used in real situations

## Conclusion

Through the literature review and the study was carried out to Psychology students we got some interesting findings. After previewing and analyzing the information gathered from the surveys applied to the students, the findings demonstrated that technology is a meaningful resource in the education. One of these causes is that it allows succeeding in the learning of the language. Despite of the observations presented above, this study also presented benefits that allow students to learn English in an effective way. Another finding in this study is that mobile technology allows students to feel encourage in English classes because the activities that they practice when use the technology allow them to improve their learning. Moreover, in this study was found technology allows learners to enjoy classes because the classes are taught in a different way and they have the opportunity to practice English in a different way such as listening conversations or watching videos, which allow learning the language efficiently.

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# **Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) in the development of contextual vocabulary of english in students of the first level of english**

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## **Abstract**

This research reveals the implementation of Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) as an excellent technological tool to teach the contextual vocabulary of English, since in this 21st century everything that has been seen so far has been technology; that contributes significantly to the education. It has been said that the vocabulary is a key part of learning a foreign language, not only with words, but think that they are a means of communicating and are expressed; desires, feelings, among others. Both teachers and students know that to know a wide vocabulary contextual and a minimum amount of grammatical structures can be developed in a new language. The implementation of the Virtual Learning Environments (VLE), to learn a new language today is one of the most appointed but very little employees, so that when it comes to learning of any kind we turn to the internet. To speak of learning a language, specifically the English means the acquisition of his words so as to use them and express what you want and what you do not want to; for this reason, the learning of contextual vocabulary of English has a very important connotation in the first steps of learning a foreign language. However this learning it is sometimes very difficult even more if we do so lonely, monotonous or in books without pictures. For all these reasons, this project has as its main objective, direct you to the university students who are in an initial level of English, where there has been a great need, and in addition to a slow contextual vocabulary learning, since; the use of the EVA as significant to the Contextual Vocabulary Acquisition of English as a foreign language, gives as a result the easiest and most fun way to do it.

**Keywords:** VLE, contextual vocabulary, English, university students, the twenty-first century.

## **Introduction**

The inclusion of the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in professional training

processes, has resulted in substantial changes in the forms of organization, the interaction between the subject and in a special way, in the way in which they are learning and knowledge is constructed, with emphasis on the search, the constant inquiry, collaborative and cooperative work. These technologies have led to new ways of learning on the part of students, which is why the optimal use of the same as well as the use of appropriate learning strategies has great importance for the whole university student, in order to enhance its capacity to learn from individual and collaborative way. (Leal, 2011)

Although the books of English learners provide a plan of studies and assist in devising a strategy to cover various points, reading and grammar can also limit the learning of vocabulary on the shortcut menu. Human beings are always looking for models; always find how to do things more terse and to cut roads to circumvent the double work. When the teacher focuses purely on the student book then the students feel they do not have to prepare or practice since everything is in the books used in the different levels of English.

Technology has become a special element of teaching support or use in specific areas of the curriculum. It has highlighted the need for students not only to be familiar with the new technologies, but also to use in the classroom and in their school work with the fluency and naturalness that already do outside the field of education.

One of the tools that make it possible for this integration in the classroom in a natural and welcoming the elements and actions that occur in the development of the daily classes are the Virtual Learning Environments (VLE), which are integrated in a natural way in the day-to-day classes, homework, and communication with families. (Educación 3.0, 2014)

The problem of this research is caused in particular by the low level of domain in the context menu of English vocabulary using the Virtual Learning Environments (VLE); The need for first-level students learn the vocabulary of English is considered as the basis to develop the skills of English language learning, since students first-level English learn grammar structures but it is complex for them to try to form a grammatical sentence without using the dictionary by ignorance and a lack of vocabulary that present as the course progresses.

The low level of English the little production in class, the dependence of the books and the primary focus on the grammar makes to the learning of contextual vocabulary of English using the Virtual Learning Environment both in and outside the classroom.

A virtual learning environment (VLE) is a set of telematics and computing facilities for communication and the exchange of information in the teaching-learning processes. In a VLE interact, fundamentally, teachers and students. However, the nature of the medium imposes the participation at key moments in the process of other

roles: administrator of the computer system, experts in media, support staff, etc. (Ulises Mestre Gómez, 2007)

Usually a class lasts between one and two hours and is composed of more than 30 students. Therefore, there is very little time to speak, practice and apply within the class skills of the English to learn the context menu of English vocabulary. It is not enough for students to be able to say or express 5 sentences per class, in order to improve you need more practice for more hours and with best virtual tools within a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). In addition, the few conversations are just repetitions of some phrases that do not reach the 100% of the students. As teachers we need to give them a more real and practical so that students can use the Shortcut vocabulary of English in phrases, sentences or conversations applied to real experiences.

One of the most important reasons is that it doesn't matter whether a student has mastered the grammar or have a good pronunciation of English, if you don't know the words you need to express their ideas, and then it is not possible to carry out an effective communication in a foreign language. It is then when the vocabulary not only happens to be an important part in the formation of the student, but becomes the most essential part of all.

The downgrade of English teachers in the management of ICT, the relationship of people with the knowledge, today is advancing by leaps and bounds. This implies having to modify processes and use different learning methods, tools, diversified, innovative practices that meet the expectations and demands of the students. With the arrival of the Technologies of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), educational paradigms give a turn, for all those who have in their hands the great task of educating. The technology is an excellent tool that facilitates the learning, skills development and the different ways of learning, therefore, it can be said that the training and updating teacher training in the use of ICT is important. (Ulises Mestre Gómez, 2007)

The classes are only theoretical in where you learn purely grammatical structures. One of the major drawbacks for the implementation of virtual learning environments (VLE) in the development of contextual vocabulary of English in students of first level, has to do with the lack of teachers on the use of these tools, and the fear of being left behind and be considered obsolete not because they are unaware of the theme of your profession but by the low level of knowledge in the use of ICT, and feel that their students pass by. In this situation, it is necessary to train teachers in the use of ICT in the classroom, as they finally they are the ones who have the responsibility to lead and guide the process of integral formation of its students and turn them into people with the skills of self-learning and adaptability to new technology.

For all these reasons, it is necessary to review the roles of teacher and students. In the first case, it is necessary to determine what are the strategies will help to develop their functions in such an environment. In addition, the teacher, to be able to develop their teaching function in a technological environment necessarily must have

a good command of the user-level technology and will be so much more creative and innovative more capable to understand (although you don't have to design) all the technical aspects.

The didactics outdated, routine classes and the few hours of classes (2 hours per week) make classes of English become boring and of little benefit for the student, it is considered that much also depends on the teachers, it should be considered that the professor also carry your own extra material to work with interesting content and if possible try to get pupils to maintain the interest and concentration in the classroom.

The lack of motivation among students of English to learn the shortcut vocabulary could be caused also by the monotonous in their classes. We must remember that they are students and many of them are beginning to learn English. The professor to find more resources and sources on the Internet you could build an excellent Contextual Vocabulary learning of English, in where the readings according to the level of each, the hear real conversations, tv series and movies in English will make the students are always willing to find more and different ways to learn from the context menu of English vocabulary through the VLE

Currently, the majority of people who come to the university do so with a low knowledge of the English language, a fact that lessens their expectations of professional competence. The study of a foreign language, limited to a few hours established academically, or the promotion of the language schools or holiday courses, have been seen as insufficient measures during these years. It is for this reason that taking advantage of the forced conversion of the Bachelor Degrees and Diploma in degrees; it begins to give the importance that has the knowledge of a foreign language.

The Ecuador could not be the exception, on the contrary, each day the English teachers and researchers are looking for new and better alternatives to help future generations of students to acquire English as a foreign language.

But that is a long process there have been shortcomings, in many cases, the failure to have certain students, this can be said has been due to disuse of Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) in the development of contextual vocabulary of English in students of first level represented by a setback in the progress that the educational competence. The following investigation without a doubt, taking into account the relevance of the contextual English vocabulary at beginner level students has had on the different approaches and methodologies for the teaching of English.

## **Development**

### **General methods:**

In this research it was explained that the implementation of the Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) on the

learning of contextual vocabulary of English in the first level of English, where the problem is to analyze from the facts, phenomena, experiences and experiences of the researcher.

The type of proposed research responds to an Inductive – Deductive Final del approach because its relevance in this research should be considered the type of documentary research, which will collect information from sources such as the internet, books, brochures, leaflets and previous research in order to broaden and deepen the knowledge about the problem proposed to draw conclusions, and recommendations of the implementation of the Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) on the learning of general vocabulary of English.

For the diagnosis was used the type of field research of descriptive character, which served as a base for discovering the need, the shortcomings and the feasibility of formulation of solutions that will be implemented, also allowing the collection of information directly from the social environment with the purpose of detail, explain and analyze the causes of the problem and its solutions of Virtual Learning Environments, to be able to know the effects that it has on independent variables; Virtual Learning Environments and dependent Vocabulary in Context.

The research was developed considering the following stages:

**First Stage:** In this stage, the literature review, documentary, and legislative, was researched which provided a contextual and theoretical framework for its development. It was developed and implemented the research instruments to structure the diagnosis that served as the basis for the development of the proposal.

**Second Stage:** In this stage was implemented Virtual Learning Environments, contextual vocabulary in English to students in the first level of English and the process of socialization of the applicative techniques of virtual learning environments in the context menu of English vocabulary.

#### **Conclusions:**

- The implementation of the virtual learning environments is a clear decision-support tool to achieve the goal of college students is to acquire a contextual vocabulary in English.
- VLE is the tool that is needed for students and teachers have the necessary contact to advise and assist the students and be able to reach the objective that is to be able to acquire a new vocabulary as it is the contextual vocabulary in English.
- The frequent use of the VLE in the university students to acquire a contextual vocabulary made possible this idea in a 90% since the students obtained more fluency in speaking and writing in English.

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# **Chapter 2**

## **METHODOLOGIES / TEACHING APPROACHES**

# **Productive use of english with the functional-notional approach**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this article is to guide a group of university students toward learning the English language, on a communicative approach known as Notional - Functional. This approach, that influences real life, must do with the need of State Technical University of Quevedo students' for being orally proficient in a second language. In addition, our objective was to apply constructive techniques which can easily be used at the university level. Speaking correctly and be understood are the main goal for our students who see in the English language a bridge that will unite their profession with better paid jobs. Therefore, the applicability and domain in English must be highly functional according to their interests. In this study were reviewed key aspects where the teaching-learning process was applied in some demo teaching classes. The qualitative-ethnographic approach to interview and observe some students was used with the purpose of determining if the Notional Functional Approach gave them all the academic elements for improving their learning process, if the application of this approach innovated class activities, and if their language skills were improved, concluding that The Notional-Functional approach improved students' skills and provided them the opportunity to use a real language according to the students' communicative purpose.

**Keywords:** Communication skills - teaching-learning process – Communicative competence – demo-teaching classes – innovation - Linguistic theory.

## **Resumen:**

El objetivo de este artículo es orientar a un grupo de estudiantes universitarios hacia el aprendizaje del idioma Inglés, basado en un enfoque comunicativo conocido como Teórico Funcional. Este enfoque que condiciona la vida real, se relaciona con la necesidad de los estudiantes de la Universidad Técnica Estatal de Quevedo de ser competente en un segundo idioma, Además, nuestro objetivo fue aplicar técnicas constructivas que pueden fácilmente ser usadas en el ámbito universitario. Para los estudiantes, hablar correctamente y ser comprendidos son objetivos principales, porque ven en el idioma inglés un puente que unirá su profesión con empleos bien remunerados. Por otra parte, la aplicabilidad y el dominio del idioma deben ser realmente funcionales y prácticos de acuerdo a sus intereses. En este estudio se revisaron aspectos claves del proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje que fueron aplicados en varias clases demostrativas, para lo cual se utilizó el enfoque cualitativo de carácter etnográfico para entrevistar y observar algunos estudiantes con el propósito de determinar si el Enfoque Teórico Funcional, les dio los elementos académicos para mejorar su proceso de aprendizaje, si la aplicación del mismo dinamizó las actividades de manera eficiente, y si mejoraron las habilidades lingüísticas de ellos, concluyendo que el enfoque propuesto, mejoró las habilidades de los estudiantes y facilitó el uso de un lenguaje real según el propósito comunicativo del alumno.

**Palabras clave:** Habilidades de la comunicación, - Proceso enseñanza – aprendizaje; competencia comunicativa – clases demostrativas – innovación - teoría lingüística.

### **The language and its nature**

Those who love studying language and linguistics like to think that language is as real as a living being. Several linguistics known languages grow up, changes, gets old and gradually disappears with the emergence of new language(s) to replace it. (Center, 2016). Since language is an entity that acquires change, it is definitely required that different studies should deal with different aspects of this entity. Language should be analyzed representing different aspects as sound, structure, meaning, etc.

As sound the main branch are phonetic (how the sounds are produced or articulated), and phonology (that studies speech sounds). As structure language is traditionally considered consisting of three parts: signs, meanings, and a code connecting signs with their meanings; and as meaning, language study the way in which words and signs are used, depending on the social context.

According to Wilkins, (Wilkins, 1976) one of the major decisions that must be taken in the teaching of foreign languages is on what basis we will select the language to, which the learner will be exposed and which we will expect him to acquire. Throughout the process of learning a language, many approaches have been proposed or adopted, but nowadays exist controversies in our profession ranging from the search for a reasonable language teaching methodology to the search for an appropriate professional name. Acronyms like TEFL

(Teaching/Teachers of English as a Foreign Language); TESL (Teaching/Teachers of English as a Second Language); TEAL (Teaching/Teachers of English as an Additional Language); TESOL (Teaching/Teachers of English to Speakers of other Language); and, ELT (English Language Teaching) have gained relatively permanent acceptance, and fixed a professional label that most of the teachers follow.

### **The language teaching-learning process**

The work of teaching is simultaneously mental and social. It is also physical, emotional, practical, experiential, historical, cultural, spiritual, and personal. (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Teaching is a complex activity, not only for these dimensions, but also for their supporting of students' learning. Additionally, the question how language teacher learn to teach has stimulated much discussion. The teacher training is defined from the years they themselves spent as students. Otherwise, teachers are aware of their assumptions, values and belief, and the most important they can choose to teach differently from the way they were taught. They can analyze certain method for improving their teaching practice. Being part of an educational community confers a professional identity and connects teachers with colleagues thus they are less isolated in their activities.

Since a method is more abstract than teaching activity, it is not surprising that teacher prefer activities than methods when they plan their lessons. A series of methods have helped teachers in their teaching process, but which method is best? According to Prabhu, (1990) there is no a single best method, instead teachers will use a method that go with their own beliefs about the teaching learning process, belief on their experience and their professional training.

In addition, teachers always want to know what is new. They are searching for ways to make their activity more successful. Since The Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, Audiolingual, The Reading Approach, etc. until new contemporary theories like Universal Grammar Theory, Skill Acquisition Theory, Communicative Approach, Content and Language Integrated Teaching, etc. all reflect a diversity of views on the teaching and learning process, mainly on learning outcomes.

Since the learning of a language is most commonly identified with acquiring mastery of its grammatical system, it is not surprising that most courses have a grammatical (or "structural") pedagogic organization. Of course there is an enormous variety in the ways in which language may be presented in grammatically structured teaching materials themselves, but there are also quite other ways of defining the context of language courses. (Wilkins, 1976). Instead of revamping a grammatical syllabus, Wilkins suggests a notional approach which would allow the learner to communicate his needs through language.

The functional approach to language teaching is intimately related to the communicative approach and in recent years has enjoyed widespread popularity. (Berns, 1983) While functional approach was largely understood as a

cover term for the underlying concept that language is used for communication, and most interpretations emphasized the communicative needs of learners and explicit presentation of language functions and the linguistic forms associated with them, there was no standard interpretation of the terms function, notion, or communication. For some people a function was as general as "describing a person or place" or "describing mechanical processes"; for others it was as specific as "requesting help with baggage" or "answering questions about what people have been doing."

### The Notional- Functional Approach

The birth of The Notional Functional Approach –NFA-, by D.A. Wilkins, focuses on oral proficiency liberated learner and teacher from the structured text. It emphasizes communicative purposes of a speech act, also help students to use real and appropriate language for communication. It underlines what people want to do or what they can accomplish Finocchiaro, M., & Brumfit, C. (1983). Grammar was not only the basis of syllabus organization. His Notional Syllabus stimulates thought and experiments in the field of syllabus design, being of wide interest among educationalists as well as applied linguistic. This new approach provided the opportunity to utilize grammar and vocabulary as the vehicle to convey students' needs. The Notional-Functional approach is designed to allow learners to direct their conversation according to their needs in any given situation.

Wilkins analyzed the system of meaning that a learner would need to communicate, and expressed them in terms of "**notion**" -a concept or idea- can be specific (dog, car, house) or general (location, frequency, time, sequence, etc.) and "**function**" -the communicative act- (writing an apology, promising, greeting, requests, threats, complains, offers, etc.) examples: **function: greeting** - Hello (informal), Good morning (informal), **function: apology** - Sorry (informal) My apologizes (formal), In Wilkins' words: *The process of deciding what to teach is on consideration of what the learner should communicate in the foreign language.* (1976)

Wilkins developed his ideas into a book called *Notional Syllabuses* in 1976. The advantage of this syllabus is it takes the communicative facts of language into account from the beginning without losing sight of grammatical and situational factors. It is potentially superior to the grammar syllabus because it will produce a communicative competence. (Wilkins, 1976).

The multiple usages of the terms functional/notional, communicative functions, and communicative notions reflected also contributed to uncertainty as to precise meanings on the part of textbook writers, publishers and educational administrators, all who were aware of these terms in their more original and restricted meanings. In essence, a functional approach to language is on an interest in performance, or actual language use. It is thus in decided contrast with the Chomsky concern with the linguistic competence of the ideal speaker-hearer (Chomsky, 1965)

### **Application of Notional-Functional Approach with UTEQ' students**

The Faculty of Animal Science has a population of approximately thousands students. English class participant attend once a week for a two hour. According to Red Nacional de Idiomas -RANI- meeting (2014) two hours by week are not sufficient for language learning. Thus, from our own experience and from other colleagues' experiences, furthermore considering students' need, the NFA was chosen. Additionally, because work around "notions," real-life situations in which people communicate, further broken down into "functions," specific aims of communication, especially for overcoming the deficiency of time, with a learning on the real needs of the students.

The activities carried out were:

- Simulation Games (role play)
- Interviews.
- Exchange of information shared between students.
- Games.
- Language Exchange.
- Surveys.
- Work in pairs.
- Learning by teaching.
- Surveys.
- Work in pairs.

Regardless it was requested to students or grammar exercises to do at home exercises of automatism non-communicative. It helped the students to use the language in different contexts by creating sentences with meaning (instead of helping them build up perfectly correct grammatical structures or to get a perfect pronunciation). The foreign language learning was evaluated with performance test instead of achievement test for grading is difficult, in other words knowing how the student developed his/her communicative competence, defined as their ability to use their knowledge in an appropriate manner.

Students used language in some contexts by creating sentences with meaning (instead of helping them build up perfectly correct grammatical structures or to get a perfect pronunciation). The UTEQ' students were assessed addressing correction also fluidity. The assessment is not limited to the product, but covers the entire process; it is a question of determining at what time and in what sense it is appropriate to modify some aspect of the instructional process.

According to Brown (2000, p. 43) some important characteristic of this approach are:

- Classes on components of communication.
- The techniques of language have meaningful purpose.
- Fluency and Accuracy.
- Productive use of the language out classroom learning.
- The role of the teacher is a facilitator and guide,

Another important step in a communicative class is motivation. It is essential if we want to create an ideal learning environment that include some elements, like drawings, films, meaningful tasks for the student, recreational activities, competition, and so on.

Communication is a process with specific purpose so additional to vocabulary, rules and functions it is important the negotiation of the meaning where students must participate in real tasks for example: See a schedule of aircraft to know if there is direct flight from Barcelona to Singapore, and not, e.g., respond to the questions of the book. The oral interaction between students is frequent: in pairs, trios, in larger groups or between the whole classes. The textbook is considered a valuable material support, but not the shaft of the instruction. They are also used for other types of materials - e.g., for troubleshooting tasks in group - and authentic - magazines, brochures, public transport tickets, etc., as well as everyday objects: a camera, an alarm clock, etc. In the specific case of Agricultural Engineering' students, some leaflets with information related to the profession were taught as well as practical expressions with explicit meaningful information like: Could you explain me what are the chemical elements to fumigate a plant?, or Could you tell me what are the most damaging pests for crops? And so on.

The role of the teacher is broad: to analyze the needs of the students, create communication situations, organize activities, advice, participate as a partner more, observe the development of the tasks in the classroom, preparing materials, etc. In other words, facilitate learning, fostering cooperation among the students, who are the true protagonists; this is, therefore, a learner-centered approach.

### **Methodology**

Using rigorous qualitative research methods can enhance the development of quality measures the development and dissemination of comparative quality reports as well as quality improvement efforts. Sofaer, S. (2002). The objective of this research of qualitative approach was identified how Notional-Functional Approach would improve learning in Agricultural Engineering' students. The research was carried out at State Technical University of Quevedo, Faculty of Animal Science. The sample was thirty students specifically from fourth semester, eleven male (36.67%) and nineteen female (63.33%). Firstly, it was applied a questionnaire to determine the main difficulties they had about studying English. In addition, a group of teachers were

interviewed, to learn from their experiences, as well as their teaching methods to compare also determine if the application of the National-Functional Approach would motivate students towards learning.

### **Our hypotheses are:**

1. - Learning English two class hours per week to acquire fluency is insufficient.
2. - Agricultural Engineering' students are interested in learning English to improve their profession.
3. - Students would like speak English quickly otherwise study a lot.

### **Survey Questions**

1. What is your greatest difficulty in studying English?
2. What areas do you use English?
3. What is your main objective for studying English?
4. What is the contribution of the English language in your professional career?
5. Would you study English with a new approach to enable you to improve your English?

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **Answers to the survey**

##### **Question No. 1** What is your greatest difficulty in studying English?

15 students indicated that Grammar (50%) is the main difficulty to study English, followed by Vocabulary (16.67%); Colloquialisms and slangs (3.33%); Pronunciation (30%)

##### **Questions No. 2.** What areas do you use English?

The English language is used by 17 students in their area of study representing (56.67%); 9 use it at work (30%); 2 students claims it is important to travel (6.67%); and 2 learners said English is useful in Entertainment (6.67%)

##### **Questions No. 3.** What is your main objective for studying English?

The main factor that motivates students to learn English is to communicate (50%), 5 students expressed how important is for them reading magazines (16.67%); and 10 students considered necessary to understand spoken language (33.33%)

**Questions No. 4.** What is the contribution of the English language in your professional career? All language courses of the UTEQ have areas of research and the English contribution is very important for 20 students (66.67%), and important for 10 students (33.33%).

**Questions No. 5.** Would you study English with a new approach to enable you to improve your English?

The most positive aspect was the opening of the students toward a new approach which help them to learn and achieve quick achievement, 22 students responded positively (73.33%), and 8 claims perhaps they would consider the approach proposed. (26.67%)

The above results indicate the difficulty that students have to learn English; aspects like grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation are the key points that need to be improved. Teachers are looking for different methods to fill the gaps as indicated by Prabhu, (1990) “*there is no a single best method, instead teachers will use a method that go with their own beliefs about the teaching learning process, belief on their experience and their professional training*”

The English language according to the students' responses is useful in their studies and work, because it is vital to communicate with other people and obviously to read articles related to their careers. The experiences of teachers consulted, served to us identify their problems and to check their efforts to motivate learning in students, due in part to a strict syllabus that many times is not created according to the needs of the students, as well as to demonstrate that Notional-Functional Approach is an innovative proposal to stimulate and reactivate teaching and learning' process in the Faculty of Animal Science, according to responses achieved.

Students were invited to participate in some classes' demonstration, where teachers explained the benefits of the approach applied to real needs. Use of “Apologizing”, was an example of a lesson plan proposed (Annex No 1.). All activities were timed and were met successfully. Teachers gave enough time to her students to work on the group activities and went over the answers class. Students discussed their reading assignment in groups because small group activities allowed them develop oral proficiency.

Group activities were helpful because students had the opportunity to correct their errors and receive feedback. Being this class for students with same English level all activities were appropriate for them, giving confidence and good understanding. The teachers gave instruction in a clear way, the pronunciation was clear and slow. Teachers repeated instructions according students' needs. Words like Excellent. Wonderful. Good were motivating and appreciated by students.

### Conclusions

As researchers we established The Notional-Functional Approach is the bridge between foreign language teaching profession and real needs of students using language in its natural context, thanks to some enjoyable activities. In our opinion grammatical structures reduce students' motivation because they do not appreciate immediate results. That is why we are in favor of applying the Notional-Functional approach taken into account sensitivity to the individual needs of students. The ability to use real, appropriate, and clear language facilitated

learning; moreover the design of a functional-notional curriculum contributes to the goal of communication and interaction from the first day of study.

Some salient aspects of this approach should be highlighted because summarize the functionality of it.

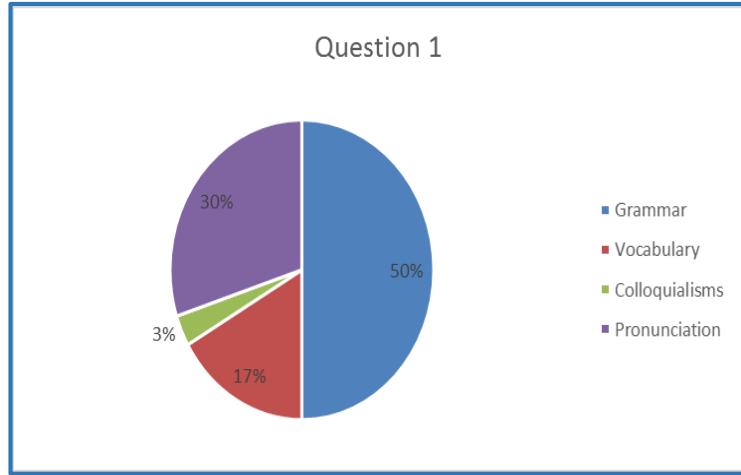
1. - Realistic learning task created by teachers may be utilized with groups or individual students.
2. - The approach recognizes the real need of students
3. - The Notional-Functional approach provides the learners the opportunity to use real world language, facilitating the learning of grammar, vocabulary, and culture according to the students' communicative purpose.
4. - The act of communication becomes a motivating factor for learners.

Finally, the implementation of a Notional-Functional Syllabus will develop proficiency in the four language skills, creating a sense of reality; moreover, this proposal can reinforce foreign language study in a potential, strong and effective alternative for teachers and students.

### **Acknowledgement**

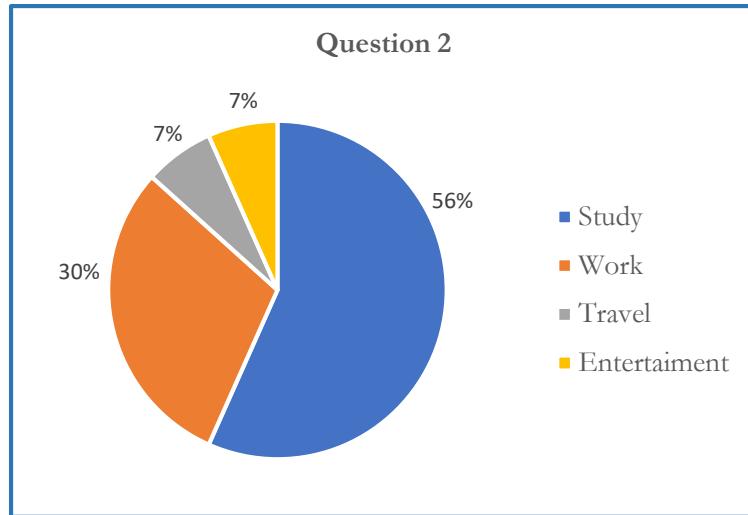
I would also like to warmly thank the fourth semester of Agricultural Engineering' students, who offered us their enthusiastic support for the creation of this document. Thanks to Dr. Marcelo Haro, Msc. Rosmaira Martínez, Msc. Guisella Chabla, and Msc. Jenny Muñoz, for sharing their experiences that enriched this research

**Question No. 1** What is your greatest difficulty in studying English?



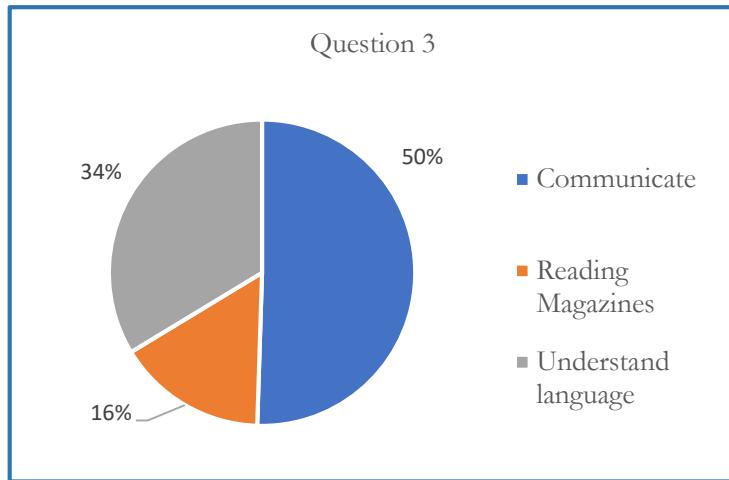
**Source:** Self-elaboration

**Question No. 2.** In what areas do you use the English language?



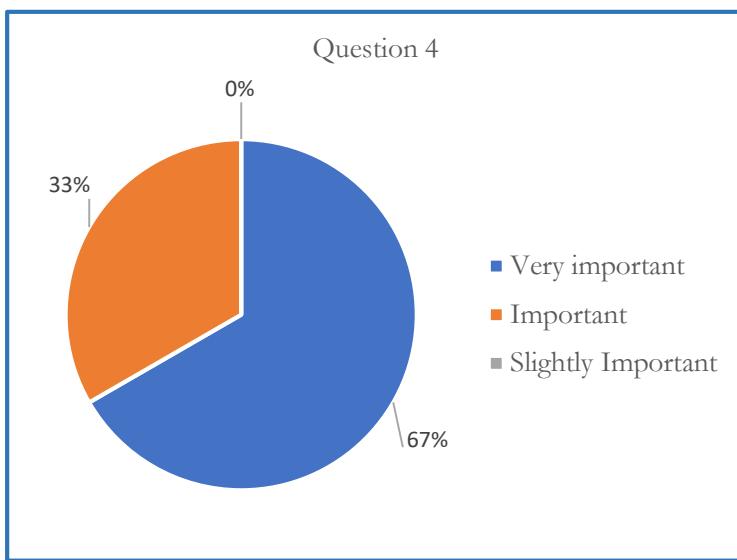
**Source:** Self-elaboration

**Question No. 3.** What is your main objective for studying English?



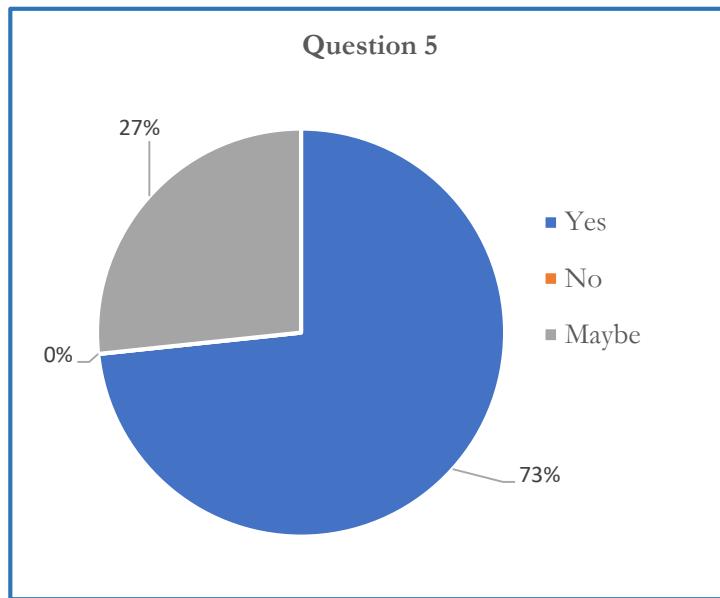
**Source:** Self-elaboration

**Questions No. 4.** What is the contribution of the English language in your professional career?



**Source:** Self-elaboration

**Questions No. 5.** Would you study English with a new approach to enable you to improve your English?



**Source:** Self-elaboration

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<http://www.belc.bu.edu.eg/belc/downloadcenter/coursescontent/phontics/Step/1.html>

**No. 1 - Lesson Plan on NFA****THE NOTIONAL-FUNCTIONAL APPROACH****LESSON PLAN**

|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| Scenario: At home   | Theme: Apologizing |
| Essential Question: Why and When people should apologize?   |                    |
| <p>Enduring Understanding:</p> <p><b>Apologize verb [I]</b></p> <p>UK usually apapologizekus /ə'pɒl.ə.dʒaɪz/ us /ə'pa:.lə.dʒaɪz/</p> <p>To <u>tell</u> someone that you are sorry for having done something that has caused <u>problems</u> or unhappiness for them. (Cambridge Dictionary).</p> <p>Deciding to provide an apology for your actions requires you to first decide whether what you did was right and appropriate, or wrong and inappropriate.</p> <p>If what you did was right and appropriately handled, you don't have to apologize. If a teacher grades a student's paper and the student only gets 10 percent of the questions correct and fails the test, the teacher shouldn't apologize. If a supervisor appropriately calls an employee aside and tactfully corrects the employee's behavior, the supervisor shouldn't have to apologize if the employee is embarrassed by the correction.</p> <p>However, if what you've done is wrong or inappropriately handled, you don't deserve to maintain your sense of personal power by not apologizing. I've known people who are PROUD they've not apologized for things they've done wrong. They may feel empowered, but they have no friends, their spouses are distant, and their children avoid them. I hope their empowerment and self-worth are there for them when they're in trouble or need someone, because no one else will be.</p> |                    |

| Linguistic Competencies      |                          | Goals<br>Learner can ...        |  |                       |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| Oral & Written Comprehension | Listening                |                                 | comprehend the general idea of overheard conversations           |                       |
|                              | Reading                  |                                 | read with fluency and accuracy                                   |                       |
| Oral & Written Production    | Spoken Interaction       |                                 | ask other students to confirm solutions to problems              |                       |
|                              | Spoken Production        |                                 | Talk with relatives or friends using vocabulary for apologizing. |                       |
|                              | Writing                  |                                 | Write notes for apologizing.                                     |                       |
| Learn to Know (Linguistic)   | Learn to Do (Pragmatics) | Learn to Be & Live in Community | Mediation strategies   | Assessment Strategies |

|   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p><b>Functions</b></p> <p>Explain that being sincere means not only feeling sorry, but also saying and doing things demonstrating that you are sorry.</p> <p><b>Useful expressions</b></p> <p>...was ...of me<br/> (I know) my actions...<br/> (Looking back), I (know) that...<br/> (Please) don't be angry<br/> I accept (full) responsibility<br/> I am/feel (so) ashamed<br/> I can understand how you feel (about...)<br/> I do apologize<br/> I don't know what to say<br/> I am most terribly sorry<br/> I regret...<br/> I take (all) the blame<br/> Pardon me!<br/> Please accept my/our apologies<br/> Please excuse my behavior/thoughtlessness/...</p> | <p><b>Grammar &amp; Sentence Frames Objective - Notion</b></p> <p>I Use sentences in simple past and vocabulary related to the topic.<br/> Vocabulary</p> | <p><b>Warm Up:</b> ( 10 minutes)</p> <p>A poster will be presented and students should express their opinions about photos, and answer the question: What could be the possible situations showed in this poster? Annex 1</p> <p><b>Pre-reading tasks -</b> (10 minutes)</p> <p><b>Preview the task.</b> Read the instructions and ask: Do you have similar problems? Do you consider important apology?</p> <p>What are the possible situations that need an apology?</p> <p><b>Do the task</b></p> <p>Ask students if they know about phrases for apologizing.</p> <p>Teach vocabulary to get the students thinking about the topic. Write on the blackboard this useful expressions :</p> <p>...was ...of me<br/> (I know) my actions...<br/> (Looking back),<br/> (Please) don't be angry<br/> I accept (full) responsibility<br/> I am/feel (so) ashamed<br/> I can understand how you feel (about...)<br/> I do apologize<br/> I don't know what to say<br/> I am most terribly sorry<br/> I regret...<br/> I take (all) the blame<br/> Pardon me!<br/> Please accept my/our apologies<br/> Please excuse my behavior/thoughtlessness/...</p> <p><b>Follow-up</b></p> <p>Tell the students about these important steps when people need apologize with other.</p> <p><u>Skill Steps</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Decide if you need to apologize.</li> <li>2. Think about your choices: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Say it out loud to the person.</li> <li>b. Write the person a note.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Choose a good time and place.</li> <li>4. Carry out your best choice in a sincere way.</li> </ol> | <p>By means of a rubric<br/> Ss will be evaluated<br/> Annex 2</p> |
|---|---|--|--|

**During spoken activity - (15 minutes)**

Discuss how difficult it might be to apologize. Using the poster, talk about how a person might feel before apologizing (for example, anxious, afraid) as well as how a person might feel receiving the apology (for example, relieved, less upset, less angry). You may use the situation cards to prompt students in generating feelings.

**Post Reading Activity- ( 10 minutes)**

**Refining Skill Use: MATERIALS —**

Apologies poster; Blackboard – Markers - Apologizing Worksheet.

**Copies of the Apologizing in Our School worksheet**

Have the students form groups of three or four and give each group an

Apologizing in Our School worksheet. (Annex 3). Instruct students to read the situation in each school area and decide how they might apologize.

Allow the groups to select one situation and plan a role play to illustrate it. Have small groups conduct the role plays for the larger group. Provide groups with appropriate feedback on skill performance.

**Production**

Students will write a note using vocabulary learned during the lesson for apologizing

# **Meta-cognición: Aplicación del Writing Correction Code en la escritura de ensayos académicos con propósitos específicos.**

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## **Resumen**

La evaluación implica retroalimentación, la cual, para ser efectiva debe ayudar al estudiante a pensar y buscar una solución al problema, permitiéndole interiorizar el conocimiento. Este proceso se conoce como retroalimentación meta-cognitiva. Es una actividad intrínseca que guía la reflexión sobre el qué, cómo y por qué de un error. En esta investigación se usó el Writing correction code (WCC) en inglés para identificar los errores de los estudiantes en cuanto al uso del lenguaje en un ensayo académico. El objetivo fue determinar en qué medida la evaluación meta-cognitiva ayuda al estudiante a escribir un ensayo académico gramaticalmente correcto en inglés. La metodología inició con la aplicación de un pre test; la intervención implicó la escritura de palabras, oraciones, párrafos y ensayos. Cada etapa fue evaluada por pares y por el profesor y al final se aplicó un posttest. Para la comprobación de la hipótesis se utilizó la prueba estadística de t-student para muestras pares, verificando la efectividad de la intervención pedagógica. Se concluyó que la evaluación metacognitiva a través de WCC contribuyó a escribir ensayos académicos gramaticalmente correctos. Se recomendó que la retroalimentación provenga del profesor para que tenga mayor validez y confiabilidad.

**Palabras claves:** evaluación meta-cognitiva – writing correction code, escritura académica.

## **Abstract**

The evaluation process implies feedback, which helps students think and find a solution to the problem, allowing them to internalize knowledge. This process is known as meta-cognitive feedback. It is an intrinsic activity that guides students to reflect on the what, how and why of an error. This research work applied the Writing Correction Code (WCC) in English to identify students' errors in an essay. The objective of this pedagogical intervention was to determine to what extent the meta-cognitive evaluation helps students to write a grammatically correct academic essay in English. The methodology started with the application of a pre-test;

the intervention involved to write words, sentences, paragraphs and essays. Each stage was evaluated by peers and by the teacher and finally, a post test was applied. In order to prove the hypothesis, the t-student test for paired samples was applied. It allowed to verify the effectiveness of the pedagogical intervention. It was concluded that the metacognitive feedback using the WCC contributed to improve the language usage on academic essays. Finally, it was recommended that the evaluation should be carried out by the teacher so that the feedback could be more valid and reliable.

**Keywords:** Metacognitive Feedback– Writing Correction Code (WCC)- academic writing

### Introducción al problema

El problema específico que se estudia en este trabajo investigativo es determinar en qué medida la Evaluación metacognitiva ayuda a los estudiantes a escribir ensayos académicos gramaticalmente correctos, puesto que la población de estudio, estudiantes de medicina, enfrentan la necesidad de producir escritos de carácter académico e investigativo. La producción escrita requiere un riguroso proceso de aprendizaje, más aún para escribir ensayos académicos, para lograrlo, se requiere utilizar un léxico apropiado, y habilidades intelectuales para generar y organizar ideas en oraciones, párrafos y ensayos coherentes y lógicamente ordenados.

Un problema particular de la población de estudio es que al iniciar séptimo semestre deberían haber aprobado los 6 niveles de inglés y obtenido el nivel B1 que acredita la Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo de acuerdo a la ley de Educación Superior del Ecuador. (CES, 2014). Sin embargo, esto no es un prerequisito para tomar la materia de Inglés Médico 1 que se encuentra en la malla curricular de la carrera de Medicina como materia obligatoria y pre-requisito de Inglés Medico II, por lo que al momento de acceder al curso, no todos tienen el mismo nivel de conocimiento del idioma y no pueden escribir un ensayo gramaticalmente correcto.

Este no es un problema aislado sino que se replica en el proceso de aprendizaje del idioma 2; por lo que es muy importante encontrar la solución a este problema ya que muchos de los profesores de lengua extranjera luchan cada día con el hecho de lograr precisión en el uso del lenguaje al momento de escribir; para esto, los profesores han discutido formas de corregir un escrito correctamente y de proveer una correcta retroalimentación, llegando a la conclusión que esta retroalimentación para que sea efectiva debe ser clara, a tiempo y específica (Brookhart, 2012).

Adicionalmente, esta retroalimentación debe permitir al estudiante meditar sobre sus propios errores a fin de que sea capaz de corregirlos y no volverlos a cometer. Es así que se propone el uso de Writing Correction Code (WCC) presentado por British Council (British Council, 2017) intentando descubrir en qué medida la evaluación meta-cognitiva, continua y de varias formas soluciona este problema y si ayuda o no a que el escribir sistemáticamente en lenguaje 2 sea una habilidad desarrollada en los estudiantes que se sometieron a la

intervención.

Existen varios artículos cuyas variables coinciden con el presente estudio, entre los más relevantes se pueden citar el estudio “The Use of Metacognitive Knowledge in Essay Writing among High School Students” presentado por Shahlan Surat1, Saemah Rahman1, Zamri Mahamod & Saadiah Kummin, el cual muestra el uso de las mismas variables: metacognición y la escritura de ensayos. (Canadian Center of Science and Education, 2014). Este estudio difiere en el hecho de que fue aplicado a estudiantes de nivel secundario, en contraste al presente estudio que fue aplicado a estudiantes de nivel superior. El primero, también se concentró en el proceso mismo de la escritura, evaluando los tres niveles de conocimiento que propone Favell mientras que este estudio se centra en el uso de la evaluación metacognitiva, en el uso del lenguaje en Inglés al momento de escribir un ensayo. Este estudio tomó como referencia el hecho de que cada estudiante usó estos tres tipos de conocimiento al evaluar la variable del uso del lenguaje para escribir ensayos.

Otro estudio referencial es el de Estrategias metacognitivas de escritura en el discurso académico el cual aborda las tres estrategias metacognitivas propuestas por Favell: planificación, monitoreo-control y evaluación. Luego de la intervención, se evidenció que los estudiantes comenzaron a utilizar en mayor número tales estrategias metacognitivas y canalizar su propio proceso de composición (Díaz, 2017). De la misma manera el presente estudio utilizó estas estrategias metacognitivas al planificar tanto el proceso de intervención pedagógica como el proceso de evaluación utilizando la autoevaluación, coevaluación y heteroevaluación. Es importante señalar que el mencionado estudio se enfoca en el aspecto de contenido del discurso académico mientras que la presente investigación buscó resultados en el aspecto formal del idioma.

La hipótesis planteada expresa que la Evaluación Metacognitiva influye en el uso del lenguaje escrito de ensayos académicos. El objetivo de este estudio fue determinar en qué medida tal Evaluación influyó en el uso del lenguaje escrito de ensayos académicos. El objetivo secundario fue aplicar Writing correction code en Autoevaluación, coevaluación y hetero-evaluación.

De acuerdo a la hipótesis planteada, el diseño de la investigación fue cuasi-experimental porque la muestra se constituyó por un grupo intacto que no requiere una asignación aleatoria.

En cuanto a las implicaciones teóricas y prácticas de este estudio describe lo que es la evaluación y la metacognición en la escritura de un ensayo. La evaluación es un proceso continuo de recolección y discusión de información que proviene de distintas fuentes, de esta manera los estudiantes desarrollan un conocimiento significativo de lo que saben entienden y pueden hacer (metacognición) como resultado de sus experiencias dentro y fuera del aula. Este proceso culmina cuando los resultados se usan para mejorar el aprendizaje y alcanzar el objetivo propuesto que en este caso es la escritura del ensayo. (Indiana university, 2007).

### **Importancia del problema**

Un ensayo es una forma sistematizada de dar a conocer puntos de vista, resultados y conceptos; y también constituye una estrategia de evaluación de la habilidad para escribir. Escribir un ensayo de cualquier tipo probará cuan eficientemente un estudiante puede hacer uso del lenguaje para comunicarse en una forma clara y precisa. Por lo tanto, es muy importante que cada estudiante sea capaz de manejar el idioma extranjero con exactitud, coherencia, y facilidad. Más aún, si se trata de un ensayo de carácter académico pues este comunica hechos o argumentos científicamente probados y que son de soporte para cualquier cátedra. Esta investigación abordó aspectos básicos que otros estudios no lo hacen como el aspecto formal del idioma dando a conocer la información con respecto a los errores gramaticales más importantes en la población de estudio. De igual manera se conoció el nivel de habilidad real de los estudiantes en cuanto al conocimiento declarativo, procedural y estratégico de los estudiantes. Además, se permitió conocer el nivel de compromiso de la población con respecto a desarrollar sus habilidades metacognitivas para identificar el problema, buscar la solución e interiorizar el conocimiento. Adicionalmente, se evidenció la responsabilidad que se desarrolla para la autoevaluación y evaluación por pares (coevaluación)

Por estas razones, este proyecto tiene como propósito descubrir en qué medida la evaluación meta-cognitiva, continua y de varias formas soluciona este problema y si ayuda o no a que el escribir sistemáticamente en lenguaje 2 sea una habilidad desarrollada en los estudiantes que se sometieron a la intervención.

### **Metodología**

El tipo de diseño de este estudio fue cuasi-experimental, por lo tanto la muestra fue sin asignación aleatoria, ya que implicó la comparación de las variables antes y después de la intervención. La intervención se realizó con 21 estudiantes (13 mujeres y 8 hombres) de la escuela de medicina en la materia de Inglés Médico I.

Se inició la intervención con un pre-test que consistía en escribir un ensayo de 250 palabras en el cual los estudiantes argumentaron su posición a favor o en contra de la muerte asistida en casos de enfermedades terminales. En este ensayo se calificaron tres aspectos: estructura, uso del lenguaje y pensamiento crítico. Para el segundo aspecto, es donde se aplicó la evaluación meta-cognitiva usando el WCC. Las otras dos categorías se evaluaron a través de rúbricas y listas de cotejo (que son objeto de otro estudio). También se llevó a cabo una encuesta de 6 preguntas (cinco cerradas y una abierta) para verificar el problema existente en la población y para conocer el tipo de evaluación que ellos recibían en los cursos de Inglés tomados en la institución o fuera de ella.

Para verificar la efectividad de la propuesta se aplicó el posttest con los mismos parámetros del pretest.

Al finalizar, los estudiantes también escribieron un ensayo sobre sus apreciaciones acerca de la intervención las mismas que se tomaron en cuenta en el desarrollo de las conclusiones y recomendaciones.

La Evaluación provino de varias fuentes. Auto-evaluación (prueba de lectura), evaluación por pares y evaluación del profesor. Y se dio también en varios niveles ya que la propuesta estuvo fraccionada en diferentes etapas que a continuación se detallan:

1. La primera etapa consistió en activar el conocimiento previo sobre el uso de cada parte del lenguaje. ( adjetivos, verbos, pronombres, tiempo presente, pasado y más temas gramaticales del Idioma)
2. Segunda etapa desarrolló la Evaluación en escritura de oraciones. ( frases, cláusulas dependientes e independientes)
3. Tercera etapa, evaluación en párrafos (párrafo de introducción, desarrollo y conclusión)  
Además se activó el conocimiento en cuanto al buen uso de la puntuación, mayúsculas y minúsculas y frases de transición.

Se dieron un total de 5 momentos de evaluación. Cada uno de ellos evaluado por el mismo estudiante, un compañero y el profesor.

Se utilizaron los métodos científico, inductivo y descriptivo. Científico porque nos permitió descubrir el problema, recolectar datos, formular una hipótesis y administrar la intervención. Método inductivo porque se empezó en observaciones específicas y prosiguió hasta llegar a generalidades y teorías. Por último el método descriptivo que permitió caracterizar las particularidades de la población antes y después de la intervención. Para el análisis de los datos recolectados, se aplicó el software Microsoft Excel y la prueba estadística de t-student para la comprobación de la hipótesis.

Las definiciones conceptuales y operacionales de las variables utilizadas en el estudio, facilitaron la comprensión de este trabajo investigativo.

Evaluación Metacognitiva.- es una actividad intrínseca que induce al estudiante al reflexionar sobre el qué, cómo y por qué de una acción (Bordas, ABC Color, 2017) Durante la intervención cada estudiante tuvo la oportunidad de autoevaluarse y de identificar tanto las fortalezas como los aspectos que debe mejorar en el idioma. Como lo menciona Flavell es la capacidad de aprender a aprender, tomar conciencia de lo aprendido y regular el autoaprendizaje. (Millan, 2013). Implica reconocer qué procesos ayudan a desarrollarse y qué otros promueven al error. La evaluación meta-cognitiva ayuda al estudiante a estar consciente qué si desea dar paso a nuevos logros debe desarrollar habilidades de autoconocimiento y autorregulación, es decir el autoanálisis de actitudes y control del esfuerzo y dedicación en distintas tareas, la planificación de medidas oportunas de acuerdo a las posibles desviaciones y el control de la adquisición de los conocimientos y habilidades para tomar conciencia de sus propias estrategias de aprendizaje.

Writing Correction Code.- durante la intervención se usó el Writing Correction Code de la escritura (WCC) propuesta por el British Council (British Council, 2007). Esta etapa inicial implicó la capacitación en el manejo de los códigos de WCC. Así también, se realizó la explicación del aspecto gramatical de cada código. A medida que los estudiantes usaban los códigos, se familiarizaban no solo con el aspecto operativo de la intervención sino con el aspecto formal del uso del idioma.

- **WW** Wrong word = palabra incorrecta
- **WT** Wrong time = tiempo incorrecto
- **WF** Wrong form – forma incorrecta
- **WO** Wrong order - orden incorrecto
- **SP** Spelling - ortografía
- **P** Punctuation – puntuación
- **X** Extra word – palabra extra no necesaria
- **M** Missing word - se necesita una palabra
- **R** Register – registro

Uso del lenguaje.- se refiere a las reglas del lenguaje en sí mismo, es decir, las estructuras utilizadas. (British Council 2008) En lingüística puede darse la diferenciación en lo que se refiere a uso del lenguaje y la gramática ya que esta se relaciona con las funciones de las palabras, la construcción de oraciones y cómo las palabras se combinan para formar oraciones. La gramática es más basada en reglas, es objetiva y tiende a evolucionar más lentamente. Pero por lo general el uso del lenguaje y la gramática se agrupan con propósitos de enseñanza pero pueden separarse con propósitos de estudio. (Grammariest, 2014) Por fines investigativos conectados a la práctica docente se unificó tanto el aspecto formal como de uso del idioma, lo cual ayudó a que los estudiantes adopten una perspectiva no solo formal del idioma sino una perspectiva de practicidad para su formación académica como futuros médicos ya que los ensayos fueron de carácter médico-científico.

Ensayos Académicos.- un ensayo académico es un fragmento de escritura que tiene el propósito de describir, explicar o discutir un tema. Usualmente plantea opiniones personales, reporta información, explica teorías, o analiza y discute ideas. El tono puede ser serio o humorístico y puede estar escrito desde cualquier perspectiva, dependiendo del autor. El propósito del este tipo de ensayos es presentar un discurso razonado. A nivel universitario, un ensayo tiene la característica de contribuir a las habilidades de pensamiento crítico del estudiante. La estructura de un ensayo consiste de introducción, párrafos y conclusión. (Langosch, 1999).

La intervención tuvo una secuencia lógica cuyo producto final fue un ensayo minuciosamente estructurado (introducción, desarrollo, conclusión) con sus respectivos componentes, enfocándose en ensayos descriptivos y argumentativos porque estos contribuyen al pensamiento crítico.

## **Resultados y discusión**

### **Encuesta**

El instrumento de recolección de datos fue la encuesta, que tuvo un carácter diagnóstico y de análisis de necesidades de la población de estudio. Esta, se realizó antes de la intervención pedagógica, misma que mostró los siguientes resultados: menos del 50% de los estudiantes han terminado los 6 niveles de inglés ofertados por el centro de Idiomas de la Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo, por lo tanto no todos han sido capacitados en cómo escribir un ensayo. De los temas gramaticales propuestos como básicos en el nivel A1, la mayoría dice haberlos estudiado alguna vez pero no recuerdan con claridad y no se sienten en capacidad de corregir a otros. En cuanto a la retroalimentación recibida en el uso del lenguaje, solo el 38 % de la población dijo haber recibido retroalimentación efectiva, esto es, a tiempo, específica y clara. Y en menor porcentaje aún dicen haber tomado en cuenta esa evaluación para corregir sus errores y producir conocimiento.

### **Pretest y postest**

Al comparar los resultados obtenidos del pre-test y el post-test, son válidos pues así se muestra también el T-student aplicado para muestras pares ya que  $P= 0.36$  y significancia  $\alpha = 0,05$  por lo que  $P < \alpha$ , con la tabla calculada con 20 grados de libertad, un nivel de significancia de 0.05 y una probabilidad de 0.36 por lo que se aceptó la hipótesis alterna y se rechazó la hipótesis nula. La hipótesis alterna expresa que la evaluación metacognitiva contribuye a la escritura de ensayos gramaticalmente correctos. Lo que significa que estadísticamente los niveles son aceptados.

Por otro lado, al comparar el presente estudio con el publicado por Coyle de Cambridge University press “Studies on second language adquisition” (Coyle, 2014) coincide que la evaluación meta-cognitiva usando el WCC mejora la producción escrita de estudiantes de una lengua extranjera.

De igual manera, el artículo publicado por la Universidad Nacional de Villa María denominado “Estrategias metacognitivas de escritura en el discurso académico”, determinó que los resultados del pretest y dos postests muestran que los estudiantes comenzaron a utilizar un mayor número de estrategias metacognitivas a partir del tratamiento y a tener un mayor control sobre su propio proceso de composición. (Díaz, 2017). Es decir que los dos estudios coinciden que la evaluación metacognitiva contribuye para mejorar la escritura de ensayos aunque el presente artículo se enfoca al aspecto formal del idioma y el de la Universidad de Villa María se enfoca en el estilo del ensayo.

El estudio “The Use of Metacognitive Knowledge in Essay Writing among High School Students” (Canadian Center of Science and Education, 2014) provee evidencia de la necesidad de una intervención para ayudar a los estudiantes a mejorar las habilidades de escritura.

En el estudio Error Analysis: Investigating the Writing of ESL Namibian learners (Sirkka, 2010), en el cual examinó los errores en una colección de 360 ensayos escrito pro 180 participantes, el cual determinó que los 4 errores más comunes fueron, los tiempos, las preposiciones, los artículos y la ortografía. En el presente estudio se determinó a través del Writing Correction Code que los errores más recurrentes en la escritura de los ensayos fueron: w/w wrong word palabra equivocada, que se refiere al uso inapropiado del vocabulario; la puntuación; y el w/t wrong tense que es el uso incorrecto del tiempo verbal. Es decir, que los 2 estudios coinciden en cuanto al error más común el uso del tiempo verbal, y se podría decir que dentro del código wrong Word constan también las preposiciones.

Los datos obtenidos muestran que la media de errores en el pretest fue de 30,6 y en el postest 18,7 lo cual evidencia la efectividad de la intervención (Gráfico 1). Es importante señalar que aún cuando la media de errores en el post-test, es de 18,7 y se puede decir que en un escrito de 250 palabras este es un nivel alto de error. Sin embargo, si se observa una mejora con respecto a los resultados del pretest y postest luego de la intervención pedagógica; siendo de 52% al 71% como lo muestra el histograma (Gráfico 2); por lo tanto se prueba la hipótesis alternativa.

Entre las limitaciones de este estudio se pueden mencionar la heterogeneidad de los estudiantes en cuanto al nivel de inglés puesto que solo el 52% habían terminado los 6 niveles de inglés y el resto tenían un nivel muy bajo. De igual manera, se evidenció la falta de compromiso de algunos de los estudiantes para desarrollar sus habilidades metacognitivas, lo cual limitaba su aprendizaje. Adicionalmente a la falta de compromiso, se denotó también la falta de honestidad en la autoevaluación y co-evaluación. Se considera que estos aspectos son además de personales, culturales y marcados en la cultura latinoamericana lo que limita el potencial autodidacta de esta intervención. Otra de las limitaciones es el tiempo de la intervención que fue de 4 horas semanales durante 4 meses, que fue un tiempo limitado considerando la complejidad en el proceso de la intervención tanto para los estudiantes como para los investigadores.

Los incentivos utilizados en este estudio que en términos objetivos fueron las notas tuvieron una relación directa con la tasa de cumplimiento, y además se observó en algunos estudiantes la motivación intrínseca para continuar aplicando la metacognición al desarrollo del aprendizaje del lenguaje.

## Conclusiones

Cómo conclusiones se pueden anotar las siguientes:

La evaluación meta-cognitiva ayuda a los estudiantes a darse cuenta de los errores cometidos, a reflexionar sobre ellos, buscar información sobre la forma correcta, solucionar el problema y no reincidir en los mismos, por lo

tanto se produce aprendizaje significativo.

La retroalimentación debe ser oportuna, clara y específica para que los estudiantes puedan usar esa información para solucionar sus problemas cognitivos y procedimentales del uso del idioma. Es preciso también, que los estudiantes estén familiarizados y tengan en claro el tipo de retroalimentación que proveerá el docente antes de la entrega de trabajos, así ellos sabrán que esperar al momento de recibir su escrito.

A través del Writing Correction Code permitió detectar los errores más recurrentes en la escritura de los ensayos lo cual permitió desarrollar un feedback relevante y específico, así como guiar la intervención pedagógica para el cumplimiento del objetivo propuesto.

Algunos factores que afectaron positiva o negativamente a los estudiantes durante la intervención fueron el nivel de inglés, el compromiso, nivel de honestidad y el tiempo de la intervención para aplicar la retroalimentación recibida.

Basados en las reflexiones finales anotaremos que los estudiantes mayormente van a preferir la retroalimentación proveniente del profesor, puesto que lo consideran como un experto para poder corregir los errores. Sin embargo, la retroalimentación proveniente de los compañeros les ayudó a perder el miedo a cometer un error sin tener que enfocarse en la nota que pueden obtener en determinada tarea.

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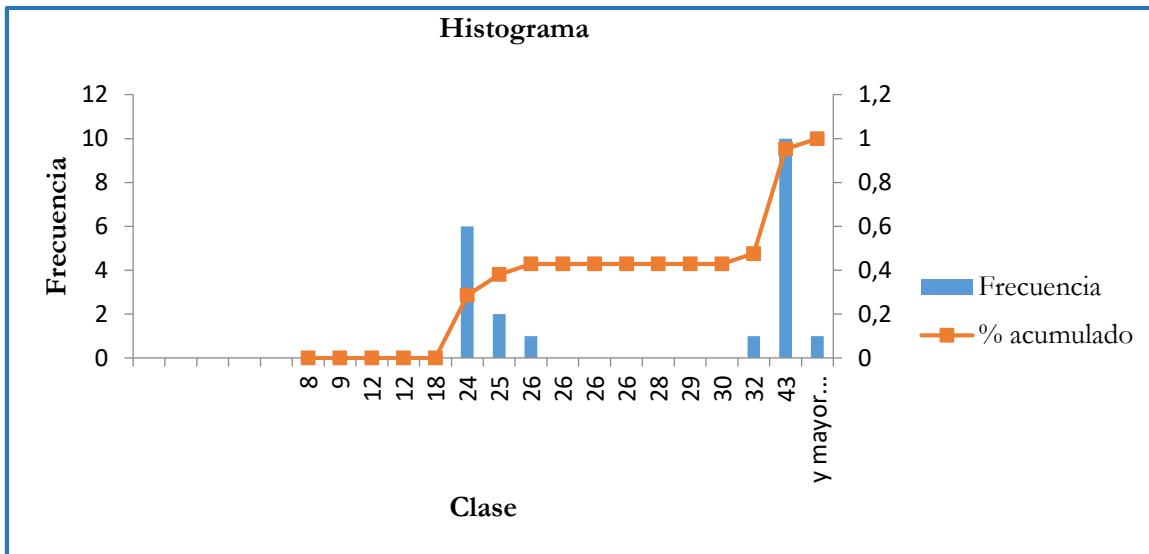
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Gráfico 1. Resultados de Pre test y Post test: Número de errores

| Nº        | Número de Errores   |              |                     |              |                      |              |                     |              |                |              |                  |              |                    |              |                      |              |               |              | Total<br>Number<br>of errors |     |      |      |
|-----------|---------------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|------------------------------|-----|------|------|
|           | WW<br>Wrong<br>word |              | WT<br>Wrong<br>time |              | WO<br>Wrong<br>order |              | WF<br>Wrong<br>form |              | SP<br>Spelling |              | P<br>Punctuation |              | X<br>Extra<br>word |              | M<br>Missing<br>word |              | R<br>Register |              | ? Not<br>clear               |     |      |      |
|           | Pre<br>test         | Post<br>test | Pre<br>test         | Post<br>test | Pre<br>test          | Post<br>test | Pre<br>test         | Post<br>test | Pre<br>test    | Post<br>test | Pre<br>test      | Post<br>test | Pre<br>test        | Post<br>test | Pre<br>test          | Post<br>test | Pre<br>test   | Post<br>test |                              |     |      |      |
| 1         | 2                   | 1            | 4                   | 1            | 4                    | 1            | 3                   | 2            | 4              | 0            | 4                | 0            | 1                  | 0            | 0                    | 0            | 2             | 0            | 1                            | 25  | 7    |      |
| 2         | 8                   | 7            | 9                   | 6            | 4                    | 4            | 4                   | 3            | 5              | 4            | 7                | 7            | 3                  | 4            | 2                    | 3            | 2             | 3            | 2                            | 46  | 43   |      |
| 3         | 4                   | 2            | 3                   | 1            | 1                    | 0            | 2                   | 0            | 1              | 0            | 5                | 2            | 2                  | 0            | 1                    | 0            | 2             | 2            | 0                            | 21  | 7    |      |
| 4         | 5                   | 2            | 4                   | 1            | 0                    | 0            | 1                   | 0            | 2              | 0            | 4                | 2            | 1                  | 0            | 0                    | 0            | 3             | 2            | 2                            | 0   | 22   | 7    |
| 5         | 6                   | 3            | 3                   | 0            | 0                    | 0            | 2                   | 1            | 1              | 0            | 3                | 2            | 2                  | 0            | 2                    | 1            | 2             | 2            | 0                            | 0   | 21   | 9    |
| 6         | 3                   | 1            | 5                   | 2            | 0                    | 0            | 1                   | 0            | 2              | 0            | 3                | 1            | 3                  | 0            | 3                    | 2            | 3             | 2            | 1                            | 0   | 24   | 8    |
| 7         | 2                   | 1            | 7                   | 6            | 3                    | 1            | 0                   | 0            | 3              | 1            | 4                | 1            | 2                  | 0            | 1                    | 0            | 3             | 2            | 0                            | 0   | 25   | 12   |
| 8         | 5                   | 3            | 4                   | 3            | 0                    | 0            | 2                   | 0            | 2              | 2            | 4                | 0            | 2                  | 0            | 2                    | 2            | 3             | 2            | 0                            | 0   | 24   | 12   |
| 9         | 6                   | 2            | 4                   | 0            | 1                    | 0            | 2                   | 0            | 1              | 1            | 4                | 1            | 3                  | 0            | 2                    | 1            | 3             | 0            | 0                            | 0   | 26   | 5    |
| 10        | 7                   | 2            | 3                   | 1            | 0                    | 0            | 0                   | 0            | 2              | 0            | 4                | 2            | 4                  | 0            | 1                    | 1            | 0             | 0            | 2                            | 0   | 23   | 6    |
| 11        | 8                   | 7            | 2                   | 0            | 2                    | 1            | 2                   | 1            | 4              | 2            | 6                | 3            | 3                  | 0            | 1                    | 1            | 3             | 2            | 1                            | 1   | 32   | 18   |
| 12        | 7                   | 6            | 4                   | 3            | 1                    | 1            | 3                   | 1            | 3              | 3            | 4                | 4            | 4                  | 3            | 3                    | 2            | 3             | 2            | 1                            | 1   | 33   | 26   |
| 13        | 9                   | 8            | 5                   | 4            | 2                    | 0            | 4                   | 1            | 4              | 3            | 5                | 3            | 3                  | 2            | 3                    | 2            | 3             | 3            | 1                            | 1   | 39   | 26   |
| 14        | 8                   | 8            | 4                   | 3            | 2                    | 2            | 4                   | 1            | 4              | 3            | 4                | 4            | 4                  | 3            | 3                    | 2            | 3             | 2            | 2                            | 2   | 38   | 30   |
| 15        | 7                   | 7            | 6                   | 2            | 3                    | 2            | 3                   | 2            | 3              | 3            | 5                | 3            | 2                  | 4            | 4                    | 2            | 3             | 2            | 3                            | 2   | 39   | 29   |
| 16        | 8                   | 6            | 1                   | 1            | 2                    | 2            | 5                   | 2            | 2              | 2            | 6                | 3            | 3                  | 2            | 5                    | 2            | 3             | 2            | 2                            | 2   | 37   | 24   |
| 17        | 9                   | 6            | 3                   | 3            | 3                    | 3            | 2                   | 2            | 4              | 3            | 6                | 3            | 4                  | 1            | 3                    | 3            | 4             | 3            | 3                            | 1   | 41   | 28   |
| 18        | 8                   | 6            | 3                   | 3            | 3                    | 2            | 3                   | 3            | 5              | 4            | 4                | 4            | 3                  | 3            | 4                    | 2            | 3             | 3            | 4                            | 2   | 40   | 32   |
| 19        | 8                   | 6            | 2                   | 2            | 4                    | 3            | 1                   | 2            | 2              | 3            | 5                | 3            | 4                  | 2            | 3                    | 0            | 2             | 3            | 3                            | 2   | 34   | 26   |
| 20        | 7                   | 6            | 2                   | 2            | 3                    | 2            | 2                   | 2            | 3              | 4            | 6                | 3            | 5                  | 1            | 3                    | 1            | 1             | 1            | 2                            | 2   | 35   | 25   |
| 21        | 7                   | 6            | 2                   | 2            | 5                    | 2            | 2                   | 2            | 3              | 3            | 6                | 3            | 2                  | 2            | 4                    | 1            | 2             | 3            | 1                            | 2   | 34   | 26   |
| $\bar{X}$ | 6.3                 | 4.5          | 3.8                 | 2.1          | 2.0                  | 1.2          | 2.2                 | 1.1          | 2.8            | 1.9          | 4.7              | 2.5          | 2.8                | 1.2          | 2.3                  | 1.3          | 2.5           | 1.9          | 1.4                          | 1.0 | 30.8 | 18.7 |

Fuente: Escudero Isabel, Fuertes, Narcisa, Ecuador 2017

**Gráfico 2.** Histograma de resultados pre test y post test



**Fuente:** Escudero Isabel; Fuertes, Narcisa, Ecuador, 2017

**ESP an approach to motivate and enhance the reading comprehension level of  
EFL students at the University of Cuenca.**

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**Resumen**

El inglés para propósitos específicos (ESP) es un enfoque pedagógico centrado en el estudiante que enseña el inglés como un lenguaje adicional orientado en el desarrollo de las destrezas del idioma dentro de un área específica como por ejemplo contabilidad, administración, educación, derecho, ingeniería, tecnología, salud, medicina, etc., es decir, está basado en diseñar cursos para conocer y cubrir las necesidades e intereses académicos del estudiante. En este contexto, el propósito de este estudio fue establecer los efectos que el ESP tuvo en el nivel de lectura comprensiva en 25 estudiantes de Psicología en la Universidad de Cuenca. Esta investigación utilizó tanto instrumentos de recolección de datos cuantitativos como cualitativos. Los resultados muestran que hubo evidencia de una mejora en el nivel de lectura comprensiva así como también en el desarrollo de las otras destrezas del lenguaje. Además, de acuerdo a las percepciones de los estudiantes, ellos se sintieron motivados e interesados en leer textos relacionados a sus necesidades e intereses. En resumen, aplicar el enfoque ESP en el proceso enseñanza-aprendizaje del inglés com lengua extranjera puede ser significativo para los estudiantes universitarios a fin de que ellos lleguen a ser profesionales más competitivos e independientes; por lo tanto, es responsabilidad de todo instructor de inglés ser sensible a las necesidades de sus estudiantes y a sus contextos de aprendizaje.

**Palabras claves:** ESP, Comprensión Lectora, Análisis de Necesidades

**Abstract**

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a learner-centered approach to teaching English as an additional language, which focuses on developing English communication skills in a specific discipline, such as accounting, management, education, law, engineering, technology, health, medicine and so on. ESP is based on designing courses to meet specific learners' needs and interests. In this context, the purpose of the present study was to

establish the effects ESP had over the English reading comprehension level in a class of 25 Psychology students at the University of Cuenca. Both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments were used to gather information for this research. Results show there was evidence of an improvement in the reading comprehension level as well as in the development of the other language skills. Furthermore, according to the students' perceptions, they felt motivated and interested in reading texts related to their needs and interests. In sum, to apply ESP approach in EFL contexts can be meaningful for university students in order for them to become more competitive and independent professionals; therefore, it is the English teacher's responsibility to be sensitive to learners' needs and their learning contexts.

**Keywords:** ESP, Reading Comprehension, Needs Analysis

## **Introduction**

English is considered as the Lingua Franca, nowadays it is the common language around the world; therefore, it is essential for students and professionals to learn and improve their English since both in the academic and professional fields most publications are written in English. Researchers and students need to read and investigate papers on their fields of study and careers, for this reason, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) can be very useful to them. ESP has not been commonly applied at the University of Cuenca (UC) where the teaching-learning process is teacher-centered and focused on General English. The UC English program as a whole does not include specific texts to work on reading comprehension skills.

In this context, the present study attempts to study the effects that ESP has over the reading comprehension level of Psychology students. We hope this study can become an important contribution to English Instructors and linguistics in general. It can also contribute to the improvement in the English reading comprehension level of students at the University of Cuenca. The main theoretical foundations used to support this research study are Reading Comprehension, English for Specific Purposes, and some relevant studies done in the ESP field.

### **Reading comprehension**

Reading Comprehension is the ability to interpret words, understand the meaning and relationships between ideas carried in a text. Snow (2002) defines reading comprehension as the ability to understand. Consequently, the aim of a reader is to attempt to comprehend what the reading is about. Reading comprehension focuses on three main elements: the reader who comprehends a text, the text that is going to be read and understood, and the activity in which comprehension takes place. Reader, text, and activity are connected to each other in lively ways. In order to help students to comprehend texts, some of the following reading strategies have been applied by teachers: selecting reading material, skimming and scanning, generating and answering questions, monitoring comprehension, visualization, visual representations of the text, talking about the text; brainstorming before reading, making use of prior knowledge, predicting and pre-viewing, reading aloud while reading, using context

clues while reading, highlighting and reviewing, summarizing, retelling, reading as often as possible and so on.

After the Second World War, ESP appeared as an answer to learners' expectations. People needed English to read manuals, communicate with each other, and read specialist textbooks. In some cases, teachers were asked to teach the specific English they needed to cover their demands because teaching General English would have taken too much time. ESP has grown as a distinct discipline since the 1960s. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987) "ESP is an approach to language learning based on learners' needs"(p.19).

Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) list both absolute and variable characteristics of ESP which are:

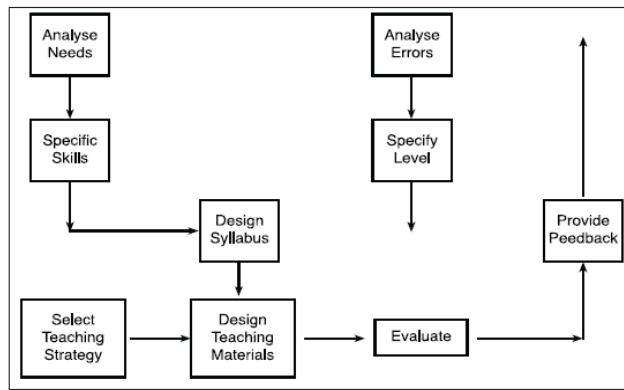
**Absolute Characteristics:** "*ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner*", (2) "*ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves*", (3) "*ESP is centered on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse, and genre*"

**Variable Characteristics:** ) "*ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines*", (2) "*ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of General English*" (p. 6).

Teachers should follow some steps when designing an ESP course. The first step is the *needs analysis* process. It implies to identify the kind of English that students need. Second, select the content that is going to be covered during the course. Third, tasks and activities should be planned according to the chosen material. For instance, students can work on reading comprehension, listening, writing, speaking and vocabulary activities, and finally, the evaluation process in which the instructor assess students on the language learning process (Tarnopolsky, 2015).

As for syllabus design for an ESP course, Dincay (2011) suggests the diagram below.

**Figure 1:** ESP Language Teaching Syllabus Design.  
From "Designing a Learner-Centered ESP" by Bell 1981



Bautista Barón (2013) carried out an ESP study at the police training institute in the city of Bogotá-Colombia which was accredited by the Ministry of National Defense called “Escuela de Investigación Criminal de la Policía”. Its main goal was to improve the police officers’ performance in English through ESP since in the previous years this language has turned into an important means of communication for them. The author concludes that the students understood the importance of ESP in their professional performance, praising the creation of Criminalistics-based reading workshops underpinned by Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) principles. She also adds that the students enhanced their reading comprehension by being responsible for their own learning through strategies like self-evaluation, selecting and applying learning strategies by themselves, and having a positive attitude towards it. The students were able to identify their difficulties and achievements, which resulted in a significant advancement in communication and self-sufficiency.

SP has been used in the field of law as well. Arias (2014) published the article “Reading through ESP in an Undergraduate Law Program”. The research was done at the Universidad Santo Tomás Tunja (USTA), Colombia. The author emphasizes that “Reading is relevant because it provides learners with the vocabulary and the knowledge that will be used in their professions” (p.108). The results showed that students were motivated to read English texts about law and the American laws specifically because it allowed them to increase their knowledge and compare the Colombian and American Constitutions. According to Arias (2014), students were able to discuss legal topics after reading texts about American law. She also indicates that students increased their self-confidence and were motivated to acquire new information about other countries while enriching their law perspective around the world.

Additionally, ESP has been applied in the Engineering field. Alqahtani (2015) published the study: “Teaching English for Specific Purposes: Attitudes among Saudi Engineering Students”. The aim of this study was to carry out an analysis related to the attitudes of Saudi Engineering Students about learning English as a second language. The study results confirmed the initial hypothesis that Engineering students’ attitudes towards learning English can change when they realize that it is necessary for their major and profession.

Brunton (2009) in his Needs Analysis study “An Evaluation of Students’ Attitudes to the General English and Specific Components Course: A Case Study of Hotel Employees in Chiang Mai, Thailand” states the benefits of having in mind what needs to be done before the implementation of any language program. The goal of this study was to investigate hotel employees’ attitudes toward Hotel English and General English in an English course of eight weeks. From the results, it was found that the ESP satisfaction was high; nevertheless, the majority of participants wanted to learn General English. Another important finding was that General English benefited students within the English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) domain. Furthermore, the authors found that courses should be designed with regard to the employees’ immediate perceived needs.

### **Importance of the Problem**

The University Language Institute (ULI) entered the credit system for English teaching from the academic semester of September 2009–February 2010 with the main purpose of facilitating students’ mobility from one major to another, or from one school to another. The program includes three mandatory levels of General English focusing on the development of the four macro skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing. These levels are divided into three courses (English I, English II, and English III) with 96 class hours in each. At the end of the three levels, university students are expected to reach a B1 English level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages after having attended 288 class hours. However,

Meyer (2014) in her Language evaluation report states that the majority of University of Cuenca (UC) students do not reach the B1 level of the Common European Framework Reference for Languages and that they are truly interested in reading articles related to their field of study. She adds that “It is significant that more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the surveyed students wished that half or more of their English course would focus on their major” (p. 54).

In this context and based on this needs analysis of the UC university students’ language needs, the English Program at the School of Psychology has been including English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in its three credit courses since the second semester of 2014. The teaching-learning English process is mainly focused on reading academic texts selected by the students in order to help them improve their reading comprehension level and to develop the other language skills such as speaking, writing, grammar in context and listening in order to achieve the expected B1 level at the end of the three levels program.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Questions**

To what extent can ESP improve the English reading comprehension ability?

What are the students' perceptions about their own reading comprehension in an ESP context?

### **Research Design**

The study applied a convergent parallel mixed methods design in order to establish the effect of ESP on reading comprehension level (Creswell, 2014). As for collecting quantitative data, a pre-experimental design was used, this consisted of a pre-test and a post-test to be administered to a convenient group. Qualitative data about the students' perceptions were collected from the participants' journals and interviews and was base on Mackey & Gass', (2005) model.

### **Participants**

The intervention for the study was carried out with a convenient group of 25 students, 9 males and 16 females, ages from 18 to 24 years old, and registered in the first level of English for Credit courses from the School of Psychology at the University of Cuenca.

### **Data collection procedure**

The processes followed by the present research study were: First, a pre-test was applied before the intervention. Second, there was an ESP intervention which lasted around twelve weeks. Third, students wrote three journal entries about their perceptions, feelings, and experiences on the use of ESP in their English classes during the intervention. Fourth, personal interviews were conducted with six students, who were randomly chosen by the researcher to obtain information about their experiences and perceptions during the intervention period. Then, a quantitative instrument, a closed-question survey about the students' anxiety level and their perceptions on the use of ESP was used. Finally, a post-test was applied at the end of the semester.

### **Instruments**

#### *Pre-test*

The instrument used for the pre-test was an A2 standardized reading comprehension test according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, taken from the "Exam English" website (Exam English Ltd., 2016, p. 2).

#### *Intervention Description*

English classes were carried out during the March-August 2016 semester, and the ESP intervention process lasted 36 hours, three hours per week for twelve weeks. The researcher used the texts related to the Psychology selected by the students and develop different activities such as identifying the main idea, skimming, scanning,

drawing inferences, generating questions, getting meaning from context and summarizing. The objective of the intervention was to improve students' reading comprehension skills and prove our initial hypothesis that students will increase their level of comprehension when applying the ESP model and find out their perceptions about this English language teaching approach.

A booklet with selected academic texts, the teaching material, was photocopied for the students during the second week of the semester. Every week they worked on different topics related to Psychology. For instance, topics such as *The power of hypnosis, Behaviorism, Positive Psychology, and Bipolar Disorder* were studied three hours a week. First, the students were asked to read the text at home. Then, videos about the topics were presented in class. Next, the teacher asked the students to recall their previous knowledge about the subject. Later, worksheets with different reading comprehension activities, such as answering questions, mind maps, concept maps, word search, true or false statements, synonym match, phrase match, Venn diagram, were performed by the students. Then, they would go over the article again and complete the activities deemed appropriate for the topic. After that, general questions about the students' understanding were asked, and the answers were discussed in pairs. Finally, a summary about the topic was written by the students.

### *Journals*

During the intervention process, students were asked to write their journal entries about their perceptions, feelings, and experiences about the use of ESP in their English classes, in order to ensure continuity in anecdotal records. The three questions in their entries were: 1) 'What is your perception about learning English through ESP?' 2) 'How do you perceive your English classes?', and 3) 'How do you evaluate your own reading comprehension with this teaching method?'

### *Interviews*

Six students were interviewed in Spanish by the researcher, and their answers were recorded and transcribed to gauge their experiences and perceptions about their English classes based on ESP. The six issues to be raised were: 1) From your point of view as a university student, describe your experiences in your English classes at the School of Psychology. 2) In the School of Psychology, teachers work with reading material related to Psychology. Could you describe the effects of this activity on your reading comprehension? 3) Tell us an occasion that you remember about working with specific readings. 4) Comparing the traditional English teaching approach (high school) and the university English teaching approach (ESP), what are the advantages and disadvantages of both? 5) How do you evaluate your own English learning through ESP? 6) Is there any other remark that you wish to make about ESP? During the interview, other topics related to these English classes were discussed between the researcher and the students.

### *Survey*

The instrument applied was an international standardized and validated test survey called The Modified Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale Test (MFLRAS). The survey addressed the level of anxiety and perceptions of reading comprehension in EFL students. The questionnaire had 20 closed-questions with ordinal variables and qualitative scales of grading.

### *Post-test*

To conclude the intervention, a post-test was administered to the students in order to compare the reading comprehension level of the students before and after the application of the ESP approach. The instrument used for the post-test was an A2 standardized reading comprehension test. The tests were online and were taken by the students through the university's e-virtual platform in the Philosophy Computer Lab under the researcher's guidance and supervision.

## **Results**

### *Pre-test and Post-test Results*

The tests results were analyzed through two non-parametrical Wilcoxon Tests, used in groups with less than 30 participants, were administered. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program was used to analyze the quantitative data. As it can be seen in table 1, the means of the study group differ in the pre-test and the post-test results. In the pre-test, the average is 46.3 out of 100; in the post-test, the average is 50.7 out of 100. Therefore, the conclusion is that there is an increase of 4.4 points in the overall average of the group.

**Table 1**

| Means Analysis and Comparison |          |        |           |
|-------------------------------|----------|--------|-----------|
|                               | pre-test |        | Post-test |
| N                             | Valid    | 25     | 25        |
|                               | Lost     | 5      | 5         |
| Mean                          |          | 46.36  | 50.78     |
| Median                        |          | 44.50  | 51.50     |
| Mode                          |          | 43.00* | 30.50*    |

\*There are several modes. The lowest value is displayed.

Source: Pre-test and post-test grades from A2 standardized reading tests.

According to the Wilcoxon signed-rank Test, the level of significance is higher than 0.05, which statistically indicates that there is no significant relationship between the two samples of the study group. The sign test was also performed in order to test the value of The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test results of the pre-test and the

post-test

**Table 2** The Wilcoxon Signed-rank Test

| Contrast Stats                        |                     |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| POST-TEST MEAN                        | PRE-TEST MEAN       |
| Z                                     | -1.468 <sup>a</sup> |
| <u>Sig. Symp. (bilateral)</u>         | <u>0.142</u>        |
| <sup>a</sup> Based on negative ranges |                     |
| <b>b</b> . Wilcoxon Signed-rank test  |                     |

**Source:** Pre-test and post-test grades from A2 standardized reading tests.

#### *Journal Entry Interpretation*

The journal entries were written by the participants. It is important to highlight that the journals were written in Spanish because the entries were made by First Level students of English and the goal of this technique was to collect and analyze their opinions about the ESP language teaching approach. The students' answers were transcribed and categorized by the researcher.

The students' perceptions about ESP classes have been divided into two aspects: positive aspects and negative aspects. First, motivation is a recurrent topic mentioned by the students. When they perceived the class as interesting they said they liked it because they were studying topics and reading texts related to Psychology. It stimulated, in some cases, their own interest in continuing learning English by themselves outside the class. For example, a student said, "It is simply great to learn English in this way". Second, based on some of the comments, didactics is another relevant topic that students pointed out. They described the English classes taken at the School of Psychology by using different descriptors such as dynamic, pragmatic, versatile, technical, interesting, productive, understandable, rewarding, interactive, and pleasant. Third, they said that the activities done in classes helped them improve their language proficiency since they practiced reading, writing, listening, and speaking which resulted conducive to their overall English learning. Additionally, most of the students highlighted the importance of dealing with English teaching material that is related to their Psychology majors. They described it as very useful language practice because they could learn new vocabulary, which helped them to be familiarized with the terms and be able to read articles in English for other subjects that composed their study plans their majors. Finally, students compared their reading comprehension level at the beginning and at the end of the semester. They wrote phrases like "Now, I can read longer scientific texts. It is easier and faster to read a text". They said they learned how to handle and understand a text avoiding word by word translation.

On the other hand, there were also negative perceptions about the English classes. They said that there was not enough work done on vocabulary within the reading comprehension activities, and they suggested reviewing the vocabulary before exploring a text. They also said that some grammar structures, like questions and answers, needed to be practiced more thoroughly. In the final reading comprehension self-evaluation, a few students said that their reading comprehension improvement was very low with this approach.

#### *Interviews*

The interviews were transcribed, analyzed, and categorized looking for similar premises. The categories were: motivation, didactics, advantages, disadvantages, suggestions.

The first relevant issue found in the students' answers was motivation. Some of the interviewees saw ESP as a new perspective in learning English; it attracted their attention and motivated them to learn English. They felt motivated to read texts related to Psychology in English.

Didactics was the second important aspect highlighted by the students. They described their classes as interactive and practical. They alleged that all the language skills were practiced during the classes and that they liked the listening and writing activities.

As it can be seen, participants found several advantages in ESP rather than disadvantages. They evaluated their own reading comprehension level and confirmed that it improved throughout the semester. They said that at the beginning, it was difficult for them to read academic articles related to Psychology, but at the end of the semester, they were familiar with them. The four skills enhancement and development is another advantage they talked about. They said they felt more confident to talk and write in English at the end of the semester.

However, some disadvantages were also mentioned. Some of them talked about how grammar was to some extent sidelined. They alleged that it was a weakness of this approach. The lack of sufficient vocabulary work surfaced again in the interviews. They said it was necessary to reinforce some lexical items when studying English. Some of the students also mentioned that they had a bad experience with learning English. They said they had grown tired of the repetitive language classes at high school.

Finally, the students made some suggestions about the English classes and the ESP application. They said that some students had a very low English level. They suggested that the classes should be less challenging at the beginning.

Another suggestion was to work in groups more frequently because it helped them to learn from each other. They suggested working more on grammar. A few of them said that there were not enough speaking activities and suggested that more of those should be included in the course.

### *Survey Results*

The survey questionnaire has 20 questions, however, only the most significant questions are presented in this section.

Based on the question four results, it can be said that students were not familiar with dealing with large texts in English because if we take into consideration the answers *always* and *usually* in the Likert Scale, 43% of the students said that they felt overwhelmed whenever they saw a whole page of English in front of them and only 9% of them answered *never*. The question five shows that students preferred to read about familiar topics, since 78% of the students (always, usually and sometimes) said that they were nervous reading a passage in English when they were not familiar with the topic; only 4% said they were never nervous. Previous knowledge about some of the topics in L1 (Spanish) may have helped them to infer some vocabulary. The results of question twelve were very significant because students said they liked to read texts in English, which could be very beneficial for their learning process. 74% of the students said they always, usually and sometimes enjoyed reading English. Only 4% of the students said that they never enjoyed reading. Based on the results of question thirteen, it can be inferred that after being exposed to several texts in English during the intervention, the students acquired confidence in reading. Sixty-one percent of the students said that they always, usually and sometimes felt confident when they were reading in English. The results of question eighteen present the students' self-evaluation about reading comprehension as described in their journals. Eighty-seven percent (always, usually and sometimes) said they were satisfied with the level of reading ability in English that they had achieved so far. Only 4% said that they were never satisfied with it.

### **Discussion**

In order to answer the first research question of this study, (“To what extent can ESP improve the English reading comprehension ability of Psychology students?”); a pre-test and a post-test were administered to the convenient group at the beginning and at the end of the semester. Based on the results, comparing the pre-test and the post-test averages, it can be said that there was a slight improvement in the English reading comprehension level of the students; this, in spite of the fact that the statistical results showed that the reading comprehension improvement was not noteworthy. The goal of the reader is to try to understand what the reading is about according to Snow’s (2002) definition. The purpose of improving the reading comprehension has been fulfilled with the intervention; however, in this study case, the students’ grades in the tests were not statistically significant. In contrast to Bautista Barón (2013) who stated that in her study students showed a significant improvement in their reading comprehension level. Some factors or limitations may probably have affected the participants’ reading comprehension performance in the present study. The first is that the duration of the intervention was only 12 weeks, a total of 32 hours of ESP. For statistical validity, the minimum required number of participants for parametrical statistical tests is 30. This condition was not possible to fulfill because only 25 students were registered in the class. The third issue worth mentioning is the fact that the English level

of students may not have been appropriate for the intervention. It is important to remember that the study group was the First Level, and their proficiency level was really low in most cases. In most cases, the ESP programs described in the literature review were applied to higher levels. For example, Arias' (2014) carried out a study with fifth-level English students of law students. Also, a study about difficulties in teaching ESP at a university in Vietnam, (Hoa & Mai, 2016) showed that almost 60% of the students had difficulties in recognizing vocabulary and they depended on the dictionary. In the present study, students were not allowed to use a dictionary while taking the pre-test and the post-test.

To answer the second research question of this study, "What are the students' perceptions about their own reading comprehension in an ESP context?"; two qualitative instruments were used in order to explore students' perceptions regarding their reading comprehension level and the ESP application itself.

From the analysis of the journal entries, it transpires that students were motivated because they perceived the classes as interesting since they were studying topics related to their field of study. Correspondingly, Arias (2014), said that specialized text increased students' motivation because her law students were engaged in reading about the laws applicable to crime and punishment in the United States. In this research, at the end of the semester, they showed that they were motivated to using English as a tool for reading articles about their major. Clark & Rumbold (2006) suggest that intrinsic motivation refers to engagement in an activity in which students are driven by internal rewards; that is, reading for curiosity, enjoyment or satisfaction. Additionally, Bernal & Feyen (2017) in a previous study about the perceptions of the English Program at the Psychology School affirm that students were enthusiastic about using materials related to their field of study, and this improved their motivation to study English.

A second relevant topic was didactics. They described their English classes as dynamic, interesting and productive. This outcome is supported by Boroujeni and Fard (2013), who found out that almost 90% of the students preferred to have an active role in the classroom and work in different setups, like pair work/group work, and take part in games and projects. In the present study, it was found that students described their classes as dynamic, for they were part of their own learning while working on worksheets, discussions, project presentations, and journal writing.

Although the ESP treatment in this study was focused on reading, the other skills were also developed because students worked on different activities, which required speaking, listening, and writing activities to perform and present. This finding is supported by Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) who stress that "ESP is centered on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse, and genre" (p. 6).

The students evaluated their own reading comprehension skills in the last open-ended question in the journal

entries. Most of them stated that there was a significant improvement in their overall reading comprehension. Arias (2014) also found that the students were able to connect their previous knowledge about the law with the text they read about this field of study in English. In our case, it can be assumed that the previous knowledge that most of the students had about Psychology, helped them to understand the text used during the semester.

In the majority of cases, students said they could understand most of the text because they related the reading to their majors. It is important to mention that according to participants' opinion, vocabulary was a limitation in their English reading comprehension. Even though most of them were satisfied with the ESP intervention, a few students raised the issue that vocabulary was not dealt with sufficiently during the reading comprehension instruction process. As it was mentioned before, Hoa and Mai (2016) found that their students had difficulties when faced with the specialist vocabulary involved. Arslan and Akvarov (2012) also pointed out that most of their students were aware that they lacked sufficient knowledge of vocabulary related to their occupational fields.

After analyzing the participants' interviews in our study, the issue of "motivation" was a frequently recurring item. The interviewees said that ESP was a new perspective in learning English for them. According to Torregrosa and Sanchez-Reyes (2011), realism and the use of authentic materials increase learners' motivation and expose them to real language and culture. In this research, it was observed that the students were interested and motivated to work on Psychology topics. This is in accordance with Alqahtani's findings (2015) who found that students had a positive attitude and motivation for learning English as a second language. Similarly, Arslan and Akbarov (2012) emphasized that their students would have preferred to be given courses where English is connected to their field of study.

Participants also mentioned having this type of didactics as a positive experience both in the interviews and the journal entries. They remembered some of the activities that were carried out during their classes, and they described them as interactive. According to Tarnopolsky (2012), an ESP class should include the basic principles of integrating English speaking, listening, reading, and writing into the learning process.

The students of the present study were able to identify some of the advantages arising from the ESP methodology. They stated that their reading comprehension level improved throughout the semester. In a previous study, Ahmadi (2013) found that students who had higher motivation in reading would increase their English reading comprehension proficiency more than those without. In our case, students said they felt more confident to talk and write in English by the end of the semester. Nevertheless, some students found shortcomings regarding the ESP application, such as the weaknesses in the treatment of grammar and the lack of sufficient vocabulary instruction. As it is explained by Tarnopolsky (2012), the learning activities are oriented to the specialist context; however, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation are collateral while not being specifically reinforced.

The results from the survey used in our research showed that there was a favorable tendency towards reading after the ESP intervention. These results are in line with those obtained by Arias (2014), who stresses that reading is an essential part of both students and professionals' daily tasks. She also found that specialized texts increased students' motivation because they read a large quantity of relevant information. In the same manner, the students of the present study felt motivated to read in English after the application of the ESP course. Furthermore, Jacobson, Degener, and Purcell-Gates (as cited in Bautista Baron, 2013) remark that adult students prefer to receive instruction that uses authentic materials and activities which can help them to cope in their professional lives. In our case, it has also been found that 60% of the students felt confident when they were reading in English. This finding is similar to that of a previous study done in Saudi Arabia where Alqahtani (2015) found that the students' needs and interests are connected to their learning experiences and background, which increases their self-confidence.

Finally, it was found that 86% of the participating students declared that they were satisfied with the level of reading ability in English that they managed to achieve. Ahmadi et al. (2013) claim that researchers who conducted studies in the field of motivation found that it was one of the most significant factors that affected students' reading comprehension. In the same way, Ryan and Deci (2000) state that "Intrinsic motivation is defined as the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions" (p. 56).

### **Conclusion**

This study shows that there was an improvement in the reading comprehension ability of the Psychology students after the application of ESP in their English classes during the semester March - August 2016. Even though the improvement was not statistically significant, the students' perceptions about their own reading comprehension were positive.

Students need to see English as a tool for their professional lives, and working with specific texts can help them to have a broader overview of their own profession and not as a minor academic undergraduate requirement. Motivation is an important factor that needs to be considered by teachers, academic institution administrators since, in the Ecuadorian context, English is taught as a foreign language rather than a second language, which most of the time is a disadvantage for teaching because students do not fully realize the importance of learning English.

Another suggestion for English teachers, who want to implement ESP in their classes, is to take into consideration to work on vocabulary activities before reading and exploring academic texts.

The main conceptual referents, who gave support to this research were Hutchinson and Waters (1987), and Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), since they stated that the ESP approach helps students to learn English in an effective way, which has been proved in this research. It is possible to summarize their theory in this simple

phrase: "Tell me what you need English for and I will tell you the English that you need" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 8).

As has been discussed above, in most cases ESP has been used with students who had a good English proficiency level; however, we have ventured on carrying out this study with participants of the First Level Credit Course of English at the University of Cuenca, and as a suggestion for further studies and applications would be to work with higher-level students.

In summary, based on the different data collection instruments used and the results obtained in this research, it can be said that the ESP approach should definitely be considered for future curriculum plans. If students claim that they need English as a tool for their professions and must be based on relevant and specific contents, higher education institutions should have solid answers to respond to these demands and teach English as another subject on the students' curriculum to enhance their motivation, like for their language learning, professional development, and not only as a mandatory and unavoidable requirement for graduation.

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# **Process and product approaches to enhancing writing skill in EFL classrooms**

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## **Abstract:**

The main aim of this qualitative study was to determine the influence of using the Process and Product approaches— as a dual-method approach— in order to enhance writing skill in an EFL English class at Language Center of Technical University of Cotopaxi. This action research was carried out during the academic term April- August 2017, with 11 participants. Teachers' observation was applied as data collection method; an anecdotal note was used to observe students' written compositions focusing on six components: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. The research was developed in three phases, the diagnosis, the teaching of writing by combining the two approaches and the evaluation phase. Results show that students' written compositions improved significantly after applying the approaches mentioned. The process approach helped students to generate ideas and to organize those ideas in a text composition; and the product followed by the process approach helped students to learn the linguistic knowledge (grammar, spelling, vocabulary and punctuation). A balanced integration of the writing process approach and the product approach allowed enhancing writing skills and changing students' attitude towards writing. Therefore, it is suggested that English teachers apply process and product approaches—as a dual method in order to give students more opportunities to develop their writing skill, and to make them feel more confident when doing writing compositions.

**Keywords:** Writing process approach, product approach, EFL class, writing skill

## **Resumen**

El objetivo principal de este estudio cualitativo fue determinar la influencia del uso de los enfoques *Process and*

*Product* como un método dual que permita mejorar la destreza de escritura en estudiantes de nivel inicial de Inglés como lengua extranjera en el Centro de Idiomas de la Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi. Esta investigación acción se llevó a cabo durante el período académico Abril - Agosto del 2017 con 11 participantes. La observación docente fue aplicada como método de recolección de datos; se usó el registro anecdótico para observar las composiciones escritas de los estudiantes los cuales se enfocaron en seis componentes: contenido, organización, gramática, vocabulario, ortografía y puntuación. La investigación se desarrolló en tres fases, el diagnóstico, la enseñanza de la escritura combinando los dos enfoques y la fase de evaluación. Los resultados muestran que las composiciones escritas de los estudiantes mejoraron significativamente después de aplicar los enfoques mencionados. El enfoque *process approach* ayudó a los estudiantes a generar ideas y organizar estas ideas en una composición de texto; y el *product approach* seguido del *process approach* ayudó a los estudiantes a aprender el conocimiento lingüístico (gramática, ortografía, vocabulario y puntuación). Una integración equilibrada del enfoque *process and product* permitió mejorar las habilidades de escritura y cambiar la actitud de los estudiantes con relación a la escritura. Por lo tanto, se sugiere que los profesores de inglés apliquen los enfoques *process and product* como un método dual para brindar a los estudiantes más oportunidades de desarrollar sus habilidades de escritura y hacer que se sientan más seguros al escribir composiciones.

**Palabras clave:** Product approach, product approach, aula EFL, habilidad de escritura

## **Introduction**

Writing is a fundamental skill to be developed in EFL students; however, it is quite challenging for both teachers and students because it requires much practice and effort to make intelligible written texts. Many teachers agree that developing writing skill in students who study English as a foreign Language is quite difficult due to many factors such as: limited time, large classes, individual learning styles, and student's lack of vocabulary, students' motivation, and students' poor writing skill in their first language. In spite of these problems, there is still awareness about the need to expand opportunities to improve students' writing skill because students need to develop their competence to communicate their beliefs, thoughts and point of views in different writing styles. Some writers mention that teachers are concerned about the final piece of writing and provide students feedback focused on vocabulary, grammatical structures, spelling and punctuation. They do not teach how to develop the ideas and how to write those ideas into paragraphs. It means that teachers do not pay attention to the composition taking into account the audience and the purpose of the communication. They do not use specific methods to develop the skill; in fact, writing is neglected in many classrooms. Therefore, it is suggested that teachers use different approaches to enhance writing in the classroom taking into account students' needs and the teaching context. A critical analysis of the methods and approaches to develop writing skill allowed determining that the process and product approach are presented as alternatives for EFL classrooms (Vanderpyl, 2012; Avan, 2015; Onozawa, 2010; Gholami Pasand & Bazarmaj Haghi, 2013). Others even suggest combining both of them. (Hasan & Akhand 2010; Sarala, T.P, Abdul, B.S., & Fauziah.B.I. 2014; Mei 2005)

The process approach is seen as a method that allows teaching writing following a process. Camps (2005) defines the writing process as “a sequence of a series of cyclical, recursive, and progressive stages with the purpose of producing a final piece of written work” (p.130). Leki (1991) states that the process approach places more emphasis on the stages of the writing rather than the final product (as cited in Belinda 2006, p.2). The writing process approach encourages students to see writing not as a grammar exercise, but as an activity to convey ideas and thoughts through a written composition (O’Brien, 2004). This method asks students to think and organize their ideas before a writing task. Students learn that writing is not only based on grammatical structures but also on the purpose of the communication. Students develop their ability to generate ideas and to organize these ideas in their compositions.

On the other hand, “the product approach is an oriented-class due to the teachers supply students with standardized texts so that they can follow the model to write their own piece of writing” (Khan and Bontha, 2015, p. 96). This kind of approach leads students to produce a final composition based on models provided by teachers. It focuses on imitating and modeling a text as well as structuring phrases and sentences to complete a specific format of writing based on a provided sample. The organization of the ideas is more important than the ideas themselves and students only complete a single draft. Teachers save time and avoid the long process of writing; the final product is the center of this approach. Pinca (cited in Badger and White, 2002) points out that the product approach is seen as linguistic knowledge, focused on appropriate use of vocabulary, syntax and cohesion. The writing composition as a product must be coherent with no errors in the text (Nunan, 1999, p.). According to Sarala, Abdul and Fauziah (2014), the product approach is one of the most common methods used by teachers in schools around the world (p.790).

**Table 1** Process approach vs product approach

| Process approach  | Product approach  |
|---|---|
| Content is important.   | Correctness and form is important.  |
| Ideas are created and formulated during the process of writing  | Ideas are taken from writing models   |
| Organization and meaning is necessary. Errors are tolerated; Some mistakes can become fossilized in students, though. | lexicon-grammatical areas, spelling and punctuation is important, students can learn from written models                            |
| Write for a real audience and for a personal purpose  | Audience is neglected   |
| The process develops creativity and critical thinking   | Copng sample text, prevent students to think critically and creatively  |
| Mechanical aspects of writing are important, but they should not interfere with the composing process.                | Since the main focus of these approaches is on written form, grammar is emphasized and a particular effort is made to avoid errors. |
| This composing process requires much revision and rewriting, however, students can get bored.                         | Students have to do only one draft.   |
| The teacher intervenes and guides students during the composing process, but it is time consuming.                    | Teachers wait the final written. They do not have to do any process.  |
| Instead of worrying about form, students concentrate on conveying a written message; emphasis on creative process.    | forms of the written products emphasis on end product   |
| Teachers have to check many drafts  | Teachers correct and mark only the final product.   |
| Students develop their ability to create their own texts.   | Students become dependent writers   |
| Teachers ask students to follow steps   | Teacher ask students to follow models   |
| Writing mechanics are applied by students in context.   | Writing mechanics are copied from modeling sentences.   |

Even though the process approach offers benefits, it also has some drawbacks. For example, the writing process approach requires time to generate ideas, to edit, to review, and to correct. The amount of time required may at times become an inconvenience or even a difficulty, especially, when teachers have a large group of students. They may not have enough time to guide all students without demotivate them or causing them to lose interest in writing. Another drawback is that the process approach may cause teachers to focus more on generating and organizing ideas rather than grammar, syntax and language usage (essential elements to convey clear messages). It can lead students to believe that grammar is not important when writing. In order to minimize these problems, it is a good idea to integrate the product approach; models lead students to avoid the long process of writing and make students aware of various aspects of writing such as style, vocabulary, organization and structure. Eschholz (1980) emphasizes that when models are integrated appropriately into the content of the writing process, they become useful teaching tools.

In the same way, the product approach has some drawbacks. Murray states that simply modeling texts does not help students to develop their creativity (as cited in Pasand & Haghi, 2013, p.76). Students are only concentrated on imitating structures rather than developing ideas, which is extremely crucial in making understandable writing composition. Therefore, students have problems in thinking critically, producing ideas, and then connecting those ideas into paragraphs. Consequently, at this stage, students do not pay attention to the content or to the communicative purpose behind their writing (Nunan, 1999 as cited in Kham and Bontha, 2015, p.97). It can then be said that the writing text loses the essence of communication and the message students want to convey. Teachers can avoid this problem by applying the process approach since it allows students to generate their own ideas for their written texts. This process can avoid that students get used to using only models and provide them with tools to generate ideas creatively.

Consequently, the main aim of this study was to determine the influence of using the Process and Product approaches— as a dual-method approach— in order to enhance writing skill in a beginning English class at Language Center of Technical University of Cotopaxi. The research question that guides this study is whether or not the integration of the process and product approach contributes to enhance the main elements of writing; content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation in a beginning English class.

### **Methodology**

This action research was carried out during the academic term April- August 2017. Participants were 11 students; their ages are between 18 to 20 years old, 9 males and 2 females. Teachers' observation was applied as data collection method. Problems identified were registered in an anecdotal note (See annex 1); the principal components observed were: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. The research process was developed in 9 writing sessions. The first two sessions were used to identify difficulties students had in their compositions. The next five sessions aimed at implementing the approaches— as a dual method,

and the final two sessions aimed at investigating whether or not this integration helps students to improve their writing compositions, mainly in the six components: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. The stages of the process approach corresponds to Steel (2004, p 79) and the stages of the product approach are suggested by Badger & White (2000, p. 153). Based on the teaching experience, the researchers proposed the integration of the approaches in this way:

**Table 2** Process-product aproach

| APPROACH       | PROCEDURE  |
|----------------|--|
| <b>PROCESS</b> | (Brainstorming): In this stage, students generate and track their ideas by note-jotting and discussion.  |
| <b>PROCESS</b> | (Planning/Structuring): Students then convert their jotted ideas into note-form and judge the quality and usefulness of the ideas.   |
| <b>PROCESS</b> | (Mind mapping): Students organize ideas into a mind map, spider gram, or linear form (also called graphic organizers). This stage helps to establish the hierarchical relationship of ideas that helps students to develop the structure of their texts.                         |
| <b>PRODUCT</b> | (Familiarization): At this stage, the model sentences or compositions are given to students to focus on grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation that teachers want to teach.   |
| <b>PRODUCT</b> | (Controlled writing): Students practice new language in a limited way. They rehearse all linguistic knowledge by completing exercises or writing sentences in an isolated way. It requires only the manipulation of the language learned.  |
| <b>PRODUCT</b> | (Guided writing): At this stage students can write compositional texts using the language previously taught.   |
| <b>PROCESS</b> | (Writing the first draft): Students write the first draft. This is done in the class often in pairs or groups.   |
| <b>PROCESS</b> | (Peer feedback): Drafts are exchanged, so that classmates become the readers of each other's works. By responding as readers, students develop awareness of the fact that a writer is producing something to be read by someone else and thus they can improve their own drafts. |
| <b>PROCESS</b> | (Editing): Drafts are returned and improvements are made based upon peer feedback.   |
| <b>PROCESS</b> | (Final draft): A final draft is written. The students write being aware of teachers' comments to improve writing skills.   |
| <b>PROCESS</b> | (Evaluation and teachers' feedback): Students' writings are evaluated and teachers provide feedback on them.   |
| <b>PRODUCT</b> | (Free writing): At this stage students use all the information they have already generated by using an e-mail template. Students write freely; however, they still depend on their teachers.   |

First, the rhetorical stages of the process approach and the product approach were taught in order to familiarize students with what was expected to do in each stage. Second, brainstorming was introduced as a technique to generate ideas by using written models. Third, the teachers' feedback was used in order to teach students how to organize their ideas better; to reinforce this activity, the teacher discussed the order of the ideas to be written in the composition. Fourth, grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation were taught using the stages of the product approach in order to make students understand how language is formed. Fifth, to consolidate this

knowledge, drafting which is a stage of the process approach was developed; students were asked to write the ideas in context in order to avoid error-free single sentences. Sixth, the peer feedback was used to make students aware of mistakes and errors. Seventh, students moved to the next draft to improve their writing. Drafting encouraged students to become more flexible with writing; students felt freer to modify their writing as many times as it is necessary. Eighth, Again, teachers' feedback was used to focus on elements which were not seen on the peer feedback. The last step consisted on giving students e-mail models in order that they connect all the information in the template.

## Results

The anecdotal notes allowed gathering qualitative information about the students' problems in writing and the development of this skill during the implementation process. The observation focused on six main components of writing: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. Main findings are presented in the following table.

**Table 3:** Results of the anecdotal notes

| COMPONENTS          | The diagnosis phase  | The implementation phase  | The evaluation phase                            |
|---------------------|--|---|---|
| <b>CONTENT</b>      | The students did not know how to start and what to write in the assignment.  | The students take time to generate ideas                              | The ideas were fluent.                          |
| <b>ORGANIZATION</b> | Students mixed all the ideas and they were not in sequence                   | The ideas were getting some sequence.                                 | The ideas were organized in a paragraph.        |
| <b>GRAMMAR</b>      | There were many mistakes in grammar.   | Some grammar mistakes from Spanish translation                        | A few mistakes in verb agreement                |
| <b>VOCABULARY</b>   | They asked a lot how to write words in English                               | Students asked a little for vocabulary                                | They used the correct vocabulary by themselves. |
| <b>SPELLING</b>     | The students wrote the words as they sounds.                                 | Students were aware to check the spelling in their books or notebooks | There were few errors in spelling.              |
| <b>PUNCTUATION</b>  | The students used all the time the comma and did not realize capitalization. | They mixed the comma and the period                                   | Punctuation was correct and capitalization      |

In the diagnosis phase, the students had many problems in the writing process. To begin with, the students did

not know how to generate ideas and therefore they had troubles to start the writing assignment because they did not have any idea what to write. Students also have inconvenient in the organization. The few information they had was not written in a sequence way. They mixed all the ideas in one paragraph. Another fact was grammar. The writing activities were poor in grammar. They had many mistakes in verb agreement, and tenses. The vocabulary was not extended. They asked the teacher how to say words in English. Besides, students wrote the words as they sound, so there were many mistakes in spelling. Additionally, there was not a correct use of periods and commas. They used all the time commas and some students used neither periods nor commas. All these problems affected the writing composition and the information that they were trying to convey.

In the five following sessions, the process and product approach was implemented in order to check students' progress in writing, focusing on six components: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. During the process, students got used to generating and organizing ideas before writing; little by little, the content of the students' compositions became more relevant. Moreover, their ideas were getting some sequence in the paragraphs. Regarding grammar, students had some mistakes from Spanish translation, for instance, they wrote the nouns and then the adjectives. They also overgeneralized the use of articles in singular and plural nouns. Students asked for vocabulary to the teacher less time. Additionally, there were less spelling mistakes because students realized the importance to check spelling before writing. The last challenging fact was punctuation. Students mixed periods and commas because they did not differentiate well when to use them.

The evaluation phase was done in two sessions in order to know the influence of using the process and product approaches in the components mentioned previously. Students' written compositions had better quality in the evaluation phase than those written in the diagnosis phase; students progressed in all the components and therefore they improved their quality of writing texts. The information provided in the writing composition was clearer and easier to understand. There were a few errors in spelling and grammar, but it does not interfere in the purpose of the writing activity. High and low writing students took advantage and learned from both approaches.

## **Discussion**

The investigation found that using the process and the product approach as a dual method contributes to develop the main elements of writing: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation in beginning students at Language Center of the Technical University of Cotopaxi. As most of the writing approaches have drawbacks, many researchers suggest combining more than one in order to minimize difficulties (Hasan & Akhand; 2010; Sarala, T.P, Abdul, B.S., & Fauziah.B.I. 2014). Process and product approach help students to generate ideas, to organize these ideas, and to use linguistic knowledge (grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation).

Student learned to generate ideas, so the content of their writing compositions were more relevant. Brainstorming strategy was useful purpose. Brainstorming encouraged students to write their own experiences and knowledge about a topic. In this context, some research works found positive effects of brainstorming on developing writing skills in terms of content and organization, mechanics of writing, and language use. (Ibnian, 2011; Mojtaba & Javad, 2013) These works present brainstorming as a motivating technique to get students involved in the writing process. Therefore, it is suggested to teach brainstorming technique in order to activate students' thinking so that they can create their own ideas. Rao's research (2007) showed that the explicit instruction of brainstorming has a measurable influence on writing performance.

As process approach requires to write many drafts and it involves correction and feedback, students learned how to organize their ideas better. Teachers' feedback and peer feedback gave them reinforcement about the knowledge learned and the opportunity to correct and present their texts sequentially and consistently. Based on this feedback, they tried to organize better their ideas in a new draft. This integration of feedback contributed to have a progress in their writing tasks. So teacher feedback and peer feedback were useful. Nooreiny, Hamidah and Kee (2011) point out that two forms of feedback can play an important and complementary role in enhancing the acquisition of writing. They state that teacher feedback and peer feedback in writing help increase immediate writing abilities and help promote durability of the skill as well. They also state that even though teacher feedback is considered more effective by many students, peer feedback with appropriate training serve as an important supporting role in helping learners in their writing. We support this finding because we asked students to focus on specific components and the results were satisfactory because students could realize their own mistakes. It also helped students to understand the importance of this feedback to improve their writing tasks. In addition to, Bijami, Pandian and Mehar'research (2016) reports that students got better understanding of their errors on their writing as a result of getting direct feedback..

Finally, both process and product approach contributed to improve the linguistic knowledge. To begin with, Khan and Bontha (2015) claim that the product approach provides students "linguistic knowledge" and understanding of how language is formed (p 97). This argument was demonstrated during the stages of familiarization, controlled, guided and free writing—stages of the product approach. Students understood how language is formed and how to use the grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation correctly. Modelling text strategy was useful to make students write correctly and consistently even though the sentences are decontextualized. Even though Eschholz (1980) states that when models are integrated appropriately into the content of the writing process, they contribute to the improvement of all writing components: organization vocabulary, grammar, spelling and punctuation. Then, in order to improve and consolidate this knowledge, it is necessary to make students practice sentences in context so that they make sense and have meaning in a written text. To achieve this, the researchers used feedback which was useful to practice and acquire linguistic knowledge, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. Participants led to enhance a quality writing composition.

Lundstrom & Baker (2009) assert that teachers' feedback and peer feedback improve students' writing, but most of teacher's feedback lead successful revisions than peer feedback. However, in this study both of them contributed significantly but it is crucial that teachers also guide peer feedback, helping students focus on the writing components to be evaluated, so they have an idea about what to check. In the same context Bitchener, Young and Cameron (2005) point out that written feedback helped develop confidence while developing writing skills. That is one advantage of the process approach in terms of practice. It gives students the opportunity to correct at any time of the writing process to enhance writing.

In general, process and product approach contribute to enhance the main components of writing skill: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. This combination is more useful than teaching with only one approach. Tangpermpoon (2008), Brookes and Grundy (1990), believe that if we teach the writing approaches separately this will result in unbalanced L2 writing performance. By integrating these approaches to writing, EFL students can transfer the skills they have gained from each approach from one mode to another and have a much better writing performance. It allows focusing on developing all the writing components to have a quality text and not to concentrate only on specific components. Therefore, high and low writing students took advantage and learned from both approaches. This results are different to what Mei (2005) found when applying both approaches; high writing ability participants benefited more from the process approach than they did from the product approach.

### **Conclusion**

This study allowed determining that the integration of the process and the product approach contributes to enhancing writing skill in a beginning English class at Language Center of Technical University of Cotopaxi. Mixing the two approaches allowed improving all the components of the writing skill: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. The process approach helps students to generate ideas and to organize those ideas in a text composition; and the product followed by the process approach helps students to learn the linguistic knowledge. It also helps teachers and students to have a better attitude towards the teaching and learning writing skill. By mixing these approaches, teachers will have better results and students will feel more confident when doing writing assignments. Based on these findings, the researchers suggest teachers to see the teaching of writing as a process that goes from doing brainstorming to writing many drafts in order to have a final product.

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**ANECDOTAL NOTES  
TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF COTOPAXI  
LANGUAGE CENTER**

CLASS: ..... DATE: .....

TEACHER:

OBJECTIVE: Observe students' writing compositions when applying process-product approach.

ACTIVITY:

| COMPONENTS   | Observation | Teacher's analysis |
|--------------|-------------|--------------------|
| CONTENT      |             |                    |
| ORGANIZATION |             |                    |
| GRAMMAR      |             |                    |
| VOCABULARY   |             |                    |
| SPELLING     |             |                    |
| PUNCTUATION  |             |                    |

# **Design, production, application and analysis of task-based teaching material for beginner hospitality students at the University of Cuenca**

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## **Resumen**

Diseño, producción, aplicación y análisis de material didáctico basado en tareas es el enfoque de esta investigación. Este tema surgió en base a la carencia de material didáctico y una metodología apropiada para satisfacer las expectativas de los estudiantes en la adquisición del idioma inglés en la carrera de Hospitalidad en una Universidad de Ecuador. Los diversos textos utilizados en clases de inglés provienen de otros países desarrollados por lingüistas expertos, pero centrado en la cultura, las costumbres y tradiciones de otros lugares. Esta investigación tiene como objetivo el diseño, producción, aplicación y análisis de un producto final que proporciona a los participantes temas para promover la cultura del Ecuador, costumbres y tradiciones. El idioma Inglés es el medio por el cual los estudiantes deben ser instruidos para convertirse en embajadores de su cultura, tradiciones y costumbres. Para determinar la validez de la aplicación de las tareas que implica "manos a la obra", se aplicó una investigación de modo mixto (MMR), que requiere un análisis cuantitativo y cualitativo de las tareas utilizadas. Los resultados obtenidos fueron satisfactorios; sin embargo, la limitación principal es la falta de estructura que, de hecho, muchos autores han discutido sobre este inconveniente en (TBLT).

**Palabras clave:** Diseño, Producción, Aplicación, Análisis, Task-Based Language Teaching, Investigación de Modo Mixto.

## **Abstract**

Design, Production, Application and Analysis of Task-Based teaching material is the focus of this research. This topic emerged from the factual statement that there isn't material to suit students' expectations on language acquisition in the career students are pursuing at the School of Hospitality at a University located in Ecuador. The various texts used in English classes come from other countries developed by expert linguists, but focused on culture, customs and traditions from other places. This research work is aimed on designing, producing, applying and analyzing an end product which provides participants with topics to promote the Ecuadorian culture, customs and traditions. English language is the means by which students ought to be trained to become ambassadors of their cultural background. To determine validity of the application of tasks which implies "getting hands-on activities", a mixed mode research (MMR) was applied which required a quantitative and

qualitative analysis of the tasks used. The results obtained were satisfactory; however, the main constraint was the lack of structure which, indeed, many proponents have argued about this drawback. TBLT serves as a model of how English academics can create, implement and determine the essential features of tasks to suit participants' needs and wants.

**Keywords:** Design, Production, Application, Analysis, Task-Based Language Teaching, Mixed Mode Research (MMR).

## **Introduction**

It is undeniable that the need to be interconnected and to have an intercultural communication has demanded the need of a language that is common not only for travelers and business people, but for the whole world's population; for this reason, Firth (2004) indicates that 'English has become a lingua franca that needs to be developed in all the fields'. Hospitality, Tourism and Gastronomy are areas where its various service providers such as receptionists, flight attendants, ticket agents, chefs, waiting staff and the like, need to have knowledge of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) so that the barriers of communication would not stop people from sharing information and knowledge about each other's culture and idiosyncrasy (pp. 237 – 259).

Over the last thirty years, English has been taught at different levels of education in Cuenca - Ecuador such as elementary school, high school and university; however, there are variables which have affected the teaching-learning process of the target language. First of all, the focus of language teaching has been on form rather than on function which has led students to concentrate on the structure rather than on the content. A study administered by Clavijo and Solís (2001) amongst Public, Private and English Teaching Centers state that the hindering factors which impede participants to acquire the target language are "the lack of professionally trained teaching staff, the need of a curriculum design which suits the Ecuadorian student population in the different levels of education, standardized goals for the different levels, adequate didactic materials and a proper methodology" (pp. 60-62). As a result, English teaching and learning has failed in the process of respectively imparting and acquiring the target language.

Hence, this research work is focused on the "Design, Production, Application and Analysis of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) Material for Beginner Hospitality Students at the University of Cuenca" since there is a lack of a proper academic teaching guide that provides local information about Cuenca, its surroundings, its customs and traditions.

There are several researchers that support TBLT such as Ellis et al. These researchers agree that students need to be presented with different tasks so that they can build on the language by using different resources and by doing collaborative work, which emphasizes sharing information amongst peers to reach agreed objectives. In

other words, participants construct knowledge of the target language by 'getting hands on' activities and becoming actively involved in the process of language acquisition (Ellis et al., 2003, p. 305).

Language is presented so that agreement or disagreement may arise, to state opinions and to talk about facts. Vygotsky (1978, pp. 102), author of *Mind and Society*, indicates that "a facilitator should enable the learner to bridge the gap between previous knowledge of the language acquired through various communicative tasks shared with peers". With this in mind, TBLT is used so as to promote Ecuadorian culture and traditions through a series of tasks. Furthermore, participants construct knowledge through the use of creative thinking skills and problem-solving situations (Lewis, A., & Smith, D. 1993, pp. 131 – 137).

TBLT is based on the constructivist learning principles where, according to Dewey (1913), students are engaged in the learning process rather than 'being mere receptacles of the teacher's knowledge' (qtd. in Larsen-Freeman, pp. 151). The Constructivist theory deals with using language effectively and it is supported by the eclectic method, that is, TBLT parallel to content-based instruction (CB) and cooperative learning (CL) which will aim to help students construct prior knowledge with new experiences and tasks set so as to have participants build on the target language. Students attending classes at the School of Hospitality Science come from different provinces where participants have faced variability concerning different methods, approaches and techniques as well as the variable concerning the amount of weekly hours spent in English language instruction. Therefore, disregarding the previous variables, it is expected that the use of TBLT will strengthen speaking skills through the use of tasks to setup different contexts where students will be requested to collaborate in the production of a linguistic outcome. TBLT requires the creation of interactive contexts through the use of brainstorming ideas in order to reach an end product, and this is where "Design, Production, Application and Analysis of Task-Based Teaching Material" arises.

### **Problem Statement**

There is a vast series of books on hospitality; for instance, "Tourism" by Robin Walker and Keith Harding - Oxford English for Careers and "Tourism and Catering" by Neil Wood – Oxford University Press. The preceding printed versions are focused on places, culture and food from other countries. Henceforth, the School of Hospitality Science lacks proper academic teaching materials that provide local information about Cuenca, its surroundings, its customs and traditions. There is a considerable population of foreign people visiting or expats settling down in Cuenca and, therefore, participants ought to be prepared to give information and promote their culture. Most students have demonstrated a lack of Basic English language skills; therefore, the need to design, produce, apply and analyze Task-Based Language Teaching material to suit participants' needs and interests, emerges.

TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching) at the School of Hospitality Science will provide opportunities for second language acquisition through CBI (Content-Based Instruction). Brinton, Snow, and Wesche (2003) point out that ``CBI or Content-Based Instruction is not only restrictive to a language program, but rather integrates the learning of language with the learning of a subject matter'' (qtd. in Larsen-Freeman, pp. 131).

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the actual study was to design, produce, apply and analyze Task-Based material for beginner students at the School of Hospitality Science (Catering and Entertainment) to build language acquisition, precisely the communicative skill through different tasks based on real life situations, which was the main focus in designing the syllabus. Furthermore, Task-Based activities were provided to students with the necessary means and resources to interact with peers, and interviewees by using the target language at an A2 level of the CEFL (Common European Framework for Languages) and to find out whether there is any meaningful result by the use of TBLT in a first level University language classroom.

Language theories, either cognitive, humanist, constructivist and/or behaviorist, have contributed to the complex tapestry of language teaching and language learning or language acquisition which have been analyzed by various researchers and supporters about its arguments, methods and techniques and how these have influenced on Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) as an approach to language acquisition. These theories have been discussed in several articles; therefore, Design, Production, Application and Analysis of Task-Based Language Teaching material were the focus target in this research.

The following proponent, Wang, Cheng-Jun (2006), on her dissertation paper ``Designing Communicative tasks for College English students'' indicates that English is an open door to international communication. This researcher emphasizes on College English Curriculum Requirements which, she says, should reflect and develop students ability to use English focused on the listening and speaking ability to be able to interact socially, and to further their careers to promote cultural quality for social development and international exchanges. The afore mentioned advocate, in her journal, refers to the application of TBLT recommended by China's Ministry of Education. She says that 'tasks' are key units for designing and implementing foreign language instruction (p. 5).

As for task design, Wang (2006) indicates that communicative task design should meet certain standards for the analysis of College English textbooks. Not all texts meet the students' expectations and interests, for this reason, she also points out that tasks ought to be designed with goals which is very important before learner's communicative activities. She says that communicative activities without goals, cannot encourage learners' interest in verbal participation. The researcher indicates that a task without goals, is not a real task (p. 28).

In this research work, as indicated previously, based on the hypothesis that there isn't TBLT material for

Hospitality students who would use the background cultural information to acquire the target language for communicative purposes, the goals were set forth in each one of the designed TBLT lesson plans based on the students' information as to what outcomes should be reached when acquiring the target language. The textbooks used in the language class are generally chosen by a corpus of English language staff. Most of the textbooks contain information from other countries, cultures, customs and traditions. So, based on research, there is the need to design, produce, apply and analyze TBLT topics that would lead students to produce the target language.

Here, Wang (2006) agrees that most educational institutions require the use of textbooks authorized by the academic staff and not by the needs of the participants according to the career they are pursuing. In this research, once the unit lessons were applied, a work-group self-evaluation sheet was distributed for students to reflect on the parameters set forth by Willis, D. and J. Willis (2004, p. 253) which comply with TBLT and whether the tasks met the three important phases as pre-task, main task and post-task. In the same way, during each one of the lessons, students were observed for in-class preparation, use of language, lesson presentation, group or pair work – classroom management, classroom atmosphere and use of technology since students were requested to use much of the websites for reading as input-providing tasks.

To resume, Task-Based Language Teaching/Learning arises from the Constructivist Psycholinguistic theory based on Samuda and Bygate (2008) who refer back in history and cite John Dewey (1913) who was noted as the founder of the constructivist approach'' (p. 151). This approach is relevant to the needs and interests which emphasizes behavioral aspects of an individual's intrinsic desire to acquire the target language, English.

### **Research Questions**

This research study was intended to respond to the following questions:

1. To what degree can beginner students improve their English language skills by using Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) materials designed, produced, applied and analyzed at the School of Hospitality Science at the University of Cuenca?
2. To what degree can beginner students promote the Ecuadorian culture through designed, produced, applied and analyzed Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) material?

The outlined research reveals a theoretical framework where TBLT is used as a central unit of planning and imparting tasks. TBLT is used to elicit previous knowledge of the target language, even if minimum, to enhance the communicative skill of first level hospitality EFL learners. Several theorists are cited throughout who claim on the practical use of tasks for constructing language cognition. The subsequent topic is focused on the methodology used and the analysis of a Mixed Mode Research (MMR) study. Furthermore, the conclusions ad

recommendations based on the results obtained are stated herein.

## **Methodology**

In this research project, tasks are designed for an intact group of twenty-seven students ranging from the age of 17 to 23 year olds. The length of the research starts on March 11th to July 10th, 2013, which takes up a period of sixteen weeks on a two-hour daily basis from 18h00 to 20h00 p.m., which sums up to a total of 160 hours. The study is conducted to a sample population of 1st English level University students who are majoring in Hospitality, Tourism and Gastronomy. The objectives of this research work are to find out how much language output students will be able to produce after the application of TBLT based on contents related to each one of the three majors and to verify language output as a result of the use of this approach .

### **The Concept of a Foreign Language Task**

Pica, Kanagy & Falodun (1993) state that there is no single definition of a classroom task in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research and language pedagogy. Additional definitions are offered which are believed to be representative of the variety researched in literature.

Skehan (1998) indicates that:

Task-Based Language Teaching proposes the notion of 'task' as a central unit of planning and teaching. In other words, a 'task' is an activity or goal that is carried out using language, such as finding a solution to a puzzle, reading a map and giving directions, making a telephone call, writing a letter, or reading a set of instructions (qtd. in Richards and Rodgers, p. 224).

Nunan (1989), on the other hand, states that:

The communicative 'task' is a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than on form. The 'task' should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right (qtd. in Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching, p. 4).

Ellis (2003) likewise states that:

A 'task' is a workplan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the propositional content has been conveyed (qtd. in Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching, p. 16).

As for Long (2009):

A 'task' is defined as a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others such as painting a fence, dressing a child, weighing a patient, sorting letters, or helping someone across the road (qtd. in Task-Based Language

Learning and Teaching, p. 4).

In Richards and Rodgers (2001), it is disputed that ``a task was considered a manual job in the 1950's which was focused on a solo psychomotor task which required little communication or no communication at all'' (p. 225). However, as research on task-types develops, ``tasks cannot only be individualistic, but for a more meaningful outcome, tasks are required to be carried out in pairs or in groups so as to promote teamwork which allows students to build on several aspects in language learning/acquisition which deal with social skills, raising language cognition, sharing of information, team building and motivation enhancement''. In TBLT, `conversation` is, according to Skehan (1998), the central focus of language and the keystone of language acquisition (pp. 225-227).

What is a ``task``?

Prabhu (1987) states three different task types:

- Information Gap
- Opinion Gap
- Reasoning Gap

**Information Gap** exercises request Student 'A' to find out information that Student 'B' has and vice versa. This task type only requires transfer of information. Whereas, **Opinion Gap** exercises require students to express their view points, and for this effect, students will use linguistic resources to complete the task. This demands a holistic language approach which promotes second language acquisition. **Reasoning Gap** exercises, on the other hand, require students to reflect on a theme given such as: ``What topic of conversation would you use when meeting and greeting someone for the first time at the gym?``; students will read an excerpt online and discuss about ``Meeting and greeting in Ecuador as opposed to other countries``. However, the latter demands a higher cognitive level of the target language (Prabhu, 1987, qtd. in Larsen-Freeman, p. 158).

The three types of tasks can be **focused** or **unfocused**. Focused, meaning that ``students are expected to talk about a certain topic which provides students with opportunities to use specific linguistic elements`` (qtd. in Larsen-Freeman, p. 159). Although, Loschky and Bley Vroman (1993) indicate that those linguistic elements are not explicitly told, but rather hidden. An example of this focused task would be `` my daily routine``; it is more likely that students will be using the simple present, but students do not focus on the structure, but rather on the content. Whereas, unfocused tasks relate to an open-ended outcome.

Participants have the opportunity to express themselves in a general way. An example of an unfocused exercise would be ``planning a vacation``, students will probably be using future forms as ``will``, ``going to``, ``progressive forms``, ``might`` as an auxiliary which indicates possibility or ``have to`` which expresses

obligation. The outcomes are varied depending on the participants' needs to express their interests, wishes, and desires. The result may be completely different from what the facilitator expects. However, tasks, focused or unfocused, should be meaningful.

Nonetheless, a 'task' needs to be designed as an assignment given to a student, a pair of students or a group of students to carry out within a limited amount of time which is based on a particular topic related to the content of the subject matter at task. The task may be oral or written. However, a task-based activity requires students either to produce the information, language output, for instance writing a letter of request for an interview to an entrepreneur in the city of Cuenca-Ecuador, or reporting orally about the same entrepreneur, or the production of both tasks. To get to this point, participants should have already been exposed to as much input as possible. Ellis (2003) refers to this distinction as output-prompting tasks as opposed to input-providing tasks (qtd. in Larsen-Freeman, p. 160).

### **Strengths and Weaknesses of Task-Based Activities**

Wilkins (1976, qtd. in Larsen-Freeman, p. 160) states some strengths/advantages and weaknesses /disadvantages:

Some of the strengths of TBLT is that this approach is student-centered which means that the instructor gives directions on what participants ought to do and participants have to find the way to comply with the Task. Additionally, Task-Based Language Teaching is supported by Second Language Acquisition (SLC) (Wilkins, 1986, qtd. in Larsen-Freeman, p. 149) since the use of tasks allow students to get 'hands-on activities' which becomes challenging, motivating and enjoyable; this way, students get to explore their own learning by using tasks. Likewise, tasks can be applicable to students' needs and interests depending on the area of study which can be negotiated between the instructor and the participants.

On the other hand, tasks can also have some drawbacks such as the absence of grammar even though tasks may require participants to use structured-based communicative activities. Similarly, in order to perform the task, the students might not use the recently acquired structures or vocabulary, instead there might be fossilization of language patterns which might not have been corrected such as mispronunciation of -ed past regular forms amongst other fossilized language forms as the use of "for" and "to" for "for to play" instead of "for playing" or "to play" and the examples are manifold.

### **The experimental study**

This research work emerged from a hypothetical question about English as a Foreign Language (EFL) imparted at the Hospitality School where authorities demand students to master the four skills of the target language,

English, but with the main focus on the communicative domain. Therefore, data collection took place during the hundred and sixty hours of the whole semester which is equivalent to eighty days of class for two hours daily.

## **Participants**

This study began with the theoretical background bibliography, a study of the research participants, the data collected for analysis and the statistical instruments used to measure the results. The experiment was applied to an intact population of twenty-seven participants, in the first level of English, who are pursuing the career of Tourism and Hospitality or Hotel Industry, and Gastronomy. The students are in their late nineteen's and early twenties. Most of the students come from the outskirts of the city of Cuenca.

## **Multiple constructs**

The length of research allowed the application of multiple constructs such as a diagnostic test in order to measure participants' background knowledge on the four skills of the target language. Following this, a survey on the Common European Framework for languages was administered which stated the abilities that the participants ought to have for the different categories such as listening comprehension, reading comprehension, oral interaction, oral expression and written expression. A survey on demographics was equally applied to find out information on the student population researched, what the age range of the participants was, what educational institutions participants came from, how long student studied the target language, and what motivated attendees to learn English. Particularly, a pre-test which was the point of departure to find out where participants started and a post-test which measured the results once the experiment had concluded were equally administered. Participants were assessed both before and after the manipulation of the treatment to determine effectiveness of the intervention. During the research period, observations were carried out throughout the six units designed, produced, and applied. Similarly, self-evaluation sheets were filled in by research participants.

Along the research, various tasks were applied on the four language skills; however, the communicative skill was, again, the main focus all along. As was stated in previous chapters, a meaningful output depends on how much meaningful input is given to students throughout the study.

The research design is quasi experimental since Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) along Content-Based Instruction (CBI) was applied to the sample population of participants which emphasized on a cause-effect outcome.

For the quantitative statistical analysis, tables, graphs, likert scales, and the student t- test were used. And for the qualitative statistical analysis, the sources used were "secondary data" which focuses on journal writing, and

“discourse analysis” as well as “conversation analysis” to determine language acquisition based on Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). As a final procedure, a t-student test was used to determine the difference, if any, between the pre-test and the post-test.

Data analysis and interpretation / Results

### **Demographics Analysis**

The group of participants tested involves a minimum of 18 to 24 years of age or more. Most of them are between 18 to 20 years of age representing a 63.2%, followed by a group of participants from 21 to 23 years of age with 26.3% and two students who are 24 years of age or over which represents a 10.6%.

**Table 1 - Age**

| Participants' Age | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| 18-20             | 12        | 63.2       |
| 21-23             | 5         | 26.3       |
| 24 or over        | 2         | 10.6       |
| Total             | 19        | 100.0      |

**Fuente:** Clavijo, Ecuador, 2017

Meanwhile, the area of majoring is divided into two, the first one deals with the Hospitality Industry (Tourism, Hotel Industry and Gastronomy) which is represented by a 73.7% of participants and the remaining difference which is 26.3% of students who are pursuing a special career (Carrera de Titulación Especial) within the School of Hospitality Science.

**Table 2 - Educational Area you are involved in**

| University Major     | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------|-----------|------------|
| Hospitality industry | 14        | 73.7       |
| Special career       | 5         | 26.3       |
| Total                | 19        | 100.0      |

**Fuente:** Clavijo, Ecuador, 2017

Students were asked to calculate the number of hours that they have studied EFL (English as a Foreign Language) at Elementary School, High School and/or at private institutions and the average number of hours they have studied English throughout their life was obtained. Thus, it is noted that the minimum number of hours completed by students is 774, while the maximum value is 5600 hours. An average for the group is 1945 hours with a standard deviation of 1134.

**Table 3** - Sum of hours that students have studied English language

|                    | Hours | / 12 Scholar years | Per Month | Per Week  |
|--------------------|-------|--------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Mean               | 1945  | 162 hrs.           | 18 hrs.   | 4.5 hrs.  |
| Standard deviation | 1134  | 94.5 hrs.          | 10.5 hrs. | 2.6 hrs.  |
| Range              | 4826  | 402.2 hrs.         | 44.7 hrs. | 11.2 hrs. |
| Minimum            | 774   | 64.5 hrs.          | 7.2 hrs.  | 1.8 hrs.  |
| Maximum            | 5600  | 466.7 hrs.         | 51.9 hrs. | 13 hrs.   |

**Fuente:** Clavijo, Ecuador, 2017

When students were asked why they study English at University, various reasons were noted. The highest corresponds to the fact that it is the lingua franca of the world which represents 100% of students who agree. Additionally, this same percentage indicated that the language would help them find a better job. Although a high level of respondents disagreed, participants indicated that they study English because they either like it or because they have to take it since it is a compulsory subject at University.

**Table 1** - Reasons to study English language

|  | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| I study English because I like it.                               | 15        | 78.9       |
| I study English because it's a worldwide language.               | 19        | 100.0      |
| I study English because it's a compulsory subject at University. | 13        | 68.4       |
| I study English because it will help me find a better job        | 19        | 100.0      |

**Fuente:** Clavijo, Ecuador, 2017

Students were asked to assess their perception of English classes based on the teacher intervention and student interaction. 78.9% said that the interaction between students is the hallmark of teaching the language, while 31.6% indicated that teacher participation is minimized.

**Table 5** - Student and teacher intervention

|                            | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Teacher talk is minimized. | 6         | 31.6       |
| Student talk is maximized. | 15        | 78.9       |

**Fuente:** Clavijo, Ecuador, 2017

The average of the four evaluated skills allowed an overview of whether students, through the intervention process using TBLT, had improved their situation, having found that the initial overall average was 40.13 (S.D. 10.14) and at the end it was 67.89 (S.D. 12.21). The p value confirms that indeed there is a difference between the initial and final situation.

**Table 6 - Comparison of means**

|                | Mean  | N  | Standard Deviation | P value |
|----------------|-------|----|--------------------|---------|
| Pre Grammar    | 67.37 | 19 | 2.21               | 0.213   |
| Post Grammar   | 60.09 | 19 | 11.83              |         |
| Pre Listening  | 16.71 | 19 | 17.85              | 0.000   |
| Post Listening | 59.34 | 19 | 16.35              |         |
| Pre Reading    | 49.37 | 19 | 18.93              | 0.000   |
| Post Reading   | 84.21 | 19 | 9.61               |         |
| Pre Writing    | 50.09 | 19 | 16.59              | 0.006   |
| Post Writing   | 64.74 | 19 | 24.02              |         |
| Pre Speaking   | 17.11 | 19 | 17.27              | 0.000   |
| Post Speaking  | 71.05 | 19 | 20.25              |         |
| Pre Total      | 40.13 | 19 | 10.14              | 0.000   |
| Post Total     | 67.89 | 19 | 12.21              |         |

**Fuente:** Clavijo, Ecuador, 2017

### Evaluation of Tasks

According to the compliance of Tasks stated with the following criteria, the average percentages of participant satisfaction toward the fulfillment of each unit was considered by finding the lowest rating for the activity of Entrepreneurs in Tourism which is represented by a 42.86%. This means that most participants felt that this task topic was not been fulfilled as was expected. On the other hand, a 57.14% of the participants indicated that they had complied with the lesson concerning “People Who have made History in Tourism”, which is also considered a positive compliance percentage, although not very high. Another percentage corresponds to the lesson about “Churches in the city of Cuenca” which is 89.80%.

Meanwhile, issues such as “Meeting and Greeting in Ecuador”, “Gastronomy in Ecuador”, and “Journal writing on 20 topics” have results of 100%, that is to say, participants feel they have complied fully.

### Discussion

Once the results were obtained from the Demographics Survey which requested useful background information on what the population of students was, age groups, educational institutions participants came from, the length of time represented in hours that students had studied English, information on what leads participants to learn

the target language and additional relevant information that helped me understand who I would be working with and what interests students have, has let me have a broader understanding of the problem when imparting the target language. When students entering University, it has been noticed that students don't reach an A2 level based on the Common European Framework for Languages and, then, the teaching staff of English language in the Austro of Cuenca are asked about what we are doing in order to have our student population of English reach the international standards of the CEFL.

Through the demographics survey, it was possible to find out that not all the students were the same age when entering first year of University. Most of the participants were between 18 to 20 year olds and the remaining percentage was 21 years of age and above. This datum is interesting since there are variables that affect the teaching-learning process depending on age groups. The majority of students who are 18 to 20 year olds are full time students and the rest of the students who are older than 21 not only do they study, but they also work. This intact group of students received English classes from 18h00 to 20h00 p.m., which indicates that indeed there are many variables to consider when it comes to imparting English classes at the end of the day.

Another factor to consider is the type of educational institutions participants came from. Not all educational institutions impart the target language by using the same syllabus; therefore, the outcomes from the student population of English language learning are variable. Teaching staff, resources, technology and goals are all part of the language results acquired. The business of selling books by the different editorials has expanded largely and educational institutions are not focusing on what students are required to learn in the different stages. Another crucial factor is that the same educational institutions change the series of books every so much time which does not let the process have continuity. In order to have results, the use of a text requires long-term and also trained teaching personnel with the latest trends in imparting the target language, but not forgetting about the many language theories which lead instructors to have a clear scope of how learners learn.

For all the reasons stated above, it is mandatory to start re-thinking on the process of imparting the target language and not imposing texts on the students nor instructors to comply, perhaps, with goals set in other countries which does not reflect our reality. For many school directors or language directors, it is the easiest way to adopt a text where every single exercise, activity, or plan is already set. Through my experience of imparting the target language, I have seen the students desire to express who they are and what they want and where they would like to head.

The proposal of designing, producing, applying and analyzing tasks for students in different areas of study demand much more time and dedication, but the results both from the participants and from the instructor become more meaningful.

In this research work, the syllabus was designed based on what students need according to the careers they are pursuing. The first level of students not only were from Tourism, Hotel Industry and Gastronomy, but also some of the students came from the denominated Special Career (Carrera de Titulación Especial). These students came from a University which closed down and the School of Hospitality admitted a group of students in a field called CTE. To measure participants' validity in the first level of English where TBLT was designed, produced, applied and analyzed, several instruments were applied such as the demographics survey to find out about the student population, a diagnostic test, a survey on the Common European Framework for Languages (CEFL) to measure listening comprehension, reading comprehension, oral interaction, oral expression and written expression.

A pre-test and post-test were equally applied to compare where students started and where students concluded. From the results already explained previously, the outcome was acceptable on the four language skills with the domain in communication; however, the drawback was on grammar and that is exactly one of the disadvantages of TBLT where most of the proponents indicate that this approach does not focus on grammar.

Other factors for achieving positive results in TBLT were focused on group work, pair work or individual tasks. The use of technology also played an important role as well as getting feedback from the instructor. Some of the advantages of TBLT is that it offers an active and lively participation from both the participants as well as from the instructor. Most of the tasks in the end product or teaching manual offer links where students are required to use their smart phones to look for information, to read, to research, to listen and to watch videos. There was always a goal in class so that students may not become distracted with social websites, students were required either to present an end product orally or in written form.

The quantitative results were expressed above and the qualitative results indicate that students were participative at all times. Out of the 27 students who started in this research project, 8 students dropped out. The 19 students left, persevered and worked their way through. The reasons why the 8 students might have quit are unknown.

As Wang (2006) indicates, different colleges will use different teaching materials, at the same time, the level of the students' linguistic competence are also different, so the teachers should analyze their courses and their learners, and then design communicative tasks based on their L2 courses and their learners. Perhaps there are some other limitations we cannot predict at present, which need our further study in the future, but our teaching objective is the same one which requires the teachers to adapt their courses and design tasks based on TBLT (p. 82).

As a conclusion, TBLT needs more exploration in the language classroom. More instructors need to be engaged in designing, producing, applying and analyzing Task-Based Language Teaching according to the students' needs

and wants which are geared towards their field of study.

## Conclusions

First, the topic of this research work emerged from the factual statement that the School of Hospitality Science lacks proper academic teaching materials that provide local information about Cuenca, its surroundings, its customs and traditions. For many years, elementary schools, high schools and universities have been using textbooks produced by linguists who are, indeed, professional in the field of creating a product which is used by endless populations of students worldwide. However, the goal for our students ought to be the acquisition of the target language through Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) alongside Content-Based Instruction (CBI) which demands instructors to design, produce, apply and analyze meaningful tasks that would be connected to the career students are pursuing.

Second, tasks applied in the language classroom have to be tailored made so that they respond to the students' claims on the topics that participants are interested on. Over the years, textbooks used in the different educational institutions in Ecuador have been used over and over again, focusing perhaps on the same topics and the same language structures without having any meaningful output and, therefore, causing demotivation and the lack of interest towards the target language. Two questions were stated at the beginning of this research work and they were: "To what extent can students improve their language skills by using Task-Based Language Teaching materials designed, produced, applied and analyzed at the School of Hospitality Science at the University of Cuenca?" And the second question was: 'To what extent can TBLT teaching material be applicable to the population of beginner students?'

Third, through this research topic, it has been proven that, in fact, the use of TBLT can be applicable to first level beginner students since participants have already been exposed to the target language as it was determined when completing the demographics survey where various proponents have argued that TBLT is connected to participants' past cognitive experiences; however, this process of finding out information, analyzing results, acknowledging the drawbacks of TBLT and deciding on an action plan takes time, devotion and dedication. Last but not least, the various tasks, focused on the different skills, have given participants insights that Task-Based Language Teaching is not restrictive to the classroom, but rather gives participants the opportunity to learn from outside the classroom, from the real world. The tasks designed gave participants the opportunity to share, interact, to research, to become informed through interviews about what goes on in the world of hospitality in the city of Cuenca – Ecuador.

## Limitations and Recommendations

Several constructs were applied to elicit information about the impact of the application of Task-Based Language teaching in the first level of beginner students at the School of Hospitality Science, for this reason

some recommendations will be stated herein.

With this research topic, it is intended that beginner students at the School of Hospitality Management who have already experienced "Designed, Produced, Applied and Analyzed Task-Based Language Teaching" continue with this approach in the next levels until they have finalized the 6<sup>th</sup> semester so that an evaluation be made to find out the outcomes of the application of this approach. We must bear in mind that results either positive or negative depend on long-term application.

A teaching staff committed to curriculum design should be assigned and held responsible that this long-term approach be applied as a pilot project for future reference. Doing "Designed, Produced, Applied and Analyzed Task-Based Language Teaching" during one semester has been meaningful all along. This research topic should be consistent and supported by School Directors and the Headmaster of the University. Nonetheless, this research topic should be applied in other Schools at the University of Cuenca with a committed staff who would dedicate time, interest and awareness that it is the moment that the University has a turnover in English language instruction.

This research is expected to contribute to improving higher levels of English language production by being analytical and critical through the use of the various designed, produced, applied and analyzed tasks. With the applications of activities and projects, the participants will develop their language knowledge, precisely the communicative skill through task based activities on real life situations. By being a School that promotes Hospitality, Tourism and Gastronomy, the students will be able to provide relevant information about the three careers. Continuity must be the principle.

Tasks were applied based on related careers where English content is taught. The English teaching-learning process has to be one step ahead than the actual knowledge of the participant and thus more meaningful and challenging it will be. TBLT also has to be linked to society and the environment where the students are majoring. Only this way, learning the target language will be fruitful and beneficial.

With Task-Based Language Teaching, field trips and tour guides are continually emphasizing the importance of planning, organizing, budgeting, and working in logistics, broadcasting and implementing projects considered as macro activities. And as micro tasks, we can consider the ability to transmit information through a good diction, pronunciation, fluency, knowledge of the topic, eye contact, body language where both macro and micro activities cause an impact on quality service.

Perhaps teaching general English is an activity we have been doing for many years. However, one of the ways to acquire the language is through specific contents such as History, Geography, Tourism planning in English,

etc., a process that becomes more meaningful for students. Teaching subjects in English that are relevant to each one of the different careers becomes challenging, meaningful and applicable. The objectives should be focused on the use of a lexicon which is relevant to the career pursued. This involves reading texts covering technical terms, tasks that students can perform using the four language skills. In the case of the School of Hospitality Management, it is required that students master the skill of oral communication.

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# **Potencialización de la competencia comunicativa en inglés a través de pares receptivos y productivos**

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## **Resumen**

El proyecto consistió en organizar las habilidades de comprensión auditiva, comprensión lectora, escritura y producción verbal en pares lingüísticos para potenciar las competencias comunicativas del idioma inglés. Se aplicó de manera experimental en los ocho niveles de estudio del programa de suficiencia de la Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas ESPE durante dos semestres. Participaron doce docentes de la asignatura de inglés y 489 estudiantes; se estructuraron las cargas horarias por pares receptivos y productivos y se las desarrollaron en forma individual. Se elaboraron fichas de observación en hoja electrónica para registrar las novedades presentadas con los estudiantes de manera individual y grupal y representar estadísticamente el desarrollo en cada una de las habilidades, de igual manera se elaboró una hoja electrónica conteniendo las cuatro habilidades de Listening, Reading, Writing y Speaking para obtener el promedio general de cada curso. Tratamiento especial tuvo lo relacionado a gramática y vocabulario en lo concerniente a que su estudio y análisis se realizó en contexto y no aisladamente. El material didáctico utilizado en el proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje para el desarrollo de las actividades académicas fue diseñado por el equipo de docentes del Departamento de Lenguas en base al silabo institucional y a su experiencia profesional; las prácticas de conversación se realizaron en los laboratorios del Departamento.

**Palabras clave:** Potencializar, competencias, reestructuración, organización, habilidades de la comunicación.

## **Abstract**

The project was based in organizing the skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking in linguistic pairs to potentiate the communicative skills of the English language. It was applied experimentally in the eight levels of study of the sufficiency program of the Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas ESPE during two semesters. Twelve

teachers of the English course and 489 students participated; the hourly timetable were structured by receptive and productive pairs and they were developed individually. Observation cards were made in electronic sheet to record the information of students in individual and group form, and represent the development in each skill statistically, as well as an electronic sheet containing the four skills of Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking to get the overall average for each course. Special treatment was applied to grammar and vocabulary because its study and analysis was done in context and not in isolation. The didactic material used in the teaching-learning process to develop the academic activities was designed by the teaching staff of the Department of Languages based on the institutional framework and professional experience; the conversational practices were performed in the laboratories.

**Keywords:** Potentiate, skills, restructuring, organization, communication skills.

## Introducción

La potencialización de competencias comunicativas y lingüísticas en inglés nace como respuesta a la necesidad imperiosa de elevar el nivel de dominio del inglés como idioma extranjero en los estudiantes del Programa de Suficiencia de la Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas ESPE.

Las clases de inglés se han desarrollado, en nuestro entorno, de una manera estandarizada desde hace mucho tiempo atrás: el docente dicta dos horas de clase utilizando un texto a un grupo de estudiantes que siguen página a página el material y el mismo docente ejecuta el proceso de desarrollo de habilidades de la comunicación en inglés. Al finalizar el mismo se ha podido evidenciar un desarrollo de habilidades de comunicación no óptimo de acuerdo a los estándares establecidos por la institución y relacionados al MCERL, es por ello que, en busca de elevar el nivel de comunicación y de conocimientos del inglés como idioma extranjero, se planteó la propuesta de individualizar el proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje considerando cada una de las habilidades de listening, reading, writing y speaking por separado y organizándolas por pares receptivos y productivos. Se sumó a esto el análisis de gramática y vocabulario en contexto para reforzar el aprendizaje; se completó el ciclo con prácticas de conversación en los laboratorios del Departamento.

### Punto de partida.

Dentro de ese contexto se planteó la inquietud de saber: ¿Se logrará potencializar las competencias comunicativas y lingüísticas de los estudiantes con la reestructuración del proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje a través de la organización de las habilidades de la comunicación por pares receptivos y productivos?

Se utilizó el método deductivo inductivo porque se partió de experiencias y resultados no halagadores en el aprendizaje y enseñanza del inglés; se aplicó una etapa de observación del proceso de aprendizaje el cual permitió identificar falencias en la metodología, las técnicas, los recursos y se realizó un análisis a cada uno de los sujetos y objetos inmersos en proceso académico. La deducción de estos hechos permitió llevar a cabo un

proceso de experimentación bajo la firme idea de que la reestructuración del proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje a través de la organización de las habilidades de la comunicación por pares receptivos y productivos sí potencializará las competencias comunicativas y lingüísticas de los estudiantes del programa de suficiencia en inglés de la ESPE.

### **Marco referencial o estado del arte**

Es universalmente conocida la importancia de estudiar inglés puesto que es el idioma transmisor de los avances de la ciencia y la tecnología y de la actualización de conocimientos en muchas áreas con las que convive el ser humano. La Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior, en el artículo 124.- Formación en valores y derechos.- expresa: “Es responsabilidad de las instituciones del Sistema de Educación Superior proporcionar a quienes egresen de cualesquiera de las carreras o programas, el conocimiento efectivo de sus deberes y derechos ciudadanos y de la realidad socioeconómica, cultural y ecológica del país; el dominio de un idioma extranjero y el manejo efectivo de herramientas informáticas”. De la misma manera el Reglamento de Régimen Académico en el artículo 31.- Aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera.- establece en lo pertinente que las IES garantizarán el nivel de suficiencia del idioma para cumplir con el requisito de graduación; en esta base, la Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas ESPE busca cumplir con lo relacionado a “garantizar” el nivel de dominio del idioma. En el programa de suficiencia de la ESPE existen 489 estudiantes que estudian diferentes carreras ofertadas por la universidad y todos ellos convergen en las aulas del Departamento de Lenguas como responsable de cumplir con este requerimiento.

### **El programa de suficiencia en inglés.**

El nivel de suficiencia representa un elevado desarrollo de las cuatro habilidades básicas de la comunicación pero dentro de ese contexto no se puede dejar a un lado la competencia comunicativa y la competencia lingüística que los estudiantes deben alcanzar.

Al buscar elevar el nivel de dominio del inglés se consideró enseñar la asignatura de inglés unificando las habilidades en pares como se indica: Listening y Speaking, Reading y Writing. De esta manera se reestructuraron los horarios para que sean dictadas por diferentes docentes y explotar al máximo cada una de ellas.

La carga horaria es de 72 horas por semestre en cada nivel; los cursos intensivos comprenden 144 horas de clase. En tal virtud se dictó una hora de clase a la semana por cada una de ellas. Adicionalmente se incrementó clases de Grammar y Vocabulary, y Conversation y Practice para completar el ciclo.

### **Habilidades de la comunicación en Inglés.**

Las habilidades de la comunicación en inglés están definidas en receptivas y productivas: las receptivas se componen de Listening y Reading, y las productivas por Writing y Speaking.

**Listening** es la habilidad de entender mensajes verbales. Heidi Byrnes (1984, pp. 318-319), The role of listening comprehension, dice que la comprensión auditiva precede la producción en todos los casos del aprendizaje de un idioma, y no puede haber producción a menos que se dé el estímulo lingüístico (linguistic input) y, que éste, a su vez, se convierta en material comprensible (comprehensible intake) para la persona que escucha. La comprensión es importante no sólo porque precede la producción lógica y cronológicamente, sino especialmente porque parece ser el mecanismo básico por medio del cual se internalizan las reglas del lenguaje.

**Reading** es la habilidad de comprender mensajes escritos. Las investigaciones llevadas a cabo por Rockwell (1982), Collins y Smith (1980) y Solé (1987) revelan que tanto los conceptos de los docentes sobre lo que es aprender a leer como las actividades que se llevan a cabo en las aulas, no incluyen aspectos relacionados con la comprensión lectora. Esto pone de manifiesto que los docentes comparten mayoritariamente la visión de la lectura que corresponde a los modelos de procesamiento ascendente según los cuales la comprensión va asociada a la correcta oralización del texto.

*“La comprensión lectora es el proceso de elaborar un significado al aprender las ideas relevantes de un texto, es también la decodificación de un texto y relacionarlas con los conceptos que ya tienen un significado para el lector. Es importante para cada persona entender y relacionar el texto con el significado de las palabras. Es el proceso a través del cual el lector “interactúa” con el texto, sin importar la longitud o brevedad del párrafo.”*

**Writing** es la habilidad de producir documentos escritos. “La **comunicación escrita** es un modo de transmisión en el que el emisor elabora su mensaje sin necesidad de coincidir espacial y temporalmente con su receptor al momento de hacerlo. De hecho, ni siquiera es necesaria esa coincidencia efectiva. El sujeto propio de esta comunicación es el ser humano.

La **comunicación escrita** codifica con precisión el lenguaje hablado, en este sentido, hay un lazo entre oralidad y escritura, pero la comunicación escrita posee rasgos particulares con respecto al uso del lenguaje, lejos de ser un mero “sustituto” de la transmisión oral.”

**Speaking** es la habilidad de expresar verbalmente un mensaje. “La **comunicación oral** es una de las dos formas tradicionales de expresión con que cuenta el ser humano y se distingue de la comunicación escrita en varios elementos fundamentales, como la presencia de los interlocutores involucrados o la duración del acto comunicativo en el tiempo.

Su desarrollo está en la interacción de uno a uno; o en la exposición hacia públicos específicos, como en discursos, sermones y demás. En la actualidad las personas mantienen tal contacto ya sea de manera presencial, o a través de otros medios de comunicación.

La **comunicación oral** es considerada parte fundamental de los rasgos naturales del hombre, que lo distinguen de los animales; dado que éstos, hasta donde sabemos, no son capaces de producir un lenguaje articulado, es decir, no pueden desarrollar y transmitir un sistema de signos (ni orales ni escritos) a través de los cuales comunicarse.

### **Competencia comunicativa y competencia lingüística.**

La competencia comunicativa es entendida como la capacidad del individuo de establecer una comunicación bajo normativas sociales y culturales que le llevan a emitir un mensaje comprensivo y con un nivel adecuado de fluidez.

Por otro lado, la competencia lingüística comprende la capacidad y el conocimiento lingüístico del individuo para establecer un proceso de comunicación bajo estándares gramaticales, ortográficos y sintácticos que le permiten comprender y emitir un mensaje de manera clara.

La reestructuración del programa de enseñanza y la organización del mismo demandó el trabajo de todos los docentes y el compromiso de las autoridades para verificar su aplicación y la potencialización de cada una de las habilidades dando como resultado el mejoramiento de la competencia comunicativa con sólidos conocimientos lingüísticos que llevaron a obtener resultados muy apreciables y muy significativos.

### **Metodología**

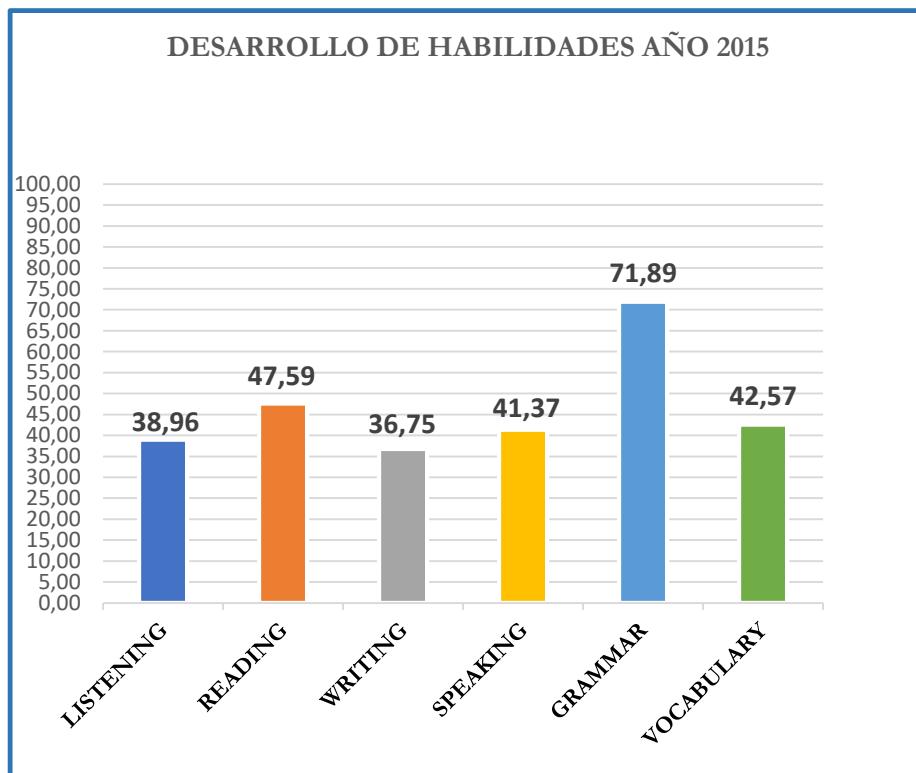
En base a reportes de los docentes al finalizar cada período de estudio se tomó la decisión de observar el proceso académico desde las aulas para detectar falencias y potencialidades tanto de estudiantes como de docentes. De los datos obtenidos se identificó que los estudiantes tenían diferencias de conocimiento y de desarrollo en las habilidades de comunicación: es decir, un estudiante tenía un aceptable nivel de lectura (72%) pero su nivel de comprensión auditiva era deficiente (32%), de igual forma la habilidad de escritura presentaba un nivel prudente (68%) y la producción verbal era escasa (46%). A esto se sumó los problemas de estructuración gramatical, de léxico y de pronunciación. Se partió de vivencias profesionales obtenidas de visitas y estudios realizados en universidades de Los Estados Unidos, así como en institutos de Canadá; aquí se pudo observar el desarrollo del proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje del idioma inglés, y; en base a esas experiencias se reestructuró el proceso académico del Programa de Suficiencia de la ESPE.

Para el período académico Abril- Agosto 2015 se aplicó la reestructuración y se incluyó hojas de registro para realizar el seguimiento de novedades presentadas. Durante Octubre 2015 – Febrero 2016 se obtuvieron los primeros resultados y en base a ellos se impulsó el trabajo del siguiente semestre. En Abril – Agosto 2016 se pudo obtener datos y registros estadísticos que demostraban un notable mejoramiento en el proceso académico.

### **Resultados**

La población se estimó en 498 estudiantes de los ocho niveles del programa de suficiencia en inglés y 14 docentes del Departamento de Lenguas de la universidad. Los datos con que se inició la presente investigación fueron:

Gráfico N° 1



**Fuente:** Registros e informes de docentes:

Luego de la aplicación del proyecto de potencialización de la competencia comunicativa en inglés a través de pares receptivos y productivos, los resultados son los que a continuación se exponen:

Gráfico N° 2



Fuente: Registros e informes de docentes

La habilidad de Listening alcanzó un desarrollo promedio de 74,80% en comparación con el inicial que fue de 38,96%. Speaking tuvo un notable incremento puesto que se enfatizó en pronunciación, sentido y fluidez alcanzando un 75,90% en comparación del 41,37% con que se partió. Reading se determinó en 80,52% y Writing en 79,12% en relación al promedio inicial de 47,59% y 36,75% respectivamente. En cuanto a Grammar y Vocabulary se determinó en 84,94% y 81,73% en comparación de 71,89% y 42,57% que era el índice inicial.

Se aplicaron encuestas a los estudiantes y a los docentes para determinar el grado de efectividad del proyecto de reestructuración académica. El trabajo por pares receptivos y productivos, así como de fortalecimiento de gramática y vocabulario se evidenció en las prácticas de conversación y de laboratorio.

### Conclusiones

- Se evidenció falencias y debilidades en el proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje del idioma Inglés en el Programa de Suficiencia de la ESPE Latacunga.
- Se reestructuró el proceso académico en pares receptivos y productivos como: Listening&Speaking, Reading &Writing; se dio singular importancia a Grammar&Vocabulary y se verificó con Practice&Conversation.
- Los resultados reflejan un mejoramiento significativo en el aprendizaje y enseñanza del idioma.

- Tanto docentes como estudiantes manifiestan su conformidad con la nueva manera de desarrollar el proceso académico.

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# **Chapter 3**

# **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT /**

# **PUBLIC POLICIES**

# **English Language Teachers versus the problem to write a scientific paper**

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## **Abstract**

The advent to develop an investigative society, has urged professionals to experience a subit change in the field of higher education in Ecuador. However, the production of academic results in the Language Center at the National University of Chimborazo has been minimized and undervalued. Even though teachers of English are aware of the professional and financial benefits of writing a scientific paper, most of them believe that they were not trained enough to do so. Therefore, this paper pretends to provide the steps, hints or clues in order to assist and encourage novel writers to present their findings within scientific settings.

**Keywords:** English language, teachers, scientific paper, process, steps.

## **Introduction**

### **Introduction to the problem**

To be able to generate and produce knowledge constitutes one of the most challenging tasks that modern institutions of higher education have to face nowadays (Altbach, 2015). There is a wide variety of activities that involve the investigative process such as to be able to identify elements that should be properly socialized, the materials and methodologies applied in order to get the objective set at the beginning of a study as well as the ability to analyze and interpret the obtained results in such a way these can be discussed by experts on each specific area. All of these aspects should be communicated by writing outstanding scientific papers in prestigious and well-recognized journals of worldwide impact (Robson, & McCartan, 2016). In this way, educators should contribute to generate and produce knowledge not only by the investigation itself, but sharing their findings in a way that can be reproduced by others.

Unfortunately, the challenge of writing a paper could present a number of constraints if there is a gap in the process and the structure that needs to be followed. That is why, the aim of this article is to assist students, educators, professionals and people in general who are interested in the process of writing a scientific paper, taking account of its different stages (Vitse, & Poland, 2017). We all know that upon completion of any study, researchers should be able to communicate their findings and results in such a way that these can be properly analyzed and reproduced by others for further studies. That is to say, these findings should be based on the study of any particular problem in order to be validated and tested by others. Unfortunately, the majority of educators but mostly English Language teachers in Riobamba, Ecuador lack the ability to do it due to there is a variety of factors that imply and may affect the acceptance of a paper. Although, we may encounter an abundance of studies on this particular issue, when we want to write a paper, it would be crucial to consider that the ability to share and communicate the obtained results relies on the experience and knowledge of the investigator. A lot of people think that at the end of a study, the only thing we get is numbers, tables and formulae with no specific and clear information which tends to confuse prospective readers causing them not to waste their time reading a paper (Lefevere, 2014). Therefore, it is urgent to change this misconception about papers through the careful analysis of previous and current studies LOES (2010). In spite of the regulations stated by the Ecuadorian government on the need for university teachers to write papers, it has been observed that they but more specifically English language teachers have left behind. It's worth mentioning that in academic settings, we should bear on mind that at the moment to present the results of an investigation, there may probably be a group of professionals who stand out against a high level of education and proficiency on the writing process of papers (Nordin, 2017), something that in our particular point of view terrifies less skilled people to present their findings. That is why we would like to present some hints that will surely serve others to write a scientific paper.

### **Importance of the problem**

Recent developments in the field of higher education have led to a renewed interest to write scientific papers (Franco, et al, 2014). In the teaching practice, it is crucial to incorporate the investigative capacity that educators have in order to improve their pedagogical performance. At the current time, the advent to develop an investigative society, has urged professionals to experience a subit change in the field of higher education in Ecuador. However, the production of academic results in the Language Center at the National University of Chimborazo has been minimized and undervalued. Even though teachers of English are aware of the professional and financial benefits of writing a scientific paper, most of them believe that they were not trained enough to do so.

On the one hand, a scientific journal is commonly considered as a valuable instrument for novel and experienced researchers due to the impact that a paper can cause in the name of science (Sinatra, et al, 2016). Nevertheless, there is a controversy in terms of its importance or relevance. On the other hand, some researchers might

probably reproduce the wrong idea that there exists an abundance of periodic academic publications and that they are well treated by readers, as they think electronic journals omit the need for peer reviewers. (Mulligan, et, al, 2013)

It is worth mentioning that throughout the years, scientists in general have been exposed to a simple fraction of knowledge they will require during their careers. As a matter of fact, a high percentage of new knowledge will appear with the pass of time (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 2014), so they have to be updated, or else, they will take the risk to limit their professional growth in the field of research. Even though, these professionals may have difficulties in the process of analyzing, revising and discarding information; they will undoubtedly find out rewards or incentives that may come from digging into reading, writing and publishing a scientific paper.. (Lester & Lester, 2015)

The inevitable demand to connect the teaching practice and the investigative process within university settings has created the need to train professionals who may be able to produce and socialize their findings (Jarzabkowski, et, al, 2014), as these institutions must be able to contribute to strengthen this particular area which has been underestimated in the Ecuadorian academic society. Therefore, it seems essential to increase the production of academic papers as they will become the primary factor that will surely boost the generation of knowledge. (Serrat, 2017)

The principle that emerges from the prior arguments has to do with the role of the investigation as an essential element to improve the quality of education which goes hand in hand to the teaching practice (Cuban, 2013). Consequently, it seems essential to motivate new generations of educators to identify the need to transform and innovate their careers in benefit of future generations. Although, this would be a challenge at the beginning, professionals will be capable to develop their skills, abilities and competencies that will surely allow to respond to the current social demands. (Howard, et, al, 2015)

This challenge requires the appropriate communication of information by the researcher due to there is no study that can be concluded without the corresponding and efficient manner to socialize the obtained results. As a matter of fact, there is a variety of scientific and academic events held throughout the country where these findings might be properly discussed by experts on different areas of knowledge. (Bromme, et, al, 2016)

It is worth pointing out that although the production of scientific papers might consume excessive amounts of time (Juve, 2013), this activity along with the socialization of results in recognized journals is not considered an optional activity for university teachers and has become an urgent need due to producing papers plays an important role in the future of the institutions they currently work as well as their personal benefits they might probably obtain such as promotions (Hamid, et, al, 2015) just to cite one.

Several attempts have been made to overcome the obstacles to write papers (Hyland, 2016). Unfortunately, over the past few years a number of researchers have sought to determine that the limitations they have in spite of the importance mentioned above is the lack of basic information on the process to write a paper. Researchers mentioned that they learnt the process in an informal way something that diminishes the quality of their writing (Snow, et, al,2016). On this score, let us present to future researchers some alternatives, hints, suggestions and recommendations that novel investigators at the English language staff should be aware of at the moment of writing a scientific paper so that they will be involved and engaged to contribute to science.

One of the most important benefits that a researcher may obtain upon completion of writing a scientific paper is unquestionably the development of science (Castle & Keane, 2016). This is a step by step process which is surely conducted by previous studies. Among some of the advantages that investigators may receive, we have the intellectual recognition they get as well as the reputation and prestige that writing implies, something that guarantees a continuous improvement of their academic position within a society of knowledge. (Tello, 2015). Moreover, this academic production is commonly utilized by governments and some organizations as a parameter to concede financial resources that permit any institution strengthen its undergraduate and postgraduate programs through a careful selection of its academic and investigative staff.

Hence, this paper pretends to provide a synthetic but an objective manner to structure a scientific paper in such a way that novel writers familiarize with the essential aspects that an article contains (Riddell, 2014). To carry out the present study, the main descriptive elements that include a paper were carefully and meticulously selected. The authors of this academic work consider that the obtained result is aimed to satisfy the necessary requisites to write a scientific paper.

It is also believed that this document will constitute a powerful tool in order that readers develop their competencies to present results in academic settings as the art of writing is acquired and polished with each passing day through a constant practice and a culture of tenacy and perseverance. Therefore, this product should be understood as the first step on an exciting journey towards the excellence in terms of socialization of academic and investigative experiences of novel or experienced researchers.

### **What do you need to know to write a paper?**

To be able to follow a logical order to guide the reader constitutes one of the various components on an academic paper. However, this order does not necessarily follow a logical connection. In reality, the introduction, conclusion or even the abstract are generally the last steps to take into consideration. Inclusively, sometimes the title is changed at the last minute according to what was written.

There have been several studies into the do's and dont's when writing a paper that researchers should know. For instance, Greenhalgh (2017) demonstrated that writing a scientific paper goes beyond than a simple reproduction of numbers or statistics. Therefore, a researcher should be capable enough to organize a paper considering the following aspects that go as follow:

1. The introduction that refers to the problem to be investigated.
2. The materials and methods that deal with the manner the problem was treated including a variety of concepts, the variables of the study, different studies developed in the area.
3. The results of the study that should indicate the respective findings.
4. The discussion of results that should carefully explain the significance of these findings.
5. The results of the study after the analysis of the information.

### **The Title**

The title represents the primary factor that will determine the success of any investigative work, as it should cause an impact and get the attention of the reader. If the title of a paper is not well developed, rest assure that many readers will avoid to waste time checking out something that has not carefully considered. It briefly and logically describes the essence of the article. From time to time, it tends to divide the title in two parts, on the one hand, in a general way and on the other hand, to establish the context of any specific situation.

Whenever possible, the title should be written just with a few words and it should contain the main idea from the study. It seems that short titles appear more attractive than extensive ones due to when they contain more than fifteen words, the majority of revisors lack of time to check everything out in detail and they might probably think that the investigator is not skillful enough to synthetize the information.

Therefore, the title should specifically describe the most relevant components of any particular study. I need hardly say that this is not the moment to attempt to explain the study itself, so try to avoid complex words or unfamiliar expressions, abbreviations, acronyms, statistical analyses or formulae that would be described later on.

As for the writing style, there are some researchers who prefer to apply a descriptive analysis on their papers. On the one hand, for a group of researchers, the option to state the title in an interrogative form is considered valid. However, on the other hand, another group of experts argue that this affects the quality of a paper. In this way, what we have to bear in mind is that the title should not contain any type of conclusions, a frequent error when writing a paper.

## **Authorship**

Even though it may not sound relevant for novel researchers, the manner we write the name of the authors of a study along with the institution they currently work should be carefully taken into consideration as it should be as clear as possible in case other investigators want to make use of our paper to reproduce the process or cite the source they find the information. It would be advisable to write in an alphabetical order the name of the authors who have really contributed to the paper.

To be able to correctly write the name of the institution and the electronic address of the authors constitutes another important factor on a paper since as you may already know, at the present time, every institution of higher education in Ecuador is judged by the contributions of its academic staff and or investigators. Therefore, it is necessary to standardize the form the institution will be mentioned as well as the institutional e-mail of the investigators, that is to say, whether you use its full name or its acronym in order to avoid future misunderstandings or confusion and give real credit to the place the study took place.

## **The Abstract**

It is worth pointing out that the abstract might probably be the unique part that a reader will consider to decide to keep on the track. For this reason, a well-written abstract should synthesize the main points of each one of the sections included on a scientific paper. It should establish the objective of the study, the respective materials and methods applied without explaining them in details; to summarize, highlight and discuss the principal results and provide the corresponding suggestions or recommendations.

Unquestionably, the abstract represents the part of any study which is available to the reader who will determine if it is worth reading it or not. It should not contain any type of information related to figures, charts or bibliographical references. Likewise, it is necessary to avoid the use of ambiguous words, elements or phrases as an effective abstract should be directly stated. If there are elements that need to be mentioned in an abstract, well then, put them into it, or else you take the risk that a reader would simply discard your paper. Some prestigious journals recommend that an abstract should contain: The background and aims; the methodology applied; the key results and the respective conclusions. Generally, an abstract should not exceed 200 words and it must specify the study avoiding the description of particular details.

## **Keywords**

Due to the multiple activities of investigators, it is important to consider the time as a key factor when writing a scientific paper. Scientific journals and researchers use keywords for the publication of their manuscripts, aspiring the widest possible dissemination of the content at a global level. Key words are short words or phrases that allow to classify and direct the entries in the systems of indexation and retrieval of the information in the databases of a particular manuscript or subject area. However, the most difficult aspect to bear in mind is the

choice of the words that best represent and support the study. It is understood that preference will be given to those who present higher scientific level or better understanding by the technical groups. Therefore, it would be a good idea to utilize between five and seven “magic words” that will be useful to attract potential readers.

### **The Introduction**

The introduction of a paper should impact the reader and explain the reason why the investigators conduct a particular study. A scientific paper is aimed to narrate the history of the investigation in four chapters that must provide specific information on the question of the study (rationale) the way we solved the question (materials, patients and or methods), what we found (results) and the implications from the results obtained (discussion).

In this section, the research question is the key element of any study, due to it will tell us the exact value of the study in relation to the current information on a particular topic, this will support the type of the study which constitutes another important factor on a study that would be totally described in the section that corresponds to materials and methodology.

I am quite sure you are wondering “What makes a good research question?” right? Well, let me tell you that according to some experts, a good research question should include the following characteristics: feasible, interesting, attractive, ethical and relevant. It is feasible when the researchers are capable to respond the question, it means, if their knowledge and experience were sufficient to conduct a study.

The research question should be interesting for the investigators as they will spend valuable time trying to respond it. It has to do with the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation the investigators demonstrate to conduct the study. The question should be relevant to the scientific community because its answer may pose a significant contribution for future studies to make transcendental decisions on a specific area. It should also be attractive due to in many cases something that has been already answered deserves further explanations unless a new answer may provide another perspective to any particular problem.

A question should be ethically posed and answered in such a way that any study respects, protects and guarantees the rights of the participants such as their physical and mental health, privacy and the confidentiality of their personal information. Atractiveness and relevance constitute the core to consider a particular study as scientific. In the introduction of a paper, we should take into account why we want to conduct a study in order to establish the reason of the study in order to motivate the reader to analyze the information or the editor to publish it in a scientific journal.

In other words, we should provide the reader with the necessary information to comprehend the research question, starting from the general to the specific information of the topic; to move from what it is known

about a topic, providing details on prior studies and pointing out what it is unknown of the study, and showing our attractive manner to deal with it. In the introduction, we also need to provide the reader how we pretend to answer the research question through a brief explanation of the type of design we have chosen for the study. Therefore, the introduction should provide the reader:

- The nature of the problem where its resolution is described throughout the text.
- The essence and the objective of the article plus its relevance.
- In some cases, it will include the methodology applied to carry out the study and also a description in which the paper is articulated.

### **Materials and Methods**

This section pretends to explain the way the problem has been treated in order to replicate the study, something that constitutes a key factor in scientific publications. Another important reason is that this section allows to know if the model transmitted in another paper can be adapted to a different context. In this way, the most important rule at the moment of writing this section is to provide sufficient information to another investigator in such a way that the experience can be reproduced.

Regarding to the materials, it is necessary to describe their characteristics as they quantitatively and qualitatively affect the results of a study. These characteristics may determine if the materials are applicable or not in a different setting. As to the methods, it is convenient to provide a step by step explanation so they can be properly replicated by others. In case any particular method applied has suffered certain modifications, these should be carefully explained in details.

Consequently, the section called "materials & methods" should permit the reader to evaluate and assess the quality of the instruments, the sample and how the materials and procedures were determined, the variables along with the statistical analysis of information. Ethical issues should also be presented as the information in this section is crucial to comprehend the obtained results as they reveal the manner in which they were found and allow the reproduction of a new study. (Abreu, 2015)

### **Results**

This section presents the evidence of the original contribution of the paper to science. It should be as objective as possible without considering interpretative elements that might lead a study to subjective interpretations. This is the moment to explain what was and what was not found during the experience described in the section of materials and methods. However, a word of warning, it is not advisable to include information that is not related to the objective of the study because it might lead to confusion. To include non-relevant or unnecessary bits of information in this section, does not prove how much we have worked or how experts we are on a

particular topic due to a future reader is exclusively interested to learn something new that can be useful for further studies.

A frequent error has to do with the redundancy that causes the text itself versus the tables and charts that can also present results. On the one hand, the text should definitely transmit essential information of the objective of the study, but must not never repeat information stated in graphics or charts. On the other hand, the information showed in graphics and charts should communicate a message by its own without taking a glance to the text to clarify doubts as figures provide a visual impact to the reader about the treatment or procedure implemented to get the respective outcome. Some elements to present results go as follow:

- Results from a statistical analysis
- Descriptive Statistics (standards, correlations)
- Inference statistics
- Highlight the significance of data.
- Post hoc additional analysis

Try to avoid:

- Incomplete figures and tables
- Repetition of information stated in the text.
- The application of the same writing style between the introduction and materials and methods.
- The presentation of results in the section called materials and methods.
- An ambiguous or an inadequate statistical analysis.

### **Discussion**

This segment is probably the most difficult part to write as it should avoid the simple repetition of results. This section serves to interpret the findings and put them in a broader context. Generally, when a person reads a scientific paper, this is not interested to know what happened in a particular case but to learn something new that can be reproduced in different conditions of time, location, population, characteristics, and so forth.

There are two important factors that should be emphasized in this section. First of all, the author should explain the significance of the findings and then how these are related to what is known at the current time. It is natural that the interpretation of results may contain a significant subjective bias but this can be justified if there is a conscious revision of theoretical issues. Nevertheless, this section should not include excessive speculation especially if it has not been scientifically analysed.

If the aim is to write an outstanding section of discussion, this should include the following elements: 1. to show the relationship between the positive and negative aspects derived from the results. 2. To identify how the results agree or disagree to the information encountered in scientific literature. 3. To present the possible theoretical and practical implications of the study in different areas. Finally, this section should conclude with a paragraph dedicated to state the respective conclusions and recommendations justified by the information presented throughout the study. These should necessarily be based upon the results in order to avoid ambiguous inferences.

When writing the conclusions of a research, it is necessary to be sure to present real conclusions. Although, it may seem obvious, it has often been used, in the wrong way, to merely reaffirm the results of a search. The result is a debate, however the conclusions must clearly understand a solution to the research problem. After drawing the conclusions, make a reflection of their scope; the conclusions are not necessarily the basis of the article, so limit its conclusions based on the results obtained in the research, which respond to the questions and objectives raised at the beginning of the article. (López, 2013)

It should not be forgotten that conclusions, as the final product of an investigation, should be considered provisional and approximate. Although, these may look brilliant in terms of science, the conclusions can exceed previous knowledge and, in turn, can also be overcome with the advancement of knowledge. (García & Alarcón, 2015)

## **Conclusions**

The conclusion of a research report should summarize the content and purpose of the research without seeming unnatural or boring. Any basic conclusion should have several key elements, but there are also many tactics that you can use to come up with a more effective conclusion and many that you should avoid in order not to weaken the conclusion of your report. They go as follow:

- You should briefly restate the subject and also explain its importance.
- You should paraphrase the thesis which is a focused and more specific view of the topic.
- Briefly summarize the main points which basically means that you have to remind the reader of what you said throughout the paper.
- Avoid writing new information which was not mentioned in the paper.
- Whenever possible, you can tell your readers that more research is needed on the subject of your paper.

## **Acknowledgment**

This section pretends to be kind with people or the institution that indirectly cooperated with the study in such

a way that it can be improved. Even though, there are no specific rules to write this section, it would be positive to be clear, direct and precise. It would be the opportunity to be grateful with those who provided important information, resources or materials to test the hypothesis; likewise, it is the chance to thank someone who discussed or proposed fresh ideas to polish up the paper and invested part of his or her time trying to give us a wide perspective on the topic as well as the people who spent their valuable time reading the paper in order to provide constructive criticism or even those who gave the investigator an economical support to carry out the study.

## **Reference**

When you write a paper, make sure to exclusively cite reliable references that have been published by scientific journals and reject material that has not been discussed by experts or information found on the web. Likewise it is customary to avoid referencing prior studies that did not appear in the text and also inform yourself the system that each journal requires you to follow. Consequently, it is necessary to respect the particular norms and regulations stated by a journal with respect to referencing scientific studies.

When writing a research paper it is essential to mention the documents that served as the basis for its production. In order such documents can be identified, it is necessary that these elements allow their identification to be recognized, and this will only occur through bibliographic references. The American Psychological Association (APA) defines standards for the submission of papers, without these patterns it is difficult to locate and identify the sources used in scientific work. If it is a mandatory element, the references constitute an ordered list of the documents actually quoted in the text. (Amezcuia, 2015)

## **Conclusions**

It can be concluded that writing a paper could be quite challenging for novel writers especially if they do not have sufficient information or knowledge to do it. Hence, this paper pretends to provide useful information to people who are interested in the process of writing a scientific paper, taking account of its different steps. Sadly, a lot of teachers of English in the Language Center at the National University of Chimborazo situated in Riobamba, Ecuador lack the ability to do it in spite of the personal and professional benefits that papers could have. Even though, several attempts have been made to overcome the obstacles to write papers (Hyland, 2016) researchers have found that more studies on the topic are needed to lay the foundations on how to write a scientific paper. Nevertheless, these experts agree that a scientific paper should cover the following aspects: 1. The introduction that refers to the problem to be investigated. 2. The materials and methods that deal with the manner the problem was treated including a variety of concepts, the variables of the study, different studies developed in the area. 3. The results of the study that should indicate the respective findings. 4. The discussion of results that should carefully explain the significance of these findings. 5. The results of the study after the analysis, comparison and contrast of the information.

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# Characteristics of effective EFL Ecuadorian instructors

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## Resumen

El tener una idea clara sobre las principales características de los instructores eficientes de inglés según las percepciones de nuestros estudiantes nos puede ayudar a renovar nuestras prácticas de enseñanza e investigación, a encontrar mejores alternativas para la mejora profesional y la relación con nuestros estudiantes. El propósito de este estudio exploratorio cualitativo fue conocer las principales características de los profesores de inglés eficientes según las opiniones de estudiantes universitarios ecuatorianos. Los participantes fueron cincuenta y cuatro estudiantes de la Facultad de Psicología de la Universidad de Cuenca a quienes se les pidió que expresen sus percepciones sobre los profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera en una pregunta abierta, parte de su examen de medio ciclo. Los resultados muestran que las 5 características principales de los profesores eficientes de inglés como lengua extranjera son: i) responsables (43%); ii) amigables (31%); iii) apasionados (31%), iv) dinámicos (28%), y v) divertidos (24%). Se recomienda socializar los resultados actuales con la administración de las instituciones de educación superior y los profesores de inglés para crear un sentido de conciencia y hacer más investigación a nivel nacional.

**Palabras claves:** EFL, profesores eficientes, percepciones de los estudiantes,

## Abstract

Having a clear idea on what the main characteristics of effective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors according to university students' perceptions can help us enhance our teaching and research practices, to find better ways to improve ourselves as professionals and the relationship with our students. The purpose of this qualitative, exploratory study was to find out about the main characteristics of effective EFL instructors perceived by Ecuadorian university students. The participants were fifty-four Psychology majors' students who were asked to state their opinions about their perceptions of effective teachers in an open-ended question, part of their mid-term exam. Results show that university students think that the 5 most important characteristics of effective EFL teachers are: i) responsible (43%); ii) friendly (31%); ii) passionate (31%); iv) dynamic (28%); and v) humorous (24%). It is recommended to socialize the current results with Higher Education Institutions administration and EFL instructors to create a sense of awareness and propose to do more research at national level.

**Keywords:** EFL, effective instructors, students' perceptions.

## Introduction

*I cannot be a teacher without exposing who I am."*

***Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of Freedom***

It is commonly said that there is no possibility to detach the teaching from the teacher; it would be similar to ask water not to be wet. EFL students and teachers coexist together in a constant human relationship and synergy where learning and teaching can or cannot take place. Riasati & Bagheri (2014) believe that an effective language teacher can facilitate the learning process, influence how students perceive the course content, and can create a positive learning experience for the language learners.

Therefore, it is crucial to have students in mind, and think of them as the main protagonists of our daily commitment and work closely with them. The students' perceptions of their teachers cannot be overemphasized in education because they provide rich information for understanding students' cognition and classroom processes (Knight & Waxman, 1991). The students' perceptions enable researchers and teachers to appreciate students' thought processes (Tuan et al., 2000)

Taking students' opinions and comments about what the most important characteristics of an effective English instructor into account can serve us greatly as the main source for our professional improvement. Academic and personal experiences, as an EFL instructor at the University of Cuenca (UC) for more than 17 years, 8 years of teaching experiences overseas, and as a researcher in the last 5 years, have helped me and have been very valuable since they have given me the opportunity to have a close guesstimate about what really happens in relation to the noble and delicate undertaking of language teaching. However, more constant, open and frank dialogue with the English Language Institute (ELI) of the Universidad de Cuenca teaching staff and those students who we serve was and is necessary, and it is my belief that this exploratory study has shed some light to a certain extent on what the characteristics of effective teachers according to the perceptions of the Ecuadorian university students are.

It was also important to offer opportunities to the Ecuadorian university students a space in which they could openly and honestly state what the most important characteristics of effective English teachers are. Freire (2005) points out that those who have been denied their primordial right to speak their word must first reclaim this right, and prevent the continuation of this dehumanizing aggression (p. 86). Therefore, as a regular practice, we have been requesting students to speak up and be critical about what is being offered in their English courses and especially what characteristics of an effective EFL instructors are the most important for them. Salahshoura & Hajizadehb (2012) mention that with students playing a central role in modern classrooms, researchers are

taking more interest in identifying students' interests and preferences in regard to the classroom material, curriculum, and the classroom instructor.

The idea of inviting students to make their proposals and feedback on the quality of teaching they experience during their academic career has been permanent in many North American university institutions since the mid-1920s (d'Apollonia & Abrami, 1997). There is a growing interest and vast literature concerning the evaluation of instruction in higher education institutions and the importance of course evaluation questionnaires as a means of communicating teachers about their strengths and weaknesses as instructors. Marsh and Roche (1993, cited by Delaney, J. G. et al., 2010) examined students' evaluations of teaching efficiency as an alternative to improve university teaching. To define students' perceptions of the quality of teaching and learning and their satisfaction, Suaman et al., (2013) analyzed the following aspects that students consider important in university academic life: 1) courses; 2) motivation of the teacher; 3) instructional methodology; 4) relationship between students; 5) relationship between teacher and students; 6) assigned tasks; 7) teacher competence; 8) obstacles and limitations presented, and 9) the evaluation of content by the teacher.

Fillmore (2000) in her research study what teachers need to know about language, points out the need to identify the following characteristics in a language teacher, and she concludes that a teacher should i) be a communicator; 2) an educator; 3) an evaluator; 4) an educated human being, and 5) an agent of socialization.

According to Brosh (1996, cited by Al-Mahrooqi, 2015) effective EFL teachers are those who focus on comprehension, are in command of the language, prepare interesting lessons, help students to be independent, and deal with students fairly

Cabalín Silva & Navarro Hernández (2008) in their studies about the characteristics of traditional and non-traditional teachers, point out that in the first group the most outstanding characteristics are the ones who: i) explains the subject clearly; ii) presents the subject orderly; iii) has a good mastery of the subject and iv) is up to date. In relation to the second group, there are five characteristics that students want their teachers to have: i) be fair; ii) be patient; iii) be clear in their explanations; iv) explain as many times as necessary, and v) be interested in his students. Other studies regarding the most common peculiarities in an efficient EFL instructor have identified characteristics such as: generates a climate of trust, allows active participation, shows interest in student learning, exhibits a humanist orientation, and delivers positive feedback. Some data reveal that among the adjectives that most define a good EFL teacher are respectful and responsible. However, in research carried out two years later about the Students and Teachers' Conceptions of A Good University Professor in the Faculty of Medicine of the University of La Frontera, the following characteristics were identified: A good University Professor should be: i) updated in their subject; ii) possess knowledge of the subject matter; iii) be creative; iv) be responsible; v) have mastery of pedagogy, and vi) have ease of speech. (Cabalín Silva, Navarro Hernández, Zamora Silva, & San Martín González, 2010).

Delaney et al., (2010) in their study on Students' Perceptions of Effective Teaching in Higher Education, held at the Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada, which involved 330 university students during the winter semester of 2008, describe nine characteristics and identify the behaviors of teachers who demonstrate efficiency in their teaching. Instructors who are considered to be effective are those who are respectful of their students, knowledgeable about their subjects, approachable, engaging, communicative, responsive, professional and humorous.

Clark (1995, cited by Mohammad Sadegh Bagheri & Mohammad Javad Riasati, 2014) considers that for good teaching practice, cognitive and affective goals should be present in university teaching. He developed a questionnaire that covers a wide range of teaching activities that are associated with good university teaching practice and the achievement of both cognitive and affective objectives. The University of Winnipeg Quality Instruction questionnaire, known as the UW-QUIQ, measures the following characteristics that are useful for thinking about the quality of university teaching. Among the cognitive goals are: i) Subject knowledge demonstrated by the appreciation of it; ii) Organization of Teaching, coherence, organization, and planning; iii) Clarity of Expression: connection with students through explanations of the subject in a clear, orderly and precise manner; iv) Presentation Quality: tone of voice, attention and enthusiasm in presentations. Within the cognitive aspects, the following aspects are taken into account i) stimulation of students' interests; ii) participation and openness of students; iii) interpersonal relationships, and iv) good communication and a sense of justice.

Walker (2008) in a study in which teaching students and students from other majors such as social work, Psychology, Mathematics and Biology and that later decided to become teachers found that the 12 most important characteristics of effective teachers for these groups of students were: i) prepared; ii) positive; iii) hold high expectations; iv) creative; v) fair; vi) display a personal touch; vii) cultivate a sense of belonging; viii) compassionate; ix) have a sense of humor; x) respect students; xi) forgiving; and xii) admit mistakes.

On the other hand, Miller (1987) in her article about the 10 characteristics of a good language teacher, considers a good language instructor to the one who i) has a contagious enthusiasm for teaching; ii) is creative; iii) adds pace and humor to the class; iv) challenges students; v) is encouraging, patient and does not give up on his students; vi) will take an interest in his students as persons; vii) knows grammar well and explains something on the spot if necessary; viii) takes a minute or two to answer a question after class; ix) treats students as persons, on an equal basis with all members of the class, and x) leaves his emotions baggage outside the classroom. Additionally, Anderson (2014) points out that Effective Teachers (ETs) are the ones who have i) a genuine relationship with the students which means that when dealing with them with care and real commitment, you as an instructor can have a significant impact on the students' attitudes, motivation and behavior and as a consequence of this relationship, students work harder, and are more successful learners; ii) ETs have a deep

understanding of a student's cultural background by openly welcoming students and accepting cultural differences. These kind of language teachers value students which can make them feel more apt to assimilate into the English-speaking culture, to make friends and increase opportunities to use English. These students will feel more at ease to try to engage in conversations with native English speakers and acquire English skills faster; 3) ETs will be always looking for opportunities of training in second or foreign language techniques and approaches; 4) they will understand the individual needs of students by individualizing the classroom lessons which can be focused on each functional English level in the areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills; 5) ETs encourage English conversations and involvement outside the classroom, and 6) an ET has a willingness to connect with English communities which gives the opportunities to EFL students to practice and use English in real contexts.

In the same line, P'Rayan (2009) declares that ETs are the ones who display traits of 1) imagination; 2) innovativeness; 3) interaction; 4) independent thinking; and 5) interdependent imagination. When teachers of English have these five characteristics, they can do wonders in the English class, they break the monotony and make students participate actively in the different English assignments. By being an innovative English teacher, we can dare to go off the track and try new paradigms of teaching a new language, we can dare to be unique and different, experiment new things and be always fresh and renewed. English teachers who interact with students make the lessons more dynamic and full of life, empower learners and help them develop their language skills. ETs are independent thinkers and can help their students develop their independent thinking and look for ways to become autonomous learners. Independence means to think on your own, be critical of what you see and hear, and question information and irrational assumptions. It is always possible to encourage students to ask again and again and find out about what they listen to us on their own, to go beyond what is heard and said in class. ETs are interdependent when they display polite, pleasant, practical, persuasive and powerful relationships with others. Those people who are interdependent use positive language and win people, and those teachers who do not ridicule, mock or use sarcasm with their students are the ones who inspire, motivate and encourage EFL learners to succeed in their academic and personal life.

At present the educational process is in constant change; consequently, it is necessary to propose a new conception and a change of educational paradigms. It is necessary then to make an analysis of the traditional educational model in which the teacher is the one who owns the knowledge and to impart and evaluate it is his main objective. There are several proposals for a new student-centered educational paradigm, where motivation, ethical aspects, and skills that contribute to the better development of the personality of each student are considered. Furthermore, it is necessary not to only emphasize on academic aspects, but also on projects that go beyond that, including values and feelings, where teachers become guide-facilitators in this process, who are not considered as the only knowledgeable experts of a discipline, but masters in the design, development, analysis and evaluation of their own educational practice, and where acceptance, mutual respect, and

understanding would be the main referents of the teaching-learning process (Cabalín Silva & Navarro Hernández, 2008).

The desire to clarify the qualities that make university teaching effective has been revitalized, and as a renewed mandate to enhance teaching and learning appears predominately in the strategic plans of many universities and colleges (Delaney, et al., 2010). At local level, the University of Cuenca (UC), within the proposals of its strategic plan 2012-2017, section 7.2, proposes that in the teaching area, the UC will guarantee academic excellence with policies for a university of the century XXI by implementing a model of education focused on learning, accompanying students in their academic training process, among others. Section 7.6, within the Institutional policies, the UC proposes "progressively improve the quality of higher education with a scientific and humanistic vision, strengthening the educational model focused on student learning, applying international quality standards, articulate to the objectives of the National Plan for Good Living, and promote processes for continuous improvement in institutional management as support activities for academic, operational and strategic direction." (University of Cuenca, 2013. Strategic Plan, pp. 37-38; 40)

Although substantial studies asserted the effectiveness of specific teaching methods and practices, there has been a total lack of research on EFL learners' perceptions of their own learning experiences in the existing theories on second/foreign language acquisition, especially within the EFL environments (Ching, 2014) and specifically in EFL Ecuadorian university contexts. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to identify the perceptions of university students about the 5 most important characteristics of effective EFL teachers in our university context. Knowing about the perceptions that university students have regarding the characteristics of EFL effective teachers has given us first-hand information that can be taken as the foundation for improving our professional practice, relationships between teachers and students, and the teaching-learning quality that can focus more on learning than on teaching.

### **Importance of the Problem**

There is a constant dialogue at university level about how to improve EFL teaching and learning; there is also plenty of time spent on meetings, workshops, training programs, conferences, symposiums, national and international congresses, and good intentions to take into account EFL students as the main protagonists in the academia. However, those good intentions remain solely as good intentions, for at the moment of the delivery of EFL lessons what concerns more to the majority of EFL staff is to cover syllabi planned with the administration that most of the times are improvisations, the covering of the scope of sequence of commercial English books or what it is worse, personal interests. Students' opinions, needs and demands both at academic level and personal level are neglected or not taken into consideration. This lack of communion with what students expect of EFL programs can be one of the issues that hinders the success of teaching and learning English at University level in our Ecuadorian contexts. There is often a rupture in the communication among

administration, EFL teachers, and students and as stated by Bernal & Feyen (2017) the teaching process is entirely teacher controlled, and the reality is that most English courses demotivate, frustrate and bore students, often leading to an aversion and frustration to learning English. The students in general possess at graduation a low to moderate knowledge of English language and poorly master English reading, listening, communication and writing skills. Consequently, a new and innovative approach of dealing with EFL students in which a sincere and open dialogue about what characteristics make an effective EFL instructor must be proposed since the teaching staff is considered one of the most crucial pillars for the success or failure of any proposed English program. Suarman et al., (2013) recommend in their study that the university must find out about students' needs in the teaching and learning processes, including the physical needs or methods of generating a better relationship between the students and university as well as among students in order to enhance the quality of higher education.

There is a lack of research on topics about the characteristics of good EFL Ecuadorian Instructors in our EFL contexts, and the reasons could be numberless. One of them could be the insufficient number of EFL teachers interested in establishing an honest and open dialogue with their students. Another could be the lack of practice in EFL instructors of being evaluated in the areas of personal issues such as if teachers care more about their teaching than their students' learning, the lack of empathy they might display in their classrooms, or simply because there is a general conception in the educational system that students cannot take part of the teaching and learning process. They are generally denied their right to speak up, suggest or comment on what they expect of an English program and their teachers. Therefore, this study aims to discover a basic underlying theme or principle that may enhance teaching effectiveness among university English teachers in a classroom and to answer the question of what are the 5 most important characteristics of effective EFL Ecuadorian English Instructors in order of importance. Although this study focuses on college English teaching and learning in an EFL context, there is no reason to expect that the results that were produced here are limited in applicability to the field of language teaching (Millis & Rhem 2010, cited by Ching 2014). The generalizability of findings may be more dependent on time, cultural aspects, places, student demographics, and motivation than on the particularities of specific subject matters. With this in mind, this study had one important research aim which was to investigate what are the 5 most important characteristics of an effective English instructor according to Ecuadorian university students and have these data available as the foundation for the improvement of EFL teaching practices, and further research in EFL Ecuadorian university contexts.

## Methodology

### Research questions

The researcher had the following questions:

- 1) What are the 5 most important characteristics of Effective Ecuadorian EFL Instructors?
- 2) How are these 5 characteristics rated in order of importance?

## **Research Design**

In order to give university students an opportunity to clearly state their opinions and perceptions about the characteristics of effective EFL Ecuadorian instructors, the qualitative method was used. According to Delaney et al., (2010) the main objective of the qualitative research is to understand, rather than generalize, the ways in which the participants in a particular research, think of their own experiences. Understanding is generated through the interpretation and analysis of the expression of those experiences (Whitt 1990, cited by Delaney et al., 2010). The interpretation of students' perceptions regarding the characteristics of effective teachers was the main key to this research, which leads to this study to be based on theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling is based on what researchers want to find out in certain contexts. To understand patterns of experiences, researchers using the theoretical sampling collect descriptions of the experiences of study participants (Hutchinson 1998, p. 125 cited by Delaney et al., 2010). The objective of this study was to collect information about students' perceptions of teachers who are effective in their professional work. Participants were given the option to write what they wanted without restricting ideas, concepts, and other opinions that generally occur when working with multiple-choice questionnaires or using the Likert scale.

## **Participants**

Fifty-four EFL students out of the 59 registered for English for credits, 22 (Level II), 25 (Level III Group A), and 12 (Level III-Group B), of the Faculty of Psychology of the Clinical, Educational, and Social Psychology majors during the semester March-September 2017 participated in this study. As the inclusion / exclusion criteria, the researcher took into consideration the data obtained from the 54 students who partook in this study and who were attending regularly to English classes. Those students who missed the day of the mid-term exam did not participate, nor the students who had enrolled during the semester but never attended classes.

## **I**

### **nstrument and administration**

The instrument used in this study was an A4 format answer sheet (see Annex 1) in which the participants wrote an essay about the 5 most important characteristics of a good/effective teacher and that was part of the writing section of the English midterm exam for credit courses, level 2 and 3. The time allotted for this exercise was 45 minutes in which participants were asked to write a 200 and 300-word essay respectively.

## **Data Analysis Procedure**

Data analysis procedure was as follows: i) As part of the written part of the mid-term exam for English credits, level 2 and 3, participants were asked to write an essay about the 5 most important characteristics of a good English Instructor and rate them from the most to the least important one; ii) essays were read one by one and the features of effective instructors were highlighted manually; iii) Effective teachers attributes, that is, the sixty-four different adjectives given by the students when describing the characteristics of a Good English Instructor were classified in various categories; iv) the responses were uploaded to an excel sheet in which columns were

created to organize the data, and v) measures of central tendency were used to create the tables that are presented in the results section.

## Results

Out of the 59 students enrolled in English Level 2 and 3 for credit courses at the School of Psychology, Universidad de Cuenca, during the semester of March to September 2017, 54 (92%) participated in this study, 39 (70%) female, 15 (28%) male and 1(2%) did not write its name. Thirty-nine (72%) of the participating sample provided the 5 most important characteristics of effective English Instructors; 6 (11%) 4 characteristics; 5 (9%) 3 characteristics, 3 (6%) 2 characteristics, and 1 (2%) 1 characteristic.

Table 1 shows the 5 most important characteristics of an effective EFL Instructor in order of importance according to the perceptions of Universidad de Cuenca university students. As seen below, effective English instructors should be i) responsible (43%); ii) friendly (31%); ii) passionate (31%); iv) dynamic (28%); and v) humorous (24%). It is also worth stating that participants similarly mentioned that effective English Instructors are the ones who are knowledgeable (19%); respectful (19%) and able to teach (19%).

**Table 1.** Characteristics of Effective EFL Instructors

| Characteristics of Effective EFL Instructors |    |    |
|--|----|----|
| Characteristic                               | N  | %  |
| Responsible                                  | 23 | 43 |
| Passionate                                   | 17 | 31 |
| Friendly                                     | 17 | 31 |
| Dynamic                                      | 15 | 28 |
| Humorous                                     | 13 | 24 |

**Source:** Bernal, M. Ecuador, 2017. Data collected from students' papers.

It is also worth revealing that some of the least important characteristics of an effective EFL instructor chosen by the participants in this study are: attentive 1 (1.85%); bilingual 1 (1.85%); critical 1(1.85%); considerate 1(1.85%); demanding (1.85%); coherent 1 (1.85%) and so on, that is, out of the 54 participants 1 chose to mention the aformentioned characteristics.

## Discussion

This research had the intention to find out about the 5 most important characteristics of an Effective English

Instructor and to determine what the most important ones in terms of priority are. The first point to note is that most of these students want a responsible teacher, that is, an English teacher who comes to class on time, prepared, and ready to teach. They want also EFL teachers who are passionate for teaching which means when they see teachers that love what they do, they feel that those teachers care for them as students and people, and make them attend and like going to class due to the love for teaching they see in them. Furthermore, university Ecuadorian students want EFL instructors who are dynamic that easily interact in class and let students be part of the teaching and learning process. They really feel comfortable in a dynamic environment where they feel they belong to a community of learning in which every member cares for the other. Students also want friendly teachers who can trust; friendly in the sense they can open themselves up, share triumphs and failures and be assured that they will not be judged for their tryings. Additionally, university students want teachers who show them genuine friendship where respect is the main component of this trait. Finally, they want teachers who has a great sense of humor, for they consider that by having humor in class is relaxing and creates a safe environment for learning.

Similar findings such as the Salahshour & Hajizadeh's (2012), in which Iranian language learners stated that effective EFL instructors are the ones who have interest in his/her job, a sense of responsibility towards his/her job, are enthusiastic and lively, and are self-confident and punctual mirrors to a certain extent what we have found in our study. Additionally, a study done by Miller (1987), a language teacher and student, points out that the most important characteristics of a language instructor can be summarized in four areas: (1) affective characteristics, (2) skills, (3) classroom management techniques, and (4) academic knowledge. Within the affective characteristics are the enthusiasm, encouragement, humor, interest in the student availability and mental health. Part of a language instructor's skills are the creativity and challenge; of the classroom management, the pace and fairness; and of the academic knowledge, the grammar.

In a study on Students' Perceptions of Effective Teaching in Higher Education carried out at Memorial University of Newfoundland, in Canada, Delaney et al., (2010), students identified nine behaviors that are characteristics of effective teaching in both on-campus and distance courses. Instructors who are effective teachers are respectful of students, knowledgeable, approachable, engaging, communicative, organized, responsive, professional, and humorous.

We firmly believe that the findings of our study done in a university Ecuadorian context in which students had the opportunity to state their own opinions about the characteristics of EFL instructors can serve us as a foundation to improve our overall teaching and learning practices. Freire (2005) points out that people who have been denied the right to speak up must claim that right, for it is essential of opening healthy spaces of dialogue for the benefit of an academic community. It is our contention that by asking students what the good

characteristics of effective English Instructors are, opportunities of changes in a teacher-centered English curriculum and teaching practices to a more student-centered one will greatly increase. By knowing what our EFL students expect of us and by taking their opinions, comments, and suggestions into account more seriously, the synergy we can create in our EFL classrooms will be of great value for the improvement of our professional and personal endeavors.

As it is seen in this study findings as well as in Salahshour & Hajizadeh's (2012), Miller's (1987), Delaney's et al., (2010); Walker's (2008); Al-Mahrooqi, R., Denman, C., Al-Siyabi, J., and Al-Maamari, F.'s (2015), what most EFL students want is EFL Instructors who are responsible, humorous, knowledgeable, respectful and able to teach English well. These results and material should be responsibly taken into consideration when planning to implement new programs and curricula for English language studies. However, it is essential to mention that these findings respond to a particular EFL context, the School of Psychology of the Universidad de Cuenca, and should be taken with caution, for it has its own limitations and applications. There were certain participants that were not able to provide the information requested, and it was probably due to the fact that they did not understand the instructions of the written exercise correctly. There were also certain problems in the deciphering of the information provided and some of their handwriting was difficult to understand. However, the data collected served us to shed some light on the most important characteristics of an effective EFL instructor in our Ecuadorian university contexts

If English programs offered in higher education institutions in Ecuador want to improve the EFL teaching and learning processes, students' opinions must not be neglected. Examples of action research similar to this one should be replicated in order to have more valid and realistic data according to the different EFL contexts we have around our country. Teaching EFL at the Universidad de Cuenca might not be the same as teaching EFL at the Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi for example; however, the findings presented in this study can be used as a referent for future studies at national level.

### **Conclusion**

We can conclude that this study has shed some light about the 5 most important characteristics of an effective EFL instructor in order of importance. Participants also mentioned what expect of us as EFL instructors by clearly stating the 59 more characteristics that make an EFL instructor effective according to their perceptions. These are the following:

**Table 2.** Characteristics of an Effective Ecuadorian EFL Instructor.

| CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE ECUADORIAN EFL INSTRUCTOR |                  |                |                 |                     |
|---|------------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| • Able to read well                                       | • Comprehensible | • Fair         | • Intelligent   | • Reliable          |
| • Able to speak English well                              | • Considerate    | • Flexible     | • Interactive   | • Resourceful       |
| • Able to teach   | • Cooperative    | • Focused      | • Interesting   | • Respectful        |
| • Able to write well                                      | • Creative       | • Friendly     | • Knowledgeable | • Responsible       |
| • Academically prepared                                   | • Critical       | • Funny        | • Likeable      | • Serious           |
| • Accessible  | • Demanding      | • Generous     | • Motivated     | • Skillful to teach |
| • Active  | • Disciplined    | • Good Looking | • Open-Minded   | • Sociable          |
| • Attentive   | • Dynamic        | • Happy        | • Organized     | • Spontaneous       |
| • Bilingual   | • Empathetic     | • Helpful      | • Passionate    | • Strict            |
| • Cheerful  | • Encouraging    | • Honest       | • Patient       | • Tolerant          |
| • Clear   | • Exemplary      | • Humble       | • Prepared      | • Trustworthy       |
| • Coherent  | • Experienced    | • Inquisitive  | • Promoting     | • Understanding     |
| • Communicative   | • Facilitator    | • Inspiring    | • Punctual      |                     |

**Source:** Bernal, M. Ecuador, 2017. Data collected from students' papers.

As Salahshour & Alizada (2012) points out, taking the School of Psychology of the Universidad de Cuenca EFL context into consideration, one can be able to notice that students' perceptions regarding the EFL teaching and learning process have often been neglected. Despite the available research results on university students' goals and opinions about EFL programs, teachers, and institutional managers have specified certain criteria for teaching without considering the main participant of the classrooms, that is, the students. The findings of the current paper have specific implications for existing and prospective EFL lecturers and teachers. Teachers have to take the students' needs and perspectives into consideration when teaching. The old method of teacher-centered classrooms must give way to new student-centered approaches in the Universidad de Cuenca EFL context for successful and effective learning to take place. Teachers must realign their teaching according to the students' ideas rather than doing and imposing what they themselves feel is appropriate. The Ecuadorian EFL context demands further research in this regard. Researchers can investigate the implications that students' attitudes towards learning English in Ecuador, gender, age, ethnicity, social class have on the students' perceptions regarding the teaching process within classrooms. Also, such research ought to be carried out on a broader scale to yield more precise results.

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**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE:** May 15, 2017

**PSY III**

**MID-TERM EXAM**

C. WRITING: Write a 300-word essay about this topic: For you, *what are the 5 most important characteristics of a good English language Instructor?* Give reasons and examples to support your response. Mention them in order of importance. (1 the most and 5 the least important). Use PEN please. (5 points)

***The 5 most important characteristics of a good English language Instructor***

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**RUBRICS**

Excellent: 1    Very Good: 0,75    Good: 0,50    Fair: 0,25    Poor 0,10    No Production: 0

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>1. Content:</b> Knowledgeable, substantive development of thesis, relevant to assigned topic  |    |
| <b>2. Organization:</b> Fluent expression, ideas clearly stated/supported, succinct, well-organized, logical sequencing, cohesive:                   |    |
| <b>3. Vocabulary and Language Use:</b> sophisticated range, effective word/idiom choice and usage, word form mastery                                 |    |
| <b>4. Grammar Usage:</b> effective, complex sentences, few errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions |    |
| <b>5. Mechanics:</b> few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing   |    |
| <b>TOTAL:</b>  | /5 |

#### Refer to this format: The components of a descriptive essay format

Just like any other assignment, descriptive essays have specific elements students should never ignore. Specifically, all descriptive essays need to include:

- **Introduction.** That is where the author briefly introduces the subject or the object of the essay. Introduction has to be written in an engaging manner to draw readers' attention and convince them read further rather than switch to something else.
- **Main Body.** The subject or object of descriptive essay is further explored and explained in detail in the body of the essay. The author can describe every particular aspect of the subject/object depending on what he/she considers important. Usually, writers use a great variety of adjectives and adverbs to make the paper colorful, lively, and interesting to read. Also, in this section the author can provide specific examples to enhance the description of the subject/object and make it easier to understand for the audience. This part of the essay provides readers with the insight into what the authors thinks about the particular topic.
- **Conclusion.** It is the last but not least important component of a descriptive essay. In this part, the author provides his own thoughts and conclusion of the subject or object of the essay, which depends greatly on author's writing style, imagination, and analytical skills.

Retrieved from: <https://essaywritingstore.com/format-of-descriptive-essays>

# **Realidad vs percepción: nivel de inglés de los estudiantes de la Carrera de Idiomas - UNACH**

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**¿Se cumple con la demanda del estado para la inserción laboral en la enseñanza del idioma inglés en el Ecuador?**

## **Resumen**

La presente investigación cuasi-experimental y analítica evidenció el nivel de proficiencia en inglés de los estudiantes del último año de la Carrera de Idiomas de la Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo en el periodo 2013-2014. Se utilizaron pruebas estandarizadas de la Universidad de Cambridge y una encuesta aplicada a estudiantes y docentes para conocer su percepción sobre el nivel de inglés que poseen al finalizar la carrera. El objetivo fue diagnosticar el nivel de inglés de los estudiantes para posteriormente contrastarlo con la percepción expresada por estudiantes y docente en la encuesta. Los instrumentos utilizados permitieron observar la divergencia entre el nivel obtenido en las pruebas de Cambridge y el manifestado por los participantes en las encuestas. Los resultados generales en cuanto al dominio del idioma arrojaron los siguientes datos: el 29% de los estudiantes considera tener un nivel B2, mientras que el 71% considera tener un nivel inferior, el 38% de los docentes considera que sus estudiantes tendrían un nivel B2, mientras que el 62% no. El test diagnóstico revela una realidad muy diferente, ubicando solamente al 2% de los estudiantes en un nivel B2. Esto refleja a nivel micro la realidad del dominio del inglés en el Ecuador.

**Palabras clave:** Nivel B2, Estudiantes, Proficiencia, Percepción, Idiomas – UNACH

## **Abstract**

The present quasi-experimental and analytical research evidenced the level of proficiency in English of the students of the last year of The Languages Career of the Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo in the period 2013-2014. A survey was applied to the students and teachers to know their perception of the English level they

have at the end of the career and standardized tests of the Cambridge University were used. The objective was to diagnose the level of English of the students to later contrast it with the perception expressed by students and teacher in the survey. The instruments used allowed to observe the divergence between the level obtained in the Cambridge tests and the manifested one by the participants in the survey. The overall results in terms of language proficiency showed the following data: 29% of students considered to have a B2 level, while 71% considered having a lower level, 38% of teachers considered that their students have a B2 level, while 62% did not. The diagnostic test reveals a very different reality, placing only 2% of students in a B2 level. This reflects at micro level the reality of the English proficiency in Ecuador.

**Keywords:** B2 Level, Students, Proficiency, language skills, Languages -UNACH

## Introducción

En las últimas décadas el inglés se ha convertido en la “Lengua Franca” del presente como bien sostiene Richards & Schmidt (2010, p. 340) en Han (2015, p. 5), y el *National Curriculum Guidelines* (2014) propuesto por el Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, donde se afirma que, los más recientes avances en tecnología, ciencia, información social y académica, etc. están escritos en inglés. Con razón advierte Bueno (2010, p. 3) aproximadamente el 85% de las Organizaciones Internacionales hacen uso oficial del inglés como medio de comunicación, de igual manera el 85% de la industria del cine, el 28% de publicaciones de libros, el 80% de la información almacenada en la web, se presentan en éste idioma

Muchas Universidades de prestigio mundial, intercambios académicos, empresas multinacionales, etc., establecen como requisito de ingreso, un puntaje mínimo en alguno de los exámenes internacionales acreditados para la medición del dominio de la lengua anglosajona; entre ellos: TOEFL-iBT, TOEIC, IELTS, los exámenes de la Universidad de Cambridge (KET, PET, FCE), etc., los que están conjugados con los niveles establecidos según el Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las lenguas (MCER): A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2 (Centro Virtual Cervantes, 2002).

Es innegable la importancia del idioma inglés, como los múltiples beneficios y oportunidades para personas que lo hablan. Sin embargo hay que reconocer que muchos profesionales de la enseñanza del idioma inglés, presentan muchas dificultades en el manejo las destrezas comunicativas del inglés (*Listening, speaking, reading and writing*)

Un estudio del *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) en 2009, muestra que “América Latina tiene los índices más débiles de dominios del idioma inglés a nivel mundial. Muchos de los estudiantes de América Latina no alcanzan el nivel 2 de PISA, lo que significa que “tienen dificultades para realizar las tareas de lectura más elementales y carecen de las habilidades esenciales necesarias para participar de manera efectiva y productiva en la sociedad”, resultados que se replican en un estudio realizado por la revista Education First (EF) en el año 2014,

en la que el Ecuador se ubica en el puesto número 37 de 44 países con un nivel “Muy bajo”.

Estudios realizados en universidades de Guayaquil, Ambato, Esmeralda y Cuenca, demuestran que el nivel de dominio de inglés tanto de docentes como estudiantes de los últimos niveles de las carreras de Idiomas en el país, es deficiente.

Prado (2014, p. 67) en su estudio denominado “Análisis de las deficiencias de competencias en el idiomas inglés de los profesores de tercer nivel en Guayaquil, Ecuador” sostiene que una gran mayoría (84.7%) de los entrevistados tienen un nivel Bajo en lectura y escritura, además que “el 3.3 de éstos reconocen que no tienen conocimientos mínimos de este idioma”. Esta idea constituye una extensión de lo propuesto por Chicaiza (2013, p.23), en su tesis doctoral “Detección y análisis de necesidades de capacitación para el profesorado del idioma inglés en la Universidad Técnica de Ambato-Ecuador”, “a nivel nacional se encuentran docentes poco cualificados para brindar una educación de calidad”. De esta manera, se lleva adelante un razonamiento similar a la tesis de Callea, et al. (2012, p. 14) “Los profesores de inglés y su práctica docente: Un estudio de caso de los colegios fiscales de la ciudad de Cuenca, Ecuador” donde mencionan que uno de los factores que impide el desarrollo del conocimiento por parte de los estudiantes es la “carencia del manejo de la lengua extranjera como medio de instrucción”

Dominguez (2014) en su tesis “*Selection of English teachers to enter the teaching profession in Esmeraldas city, school year 2013-2014*” Manifiesta que, en las pruebas que el Ministerio de Educación de Ecuador toma para el ingreso al magisterio fiscal, los resultados fueron negativos, ya que únicamente el 14% (1.913 de 14.110 aspirantes), aprobaron esta evaluación, además menciona que el 86% no pudieron responder preguntas básicas de nivel de estudiantes de primaria.

En una entrevista al Ministro subrogante de Educación del Ecuador, Freddy Peñafiel de fecha 25 de marzo de 2014 en GAMA TV, manifiesta que tres años atrás se evaluó a todos los profesores de inglés de las instituciones públicas del país con el TOEFL, obteniendo resultados “bastante malos”, 4.500 docentes fueron evaluados y menos del 02% obtuvieron el nivel B2 (nivel que facilita el libre ejercicio profesional como profesores de inglés en el Ecuador) datos alarmantes que reflejan que los profesores de inglés en el país “no saben hablar inglés”.

Navas de Pereira (2010, p. 154) en su estudio “La enseñanza de las lenguas extranjeras en la Escuela de Idiomas Modernos de la UCV desde la perspectiva del Marco Común Europeo de Referencia” (Centro Virtual Cervantes, 2002, pp. 26; 33) explica que un usuario independiente “participa en conversaciones con un grado de fluidez y espontaneidad que posibilita la interacción habitual con hablantes nativos sin suponer tensión para ninguna de las partes. Resalta la importancia personal de ciertos hechos y experiencias, expresa y defiende puntos de vista con claridad, proporcionando explicaciones y argumentos adecuados”. Criterio que va en total concordancia con

lo establecido por el MCER.

Para la evaluación de cada una de las destrezas comunicativas el MCER establece los siguientes criterios:

### **Comprensión Auditiva (Listening)**

Según lo establecido en el MCER (2002), quien posee un nivel B2 en la destreza de comprensión auditiva comprende conversaciones bilaterales como discursos retransmitidos, de la vida personal, social, académica o profesional. Comprende las ideas primordiales de un discurso complejo lingüísticamente de temas extensos, concretos y abstractos pronunciados en un nivel de lengua estándar, incluyendo debates técnicos dentro de su especialidad. (Centro Virtual Cervantes, 2002, p. 69).

### **Expresión Oral (Speaking)**

En expresión oral quien posee un nivel B2 describe y presenta ideas claras y sistemáticamente desarrolladas sobre múltiples asuntos relacionados con la vida cotidiana y su especialidad, resaltando correctamente aspectos significativos y detalles relevantes, defiende sus puntos de vista con ideas con fluidez y coherencia. (Centro Virtual de Cervantes, 2002, pp. 62-73)

### **Comprensión Lectora (Reading)**

Tener un nivel B2 en comprensión lectora significa que, el estudiante lee con rapidez textos complejos y extensos con diferentes finalidades, además maneja un nivel alto de vocabulario, lo cual le permite obtener una idea general del texto, entiende textos profesionales y puede analizarlos profundamente utilizando como recurso un diccionario como guía en la interpretación de palabras desconocidas. Entiende detalles relevantes, de noticias, de artículos e informes de diversos temas.

### **Expresión Escrita (Writing)**

En expresión escrita el estudiante en el nivel B2, describe con precisión experiencias reales o ficticias, tanto de su profesión como de otros temas, respetando normas de acuerdo a los diferentes géneros literarios. Escribe con un alto nivel, resúmenes de películas, libros u obras teatrales. Puede sintetizar y argumentar información de otros autores.

Así mismo el Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador en el año 2012 bajo esta concepción, establece estándares de calidad educativa tanto para profesores como estudiantes de inglés del sistema educativo nacional “*The Ecuadorian in-service English Teacher Standards and The English Language Learning Standards*”.

Se entiende entonces que, hay una conjugación coherente y pertinente entre lo que se desea instaurar en el sistema educativo nacional con lo internacionalmente acreditado para el efecto. Con claridad se aprecia que, el Ecuador busca transformar el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del idioma inglés, por tanto; se instituyen estándares de

calidad educativa en esta área, se desarrolla un nuevo currículo basado en lo establecido en el MCER (*The National Curriculum Guidelines*, 2014), se crean programas de becas internacionales de capacitación y estudios de postgrado (*Go Teacher*), así como se norma la evaluación y capacitación permanente para docentes del magisterio fiscal nacional, y lo más relevante se establece el nivel B2 de acuerdo al MCER, como un requisito mínimo y exigible para ser profesor de inglés en el Ecuador como se establece en el Acuerdo Ministerial 153-13 (2013, Arts. 5, 8.).

Bajo los preceptos descritos en párrafos anteriores, la realidad en el ámbito local no varía, una evaluación diagnóstica aplicada en el año 2014 a estudiantes de cuarto año de la Carrera de Idiomas de la UNACH, con instrumento desarrollados por la Universidad de Cambridge (2009) para medir el nivel de dominio en cada una de las destrezas comunicativas del inglés, refleja que el 98% de los estudiantes, al finalizar su colegiatura no alcanzan el nivel de dominio (B2) requerido para ser docente en el área de inglés en Ecuador tal como sugiere el Acuerdo Ministerial 153-13 (2013, Arts. 5, 8.).

- Todo lo anterior conduce a formular el siguiente problema: ¿Cómo contribuir a desarrollar las destrezas comunicativas del inglés a nivel B2 según el MCER, en los estudiantes que egresan de la Carrera de Idiomas de la UNACH?

Con el propósito de dar solución a esta problemática, para la fase diagnostica, se propusieron los siguientes objetivos específicos:

- Diagnosticar el nivel en que se encuentran los estudiantes de la Carrera de Idiomas en períodos lectivos terminales a través de la aplicación de samples diseñados por la Universidad de Cambridge.
- Contrastar los resultados obtenidos con los estándares establecidos por MCER

### **Metodología**

La investigación planteada tiene un enfoque mixto (cuali-cuantitativo) ligado a las tendencias actuales de investigación en el campo de las Ciencias Sociales, esta perspectiva se apoya en Grinnell & Unrau (2007), citado por Ruiz, Borboa & Rodríguez (2013), quien señala que el enfoque mixto sigue cinco fases interdependientes:

1. Llevar a cabo una observación y evaluación de fenómenos. Así se realizaron evaluaciones para determinar los problemas de uso del idioma inglés con fines comunicativos de los estudiantes en cada una de las destrezas comunicativas.
2. Establecer suposiciones o ideas como consecuencia de la observación y evaluación realizadas, es decir sus posibles causas y consecuencias.

3. Probar y demostrar el grado en que las suposiciones o ideas tienen fundamento a través del análisis y contrastación científica en base a estudios previamente realizados.
4. Revisar tales suposiciones o ideas sobre la base de las pruebas o del análisis.
5. Proponer nuevas observaciones y evaluaciones para esclarecer, modificar, cimentar y/o fundamentar las suposiciones o ideas; o incluso para generar otras. En otras palabras establecer posibles soluciones al problema planteado.

De igual manera es de tipo aplicada, cuasi-experimental y prospectivo; pues este punto de vista se apoya en Giroux & Tremblay (2004) citado en Quijano (2013, p. 14) quienes enfatizan que este tipo de investigación busca “estudiar problemas concretos con el objeto de proponer un plan de acción para decidir o intervenir eficazmente una situación dada” así se busca entender las causas del bajo nivel de “Dominio operativo limitado” del idioma inglés de los estudiantes que egresan de la Carrera de Idiomas de la UNACH, para proponer un programa de refuerzo académico, que busca preparar al egresado para enfrentar y pasar exitosamente un examen nivel B2 según el MCER

La investigación está dirigida a los estudiantes egresados de la Carrera de Idiomas de la UNACH quienes al finalizar su carrera deben rendir un examen nivel B2 para su libre ejercicio profesional según lo establecido en el Acuerdo Ministerial 153-13 (2013, Arts. 5, 8.). El total de estudiantes que representa la población (40 estudiantes y 09 profesores) son tomados como muestra debido al número reducido de participantes a quienes se les aplicó una encuesta para la obtención de datos preliminares referente a la perspectiva que tienen los estudiantes acerca de la realidad académica en la que se desenvuelven y su auto-concepción del nivel de inglés que tienen, además; se aplicaron tests (*sample tests* de la Universidad de Cambridge, 2009) para diagnosticar y determinar el nivel de dominio del idioma inglés en cada una de las destrezas comunicativas de los estudiantes.

De igual manera se aplicaron encuestas a 09 profesores y estudiantes de la Carrera de Idiomas y Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación, Humanas y Tecnologías de la UNACH, acerca de la percepción de la realidad académica de quienes cursan los últimos semestres de la colegiatura, de tal manera que, los resultados obtenidos puedan ser contrastados con la evaluación de las destrezas comunicativas.

### **Resultados Y Discusión Del Diagnóstico**

Las políticas estatales buscan la excelencia en la enseñanza-aprendizaje del inglés, así como los organismos internacionales creados para el efecto, sin embargo, nace la interrogante ¿Las instituciones de educación superior que forman profesionales de la enseñanza del idioma inglés, contribuyen al logro de este objetivo? Los resultados obtenidos en la etapa diagnóstica del presente estudio demuestran que NO.

Las encuestas aplicadas a estudiantes del cuarto año y a profesores de la Carrera de Idiomas de la UNACH en el 2014, mediante una serie de *sample tests* desarrollados por la Universidad de Cambridge (FCE, 2009) para evaluar

las destrezas comunicativas del idioma inglés, ratifican esta aseveración.

En la encuesta aplicada a los estudiantes se plantearon varias interrogantes, entre ellas:

### ¿Qué nivel de inglés considera que tiene?

(En la siguiente escala, 1 corresponde a nivel básico y 4 a nivel avanzado)

Para la evaluación de estos criterios se considera lo establecido en el MCER, que para mejor comprensión por parte de los estudiantes se los denominó: A1 Acceso “Básico”, A2 Plataforma “Medio Bajo”, B1 Umbral “Medio”, B2 Dominio operativo limitado “Avanzado” y se estimó un valor proporcional en base a lo establecido en las pruebas de la Universidad de Cambridge:

- **B2** 100-80 %
- **B1** 79-50 %
- **A2** 49-35 %
- **A1** 34% o menos

Tabla 1

| Tabla 1.<br>¿Qué nivel de inglés considera que tiene? |                     |                      |                     |  |
|---|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--|
| NIVEL MCER  | ENCUESTA PROFESORES | ENCUESTA ESTUDIANTES | TEST USE OF ENGLISH |  |
| B2  | 38%                 | 29%                  | 2%                  |  |
| B1  | 50%                 | 66%                  | 10%                 |  |
| A2  | 12%                 | 5%                   | 15%                 |  |
| A1  | 0%                  | 0%                   | 73%                 |  |

Fuente: Mantilla, F. y Narváez, C. Ecuador, 2014

Como se evidencia en la Tabla 1 existe divergencia entre los datos obtenidos en la encuesta aplicada a profesores y estudiantes con los resultados del test diagnóstico. Se observa que la percepción de éstos en cuanto al nivel de inglés es muy alta en relación a los resultados obtenidos en la prueba. Mientras que ningún estudiante y profesor consideran que pueda existir nivel A1, el examen refleja que la mayoría de estudiantes se ubica en dicho estándar.

A continuación se presentan los resultados obtenidos en las encuestas y test diagnóstico aplicados para conocer el nivel de los estudiantes en cada una de las destrezas comunicativas del idioma inglés.

**Tabla 2**

| NIVEL MCER | ENCUESTA   | ENCUESTA    | TEST |
|------------|------------|-------------|------|
|            | PROFESORES | ESTUDIANTES |      |
| B2         | 0%         | 27%         | 5%   |
| B1         | 56%        | 50%         | 36%  |
| A2         | 33%        | 18%         | 36%  |
| A1         | 11%        | 5%          | 23%  |

**Fuente:** Mantilla, F. y Narváez, C. Ecuador, 2014

La diferencia entre lo que estudiantes y profesores piensan y los resultados del test relacionado con *Listening* son menos radicales, como se refleja en la tabla 2; se observa que la población alcanza los niveles A2 y B1 en su mayoría, resultados que demuestran la correlación entre lo expuesto en la encuesta y los datos del test.

**Tabla 3**

| NIVEL MCER | ENCUESTA   | ENCUESTA    | TEST |
|------------|------------|-------------|------|
|            | PROFESORES | ESTUDIANTES |      |
| B2         | 37%        | 27%         | 5%   |
| B1         | 50%        | 55%         | 20%  |
| A2         | 13%        | 18%         | 35%  |
| A1         | 0%         | 0%          | 40%  |

**Fuente:** Mantilla, F. y Narváez, C. Ecuador, 2014

En *Speaking* la diferencia entre la apreciación de estudiantes y docentes con los resultados del test vuelve a ser significativa, los datos expuestos en la Tabla 3 prueban el desconocimiento del nivel de proficiencia de los estudiantes en esta destreza.

**Tabla 4**

| NIVEL MCER | ENCUESTA   | ENCUESTA    | TEST |
|------------|------------|-------------|------|
|            | PROFESORES | ESTUDIANTES |      |
| B2         | 25%        | 50%         | 2%   |
| B1         | 50%        | 41%         | 15%  |
| A2         | 12%        | 9%          | 25%  |
| A1         | 13%        | 0%          | 58%  |

**Fuente:** Mantilla, F. y Narváez, C. Ecuador, 2014

En la Tabla 4 concerniente a la destreza de *Reading*, se reafirma la concepción desacertada que tienen estudiantes y docentes en esta área, realidad que pudo ser constatada en los resultados obtenidos mediante el test diagnóstico.

**Tabla 5**

| NIVEL MCER | ENCUESTA   | ENCUESTA    | TEST |
|------------|------------|-------------|------|
|            | PROFESORES | ESTUDIANTES |      |
| B2         | 28%        | 45%         | 10%  |
| B1         | 43%        | 41%         | 25%  |
| A2         | 29%        | 14%         | 40%  |
| A1         | 0%         | 0%          | 25%  |

**Fuente:** Mantilla, F. y Narváez, C. Ecuador, 2014

La Tabla 5 es una muestra más de la irrealidad en la que viven estudiantes y docentes. En ambos casos se desconoce la existencia del nivel A1, sin embargo el test demuestra que hay un amplio porcentaje de estudiantes con características de éste nivel.

## **Discusión**

Es evidente que las percepciones subjetivas tanto de docentes como de estudiantes, no se ajustan a la realidad subyacente, que demuestra que la educación impartida durante la colegiatura no garantiza el logro del nivel mínimo que demandan las normativas establecidas para el efecto; de tal forma que parece haberse creado en la mente del estudiante, una realidad ilusoria que no le permite desarrollar un nivel de conciencia para auto-evaluuar, criticar, y por ende trasformar su contexto, que dista mucho de la realidad evidenciada en países del primer mundo.

A criterio del 45% de los estudiantes, el nivel alcanzado se debe en parte a la metodología aplicada por los docentes. Se menciona en la encuesta que, el trabajo en el aula de clases se enfoca exageradamente en la formación docente, descuidando el desarrollo integral de la competencia comunicativa. Además, luego de la aplicación del test diagnóstico se evidencia que no se prepara a los estudiantes para acreditar su nivel de inglés a través de un examen internacional, pese a que el 32% de los participantes considera que es imprescindible poseer una certificación oficial.

El test diagnóstico aplicado demuestra que la perspectiva que los estudiantes y docentes tienen no concuerda con los resultados obtenidos, la capacidad auditiva tanto para responder preguntas, como para enlazar ideas y para la comprensión general son demasiado bajas, para un futuro docente en el área de la enseñanza del idioma inglés.

En cuanto a la destreza oral, el instrumento aplicado evidencia un grado mínimo de conocimiento en los aspectos gramaticales, vocabulario, pronunciación, coherencia y cohesión, interacción con el interlocutor, lo que hace ininteligible la conversación reduciéndola muchas veces a ideas aisladas carentes de significado. Cabe mencionar que éste es un requisito imprescindible para todo profesional de la enseñanza del idioma inglés, pues; esta actividad en la actualidad se enmarca en el enfoque comunicativo (National Curriculum Guidelines, 2014), que demanda la interacción constante en la lengua objeto entre docente y dicente. Se puede evidenciar en el entorno educativo la tendencia a utilizar primordialmente la lengua materna como medio de interacción entre compañeros e inclusive entre docentes y estudiantes (característica primordial del *Grammar Translation Method*), realidad que se presenta tanto dentro como fuera del aula

En la destreza *Reading*, los resultados obtenidos ratifican lo aseverado por el INEC (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y censos, 2012), que el 27% de ecuatorianos no tienen hábitos de lectura. Si esta realidad se evidencia al momento de leer en el idioma nativo, no es difícil imaginar, qué tan complicado puede ser desarrollar este hábito en un idioma extranjero; sin embargo, al ser estudiantes que cursan una carrera universitaria por un lapso de cuatro años, es menester afirmar que, al menos puedan entender ideas principales dentro de un texto, buscar información específica, comprender artículos especializados, reconocer puntos de vista, entender el significado de palabras valiéndose del contexto, sin embargo los participantes tienen problemas inclusive para entender textos básicos. Estos factores no permiten la plena realización del futuro profesional y son un limitante para la producción científica, principio fundamental de la misión de la UNACH.

La producción escrita, muestra también un nivel de deficiencia, aunque hay un porcentaje elevado con nivel A2 y B1. Únicamente el 10% de la población objeto de estudio, cumplen con el nivel exigible en esta destreza, y no el 28% como afirman los docentes o el 45% mencionado por los estudiantes.

La demanda nacional de docentes capacitados que posean al menos un nivel B2 en dominio de la lengua

anglosajona, obliga a despertar la conciencia de estudiantes, docentes en ejercicio y autoridades para capacitarse permanentemente, debido a los problemas que se presentan a nivel local y nacional en el área de la enseñanza del inglés; por esta razón los estudiantes tienden a alinearse a los proyectos de estado, así al preguntarles si estarían dispuestos a participar en el programa de capacitación, propuesto para sobrellevar la prueba internacional nivel B2 el 95% de estudiantes responden que SÍ.

### **Conclusiones**

- Las exigencias establecidas por el Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador en el área del inglés, no se alcanzan después de casi cuatro años de colegiatura.
- Los resultados reflejan que únicamente el 02% de los estudiantes (01 de 40) está en la posibilidad de acreditar un examen internacional de dominio del idioma inglés nivel B2.
- Existe una brecha muy marcada entre la percepción de docentes y estudiantes en cuanto al dominio del inglés y los resultados de los test aplicados.

### **Recomendaciones**

- La metodología utilizada en el aula debería enfocarse también en el desarrollo de competencias para aprobar un examen internacional.
- Es necesario aplicar un programa de refuerzo académico que faculte a los estudiantes obtener el nivel de inglés que demanda en Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador.

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# **The integration of theory/practice in the education of English teachers: The case of the Autonomous University of the state of Hidalgo, Mexico.**

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## **Abstract**

This research describes a qualitative case study exploring the role that theory and practice play in the preparation of teacher of English, providing evidences from trainers' and trainees' conceptions of theory and practice, and from trainee's teaching practice. The study of these two dimensions also enhances our understanding of pre-service teacher education program at university level in Mexico. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and post observation interviews. The study also includes a description of the BA in ELT syllabus of the practicum courses. The findings revealed that the traditional model of learning influenced the concept and the way messages about these two phenomena are transmitted. Observation in classroom showed that trainers' instruction affected trainees' performance in their teaching practice. However, it was discovered that some of the trainees also engaged in self-evaluation of their teaching. As a result of analysis of the findings recommendations are made regarding how the practicum syllabi could be improved with reference to how theory and practice are taught. The findings suggest that fostering reflectivity is a suitable way to integrate theory and practice for these novice teachers in their specific context and produce a better quality of second language teaching education.

**Keywords:** theory, practice, teaching, learning, reflection.

## **Resumen**

Esta investigación describe un estudio de caso cualitativo sobre el papel que la teoría y la práctica desempeñan en la preparación de profesores de inglés, aportando evidencias de concepciones que los docentes y alumnos tienen de estas dimensiones del conocimiento. El estudio contribuye a mejorar nuestra comprensión del programa de educación de profesores de inglés en el nivel universitario en México. Los datos fueron recolectados utilizando entrevistas semi-estructuradas, observaciones de clases, entrevistas posteriores a la observación, y una

descripción de los programas de los cursos prácticos (el *practicum*). Los hallazgos revelan que el modelo tradicional de aprendizaje predomina en el concepto y la forma en que se transmiten los mensajes sobre la enseñanza del idioma extranjero. Las observaciones en aula mostraron que las concepciones transmitidas por los docentes influyen en las prácticas docentes de los alumnos. Se descubrió que algunos de los participantes realizaban autoevaluación de su desempeño. Como resultado del análisis se hacen recomendaciones para mejorar los programas de los cursos prácticos. Los hallazgos sugieren que el fomentar la reflexión es una forma adecuada para integrar la teoría y la práctica en los maestros novatos en su contexto específico y producir así una mejor calidad de enseñanza de una segunda lengua.

**Palabras claves:** teoría, práctica, enseñanza, aprendizaje, reflexión.

### **Introduction**

Two important aspects of knowledge and useful elements to become a professional teacher of English are theory and practice. With this aim, pre-service teacher education courses are intended to equip novice teachers with the necessary tools in order to help them to move into the teacher's role with efficiency and confidence. Nevertheless, traditional models of teacher education consider these aspects as two separate issues; theory is learnt at university and practice on the job.

In the literary search we found considerable variations in the way in which the theory/practice relationship is understood in the field of teacher training. Traditionally, the idea that practical teaching skills can only be learned in the workplace has led to the assumption that theory is independent of practice. Arguments have also centered around what comes first, theory, practice or vice versa. Deng (2004: 147) states that theory implies two senses: on the one hand, "it denotes something already proven or established." On the other hand, "it means a particular conception or vision of something..." As for practice, it indicates the condition of a routine activity, and can also refer to the condition of developing skills or teaching techniques.

Perhaps it is the definition of "practice" that most clearly denotes a division between these two concepts. From this perspective of considering theory separately from practice, Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1980, 1986) (quoted in Tsui 2003:10) speak of a procedural knowledge (knowing how), which is the most important element in the acquisition of experience, and declarative knowledge (knowing that). A similar point of view is found in Entwistle (1976: 39, 49) who refers to Ryle's claim (1949) that knowing in practice how to do something is independent from theory, which is less important than acquiring such abilities. However, Entwistle also considers that "theorizing" is an activity that can be performed in the same context as the practice of skills.

Rather than viewing theory and practice as independent entities, researchers like Griffiths and Tann (1992) (quoted in Williams (1999: 14)) find that the theory/practice dichotomy is wrong and that "theory and practice

are more useful if they are seen as two sides of the same coin, inextricably linked: what could be called theory with practice". Similarly, Kumaravadivelu (2001) notes that:

*"The experts (Elliot 1991) have long recognized the harmful effect of the dichotomy of practical theory. They claim that theory and practice inform each other, and together constitute a dialectical praxis, an assertion that has recently influenced the teaching of the L2 and in the training of teachers."* (p.540)

Researches such as Tsui's (2003) provide a vision of the process that unfolds as teachers progress from being novices to acquiring experience in language teaching, suggesting that teachers develop their own principles through experience and reflection on experience. Similarly, Johnson's (1994) study reveals the extent to which student teachers' beliefs about second language teaching are influenced by their experiences as students and by their perceptions of what a teacher should be. These examples demonstrate that teacher training should not simply be a demonstration of techniques for beginning teachers, but should imply a more complex combination of theory and practice. It is not surprising, then, that researchers in the field of second language teaching reject the idea of divorcing theory and practice. Brumfit (1983), for example, considers that the balance between theory and practice "must be based on the relationship between the two..." (p.61). The Hungarian teacher training program described by Medgyes and Malderez (1996) covers both theory and practice with students and trainers working on classroom observations, tutorial support and the central idea of promoting reflective learning. When the concept of theory and the concept of practice are not seen as two parts of a false dichotomy, there is no conflict or division between them. Wallace (1990), for example, connects theory and practice when he states that "received knowledge" must inform and be informed by "experiential knowledge" (pp. 14-15). Along the same line is also Williams (1999) that links personal and public theories with practice. See also Madrid (2004) for a summary on the basic components of professional knowledge and the curricular objectives in the initial formation of the teachers of foreign language.

The way theory and practice are understood in this research work is that theory and practice do not oppose one another. On the contrary, they are closely related; each serves the other and together form a whole. The theory provides the principles according to which practical work is performed. Practice provides the background against which theories are tested and serves also to provide the basis for the generation of new theories. The training of language teachers lays the foundation for providing adequate background to the theory of language teaching; the experience provides the opportunities to acquire the skills, which together under the shelter of reflection produce a better integration of theory and practice. As Trappes-Lomax (1999) points out, it is the element of reflection that connects theory and practice:

*"Reflection serves to connect, in different ways, theory with practice. Reflection on and in action, by illuminating the nature of the relationship between theory and practice, gives meaning to the teacher's choices in the course of a*

*lesson and acts as a stimulus to change over the course of a career." (p. 5)*

The concept of reflection in teaching can be traced back over the last thirty years but it was not until the mid-1980s that the reflective paradigm strongly challenged and affected the development of teacher education programmes, and over the last decade the notion of teacher reflection has become widely accepted and is now a commonplace in most teacher education programmes in TEFL. Significant publications about this issue are those of Schön's "the Reflective Practitioner" in 1983; Wallace's "Training Foreign Teachers" in 1990; Sparks-Langer's "Approaches to reflective Teaching" in 1992; Bartlett's "Reflective Teaching" in 1990. What follows is an attempt to define reflection and to consider why it might be important in bridging the gap between theory and practice in second language teacher education.

The notion of reflective teaching stems from Dewey (1910) the first educational philosopher to consider the notion of reflection, and who defines reflection as:

*"Active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (p.6)*

Dewey (1910) suggests that the development of reflection involved the acquisition of certain attitudes and skills of thinking. He also contrasted "reflective thought" (p.8) with "routine action" (p.14). According to Dewey, "routine action" is guided by factors such as tradition, habit and authority and by institutional definitions and expectations. By implication it is relatively static and is thus unresponsive to changing priorities and circumstances. "Reflective action", on the other hand, involves a willingness to engage in constant self-appraisal and development. Many followers of Dewey have based their definitions on his principles.

What follows are some key characteristics of reflection provided by Gilpin (1999:111):

- Dewey (1933): "It begins from a felt difficulty and then leads to analysis and generalization".
- Schön (1983): "It is not static: implicit in its meaning is action".
- Leichner (1983): "It is a process of informing practice with reason".
- Hullfish and Smith (1968): "When recognition fails, even momentarily, the situation calls forth doubt and uncertainty. This is the ground from which reflective activity arises".
- Gilpin (1999): Points five essential components: Noticing, reasoning, change, questioning, affective involvement.

In the light of these definitions about reflection, there seems to be a broad agreement that reflection is an essential element in teaching.

As for the Mexican context, English has enjoyed a high status for a long time in Mexico. When the first modern school was founded in 1883 in the state of Veracruz, the two required subjects in the curriculum were English and French (Solana et. al. 1981:55, cited in Nuñez 2003:6). During the 1960s English took precedence over French and the latter disappeared from the programmes leaving English as the only foreign language in the official curriculum.

Since then English has been introduced in Mexican public schools as early as junior high school (secondary) though English is taught in private schools from the first step on the Mexican educational ladder, kindergarten (pre-primary). English courses can also be taken in language centers that have been flourishing in Mexico for many years. However, English is not widely used for social interaction or for oral communication, and so for this reason it is considered as a foreign language rather than a second language.

Nowadays the learning of English as a foreign language in Mexico has become a compulsory subject in different educational organizations from primary level to undergraduate programmes. Consequently, there is a growing demand for qualified English teachers.

The Bachelor of English Language Teaching (ELT) at Hidalgo State University (HSU) was designed and offered since 1999 as a response to this growing demand. The present study was carried out in order to provide elements for the understanding of teacher-student perceptions of how the institution of higher education articulates theory with practice in the specific ELT program. More specifically, the primary objective has been to investigate students' perceptions of how the teacher-training program has prepared them in terms of theoretical and practical knowledge. It also wished to explore the general evaluation of the program by the participants and how it could be improved. A secondary objective is to reflect on the results of this study, hoping that through the review of the contents and methodological approach of the program, the training course of English teachers will be improved.

The research questions are:

1. How do teacher trainers handle the theoretical and practical aspects when teaching?
2. How and to what extent do novice teachers apply and integrate the theoretical knowledge they receive during the teacher-education program when they practice their teaching?
3. How do trainees feel the teaching practice they have taken as part of the teacher education programme has helped them bridge the gap between theory and practice when they start working as teachers?

### **Importance of the problem**

In relation to investigations of language teacher training, Rockwell (1991, 1995, 1998) and Bertely and Corenstein (1998) (cited in Bryan and McLaughlin, 2005) offer a broad summary of what has been done in the last 25 years. However, these studies focused more on teacher practices and on the condition of teaching. Much of the research focuses on the teaching conditions of Mexican teachers in rural schools at the primary, secondary and preparatory levels and not on a tertiary teacher-training program. In addition, most of this research is not focused on teaching a second language. In the same sense, the study by Díaz et al. (1978) on a continuing education course for English teachers in Mexico gives us a description of the teaching conditions, the level of English and the training of teachers and students, but this research was carried out in secondary schools.

Some studies within an international context are those of Lebart (1995) who evaluated an initial teacher-training program at the university level in Malaysia, where the relationship between theory and practice was studied in a teacher-training course. Vilches (2001) focused his research on the process-oriented approach used in a training project for language teacher trainers in the Philippines. Barcelos (2000) studied the beliefs of teachers and students in the context of Brazil. Among the latest research related to the theme of this study and that stand out in the Latin American context are the one by Acosta Murillo (2014) who proposes learning communities through collaborative work and information and communication technologies to explain those elements which are contributed to teaching practices at the primary and secondary levels. Padilla and Espinosa (2015) studied the teaching practices of English teachers in public secondary schools in the city of Aguascalientes, Mexico. Another relevant study is that of Raba Castro (2014) on theory and practice in undergraduate teacher training within the framework of Colombian policies. While these studies have improved the understanding of teacher training courses at home and abroad, they still leave a gap in relation to what we know about the training of language teachers at undergraduate level in Mexico, a gap important that you try to fill.

### **Methodology**

This study has a qualitative and hermeneutical character that seeks to understand the reality of the English teacher training with an interpretative view of the multiple voices of those who participated in this study and who reflect their conceptions of the world through sharing their experiences. Fieldwork began with a pilot interview that lasted approximately thirty minutes, which was transcribed and analyzed manually. As a result of this pilot, questions related to anxiety experienced by student teachers in their initial practices were included in the main interview. Subsequently, fieldwork was begun over a period of sixteen weeks, distributed in three different sites, the academic area of English Language Teaching, a primary school and the university language center. Regarding sampling, although there are a variety of sample types that can be used, we describe here what Ritchie and Lewis (2003) call criterion-based sampling because this was the type of sampling used for the present study.

*“The selection of the participants ... are chosen because they have particular characteristics that allow the detailed exploration and understanding of the central theme that the researcher wishes to study.”* (p.79)

Holloway and Wheeler (1996), Patton (2002) and Robson (2002) (cited in Ritchie and Lewis, 2003) are the focus of selection for the participants in this study. These informants are:

*“Elected to give a detailed picture of a particular phenomenon, for example, individuals that belong to the same subculture or have the same characteristics. This allows detailed investigation of social processes in a specific context.”* (p.79)

In this case study and to ensure the necessary coverage, it was used a homogeneous sampling form with eight informants, involving participants of the same degree in English language teaching (ELT) at the Autonomous University of the State of Hidalgo. Three instructors, the coordinator and four apprentices were invited to participate in the study. The main characteristic of these participants is that they are English teachers, which means that they belong to the same “subculture” of English teachers. These participants were selected because they represent different perspectives in relation to theory and practice in the teacher-training course.

Initially, four participants were specified for this study:

1. An instructor in the Teacher Training course
2. The coordinator of the BA in ELT
3. A student without teaching experience in teaching English.
4. An ex-student of the English language-teaching program currently teaching English.

However, four additional participants were added as a result of the findings during the pilot interview process. A second reason for adding participants was as a consequence of what emerged from the initial interviews. Each informant was observed for a minimum of eight hours although the number of observations was varied according to the participant. Additional observations were made with some informants where the need arose for more data to adequately address the research questions. For a summary of the participants' profile, see table 1 in the appendix.

For the purposes of this study the following documents were also analyzed:

1. Two programs of the teacher-training course. One was the original program that was used as the basis for the course when it was first established. The second version was prepared by the trainers and was in use when this research was carried out.
2. Copies of materials instructors used in their classes.
3. Class plans designed and used by the participants during their microteaching activities in the workshop.
4. The curriculum of the Bachelor's program in English Language Teaching.

The findings of this study should not be generalized to other Mexican universities and any conclusion is subject to further study by other institutions for confirmation. Of course, the strength of a qualitative study is that it allows one to appreciate the situation to a depth that a more quantitatively oriented study would not have done. In other words, while the strength of a quantitative study is that it shows a pattern that extends across a large number of situations, the strength of qualitative methods is a concrete description of detail where we can see how the issues of interest in the research interact in the real environment. On the other hand, it is increasingly accepted that transferability rather than generalization represents the goal of research in the qualitative paradigm.

The presentation of the data in this study is organized around the research questions. Because of the length of the analysis, only relevant aspects of the sample are presented as a sample. The analysis includes information on three sets of data:

1. Pre-observation interviews that portray the attitudes, experiences and beliefs of trainers and learners about teaching and in relation to the main interest in this study, which is the relationship between theory and practice.
2. Observations in the classroom that describe how participants' conceptions of theory and practice influence their teaching practice, as seen in their teaching and classroom management methods.
3. Post-observation interviews, which present the participants' explanation of their decisions to make use of particular practices based on what is observed in their classes.

### **First Research Question**

- How do teacher trainers handle the theoretical and practical aspects when teaching?

It is interesting to note that in general there was a tendency for trainers to emphasize theory about practice. In addition, there was a relative "distance" between theory and practice on the evidence of observations made. An example of this can be seen by the fact that Coach B prefers to group all theoretical subjects by teaching and

providing practice at the end of the course once all theory has been “learned”:

*“What I want to do is that between a month and a half or so ... we are having this review, course of recovery on the theory and then as soon as we have finished with that ... I want them to apply all these things that we have seen as a review to apply them to a micro-teaching activity.”*

On the contrary, Coach A goes step by step in each lesson, providing theory and practice in small chunks:

*“My class consists of three parts, there is theory, practice and then I ask students to observe their teachers not as students but as future teachers and to take all the things they like and reject all the things they do not. They like it, so I think it's a way of thinking.”*

It could be seen from the observation data of the classroom that the breadth and depth of the theories that the trainers presented in their classes were rather superficial and limited to the replica of ideas based on what was in the readings, following only the most obvious points without proving other nuances of depth of the subjects taught. It was possible to observe the need for more appropriate techniques to develop the active participation of teacher-trainees in the discussions held in classes; the participation of the students was limited to summarizing or echoing what the author says about the subject being studied. The time students are allowed to grasp the idea of what is in the reading is limited to the time it takes for one of them to read the paragraph out loud. By not having time to process the information, the students do not respond to the questions of the trainer, although there were some attempts to encourage the students to reflect on what they learned.

During the post interviews, trainers were asked if they knew about the type of work they like to do in the classroom to the trainees, the trainers remarked that the theory is not a favorite among learners since trainees perceive the reading as unattractive activity:

*“Well, probably because of bad experiences probably [the apprentices] remember that they are just reading and reading ... I put the research subject in the classroom and developed in such a way with theory and more reading theory and more reading, of course, it was boring, but then I have changed or improved the way of teaching and I try to include the practical and theoretical aspects and unite them.”*

## **Second Research Question**

- How and to what extent do novice teachers apply and integrate the theoretical knowledge they receive during the teacher-education program when they practice their teaching?

Some of the trainees begin working as English teachers before completing their undergraduate studies. On the

other hand, the teaching practices they carry out as part of their studies have some limitations in providing students with practices outside the classroom. Therefore, when practitioners come into practice, they may or may not have experience in teaching and their experience may be varied. Two of the students were completely inexperienced as teachers, the only teaching experience they had at the time of the study was the practice they had in the workshops. In addition to the practice, both had also delivered classroom presentations and had also team-taught a whole class to another group of undergraduates (within the university). These learners had problems in lesson planning and also lacked confidence in teaching, perhaps as a result of not being equipped with those teaching skills that Richards (1998) is referred to as crucial and basic in any teacher training program. This is what one of the trainees said:

*"Yes, it was difficult at first because it is not easy to plan a lesson; I felt excited and fearful at the same time. As we were the same age ... (students and teacher). They said, "So you're going to teach me?" You never know how the students will react."*

As for the trainee teacher F, his comments bring to mind those factors Johnson (1996) (quoted in Borg, 2003: 94) views as “contextual realities” that limit apprentices' practices. First, he emphasized how the level of competence, motivation, and personality of students can affect things. It also points to the fact that classroom design has several limitations:

*"... the first time I taught classes was in the Language Center with an advanced level so it was an easy task, most of the time people in a language center want to learn English, they are not required to study it. They are students who are willing to cooperate, you can ask them to do different activities and they do it happily and know they are learning. However there are some disadvantages in the type of classrooms in the Language Center, the class time can also be a limiting and there is too much noise, it is very hot, etc. "*

Participating learners speak of the gap between theory and practice in terms of the limitations of theory once they started teaching. Although they felt they had enough theory, they lacked practice. One of them also argued that they need a lot of practice and this is something that cannot be provided by the faculty. They believe they will learn to be teachers over time and through experience. This is not something you can get from formal education. It seems that there is basically a gap between the acquisition of theories and skills and the ability to apply it in real practice.

One of the hypotheses that Wubbels et al. (1997) raises about the gap between theory and practice is that when theory is taught without relation to teaching practice it is difficult to access this information once the apprentice is in teaching practice because it has been “compartmentalized.” (p.77). This was shown by one of the participants in declaring that they first learn the whole theory and then use it in their microteaching activities.

### **Third Research Question**

- How do trainees feel the teaching practice they have taken as part of the teacher education programme has helped them bridge the gap between theory and practice when they start working as teachers?

As far as the more experienced students are concerned, their stories of episodes in the classroom point to a lack of self-confidence in their teaching. It is obvious that these apprentices were, in Wallace's words (1990: 89), "to be thrown unprepared into a classroom situation". Apprentice G began working as a teacher when he was in the middle of his studies. He felt that he was not prepared enough to start teaching at that time, and he adopted the strategy that one of the teachers would share during his studies on imitating those teachers who he admired and he liked his way of teaching.

It is interesting to note that learner G preferred to use the direct method with his primary school pupils because he himself learned English through this method. For him, this is the method that was promoted in the ELT program, although in fact the stated objectives of the curriculum should focus mainly on a more up-to-date pedagogy. It is therefore obvious that the ideas of the apprentice G on the method are poorly conceived, perhaps as a consequence of the disinformation given by some of the trainers in the courses of the program, or perhaps because he did not correctly understand the messages transmitted during the pedagogy courses. Ideas about the pedagogy of participant G differ markedly from the inexperienced learners who study in the same program.

During classroom observations, it was observed that their classes were of a traditional type. As part of their routines, learner G discusses grammatical issues by writing some examples on the board and giving an explicit description of the grammar rule through the use of metalanguage and highlighting the key words in sentences. His classes were characterized by the predominance of the teacher's talk, and control. He usually started his class by checking the homework.

On reflection, Dewey (1933) considers that there are certain attitudes and thinking skills that are implicit in the notion of reflection and Schön (1983) favors the intuitive performance of "reflection in action." Likewise, Trappes-Lomax 1999:5) considers reflection as a link between theory and practice. According to these authors, one could say that reflective teachers should be able to view their teaching performance in a critical way so that they become more self-aware of their teaching performance.

It was found in the analysis that apprentices knew how to evaluate themselves. After his self-assessment, Apprentice G tried to find a solution to the problems he identified and said he also asked his instructors for advice. On the other hand, apprentice D confessed that he did not know how to be reflective. Nevertheless he talked about his self-assessment of his teaching. It seems that the students' reflection on their own performance

tended to focus mainly on the negative aspects of their teaching. It also seems that his reflection reflects what Van Manen called the “technical level” (cited in Drever & Cope, 1999: 98), that is to say the emphasis on technical issues such as the material used, the time of each activity, etc. but not the reflection of the teaching-learning processes that are developed in the classes.

## Discussion

The results indicate that trainers and trainees perceive the theory in the sense of the principles established and dictated by experts. They are more familiar with what Eraut (1994) (quoted in Williams, 1999: 14) calls “public theories” that come from books than with the idea of developing their own theories. Although there was some evidence with one of the trainees who attempted to develop the theory of their practice, this was limited to the level of reinforcement of existing theories. Although trainers and trainees think that theory and practice are interdependent, the link between theory and practice is perceived from the traditional educational perspective, assuming that the theoretical aspects of teaching should be applied through the practice of teaching in the classroom. As a result, the practical course trainers end up imparting theories to the students rather than applying the theories in a practical situation.

As for the type and complexity of the theory that is handled in the classes, it was observed that, following a prescriptive approach, the information that was given to the apprentices was controlled by the trainers because they assume that the apprentices may have problems in understanding the theory because of their limited command of the language. Although the acquisition of the theory is important, it is clear that the command of English also has to be improved. In fact, without a certain level of language mastery, it would be difficult to teach effectively (Richards, 1998). Therefore, trainers are trapped in a situation where they have to strike a balance between ensuring that learners acquire the theory and practice in addition to communicative skills of the English language. However, if you look at the program that was written by these trainers, you can see that the theoretical coverage is too broad. As a result, trainers seem to be struggling over time to cover this theoretical content, as well as trying to provide practical assignments to student trainees

Novice teachers felt that not all theories and practical aspects that were learnt on the programme could be applied in their teaching context. Trainees complained of the irrelevance of theory to practical teaching because the theory and practice that was imparted and acquired on the programme was delivered in an ideal situation. Nevertheless, it would be very difficult to implement theory with guidelines precise enough for trainees to use in every teaching situation. This is because every teaching situation has unique contextual features. Hence a programme, which focused on reflection, may well be more effective. This would enable trainees who are entering the classroom to manage the contextual particularities of their teaching circumstances with more confidence. These novice teachers also felt that they were not given sufficient exposure to, and practice in, actual classrooms, as the first practicum does not feature until the third semester of the programme. So trainees

felt it would have been more reasonable to start the practicum in the first semester of the programme. Another way in which trainees addressed this research question was from the perspective of expertise. Their comments confirmed that those trainees with some experience in teaching were still in the “survival” phase as suggested by Tsui (2003). Therefore, for them theory is more related to their immediate needs. Despite a lack of preparation, trainees still felt that they had gained something valuable from the teaching practice and the theories they had learnt in college.

On the other hand, the lack of explicit guidance led to uncertainty and confusion among participants. In their first microteaching presentation, the students appeared to be still poorly prepared, but they felt more self-assured and were able to function more effectively for the second presentation. This was apparently because by then they were more familiar with the various aspects of the practice of microteaching, and had the opportunity to develop their capacity for reflection through the self-assessment and feedback they received from trainers and peers. This could also be seen as evidence that reflexive activity was useful as a tool for apprentices to improve the quality of their practice. In spite of this, the students complained of insufficient supervision during the practice. This lack of supervision could be attributed to the heavy workload of trainers, which could have resulted in instructors not having sufficient time to give effective guidance to learners. An alternative explanation might be that the trainers themselves need to understand that their role as teacher trainers requires them to devote more time to supervision and preparation. In the analysis of the data, we observe that the modifications that the students request of the program comprise three important aspects in terms of theory and practice:

1. More individual, varied and coherent practice
2. More coaching supervision
3. Theory more related to the needs of the students

From the analysis it follows that the course of teaching practices needs to be improved. In order to bridge the gap between theory and practice, it is certainly necessary to improve the current program insofar as it refers to more and better opportunities for reflection. The role of practical activities should be further clarified so that they provide students with a more extensive and reflective preparation. The teaching practice should consist of sessions of micro and macro teaching with group discussion because these activities give students the opportunity to practice and test their own theories and those theories they have learned. In addition, teaching practice should provide students with opportunities to develop competence, confidence and self-assessment habits. Ideally, experienced instructors and teachers could participate as mentors to support apprentices. In this way, learners will greatly benefit from regular and sustained contact with instructors who motivate them to experiment with various pedagogical theories, providing constructive feedback and reflective interaction.

Although the research was done in a single localized context and was not performed with the aim of making generalizations, this does not invalidate this case study. The issues arising from the data collected and the

subsequent presentation of the data can make significant contributions to the debate and practice in a broader field on the application of theory and practice of language teachers. In-depth, small-scale case studies of teacher training courses in Mexico remain relatively small in number. Therefore, this research provides important and valid contributions to the knowledge, deepening our understanding of the experiences shown by the participants, as well as our knowledge of the different situations, and contexts investigated. On the other hand, research projects such as this qualitative case study conducted in a variety of contexts different can help to overcome some gaps in the field of second language teacher education, identifying specific areas that require more research.

Another concern is the subjective nature of the data. Although academic peers for the sake of reliability verified coding and categories, the validity of the findings as a faithful reflection of the actual development of the participants' teaching activities is open to (re) interpretation. This is also related to the issue of transferability, as it will depend on the readers of this research to make judgments about the extent to which the results can be applied to their own situations. In relation to the inherent subjectivity of this study, this should not be considered as a limitation. As Stake (1995: 45) argues, "*subjectivity is not seen as a failure necessary to be eliminated but as an essential element of understanding.*"

There is also the question of whether the participants offered an exact representation of their own contexts in the interviews, something that is difficult to judge. However, the classes observed were actually used as a means to clarify and confirm the issues and concerns expressed by the trainers and trainees during those interviews. These observations provide evidence of whether participants actually do what they say they do, and improve the validity of the research.

Regarding interviews, although a series of questions were prepared as the interview guide, questions were sometimes asked differently for respondents, and the semi-structured nature of the interview means that part of the interview information obtained is not strictly comparable from informant to informant, and no attempt is made to suggest that it is.

This study suggests that there are a number of issues that need to be investigated in the future so that we can achieve a more complete understanding of the integration of theory and practice in teaching the language teacher at the undergraduate level. Borg (1998). It would be equally interesting, if time allowed, carrying out a case study that could observe and videotape the practice of the participants in the teaching practice classes in addition to the corresponding interviews for a longer period than was used in this investigation. This would provide an insight into the learner's thoughts about the process by which theory and practice are integrated. Another possibility would be to extend the field of informants to the entire population in the program by attempting to link quantitative and qualitative methods. After a qualitative approach in reflection, a quantitative

measurement instrument could be constructed that would identify the reflective characteristics of the trainers and the apprentices and then evaluate them. The results could be used to improve the findings of this study and shed new light on theory and practice that could be exploited in later studies.

It is concluded with special emphasis on the efficient and judicious use of reflection during the training of language teachers to make them more independent, giving them the opportunity to develop skills and pedagogical skills through a constructive and reflexive feedback on their own practices and investigate and/or generate theory from these practices taking into account the particularity of their own contexts which would support their future development in the professional setting.

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# **La enseñanza-aprendizaje del inglés en el Ecuador: Una aproximación desde la investigación educativa a las unidades educativas fiscales y rurales en Azogues**

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## **Resumen**

Medidas y cambios en la educación en inglés en el Ecuador han atraído la atención de diferentes sectores. En base a ello, desde el último cuatrimestre del 2016 se está llevando a cabo un proyecto de investigación, liderado por la UNAE, con la intención de conocer de qué manera el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del inglés en los terceros años de bachillerato de ocho unidades educativas fiscales y rurales del cantón Azogues se realiza en el marco del Currículo de Ingles. Este estudio exploratorio determinó, a través de un test, el nivel de dominio de inglés de los estudiantes e identificó en qué competencias lingüísticas tienen mayores y menores dificultades. Además, se ha utilizado la observación directa y se ha aplicado un cuestionario de encuesta a los docentes. Hasta el momento, se ha determinado que los estudiantes poseen un nivel de dominio del inglés deficiente y que los docentes de inglés emplean una metodología tradicionalista; actividades de aprendizaje comunicativas e interactivas son escasas. Los resultados del test corroboran las estadísticas relacionadas al bajo nivel de inglés de los estudiantes ecuatorianos. Consecuentemente, es clave un seguimiento y análisis de la efectividad de las políticas educativas encaminadas a mejorar la enseñanza del inglés.

**Palabras claves:** Educación, currículo, enseñanza-aprendizaje, idioma inglés, investigación educativa.

## **Abstract**

Measures and shifts in English education in Ecuador have attracted the attention of different sectors. On the basis of that information, from the last quarter of 2016 a research project, led by UNAE, is being carried out with the aim of learning about in what ways the English teaching-learning process in the last grade of baccalaureate of eight public, rural educational institutions takes place within the context of the English Curriculum. This exploratory study determined, by means of a test, the English proficiency level of students and identified the linguistic competences the students had the most and the least difficulties with. In addition, direct observation has been employed and a survey questionnaire has been administered to the participating teachers. Thus far, it has been determined that the students have a deficient English proficiency level and the language teaching methodology, employed by the teachers, is traditional; communicative and interactive learning activities are scarce. The test results corroborate statistics regarding the English low level of Ecuadorian

students. Consequently, it is key to conduct a follow-up and analysis of the effectiveness of educational policies focused on the enhancement of the teaching of English.

**Key words:** Education, curriculum, teaching-learning, English language, educational research.

## Introducción

La enseñanza-aprendizaje del inglés ha dado un giro grande en el sistema educativo ecuatoriano en las últimas dos décadas y varias medidas han sido implementadas. Por ejemplo, exámenes internacionales y estandarizados se han convertido en los medios que acreditan la suficiencia de esta lengua extranjera de estudiantes y profesores de distintos niveles educativos. Adicionalmente, en la actualidad se han realizado programas de capacitación para profesores de inglés en ejercicio, programas de posgrado en varias universidades del país (e.g., Universidad de Cuenca, ESPOL, UCSG), se han creado nuevos programas de pregrado (e.g., UNAE), y se están realizando proyectos de investigación sobre diferentes aspectos de educación en inglés liderados por universidades ecuatorianas; entre estas instituciones de educación superior podemos citar la Universidad Técnica de Machala, Universidad de Cuenca y la UNAE. En el pasado, específicamente en los años 90 una de las primeras medidas adoptadas fue la obligatoriedad de la enseñanza del inglés en la educación secundaria ecuatoriana (British Council, 2015). En 1992, por medio de un convenio entre el MinEduc y el British Council una importante reforma curricular para la asignatura de Inglés fue llevada a cabo para las instituciones educativas públicas y fiscomisionales. Por lo tanto, todas estas series de medidas e iniciativas orientadas a mejorar la enseñanza-aprendizaje del idioma inglés indican la importancia brindada a esta asignatura escolar en el sistema educativo ecuatoriano.

La reforma curricular en el área de inglés liderada por el MinEduc y el British Council a través del proyecto denominado Reforma Curricular para el Desarrollo del Aprendizaje de Inglés o Curriculum Reform and Development for the Learning of English (CRADLE), fue aplicado a los colegios a nivel nacional (Calle et al., 2012) en los años 90. Luego el proyecto Fortalecimiento de la Enseñanza del Inglés promovido nuevamente por el MinEduc entró en vigencia. Este proyecto ha pretendido mejorar las competencias lingüísticas de los profesores de inglés como también su práctica docente. Entre los objetivos generales del proyecto se puede citar lo siguiente: la implementación de un currículo nuevo de inglés que responde a los lineamientos establecidos en el Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para la Enseñanza, Aprendizaje, y Evaluación de Lenguas Extranjeras (MCER), la distribución gratuita de textos de inglés alineados al currículo nuevo, la creación e implementación de un sistema nuevo de evaluación basado en pruebas estandarizadas para los profesores de inglés en ejercicio docente y, también, para aquellos que desean ingresar al sector educativo público, entre otras iniciativas (MinEduc, 2016).

Las Directrices Curriculares Nacionales de Inglés (DCNI) para los años escolares octavo, noveno y décimo y para el Bachillerato General Unificado (BGU), elaborado a raíz de la creación del Proyecto de Fortalecimiento de la Enseñanza del Inglés, estuvieron vigentes desde el año 2012 hasta el 2016. Las DCNI presentan algunas características fundamentales. En primer lugar, las DCNI manifiestan que los estudiantes que culminen el BGU deben alcanzar un nivel B1 según el MCER – lo cual debe ser entendido como el objetivo general de este tipo de directrices. Las características principales de las DCNI tienen estrecha relación con el enfoque de Enseñanza Comunicativa de Lenguas (Communicative Language Teaching/ CLT como se le conoce en inglés) y el MCER. Es relevante mencionar que los lineamientos curriculares de inglés fueron forjados en base del MCER y que el CLT constituye la filosofía fundamental en la que las directrices o lineamientos están sustentados (MinEduc, 2012).

Es esencial discutir acerca del enfoque comunicativo-funcional y el MCER debido a que el MinEduc se basó en estos dos componentes al momento de elaborar las DCNI y estos dos elementos tienen un papel transcendental en el Currículo de Inglés actual. El enfoque en cuestión ha sido usado a nivel mundial porque incluye una serie de principios acerca de la naturaleza del lenguaje y sobre la enseñanza y aprendizaje de idiomas, con especial énfasis en la autenticidad. Mientras que el MCER proporciona una base común para la elaboración de lineamientos curriculares y sílabos para la enseñanza-aprendizaje de idiomas. Este marco de referencia ha tenido un importante role en políticas educativas lingüísticas a nivel internacional debido a que ha establecido un camino el cual indica lo que los estudiantes deben conocer y a las destrezas que deben desarrollar para poder comunicarse efectivamente en la lengua meta en distintos niveles de suficiencia (Ureña, 2014; MinEduc, 2012).

Actualmente ha atraído mucha atención la implementación de un currículo de inglés nuevo que contiene estos cinco componentes principales: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Content and Langauge Integrated Learning (CLIL), Internacional Standards/ CEFR, ThinkingSkills, y Learner-CenteredApproach; este currículo nuevo ya ha sido implementado desde el segundo hasta el séptimo grado de Educación General Básica. Sin embargo, la implementación completa se pretende realizar progresivamente en todas las instituciones educativas públicas del país, la cual comenzó en el año lectivo 2016-2017 en la región sierra y en el año lectivo 2017-2018 en la región costa (MinEduc, 2016). Anteriormente la enseñanza del inglés era opcional desde el segundo grado hasta el séptimo grado de EGB y la enseñanza de este idioma era únicamente obligatoria desde el octavo grado hasta el tercer año de bachillerato (MinEduc, 2012).

### **Introducción al problema**

Una enseñanza ineficaz puede tener efectos negativos en la clase de inglés. Esto se evidenció en una investigación llevada a cabo en las instituciones educativas públicos de la ciudad de Cuenca en el marco del Currículo de Inglés anterior, a cargo del proyecto CRADLE. Específicamente, este estudio examinó las prácticas docentes de los profesores de inglés del sector público; los resultados indicaron que varios aspectos afectan al

conocimiento y habilidades de los estudiantes de inglés de educación secundaria. Los factores que dificultan que los estudiantes de secundaria posean un conocimiento adecuado de la lengua inglesa y, consecuentemente, tengan dificultades para comunicarse en esta lengua se relacionan con el uso de una metodología de enseñanza tradicionalista. Esta metodología implica un aprendizaje centrado en el profesor, como también la falta de interacción entre los estudiantes en la lengua inglesa. Otro factor es la confusión que poseen los profesores al intentar implementar estrategias comunicativas en las aulas de clase (Calle et al., 2012).

Por otro lado, Ureña (2014) ha manifestado que se debe tener en cuenta el nivel de suficiencia de inglés requerido a los profesores del sector público, quienes deben poseer un nivel B2 según el MCER. Esto indica que los profesores de inglés solo necesitan ser usuarios independientes, de nivel intermedio alto, del idioma que enseñan, cuando deberían tener un dominio por encima de esto, es decir, debería tener al menos C1, es decir, un usuario competente con dominio operativo eficaz del idioma, si es que se quiere que los estudiantes logren el nivel requerido. Autores como Staehr y Kuhlman (2010) sostienen que el dominio de la lengua inglesa es un requisito profesional que los profesores de este idioma deben cumplir. Sobre el nivel de inglés que los profesores a nivel nacional poseen existen estadísticas que muestran que gran cantidad de docentes no llegan al nivel requerido por el MCER. Rosero (2014) manifiesta que en el 2012 por primera vez 4,089 profesores de inglés fueron evaluados y solo el 0.93% (38 profesores) poseen un nivel B2. Con referencia a esta situación, Ureña (2014) nos plantea la siguiente interrogante: ¿Es posible que los estudiantes alcancen un nivel de suficiencia B1 de la lengua inglesa cuando a sus profesores solo se les requiere poseer un nivel B2? Adicionalmente, en el 2012 la SENESCYT presentó resultados del nivel de inglés de los estudiantes del país y el promedio fue de trece sobre veinte en los estudiantes de décimo de EGB. Los estudiantes del tercer año de BGU obtuvieron el mismo puntaje mientras que los docentes de esta asignatura tienen un nivel de inglés inicial (Ecuador Inmediato, 2012).

A pesar de las innovaciones e iniciativas que formaban parte de la reforma curricular por medio del proyecto CRADLE, el bajo rendimiento de los estudiantes de inglés ha sido evidente. Problema que se refleja al momento que los estudiantes ingresan a la universidad, ya que ellos no logran acceder a niveles intermedios o avanzados de inglés (Calle et al., 2012). En suma, a pesar de los esfuerzos realizados desde los años noventa, únicamente un mínimo de estudiantes del BGU logran alcanzar los niveles deseados de suficiencia del idioma inglés al culminar sus estudios de secundaria. Así mismo, la mayoría de estudiantes universitarios presentan problemas para lograr obtener la acreditación de suficiencia respectiva, según el MCER, lo cual es un requisito actual de graduación (El Comercio, 2016). Esta problemática también se refleja en la dificultad que los estudiantes tienen para acceder a becas internacionales o inclusive para continuar sus estudios en posgrados.

### **Importancia del problema**

En el marco del Currículo de Inglés nuevo, los profesores deben basarse en propósitos comunicativos y en las distintas funciones de la lengua inglesa al momento de planificar e implementar sus lecciones en el aula de clase.

Además, los profesores deben tener un buen conocimiento del MCER y de las metodologías de enseñanza contemporáneas y comunicativas – CLT y CLIL – las cuales tiene un papel principal en el currículo vigente. Es decir, los profesores de inglés deben hacer uso de metodologías que involucren a los estudiantes en una comunicación genuina e interacción auténtica; estos aspectos guardan una estrecha relación con lo que propone el currículo de inglés y con las orientaciones curriculares planteadas por el MCER.

Conocer como los profesores realizan la implementación del Currículo de Inglés en su práctica docente es una temática que no ha sido abordada anteriormente y que merece especial atención por distintos motivos. Al abordar esta temática se conocerá los desafíos y dificultades que los docentes enfrentan en las aulas de clase de las zonas o áreas rurales del sistema educativo ecuatoriano. Además, es de gran relevancia conocer el nivel de inglés que los estudiantes, en el último año de bachillerato de las parroquias rurales de unidades educativas fiscales, poseen. Esto servirá para conocer en qué medida el objetivo general de las DNICI fue alcanzado. Vale la pena recalcar que también este mismo objetivo debe ser alcanzado por los estudiantes al terminar el BGU por medio de una implementación del Currículo de Inglés actual. Como se mencionó anteriormente este objetivo general implica que los estudiantes al culminar el BGU logren un nivel B1 según el MCER y, adicionalmente, que los estudiantes desarrollen una competencia comunicativa (y componentes lingüísticos importantes tales como la sociolingüística y la pragmática) a través del fortalecimiento de la lectura, escritura, comprensión auditiva y expresión oral en el idioma meta.

En este sentido, es primordial conocer si la práctica docente de los profesores de inglés es sustentada en el enfoque metodológico de enseñanza de idiomas que el currículo vigente propone y en qué medida el objetivo general de las DNICI y el currículo actual, ha sido alcanzado. Esto es importante ya que las reformas curriculares de inglés de los últimos veinte años han requerido a los docentes de este idioma extranjero la implementación de una enseñanza basada en un enfoque comunicativo, lo cual podría contribuir positivamente a que los estudiantes al terminar sus estudios de secundaria alcancen el nivel B1; esto les ayudaría a los estudiantes enfrentar de manera más efectiva las actividades académicas y profesionales en el futuro.

La falta de estudios empíricos y de información en la literatura revisada acerca de la enseñanza-aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa (y de la educación en inglés en general) dentro del marco de las(últimas) reformas curriculares de este idioma extranjero deja un vacío el cual debe ser llenado y, precisamente, eso es lo que el presente estudio en curso pretende realizar.

### **Metodología**

Para este estudio se realizó una investigación mixta. En este sentido, según Creswell (2015), la razón principal para la elección de un diseño de investigación mixta radica en que la combinación de datos cuantitativos y cualitativos proporciona un mejor entendimiento acerca de un problema de investigación, lo cual no sería posible

si se recolectaría y analizaría únicamente alguno de estos dos tipos de datos de manera solitaria. La primera parte del estudio comprendió una investigación cuantitativa de tipo exploratorio, la cual fue completada a finales del año 2016. Para Creswell (2008) la metodología exploratoria permite identificar aquellos componentes de un fenómeno educativo a fin de determinar la situación real en el cuál se encuentran los sujetos investigados. En la primera parte de este estudio de investigación mixta, los sujetos investigados fueron los estudiantes en los terceros años de BGUde unidades educativas fiscales de las parroquias rurales del Cantón Azogues. De esta población se buscó determinar su nivel de dominio del idioma inglés, en relación al nivel B1 establecido por el MinEducel cuál debe ser alcanzado por los estudiantes al terminar el BGU.

Para determinar el nivel de dominio de inglés de los estudiantes se aplicó un test, el cual estuvo compuesto por los siguientes componentes fundamentales el idioma inglés: (1) El primer componente evaluó la lectura y uso de inglés de manera conjunta, (2) el segundo componente se centró en la escritura, (3) el tercero midió la comprensión auditiva de los participantes y (4) el cuarto la destreza del habla. 272 estudiantes estuvieron matriculados en los terceros de bachillerato de unidades educativas públicas de las ocho parroquias rurales del Cantón Azogues de la provincia del Cañar durante el año electivo 2016-2017. Se seleccionó una muestra de 160 estudiantes con un 95% de confiabilidad. De los cuales, 142 estudiantes entre féminas y varones de 16 y 18 años realizaron el test; esto corresponde al 88.75% de la población total de estudiantes. Todos los estudiantes recibieron una hoja de consentimiento para la realización del test; sin embargo, únicamente 142 estudiantes entre mayores y menores de edad aceptaron realizar el test en cuestión.

Actualmente se está llevando a cabo la fase de investigación cualitativa del presente estudio el cual fue también de carácter exploratorio. Según Hernández, Fernández y Baptista(2014), un estudio exploratorio se realiza con la finalidad de examinar un problema y/o tema poco investigado o totalmente desconocido. Por lo tanto, mediante este tipo de estudio podemos familiarizarnos con un problema de investigación desconocido, del cual se tiene muchas incertidumbres debido a que no existe un estado actual del conocimiento sobre el problema de investigación. Este tipo de investigación comprendió observaciones directas de clase y, también, se han realizado grupos focales. Las entrevistas a profundidad a los docentes se realizaron durante el mes de Septiembre del año en curso (2017). Para propósitos de este trabajo, el cual brinda resultados parciales de investigación del Proyecto UNAE CIP – 017 –2016 y, por otro lado, intenta identificar y analizar información demográfica clave y puntos de vista de los docentes de inglés en relación a su práctica docente en el marco del Currículo de Ingles actual. Es por ello que se aplicó un cuestionario de encuesta con preguntas abiertas a los docentes participantes, lo cual debe ser entendida como una actividad de investigación adicional al proyecto antes mencionado

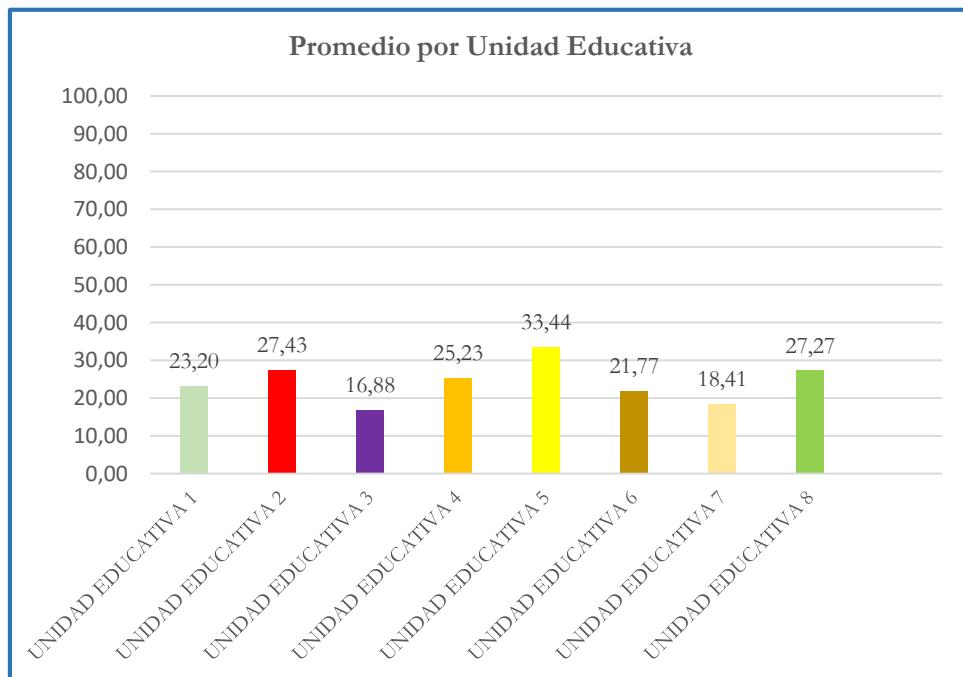
De manera general, las observaciones de clase permitieron conocer como el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa se lleva a cabo dentro del contexto natural de las aulas de clase de instituciones educativas fiscales y rurales; la guía de observación fue elaborada en base a los resultados obtenidos del test aplicado a la

muestra de estudiantes y en base a los componentes claves del Currículo de Ingles. Por otro lado, las preguntas del cuestionario pretendieron identificar los desafíos y dificultades que los profesores de inglés enfrentan en su práctica docente; por lo tanto, estas preguntas permitieron que los docentes participantes expresen y den a conocer sus puntos de vista. Los docentes participantes en total fueron ocho; tres de los ocho docentes poseen títulos universitarios de tercer nivel en enseñanza de inglés, cuatro docentes tienen títulos de tercer nivel en otras áreas de las ciencias de la educación (e.g., Lengua y Literatura y Historia y Geografía) y un docente posee un título en una área distinta a la educación. Más del 50% de los docentes tienen estudios universitarios posteriores a la obtención de su título de tercer nivel; es decir poseen diplomados, un docente posee título de magister y otro docente está actualmente realizando estudios de posgrado.

## Resultados

Como se mencionó en la sección anterior de la metodología, la primera fase de este estudio fue la aplicación de un test que midiese el nivel de inglés actual de los estudiantes, en el tercer año de bachillerato en las ocho unidades educativas fiscales de las parroquias rurales del cantón Azogues, en relación al nivel establecido que los estudiantes deben alcanzar al terminar el BGU según el Currículo de Inglés. Estos resultados se presentan en la Figura 1.

**Figura 1.** Promedio de calificaciones por institución educativa.

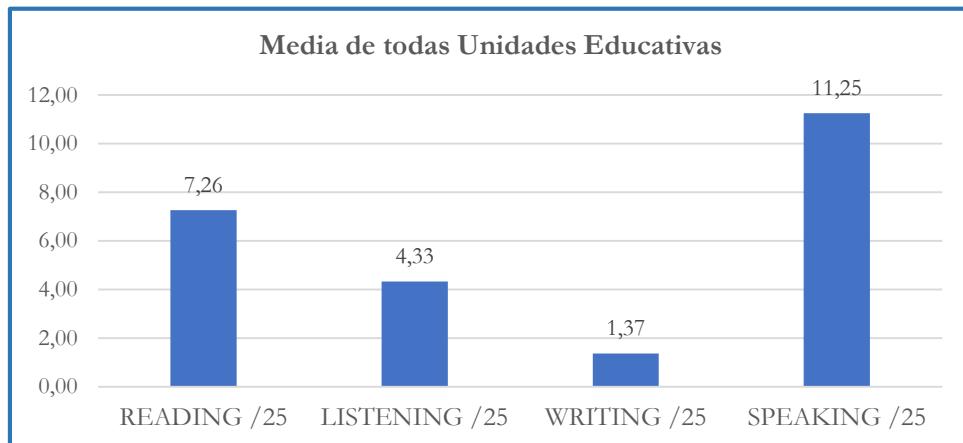


**Fuente:** Elaboración propia.

La Figura 1 muestra que los promedios de los resultados del test aplicado a las unidades educativas participantes se encuentran muy por debajo del objetivo general planteado por el MinEduc para la asignatura de inglés, el cual es que los estudiantes del tercer año de bachillerato alcancen un nivel B1.

La medida de posición central o media de los resultados generales obtenidos por todas las unidades educativas en cada componente o habilidad lingüística evaluada por el test de inglés se presenta en la Figura 2.

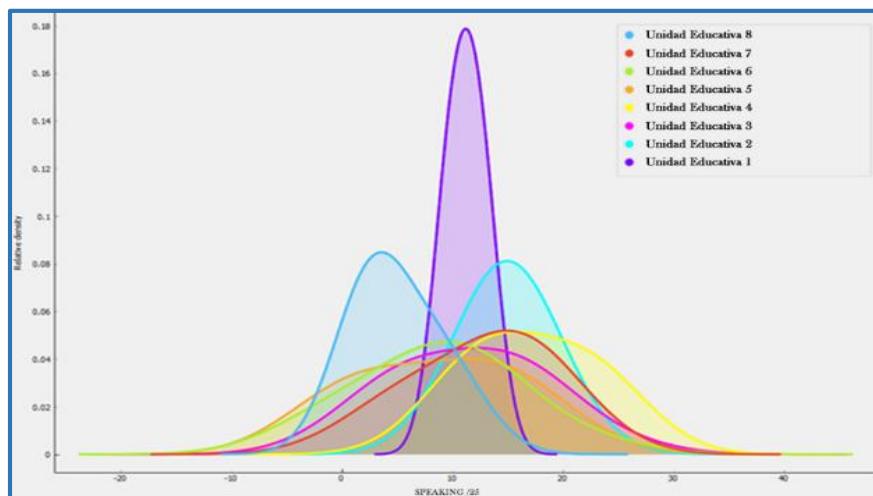
**Figura 2.** Media de los resultados generales obtenidos.



**Fuente:** Elaboración propia

La habilidad lingüística en la que los estudiantes de todas las unidades educativas obtuvieron los mejores resultados, lo cual es ilustrado a través de densidades visuales, se presenta en la Figura 3.

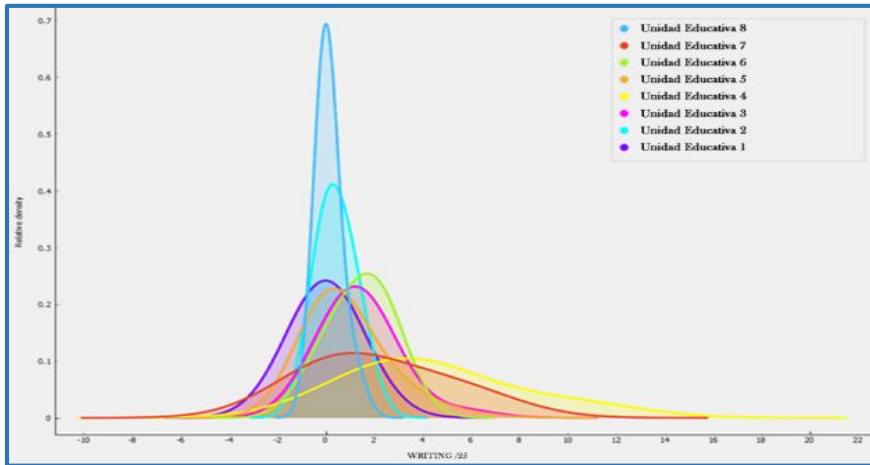
**Figura 3.** Habilidad lingüística con mejores resultados.



**Fuente:** Elaboración propia.

La habilidad lingüística en la que los estudiantes de todas las unidades educativas obtuvieron los resultados más bajos, lo cual es ilustrado a través de densidades visuales, se presenta en la Figura 4.

**Figura 4.** Habilidad lingüística con resultados más bajos.



**Fuente:** Elaboración propia.

A continuación se presentan los puntos clave de las observaciones de clase de manera general. Es importante mencionar que este estudio todavía no ha finalizado y que los resultados incluidos en este trabajo son hallazgos parciales. En cuanto a las observaciones de clase realizadas los resultados son los siguientes: a) La enseñanza de los profesores de inglés se basa mayoritariamente en la técnica de la traducción durante la instrucción de estructuras gramaticales y de vocabulario. Adicionalmente, durante las observaciones de clase realizadas se identificó que no existen espacios de aprendizaje donde una comunicación auténtica e interacciones comunicativas significativas en inglés se las realice entre el profesor y el estudiante y entre los estudiantes. El nivel discursivo de la mayoría de los docentes de inglés observados es limitado; esto provoca que las conversaciones e interacciones que se intentan llevar a cabo en las aulas sean básicas. Los estudiantes no reciben o no están expuestos a una amplio *input* por parte de sus profesores y al momento que los estudiantes intentan interactuar de manera verbal tienen dificultades para hacerlo; por otro lado, cuando existe una interacción comunicativa verbal entre profesor-estudiante las respuestas que los estudiantes proporcionan se centran en declaraciones afirmativas y negativas cortas.

Otro tema principal y recurrente que fue observado en las aulas de clase fue una instrucción basada casi exclusivamente en el texto de inglés entregado por el MinEduc. Es decir, los docentes observados hacen uso del libro de inglés como su material didáctico principal. Gran parte del desarrollo de las clases brindadas por los docentes se concentran en solicitar a sus estudiantes que completen los ejercicios del libro de manera independiente. Por lo tanto, fue muy limitado o casi inexistente la elaboración de materiales didácticos por parte

de los docentes observados y de la implementación de trabajos o actividades de aprendizaje grupales o en parejas basados en el interés e necesidades de los estudiantes.

Por último, se presenta la información más relevante obtenida a través de un cuestionario de encuesta con preguntas abiertas realizada a los ocho docentes de inglés de las unidades educativas participantes. El objetivo del cuestionario fue determinar los desafíos, retos y/o problemas que los docentes enfrentan en sus clases en el marco del Currículo de Inglés actual. Las respuestas de los docentes, quienes forman parte de unidades educativas fiscales de parroquias rúlares y están a cargo de la enseñanza del inglés en los terceros años de bachillerato, se centran principalmente en lo siguiente: la falta de equipos tales como proyectores y (suficientes) grabadoras y también la falta de laboratorios de inglés dificultan la enseñanza-aprendizaje de esta asignatura. Además, la entrega tardía de los libros de inglés provoca inconvenientes para planificar e iniciar las clases. Adicionalmente, responsabilidades al enseñar otras asignaturas, al ejercer funciones administrativas, y al tener una carga horaria elevada causan preocupación ya que esto no permite tener tiempo suficiente para la enseñanza del idioma inglés. Otro aspecto es la dificultad que algunos profesores enfrentan para desarrollar las destrezas lingüísticas de la comprensión auditiva y del habla en sus estudiantes. Por último, se cree conveniente incluir el siguiente punto de vista obtenido a través de la aplicación del cuestionario; las afirmaciones son claves en lo referente a aspectos que influyen en el nivel de inglés de los estudiantes en los últimos años del BGU:

*“No contar actualmente con un colega preparado en el área. Éste factor influye mucho [...] en el nivel de conocimiento del idioma por parte de los estudiantes. Éste es el mayor reto que tengo como docente el de enseñar a los estudiantes que llegan a los cursos de bachillerato sin bases o con muy pocas bases de conocimientos en el idioma. Ésta es una lamentable realidad [...]”*

### **Discusión**

El objetivo central del proyecto Fortalecimiento de la Enseñanza del Inglés, el cual fue establecido en el año 2012 y el cual sostiene que para el año 2017 los estudiantes que terminan el BGU de la región Sierra alcanzarían un nivel B1. Sin embargo, este objetivo no se cumplió en las instituciones o unidades educativas participantes. Lamentablemente los estudiantes rurales investigados muestran un nivel muy básico de inglés; este nivel correspondería a un nivel A1 según el MCER. Estos resultados evidencian que las políticas educativas planteadas en el 2012 por medio del proyecto antes mencionado y el cual tuvo como meta mejorar el aprendizaje del inglés no ha dado resultados satisfactorios, al menos en lo que respecta a los estudiantes de bachillerato de las instituciones educativas participantes de este estudio.

Debido a que la mayoría de docentes no tienen estudios universitarios en enseñanza de la lengua inglesa y poseen un nivel de inglés no adecuado para dictar clases en este idioma extranjero, el uso constante de la técnica de la traducción y de una enseñanza centrada principalmente en estructuras gramaticales, donde el profesor es el

centro del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, fue evidente en las clases observadas. Este tipo de enseñanza no se sustenta en los principios centrales del Currículo de Ingles, el cual intenta fomentar una instrucción basada en la comunicación e interacción y donde la lengua inglesa sea el medio para aprender, reforzar y descubrir temas importantes que pertenecen a las distintas asignaturas escolares. También en este tipo de instrucción los deseos, intereses y necesidades de los estudiantes de inglés no deben ser omitidos.

El Currículo de Inglés fomenta una instrucción basada en el enfoque comunicativo de enseñanza de idiomas, lo cual implica que los estudiantes se conviertan en el centro del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje y que sus necesidades e intereses sean tomados en cuenta. Asimismo es importante fomentar una comunidad de aprendizaje colaborativa donde los estudiantes puedan construir conocimientos, generar entendimiento, intercambiar significados, cometer errores y asumir riesgos (Long, 1996; Richards, 2006; Ahmad & Rao, 2012; Prasad, 2013). Por lo tanto, una instrucción basada en estas características debe ser implementada en las aulas de clase en el marco del currículo actual.

La carencia de una instrucción basada en principios esenciales como la comunicación y la interacción tiene un efecto negativo en el nivel de dominio de la lengua meta entre los estudiantes; esto se evidencia en los resultados del test aplicado. Existe un nivel insatisfactorio de desarrollo de las habilidades lingüísticas principales y los estudiantes tienen dificultades en la escritura y en la parte oral del idioma inglés; esto indica que se tiene que tomar medidas para mejorar las destrezas productivas. Como indica Brandl (2008) una enseñanza comunicativa debe hacer uso de situaciones de la vida real donde la comunicación e interacción tengan un papel primordial. En este sentido Richards (2006) sostiene que factores positivos para el aprendizaje del inglés como idioma extranjero involucra que los estudiantes participen en una comunicación e interacción significativa debido a que esto facilita el aprendizaje de un segundo idioma. Nunan (1991) añade que se debe tener en cuenta que la comunicación e interacción, entre otras cosas, facilita el aprendizaje de funciones y estructuras del idioma meta de una manera efectiva. Adicionalmente, Hoang-Thu (2009) señala que la interacción comunicativa facilita la adquisición ya que ello ayuda a la producción del idioma de los estudiantes de una segunda lengua.

La literatura concerniente a la adquisición y enseñanza de idiomas es clara al señalar la importancia de exponer a los estudiantes a un *comprehensible input* o insumos/informaciones comprensibles durante el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje. Se idéntico que tres factores principales son los impiden a los estudiantes recibir comprensible input: a) la mayoría de docentes no tienen formación universitaria en pedagogía o docencia en inglés, b) los docentes poseen un limitado nivel de suficiencia en el idioma que enseñan, y c) el uso de materiales didácticos (e.g., visual aids) es escaso. Ellis (1991) manifiesta que el proceso subconsciente de adquisición de una segunda lengua se lleva a cabo cuando se logra que los aprendices reciben comprensible input. Además, Long (1983) menciona que tener acceso y recibir comprensible input tiene un papel central para una adquisición de idiomas de manera exitosa y cuando los estudiantes experimentan una mayor cantidad de

comprehensible input esto causa que la adquisición un segundo idioma sea más rápido. Lee (1997) indica que comprehensible input puede ser generado al involucrar activamente a los estudiantes en actividades comunicativas que requieren de una constante interacción.

La principal dificultad que los docentes enfrentan, según sus puntos de vista, es la falta de equipos tecnológicos y la carencia de recursos didácticos. El tener acceso y hacer uso de este tipo de recursos en clases puede tener varios beneficios en el proceso de aprendizaje de los estudiantes rurales de inglés. Es por ello que los docentes deben ser dotados al menos con los equipos básicos para una enseñanza alineada a la era digital en la que vivimos; sin embargo, los docentes deben buscar alternativas que puedan sustituir la carencia de equipos y recursos didácticos modernos. Un avance en este tema podría ser elaborar su propio material didáctico y hacer uso de otras fuentes y recursos y no basar ampliamente su enseñanza en el texto guía de inglés. Crear materiales que ayuden a entender el input que debe ser proporcionado en inglés durante las clases, dentro de un contexto donde se favorezca a actividades de aprendizaje basadas en la comunicación e interacción ayudaría a los estudiantes en su viaje por aprender mejor y alcanzar la meta general del Currículo de Inglés.

### **Conclusiones y Sugerencias**

La situación de la enseñanza-aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa en las unidades educativas fiscales, especialmente en las áreas rurales del Ecuador, no ha logrado una mejoría representativa pese al cambio del currículo de inglés antiguo, a cargo del proyecto CRADLE, por el Currículo de Inglés vigente, el cual tuvo su génesis en las Directrices Curriculares Nacionales de Inglés (DCNI); las mismas que estuvieron vigentes desde el 2012 hasta el 2016 y fueron actualizadas en el 2014. En este contexto, los programas de capacitación docente dentro y fuera del país y el requerimiento que los docentes han enfrentado por mejorar su nivel de dominio de inglés pueden ser vistos como medidas positivas. Sin embargo, de este tipo de programas no se han beneficiado todos los docentes de inglés del país, lo cual refleja una serie de desigualdades significativas y se puede evidenciar en los resultados obtenidos hasta el momento por este estudio.

El test permitió corroborar las estadísticas relacionadas al bajo nivel de suficiencia del idioma inglés en el Ecuador; los resultados originales obtenidos hasta el momento por esta investigación (en curso) indican que el nivel de dominio en esta lengua extranjera por parte de los estudiantes de unidades educativas públicas de las zonas o parroquias rurales es deficiente. Este resultado nos pone de manifiesto de que las políticas educativas referentes a la enseñanza del idioma inglés en las instituciones educativas públicas todavía no han sido suficientemente óptimas para que los estudiantes que culminan la secundaria logren el nivel de dominio de inglés (B1) establecido por el MinEduc. De manera general las competencias lingüísticas del idioma inglés de los participantes del estudio son muy limitadas, especialmente la competencia lingüística de la escritura y de la comprensión auditiva.

Una instrucción basada en metodologías comunicativas y contemporáneas de enseñanza de idiomas(e.g., CLT, CLIL, TBLT) deben tener un papel central en las aulas de clase en el marco del currículo vigente; hacer uso de este tipo de metodología de enseñanza no es algo nuevo en el contexto educativo ecuatoriano ya que iniciativas basadas en el enfoque comunicativa de enseñanza de idiomas y reformas curriculares alienadas a este enfoque han estado presentes en el Ecuador desde hace más de dos últimas décadas. Una instrucción basada en este tipo de metodologías permitirá que los estudiantes adquieran componentes importantes de la lengua inglés, tales como estructuras gramaticales y vocabulario, dentro de un contexto significativo y autentico y no de manera inconsistente y aislada

Los profesores encargados de la asignatura de inglés deben tener estudios universitarios o algún tipo de formación académica formal en docencia o pedagogía de la lengua inglesa. Por otro lado, programas de educación continua orientados a profesores en ejercicio que no tengan estudios previos en docencia en inglés deberían ser implementados por el MinEduc con ayuda de las universidades. Esta medida sería clave ya que muchos docentes son asignados para enseñar inglés por distintos motivos; por ejemplo, para completar la carga horaria de 40 horas a la semana y porque existe un déficit de profesores de inglés en el país.

Es evidente que los resultados alcanzados no son satisfactorios en la población estudiantil del país y que su nivel de suficiencia de la lengua inglesa es uno de los más bajos en Latinoamérica, lo cual es una gran preocupación y amerita que se realicen investigaciones profundas y a largo plazo que contribuyan a solucionar los problemas ya identificados. Los académicos, con el apoyo necesario de las universidades, deben jugar un papel trascendental en este sentido.

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# **Chapter 4**

## **SOCIAL CONTEXT**

# Approaching to Clil Methodology

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## Resumen

La metodología CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), realiza un doble enfoque educativo, utiliza un lenguaje adicional a la lengua materna para llevar a cabo eficazmente la enseñanza y el aprendizaje del contenido y del lenguaje simultáneamente; lo que permite proyectar al estudiante hacia el mundo globalizado, ya que en el proceso de aprendizaje se mantiene una comunicación efectiva mediante la presentación de contextos cotidianos en otro idioma, la cognición que se convierte en situaciones de aprendizaje relevante ya que nace de la necesidad del estudiante, la cultura elemento indispensable para que el estudiante compare, intervenga y se apasione por hechos importantes de su realidad y de la cultura de la nación del idioma que se está aprendiendo, para lo cual es importante determinar la implementación de la metodología clil en el aprendizaje del idioma inglés, y se viabilizó mediante la aplicación del método lógico deductivo se consideró premisas generales y con la aplicación de la técnica de encuesta e instrumento se estructuró un cuestionario en una población de 20 docentes de la Unidad Educativa Hispanoamérica de la ciudad de Riobamba, durante el período 2016-2017, y se llegó a la conclusión que la metodología CLIL, es empleada solo por la docente del área de inglés, y considerada como una materia lo que imposibilita el dominio idiomático de los estudiantes, para lo cual se puede recomendar que se implemente la metodología CLIL para conseguir la fluidez al comunicarse, comprensión de textos en el idioma inglés pero sobre todo exista un intercambio cultural.

**Palabras claves:** estrategia, metodología, CLIL, aprendizaje, idioma, inglés

## Abstract

Content and language integrated learning, abbreviated as CLIL, is generally defined as a dual-focused approach to education, where a foreign language and a subject area (content) are integrated during teaching (Coyle et al. 1). In the same respect, Lasagabaster and Sierra describe CLIL as a methodology, a pedagogical approach, an educational approach, and an innovative educational practice in a given context (4). Similarly, the glossary presented by University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations suggests the definition for CLIL as “an approach in which a foreign language is used as a tool in the learning of a non-language subject in which both language

and the subject have a joint role” (1). In another form of definition by Marsh, he describes CLIL as “Any dual-focused educational context in which an additional language, which is not usually the mother tongue of the learners involved, is used as a medium for teaching and learning a non-language content” (15).

**Keywords:** strategy, methodology, CLIL, learning, language, English

### **CLIL methodology in English language learning**

Clil methodology in English language learning at the Hispano-America High School, Riobamba- Ecuador.

Towards the end of the 20th Century, global educational practitioners such as the Council of Europe and the European Commission had raised concern and awareness on the need to promote the learning of foreign languages throughout the educational systems. Among the earliest charters commissioning the introduction of foreign languages in teaching systems were the Canadian French Immersion programs, which were developed during the 1960s. By the year 1995, the European Commission had published a White Paper entitled *Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society*. In this publication, the European Commission stated that everyone should be able to communicate effectively in at least two European languages other than their mother tongue (Lasagabaster & R, 2015).

As a precursor to the European adoption of CLIL approaches, the European Commission further affirmed that it was necessary to start learning a foreign language as early as pre-school level. In the same year, the European Council resolution emphasized the importance of implementing innovative content-language learning methods like to accommodate bilingual and intensively integrated teaching. The resolutions published by the Council also underscored the importance of providing effective language training methodologies to guide teachers within the European education systems.

In contemporary times, CLIL as a topical subject is witnessing a substantial upwelling in popularity across different geographical contexts. Going by Oliver Meyer, “CLIL is increasingly being taken up by Ministries of Education as an innovative approach to teaching modern languages, and as a motivational method used to teach subject areas, or plainly as "a contribution to internationalization and the principle of multilingualism" (Meyer, 2010). However, even in the wake of exponential growth and documented potential, very limited methodological resources and practical guidance on CLIL currently exist. Practitioners have expressed legitimate concerns over the lack of a comprehensive and integrative CLIL methodology, as well as the limited development of appropriate CLIL teaching materials (Meyer, 2010) Building on this premise, educational practitioners may consequently fail to attain the inherent potentials of the CLIL approach unless they are capable of accessing and attaining the methodological competencies required bringing this innovative instructional approach to life. With a well-defined methodological framework for CLIL, educational

practitioners will be able to embrace a specific mindset and thus ensure quality dominates teaching and learning through CLIL (Coyle & D, 2010).

The Ecuadorian educational reality in its attempt to improve its quality was planted in the Curricular Reform 2017 to the CLIL methodology as the solution for learning the English language, however it is structured in such a way that only its application in this area is identified, which really differs for its effectiveness; therefore it is necessary that there is an empowerment of what must be done so that all educational action uses the principles of the CLIL methodology and in this way to enter the globalized world of multilingualism; even more so when the Ecuadorian educational system offers an international Baccalaureate in several of its institutions.

### **Importancia del problema**

CLIL is currently used across all levels of education, from primary, secondary, to tertiary level. As a teaching approach, CLIL prepares linguistically and interculturally employable professionals who can enter the internationalized modern labor market (Hillyard). Often, content teachers are not uncommonly monolingual, and on many occasions, they may not be privy to the benefits of being bilingual. On the other hand, their language-teaching counterparts may not be exceptionally proficient in the subject-area knowledge mandatory for content teaching. In response to this contrast, education practitioners and policy developers across the globe currently insist on CLIL implementation in order to establish teaching workforces that are sufficiently competent in three content-language integration areas (Hillyard 4). These areas of focus include: subject knowledge, target language ability, and CLIL methodology. According to Hillyard, CLIL is an umbrella approach covering many context-bound varieties. Expectedly, there are as many models of CLIL as there are content and language teachers. CLIL experts have thus come up with various CLIL designs and quality training models at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Coyle, however, states “There is no single blueprint of CLIL that can be applied in the same way in different countries” (5). Coyle et al. summarized the basic types of CLIL models as follows:

- **Monolingual education:** where learners are in their native country, learning a subject-area through CLIL. Nevertheless, some learners may be non-native speakers, for example in Slovenia.
- **Bilingual education:** where learners learn over 50 % or more of their curricular subject areas in a foreign or second language (L2) (For example, in The Netherlands, Hungary, Argentina’s private sector, and Canada)
- **Multilingual education:** where students learn curricular subject areas in three or more different languages (For example, in The Basque Country, Latvia, and in Cataluña.)

- **Plurilingual education:** where learners are taught several languages, but one or more of them is taught through CLIL (For example, in Australia.)

The other common CLIL models described by Hillyard include: immersion education (for example *Språkbad*, in Sweden); integrated education curriculum (e.g. in Spain); Languages-across-the-curriculum (such as *FremdsprachealsArbeitssprache*, in Austria); and Language-enriched-instruction (e.g. in Finland) (4).

As there is sufficient evidence of the effectiveness of CLIL in English language learning around the world, specifically in Finland, Canada, Australia and the United States, it is imperative to expand CLIL studies in Ecuador, the present research work is a contribution to continue developing works that contribute to the implementation of this methodology that seeks not only the language domain of several languages, but also to contribute in an effective way in the integral formation of the student, who must respond to demands not only local or regional, must be projected internationally with the vision of a globalized world, with knowledge and full respect of the cultural diversity that the planet possesses.

### **Methodology**

The present investigation had used the deductive method, that logical procedure that goes from the universal to the particular being its function to find the unknown principle of a known fact or phenomenon. That is, to look for the relation between the phenomena with the law that governs it, since the law is universal, therefore, that phenomenon or fact is framed within the law (Arellano, 1997), which allowed establishing international parameters of the educational context which invited to the internationalization of content for student mobility.

### **Research Objective:**

To apply Clil methodology in learning English language process at the Hispano America High School in the academic period 2016-2017 of Riobamba City.

Type of investigation

### **Descriptive Investigation**

The modality of the investigation corresponds to a descriptive and feasible project, which allows to solve the main problems after the diagnosis and is based on the theoretical basis. They not only determine the variables in a proposal but also execute and evaluate the impact of the projects. Descriptive Research according to Leiva (1996) "consists in the study of a present, present reality, as to fact, people situations etc." The research is based on the observation sheets applied by the teachers and allows to conclude and recommend the implementation of CLIL methodology for the idiomatic domain.

## Technique and Instrument

To collect the needed information we used a survey, in which the people to whom the survey was directed answered some questions in a written way, being the questionnaire the instrument that links the investigation objectives and the studied reality. The purpose of the questionnaire is to obtain, in a systemic way, information of the researched population and to the variables that are being studied (Herrera & Arnaldo, 2004); in this case that the object of study with the results obtained and submitted by the application of Pearson's correlation descriptive statistical study was found a bilateral significance of 0.808 between the English language learning variable and the application of the CLIL methodology.

## Population

|   |   | Correlaciones   |                          |                      |  |                           |                               |
|---|---|---|--------------------------|----------------------|--|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
|   |   | Características del aprendizaje idiomático aplicando CLIL | Estrategia metodológicas | Área de desempeño    | Conocimiento para el desempeño docente | Necesidad de aplicar CLIL | Aprendizaje del idioma inglés |
| Características del aprendizaje idiomático aplicando CLIL | Correlación de Pearson<br>Sig. (bilateral)<br>N | 1   | ,596**<br>,000           | ,553*<br>,012        | ,323<br>,165                           | -,216<br>,360             | -,216<br>,360                 |
|   |   | 20  | 20                       | 20                   | 20                                     | 20                        | 20                            |
|   |   |   |                          |                      |  |                           |                               |
| Estrategia metodológicas                                  | Correlación de Pearson<br>Sig. (bilateral)<br>N | ,596**<br>,006<br>20                                      | 1<br>,000<br>20          | ,960**<br>,000<br>20 | ,649**<br>,002<br>20                   | ,056<br>,815<br>20        | ,000<br>1,000<br>20           |
|   |   |   |                          |                      |  |                           |                               |
|   |   |   |                          |                      |  |                           |                               |
| Área de desempeño   | Correlación de Pearson<br>Sig. (bilateral)<br>N | ,553*<br>,012<br>20                                       | ,960**<br>,000<br>20     | 1<br>,000<br>20      | ,774**<br>,000<br>20                   | -,014<br>,952<br>20       | -,050<br>,833<br>20           |
|   |   |   |                          |                      |  |                           |                               |
|   |   |   |                          |                      |  |                           |                               |
| Conocimiento para el desempeño docente                    | Correlación de Pearson<br>Sig. (bilateral)<br>N | ,323<br>,165<br>20  | ,649**<br>,002<br>20     | ,774**<br>,000<br>20 | 1<br>,000<br>20                        | -,034<br>,888<br>20       | -,076<br>,751<br>20           |
|   |   |   |                          |                      |  |                           |                               |
|   |   |   |                          |                      |  |                           |                               |
| Necesidad de aplicar CLIL                                 | Correlación de Pearson<br>Sig. (bilateral)<br>N | -,216<br>,360<br>20                                       | ,056<br>,815<br>20       | -,014<br>,952<br>20  | -,034<br>,888<br>20                    | 1<br>,000<br>20           | ,808**<br>,000<br>20          |
|   |   |   |                          |                      |  |                           |                               |
|   |   |   |                          |                      |  |                           |                               |
| Aprendizaje del idioma inglés                             | Correlación de Pearson<br>Sig. (bilateral)      | -,216<br>,360   | ,000<br>1,000            | -,050<br>,833        | -,076<br>,751                          | ,808**<br>1               |                               |
|   |   |   |                          |                      |  |                           |                               |

|   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|   | N | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 |
| **. La correlación es significativa en el nivel 0,01 (bilateral). |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| *. La correlación es significativa en el nivel 0,05 (bilateral).  |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |

## Results

The N value corresponds to the population under study in a number of 20 elements, having a significant correlation between the variables: methodological strategies and the characteristics of the language learning applying CLIL.

And also the need to apply CLIL in language learning English is very meaningful.

The population as a whole state that it is necessary to implement the mention methodology to learn English, denoting a great relevance in the area of performance in which teaching is taking place, the interest that the teacher shows for the application of the clil methodology, regardless of its domain area is generalized, which allows to implementate various strategies such as cultural interest as an element of language acquisition breaking in this way the grammatical barriers, the structure ceases to be a direct part of the learning process, the fluid dialogue generated from the student interest centers as conversations that can take place in a commercial center or when they go to the cinema, the significance between the application of Clil methodology when the students learn English, is relevant because it implies that dealing with the content of subjects other than English, is dealing with curricular contents with are relevance , and enables the student to generate a meaningful learning.

As results of this research can be established that the need to implemented clil methodology in English language learning is fundamental, being the subject of further researchs as the detailed exploration of each of Clil's methodological characteristics.

## Discusión

As a tool in the education context, institutions in which teaching and learning of particular subject areas of the curriculum take place in a foreign, regional, or minority language have been in existence in Europe and the Americas for several decades now. Prior to the 1970s, this type of provision (CLIL) was mostly offered in regions that were linguistically idiosyncratic or in the largest cities. This cultural shift in language was because either as result of the fact that they lived near national borders or people in these areas used two languages to communicate in these regions. CLIL thus involved a very limited numbers of students who were growing up in fairly unconventional linguistic or social contexts. The purpose of learning content using a foreign language was to turn the young learners into bilingual speakers, thus enabling them to acquire proficiency in languages comparable to that of the native speakers. Prior to the introduction of the term CLIL, the terms 'bilingual' and

'multilingual' were generally used to denote this kind of provision schools education or teaching curricula (Lasagabaster and BeLoqui).

In the context of the present study, the acronym CLIL represents a generic umbrella-term that describes all types of provision where a second language (whether foreign, regional, a minority language, and/or, another official state language) is used to teach particular subjects in the education curriculum other than languages modules themselves.

CLIL doubles up as a platform for an innovative methodological approach of far beyond the scope of language teaching (Coyle et al.). Accordingly, owing to its dual nature, the CLIL methodology strives to develop proficiency in both the non-language subject-area, as well as the secondary language through which the teachers communicate content. The CLIL methodology must thus take into account the importance of attaching equal significance to both language and content (Eurydice, 7-8). In addition, to achieve this twofold objective successfully, it is necessary to develop a specific methodological approach to teaching the non-language content in a foreign language.

In CLIL learning, the sustainability of teaching and learning is indispensable since teachers have to meet the duality demands of multilingual teaching without compromising the content or language aspects. To over come this significant methodology obstacle, the following section outlines recommendations on best practices that will facilitate the teaching the specific content as well as the acquisition/learning of a foreign language. The following are recommendations that when incorporated into CLIL methodology, will make learning more sustainable:

First, with respect to Content and Syllabus Development, it is important to create connections between the students' knowledge, attitudes, and experience through content/syllabus tailoring (Creese and Blackledge). Secondly, because CLIL is still an evolving field, teachers must keep up with the pace of technological developments in the field by incorporating the use of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in teaching resources, and in the development of interactive methodologies (Favilli et al.). Interactive technologies can help learners with verbal content acquisition and visual subject cognition. Third, innovative material aids like advance graphic organizers should be used to make the content learning process transparent and clear structured. Fourthly, CLIL learning environments are far from the conventional, thus, as a recommendation Cenoz, suggests that learning environments should not be restricted to specific models that are applicable to the practitioners' context. Instead, they should be open to continuous revision of CLIL practices from across the world (22). Additionally, CLIL needs to address methodology limitations present in receptive processing. Therefore, an effective methodology has to encompass student-centered cooperative activities in order to both strike a balance between teacher-centered communication and the message presentation between

a sender and recipient. The other recommendation advanced by Meyer includes the need to endorse autonomous learning by introducing digital portfolio work (through blogs, posters, websites, learning diaries, etc.) into CLIL methodology (22).

In their recommendation, Creese and Blackledge rallied for the adoption of a *translanguaging* approach to multilingual methodology by making deliberate use of the L1 to reinforce the learning process. *Transmediation* activities, which are derived from the *translanguaging* approach, help to transfer key contents in instruction media i.e. a newspaper, website, or video content from one language to another. An innovative methodology should also contain a lexical approach to instruction and regress from using isolated words or word lists. Finally, the CLIL-Pyramid can serve as the building foundation for a cyclical syllabus, which in turn promotes spiral learning and lays great emphasis on learning and study skills.

### **Conclusion**

In order to unravel the intrinsic latency of CLIL, a holistic methodology that can transcend over the traditional duality between content and language teaching is necessary. Going by Coyle et al., the essential transition from knowledge transmission into knowledge creation in any multilingual settings necessitates that students should possess skills in cognitive assimilation and conception of new knowledge in their mother tongue (153). The students in a CLIL context should not only be adept in their first language as a medium for content instruction, but should also be capable of using foreign languages to create meaning. Consequently, to accomplish 'life-shaping' potential through the CLIL methodology, language and content instructors need to prepare their students for the present cultural challenges that come with globalization. This calls for the inculcation of cross-cultural values, emphasizing cognitive and emotional learning skills, nurturing a cosmopolitan identity, and a genuine curiosity towards learning new content (Favilli et al., 378). The 4Cs-Conceptual Framework that was discussed in this study offers a comprehensive pedagogical and methodological base for a reasonably viable CLIL teaching and learning. The quality principles introduced in this research were intended to aid CLIL-teachers in the construction of CLIL methodologies, consequently enriching their lessons and materials. On the other hand, the CLIL-Pyramid introduced by Oliver Meyer (23) offers a tested sequence used to integrate those principles into methodologies developed for CLIL units. However, the exact potential of the CLIL Pyramid lies in the support it offers in the establishment and conservation of connections between diverse subjects/topics/units. Bearing this in mind, the skills, literacies, and competencies outlined in this study hold the potential to alter how we currently structure multilingual classroom learning, and how we think about curriculum planning drastically.

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# **Classroom Teachers' Perceptions on Inclusive Education**

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## **Abstract:**

This article presents the analysis of teachers' perceptions on inclusion at Amarilis Fuentes Alcivar High School of Guayaquil, Ecuador. This study also explains how important teachers' attitudes are to be successful on inclusion education. In addition, this study presents the importance of the problem and the theoretical framework where some definitions of teachers' attitudes are presented by different authors. It also analyses different concepts of inclusion education given by some institutions and finally the principles of inclusive education are presented. The analyses showed evidence of positive teachers' perceptions on the inclusive education. However, 60% of teachers stated that they totally agree about students with special needs should attend classes in centers where they can be attended by trained professionals on inclusion.

**Keywords:** integration, teachers' perceptions, inclusive education, special needs, principals of inclusive education

## **Resumen:**

Este artículo presenta el análisis de las percepciones de los profesores sobre la inclusión en la Escuela Secundaria Amarilis Fuentes Alcívar de Guayaquil, Ecuador. Este estudio también explica cómo las actitudes de los maestros son importantes para tener éxito en la educación inclusiva. Además, este estudio presenta la importancia del problema y el marco teórico donde algunas definiciones de actitudes de los profesores son presentadas por diferentes autores. Este artículo también analiza diferentes conceptos de educación inclusiva dados por algunas instituciones y finalmente se presentan los principios de la educación inclusiva. Los análisis mostraron evidencia de percepciones positivas de los profesores sobre la educación inclusiva. Sin embargo, el 60% de los maestros declararon estar totalmente de acuerdo en que los estudiantes con necesidades especiales

deben asistir a clases en centros donde pueden ser atendidos por profesionales capacitados en inclusión.

**Palabras claves:** integración, percepciones de los maestros, educación inclusiva, necesidades especiales, principios de la educación inclusiva

### **Introduction**

During the past two decades some philosophies have changed about the education of children with disabilities and several countries including Ecuador. It has implemented policies that allow the inclusion of these students to regular schools. Although, the inclusion in education has been increasing in the last decades, there are some aspects that need to improve to be successful in this change, it is teachers' perceptions on inclusion.

Avramidis & Norwich (2002) states teachers' attitude might be influenced by some factors which are, in many ways, interrelated. For example, most of integration attitude, studies reviewed earlier, responses appeared to vary according to disabling conditions (p.143). According to Clough and Lindsay (1991) teachers' concepts of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) normally consists of types of disabilities, their prevalence and the educational needs they exhibited (p. 532). Furthermore, Peacock (2016) states that inclusion classrooms have presented challenges for general and special education teachers. Successful inclusion classrooms depend upon positive of both mainstream and special education teachers (p.7).

In Ecuador, the inclusive education is established in (LOEI in Spanish *Ley Orgánica de Educación Intercultural*), agreement No. 295-13, through which it is issued the regulations concerning the attention to students with special educational needs in ordinary educational establishments or specialized educational institutions (2011). Moreover, the article 47 established in LOEI also refers to the education of people with disabilities, states both formal and non- formal education will support the special educational needs of people in the affective, cognitive and psychomotor (2011). This study also reviews the body of literature on inclusion, its concepts, and principles.

### **Importance of the problem**

This investigation is important because it is necessary to know teachers' perceptions towards students with special needs in regular schools, since their attitudes play a meaningful role to be successful on inclusive education. This study will be an effective help to solve a social problem that has been analyzed by different researchers for about two decades. Therefore, this study will be focused on the analysis of the guarantee of the right to a quality education according to different institutions of Ecuador. Furthermore, this study is important because it will help to decrease the exclusion in education, through training courses for teachers which will help them to change their point of view towards students with disabilities and give those students the opportunity to develop in an educational environment which allows access to quality education.

## Theoretical Framework

Granada, Pomés, & Sanhueza (2013) teachers' attitude is crucial for promoting inclusive education. Attitude can be defined as an essay of perceptions, beliefs, feelings in favor or against someone on something, in addition; it is understood as ways to react to a specific educational approach that focuses its intention in the achievement of all students (p.52). Boer, Pijl & Minnaert (2011) state that teachers are key people in the implementation of inclusive education. A positive attitude plays an essential role in the implementation of successful educational changes (p.331). In addition, Cordova (2006) states that different researches on teachers' attitudes to educational inclusion, showed this can change according to a set of variables related to experience in the educational process, characteristics of students, availability of resources, training support and time available (p.51).

According to Lieber et al. (1998) a positive attitude among teachers is related to the success of an inclusion program (p.87). Otherwise, Coates (1989) states some researcher that teachers have negative perceptions of inclusion (p.532). Teachers' attitudes are important to be successful in the inclusion of students with disabilities, therefore Cook et al. (2001) states that recent researches showed that success of inclusion programs is dependent on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion (p.203).

Mitchell (2004) inclusive education requires close collaboration between the regular class teacher and other people, including specialist teachers, teaching assistants, therapists and parents (p.6). According to LOEI (2011), article 11, inclusive education is defined as the process of identifying and responding to the diversity of special needs of all students through greater participation in learning, culture and communities to reduce the exclusion in education. Moreover, according to Ministry of Education of Ecuador (2011), educational inclusion responds to the guarantee of the right to a quality education, through access, permanence, learning and competition, of all children, youth, teenagers and adults in the education system, at all levels and modalities; recognizing the diversity, in conditions of good integral treatment and in educational environments that propitiate the good living.

## Literature revision

According to the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, known as ICF (2001),

*"defines disability as an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions, Disability is the interaction between individuals with a health condition (e.g. cerebral palsy, Down Syndrome and depression) (and personal and environmental factors) (e.g. negative attitudes, inaccessible transportation and public buildings, and limited social supports)" (p.3)*

According to LOEI, 2011), article 13, inclusive education should be understood as responsibility and vocation in all establishments or ordinary schooling, which should take the necessary measures to allow the admission

of those students with special educational needs that are associated or not with a disability. Moreover, UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) (2005) inclusion is a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education.

### **Principles of inclusive education**

According to the Special Inclusive Education Course of Ecuador (2011) the principles of inclusive education are equality, comprehensiveness, and globalization (p.30): First, equality means that all children and adolescents have the opportunity to access quality education, respecting individual differences to achieve citizens included in the social context. Second, comprehensiveness is the need to maintain a basic and common curriculum on the part of the school in a long period, especially in compulsory education, to attend to the diversification of students according to their economic, social and cultural origin, inclusive and special education. And third, globalization is the vision by which the students are prepared to deal with the problem of the life and from different curricular disciplines.

### **Methodology**

This paper uses a quantitative approach. A questionnaire with five questions (including age, gender and career) was administered to five English teachers who work at Amarilis Fuentes Alcívar high School to find out the perceptions they have towards inclusion. The five teachers who participated in this study work in the afternoon session, they are about 40 or 45 years old while students of this high school are from 12 to 17 years old.

### **Field Research Results**

*Question 1:* Students with special needs belong in the classroom alongside their typically developing peers. Taken from Murphy (2014)

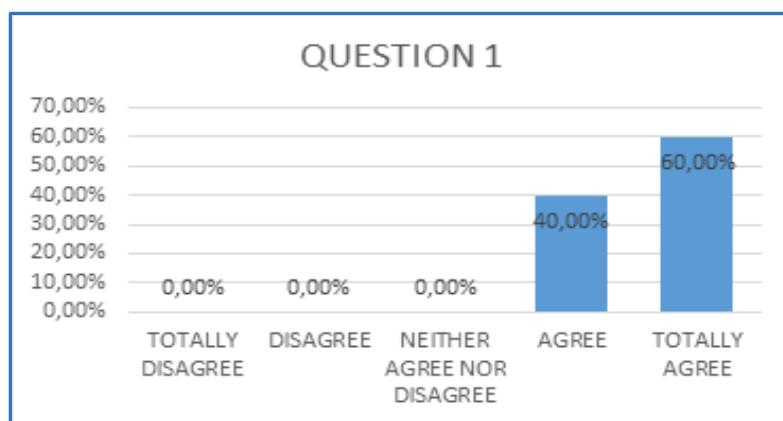


Figure 1.

Interesting, the teachers only chose two options as it shown in the graph. 60% of them selected that they totally agree students with special needs should work along with their partners, which shows a great perception towards inclusion in the High School. While, 40% of teachers agree children with special needs should be part of the regular classes and develop with the rest of the class.

*Question 2:* I am able to meet the needs of all the students in my classroom. Taken from Murphy (2014)

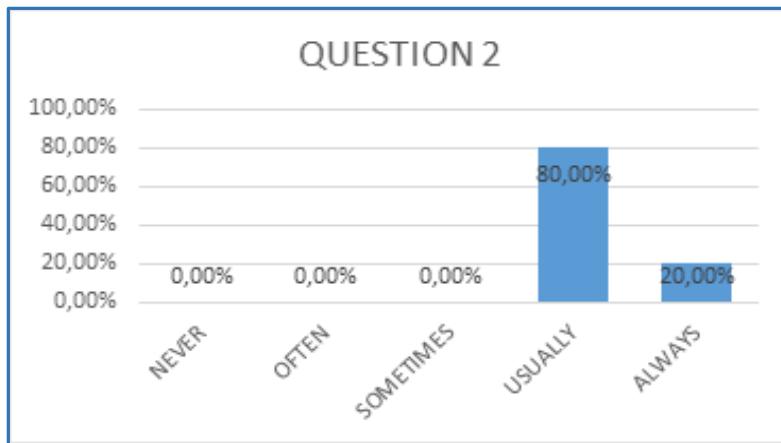


Figure 2.

In this question, most of the teachers (80%) provided an affirmative answer about to meet the needs of all the students in their classroom. It means teachers were usually able to satisfy the needs of all the students. However, only the 20% of teachers answered that they are always able to fulfill the needs of students in their classroom.

*Question 3:* Students with special needs belong in learning centers alongside peers with special needs. Taken from Murphy (2014)

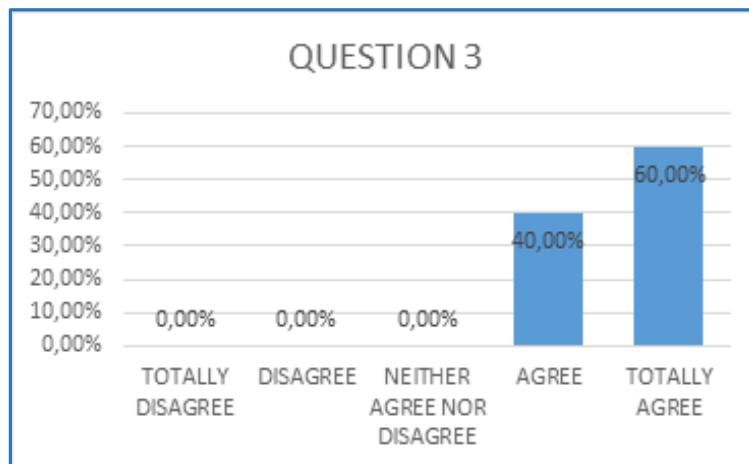


Figure 3.

In this question, 60% of teachers answered they totally agree about the students with special needs should

attend classes in specialized centers with other students with special needs. Nevertheless, 40% of teachers agree students with special needs go to centers where can be attended by trained teachers in the field of inclusion.

*Question 4:* Students with special needs benefit from friendships with students in the classroom. Taken from Murphy (2014)

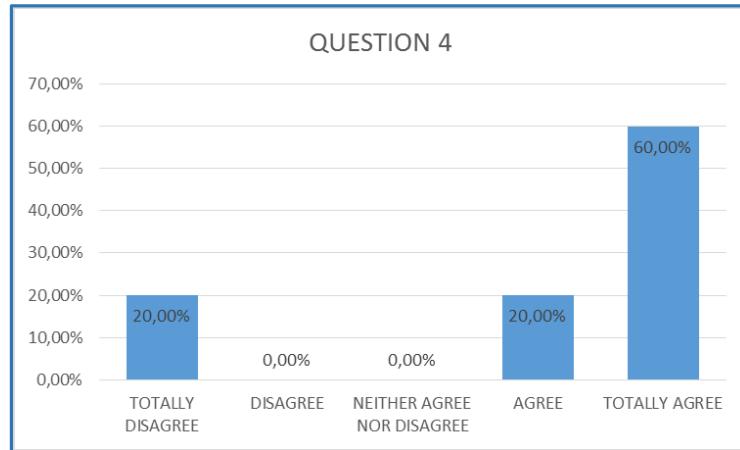


Figure 4.

In this question, teachers answered they totally agree (60%) and agree (20%) about the students with special needs benefit form friendship with other students in the classroom. These teachers think that schools are important places for children to develop friendships and learn social skills. Nevertheless, 20% of them think that students with special needs have to make friends only with other kids with special needs.

*Question 5:* Typically developing students benefit from friendships with students with special needs. Taken from Murphy (2014)

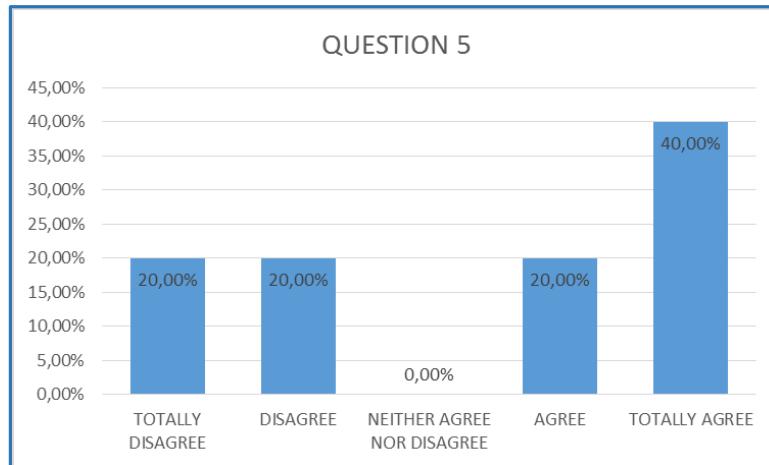


Figure 5.

Like above question, most of teachers 60% think that in inclusive classrooms, children with special needs could

learn social skills, since 40% totally agree and 20% agree typically developing students benefit from friends with special needs. Even though, 40% of them disagree with this statement.

### **Discussion**

The goal of this study was to identify the teachers' attitudes on inclusion at Amarilis Fuentes Alcivar High School in Guayaquil. This research question was to define whether some aspects can contribute to the establishment of teachers' attitudes on inclusion. Ross-Hill (2009) state that a better understanding of teacher attitude towards inclusion can assist in improving the learning environment. Furthermore, educators who hold positive attitudes towards inclusion tend to use teaching strategies that allow them to accommodate individual differences (Campbell, Gilmore, & Cuskelly, 2003; Forlin, 2010a).

This study was applied at Amarilis Fuentes Alcivar High School, afternoon session. The staff of the English area are five teachers, and all of them completed the questionnaire of five questions. Hence, the purpose of this paper was to use the results of this study to benefit students with special needs of this school. Teachers' attitudes on inclusion could be influenced by experiences they have had in their professional life with students who have especial needs. Despite this, most of the teachers are able to meet the needs not only students with special needs, but all of them. Nevertheless, 60% of students totally agree students with special needs should attend classes in centers that have professionals that are trained to work with these students.

### **Conclusion**

Results of the study discussed in this paper showed that teachers' perceptions on inclusion are from some aspects. One of these aspects is that teachers think that Ecuador does not offer programs that trained teachers to work with students with special needs. However, most of the teachers think that if they receive training courses to work with students with special needs they are able to meet the needs of all the students. Some teachers who answered the survey of this study have had bad experiences in their professional life when they have worked with students with special needs. Therefore, they think that students with special needs should go to centers where are attended by trained professionals and the students receive an appropriate education. In conclusion, the teachers' perceptions play an important role on inclusion education. Hence, the authorities in charge of giving support to teachers should provide programs that help teachers to change their perception on inclusion and students benefit from their positive attitudes.

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