

**1<sup>RA</sup> EDICIÓN**

*Reading Comprehension and Academic Writing:*  
**RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

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**FOREWORD**



*Reading Comprehension and Academic Writing:*

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This book corresponds to volume 3 of the EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT collection. It gathers contributions from teachers and instructors who work at educational institutions from primary to higher education in Ecuador and the United States and who participate in or are supporters of the Cooperation Network for Scientific Research on Reading Comprehension and Academic and Creative Writing RED-LEA.

The diverse topics presented to respond to the need to contribute to sustainable development processes from education. The contributions of the pedagogical innovations research group for sustainable development of the Eloy Alfaro Lay University of Manabí, Ecuador, and the brotherhood with the Kansas State University of the United States, for the execution of the Camino project are appreciated. This book contains sections that address academic reading and writing comprehension, socio-emotional education, inclusive education, and pedagogical innovations for sustainable development.

We hope this work will contribute to the training process of new generations of teachers with diverse, inclusive, and progressive views.

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**PART I**  
READING AND WRITING AS  
PROMOTORS OF PEACEFUL LIVING



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## **CHAPTER I**

# READING CIRCLES CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD ADULTS' MOTIVATION FOR READING LITERATURE BOOKS IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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### **Reading Circles contributions toward adults' motivation for reading literature books in English as a Foreign Language**

### **Contribuciones de los círculos de lectura hacia la motivación de los adultos para leer libros de literatura en inglés como lengua extranjera**

#### **Abstract**

Extensive reading practice is beneficial for acquiring English as a foreign language. However, it is not a popular activity for students in Ecuador. This research aims to determine the value of a literature (or reading) circle as a strategy to increase extensive reading motivation in a group of adults whose mother tongue is Spanish. This research subscribes to the post-modern paradigm, incorporating qualitative and quantitative educational research methodology measures. The participants are five Ecuadorian professors in an international English training program that included fifteen reading circle sessions during a 16-week university semester. Participants read a 380-page investigative journalism novel. Experimental methods included focus groups, surveys, and participant observations. Results demonstrate that reading circles increase participants' confidence and motivation in reading English and communicating in English their reflections about the reading. In addition, reading circles offer learners and instructors opportunities to create a dynamic learning environment, wherein instructors increase their ability to listen to learners' opinions and learners increase their vocabulary knowledge in English. The research concludes that reading circles generate positive motivation for reading an entire book to its completion. Further benefits include increased EFL acquisition, enhanced comprehension skills, and the development of inference capabilities.

**Keywords:** Reading, adults, English language, communication.

## **Resumen**

es beneficiosa para adquirir el inglés como lengua extranjera. Sin embargo, no es una actividad popular para los estudiantes en Ecuador. Esta investigación tiene como objetivo determinar el valor de un círculo de literatura (o de lectura) como estrategia para aumentar la motivación lectora extensiva en un grupo de adultos cuya lengua materna es el español. Esta investigación se suscribe al paradigma posmoderno, incorporando medidas metodológicas de investigación educativa cualitativas y cuantitativas. Los participantes son cinco profesores ecuatorianos en un programa internacional de capacitación en inglés que incluyó quince sesiones de círculos de lectura durante un semestre universitario de 16 semanas. Los participantes leyeron una novela de periodismo de investigación de 380 páginas. Los métodos experimentales incluyeron grupos focales, encuestas y observaciones de los participantes. Los resultados demuestran que los círculos de lectura aumentan la confianza y la motivación de los participantes para leer en inglés y comunicar en inglés sus reflexiones sobre la lectura. Además, los círculos de lectura ofrecen a los estudiantes e instructores oportunidades para crear un entorno de aprendizaje dinámico, en el que los instructores aumentan su capacidad para escuchar las opiniones de los estudiantes para aumentar su conocimiento de vocabulario en inglés. La investigación concluye que los círculos de lectura generan una motivación positiva para leer un libro completo hasta su finalización. Otros beneficios incluyen una mayor adquisición de EFL, mejores habilidades de comprensión y el desarrollo de capacidades de inferencia.

**Palabras clave:** lectura, adultos, idioma inglés, comunicación.

## **Introduction**

Reading is not one of the most popular practices for people of different ages in Ecuador. This occurs despite the multiple benefits reading generates for those who practice reading daily (Salmerón & Villafuerte, 2019). According to Velásquez (2019), the population of Ecuador reads half a book per year. The promotion of extensive reading in Ecuador is a

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goal of UNICEF and the Ministry of Education. Therefore, making efforts to understand the reading processes and contribute to the growth of extensive reading continues to be a goal that demands socio-educational research.

Instruction in reading addresses the multidimensional nature of the reading process, which must consider thematic preferences, time availability, age, or the availability of the devices used in reading (Krashen, 2004; Grabe, 2014). Therefore, in teaching foreign languages, the student body may suddenly pass from the phase of “learning to read” to the stage of “reading to learn” a foreign language. Foncubierta and Fonseca (2018) argue that the reading process is adjusted to bilingual education contexts of motivation for learning foreign languages and the reading techniques used in teaching. They add that reading is a practice that contributes to the acquisition of foreign languages. Thus, strengthening the reading comprehension skill of written texts demands specific strategies, especially for adult learners.

Consequently, reading is a valuable foundational resource that contributes to intellectual and social development for learners accessing and understanding the global culture and increasing readers’ knowledge and maturity. In addition, reading practices can stimulate learners’ imagination, strengthening the students’ creativity, concentration, empathy, intercultural openness, and emotional maturity. Such benefits are articulated in the socio-cognitive field to strengthen learners’ autonomy and change readers’ perspectives of the world. In contrast, the lack of reading could lead to school dropout, communication and academic deficiencies, and perhaps limitation to access employment.

The research questions to answer in this paper are:

1. What is the contribution of a Reading Circle to adult learners’ motivation for reading literature books in English as a Foreign language?
2. How are the adult learners’ participation and communication in the English language improved when using the Reading Circle?



3. What are the participants' perceptions about Reading Circle's strengths and weaknesses as a didactic practice?

This work aims to determine the contributions of the reading circle as a strategy for increasing motivation for extensive reading in a group of adult-non-native English language adults.

## **Literature review**

### **Reading circles**

Literary Circles can be used as evaluation instruments in the English class since they allow readers to describe and develop their communicative capacity by reflecting on the readings carried out (Buttler, 2016). Such literature circles contribute to the lexical development, the syntactic structure, and an increase in the concentration of the students. In addition, they improve memory and imagination, stimulating reflexive capacity in readers.

According to Velásquez (2019), the Literary Circle is a support strategy for reading a text. The participants fulfill specific roles, and socialize in a collaborative way. They follow a process of group discussions valued with different criteria. This activity is generally carried out in small groups to discuss the most relevant events and characters, linking them to personal experiences. The literary circle promotes the practice of critical thinking and reflection as essential tools to collaborate within the discussion group. It is also an interactive process in which readers manage to clarify doubts and build new opinions about what they read. Its origin goes back to Arizona, in the United States, when in 1982, Karen Smith organized reading groups in a class at the basic education level. Its execution and roles have evolved over the years. However, literature circles continue to improve the development of critical thinking, interpretation, and self-and hetero evaluation of the reading comprehension of those who participate in the reading group. The members of reading circles read responsibly and freely. Based on

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their commitment to the other group members, each of them looks for the right moment to read before the discussion session. It is a flexible and fluid activity where sharing and expressing opinions can reinforce every participant's commitment and motivation to acquire vocabulary in a foreign language. It is an experience that encourages people to keep reading and expressing their personal opinions.

To Nicholas & Claire (2019), reading circles contribute positively to the reading skills of ESL learners. They are considered tools of high contribution and importance to an ESL curriculum. Furthermore, Qi (2021) used reading circles in collaborative business classes at a university, sharing opinions about journal articles weekly. Thus, students enhanced their reading abilities and critical thinking skills.

In the context of Ecuador, Calderón (2010) maintains that literature circles positively influence students' reading comprehension, improving the capacity for analysis and critical synthesis. In addition, the participants reach mastery of the reading text's topic. This contributes to the development of cultural values, empathy, and intercultural openness among the participants in the English as a second language classroom. Finally, Intriago and Villafuerte (2019) developed an online reading circle to work remotely with the support of electronic means.

### **Literature texts and English Language instruction**

Bobkina and Dominguez (2014) argue that Literature texts have become more frequently utilized in the EFL classroom. This is a practice that helps learners acquire a more diverse range of vocabulary and is a positive contribution to the EFL curriculum. Elhess & Edbert (2015), and Maher (2018) agree that literature circles can improve learners' comprehension skills by supplying positive motivation, discussion participation opportunities, oral proficiency, and writing skills practice.

Carreño, Donado & García (2014) worked on poetry using literary reading circles to stimulate readers' feelings and offer the experience of

describing a poem. Miranda (2015) taught critical literacy by incorporating literature circles in Colombia to help students create their own opinions from a critical and reflective perspective using literary texts. A relevant problem was a lack of motivation to read long texts. However, students could begin to generate their own opinions based on reading fragments of literary works.

To Goctu (2016), doing extensive reading for university students is necessary to remove every barrier to reading texts. It includes considering readers' preferences when making text selections. Diverse factors, including genetic language learning skill/propensity and students' environmental experience, can influence students' acquisition of academic vocabulary. In addition, the systematic or limited exposition of students to social and cultural perspectives introduced in literature books may not be equally relevant to students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Erbeli et al., 2018; Fletcher et al., 2018).

Tehmina (2021) showed that students were highly motivated to read a book using the reading circles methodology. In addition, reading circles can create more interest and curiosity in ESL learners leading to strong reading habits (Muhammad & Shamaila, 2021).

### **Reading skills in adult learners.**

According to Lipka and Siegel (2012), the strengthening of reading competence in English as a second language (L2) follows cognitive processes similar to the reading process in the native language. Sociolinguistic factors such as the age at which reading practice begins can have an impact. Meanwhile, Grabe & Stoller (2011) argue that the complexity and dynamism of the reading process involves lower-level processing skills and higher-level processing skills. This processing reaches a level of automation that ensures that the learner understands a text in a foreign language. Lower level skills consist of the visual recognition of letters, the decoding of words, the graphic-phonemic relationship, and the syntactic and semantic processing of the text. Higher-level

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skills include comprehension, improved recognition of main ideas, the ability to monitor reading, make inferences, and interact with the reader's knowledge. Weak linguistic competence can activate higher-order skills to compensate for lower-level skills such as decoding. The reader in L2 already has reading competence in L1, knows to read in one language, and tries to learn to read in a second language using previously acquired skills and reading strategies.

To Dambacher (2010); Grabe (2014), the reading process has three models which are (1) Bottom-up: It is the decoding process reader execute to construct a meaning from the interpretation of the text unit from the words understanding, (2) Top-down: It the readers' interpretation on the overall text main ideas, and (3) Interactive: Readers do and exchange with other readers the interpretations of the text. These models contribute to the decoding process of word recognition and the understanding of a global text. Errors in decoding process may cause poor reading comprehension of a text because readers' saturation of their memory systems (Suraprajit, 2019). However, it is relevant to understand that readers can read between 250 and 300 words per minute and usually take between 250 and 300 milliseconds to recognize the meaning of a word (Samuels, Hiebert, & Rasinski, 2014).

In addition, Dehaene (2014) argues that reading acquisition is the result of the interaction of text-based processing skills (Bottom-up) with reader-based processing skills (Top-down). Orthographic, phonological, and semantic processes of word decoding connect to the readers' neural networks. Although reading comprehension results from the interaction of the information from the lower levels of processing with the data from the skills of higher cognitive levels, the two groups of information do not behave reciprocally. Therefore, reading is a hierarchical structure made up of various subskills required to interpret letters, sounds, words, phrases, and other subskills such as organizing ideas, mental representation, monitoring reading, and inferences.

Many studies have shown an age-related decline in reading speed in adults because people’s visual functions influence the reading process (McGowan, White, Jordan, et al., 2014). Consequently, adult readers could require more time to read a text because they could feel tired compared to younger readers (Calabrese et al. (2016). Thus, Liu, Patel, & Kwon (2017) show that when participants read aloud instead of silently, they focus on the visual aspects of reading to avoid error but minimize other high-level cognitive and linguistic relevant influences. Thus, reading speed has been a functionally significant assessment, as slow and effortful reading in impaired vision often reflects a bottom-up, visual sensory limitation on reading. Visual crowding explained approximately 15% to 22% of Flashcard reading speed variance. Although it is still possible that non-visual factors such as education or reading experience may, in part, explain the remaining unexplained variance in reading speed. Participants were allowed to complete their verbal response at their reading speed, not under time pressure.

However, Oh (2016) emphasized the importance of linguistic competence in L2 on the transfer of reading ability in L1, although it is true that Oh (2016) ignored aspects such as processing speed. These competencies are fundamental cognitive abilities that affect the reading process. In addition, when a person reads in L2, they articulate the linguistic system of the target language, intercultural interaction achieved in L2, and the degree of oral competence achieved in L2. Therefore, acquiring the L2 can be slower than the L1 (Lems, 2017). Thus, this research underlines the positive contribution of using diverse techniques and resources to support the development of reading skills in L2 (Foncubierta et al., 2018).

In this sense, Guitert and Gimenez (cited by Revelo, Collazos, and Jiménez, 2018) affirm that students learn better when supported by team interaction. Thus, efficient collaborative work emerges from reciprocity between individuals who know how to differentiate and contrast their points of view. In collaborative work, group members can



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recognize skills, deepen learning, and build knowledge. Thus, when the participants have the same objectives, positive experiences generate pleasant learning environments despite having different views and developing their lives in different contexts.

It is necessary to emphasize that asking questions forces the readers to think logically. When students ask questions about what they read, they understand better the central theme and concepts and create focus or concentration on the text's main topic. This strategy relates to critical thinking based on questioning, reasoning, experiments, and logic (Tehmina, Muhammad, & Shamaila, 2021).

Among the previous studies, the authors consider relevant the work of Koda (2010). He studied the role that reading occupies in the development of intercultural competence. In addition, he points out that it has not been possible to differentiate the teaching of second languages, reading ability, and linguistic knowledge. For this reason, reading is usually treated as a mere linguistic skill and reading ability as an aspect of grammatical or lexical competence. Three beliefs underpin these practices:

1. Reading skills develop automatically as a byproduct of increasing linguistic knowledge in L2.
2. Linguistic knowledge (grammar and vocabulary) can be learned through memorization and explanation.
3. Reading fluency in L2 can be achieved through explicit grammar and vocabulary instruction.

Thus, the reading *process* is an integrating and complex mechanism that goes beyond linguistics and helps students develop other reading *skills*, such as text content and the development of intercultural competence.

In addition, studies by Grave (2014) on the interlingual nature of reading in a foreign language in non-native adult students show that it is

very likely that they do not reach the same fluency that they have in their native language. Therefore, detecting timely profiles of students with reading comprehension problems (from the study of cognitive and affective processes that affect the development and improvement of their reading ability in the target language) undoubtedly improves both the didactics of the languages used and the final results in students.

On the other hand, Na et al. (2015) demonstrate how the involvement of non-native readers varies if they read a text devoid of emotional charge or if they read the exact text but sprinkled with emotional content. Their study confirms that non-native readers became emotionally involved and performed better on the reading comprehension assessment task when the text version contained an emotional charge, both in L1 and L2. The study of Juyandegan (2016) finds a strong relationship between self-esteem measurements of English learners and their level of reading comprehension. This finding confirms the importance of affective factors in second language learning. Thus, the reader's lack of confidence, security, or liking can reduce their ability to process information. Another variable related to non-native readers' attitudes towards the reading of texts in L2 can affect their fluent understanding of the text. This is related to the level of content and, specifically, to the use of texts to learn grammar and vocabulary.

To Lems (2017), the evidence shows that most adult students with diverse linguistic competence in English as a foreign language reach insufficient levels of oral reading fluency. However, Foncubieta et al. (2018) argue that such a level of fluency is much more developed in the native language when they read complex texts because readers' high levels of oral reading fluency in L1 transfer to L2. Here the literature circles can enhance people's verbal reading fluency in L2. According to Fernández & Fonseca (2017), the reading profile of students with difficulties in learning shows the students' need for reinforcement implemented in a personalized way. Their results elucidated difficulties in decoding and phonological skills, working memory, and socio-cultural

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factors in identifying readers' problems. They affirm that fluency and decoding skills allow the identification of students with more reading problems. They further confirm that readers with slow decoding and fluency skills and phonological and listening comprehension skills in L1 often have problems with foreign language acquisition. Finally, studies from Wood et al. (2019) show that significant relations can emerge between vocabulary knowledge and writing quality. These studies have included assessment of vocabulary specificity, academic language, or vocabulary sophistication in writing based on students' written responses and have commonly focused on the number of words and diversity of words used when learners write essays.

### Methodology

This work subscribes to the postmodern paradigm of research. It uses the mixed qualitative and quantitative research approach, which facilitates the interpretation of the data collected and participants' expressions (Villafuerte, Intriago, & Soto, 2015).

### Participants:

The participants correspond to a captive group made up of five professors from an Ecuadorian University, who executed the fall semester 2021 studies of English as a foreign language at a university in the United States. See table 1.

**Table 1.** Participants.

Participants	Age	Subject	Extensive reading frequency
WVZ	54	English arts	Low
JVH	52	Educational Research	Moderate
GWC	52	Linguistics	Moderate
GBZ	37	English arts	Low
JZZ	32	English arts	Low

**Source:** research project (2021).



**Instruments:**

**Observation form.** The instrument used was based on the Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading–Florida Standards (FAIR-FS; Foorman, Petscher, & Schatschneider, 2015).

In the word recognition task, students identify a word from a drop-down menu corresponding to the word pronounced by the computer (e.g., identify the target “assembly” from the assembly, assemble, assembly). This instrument considers four assessments, including (a) Word Recognition, (b) Vocabulary Knowledge (including recognition of morphological patterns), (c) Syntactic Knowledge, and (d) Reading Comprehension. The researchers’ team adopted the instrument to the contextual conditions where the participants lived during a semester. The facilitator used this instrument during every reading circle session, asking the participants about the new number of words in EFL learned. The research team noted the number of words declared by the participants. Students silently read a passage ranging from 200 to 1,300 words in length for this task. After each passage, students were prompted to answer seven to nine multiple-choice questions created by the participant, who runs the roll of the questionnaire for approximately 10-15 minutes.

**Focus group**

The instrument is a questionnaire of 6 questions created by the research team to collect information concerning the participants’ reading preferences, reading frequency, and reading habits. An expert group of professors affiliated with an Ecuadorian university evaluated the instrument. The expert panel advised the reduction of the original 12 questions to 6 open-ended questions centered on motivation for reading as a contribution of the reading circle to the participants. They spontaneously answered the focus group questions. The process was held for 45 minutes and recorded. The location used for the execution of this focus group was the installations of Kansas State University at the end of the semester.

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**Survey format.** The researcher's team designed the instrument ad hoc to collect information to identify the contribution of reading circles practices to the adult participants of this research on the aspects of language acquisition and motivation for reading. An expert panel syntactically evaluated the instrument in education, foreign language instruction, and didactics. All of them ascribed to an Ecuadorian university. The expert panel advised reducing the number of questions from 17 to 10, centering on the topic of contributions of the reading circle to participants for vocabulary acquisition and reading skills in English as a foreign language.

### **Process**

This research executed the following stages.

Stage 1: Reading and comprehension pretest. - Participants complete a placement test to determine their reading and comprehension level in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) before the reading circles.

Stage 2: Literature reading circle (LRC) organization. – The participants agreed to read individually three selected book chapters per week. Each participant assumed a different role per week.

Some of the LRC roles used in this research were the following:

The summary: The participant presents an overview of each read chapter.

The questioner: The person raises 2 - 3 questions per reading chapter. The answers should be clear in the text.

The researcher: The participant in this role investigates deeper information about issues, locations, laws, or characters.

The travel tracer: The person in this role marks on a map the locations that appear in the text.

The connector: The person in this role relates the text with any current and local situation or personal experiences.

The vocabulary: The participant creates a word list that appears in the text but is unknown to the readers. During the LRC, the participant pre-

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sents the terminology and its meaning or examples of its use. The participants must complete all chapter readings per week.

Stage 3: The literature reading circles sessions: They took place once per week in sessions of 60 minutes. Each participant takes 5 minutes to present their contributions.

Every session begins with the presentation of the chapter summary, and after, the other participants can spontaneously present their role contributions to the LRC. On a few occasions, LRC participants asked to have longer time sessions to complete the activities and role expositions.

The session finished with the exchange of participants' impressions about the read chapters. In addition, the participants can choose a new role for the next session.

The instructor should create a secure learning environment, increasing readers' spontaneous participation according to the roles assumed.

Stage 4: Focus group about contributions of LRC to participants reading and speaking skills in the English language.

Stage 5: Reading and comprehension posttest.- Participants complete a placement test to determine their reading and comprehension level in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) after the reading circles process (6 sessions).

Stage 6: Information and data analysis.- The research team executed an analysis of the information collected with the focus group instrument and data collected with a survey instrument.

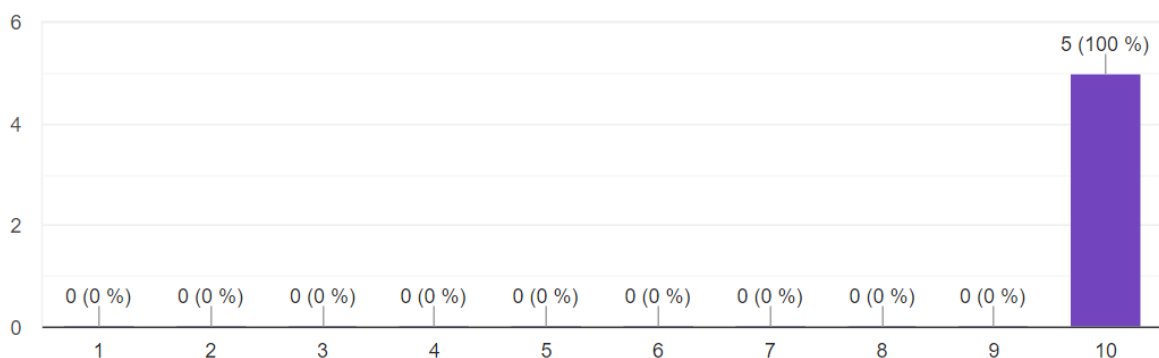
### Results

The results are presented below following the order of the researcher questions that appear in the introduction.

#### a. Contribution of Reading Circle to adults learners' motivation for Reading literature books

Based on the survey data, it is possible to affirm that the literature book titled THE IMMORTAL LIFE OF HENRIETTA LACKS caught 35% of participants' interest in reading at the beginning of the semester. However, the strategy of a Reading Circle used by the instructor soon increased the students' motivation for reading to 100% of the members of the participants.

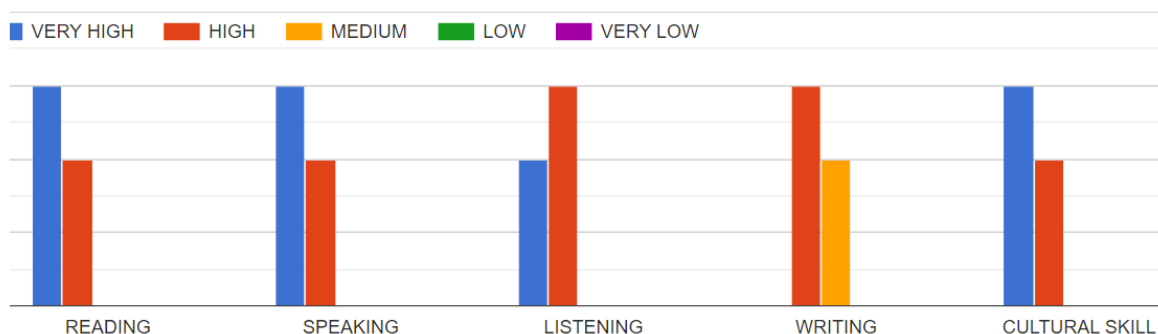
The book topic concerns scientific racism, cancer studies, and the experimentation on humans without consent. These topics increased the participants' interest in reading and discussing points of view during the weekly sessions. This situation contributed significantly to the participants' motivation to read literature books in the English language. See graphic 1.



**Graphic 1.** Motivation for Reading using Reading circle.  
**Source:** research project (2021).

**b. Adults learners' participation and communication in English language Reading Circle**

Dialogues emerged during the Reading circles. The use of different participants' literature circle roles offered permanent opportunities for communicating reflections based on the book. It also offered the opportunity to increase participants' critical thinking and intercultural knowledge.



**Graphic 2.** Reading circle contribution for participants' communication in EFL.

**Source:** research project (2021).

**c. Reading Circle strengths from participants' view**

Participants were asked about Reading Circle strengths. Their answers coincide with the following reading circle contributions: reading and comprehension, topics discussed, and roles assumed by the participants during the RC practice. See figure 1.



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### 3.3. WHAT IS THE STRENGTH OF READING CIRCLES AS A TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY?

5 respuestas

Opción 1
Reading comprehension
The topic
The roles
Critical Thinking.

**Figure 1.** Reading circle as learning strategy.

**Source:** research project (2021).

Unexpected results in this research are related to all the participants being adult learners. They introduced adjustments to the Reading Circle roles by producing didactic material by themselves (google maps routes by the travel tracer role, vocabulary charts, questions and answers sheets using the book's information, and others), which improved the participants' book understanding through a repetition of this good practice. Such results may be related to all the participants being faculty in a public university in Ecuador.

### **Conclusion**

The review of specialized literature and results obtained in this study concludes the achievement of these research aims. Thus, evidence shows that a Reading Circle can improve participants' motivation for reading literature books when worked on by adults. This result confirms authors' positions, such as Grave (2014); Fernández & Fonseca (2017). In addition, the Reading Circles practices held during this research project contributed significantly to the participants' acquisition of English as a foreign language. The roles assumed responsibly by the participants required time and effort, which occupied a high priority in the participants' professional development because they felt committed to fulfilling the reading task, its analysis, and the development of the assigned roles (Foncubierta et al., 2018; Wood et al., 2019).

The weakness of the present study is perhaps the size of the corpus, which does not allow any generalization. However, the results enable researchers to support the position regarding the high contribution of reading circles in acquiring a foreign language concerning:

1. improving more appropriate learning environments,
2. improving the instructor's capability to listen to every reader's opinion, and
3. increasing participants' vocabulary acquisition in a more extensive range in the target language.

The research team invites the scientific community to conduct new studies that deepen the development of didactics aimed at the professional development of teachers of English as a foreign language.

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**1<sup>RA</sup> EDICIÓN**

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**CHAPTER II**  
FROM THE STUDENT TO THE SCHOLAR

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## **From the Student to the Scholar**

### **Del estudiante al docente**

#### **Abstract**

Teacher identity emerges from an individual and collective transformation process in relation to public policies, their own motivations for teaching and the ideals and challenges before social problems and technological development. This work aims to contribute to the construction of identity of 21st century teachers whose mission goes beyond the transfer of information, and responds to new socio-educational demands. This piece of writing presents lessons learned in metacognitive processes from the identity of the postgraduate student to the critical-reflective scholar with a gained conviction for social justice. The analysis of this work allows us to advance the discussion on the need to rebuild the teacher identity in Latin America to accommodate the demands for professional training and coexistence in spaces of continuous academic growth.

**Keywords:** Teacher identity; academic writing; teacher training; university.

#### **Resumen**

La identidad docente surge de un proceso de transformación individual y colectivo en relación con las políticas públicas, las propias motivaciones para la enseñanza y los ideales y desafíos ante la problemática social y el desarrollo tecnológico. Este trabajo pretende contribuir a la construcción de la identidad de los docentes del siglo XXI cuya misión va más allá de la transferencia de información, y responde a las nuevas demandas socioeducativas. Este escrito presenta lecciones aprendidas en procesos metacognitivos desde la identidad del estudiante de posgrado hasta el académico crítico-reflexivo con una convicción ganada por la justicia social. El análisis de este trabajo permite avanzar en la discusión sobre la necesidad de reconstruir la identidad docente



en América Latina para acomodar las demandas de formación profesional y convivencia en espacios de continuo crecimiento académico.

**Palabras clave:** Identidad docente; escritura académica; formación de profesores; Universidad.

### **Introduction**

The act of writing helps us to think deeply (Ahrens, 2017; Barnett et al., 2020). These two skills have been a great challenge that I have learned to value because they are tools to achieve intellectual transformation (Blakeslee & Fleischer, 2019). This competence in development has been the result of reading, taking notes, discussing and reflecting on the dozens of chapters I have studied throughout my journey as an undergraduate, graduate and postdoctoral student. Without a doubt, more than acquiring specific technical knowledge, the philosophical readings have influenced the way I see the world and what is in it. Walking in the shoes of an academic has promoted a new identity, a new way of defining myself, one that has allowed me to have new thoughts and finally become a new person. An example of this new identity is that when interacting with someone, the new me spends more time observing and paying attention to visible and invisible characteristics, in an attempt to genuinely understand people, their way of being and acting, and through them learn more about myself. Applying this new pattern of behavior in my practice as a teacher, and also now as a researcher may allow me to better impact students as they walk their own path.

The ideas presented by Alcoff (2007) and Mills (2007) on how we become ignorant, allow us to find value in the students' background, in their personal life stories and their family stories. My renewed self adopts this way of living the role of teaching. As a teacher, the explanations and reasonings, within the different acts carried out by me, take shape from a perspective of understanding and acceptance. Because our students reflect what they are exposed to in school, our mission is to help them engage in thought processes to empower them with social and cogni-

tive tools (Bandura, 1993). In this way, their decisions are the result of critical and reflective thinking. Through these mental tools and other attributes acquired as part of the process of education and life experience, students can join in the battle to resist many forms of ignorance and thus social injustice (Aveyard, 2014). Finally, my identity as an academic allows me to see pedagogy as the field from which we can make a difference. My new way of looking at my profession is not that pedagogy deals only with teaching methods, classroom management or assessment; rather, the responsibility to educate becomes an humane mission, one that transcends learning about something or gaining skills. Pedagogy becomes the field of action that allows pedagogues to form a team and achieve the desired goal of a better world, where through the recognition of diversity, all styles, all voices, we can find crucial common ground that allow everyone to enjoy a life that ultimately guarantees justice and happiness (Fernandez-Balboa & Marshall, 1994). In this chapter, I share three specific learnings that have been the result of the transition from graduate student to academic researcher.

**Learning 1: Identity**

Identity is an important part of who we are. In fact, how we perceive ourselves becomes the starting point for all the actions and behaviors that define us (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). For example, since time is valuable to me, I understand that it is valuable to others as well. On the contrary, those aspects that we criticize in our way of being, although it is possible that we repeat them, we know that we do not want them to be there. I decided to add this reasoning because Alcoff’s (2006) main idea of visible identities is strongly connected to our thoughts about ourselves and others. It is from this conceptualization of myself and others that what I see acquires meaning; it is a gaze, from the combined gaze of myself and the others with whom I interact.

Whether we like it or not, we are human beings who have certain visible or identifiable characteristics. Gender and race are probably the two most powerful sources of these “identity revealers”, but there are others

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such as social class, economic status or educational level, to name a few, that are not easily observable. Alcoff (2006) posited that gender and race influence the “perception of events and of people, perception that surmises identity, credibility, salient evidence, probable causal relations, plausible explanations, relevant concepts and similarities, and other important epistemic judgments” (p.129). That we react in a certain way is not the point; it is we don’t explore the thoughts that make us react the way we do. It is important to pay attention to how we project our identity in terms of race and in terms of gender or social class. This is necessary to take into account because, as Alcoff points out:

Social identities such as race, ethnicity, and gender remain the most telling predictors of social power and success, predicting whether one works in the service sector, the trades, or the managerial class, whether and how much profit can be had by selling one’s home, how likely one is to be incarcerated, how likely one is to suffer sexual or domestic violence, and even how high one is likely to score on the SAT (p. viii)

In education, the implication of prejudice based on race, socioeconomic status, and cultural aspects can determine how teachers address students in the classroom, or even how students treat each other (Liu et al., 2019). Students who look different from the majority group are often called names, bullied, or ignored. We cannot blame students for behaving this way; instead, we need to become aware of the reasons behind this reality and act in an informed way to transform these children in the classroom so that later, as adults, they can solve the great problems of society, respecting and valuing everyone else around them despite being different (Delgado-Gaitan, 1988).

Our students need to learn to explore their identities. Students need to know where they come from, what they are and who they are (Francis & le Roux, 2011). A lot of the problems with our schools (e.g. Ecuador) based on my experience and conversations I have had with colleagues, is that our students do not really know how to identify themselves; they

lack this ability because they do not have the opportunity to think about it. Identity is often associated with ethnicity and generally ends when the question, How do you identify yourself? is answered as “mestizo”, “indigenous”, “montubio”, “white” and “other”. When identity thinking stops there, we run the risk of having citizens who do not really know who they are. One of the problems that this can generate is associated with the entry of citizens without a clear idea of their identity into the political arena. If these politicians do not have a solid understanding of who they are, they can become important public officials who miss the opportunity to participate in a transcendent way in the construction of a more inclusive and fair society. Alcoff (2007) remarked that “identities [...] [can be] both pernicious and metaphysically inaccurate, in another sense they are, or seem to be, unavoidable.” (p. 80). In contrast, politicians who have a strong understanding of their identity and the role they play in bringing justice to groups that have been stigmatized, can make demands that are contextualized, specific, historically relevant, and ultimately impactful to the groups and regions they represent.

Exploring one’s own identity and the consequent generation of questions leads to others making the important decisions. When we ignore who we are, where we come from, where we are going, and all the whys that go with it, that ignorance has the power to cause injustice, pain, and poverty. Giroux commented in 2007 that much of this ignorance has to do with our disinterest in our history. He used the case of American society to indicate that there is “a crisis in the ability of the American people to remember those “lessons” of the past that illuminate the developmental preconditions of individual liberty and social freedom” (p. 5). By analyzing what the conditions were in the past, we can detect the conditions or actions that preceded unwanted laws, or changes that paved the way for the abuse of minorities and unprotected groups. Similarly, the recent history of the world, in the political arena, is full of references to our unstable and tragic past. Almost all politicians have argued that the crisis in the world is the result of bad decisions, for example, the election of authorities through electoral processes that openly defraud-

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ed the faith that voters deposit on supposedly good citizens who seek to improve the lives of their constituents. The sad reality has been that, although all the world seems to recognize that bad politicians are to blame for much of the misfortune the world is experiencing, the rhetoric in the speeches of politicians in campaign seems to be more powerful than the memory of bad governments and their ill-advised decisions.

### **Learning 2: How we can resist ignorance**

My new identity includes thoughts that take into account why our speech, actions, and behaviors are a manifestation of our external motivations. In Medina's (2013) explanation of the epistemologies of ignorance, he reviews three arguments that explain the almost always erroneous interpretations we make of others. The first argument has to do with the time and space in which we exist. Because we are born in a specific area or region, our thoughts are shaped by the characteristics embedded in the language, culture, and norms of that specific geographic area. Alcoff (2007) said that "this locality and specificity is necessary because identities are constituted by social contextual conditions of interaction in specific cultures at particular historical periods, and thus their nature, effects, and the problems that need to be addressed in regard to them will be largely local" (p. 9). This seems quite coherent because in the place and space that we are, culture, language, religion, technology and laws accompany us. The second argument is the fact that we belong to a group. The characteristics and nature of the group to which we belong also shape and limit how we understand and interpret other groups. This can be positive or negative. This last part is strongly influenced by a third source of ignorance: the influence that systems of oppression exert to keep people disconnected from reality, or believing a modified version of it. Our students need to be aware of this in ways that allow them to see the importance of context, but also to reflect on the possibility of other ways of dealing with reality.

Finally, the fact that we belong to a specific group also helps explain why we ignore others. So, our ignorance of others is the result of certain natural conditions and others that are artificial that accompany our

reality, but just because that is the case, one cannot accept that as a curse, but see it as permission to look at the crucial points to keep in mind in defeating ignorance. Overcoming ignorance comes at the cost of transforming our minds. Medina (2013) analyzes epistemic virtues and vices in his writings. He pointed out that active ignorance is the result of vices “a set of corrupted attitudes and dispositions that get in the way of knowledge” (p. 30). The three vices that Medina explored were epistemic arrogance, laziness, and narrow-mindedness. Medina says that from these vices arise attitudes and actions that express acts of injustice by people in positions of power. He presented the idea that these vices should be transformed into virtues that express the opposite of these vices. This act would imply “a deep restructuring of the self that requires the development of new habits and the destruction of old ones” (p. 29). This would indicate that we have to look at what we believe, express and do what makes us who we are. Medina (2013) on page 55 expressed “In order to acquire and transmit knowledge responsibly, one needs to be critically aware of one’s identity and that of others; one must have at least a minimal amount of self-knowledge, and social knowledge of others” My previous argument is an act of reflection where, as a teacher, and who has the podium and perhaps some kind of influence, we need to start working on this transformational approach. My new identity aims to fully add and make use of the virtues to combat ignorance: humility, curiosity / diligence and open-mindedness. These new mental competencies are necessary if we want to get out of ignorance on our own and also help others to develop their virtues.

Pabón and Basile (2019), and Medina (2013) also advanced the idea of hermeneutical responsibility as a way to close the gap that is formed as a result of the lack of agency in our acts of communication. Medina mentions that derogatory connotations, interpretive gaps and expressive limitations are simply there without having anything to do with us and our daily use of interpretive resources. He says this is the result of our lack of action. In my new identity, there is a responsibility to find new resources and ways to support the people I have contact with, becau-

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se I recognize that communicative competence varies from person to person. In this sense, I recognize that the other only lacks the ability to express his ideas, but this inability does not mean that I cannot access their knowledge, especially if I help them in their attempt to express themselves.

An additional way to combat ignorance is through the concept of cognitive minima. Of these, self-awareness is a powerful one as “there is a special relation between responsibility and self-knowledge: in order to act responsibly and to be held accountable for one’s actions, one needs to know who one is, one has to be a reliable reporter of one’s inner world and know, for the most part, one’s beliefs, desires, intentions, and so on” (Medina, 2013, p. 121). These quotes have come to shape my new identity as someone who first takes the time to get to know and understand myself, where I come from, my beliefs and biases. This new belief allows me to understand and see things I couldn’t see. As an educator, the power of this new perspective gives me the ability to challenge what exists, expand the types of conversations and introduce new ways and methods to carry out the objectives proposed in my classes.

### **Learning 3: There is hope; teaching is more than a method**

In my new identity, various thoughts have been incorporated and with these, new thoughts and new actions are embraced. But the most powerful perspective is hope of a fairer world from the arena of the classroom, where the new citizens of the world are well trained and educated. One of the essential components of this part of my new identity as an educator of English language teachers is becoming an active participant “in helping teachers to identify, understand and generate [the] fundamental social processes necessary to encourage students to become active participants in the search for knowledge and meaning, a search designed to encourage, rather than stifle, critical thinking and social action” (Giroux, 1997, p. 29). This is where we begin to see the light of hope shine. As Giroux expressed, we need to generate “the pedagogical conditions for raising new wants, needs, and ambitions, and

real hope, but always in a context that makes such hope realizable” (p. 109). In education much needs to be done to accompany students to be critical and reflective thinkers. This mission is a tremendous addition to my repertoire of cognitive, affective, and academic tools as a college professor and researcher. This is probably the most important part of my new identity: that I begin to see myself as an agent of change, an educator who knows that he can contribute to a more just world.

### **Final Reflection**

Educators are not simply concerned with forms of empowerment that promote individual achievement and traditional forms of academic success. Instead, in their teaching they are also concerned with linking empowerment (the ability to think and act critically) with the concept of social transformation. That is, teaching for social transformation means educating students to take risks and fight within ongoing power relations in order to alter the foundations on which life is led.

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**Neuroscience, digital media, argumentative reading, and development of critical thinking in higher education**

**1<sup>RA</sup> EDICIÓN**

*Reading Comprehension and Academic Writing:*  
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**CHAPTER III**  
NEUROSCIENCE, DIGITAL MEDIA,  
ARGUMENTATIVE READING,  
AND DEVELOPMENT  
OF CRITICAL THINKING IN HIGHER  
EDUCATION

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## **Neurociencia, medios digitales, lectura argumentativa y desarrollo del pensamiento crítico en la educación superior**

### **Abstract**

This paper aims to review scientific articles related to university students' motivation for reading. It uses a bibliographic and documentary review of academic texts from the critical and hermeneutical analysis. This work addresses neuroscience, digital media, the development of critical thinking, and the relationship with argumentative reading in university education. This work also analyzes methodologies that facilitate learning processes using tools that facilitate critical and argumentative reading habits. It concluded that university students.

**Keywords:** Critical thinking, argumentative reading, neuroscience, digital media.

### **Resumen**

El objetivo de este estudio es presentar una revisión de artículos de investigación científica relacionados a la motivación a la lectura, especialmente en el ámbito de la educación superior. La metodología utilizada consiste en una revisión bibliográfica y documental de textos académicos desde el análisis crítico y hermenéutico. Este trabajo aborda temas vinculados a la neurociencia, medios digitales, desarrollo del pensamiento crítico y su relación con la lectura argumentativa en la educación universitaria. Este trabajo también analiza el uso de metodologías facilitadoras de los procesos de aprendizaje usando herramientas que facilitan hábitos de lectura crítica y argumentativa. Se concluye que los estudiantes universitarios pueden fortalecer la capacidad de transformar la información en conocimiento cuando son apoyados por procesos reflexivos.

**Palabras clave:** Pensamiento crítico, lectura argumentativa, neurociencia, medios digitales.

### **Introduction**

This research refers to the analysis and bibliographic interpretation of

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many academic documents whose conceptual theoretical framework includes parameters linked to critical reading. The main objective is to establish the meeting points of studies developed in didactics, neuroscience, and digital media and the motivation to read academic documents, especially in higher education.

The confinement scenario induced by the COVID-19 pandemic has motivated educational institutions to develop learning processes using the virtual modality. Such a situation has led to communication between teachers and students through digital educational platforms and text messages with chat applications for mobile phones. This form of interaction has revealed many spelling and grammatical errors in university students. From this arises the presumption that the students' analytical and argumentative reading and writing levels are low and, in some cases, decadent. In such a scenario, Clerici et al. (2021) argue that one of the most significant challenges students face is the lack of the habit of reading long and complex texts. Scholars like Pug (2020), Castle (2021), and Luna et al. (2021) consider that one of the problems of the teaching-learning process in universities is that students have shortcomings in the receptive and productive capacities of comprehensive reading. Thus, it is necessary to encourage critical and argumentative reading and writing processes. In addition, among the primary objectives of higher education is to promote the ability to build students' knowledge based on previous experiences through reading academic documents. For this reason, it is essential to use facilitating methodologies that contribute to the learning process to help students strengthen their ability to transform the information acquired into knowledge.

At the beginning of university studies, it is possible to observe the student's limitations with reading comprehension. However, it is necessary to consider that reading in the context of higher education is a more complex and profound process (Lobato-Osorio, 2019). In other words, the characteristics of academic texts imply specialized reading comprehension. In such a scenario, Parodi et al. (2019) pose a series of questions

related to reading in academic spaces: are we reading enough? What are we reading? In other words, the key to the matter lies in how much and what is read by students. Here emerged the following hypotheses:

- College students do not read enough,
- The reading culture has been impoverished; people read less than before.

In the case of university education, the written composition is a fundamental activity. It seeks two objectives of vital importance: (1) the construction of knowledge and (2) the formation of critical thinking (Vielma, 2021). The motivation for reading is a very present issue in society; thus, Castillo-Bravo et al. (2020), in their analysis of the reading habits of secondary school students, conclude that students denote a growing level of rejection of reading. Consequently, teachers at all educational levels are vital agents responsible for developing reading habits for future generations of professionals (Santos-Díaz et al., 2021). In other words, teachers are the central entity and generator of proposals for implementing innovative strategies to promote academic dynamisms, such as an intern learning process that promotes critical reading under learners' developed context (Pinto-Maldonado, 2021).

### **Methodology**

This bibliographic research uses hermeneutic, content analysis, and analytical-synthetic methods. According to Hernández-Sampieri and Mendoza (2018), the documentary review is carried out from the beginning of the investigative process to contextualize the problem for research. This contextualization contributes to developing a theoretical perspective that details the activities to follow, such as the detection, obtaining, and consultation of the relevant literature for the theoretical framework. This emerging knowledge contributes to understanding the approach to the research problem.

### **Critical and argumentative reading in higher education**

Critical reading means putting into practical thought the principles and

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characteristics of the critic but considering, at the same time, the particularities of the read text. Therefore, critical reading implies a high level of thinking that requires literal understanding and interpretation or inference (González-Morales, 2021; Morales, 2022).

In addition, critical thinking increases when a process of construction and ideological debate begins about the paradigms that each reader has developed throughout their academic life. Such a condition enhances the linguistic style and discursive fluency in the writing of academic texts. Such practice provides students with tools to improve their ways of acquiring and building knowledge, deducing, understanding, and learning from texts. These are skills necessary to recognize discursive diversity to achieve inferential processes, and develop critical thinking (Martínez-Solís et al., 2020; Sánchez-Fortún & Baldrich-Rodríguez, 2021).

In other words, higher education requires students to have thinking skills linked to knowledge production. To achieve this, universities must promote the development of critical and reflective thinking (Fuentes-Román & Farlora-Zapata, 2019).

Thus, argumentation can become the discursive mechanism that generates the construction of knowledge in all academic disciplines. Argumentation helps work on the curricular content of any subject. Argumentation reasoning is vital to improving student performance (Chiaro & Aquino, 2017; Chartier, 2018). Therefore, the importance of working with argumentative texts at the different levels of formal education is highlighted (Romano, 2020; Cassany, 2019).

To Zemelman (2015), students can infer a position very close to the conception of reading, a categorical form inserted into ideological, sociocultural, and historical positions linked to the production of knowledge (Morales, 2022). Concerning research in higher education, Moran (1990) proposed an approach to complexity theory. He argues that the

relationship between science and society implies the need for complex thinking that allows the observer to elucidate not only the fact or object studied, and have a self-reflective point of view. For this reason, the reading and analysis of academic texts imply raising a cognitive level that enables the development of critical, complex, and reflective thinking to address one's perspectives on a particular theory.

From the perspective of Romano (2020), skills and abilities can improve any reading-writing process to favor the formation of expert readers and writers within a specific disciplinary community. Each area of knowledge has its criteria and conventions to encourage interaction between readers of the same scientific community. Furthermore, any formal learning process requires reading as a fundamental tool, and sustained practice distinguishes between related reading techniques (Muñoz et al., 2018; Chartier & Scolari, 2019). It is essential to understand the meanings of specialized texts in any scientific discipline in higher education. Thus, when a person reads documents with complex meanings, he develops skills that allow him to raise the level of text analysis.

Reading critically and argumentatively in the context of higher education enables university students to develop cognitive skills because multiple discovered discourses give them the ability to assess, accept or reject, in diversity, the prevailing ideologies, offers, and social demands (Pinchao-Benavides, 2020; Chanamé-Chira et al., 2021). Thus, the academic objectives of many higher education institutions are to train professionals with critical thinking so that students select the implicit or explicit intentions and ideologies in the content of the texts they read and be able to adopt specific positions. (Alfaro-López, 2020; Cuiñas-Rodríguez & Medina-Cardozo, 2021; Morales, 2022).

In the context of higher education, the analysis of a text is the process of constructing ideas that configure dialogic and dialectic learning. Thus, to Cabrera-González et al. (2019), the high descriptive and deliberative degree of the study of written materials, such as research reports,



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presentations, scientific articles, and theses, provides reasons to defend an opinion, whether oral, visual or written. In the context of higher education, the analysis of a text is the process of constructing ideas that configure dialogic and dialectic learning. Therefore, the issuer uses strategies to modify the receiver's judgment about a specific matter, hoping that the reader believes or changes her opinion. Thus, arguing is a discursive operation aimed at convincing. This argument can also be the beginning of understanding through the relationship between the reader-text-context (Herrada & Herrada, 2017; Peinado-Elliot, 2020). Thus, students can insert complexity theories through academic texts' critical and reflective reading.

Thus, activities such as (a) carrying out a hermeneutic analysis, identifying and describing, (b) comparing and evaluating, and (c) reflecting on and applying narrative and aesthetic knowledge linked to narrative genres are possible to carry out from the perspective of transmedia skills, "which includes skills directly related to the reading comprehension, evaluation, reflection and communication" (Vizcaíno-Verdú et al., 2019, p. 101). In addition, university students spend a large part of their time playing video games, chatting with friends, surfing the web and social networks, and visiting audiovisual content platforms, which influence their academic performance. Reading deficits translate into difficulties in abstracting primary and secondary ideas from expository and descriptive texts (Espinel-Rubio et al., 2020). Consequently, Torres-Bernal (2020, p. 65) proposes "to use some technological and digital tools to develop a didactic strategy based on memes, which strengthens critical reading skills."

Creating groups in social networks for academic purposes enables access to information for all members of the study groups (Gómez-Hurtado et al., 2018). The use of social networks for educational purposes, in many cases, benefits the development of skills and competencies related to reading, analysis, search for information, a reworking of information shared on the network, construction of new knowledge, and de-

velopment of autonomous work. , collaborative and self-regulated. For Urquidi-Martin et al. (2019), educational technology has transcended a high level of understanding regarding how students perceive how and what characteristics are the variables that will influence the improvement of their learning process. Consequently, the exchange of reading experiences through a social network allows readers to comment and share their knowledge. An interactive discussion of varied and plural opinions and reflections arises between readers who often do not know each other. A new concept of reading communities originated in reading clubs or dialogic gatherings (Fernández-Figares & Quiles-Cabrera, 2019). Hence, from the academy, groups of students can read a text together and share ideas, reflections, and speculations to achieve discursive and hermeneutic analyses that favor significant learning emergence. In this order, information and communication technologies (ICT) provide tools, media, resources, and content, mainly settings and environments that promote interactions and experiences of interconnection and educational innovation (Varguillas-Carmona & Bravo-Mancero, 2020). In higher education, all the interrelated competencies of reading, writing, access to information, and digital communication, should be polished in the inter-learning process (Martínez-Ezquerro, 2020). To Quiles-Cabrera (2020), the idea of a reading community consists of punctual and sequenced sessions to execute operations of referential feedback to the text read and analyzed. Thus, reciprocal actions will be developed, whose variety arose from the readers' time, needs, and interests, with space always open to communication.

Digital media, or at least the vast majority, include places of participation for the reader to express ideas and speeches to be read by at least one other digital reader. In other words, cyber-media empowered to create a participatory, collaborative, and deliberative reader and receiver in their discourse (García-Orosa, 2018, p. 114). Scolari (2018) affirms that to understand better what young people consume, produce, share, create, and learn in digital environments. It is necessary to create a map of transmedia skills and informal learning strategies used

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by boys and girls to favor the formal education system. To identify competencies, skills, and techniques that a teacher can download, adapt, and put into practice in the classroom. Thus, the learning process takes on a more significant character.

### **Neuroscience and its relationship to reading in Higher Education**

This section intends to expose specific transdisciplinary studies about innovative lines of research on the reading process concerning the functions of the human brain. In the talk about neuroscience, administrative procedures, or cognitive processes, it is essential to consider the Russian neurologist Aleksandr Románovich Lúriya and Alexander Luria. Together with his mentor, the psychologist, also Russian Lev Vygotsky, considered by the scientific community as the founders of cognitive neuroscience and neuropsychology. Luria (1974), integrating Vygotski's postulates on the activities linked to mental regulation and the development of higher psychological functions, highlighted the implicit relationship between language and its concomitants. Thus, according to the psycholinguistic view, "reading is involved in developing qualities of thought such as understanding, analyzing, associating, prioritizing, inferring, deducing, questioning, and abstracting" (Sánchez-Sosa et al., 2021, p. 2).

Cognitive neurosciences, together with experimental cognitive psychology, constitute a set of disciplines that take elements from the sciences and the humanities and delve into the analysis of objects of study, such as the reading process applying biomedical technologies, also using methods from psychology and education (Núñez-Fidalgo, 2020, p. 166; López-Tapia & Hernández-Reyes, 2021). Learning to read requires high-level cognitive skills, including "attention, memory, language, and abstraction, which depend on various brain structures" (Restrepo et al., 2019, p. 83). These cognitive abilities, often called "metacognition or complex executive functions, intervene in the process of abstraction capacity for incorporating words into the lexicon of an adult person" (Guerrero-García, 2021. p. 109). The contributions of neuroscience are

in multiple theoretical publications from the academic field. Experts visualize and interpret the brain's operations using procedures taken from basic sciences such as mathematics and physics and applied sciences such as psychology and neuro didactics. (Dehaene, 2017; Carrillo-García and Martínez-Ezquerro, 2018). Consistent with Alcívar-Cedeño and Moreira-Morales (2020),

Learning to read is a process that originates in the brain, and a learner's ability to understand is linked both to brain functioning and plasticity, as well as to the study methodologies applied in educational settings and the teacher's ability to promote the mutual learning process.

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the teacher's ability to promote the mutual learning process. To Davolos and Arias (2021, p. 11), "the relationship between the cycle of perception, conceptualization, and action favors meaningful learning." Therefore, teaching is privileged when promoting and promoting reading practice. Likewise, students acquire cognitive skills according to their academic development in their formal education process. These cognitive advances imply the use of the so-called "Executive Functions, which entail behavioral production, regulation, modification and adjustment with the purpose, in the academic context, of developing new learning" (Cambrón-Muñoz and Reyes Alanís, 2021, p. 57).

Regarding the neurodiversity construct, the most widely accepted conceptual reference in the region to frame the contributions of Armstrong (2012) in the following three sections: "1) the neurodiversity approach to understanding the diverse potentialities of people, instead of concentrating on their difficulties; 2) the link between multiple intelligences, psychoeducational variables, and pedagogical practices, and 3) the conceptualization of new pedagogical strategies from the neurodiversity approach", cited by (Amador et al., 2021, p. 137). Thus, reading ability development necessarily involves the use of cognitive activities such as 1) decoding previously learned and 2) internalized symbols, which are related to other brain processes for giving rise to the combination of types of intelligence. Howard Gardner (2019) underlined that a large part of the inter-learning process occurs through oral or written language. Although logical-mathematical reasoning and encoding and decoding of symbols are critical, language continues to be, until now, an unbeatable channel for transmitting basic concepts and statements in textbooks; and this provides powerful metaphors used to explain new scientific findings.

Concerning creative reading, the Placement/Displacement Theory (TE/D) integrates an epistemic framework that allows a dynamic approach to the complex process of creative writing. Outlined from the beginning of the unity of knowledge, it seeks to respond to the under-

standing of the universe, life, and human reality from the most solid principles of the sciences. Creative reading combines the approaches of the social sciences and the humanities from the current keys in physical, chemical, or biological research. It particularly emphasizes the findings of the neurosciences (Vásquez-Medel et al., 2020). It is crucial to carry out creative writing practices but always promotes the essential development of creative abilities, oral language acquisition, literacy learning, and verbal communication Aesthetics (Vasquez-Medel, 2020).

Finally, Robinson (2009), cited by Guerrero-García (2021, p. 109), affirms that “as the brain develops its maturation process, the executive functions reorganize information according to the increasingly high amount that is progressively acquired.” This increase occurs at around 19 and 22 - 25 years old, according to other contextual factors. Therefore, university students, most of whom are of the indicated ages, are ready to develop.

## **Conclusions**

Reading and writing skills are part of the requirements of higher education. Therefore, it is necessary to continue developing initiatives and programs that encourage reading as part of an educational process that motivates students to develop critical thinking (Martín, 2020). In addition, the permanent reading practice of scientific documents can improve students’ critical thinking and arguments (Muñoz et al., 2018). It implies that university professors develop an innovative learning process reflected in a curriculum and promote academic reading from its subjects (Carlino, 2019).

The academy does not yet have a comprehensive theory that systematically incorporates reading objectives. Several researchers recognize that people read for many reasons and adapt their reading processes to such objectives (Britt, Rouet, & Durik, 2018). Consequently, through appropriate reading habits, continuous learning can be promoted by an educational approach focused on competencies. Therefore, “mo-

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tivating students to be autonomous, reflective, and committed to their academic training implies providing inter-learning strategies that prioritize reading, research, and the interest in inquiring and learning” (Sánchez-Fortún & Baldrich, 2021, p. 3). Reading and Comprehension are educational activities that influence academic performance. It allows knowledge acquisition in a significant way according to the ability of students to analyze and reflect on the content. For this, it is necessary to carry out psychoeducational work that enables positive transformations in the inter-learning process (García, Arévalo, and Hernández, 2018).

Reflecting on reading in the university environment implies keeping in mind the contextual challenges related to the learning process and the production of knowledge by the student body. Furthermore, university teachers share the need to train active readers, who can transform the reading process into significant learning for their educational career (Pérez, 2018).

A teacher, especially in university education, recognizes motivating students to read, study, analyze, and understand a specialized text to acquire learning. Meneses-Alba et al. (2018, p. 31) stated, “for students to develop reflective capacity through reading, a critical thinking style improves when analyzing argumentative texts.” The critical analysis of the read text enhances the ability of abstraction and reading comprehension.

Higher Education Institutions are committed to proposing academic training based on communicative practices and specialized texts whose primary purpose is to produce specialized and qualified knowledge (Bigi-Osorio et al., 2019). Therefore, the connection between critical reading and research skills seeks to deepen the design and practice of teaching in higher education (Suárez-Monzón et al., 2020). However, the university should develop their reading habits using academic texts to approach the generation of critical and argumentative thinking that allows them to position themselves in one or several scientific positions

around a specific concept or idea.

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## **Ludic activities: a strategy for children's psychomotor development. In the Early childhood education**

**Actividades lúdicas: una estrategia para el desarrollo psicomotor de los niños. En la Educación Infantil**



**1<sup>RA</sup> EDICIÓN**

*Reading Comprehension and Academic Writing:*  
**RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

**PART II**  
LUDICS AND ARTS IN EDUCATION



**1<sup>RA</sup> EDICIÓN**

*Reading Comprehension and Academic Writing:*  
**RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

## **CHAPTER IV**

### LUDIC ACTIVITIES: A STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN'S PSYCHOMOTOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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### **Abstract**

This work aims to determine the effectiveness of recreational activities as a strategy for supporting children's psychomotor development in Early Childhood Education. It has a quantitative approach to descriptive study with an experimental design. The sample consisted of four years old 60 children located in Ecuador. The research process consists of initial diagnosis, recreational activities application, and final experimental and control groups assessment. The instrument used is the Abbreviated Scale of Nelson Ortiz Pinilla to assess children's psychomotor development. This research uses playful activities in the teaching and learning process indoors and outdoors. Results allow researchers to analyze the intervention group's gross and fine motor areas. In addition, a level of improvement appeared in the final stage. However, the control group did not reach the same level as the intervention group. It concluded that applying ludic activities in sequential and systematic order can achieve optimal psychomotor development in several aspects of the evolutionary state in most intervention group participants.

**Keywords:** early childhood education, Ecuador, psychomotor development, recreational activities.

### **Resumen**

Este trabajo tiene como objetivo determinar la eficacia de las actividades lúdicas como estrategia de apoyo al desarrollo psicomotor de los niños en Educación Infantil. Tiene un enfoque cuantitativo de estudio descriptivo con un diseño experimental. La muestra estuvo conformada por 60 niños de cuatro años ubicados en el Ecuador. El proceso de investigación consta de tres fases: diagnóstico inicial, aplicación de actividades recreativas y evaluación final con grupos experimentales y de control. El instrumento utilizado es la Escala Abreviada de Nelson Ortiz Pinilla para evaluar el desarrollo psicomotor de los niños. Esta investigación utiliza actividades lúdicas en el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje en espacios interiores y exteriores.

Los resultados permiten a los investigadores analizar las áreas motoras gruesas y finas del grupo de intervención. Además, se observó un nivel de mejora en la etapa final. Sin embargo, el grupo de control no alcanzó el mismo nivel que el grupo de intervención. Se concluyó que la aplicación de actividades lúdicas en orden secuencial y sistemático puede lograr un desarrollo psicomotor óptimo en varios aspectos del estado evolutivo en la mayoría de los participantes del grupo de intervención.

**Keywords:** early childhood education, Ecuador, psychomotor development, recreational activities.

### **Introduction**

The pedagogical field recognizes that recreational activities linked to games, dynamics, and other physical activities are common to early childhood education. Their evolutionary development improves by exercise and practice, which begins in their family context and continues in school environments. Thus, recreational activities become a daily activity for children at the early childhood education level.

A constant increase in stimuli imposed by information acquisition in classrooms has lost the practical and motor training necessary to balance children's psychomotor development. Therefore, pedagogical theories emphasize recreational activities contributing to the formal educational process. In addition, the global trend is towards a more practical, active, and dynamic education to train children's psychomotor, cognitive, and socio-affective capabilities as a relevant part of their integral development.

In particular, at the early childhood education level, the primary psychomotor skills are built to increase children's knowledge, learning, and intelligence. Therefore, in the newest reform of the Early Childhood Education Curriculum (2014), the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education guides teachers to use pedagogical tools linked to playful activities to improve children's teaching and learning process. Recreational activities con-

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stitute a fundamental strategy to strengthen children's basic learning processes based on such innovation.

Recreational activities are of greater importance because they favor social interaction between peers and generate significant interest in knowing and learning with joy, enthusiasm, and dynamism. Recreational activities help children to manage several capabilities; as Santamaría (2008) indicates, "creativity, sensitivity, flexibility, originality, fluency, stability, social cooperation, moral attitude, communication, and physical strength" (p. 88).

In addition, García and Llul (2009) state:

Psycho-motor skills are the foundation for all forms of child development: physical, mental, emotional, and social. Therefore, children must participate in playful activities that optimally promote this development at this crucial stage. Psychomotor games develop motor skills through movement and body action, helping to improve muscle tonic, emotional, and physical skills, such as laterality, coordination, balance, orientation, spatial structuring, emotional adjustment, body awareness, and feelings (p. 90).

Children like to do rounds, dynamics activities, physical exercises, and movements in different positions. Undoubtedly, psychomotor games stand out in various movements performed during execution. López (2010) argues that playing activities contribute to children's psychomotor development because they are actions that children practice spontaneously. It also promotes the progress of individual skills and abilities, helping children to increase "balance, strength, manipulation of objects, mastery, and discrimination of the senses, eye-motor coordination, the ability to imitate, and motor coordination" (p. 24).

Besides, Benítez (2011) states that "playful activities work in favor of boys and girls to lead them to a broad knowledge for developing skills



and aptitudes that will help them in their future lives” (p. 84).

Psycho-motor development refers to changes in children’s abilities to control their body movements from rigid limitations and uncoordinated and spontaneous steps to more complex, rhythmic, smooth movements and efficient flexion and extension locomotion.

In addition, Schonhaut (2010) argues that “psychomotor development is an evolutionary, multidimensional, and comprehensive process, which masters to reach increasingly complex skills and responses individually and gradually” (p. 1). Consequently, psychomotor development is a gradual and continuous process of identifying stages of increasing levels of complexity. On the other hand, psychomotor development is a systematic and sequential process that begins when the child is in the womb. It must be stimulated at an early age to achieve appropriate comprehensive development, which involves cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and cognitive aspects of language. Consequently, psychomotor development allows children to have a total body balance and basic skills such as attention, visual-motor coordination, and spatial orientation. On this fact, Maganto & Cruz (2011) state that “Motor skills make possible a greater control of the body and the surrounding environment. These achievements influence children’s social relationships, including effective expressions, and can be increased when children move independently” (p. 7).

In summary, psychomotor development results from each motor activity children carry out in their daily lives, generating learning through their experiences.

In addition, the authors of this study observed during the supervision of the pre-service teachers’ practices in Ecuador a series of weaknesses in Early Childhood Educational centers. For example, teachers do not frequently use ludic activities as a didactic tool. They reduce recreational activities to narrating stories, singing, painting, and working with puz-

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zles without setting any goal for children's psychomotor development. In this sense, this research diagnosis evidenced reduced coordination for direct 4 to 5 years old children's movement inside classrooms, poor control of legs and arms when children were running, and Difficulty maintaining balance when children are jumping two or more times on one foot. The fine-motor coordination limitations include handling scissors and controlling space limits when painting; children do not show the development of laterality (left/right), socio-affective, and language problems.

In such conditions, the research problem to study is:

How do teachers determine the effectiveness of recreational activities in a way that favors the optimal psychomotor development of children in early childhood education?

Consequently, research questions for guiding this research are:

- What level of psychomotor development do the participants have?
- What activities enable children's optimal psychomotor development at the Early Childhood Education level?
- What is the level of psychomotor development of children in the experimental and control group after the intervention?

### **Methodology**

Regarding the methodological approach, Hernández, Fernández, and Baptista (2014) stated, "research project methodology includes the type of research, techniques, and instruments used to carry out the research process" (p. 55). Research design, according to Arias (2012), "is the general strategy adopted by the researcher to respond to the problem posed" (p. 87).

Consequently, this educational research has an experimental type of research that considers an intervention group (experimental group) and a non-intervention group (control group). It is a field research type be-

cause data was collected directly from the experimented context and from instructors that took part in this process, having as purposer to develop children's psychomotor capabilities. Thus, the experimental group used playful activities during the teaching-learning processes executed indoors and outdoors in classrooms.

### **The sample**

It was made up of 60 children enrolled in two Early Childhood Education centers located in canton Manta, Ecuador.

The teaching and learning processes used playful activities as a didactic strategy. The process consisted of elaborating a methodological guide of ludic activities for contributing to the psychomotor development of 4-year-old children that took part in this research. According to the Ministry of Social Economic Inclusion (2014) of Ecuador, "playful activities are educational or stimulating moments of child development, which are planned and executed with a specific purpose, whose content constituted by the suggested activities" (p. 40).

The research had a quantitative and descriptive approach. According to Palella & Martins (2010), "this approach is characterized by privileging data as the essential substance of its argument. Data is the concrete expression, and it symbolizes a reality" (p. 40). This approach allowed researchers to quantify the evaluation tests results of the variable -psychomotor development- of all children in pretest and post-test to compare both groups' results.

Finally, this paper presents a comparative and statistical analysis. The data obtained through the Abbreviated Development Scale form were tabulated and processed in a spreadsheet. Instruments did not present the results. Nevertheless, instead, it was a more didactic presentation, divided into three aspects: (1) motor development, (2) language development, and (3) social development.



### **The abbreviated scale of development**

A development scale comprises a very diverse set of tests and grades in difficulty to construct a detailed exploration of different development factors. This scale allows for evaluating a subject motor development level, taking into account successes and failures tests, and referring results to norms established by the author of this scale. These scales rest on the postulate -development occurs in the same order for all children.

Nelson Ortiz drew the Abbreviated Development Scale. "It is an instrument designed to make a global and general assessment of development processes" (Ortiz, 2013, p. 5). It helped the researcher team establish the psychomotor development levels of the population under research, both at the beginning and end of the research.

The Nelson Ortiz Test assessed a global and general psychomotor development process. It is a reliable and valid tool for evaluating and monitoring psychomotor development in children under 5-year-old. It uses indicators in each age range to detect cases of higher risk. This evaluation consists of four specific dimensions: (a) gross motor development, (b) adaptive fine motor development, (c) language-auditory development, and (d) personal-social development. This instrument attends to areas of the children's story in an integral way.

Material for the administration of this scale is simple, and instructions are structured as follows: in the left column appears the statement of elements as they did in the basic application form. The right column specifies every criterion a child must satisfy corresponding to the approved level. Evaluation time is 15 to 20 minutes maximum. The order of areas for execution must be flexible according to the adaptation of every child. The first item corresponds to the age range until the child fails by three consecutive items, registering the items fulfilled with 1 (one) and the items not fulfilled with 0 (zero). These partial scores are registered in each area to later obtain a global score by counting every area's score.



The overall rating for each area results from counting the number of approved rates.

The technique used was the questionnaire. According to Trujillo (2000), “a format that contains a set of questions, references to the aspects and facts that people want to investigate for a written reply” (p. 77). In its construction, a Likert scale-type questionnaire was used, which consists, according to Hernández (2014), of “a set of elements presented in a form, before which the subjects’ reaction is requested. People express reaction responses to one of the scale points” (p. 256).

Similarly, the instrument consisted of twenty-five (25) items and three (3) response options: almost always, sometimes, and rarely. It offered different alternatives through which the importance of recreational activities for boys and girls in the preschool; the instrument contained precise instructions for its response, and those who marked two or more options were considered invalid.

The collaboration of the preschool level teachers taken as a sample was requested, clearly providing them with the objective of this research. Researchers verified that instructions and elements presented in the form were well understood.

### **Techniques and instruments**

According to Zamora (2010), the assessment is the evaluative judgment made from the previous establishment of the research aims. According to Bolaños (2013), techniques and instruments are procedures and criteria used to know about achieving the proposed goals. Therefore, assessment helps collect and organize information, detect problems that children may have before, during, and after assessment, and provide reliable and valid data for obtaining the corresponding diagnosis.

### **Methodological guide for recreational activities**

This guide aims to help teachers use recreational activities in the early

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childhood education of students during the teaching and learning process, inside and outside the classroom to achieve optimal psychomotor development in four-year-old boys and girls.

Playful activities design dynamically and playfully, according to the declared objectives in developing body expression and motor skills of children who pass through this level. The term of application of the ludic activities must be carried out permanently during a school year.

This guide contains five matrices that allow assessing 50 recreational activities grouped according to the methodological strategy: ten games for the development of balance, ten games for the development of coordination, ten games for hand-eye coordination, ten games for relaxation, and ten coordination and balance development games. Recreational activities do not present difficulties in their execution, so they can be developed in a group and individually. Participants have five repetitions maximum, and the execution time is from 20 to 25 minutes.

Ludic activities are for inside or outside execution. The order of execution is randomly to adapt to the motivation processes of the participants. The material used in each recreational activity is easy to acquire or find among the resources of an early childhood education classroom: balls, cones, ropes, hulas, and planks.

### **Analysis and discussion of results**

The results obtained are:

Regarding the ludic activities variable and the dimension types of children's games, 60.94% of children always play cognitive games. In comparison, 25% of children sometimes play motor exercise games, and the remaining 14.06% almost always play games.

According to the information collected concerning inside and outside door activities for developing children's fine motor skills, the results showed that 37.5% of instructors use a body expression as a recre-

ational activity. Another 37.5% use artistic expression as a recreational activity. In comparison, 25% of instructors use a literary expression.

According to Matos (2002), passive recreational activities are considered entertainment in which children invest a minimum of energy and can usually perform them without help. They contribute to children's cognitive and socio/affective development and fine motor skills improvement.

In this same dimension of essential activities, using playful as competitive activity (running, jumping, or jogging.), instructors increased by 62.5% their physical exercising.

According to Matos (2002), studies regarding recreational activities conclude all those games that individuals perform through body movements, causing energy consumption, and can develop players' gross motor skills.

Meanwhile, 75% of instructors implemented balance activities, and another 12.5% used coordination activities after the training about psychomotor development variable with the gross motor activities indicator. In contrast, another 12.5% of instructors worked on balance and postural coordination in 4-year-old children.

On the execution of ludic activities for the game orientation indicator, 62.5% of instructors guided playing soccer, 37% guided cooperative play, and 5% guided traditional games.

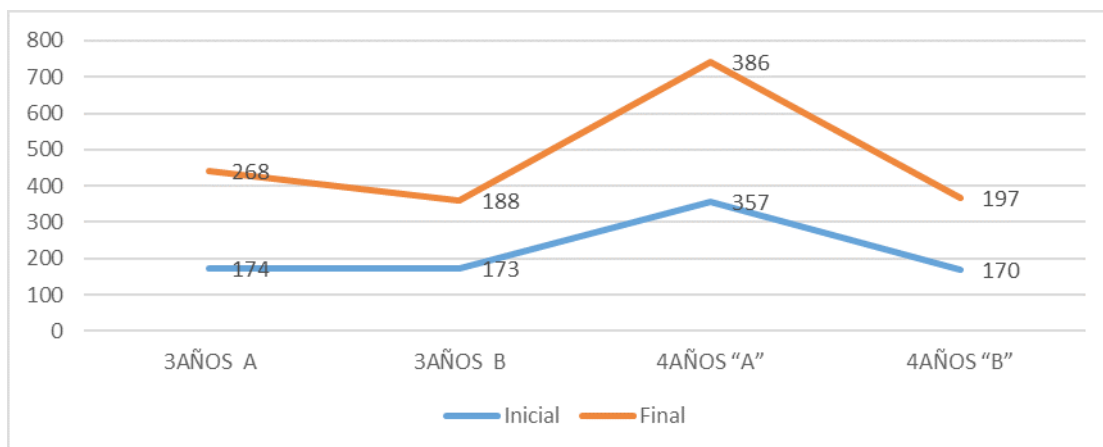
Regarding the indicator types of materials used by teachers in recreational activities, 90% used materials such as balls, ropes, or canes. Concerning the learning environment indicator when carrying out recreational activities, it is observed that 75% of teachers create adequate environments in the first three months, and 25% of teachers gradually implement the settings.

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Concerning this dimension of the role of the teacher, it found five indicators: preparing the environment, the appropriate materials, orientation to various games, motivation, and interest of the students, evaluated through 3 items.

Regarding the educational environments, García and Llul (2009) point out that educational spaces allow the optimally used of games and an entire set of spatial possibilities activities, both exterior and interior, as well as their distribution by zones inside the educational institution. People must know how to take advantage of all those recreational resources available to make more pleasant, imaginative, and practical game areas.

The comparative statistics of gross motor and fine motor development appear in the graphic below concerning the total achievement of items in the pretest and posttest.

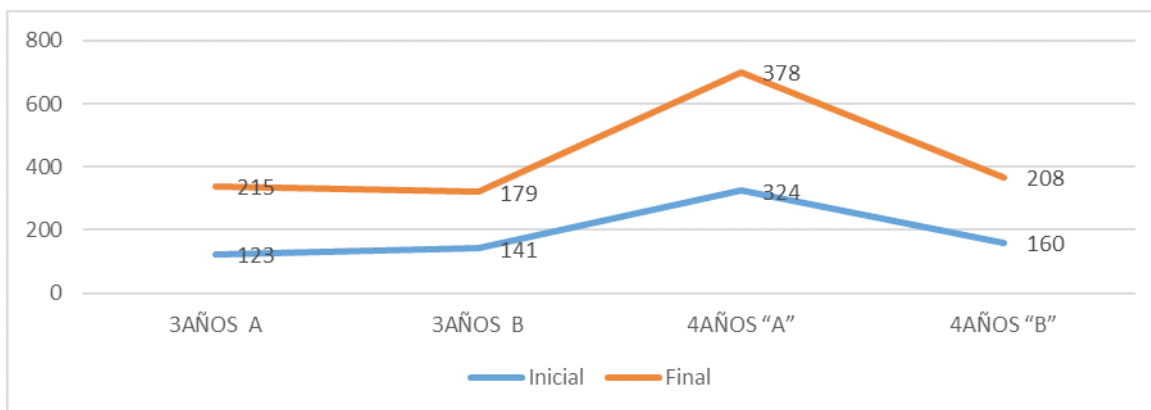


**Graphic 1.** Gross Motricity.

**Source:** Research project.

In graphic No.1 appear a comparison of two stages at the level of Gross Motor improvement. A level of gross motor improvement was found, which was exceeded in the final stage to show certain parallels levels, a high index of improvement in daily activities. However,

there was a high degree. It showed that parallels “A” did not reach the same level as their similar pair. It should have an assurance plan that standardizes the levels of knowledge in the teaching to children.



**Graphic 2.** Fine motricity.

**Source:** research project.

In graphic No. 2 shows two stages of comparison at the level of children's fine motor improvement. Researchers found a level of improvement exceeded in the final stage that indicates a high index of improvement in daily activities. However, even with a high degree reported, “B” is not at the same level of development as its similar peer compared to the third parties. They should have an insurance plan that standardizes participants' knowledge levels on the children's training process.

### **Final considerations**

Playful activities are a preponderant resource for children's integral development. In consideration of early childhood educators using playful activities only for recreation goals, leaving psychomotor development aside and without adequate stimulation, the authors provide a methodological guide for using recreational activities that enable optimal psychomotor development of 4-year-old boys and girls.

Based on this experience results, the process obtained a positive social-educational impact, allowing the researcher team to determine that recreational activities used under a sequential and systematic step fa-

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vor children's psychomotor development optimally in evolutionary and chronological states, evidencing:

1. Psychomotor state reported after intervention: 91% of children achieved a more outstanding postural balance, 92% better spatial orientation, and 87% improved psychomotor coordination.
2. Cognitive level reported after intervention: Children achieved 92% in the development of inquiry and curiosity.
3. Affective-social elements: 87% of children achieved better social integration and communication with their peers.

Results allow determining that when ludic activities follow a sequential and constant order, they can become a positive pedagogical contribution to support early childhood education instructors who guide their daily work for children's Benefit.

Finally, it concluded that recreational activities are different alternatives for improving children's social integral development, motor, socio-affective, cognitive, and language elements. Recreational activities must be planned and scheduled as part of children's daily activities and executed using didactic material of easy and economic access to contribute to optimal children's psychomotor development.

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## **CHAPTER V**

### THE PLAYROOM IN FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT'S OAK PARK HOME AND STUDIO

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### **La sala de juegos en Oak Park Home and Studio de Frank Lloyd Wright**

#### **Abstract**

This work examines the playroom in Frank Lloyd Wright's Home and Studio in Oak Park, Illinois. This specific room in which Wright's children spent their early years was the heart of the house. The playroom was built in 1895 for Wright's four children at the time. He designed this space as a family room where his children and himself could do many different activities. During the day his children played and learned in the room, while at night he used it for parties and musicales. His wife also used the playroom as a neighborhood kindergarten. The design of this room provides an opportunity to point out that Wright's architecture was influenced by Froebel's Kindergarten method. Friedrich Froebel was a German pedagogue that proposed a new methodology to teach children with a series of materials that he named "Gifts." For Wright, the geometrical shapes of these "Gifts" gave him his first strong perception of the meaning of volume and form. Therefore, there are many historians and biographies that talk about the relation between Wright's Organic Architecture philosophy and Friedrich Froebel's Kindergarten's method. Due to this connection, I will argue that Froebel pedagogy influenced Wright's playroom design because this space embodies the Froebel's gifts and kindergarten. Based on my research I found that the philosophy of Froebel pedagogy and Wright philosophy come together in the overall design of the playroom.

**Key word:** arts, libraries, Frank Lloyd Wright, Froebel, Education.

#### **Resumen**

Este trabajo examina la sala de juegos de Frank Lloyd Wright's Home and Studio en Oak Park, Illinois. Esta habitación específica en la que los hijos de Wright pasaron sus primeros años fue el corazón de la casa. La sala de juegos se construyó en 1895 para los cuatro hijos de Wright en ese momento. Diseñó este espacio como una sala familiar donde

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sus hijos y él mismo pudieran realizar muchas actividades diferentes. Durante el día sus hijos jugaban y aprendían en la habitación, mientras que por la noche la usaba para fiestas y musicales. Su esposa también usó la sala de juegos como jardín de infantes del vecindario. El diseño de esta sala brinda la oportunidad de señalar que la arquitectura de Wright fue influenciada por el método de jardín de infantes de Froebel. Friedrich Froebel fue un pedagogo alemán que propuso una nueva metodología para enseñar a los niños con una serie de materiales que denominó “Regalos”. Para Wright, las formas geométricas de estos “Regalos” le dieron su primera percepción fuerte del significado del volumen y la forma. Por lo tanto, hay muchos historiadores y biografías que hablan de la relación entre la filosofía de la Arquitectura Orgánica de Wright y el método de Kindergarten de Friedrich Froebel. Debido a esta conexión, argumentaré que la pedagogía de Froebel influyó en el diseño de la sala de juegos de Wright porque este espacio encarna los dones y el jardín de infantes de Froebel. Según mi investigación, descubrí que la filosofía de la pedagogía de Froebel y la filosofía de Wright se unen en el diseño general de la sala de juegos.

**Palabra clave:** arte, bibliotecas, Frank Lloyd Wright, Froebel, Educación.

### **Introduction**

In 1889, Frank Lloyd Wright bought a piece of land in Oak Park, Illinois and built a house for his first wife Catherine Tobin and their children. This house was his first independent residential work where he began to develop and perfect the beginnings of his modern style. The Oak Park house was one of the most architecturally and historically important building in American modern architecture because it broke the standards that architecture used during the nineteenth century. He designed the “Oak Park house as a nourishing environment to support physically and spirituality his family’s daily interaction and their overall enjoyment of the life lived there.” Therefore, the playroom was added in 1895 as space that combined the harmony between construction and daily activities. This space was

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a family room where his children played and learned, he also used it at night for parties and musicales, and his wife used the playroom as a neighborhood kindergarten. As the central part of the house, the family celebrated Christmas, played music, danced, and celebrated multiple events there. Indeed, this space had a unique style because the design of this room expanded the space in five directions and made the playroom appear larger than it was. “The overhead skylight [let] in natural light from above... A thin perforated wood screen softened the overhead light [and diffused it to the space]. Based on the seed pods and blossoms of the prickly ash, the screen’s flat geometric patterns anticipated Wright’s design for art glass windows. The walls, which read[sic] as a horizontal band, are of a rich mottled golden-brown brick (to withstand the children play) and the vault was a yellow gold color with natural trim...” It also had an upper gallery and piano.

According to many historians, the design of the playroom reflects the transcendence of his early education based on Friedrich Froebel Kindergarten’s method. Froebel used a new methodology to teach children with a series of materials that he named “Gifts.” The gift included geometric building blocks designed to teach children about forms and their relationships in nature. For him, playing with blocks gives fundamental expression to a child’s soul and to the unity of life. Like Froebel, Wright’s mother (Anna Lloyd Jones Wright) believed in the divine principle of unity. For her family, the Lloyd Joneses, “unity was their watchword, the sign, and symbol that thrilled them, the UNITY of all things.” Anna’s family’s vision made a perfect match with Froebel ideas, so she went to Boston and took lessons of Froebel’s kindergarten’s method. Then, she taught this training to Wright when he was nine years old. It is evident that Froebel’s kindergarten ideas grew in the mind of Wright and transformed his experience as an architect. Wright developed his own philosophy about unity and space that he used to create a harmony between the human habitat and the natural world. Froebel’s pedagogy influenced Wright’s playroom design because this area combined the philosophy of the principle of unity and space. Therefore, I will argue

that the playroom design embodies the Froebel's gifts and kindergarten methods. To understand the playroom design and purpose, the relation between Wright's early life and Froebel's Kindergarten's methods are examined through books, journals, newspapers, photography representations, and private collections in libraries.

### **Frank Lloyd Wright and Froebel Education**

Considered as the father of modern architecture in America, Frank Lloyd Wright gave a new vision and created a new genre, a series of innovative patterns. His buildings' designs "play with natural form through clean lines and open spaces." His legacy began with ideas of using materials in his natural states, such as wood and stone to combine the environment with his designs. His construction also integrated new techniques such as blocks of prefabricated reinforced concrete, innovations in the field of air conditioning, indirect lighting, and heating panels. The main characteristics of his design were "low-pitched roofs, overhanging eaves, and an open floor plan." He moved from closed and restrictive Victorian architecture into *Organic Architecture*. He created his own term of *Organic Architecture* as an explanation of his philosophy.

According to Elizabeth Ross, his philosophy has a background in Froebel's kindergarten method. Friedrich Froebel was a German academic and educator who dedicated his life to developing a pedagogy that is child-centered and is well-known as the founder of Kindergarten.

Froebel developed his famous kindergarten method based on the exploration of the "connection between the individual psyche and the natural and social universe."

He believed that play was the natural activity of children, so all the kindergarten activities were singing, dancing, gardening, storytelling, playing with the "Gifts" and occupation.

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These “Gifts” were a series of materials that he developed to teach children different educational skills. For him the “kindergarten represented this relationship in the natural world through educational playthings, or ‘Gifts’: a ball was the symbol of wholeness, and blocks and sticks showed the various ways that the whole was constituted through its parts: numbers, fractions, geometry, patterns”

This method was applied by Wright’s mother, Anna, to teach her children to develop their educational skills through natural play in their early years. Wright recorded many episodes of his education in his book *An Autobiography*. He said that his Froebel kindergarten training awakened his delight in play of color and design.

Wright described these “Gifts” as:

The strips of colored paper, glazed and “matt,” remarkably soft brilliant colors. Now came the geometric by-play of those checkered color combinations! The structural figures to be made with peas and small straight stick: slender constructions, the joinings [sic] accented by the little green-pea globes. The smooth shapely maple blocks with which to build, the sense of which never afterward leaves the fingers: *form* becoming *feeling*. The box had a mast to set up on it, on which to hang the maple cubes and spheres and triangles, revolving them to discover subordinate forms.

And the exiting cardboard shapes with pure scarlet face- such scarlet! Smooth triangular shapes, white-black and edges, cut into rhomboids with which to make designs on the flat table top. What shapes they made naturally if only one would let them?

A small interior world of color and form now came within the grasp of small fingers. Color and pattern, in the flat, in the round. Shapes that lay hidden behind the appearances all about.

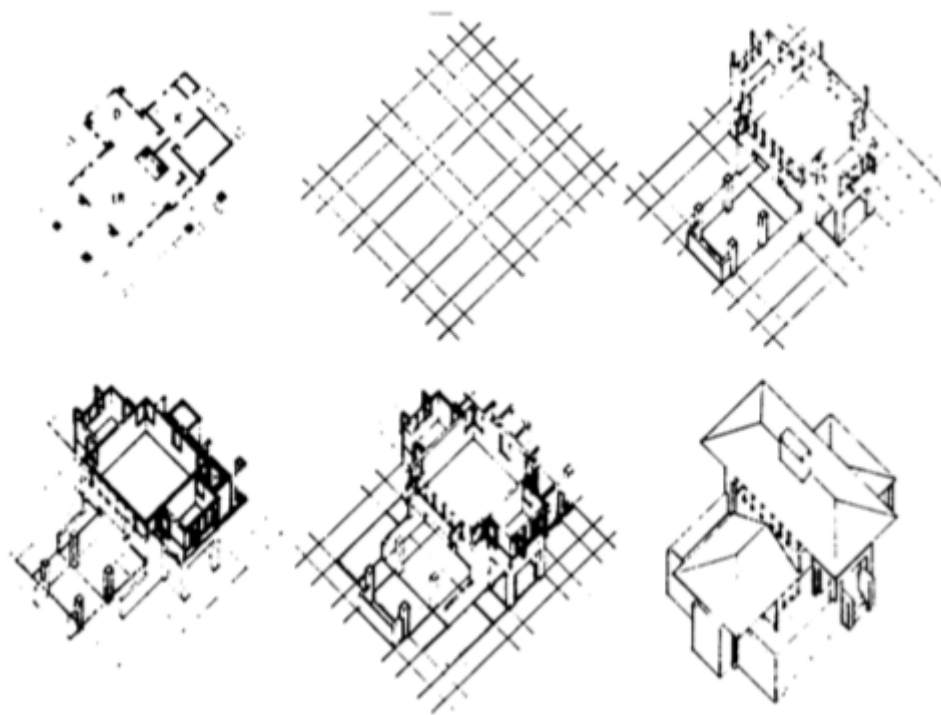
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Here was something for invention to seize and use to create. These “Gifts” came into the gray house in drab old Weymouth and made something there had never lived there before... When [his mother’s] housework was done mother and the two children would sit a low mahogany table with polished top, working with these “Gifts.” Fra Angelico’s bright-robed angels, some in red, some in blue, others in green; and one -the loveliest of all- in yellow, would come and hover over the table. From their golden harps, simple rhythms were gently falling on child mind like flying seeds carried on the wings of the wind to fertile ground. Giotto standing in the shadow at the mother’s elbow would have worn a smile beneath his Florentine cap; music smiles prophetic of seedtime and harvest other than his but eternally the same. Again- Architecture.

From this poetic retrospective it is evident that his childhood memories were deeply rooted in Wright’s mind. For instance, in “Wright in the Nursery: The influence of Froebel Education on the work of Frank Lloyd Wright,” Grant C. Manson (1953) claims that the colorful and kinesthetic stimuli of the Froebel’s kindergarten method impacted Wright’s attention, perceptual, and memory processes. He said that these gifts’ shapes had become instinctive to Wright, because it gave him his first strong perception of the meaning of volume and form. Consequently, the interpretation of color and shape developed and helped him acquire new and more complex skills and knowledge. An example of these skills was his “unit system” that he used in his architectural plans that was developed from his Froebel’s kindergarten training. In 1968, Richard MacCormac wrote a research paper, “The Anatomy of Wright’s Aesthetic,” that was fundamental to understand the “unit system” (Fig.1).





**Figure 1.** Brooks, H. A. (1979). Frank Lloyd Wright and the Destruction of the Box. *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 38(1), 7–14. <https://doi.org/10.2307/989345>

MacCormac explains that the “unit system” control the dimensions and placement of these various space-defining elements (such as screens, slabs, piers, ceilings, fireplaces), these elements were never haphazard or arbitrary. MacCormac claims that Wright began to design masses, influenced by Froebel illustrations, and t later he acquired a feeling for architecture space. His thesis was that Froebel gave Wright a philosophy, a design discipline and a characteristic style.

With regards to MacCormac’s paper, H. Allen Brooks explains that Wright never explained how the system worked until MacCormac researched it.

Norman Brosterman and Eugene F. Provenzo have thoughtfully analyzed the probable influence of Froebel's gift on Wright's work as an architecture. Provenzo said that "there is an undeniable link between Wright's adult work and Froebel's gifts. One need only look at Wright's stained-glass windows to realize the extent to which Froebel's parquetry and paper-folding exercises influenced the architect's designs, or how the proportions in Froebel's different block systems are replicated in Wright's buildings."

Wright learned to recognize the "building blocks at the heart of all natural systems and the logical way in which they were related, so that, while formulating his concept of 'Organic Architecture'- the harmonious integration of forms and forces resolved to unity - geometry, the ancients' and Froebel's choice as the ideal system to represent these 'atoms,' which became Wright's as well" . In other words, Wright could see that from the visual world to the invisible sub-atomic world, all forms are made from connected geometric patterns and relationships. Consequently, Wright used the square, rectangle, octagon, triangle, hexagon, parallelogram, circle, spiral, and arc in his works as the keys to encompass both composition and construction. These ideas took shape in his first house built in 1889 for his wife and their children. At the beginning, the house was a simple structure with a geometric form. The design was a triangular prism bounded by steep roofs and set upon a low rectangular base. The house went through a number of alterations and modifications because it was learning laboratory for Wright. It provided the architectural environment in which he could experiment with his ideas in three dimensions. In 1895 Wright transformed his studio in the second floor into a dormitory, redesigned his dining room, added a new kitchen and the handsome playroom.

### **The Handsome Playroom**

The playroom was the earliest independent work where Wright showcased his philosophy. With the playroom, "he could put into three dimensions his evolving beliefs about making a beautiful... place for art and music, and for [teaching] children in spaces for their education and play."

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According to the architecture critic, Ana Huxtable, “the playroom is a handsome space topped by a barrel vault with a central skylight, the curving ribs traced in dark wood. Light flooded from the room’s twenty-foot-high ceiling and through a continuous band of windows where the ceiling vault sprang from Roman brick walls.”



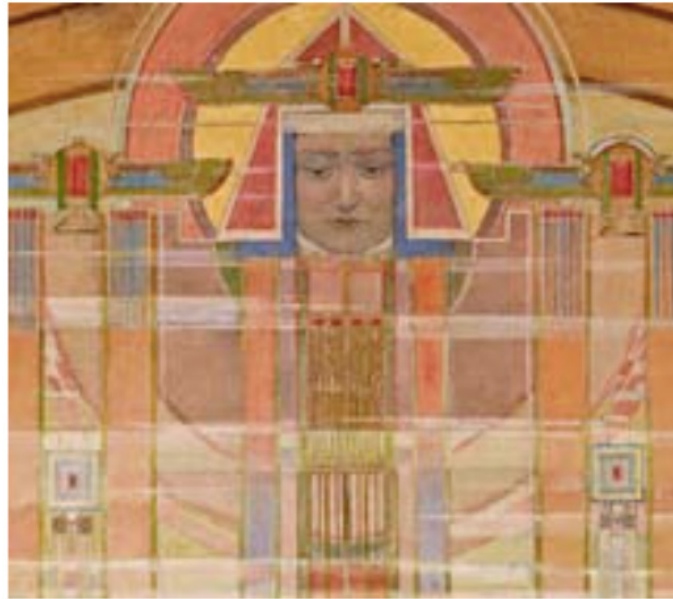
**Figure 2.** The Fisherman and Genie, mural, Charles Corwin and Frank Lloyd Wright. (Frank Lloyd Wright Trust).

This room was located on the second floor. To get into this space, Wright used a design trick. A person should “went through a long, narrow, low-ceilinged corridor and into a room that seemed, because of the height of its glorious barrel-vaulted ceiling with a skylight in the center, to be far larger than it actually was.”

In other words, the vaulted-ceiling hallway to the playroom was narrow, low, and, dark making the playroom seem wider, taller, and lighter. According to Wright’s sister, Frank “wanted that his children to grow up with a sense of light and space around them, and with beauty.”

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Therefore, Wright applied in the design contrast of high-low, dark-light, and narrow-wide to make his spaces more interesting. The room expands visually in five directions: mural on one end, gallery on the other end, windows along two sides, and the skylight above.



**Figure 3.** The Fisherman and Genie, mural, Charles Corwin and Frank Lloyd Wright. (Frank Lloyd Wright Trust)

In a lunette above a large Roman brick fireplace, a mural painted by Orlando Giannini (Fig.2) depicted a scene from one of the children's favorite stories, "The Fisherman and the Genii" from the Arabian Nights. "Although the mural is representational, depicting a fisherman gazing up the genie just released from the lamp, the decorations around the genie's wings are stylized abstract straight-line patterns. On a photograph of this mural, Wright later wrote, 'First straight-line ornament. FLLW designer.'"

This first design done in a straight-line pattern (Fig. 3), could be a reflection of Wright's memories with one of the Froebel's Gift. According to Wright, in his book "Wrights and Building,"

[He] sat at the little kindergarten table-top ruled by lines about four inches apart each way making four-inch squares; and, among other

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things, played upon these “unit-lines” with the square (cube), the circle ( sphere) and the triangle ( tetrahedron or tripod)- these were smooth maple- wood blocks. Scarlet cardboard triangle (60°- 30°) two inches on the short side, and one side white, were smooth triangular sections with which to come by pattern-design- by my own imagination. But the smooth cardboard triangles and maple-wood blocks were most important. All are in my fingers to this day. In outline the square was significant of integrity; the circle - infinity; the triangle -aspiration; all which to “design” significant new forms. In the third dimension, the smooth maple blocks became the cube, the sphere and the tetrahedron; all mine to “play” with.



**Figure 4.** Froebel’s Gift # 4 (Brosterman, 60).

It is evident that Wright became susceptible to this geometric patterns and relationship thanks to the Froebel’s Gift # 7(Fig.4). “The seventh gift (parquetry) consisted of separate boxes of flat wood or cardboard pieces in five shapes [ as Wright remembers] ... [According to Froebel], children would create flat images within the matrix of perpendicular lines scored into the surface of their low communal table. They could also make both rectilinear and prismatic shapes, were high adaptable for pictures of ‘real’ things.” In the biographies that I read, I never found a specific reflection about the similitudes between Froebel’s gift and the play room’s details; however, I believe that the mural’s design in a

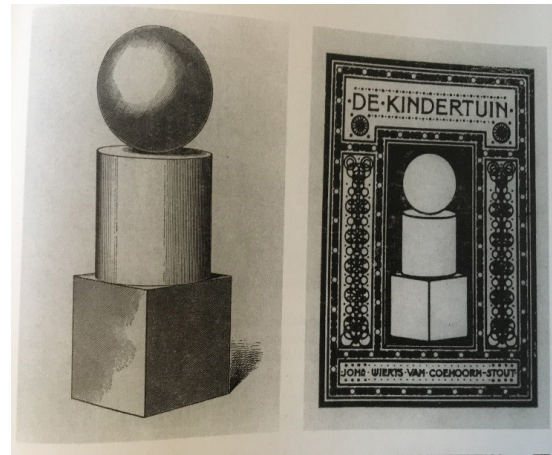
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straight-line shows the influence of the Froebel's seventh gift in Wright's ideas.



**Figure 5.** Multilevel gallery in the playroom (Harrington,41).

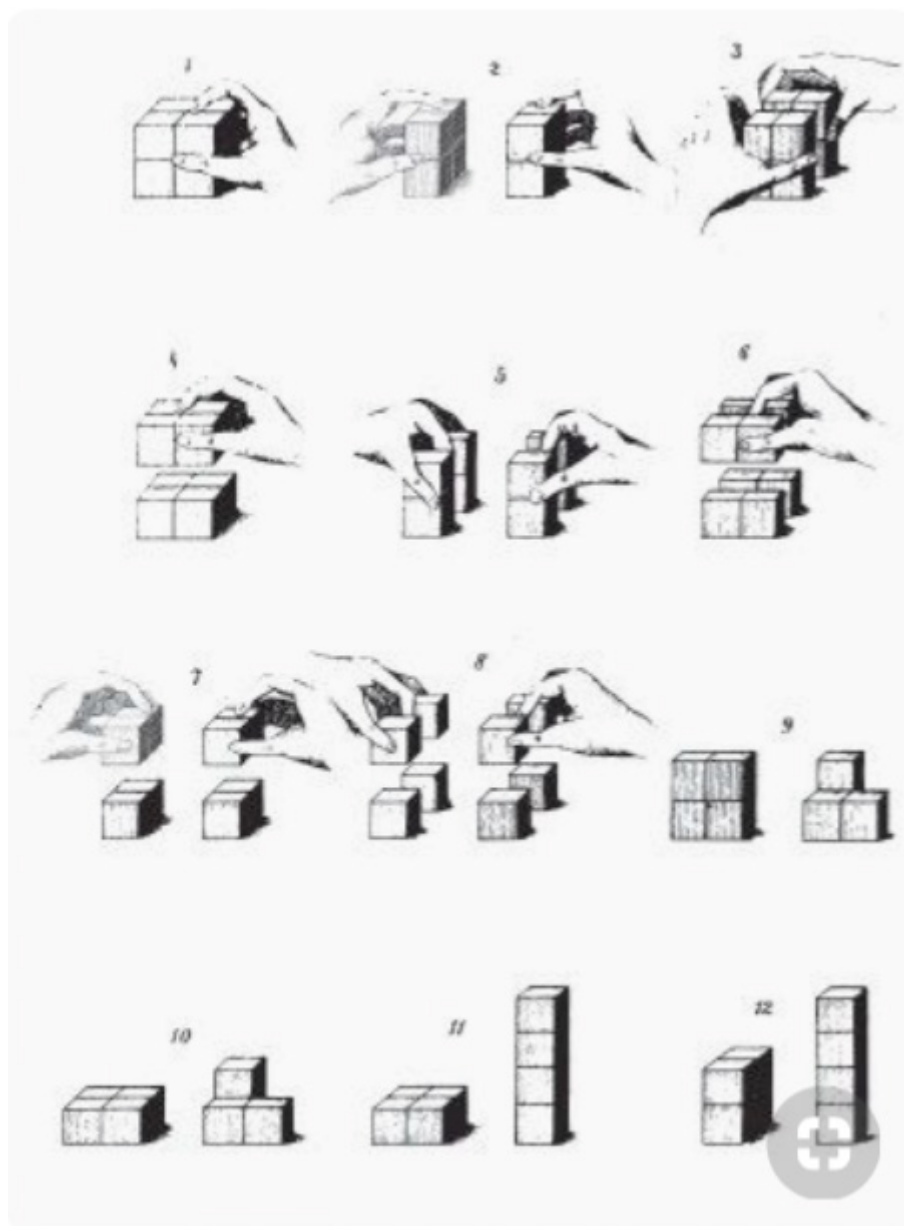


**Figure 6.** Froebel's gift # 2 (Brosterman, 47).

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At the opposite end, an upper gallery expands the room into the former attic of the home, making the playroom appear much longer than it actually is. This was a multilevel gallery (Fig.5) for the Wright's children to stage plays or to seat their audience. It was "ideal for puppet shows and other diversions, protected by a wooden balustrade and embellished with a copy of the *Winged Victory*." In this area, it is possible to see a second pattern that had stayed with Wright from the memory of the childhood Froebel "Gifts." The design of the baluster at the time was different. Wright's baluster had a modern style with geometric figures and long lines. These shapes resemble Froebel's gift # 2 (Fig.6) a lot. It used a sphere, square, and a cylinder made with maple. "For hanging, swinging, and spinning, each of the forms of the second gift is equipped with metal loops at different points and drilled through for the penetration of them dowels." A similar description is expressed by Wright in his book *Writing and Building*. He said that "to reveal further subordinate, or encourage composite, forms, these simple element blocks were suspended from a small gibbet by little [wires inserted] at the corners and whirled. On this simple unit-system ruled on the low table-top all these forms were combined by the child into imaginative patterns. Design was recreation!" Just as the forms of the second gift (Fig.7) were adapted to each other, the baluster in the upper gallery showed a connection between forms.



**Figure 7.** Froebel's gift # 2. E. Steiger & Company catalogue (Brosterman, 49).

The ceiling grilles are of oak veneer (plywood), designed by Wright to soften the skylight illumination. "Soft light filtered in through a skylight grille sawn into a geometric pattern inspired by a prickly ash tree."



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Along the north and south walls, bay windows let in sunlight, which cast geometric patterns on the vast expanse of the oak floor (Fig.8). According to Ada Huxtable' interpretation, the "oak floor was patterned in the circles and squares that had stayed with Wright from the memory of the childhood Froebel 'Gits.'"

This view is supported by Wright's eldest son, who commented that "the geometry of the Froebel system was essential to this transcendentalism, and the playroom floors, and the figure, the patterns on the floors..." In other words, the floor, the walls, and windows were connected by a particular rhythm of geometrical patterns.

The playroom's walls were made with mottled golden-brown brick. Wright used brick for the interior walls of the playroom to withstand the children's play.

Through the walls made with horizontal sequences of bricks, it is easy to feel the influence of the Froebel's gift #3, 4, 5, and 6 (the blocks). These gifts were boxes (Fig.9) with "blocks of cubes and squares columns two inches to twelve inches long... These were used to teach form, size, position, and combination (Fig.10), as well as elementary mathematics and solid geometric."

Therefore, I conclude that the playroom is a combination of symmetrical and stable solid geometric.



**Figure 8.** The playroom in the Frank Lloyd Wright's Oak Park Home and Studio. (Harrington,41).



**Figure 9.** Froebel's gift #3, 4, 5, and 6, the blocks. (Brosterman, 52-53)

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**Figure 11.** The bay windows in the playroom.



**Figure 12.** Frobel's Gift # 9,15 and 16. ( Brosterman, 66-67).

The playroom had square windows on the long sides of the room. The bay windows “are child-sized, and the barrel-vaulted ceiling starts just above the child’s height.”<sup>1</sup> This space had a built-in window seat with toy-stored bins below (Fig. 11)<sup>2</sup>. The bay windows “had a leaded glass

1 The Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio Foundation, “Volunteer Manual, 1979,” Frank Lloyd Wright Ephemera Collection-Oak Park Public Library, Chicago.

2 In cellphone photos to the author on March 9, 2019.

with geometrical flowers design.” Historians and biographies have never been done a reflection about the similitudes between Froebel’s gift and the play room’s details, but I believe that the geometrical flowers in the windows can be a representation of the Froebel’s gift # 9, 15 and 16 (Fig.12). Stick laying was one of several linear gifts in the kindergarten program, including the ninth gift (ring laying), the fifteenth gift (slats), the sixteenth (jointed slats), and the seventeenth gift (interlacing paper strips). All of these are variations of drawing, and each approached the making of line and linear forms in different ways. Wright remembered these gifts like the “German paper, glazed and matte beautiful soft color qualities... cut into sheets about twelve inches each way, these squares were slitted [sic] to be woven into gay[sic] colorful checkerings[sic] as fancy might dictate. Thus, color sense awakened.” Therefore, maybe many of Wright’s fantasy ideas crystallized through interior design such as the patterns of the windows and skylight (Fig.13).<sup>3</sup> Neil Levine point-of-view clarifies that “ the Froebel kindergarten methods, emphasizing the underlying geometric order of nature, functioned as a kind of surrogate academic training for Wright. It provided a similar basis for understanding the... process of abstraction from the specified to the general.”<sup>4</sup>Thus, the playroom design has many geometric elements that play with space. From an educational perspective, the space of the playroom was a clean slate where Froebel’s gifts took physical form on a large scale.

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3 In cellphone photos to the author on March 9, 2019.

4 Levine, N. (1996). *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright* ( Princeton: Princeton University Press), 11.



**Figure 13.** Skylight in the playroom.

### **The Kindergarten in the playroom**

Wright understood what “delighted the child’s mind and emotions: dolls, playhouse, stories read around the fireside, games and toys, the acting out of plays and charades, and above all parties- all these elements were considered in the design of the playroom.”<sup>5</sup> The Playroom was spacious and made to scale for children, therefore; a version of Frobel kindergarten worked there. Wright’s first wife (Catherine Tobin Wright) ran the kindergarten. She was remembered as an indulgent person. For example, his niece Jeanne T. Bletzer mentions that her aunt Kitty let her “play by the hour with her glorious red hair, taking it down and putting it back up again. [Aunt Kitty gave] each of the children a ‘fairly book’ of blank pages, and each night, when they were asleep, she would add a poem or an illustration to the pages and tuck it under their pillows, to be discovered in the morning.”<sup>6</sup> In a painting painted by Maginel Wright Barney in 1905, it is possible to see Catherine hold on her shoulders one of her young child, perhaps Llewellyn, who was two years old at that time (Fig.14). It is also possible to see that there are several children from it, possibly their children and children of the neighbors.<sup>7</sup> In the

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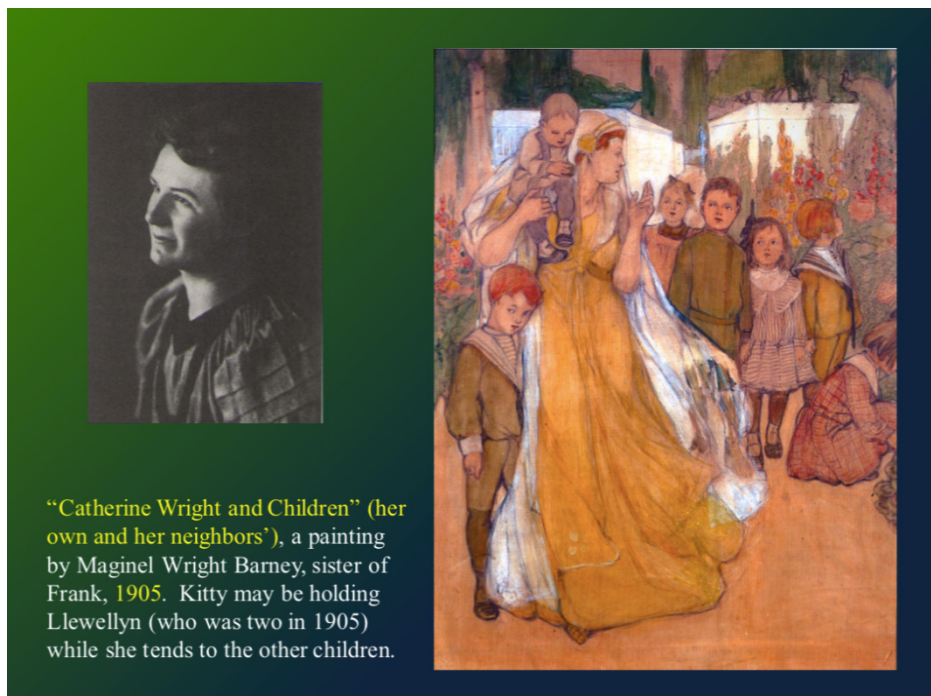
5 Larkin,20.

6 Secret,137.

7 Wright or Wrong: Women in the Life of Frank Lloyd Wright ([http://miamioh.edu/University\\_Advancement/](http://miamioh.edu/University_Advancement/)

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painting, it is not possible to see her face, but it is possible to realize that she tends to the other children. According to Wright's sister, Catherine taught Froebel kindergarten first for her own children, later for the whole neighborhood<sup>8</sup>. In a memoir written in 1946, *My Father Who is on Earth*, Wright's son John, said that his "mother lived for her children and was their disciplinarian when necessary since Father never punished them. She picked up the theme of Froebel and had the playroom floor marked out in an arrangement of circles and squares derived from his ideas..."<sup>9</sup>



**Figure 14.** Catherine Wright and children. (Wright or Wrong: Women in the Life of Frank Lloyd Wright ).

Wright's eldest son Lloyd, also remember these geometric forms painted on the floor for dances and games. He said that "the geometry of the Froebel system was essential to this transcendentalism, and the playroom floors, and the figure, the patterns on the floors and movement of

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MiamiAlum/WinterCollege2013Presentations/WrightsWomen.pdf)

8 Maginel Wright,133.

9 Secrest, 137

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the dancers, all of it [was] a coordinated, rhythmic concentration and discipline...” Lloyd also said that if they did not use the Froebel toys they made them “a la Froebel.” John and Lloyd had memories of the oak floor marked off with kindergarten arrangement of circles and squares, but also remembered the “queer dolls, buildings blocks, funny mechanical toys, animals that moved about wagged their strange heads.”<sup>10</sup> According to Wright, the kindergarten was popular in the neighborhood on Forest Avenue in Oak Park.<sup>11</sup> One day “many neighbors’ children, came to kindergarten there. The home overflowed with children until one fell out the window. The Wright’s youngest son- Llewelyn. He was not hurt very much because his dress caught in the playroom windowsill and held him a moment.”<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the house was filled with noise and laughter in the day. This kindergarten became the focal point for the entire neighborhood because they were a space of delighted the child’s mind and emotions with Froebel methods and gifts.

### Conclusion

The playroom is a unique space in the Oak Park’ house of Frank Lloyd Wring. In this space, Wright’s children, family, and neighbors enjoyed many activities such as parties, Christmas, musicals, and kindergarten activities for 20 years. The playroom’s design integrates many memories of Wright’s. These memories are connected with his training of Froebel’s kindergarten method. In particular the gifts of Froebel. Froebel’s education affected Wrights’ design for the games room and his designs in general. Since the mural on one end, the gallery on the other end, the windows along two sides, and the skylight above. All those shows the influence of the Froebel’s gift in Wright’s ideas. The floor, the walls, and windows showed a particular rhythm of geometrical patterns connected by a combination of symmetrical and stable solid geometric. Through the analyzed of Froebel’s philosophy and pedagogy until Wright’s philosophy about organic space and nature, it is possible to

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10 John Lloyd Wright, Frank Lloyd Menocal, Narciso G. Ingraham, and Ingraham, Elizabeth Wright. *My Father Who Is on Earth*. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994),

11 Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography*. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1943.111

12 *Ibid*, 112

see how come together in the overall design of the playroom. Thus, the playroom design has many geometric elements that play with space. From an educational perspective, the space of the playroom was a clean slate where Frobel's gifts took physical form on a large scale.

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**CHAPTER VI**  
ROLEPLAY: FUN OR STRESS. A  
DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW ON  
ASSESSMENT

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**Roleplay: fun or stress. A different point of view on assessment**

**Juego de roles: diversión o estrés. Un punto de vista diferente sobre la evaluación**

**Abstract**

This work aims to systematize the usage of role-playing to encourage students to develop learners' linguistic skills in English as a foreign language in a viable and fun way. The methodology selected is action research. The process considers that when EFL teachers speak about evaluation, the students get tense and stressed. Collaborative learning is a teaching-learning methodology that is not only a distribution of work. Every student on the team contributes ideas for the adequate realization of the designated evaluation. The results show that role-play positively influenced the students' performance by implementing this assessment based on collaboration and communicative skills.

**Keywords:** role-plays, collaborative learning, English language, communication.

**Resumen**

Este trabajo tiene como objetivo sistematizar el uso de juegos de rol para alentar a los estudiantes a desarrollar las habilidades lingüísticas de los estudiantes en inglés como lengua extranjera de una manera viable y divertida. La metodología seleccionada es la investigación acción. El proceso considera que cuando los profesores de EFL hablan de evaluación, los estudiantes se ponen tensos y estresados. El aprendizaje colaborativo es una metodología de enseñanza-aprendizaje que no es solo una distribución del trabajo. Cada alumno del equipo aporta ideas para la adecuada realización de la evaluación designada. Los resultados muestran que el juego de roles influyó positivamente en el desempeño de los estudiantes al implementar esta evaluación basada en la colaboración y las habilidades comunicativas.

**Palabras clave:** juegos de roles, aprendizaje colaborativo, lengua inglesa, comunicación.

### **Introduction**

In the pandemic, education suffered several changes that created several challenges for teachers, and English language teaching was no exception. One of those challenges was to carry out this process virtually, to achieve significant learning in students or better than in the face-to-face modality.

For many students, the acquisition of English as a second language is a complex process of the activities that take place in the classroom, not to mention the moment of evaluation; this is often very stressful. For this reason, it is mainly to implement activities that encourage students to learn English for fun. Teachers can evaluate this acquisition by considering their performance in activities where they can use the language rather than in a complex evaluation.

In Santo Domingo city, 31 students of Higher General Basic Education (Eighth, Ninth and Tenth year) of the Private Educational Unit “Cinco de Junio” whose ages are between 12 and 14 years old, were considered. Different activities were developed with the selected group of students to improve their English language acquisition through new evaluation forms. The results achieved respond to the learning achievements set for each year of Basic Education, which are:

I.EFL.4.2.1 Learners can name similarities and differences between different aspects of different groups. Learners can demonstrate socially responsible behaviors at school, online, at home, or community and evaluate their actions by ethical, safety, and social standards.

I.EFL. 4.10.1 Learners can effectively participate in familiar and predictable everyday conversational exchanges to complete a task, satisfy a need or handle a simple transaction, using a range of repair strategies.

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The technological tool used to implement the activities was the Zoom application, which allowed communication and interaction between the students and the teacher.

## **Conceptualization**

### **Assessment**

When teachers speak about evaluation, we are not only referring to the action of evaluating the student's knowledge about a field, subject, or topic, since evaluation has different applications: evaluating units, programs, teachers, and the teaching-learning process, among others.

Regarding the evaluation of teaching English as a foreign language, teachers use different strategies, such as tests, quizzes, homework reviews, review exercises, and participation, to measure students' English language skills.

Although there are several strategies to evaluate students' learning, teachers still consider the exam the most suitable way to assess and even evaluate the different communicative skills through it. For example, they apply a grammar test, a reading test, a speaking test, and a listening test. Moreno (2009) affirms that the conventional written test continues to be the privileged technique used by teachers for evaluation.

Several types of tests can assess the level of English language proficiency of scholars, and one of them is the standardized test. A standardized test has explicit objectives or criteria frequently from one test to another. These criteria apply and test proficiencies that are not unique to a particular program Brown, (2004). Therefore, when teachers implement these types of tests from specialized books or Internet pages, they do not adjust to the background, context, situation, or realities the students develop, obtaining unsatisfactory results in terms of their language proficiency.

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The same happens with quizzes, which, unlike standardized tests, are smaller in terms of the number of questions and have a summative orientation Brown, (2004). The reason teachers use quizzes for evaluation is that these provide evidence of the learning got in a faster way, both for the students and for the teacher. Their design is basic and does not take up much time in its application.

Reviewing assignments and revising exercises are other strategies teachers use to evaluate learners. According to García (2015), these two assessments are popular activities in the teacher's work. The first is an extra-class activity that the student usually performs at home to refresh or remind them of the subject studied in class. The second is the conceptualization of the topic. In both techniques, sometimes, compliance is reviewed. Students' answers are part of their successes or failures, or there is feedback between teacher and student to build knowledge together. This type of evaluation guarantees a formative rather than a summative function.

Students can purchase English language learning through participation in the classroom, where the teacher can evaluate many forms of what they are learning and provide feedback. Brown (2004) agrees that assessing basic reading comprehension skills can be done in various methods, such as reading aloud. According to García (2015), when the student goes to the blackboard or reads dialogues, there is a process of participation that allows detecting errors and correcting them simultaneously.

In the same sense, students should be motivated to express their ideas by producing them and thus achieve communication in English. Some students are keen on participating, which allows them to correct mistakes and improve their pronunciation. However, most prefer not to do it for fear of making mistakes because we have grown up with the erroneous idea that making mistakes is wrong, and we do not see it to learn or improve our skills.

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The evaluation is a significant part of the teaching and learning process whose aim should go beyond obtaining a simple addition of successes to give teachers a result of a grade. Its purpose in the English language is to use the language as an instrument of communication with others. Significantly, teachers seek new ways to evaluate the skills of this language in a more interrelated and positive way that allows students to function in society and teachers to get out of their comfort zone using conventional evaluations.

### **The communicative approach to assessment**

One of the English language teachers' goals is to ensure that students acquire a communicative ability to express and understand a message effectively in this foreign language, whether in personal or professional contexts. It is essential to consider the communicative model, which allows sharing knowledge means transmitting information from one speaker to another, giving rise to spaces of expression and opportunities to interact naturally and unconsciously, thereby creating genuine communication. (Van Dijk, 2008).

Within the communicative competence, the following competencies are (Brown, 2007):

- Socio-linguistic competence is related to appropriately expressing and understanding a message. It should be according to the topic and the environment in which the individual is involved.
- Discourse competence considers a series of sentences to form a meaningful whole (discourse).
- Strategic competence within which verbal and non-verbal communication strategies.

Frequently, the English class is the only moment when students use a second language. Therefore it is essential to create educational activities where students develop their communicative competencies. Teachers face a new model of learners, who need doses of motivation when learning and being evaluated. This type of student has been close to a



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world of images guided by an audiovisual perspective, which requires rethinking strategies and methods in a class. It leads the teacher to notice the teaching practices and the tools used since there must be a relationship between how they teach and evaluate (Yilorm Barrientos & Lizasoain Conejeros, 2012).

Integrated task-based assessments consider different aspects that incorporate skills, such as communicative competencies, to reflect the use of the English language. It contributes to achieving greater authenticity since it favors the design of assessments that can better replicate everyday situations (Cuestas et al., 2019). Similarly, by developing them, progressive changes are reflected in students and teachers regarding the redefined concept of evaluation.

The educator must have activities adapted and adjusted to the real world in a way that provides scholars to develop a different evaluation design, following the previously proposed topic. This proposal allows the student to express themselves freely and will respond according to their communicative skills. This approach allows evaluating the student's comprehension and production at the moment of the solution of the assigned activity and not only his linguistic ability.

Performance tests not only encourage learners to specific structures or vocabulary studied; They should generate the use of the second language as it would be used in a day-to-day situation so that the teacher observes whether the student develops the skills at the expected moment. The messages transmitted by the teacher must be understandable. They were also dealing with topics that the target students like so that they feel enthusiastic when being evaluated (Wigglesworth & Frost, 2017).

Considering the students' aspects and preferences, they become the main characters of the class and their relevance within the classroom, which results in a change of attitude towards the subject, as well as a

positive appreciation of the use of innovative methodologies, participation, human quality, and empathy towards the teacher. It results in students feeling interested, confident, and calm in class because acquiring a foreign language is linked to the identity and emotional development of everyone (Cuestas et al., 2019).

However, the teacher should consider the time needed to receive important material and further develop more appropriate activities, trying to integrate the earned knowledge so that students can solve them more naturally, not in a forced method, as in a more structured assessment.

### **Collaborative learning**

To teach the English language, educators implement different methods, such as the grammar-translation method and the direct method, which have specific features, in the same way, a unique role of the teacher and the student. However, the relevance of the collaboration among students during the process is aside. According to Salas (2016), collaboration among students as a method in the different traditional teaching approaches has not played a significant role.

Our brain seeks to live in society. Human beings consider social acceptance as something essential for people. Therefore, we are social beings; we learn socially, and we must take advantage of this in education by making teamwork a strategy to achieve better learning and get social pleasure at the same time.

It does not mean individual work is not valuable to the teaching process. The scholar, considered a member of the group, is aware of the role he/she plays in the task's execution and thus achieves mutual learning, to know that the work that each one does is meaningful for all of them. In short, collaborative learning is a strategy that provides more social pleasure, allowing integrated and efficient learning.

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Collaborative learning allows students to strengthen their interpersonal relationships and values as human beings since, by exchanging ideas or opinions for the evolution of the task, they practice tolerance, respect, solidarity, punctuality, responsibility, and friendship. In this way, it gives way to familiarity among team members, which leads to greater trust among them and consequently the safety of the work done, achieving collective learning. De la Puente (2017) agrees that the members' familiarity refers to the type of relationship between them. The greater the trust and the more the students know each other, the more outstanding the achievement of scope in learning.

We should remember that the English language is not simply a subject but a means of communication. Therefore, it should use naturally to execute activities that allow achieving communication among students, rather than the traditional use of grammatical rules. Most times, little interests them, hindering their learning, and as a result, students get low grades and a low level of language mastery because there is not enough practice in a natural context. Therefore, teachers should look for activities that promote collaborative learning with a communicative approach and, through them, develop language. Considering they work together and enjoy it in the team, teachers can evaluate all these activities developed.

There are many activities with communicative approaches that can be carried out both during class and to evaluate the learning gained by the students: dialogues, debates, singing, sharing ideas, and role play. The latter is an effective method for evaluating students' communicative competencies, as it allows for better interaction among peers and meaningful learning.

### **Roleplay**

The search for and application of new ways or strategies for language learning is indispensable and relevant to acquiring a specific language, such as English.

Roleplay is a collaborative activity that allows students to enhance their corporal expression, memory, and artistic sensibility. It is one of the most efficient, interactive, and recurrently used strategies to improve initiative, self-awareness, problem-solving, and communication skills by working in collaborative groups (Kaovere & Mbaukua, 2018; McDonald, 2012). Therefore, it is an effective technique used to solve the interpersonal problems of students and strengthen their human relations skills. Since English is a universal language, it requires spaces where students who learn a second language can improve their communicative skills. Educators can only do this through activities such as roleplay, where interaction with other people is required. Thus, roleplay is a strategy to learn English by dramatizing literary or historical works, current or past events, and even real or imaginary ones.

This strategy orient students to overcome difficulties in speaking English in real-life situations by practicing writing or speaking skills (Adams & Mabusela, 2014; Rashid & Qaisar, 2017). This type of activity as an assessment method encourages students to create their reality, interact with other people, and increase their motivation to learn and self-confidence.

Implementing roleplay is essential for improving students' English-speaking skills (Rojas & Villafuerte, 2018). This technique enhances the level of communication among students. It is also entertaining for them and helps to achieve learning in a collaborative atmosphere. When employing roleplay as an evaluation activity, it is necessary to plan it because everything requirements passed on to the students, such as, for example, the expectations or achievements to reach with this evaluation, the role that each member has within the team (Zaidi et al., 2017). A rubric needs to give a grade to the performance that responds to the parameters considered in the curriculum. In this way, students will know to put all their efforts into the work, and each of their roles while having fun, sharing, and learning is also evaluated and will get a grade without specifically exposing them to an exam.

### **Rubric**

Evaluation plays a particular role in the teaching-learning process. The classroom's progress or setbacks are evidenced here, especially when considering the acquisition of communicative skills since it allows us to communicate in a second language. Evaluating oral communication skills is sometimes complicated for both teachers and students. It considers whether the person learns the content and objectives set and how the message transmits in a second language. For this reason, the rubric assesses various aspects of the student while developing an evaluation. In addition, the student picks up the possibility of knowing how he/she will be evaluated, even reducing his/her stress levels.

There are several evaluation tools to assess students' oral skills. Among these various tools, the rubric is considered a guide to examining the learning gained by the students. Creating a rubric allows for defining and explaining the specific evaluation criteria with their corresponding performance levels and indicators. In addition, the teacher will have a clear objective to achieve with the students, guaranteeing a balanced, beneficial, and fair process for both parties. (Barquero & Ureña, 2015). A rubric summarizes the fundamental characteristics that achievement or performance should have, considering the set of learning. Students need a simple rubric for precisely what is expected of them when assessing any misunderstanding or lack of clarity in what is specified (Alsina et al., 2019).

Rubrics allow the student to recognize his strengths and weaknesses. With a self-evaluation, students prepare by themselves, according to the parameters established by the teacher, to get a better grade. (Kweksilber & Trías, 2020).

Time is a disadvantage; even the development of a tool such as a rubric also limits students' creativity because they usually guide precisely to get a good grade for ask, which can inhibit students by the parameters (Iturra & Riquelme, 2018).

**Teaching-learning process**

The teaching process should make students enjoy each class. When it was time to be evaluated, they took it as just another activity and not as a moment of stress and tension in expectation of the grade they could get. Among these activities appear: Sharing ideas, karaoke, debate, dialogue, and Role-play. The last was the most welcomed by students and teachers. It allowed measuring the development of students' listening and speaking skills in a certain way, enabling students to interact with each other and work as a team. It also allowed teachers to give assertive feedback and thus improve language learning.

*Is it possible to assess students through roleplay virtually?*

Roleplay is a didactic activity that benefits corporal expression and memory and strengthens the students' artistic ability, making them the protagonists of the learning process. As an evaluation strategy, this project not only helps to measure the students' skills but also allows them to lose their fear of public speaking and enhance their creativity. The function is to designate work teams and suggest names of classic and modern stories so that students choose one of them according to their tastes and interests and thus interpret it as if it were an actual situation. The roles they will play in the play are also designated within the work team once the members have reached agreements, strengthening their interpersonal relationships. The teacher has a passive role.

Students join into collaborative groups allowing them to perform (an example is the Wheel of names). Then, the teacher suggested different classic tales or contemporary stories, such as Crazy Story, Little Red Riding Hood, Wizard of Oz, The mouse, and the crow. Once the students choose the play they will perform, they have time to meet themselves to coordinate aspects such as characters, costumes, and scenery before the day of the performance. For example, students have 20 minutes of each class to meet and practice the play for the final presentation through the technological tool implemented for the classes, such as Zoom.

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Finally, each group must present the chosen play where the teacher not only evaluates the students' ability to speak and listen in English but also enhances the students' oral expression and creativity, as well as the collaboration among all team members.

### LESSON PLANNING MATRIX

Topic: Can and can't, adverbs of frequency.	Unit: 2		
Class objective: To encourage students' creative oral and artistic expression in the English language through the formation of collaborative work teams.	Time: 40 minutes		
Year of EGB: Eighth	Date: -----		
Activities	Learning achievement	Evaluation	Resources
<p>To develop this activity, the teacher should divide the students into collaborative groups.</p> <p>Afterward, each group will receive a script, which can be a story, an ancient or modern history, among others.</p> <p>Each group must designate different roles and responsibilities to team members such as characters, costumes, a scenery.</p> <p>In the end, each group should dramatize the chosen story.</p>	<p>The students strengthened their oral expression in the English language and demonstrated their creativity and collaboration among all team members.</p>	<p>Technique: Roleplay Instrument: Rubric</p>	<p>Videoconferencing Application (Zoom) Costumes (with materials that students have on hand) Internet Computer Speakers Microphone</p>

## Reading Comprehension and Academic Writing:

Topic: Present continuous, present simple, and State verbs.	Unit: 2		
Class objective: To encourage students' creative oral and artistic expression in the English language through the formation of collaborative work teams.	Time: 40 minutes		
Year of EGB: Ninth	Date: -----		
Activities	Learning achievement	Evaluation	Resources
<p>To develop this activity, the teacher should divide the students into collaborative groups.</p> <p>Afterward, each group will receive a script, which can be a story, an ancient or modern history, among others.</p> <p>Each group must designate different roles and responsibilities to team members such as characters, costumes, a scenery.</p> <p>In the end, each group should dramatize the chosen story.</p>	<p>The students strengthened their oral expression in the English language and demonstrated their creativity and collaboration among all team members.</p>	<p>Technique: Role-play Instrument: Rubric</p>	<p>Videoconferencing Application (Zoom) Costumes (with materials that students have on hand) Internet Computer Speakers Microphone</p>



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Topic: Present Perfect and past simple	Unit: 2		
Class objective: To encourage students' creative oral and artistic expression in the English language through the formation of collaborative work teams.	Time: 40 minutes		
Year of EGB: Tenth	Date: -----		
Activities	Learning achievement	Evaluation	Resources
<p>To develop this activity, the teacher should divide the students into collaborative groups.</p> <p>Afterward, each group will receive a script, which can be a story, an ancient or modern history, among others.</p> <p>Each group must designate different roles and responsibilities to team members such as characters, costumes, a scenery.</p> <p>In the end, each group should dramatize the chosen story.</p>	<p>The students strengthened their oral expression in the English language and demonstrated their creativity and collaboration among all team members.</p>	<p>Technique: Role-play Instrument: Rubric</p>	<p>Videoconferencing Application (Zoom) Costumes (with materials that students have on hand) Internet Computer Speakers Microphone</p>



## **Recommendations**

The assessment strategy we share in this chapter is convenient for teachers and those who want to enhance English language skills differently and more communicatively. Therefore, we give the following recommendations to our readers:

Implement the activities provided in this chapter to show the effectiveness of this new way of assessing student learning and that it is not just an informative document.

Execute the diagnostic assessment for students to know their English language level before submitting them to new knowledge and verify in a more accurate form the progress of their skills, considering the level and age of the students to ask questions according to their realities.

Implementing role play as an evaluation strategy is subject to adaptations according to the topics of the unit of study and the year the students are studying. It can be used sporadically throughout the school year to show better results in the students.

To encourage students' collaborative work to enable students to improve their English language skills, letting them be the main characters of the learning process and build their knowledge through group interaction, as well as fostering values such as empathy, solidarity, and respect.

Consider strategies that reinforce the human side of the students and their interpersonal relationships and strengthen values such as respect, solidarity, tolerance, and friendship. Teachers should consider not only the intellectual side of students but also their being.

## **Lessons learned from this experience.**

After implementing role play as an assessment, we consider that:

- Roleplay as an assessment strategy develops second language

## RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

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skills in real situations. It also encourages students' creativity, body expression, and memory.

- Students are more interested and enthusiastic when doing this type of activity because they can interact with each other and develop their communication skills in a more natural and less stressful form than filling out exercises in a written exam.
- Collaborative activities such as roleplay change the students' attitude concerning their peers in a positive form because they organize themselves in a better manner to perform the task. Respect for their interventions and different opinions.
- The teachers become guides who give the necessary guidelines and explanations to perform the activity, giving the students the leading role, who, considering their interests and subject of study, carry out the proposed activity.
- It is essential to implement a grading rubric that allows us to evaluate the student's learning and use of the language in a more explicit form.

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*Reading Comprehension and Academic Writing:*  
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## **CHAPTER VII**

### ROLE PLAY AS A MULTICULTURAL PRACTICE FOR ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION: RURAL AND URBAN EDUCATION IN ECUADOR

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**Role play as a multicultural practice for English as a Foreign language instruction: Rural and urban education in Ecuador**

**El juego de roles como práctica multicultural para la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera: la educación rural y urbana en el Ecuador**

**Abstract**

This paper aims to study the contributions of role-playing in the English language class of secondary schools in rural and urban areas in Ecuador. The participants are 45 teachers of English as a foreign language. A blend of qualitative and quantitative research approaches was used based on social and educational development theory. The techniques used for collecting data are the focus group and the open interview. Results allow determining the differences and similarities between urban and rural teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for using role-play in linguistic practice. In addition, it includes a list of recommendations to improve role-play achievements. It concluded that rural and urban English teachers think role-play is an effective didactic strategy to promote more cooperative work, creative thinking, and the use of English as a foreign language in a natural way. It improves learners' confidence to speak English in front of an audience.

**Keywords:** Teaching innovations, English class; Teaching training, Rural education, roleplay.

**Resumen**

El objetivo de este documento es estudiar las contribuciones que hacen los juegos de roles en las clases del idioma inglés en escuelas secundarias, ubicadas en áreas rurales y urbanas de Ecuador. Los participantes son 45 profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera. Se aplica una combinación de enfoques cualitativos y cuantitativos desde las teorías del desarrollo social y educativo. Las técnicas usadas para la colecta de datos con grupo focal y la entrevista abierta. Los resultados



permiten determinar las diferencias y similitudes entre las motivaciones intrínsecas y extrínsecas de los profesores urbanos y rurales para utilizar el juego de roles como práctica lingüística. Además, se presenta una lista de recomendaciones para mejorar los resultados obtenidos mediante el juego de roles en la clase de inglés. Se concluye que tanto los profesores de inglés de áreas rurales como urbanas piensan que el juego de roles es una estrategia didáctica efectiva que promueve mayor aprendizaje cooperativo, el pensamiento creativo, el uso de la lengua extranjera de una manera más natural, llegando a mejorar la confianza de los estudiantes para hablar inglés frente a una audiencia.

**Palabras clave:** Innovaciones docentes, clase de inglés; Formación docente, educación rural, educación urbana. Ecuador.

### Introduction

Despite the advantage of speaking English correctly, most high school students traditionally report a low performance in the subject of English as a foreign language in the public secondary schools of Manabí province, Ecuador. Some of the reasons that cause this phenomenon are related to the student's interest in learning a foreign language (Intrigo, Boyes, & Mendoza, 2018; Merritt, 2013). The English classes are conventional and monotonous; the classes are contextualized and lack practical sense, among other reasons (Molineros & Morales, 2018; Villafuerte, Rojas, Hormaza, & Soledispa, 2018).

There is incoherence with the Ecuadorian government's policies in teaching and learning English as a foreign language. This paper aims to study the motivation of teachers and students to practice English through role-playing. Considering the arguments of Huang (2008), role-play is a tool that revives the classroom. In addition, this research contrasts the current practices of language teaching that applied role-play in rural and urban secondary schools to determine their similarities and differences to propose didactic recommendations that improve role-play's impact shortly classes.

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This work is justified because of the limited number of studies focused on teaching and learning English as a foreign language in rural communities in Ecuador and South America. Thus, this work considers the works of Rojas & Villafuerte, 2018; Erturk (2015); Glover (2014); Huang (2008). They proposed role-playing as a critical strategy for strengthening students' confidence in expressing their ideas and feelings in a foreign language.

**Background**

The differences between urban and rural educational services in Ecuador persist significantly in their quality. Thus, more than 50% of the peasant population has completed the primary education level. However, only 20% of the rural inhabitants have access to secondary education, and hardly a few people have access to higher education.

Teachers deal with socio-cultural factors such as family commitments, distrust in the leadership, lack of means of communication, and geographical distances that prevent the cohesion in the groups of peasants and put at risk the sustainability of the associative models of community management.

Historically, the living conditions in Ecuador's rural sector report limitations for accessing fresh water and food security. The 6.4% of the national population has a low protein consumption, while the rural population (10.9%) has the highest deficit (Freire, Ramírez, Belmont, et al., 2014). Young women of childbearing age suffer from anemia, putting their own lives and children at risk during pregnancy and childbirth (Shetty, 2013).

Training young people is required to promote the reduction of the productive chain, access to market niches, and sustainable development. These processes demand knowledge of mathematics, languages, commerce, accounting, information equipment, management, and leadership (Villafuerte et al., 2018). The analysis of rural structures demon-

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strates the need for generational change, opening the way for young leaders with competencies for participation and intercultural work (Villafuerte & Represa, 2017).

Therefore, the rural adult population continues to be at a disadvantage compared to the urban population. Thus, 4 out of 10 members of urban families have completed their secondary studies, and a large proportion of them decided to complete their higher education and have access to labor relatively quickly.

The analysis of the rural background context in Ecuador confirms that the educational levels of the population influence their possibilities of accessing a job (Smith & Subandoro, 2007). Thus, the urban population can cover all their “family necessities” because education is a factor that enhances people’s access to better-paid work possibilities (Villafuerte & Represa, 2017).

It is indisputable that education is essential for personal and community development. Thus, rural leaders and agricultural producers with a higher education level are interested in transforming their traditional production systems toward a sustainable, productive model; such a goal requires clear educational strategies.

Limited access to the means of production for the most vulnerable peasant population persists; women in rural areas still face serious gender and ethnic barriers. The malnutrition of the population is evident due to the delay observed in the people’s height concerning age. It affects schoolchildren’s mental and learning capacity and attention (Freire, Ramírez, Belmont, et al., 2013).

Formal instruction contributes to people’s understanding and access to financial services required for productive purposes. Thus, negotiating with the suppliers allows for better results when working with the public sector (Ahmed et al., 2009).

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In general terms, the problem to overcome is the difficulty for families to have enough economic resources to afford the basic needs or “family basket” (Villafuerte & Represa, 2017, p. 88); and the coverage of health and education services.

On the other hand, Alizadeh (2016) states that “numerous studies and experiments in the human learning process ratify that motivation is a key factor which assures the acquisition of a foreign language” (p. 11). To Villafuerte, Franco, & Luzardo (2017), the processes of sustainable development in the rural area of Ecuador require human talents able to “apply good agricultural practices, transform raw materials into added-value products, increase the local investment in technologies, proper use of financial and accounting services; from the gender and interculturality approach” (p.72).

Teachers need training in didactics that motivate the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language. Therefore, the national curriculum of Ecuador states that learning foreign languages is mandatory for students from the 2nd year of primary education to take English classes (Ministry of Education, 2014). The expectation is to reach level B1 of the CEFR (2002); by the end of secondary school studies.

### **Literature review**

#### **Ecuadorian public policy for teaching and learning English as a foreign language**

The Organic Law for Intercultural Education of Ecuador (LOEI, 2011) promotes the teaching and learning of the English language because it offers better access to new technology, international commerce, and participation in the global community (Macias & Villafuerte, 2018).

The Ministry of Education of Ecuador introduced a new curriculum for teaching English as a second language in 2014. This regulation norms English language instruction from the second year of primary education to the end of higher studies (Ministry of Education, 2014). Such govern-

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ment policy demands the integration of about six thousand new English teachers and a research process to develop didactics to improve students' motivation to learn English (Soto et al., 2017).

In 2015, the LOEI (*Ley Orgánica de Educación Intercultural*) reformed and guaranteed the quality and warmth of primary and secondary education in Ecuador. Among the current requirements for entering the Ecuadorian teaching profession as a teacher of the English language is the presentation of an international certification that validates the proficiency in communication skills of the English language (Republic of Ecuador, Agreement 0052, 2014) at level B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference of the Language (CEFR, 2002). Therefore, the legal framework regarding the teaching of the English language in Ecuador poses challenges: to meet the demand of English teachers trained and in compliance with the standards for their teaching, teachers with English Language level B2 according to the (CEFR, 2002); to teach the English subject from the second year of primary education, and to implement the reformed national curriculum for English teaching which includes the instruction of the lessons using the Model for Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

### **Role-play and students' motivations for learning a foreign language**

According to the British Council (2004), role-play is a teaching and learning technique that supports learners in developing speaking skills. Scholars such as Beck and Kosnik (2006) claim that the teaching and learning process requires continuous reconstruction of experiences to respond efficiently to local and global knowledge demands. Consequently, "role-play is a strategy that brings liveliness to the classroom" (Huang, 2008, p.2).

Blatner (2009) asserts that role-play is a learning strategy that could be used efficiently for professional training or children's instruction at the school. He argues that role-play helps learners understand complex or simple topics from different fields of knowledge, such as literature,

history, and even science. However, for students, “language learning is pursued only in school, as an academic requirement” (Merritt, 2013), and their interest in learning a foreign language is relatively low or moderated (Intriago et al., 2018).

The Cambridge Dictionary defines *-role-play-* as the action a person does pretending to be someone else, especially as part of learning a new skill. It is like when people learn the native language, first they get the vocabulary and develop the oral communication skill, then they learn to write and read the words. As an active teaching strategy, role-plays incorporate these positive elements of enjoying learning and grasping knowledge when designed and implemented successfully (Erturk, 2015).

***Role-play*** is a didactic technique that allows students to learn through the simulation of different situations, working in groups, interacting, and following the instructions given by the teacher. Glover (2014) explains that participants might be playing a role like their own depending on the purpose of the activity. They also could play an opposing role in such interaction. Both options provide the students with the possibility of meaningful learning experiences, allowing the student to develop an understanding of the situation experienced from the ‘opposite’ point of view.

Scholars such as Hidayati and Pardjono (2018) define Role-play as a pedagogy used in various contexts and content areas. Thus, Erturk (2015, p. 6) emphasizes that “role-play as an active learning strategy can be used, not just in face-to-face classes, but also in blended or distance learning.” Role-play is also a communicational technique related to drama used traditionally for exploring different issues related to social situations (Villafuerte et al., 2018). The teacher must be clear in giving the instructions during the execution of the role-play. The class topic or content should simulate the correct context for students’ understanding (Rojas & Villafuerte, 2018).

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Motivation is a person's reason for acting in a certain way (Narayanan, Rajasekaran, and Iyyappan, 2007). She added: "Motivation involves the learner's reasons for attempting to acquire the second language, but precisely what creates motivation is the crux of the matter" (p.2). To Guay, Chanal, Ratelle, Marsh, Larose & Boivin (2010), motivation for learning a foreign language is related to the students' gender attitudes. Magel (2012) scholars believe that motivation is an increasingly important area in applied linguistics because it influences the person's reasons for directing energies to acquire a foreign language. The integrative motivation for learning a foreign language relates to the personal interest in cultural enrichment. The students' preferences or likes to practice the target language (Pourhosein et al., 2012). Meanwhile, instrumental motivation emerges from the necessity of learning a foreign language to reach specific external reasons, including getting better exam marks, incomes, or living standards. Intrinsic motivation is the execution of activities that have a pleasing effect on the learner. Extrinsic motivation refers to the execution of activities that perform the learner's abilities that allow obtaining instrumental aims like a reward or avoidance of punishment. Extrinsically motivated behaviors are generally produced in anticipation when a person knows a reward or punishment.

To Mackey (2014), the motivation for learning a foreign language is focused on the learners' abilities to make them aware of a prosperous future when the person does communicate at an efficient level using the target language. To Dörnyei quoted in Mackey (2014), motivation is a dynamic process rather than something static. Thus, learners' motivation level for learning a language can change depending on their interests. It also can be influenced by the learner's partner's conversation because motivation can be contagious. A person will become a successful learner of a foreign if she/he has the right motivation to work on it (Alizadeh, 2016). However, teachers must know about their students' culture, costumes, and living environment to idealize a context and apply the best teaching form and motivational elements. To Vygotsky quoted by McLeod (2018), the environment in which children

grow up influences their thinking. Consequently, aspects such as “elementary mental functions” attention, sensation, perception, and memory influence students by the environment or context. Such a condition is a “higher mental function” (McLeod, 2018).

**Role-play contributions to the multicultural instruction of English as a Foreign language**

Role-play could improve learners’ possibilities to enhance their professional, social, and academic success using efficient oral communication and multicultural skills. Such conditions would be of particular value in commerce, public health, and teaching, in which the oral approach and feedback are required (Blatner, 2009). The innovations to the instructional process should include linguistic practices related to “creativity, problem-solving skills, decision-making skills, communication skills, team building, and leadership skills” (Biggs & Tang, 2011, p. 24). Thereby, Role-plays expose the students to situations under the complexity of the reality of an English-speaking community. In such linguistic practices, learners improve their retention of new vocabulary (Tran, 2014).

Taking the words of scholars Islam and Islam (2013, p. 219): “The students need to comprehend the situation to communicate effectively outside of the classroom” when they use a foreign language. Donoso (2014) describes oral communication in an EFL classroom as a “set of skills that allow the appropriate involvement of students in specific communicative situations provided by the teacher, which are imperative for students to master” (p. 2).

Consequently, role-play is a technique that “allows students to develop their abilities to engage in contextualized and real communication process using English” (Gongora & Manjarrez, 2014, p.13). Moreover, they mention that role-play was an efficient practice to indirectly improve participants’ foreign language listening, reading, and writing skills.



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Such a condition transforms role-play into a critical pedagogical tool that “improves secondary students’ interest for vocabulary achievement” (Thuraya, 2016, p. 232). However, the success of pedagogy is also related to the learners’ characteristics as personality, learning styles, and motivation for learning (Cevallos et al., 2017). On this concern, teachers should consider learners’ motivations and interests when they choose topics and contents to teach (Cevallos et al., 2017). In addition, the way to learn requires the enhanced involvement of the students compared to the traditional approaches (Hidayati & Pardjono, 2018).

Scholars as Ражабов (2018); and Villafuerte et al. (2018) agree that learning a foreign language using role-play enables students to reduce their anxiety while they gain confidence in the usage of the target language. The more they practice, the less anxiety they would feel when they repeat their scripts. This ability is acquired because role-play allows language repetition and the acquisition of reflexes and habits when learners practice their language (Rojas & Villafuerte, 2018).

The review of previous studies related to this research included the work of Narayanan et al. (2007, p 12). They concluded that female students have a higher average compared to male students in the motivational categories: integrative, instrumental, resultative, and intrinsic motivation “. Guay et al. (2010, p. 370) concluded that “Girls are more intrinsically motivated towards reading and writing and are more regulated by identification towards writing than boys. In contrast, boys are more intrinsically motivated towards maths than girls”. They also concluded that students’ self-concept influences their motivation for learning. Thus, intrinsic motivation positively relates to self-concept (or perceived competence). Finally, young learners may understand which school subjects are essential for optimal development. They could concentrate more on those subjects.

In the Ecuadorian contexts authors as Rojas et al. (2018); Villafuerte et al.

(2018), Among others, have studied the contributions of role-playing to English lessons. They assert that role-play is a technique that helps students develop speaking through interaction and cooperative work, aiming to reach a higher level of oral communication skills.

### **Methodology**

A mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches for educational research is applied to determine teachers' motivations for applying role-play as a strategy for teaching and learning English in rural and urban secondary schools in Ecuador. The methodology used in this research follows the principles of Prieto & Duque (2009). They refer the dialogic learning in educational fields to explore every kind of social interaction and successful educational practices in other spaces different from a classroom to develop the curriculum and scholarly organization as a hegemonic – reproduction. The purpose is to review new empiric realities and their contributions to improving the current learning process and reducing inequalities. Consequently, it studies the current social status and critical worldview.

The participants are 45 English teachers; 25 teachers work in urban schools, and 20 English teachers work in rural schools. The criteria for selecting the participants are: (1) being an English teacher in a secondary school located in a rural or urban area in the province of Manabi, Ecuador; (2) Having at least two-years-experience teaching English as a foreign language; (3) having experience using role-plays in English lessons. The questions to answer in this paper are:

- a. What are the English teachers' experiences using role-plays in Ecuadorian rural and urban secondary schools?
- b. What are the rural and urban English teachers' motivations for applying role-plays in English class?
- c. What is the relationship between teachers' motivation for using

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- role-plays in urban and rural contexts?
- d. What elements could improve role-play achievements in the English class?

### **Instruments:**

**Focus group.** - Role-play contributions for students of English as a foreign language.

The research team created this instrument to collect information from English teachers. It consists of 5 open questions about the following categories:

- a. Advantages and disadvantages of using role-plays for practicing English as a second language
- b. Teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for doing role-plays in English class.

Researchers panel from Eloy Alfaro of Manabí university in Ecuador evaluated the instrument. They are experts in the field of teaching English as a foreign language. After the corrections, the research team used the instrument in the participants' work locations.

**Interview guide.** -The research team created this instrument to collect information from English teachers about recommendations for improving the role-play classes. It consists of 2 open questions related to the following categories: (a) Number of role-plays executed during the school year, and (b) Topics students prefer to develop role-plays.

### **Procedure and Ethic rules:**

The participants accepted a volunteer to participate in this research To sign the informed consent letter. Participants have seven weeks to express the decision to participate in this research. The research team keeps the data obtained in this research. The identity of the participants was anonymous.



## **Results**

In response to question 1: What are the English teachers' experiences using role-play in Ecuadorian rural and urban secondary schools?

Table 1 contains the rural and urban English teachers' voices concerned about the advantages and disadvantages of using role-plays in the urban and rural English classes.

The categories analyzed are:

1. Advantages of using role-plays for practicing English as a second language.
2. Disadvantages of using role-plays for practicing English as a second language.

Subcategories are:

**Urban education:** It is EFL instruction in schools in urban areas.

**Rural education:** It is EFL instruction in schools in rural areas.

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**Table 1.** Teachers' experience using role-plays in the English class.

	Teachers from urban schools	Teachers from rural schools
Advantages of using role-plays for practice English as a second language.	<p>GF_T1. 4'12. "Yes. of course. I use role-play in the class. Role -play is a good activity to apply in classroom".</p> <p>GF-T1. 5'05. "It's an activity that results different for students in the class"</p> <p>GF_T1. 6'00. "I am sure role-plays helps to improve the students speaking skill".</p> <p>GF_T1. 8'10. "Yes, because it is a way the students start losing their fear and start feeling confident and sure when learners practice English speaking skill".</p> <p>GF_T1. 11'30. "Yes. It's important to practice speaking with kids".</p> <p>GF_T1. 12'10. "Absolutely yes. Role-plays improve the English skills".</p> <p>GF_T1. 12'40. "Yes. Role-play is a great activity. Kids like to do it, but it could be complicated when students are shy</p> <p>GF_T1. 13'15. "Yes. We do practice English using Role-plays. I am convinced the role-play is one of those key activities. It gets and keeps the attention of the students".</p> <p>GF_T1. 14'40. "Yes. Role-play allows students to practice and develop speaking".</p> <p>GF_T1. 16'0. "Yes. It's a common activity to practice speaking. I use it once or twice a month".</p>	<p>GF_T2. 3'10. "Yes. Role-plays can develop the students' speaking skill".</p> <p>GF_T2. 4'20. "Yes. Of course. I think it's a good strategy. It works better with students of secondary school; when students know more vocabulary".</p> <p>GF_T2. 5'10. "Yes, role-play is very useful. It's a way to perform an active class. But some students feel afraid to speak in front of public sometimes; then, role-play is a challenge".</p> <p>GF_T2. 9'15. "Yes. It is complex to work role-plays. Kids do not like to speak in public. However, I think it is helpful in class".</p> <p>GF_T2. 11'30. "Yes. It's a good activity for practicing speaking skill".</p>

<p>Disadvantages of using role-plays for practicing English as a second language.</p>	<p>GF_T1. 18'05. "Students feel nervous about language practices using role-play".                  GF_T1. 19'10. "In general, students take much time to prepare a role-play".                  GF_T1. 21'00. "The main difficulty could be the poor participation of the students, because they don't have enough good confidence to work in a role-play".                  GF_T1. 23'10. "One of the difficulties is when the students forget how to pronounce a word/phrase or when the role-play is learned and must be said by memory. Nerves are treacherous that make them feel insecure and afraid of other students laugh at them.                  GF_T1. 24'50. "Sometimes students are not motivated to do role-plays                  GF_T1. 26'10. "They feel fear when they are going to speak in front of their classmates. Students don't come to an agreement with roles.                  GF_T1. 27'20. "Sometimes students don't get a connection with the group at the beginning of the activity".                  GF_T1. 29'05. "There are few students that prefer to work alone".                  GF_T1. 31'10. "Students feel shy at the moment to speak in English".</p>	<p>GF_T2. 13'00. "Students feel shy and forget some words.                  GF_T2. 14'10. "Students get afraid and shy. Try to figure out from rural area are very timid".                  GF_T2. 15'25. "Students think they will not have opportunities to use English in future life and they demotivate for practicing English"                  GF_T2. 16'05. "Sometimes students don't agree with the lines. So, I have no problem to change a few words. The most important is that students feel comfortable with their role-play lines"                  GF_T2. 21'25. "Students feel afraid of speaking in front of adults or students from other classes. So, I practice short role-plays inside the classroom. It works slowly"                  GF_T2. 14'10. "Students are shy and get afraid of speaking in English. They do not like to do errors when they repeat their lines of the roleplay".                  GF_T2. 16'05. "Students think they will never travel abroad, and they think English is not important".</p>
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**Source:** Research project (2019-2021).

All the participants agreed with the fact that role-play is a good activity to develop and improve the speaking skill. Paraphrasing what the participants think, most of the students' difficulties are related to motivation. It means, students feel shy and are afraid of different aspects such as pronunciation, lack of vocabulary, and their classmates' critics

In response to the question 2: What are the rural and urban English teachers' motivations for applying role-plays in the English class?

In the table 2 they are exposed the urban and rural English teachers' motivations for using role-plays in English class.

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Categories:

1. Teachers' extrinsic motivation for doing roleplays in English class.
2. Teachers' Intrinsic motivation for doing roleplays in English class.

Subcategories:

Urban education: EFL instruction held in schools located in urban areas in Manta, Manabí.

Rural education: EFL instruction held in schools located in rural areas in Manta, Manabí.

**Table 2.** Teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to execute roleplays in the English Class.

Category	The voices of the teachers from urban school	The voices of the Teachers from rural schools
Teachers' extrinsic motivation for doing roleplays in English class.	<p>GF3-01-30. <i>"It's positive. Students get to practice speaking with Role-plays"</i>.</p> <p>GF3-01-30. <i>"I think it is positive because I try to make students feel confident. I tell them they can do anything they want; that everything is a process, and it is necessary to do this kind of activities in order to feel secure and positive when speaking not just in a role-play but in real-life conversation"</i>.</p> <p>GF3-01-30. <i>"It's very positive the experience using role-plays, because it is a good motivation to learn the language"</i>.</p> <p>GF3-01-30. <i>"it is positive to develop speaking skill"</i>.</p> <p>GF3-01-30. <i>"It's positive, because students practice oral skill and lose fear to talk"</i>.</p>	<p>GF4-02-10. <i>"It's positive. They can practice speaking"</i>.</p> <p>GF3-01-30. <i>"I think it's positive. students enjoy and learn. It's positive. Students get joy at the time they practice speaking"</i>.</p> <p>GF3-01-30. <i>"It's positive. students are more active."</i></p> <p>GF3-01-337 <i>"It's positive. Students practice vocabulary"</i>.</p>

<p>Teachers' Intrinsic motivation for doing roleplays in English class.</p>	<p>GF3-01-30. "Yes. I really like to apply role-play. I am convinced it is a fantastic activity".          GF3-01-30. "I like to apply it in class to develop oral pronunciation".          GF3-01-30. "Yes, I like it. It's necessary because it's a way to change the routine and students learn more".          GF3-01-30. "I like because it is important to apply activities like this to practice speaking".          GF3-01-30. "Yes. They enjoy with this activity".          GF3-01-30. "Yes, I like. Students participate and speak".          GF3-01-30. "I like. It's funny and useful".          GF3-01-30. "I like. All students get joy with Role-plays".          GF3-01-30. "Yes. I apply it in order to practice speaking".</p>	<p>GF3-01-38. "Yes, I like it. It's a different activity to students in order to learn and don't feel bored".          GF3-01-45. "Yes, I do. It's a good oral activity".          GF3-01-53. "Yes. I really like to do role-plays in class".          GF3-01-58. "Yes, I like. It helps to develop their speaking at time they enjoy with it".</p>
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**Source:** Authors (2019).

Most teachers like using role-plays in linguistic practices. Role-play is a funny activity for students, and it generates in learners a positive experience. Most students from rural areas are related to shyness and fear of speaking English in front of adults.

In response to question 3: What elements could improve role-play achievements in the English class?

In table 3, the recommendation given for both urban and rural English teachers for improving role-play achievement in the English class are exposed.



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**Table 3.** Recommendations for improving role-play achievements in EFL class

Aspects	Urban schools	Rural schools
Number of role-plays during the school year	<i>"6 times per year (minimum)"</i>	<i>"4-5 times per semester".</i>
	<i>9 – 10 times per year". "I do it 8 times per year. It depends on the group of the students". "Between 8 or 10 times per semester. It's because it depends on "grammar" or learning the students are receiving and depends on how many students are per classroom". "3 times a year."</i>	<i>"I do it 6-8 times per year with each classroom. "I do role-plays 4 – 5 times per semester".</i>
Topics you prefer to develop with role-play	<i>"Real life situations for their better understanding. "I prefer topics according to the content of the class". "I like topics according to the age and topics that are interesting when they speak in English". "My topics most of the time must be with vocabulary, grammar, phrases... but specially vocabulary". "Sometimes I give topics according to the content of the class, and other times I want them to choose which they would like to play". "I must take into account the age of the students". "About the environment". "Students' topics. I mean, what they prefer, but involving the content of the class". "Sometimes a general topic that involve the context and the content, at the time students develop their imagination". "I prefer topics they are interested in". "Real life situations and classic stories".</i>	<i>"I prefer students to choose the topic they want to work on". "I prefer topics according to vocabulary learned but applied into context". "I prefer personal information, job interviews performance and use new vocabulary". "I prefer real life situations".</i>

**Source:** Authors (2019).

Teachers choose topics more under the content and less to the context. It motivates students to choose the topics they like for role-plays. The curriculum development should consider the local contexts to improve its results.

### Discussion

The results allow the research team to ratify the position of scholars such as Rojas et al. (2018) and David (2014); when they affirm that students learn a foreign language through social interaction with others. In this concern, role-play becomes a didactic tool that can improve participa-

tion in the class, encouraging them to speak to other students in case they are shy or get afraid of speaking in English with the teacher. Thus, learners can practice the foreign language using the communicational approach (Kuśnierek, 2015), having as the primary goal the interaction between equals (student-student) to get the confidence to use a foreign language in daily life.

Authors express their agreement with the position of Ражабов (2018) that role-playing enables students to reduce their anxiety while they gain confidence. Consequently, acquiring reflexes and habits exposes learners to professional know-how when they understand real-life situations that emerge from the dynamic communication cycle established between the participants.

Regarding participants' motivation for learning, the authors agree that context influences teachers and students' motivation for learning a foreign language. In this concern, the authors suggest that teachers adjust topics and contents to the situations that surround the learners (Rojas et al., 2018; Cevallos et al., 2017). It can be advantageous according to the area and teachers' interest in offering more active and creative classes.

This work shows how important and influential role-play can be for a foreign language acquisition process. According to the results obtained in this research, role-plays motivate learners effectively to develop students' pronunciation, intonation, and speed. Students increase their vocabulary the double than conventional strategies. It creates a more participatory learning environment allowing learners to interact with their peers at least five times more than other conventional language practices. All the participants progressed in English language acquisition, and they lost their fear of speaking the English language in front of adults.

### **In regards to the rural and urban educational contexts**

Ecuador's rural and urban areas keep different mainly because of people's lifestyles and cultures and the limited access to quality educational services in the rural areas. The education services offered in the cities in Ecuador are of much more quality than infrastructure, the number of teachers and teachers' qualifications, educational technology availability, internet access, libraries, and didactic material supply.

This research process allowed detecting that rural people think there is no need to learn English as a foreign language because most of them will never complete their studies, and most minors travel abroad. It is common to listen to rural teachers' expressions as GF\_T2. 15'25. *“Students think they will not have opportunities to use English in future life and sometimes demotivate for practicing English”* and GF\_T2. 13'00. *“Students think they will never travel abroad, and they think English is unimportant”*.

Students in rural and urban areas know that they must pass the subject of English as a foreign language as a requirement for graduation. However, they are not necessarily aware of the importance of mastering the English language for their future professional life.

In such a scenario, teachers are demotivated to reduce the forces to teach English as a foreign language as it could be considered a waste of time. In consequence, in the rural area, students need teachers to be able to explain to learners about their future labor opportunities, potential business, and use of technology. Therefore, role-plays help students develop their speech in a foreign language by engaging students in more real-life situations. In addition, students repeat the role-plays they encourage to be more confident in using the foreign language.

In contrast, in the urban area, most people grow up with the idea of obtaining a professional degree, adapting to the constant changes, and considering aspects that give them more opportunities in the global

community, such as learning a foreign language. In addition, the educational system in urban areas is probably better organized in aspects such as execution of curriculum, control of advances, and public knowledge about teacher merits.

Authors agree with Glover (2014) when he argues that role-plays do not require special tools for practical application. Teachers must be able to choose an exciting story to be represented through role-plays and clear instructions to guide learners in their learning process.

### **Conclusions**

Based on the results, the research team ratified role-play as a critical element in the foreign language acquisition process for both rural and urban schools in the Ecuadorian context. Role-plays demand time and energy from teachers. It may cause disorder and noise generated by students during these practices. Thereby, from the communication approach, teachers agree that role-plays contribute to improving students' ability to speak and their reading, writing, and listening skills.

There are significant relationships between urban and rural teachers' motivations regarding role-playing in secondary education, which are related to students' personalities, didactic factors, and equitable participation. It is concluded that role-plays help students develop their speech in a foreign language and involve students in more real-life situations. Therefore, role-plays help students improve their confidence in using a foreign language and promote their awareness of the importance of English as a global language.

Results show that teachers and students are highly motivated to use role-plays in their language practices; however, the selection of topics, time, and support material should be better articulated to the students' interests and local context to perform better. The limitations of this study may be related to the sample size; however, this work promotes the ex-

ecution of new studies about the situation of the rural education system in Ecuador and Latin America.

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**1ª EDICIÓN**

*Reading Comprehension and Academic Writing:*  
**RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

**CHAPTER VIII**  
CURRICULAR ADAPTATIONS TO  
ENHANCE THE PARTICIPATION OF  
STUDENTS WITH  
THE SENSORY DEFICIT: VIDEO ESSAYS

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### **Curricular Adaptations to enhance the participation of students with the sensory deficit: video essays**

### **Adaptaciones curriculares para potenciar la participación de alumnos con déficit sensorial: video-ensayos**

#### **Abstract**

The abrupt shift from classroom education to online education due to COVID-19 has required effort and dedication from students and teachers. However, efforts have focused on teaching as many students as possible to guarantee their access to education; and there is an urgent need for developing didactics aimed at students' attention with sensory deficits in online education. This work aims to introduce video essays to improve students with sensory disabilities' communication skills and argumentation in Spanish and English as a foreign language in a university context. This research uses the case study methodology to study the contribution of video essays in the learning process of students with sensory deficits. It used the Model of the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education for diversity care. The cases studied correspond to four students from two universities located in Manta and Portoviejo, Ecuador. Two of them were diagnosed with a progressive visual deficit and two with hearing loss. The visual and auditory remnants made possible the participants' academic work with electronic devices. Participants produced two video essays to demonstrate their learnings achieved in the English as a Foreign Language course. The trial and error technique was applied to validate the video essays as knowledge evaluation tools. The results showed a significant improvement in the participants' communication skills performance when using these didactics. It concluded that video essays could efficiently improve students' communication skills with sensory deficiencies, supplying a resource for evaluation.

**Keywords:** global citizenship; English as a foreign language; communication; inclusion education; participation; Teachers training.

## **Resumen**

El cambio abrupto de la educación en el aula a la educación en línea debido a COVID-19 ha requerido esfuerzo y dedicación por parte de estudiantes y maestros. Sin embargo, los esfuerzos se han centrado en enseñar al mayor número posible de estudiantes para garantizar su acceso a la educación; y existe una necesidad urgente de desarrollar didácticas dirigidas a la atención de los estudiantes con déficits sensoriales en la educación en línea. Este trabajo tiene como objetivo introducir video ensayos para mejorar las habilidades de comunicación y argumentación de estudiantes con discapacidad sensorial en español e inglés como lengua extranjera en un contexto universitario. Esta investigación utiliza la metodología del estudio de caso para estudiar la contribución de los video ensayos en el proceso de aprendizaje de estudiantes con deficiencias sensoriales. Se utilizó el Modelo del Ministerio de Educación de Ecuador para el cuidado de la diversidad. Los casos estudiados corresponden a cuatro estudiantes de dos universidades ubicadas en Manta y Portoviejo. Dos de ellos fueron diagnosticados de déficit visual progresivo y dos de hipoacusia. Los remanentes visuales y auditivos posibilitaron el trabajo académico de los participantes con dispositivos electrónicos. Los participantes produjeron dos ensayos en video para demostrar lo aprendido en el curso de inglés como Lengua Extranjera. Se aplicó la técnica de prueba y error para validar los video ensayos como herramientas de evaluación de conocimientos. Los resultados mostraron una mejora significativa en el desempeño de las habilidades comunicativas de los participantes al utilizar estas didácticas. Se llegó a la conclusión de que los ensayos en video podrían mejorar de manera eficiente las habilidades de comunicación de los estudiantes con deficiencias sensoriales, proporcionando un recurso para la evaluación.

**Keywords:** Ciudadanía global; formación de profesores; inglés como lengua extranjera; comunicación; educación inclusiva; participación.

### **Introduction**

Higher education has challenges in strengthening students' skills of global citizenship, which enhance the professional profile in permanent change of professionals of the XXI century.

In this sense, Mestres (2014) introduces video essays in higher education to offer students opportunities for creative practice, the promotion of critical thinking, and decision-making regarding cultural sustainability and the natural environment. In addition, they allow strengthening the competencies for effective communication and proactive citizenship for a just and inclusive society as part of human development (Salgado, 2017); and enhancing digital skills.

The video essay as an educational tool enables the execution of overall participatory processes, especially in higher education, due to accessibility and prompt distribution of information among the study groups (Turro, 2017). In addition, the use of video essays activates collaborative learning and the social construction of Knowledge (Farfán, Villafuerte, Romero, and Intriago, 2017).

In the context of Ecuador, authors such as Gatica, Villafuerte, & Romero (2018) highlight the benefits of using video production in EFL practices. They affirm that the production of Vlogs (blogs that focus on the use of amateur videos) triggers students to use skills such as creativity and argumentation, which can be very useful in EFL practices.

The political dimensions, practices, and inclusive culture that Aiscow and Boots proposed at the beginning of the 21st century remain as part of the process under construction, evaluation, and permanent improvement (Armijo, 2018). At the same time, Villafuerte and Pinoargote (2020) ratify the need to incorporate ICT in educational processes that contribute to the functional autonomy of people with visual and hearing deficits.

Regarding the model of attention to the student population with disabilities in Ecuador, it follows six dimensions: Dimension of adaptive behavior, Dimension of intellectual abilities; Health dimension; Participation dimension; and Context dimension (Ministry of Education of Ecuador, 2018).

Authors such as Marchersi & Hernández (2019) give relevance to the approach from the dimensions of (1) political and social agreements, (2) expansion and equity of early childhood education, (3) strengthening of the teaching profession, (4) the value culture and (5) changes in the social and educational attitudes. However, on the other hand, the inclusive approach considers each person as a bio-psycho-social being but limited by genetic and social conditions and physical or psychological attributes. Therefore, their knowledge, attitudes, and skills grow when they agree with their needs, conditioned by their characteristics and context (Moreno & Aguilar, 2019).

The exploration of inclusive education processes in Ecuador indicates the persistence of weaknesses to overcome in terms of curricular adaptations and proper procedures for attending to the diversity of students (Corral, García, Alcívar, & Reyes, 2018; Rodríguez et al. 2020). During year 1 of the pandemic of COVID19, educational centers limited the implementation of inclusive culture and practices. Perhaps due to the risks posed by one-to-one education of inclusive education (Feyen, 2020), equitable access to educational services for the population with disabilities was at risk (Bravo et al., 2021).

According to Reynaldos-Grandón (2020); Legido-Quigley et al. (2020), the social management of the pandemic has demanded collective and simultaneous work to face the immense burden of uncertainty that humanity has faced. UNESCO (2020) estimated that the closure of schools due to the pandemic put 72% of the planet's student population at risk of permanently leaving the educational system. To face this possibility, the teachers redesigned the subjects created for face-to-face edu-



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cation (Coraglia & Vázquez, 2020) into models of distance education, online education, or hybrid education. Therefore, information and communication technologies have been used in the confinement scenario to generate elementary learning environments (Fernández-Gubieda, 2020) and social and academic interaction through synchronous and asynchronous activities (Figallo, 2020). These are tools and competencies that most teachers did not master; despite the gaps in access to technological means, it was necessary to move forward (García-Peñalvo et al., 2020).

Thus, today educational centers use video to prevent COVID19 infections (Vilas et al., 2020). Among the previous studies reviewed in the framework of this research, Feyes (2020) considers the application of video schemes for the greater involvement of students in the learning process. The work of (Gijón, García, & Puig, 2020) added that pedagogy in special education articulates the actions and reactions capable of creating life skills. The difficulties associated with disability are assumed as challenges to face through the commitment of the educational community.

At this point, the following questions emerge that guide the present study:

1. What is the availability of furniture and materials required by online education for the attention of students with visual and hearing deficits in the homes of Ecuadorians?
2. What is the performance of the communication skills in English of the participants through the application of video essays?
3. What are the changes observed in the participants before and after the culture of peace through video essays?

This work aims to introduce video essays to improve students with sensory disabilities' communication skills and argumentation in Spanish and English as a foreign language in a university context.



## **Methodology**

This research applies the case study methodology to strengthen inclusive education in EFL instruction using ICT in the university and context. The case studies corresponding to 4 students with sensory disabilities show how their communication skills strengthen using their mother tongue and English as a foreign language to construct video essays.

## **Case studies**

The case studies correspond to four university students residing in Manta and Portoviejo. The two of them were diagnosed with progressive visual deficit and hearing loss. They participated in a hybrid classroom and online educational intervention from 2018 to 2020. In addition, the participants worked on producing video essays as part of the evaluation and Demonstration of knowledge acquired in the English as a foreign language class.

Case J: Age 23 years. The diagnosis shows Stargardt's syndrome. 80% of the macula is affected in both eyes. He lives in Manta. She studies Basic Education.

Case P: Age 27 years. Diagnosis 100% retinal detachment in both eyes. Study Music. She lives in Portoviejo.

Case X: Age 18 years. A Cochlear implant in a deconfigured state. The diagnosis showed a Hearing loss level of 90%. He is a university student in Manta.

Case MB: Age 29 years. 99% bilateral deafness. She studied Graphic Design at a university in Portoviejo. She lives in Manta.

## **Instruments and material:**

The instruments used in this research are explained below.

### **Ecuadorian model for attention to disability**

The Ministry of Education considers article 2 of the Organic Law of Inclusive Education (LOEI), which regulates the philosophical, conceptual, and constitutional foundations for the management of the educational system in Ecuador, among which stands out: “universality; education for change; guarantee an education free of gender violence, which promotes coeducation; focus on rights; gender equality; education for democracy; citizen participation; culture of peace and conflict resolution.” Its management, demand for training in functional skills, assistive technology, access to natural supports, and the adaptation of students to various learning environments (Verdugo & Schalock, 2013).

**Checklist.** - This instrument aims to determine the availability of furniture and essential material required by students with visual and hearing disabilities in the participants’ homes during confinement due to the COVID19 pandemic. The National Model of management and attention for students with special educational needs associated with disabilities in specialized education institutions is administered (Ministry of Education, 2018).

**Communication Skills Achievement rubric.** - The research team prepared an ad hoc monitoring rubric to assess participants’ performance in communication skills during the construction and exposition of the video essays. The rubric evaluates over 100 points of the levels of performance and global qualification of the following indicators.

-For students with visual deficits: CC = Content and curriculum; AI = argumentation of ideas; FO = fluency of oral expression; UV = use of vocabulary; P = pronunciation; and T = appropriate intonation.

Students with hearing impairment are AI = argumentation of ideas in writing; CC = Demonstration of knowledge according to the curriculum; UV = use of vocabulary; and S = synthesis. A panel of experts evaluated the language and inclusive education instrument from the University of the Basque Country of Spain universities.



## **Process**

Participants construct one video essay to demonstrate the EFL knowledge acquired during the current semester. The methodology used to produce the video essays was trial and error. Then, the participants repeated some parts of the product until reaching the wished results.

The research team offered technical support to the participants in face-to-face and online tutorials (hybrid model). The tutors accompanied the elaboration of the video essays step by step in the technical design when participants required. They used YouTube and *Microsoft PowerPoint* to make the video essays. First, however, the participants selected the video essays contained and their purposes.

This research applies the case study methodology to contribute to strengthening inclusive education.

### *Development scheme of a video essay*

Students organize the information following the instructions below.

**Objective:** Promote reflection and action regarding sustainable development in times of COVID19.

**Expected products:** Multimedia material (Video essay) reports on the benefits or harms of consuming natural resources and coexistence during confinement. Promote masks and biosafety protections., a campaign to reduce family violence and gender inequality.

**Profile of facilitators:** Video-essay poses a leading role for facilitators. Teachers with visions, values, and attitudes must innovate current teaching and learning processes: commitment, responsibility, and decision.

**Computer tools:** Social networks ensure that the problems of the environment are debated on a global level and transmitted virally. \*\*  
Face-to-face tutoring

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**Project:** Creation of the sustainability program according to the professional training area

**The sustainability program.-** It should contain actions that incorporate social, environmental, economic, and ethical factors in decision-making at the business level. **Motivation for learning:** Creation of programs to promote communication concerning professional studies. Adopting measures to reduce the risks of contagion of COVID19 is invited. \*\* Virtual tutoring

Creation of programs focused on sustainability and a culture of peace:

**Proposed professional field:** Ecuador's education and sustainable development inform the population about environmental impacts. Develop campaigns to promote friendly communication and coexistence in confined conditions. \*\* Virtual tutoring

*The dimensions of inclusive education care considered by the Ministry of Education are the following.*

a. Adaptive Behavior Dimension Subcategories:

This dimension includes all the conceptual, social, and practical skills necessary to successfully carry out daily life activities. It includes developing communication skills, acquiring reading and writing, and concepts related to money, time, and basic arithmetic operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division). It also refers to social skills, understanding and following rules and regulations, self-care activities (dressing, grooming, and feeding), programming and monitoring routines, use of the telephone, use of means of transport to travel to various places, and getting around and taking care of one's health.

b. Intellectual skills dimension:

It is the set of capacities that allow individuals to adapt, modify, and select different cultural tools to make decisions and solve problems. These capacities include critical thinking, argumentation, interpretation,

different forms of reasoning, and the appropriate and flexible use of one's cognitive resources, to name a few.

c. Health dimension:

Health refers to an integral state of the person under which he perceives physical, mental, and social well-being.

d. Participation dimension:

Participation refers to all those activities that a person develops in negotiation and harmonious and productive relationships with others in the different contexts in which they operate (family, school, neighborhood, and work). Participation can be observed directly through the relationships and bonds that the person establishes with friends, family, colleagues, neighbors, and teachers), in terms of duration, stability), as well as the capacity that it possesses to the agency lead or be part of groups and social networks.

e. Context dimension:

The macrosystem refers to the country or state where the person lives and all the systems derived from it. From the perspective of cultural psychology, it intertwines human activities with various factors of the immediate, community, and social environment. The context has three levels: The microsystem, configured by factors of the person's immediate environment, specifically the nuclear family, the caregivers of the person, and all the direct support personnel that it has. The mesosystem includes the school, neighborhood, health services, community, friends, and support networks or organizations. (e.g., the socio-cultural and political systems).

## **Results**

The presentation of the results follows the logic of the research questions that appear in introduction section of this chapter.

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### Availability of furniture and essential materials required for academic work with students with visual or hearing disabilities.

The checklist results considering the dimensions of disability care proposed by the Ministry of Education of Ecuador (2018) are presented below. See table 1.

**Table 1.** Classroom and home context for teaching people with sensory disabilities.

Furniture and essential material per classroom	Type of disability physical characteristics	Availability at home	
Discapacidad Visual (Ceguera o baja visión)	J	P	
Comply with INEN universal accessibility standards. Have signage in Braille in all spaces (classrooms, restrooms). Fixed organization of the elements (or warning in case of modification). Highly lit spaces. Tactile band for access and exit from each of the spaces.	Voice recorder. Computer with a screen reader. Voice calculator. Awl. Lupa Strip Magnifiers Puzzle (or other material) with textures. Cabinet with separation by the type of materials. Embossed material.	No Yes No No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No.	Yes Yes No. No. No. No. No. No. No.
Hearing Impairment (Deafness and hearing loss)	MB	X	
Comply with the INEN Universal Accessibility standards. Have visual notices of all the information that the IEE and the teacher consider necessary. Use color contrast for relevant information.	Sign language dictionary. FM system Cabinet with separation by the type of materials. Image Projector. Digital board. Computer	Yes. No. Yes No Yes.	Yes. No. Yes. No. No.

**Source:** Ministry of Education of Ecuador (2018).

### Performance of the communicative skills in English of the participants through the application of video essays.

The averages of achievements for the category communications skills obtained by the participants are exposed below. See table 2.

**Table 2.** Change in the participants oral and written expression.

Partici-pants	Diagnosis	Communication Skill	Pretest	Post-est	Change
J	Condition	Oral expression	6.00	8.50	Upward
P	Stargardt disease		5.00	8.00	Upward
MB	Corneal detach-ment	Written expres-sion	7.20	8.50	Upward
X	Hearing loses		7.50	8.60	Upward

Resource: Project registers (June/2020).

**Changes in the attitudes of global citizenship and culture of peace of the participants.**

The Changes pretest and post-test regarding participants’ citizenship and the culture of peace appear below. See table 3.

**Table 3.** Change in the participants’ attitudes of global citizenship and culture of peace observed.

Categories:	Pretest	Posttest
1) Social aware-ness	Participants had little interest in learning about social, environmental, and cultural problems.	High understanding of socio-economic, environmental, and political problems. High interest in learning about social problems
2) Citizen action in the face of the threats of the pandemic	Participants had little knowledge of labor rights, civil code, national sus-tainability plan. Their participation was oversight and co-govern-ment processes.	Approach to issues on the exer-cise of citizen rights and responsi-bilities. Moderate desire to participate in democracy Moderate knowledge of the local and global sustainability plan.



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3) Coexistence in harmony in confinement	Values: Openness to difference, dialogue, respect, and harmony. Conviction in peaceful life as a fact and right away from social construction. Ethics: Low compliance and minimal follow-up of standards.	Values: High compliance with a difference, dialogue, respect, and harmony. High responsibility, compliance, honesty, discipline. Ethics: Good compliance with the rules, recognition of successes and mistakes made.
4) ICT and COVID19.	A little follow-up to local regulations. Attitudes of enjoyment without considering global threats of a biological nature.	Distancing Life in confinement Coexistence online Learning spaces Responsibility for the care of the elderly in the face of the threat of COVID19

**Source:** Research project (Dic. /2020).

### Discussion

The results obtained in this research confirm the position of authors such as Cabero et al. (2014); and Garay (2016), who argue that ICT requires an appropriate didactic plan with clear objectives to ensure its evident contribution in professional training processes. Thus, the results show a significant improvement in communication and civic competencies.

In the Ecuadorian context, the arrival of video essay has been somewhat timid and confusing. There has been no clarity regarding its relevance compared to the production of home videos applied to language practices, as argued by Farfán et al., 2017. However, the participants managed to improve the argued expression of signed topics. These are skills linked to the adaptive behavior dimensions, intellectual abilities dimension, participation dimension, and context dimension of the Ecuadorian disability care model (Ministry of Education of Ecuador, 2018).

It was observed that the participants had never lived the experience of producing a video essay, which represented the journey through new routes for the participants, and they validate the didactic proposal with

their adaptations for working with students with sensory disabilities. It added that one of the required adjustments for working with students with visual disabilities could be the registration of authentic voices or through automatic readers; while, for students with hearing impairment, the use of subtitled text and icons could be used to facilitate understanding of the ideas presented. At this point, teachers insisted on the need to review the times and loads of demand when working with students with sensory disabilities.

Building a video essay is a challenge in which students put into practice all the skills they develop in the professional training process. For example, Digital and investigative competencies, work organization, time management, decision making, high volume information analysis, information categorization, design, and especially communication skills in the use of the mother tongue and a foreign language.

The researcher team recommended administering the tutorials accompanying this construction process in a hybrid way to strengthen the students' digital skills instantly and stimulate and animal the achievement of its elaboration. Finally, teachers should regulate the times for the complete production of the video essays according to each student's case.

Among the unforeseen findings, it indicated that the professional profile under construction in the participants became a relevant factor regarding the mastery of digital skills. Thus, in the case of MB, who studies in the Graphic Design program and since the computer is a daily work tool, he presented greater autonomy and demanded less support in the tutoring stage. In the same sense, it pointed out that P, who studies music pedagogy, demanded more support from the tutor due to the lower development of digital skills.

Another relevant factor is the level of disability status of the participants, where the frequency of demand for support is significantly higher in

participants with visual impairment than in students with difficult hearing.

Finally, it is necessary to highlight that factors such as motivation to learn and the capacity for resilience to face the execution of unknown processes is also a factor that makes a clear difference between the participants in terms of dedication to conducting video essays, the argumentative quality, and the final edition of the product.

### **Conclusions**

Results and literatura review allow the authors of this work to affirm the fulfillment of the proposed objective. It concluded that the video essays contribute significantly to improving the communication skills of university students with sensory disabilities who went from the average level of 6.2 to 8.5 points. It represents a noticeable improvement in communication skills both in the mother tongue and in the use of a foreign language; The contribution of this work is related to the flexibility, relevance, and effectiveness of the video essay to stimulate the creativity, critical and argumentative thinking of the participants. The relevance of the use of Video essay in the knowledge assessment processes in students with sensory disabilities highlights the contribution of this research to the innovation of comprehensive knowledge assessment practices. Other contributions that video essays make to students are visible in the final presentation of the product, where collective reflection on problems of common interest is promoted. The weakness of this study lies perhaps, in the small sample, which does not allow to present a generalization of the results, but the line opens: Use of Video essay in processes of the inclusive social construction of knowledge as an innovation to inclusive education. Researchers in the educational field are invited to carry out new studies that contribute to strengthening attention to diversity by promoting a culture of peace.

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**1ª EDICIÓN**

*Reading Comprehension and Academic Writing:*  
**RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

**CHAPTER IX**  
BREAKING COMMUNICATIVE BARRIERS  
THROUGH THEATER TO TEACH  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE:  
A PARTICIPATED STRATEGY.

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### **Breaking communicative barriers through theater to teach English language: a participated strategy**

### **Rompiendo las barreras comunicativas a travez del teatro en la enseñanza del idioma inglés: una estrategia participativa**

#### **Abstract**

This chapter aims to promote the use of a fully participatory strategy within the English language teaching-learning process. It induces the guides for using theater in English language instruction within the cognitive processes. In such a way, students feel comfortable learning and exploring their communication skills. As well as using different fully comprehensive learning techniques, each teaching stage is harmonized and achieves the applicability of the language in all its aspects. Theater as a teaching strategy is the closest thing to communicative reality. Theater as a harmonic teaching strategy that improve participants' comprehensive skills; teacher and students' attitudes involved in a participatory experience and, with optimal results, allowed the use of the English language within the cognitive processes. It concluded that assertive communication styles such as read theater, self-corrections, collaborative work, body language, development of creativity, and spontaneity indirectly lead to the English language acquisition process being a more enjoyable and practical teaching experience.

**Keywords:** communication skills, culture, educational innovation, theater.

#### **Resumen**

Este capítulo tiene como objetivo promover el uso de una estrategia totalmente participativa dentro del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del idioma inglés. Induce las guías para el uso del teatro en la enseñanza del idioma inglés dentro de los procesos cognitivos. De tal manera, el alumno se siente cómodo a la hora de aprender y explorar sus habilidades comunicativas. Además de utilizar diferentes técnicas

de aprendizaje integral, se armoniza cada etapa de la enseñanza y se logra la aplicabilidad del idioma en todas sus vertientes. El teatro como estrategia didáctica es lo más parecido a la realidad comunicativa. El teatro como estrategia de enseñanza armónica mejoró las habilidades integrales de los participantes; Las actitudes de docentes y estudiantes involucraron una experiencia participativa y, con resultados óptimos, permitieron el uso del idioma inglés dentro de los procesos cognitivos. Concluyó que los estilos de comunicación asertiva como el teatro leído, las autocorrecciones, el trabajo colaborativo, el lenguaje corporal, el desarrollo de la creatividad y la espontaneidad conducen indirectamente a que el proceso de adquisición del idioma inglés sea una experiencia de enseñanza más agradable y práctica.

**Palabras clave:** habilidades comunicativas, cultura, innovación educativa, Teatro.

### **Introduction**

Learning English is a significant challenge for teachers who work at different levels of education since it includes the cognitive development of basic communication skills to develop in learners' practical experiences.

Social networks connect the world. Thus, the advancement of science leads people to use strong language in all areas. The student breaks communication barriers, reaching multiple opportunities within the globalization system. Thus, Blanchiman (2014) argues that globalization includes technical communications continuously integrating the English language. Therefore, oral communication becomes the basis of social exchange because the command of English as a foreign language monopolizes the development of cultural conversation.

Regarding the teaching system provided by educational institutions, on the one hand, there is a lack of resources provided by the state. There is no necessary investment for students to access technological means

within pedagogical hours. Evidence shows a lack of language practice during classes in Ecuador. In addition, poor language practice results in learners' demotivation (Fuertes Lopez, 2017).

When we still find a traditionalist approach within school programs, in which educators apply strategies to develop writing and repetition, a dependence on textual resources, insecurity, and limitation towards the development of the oral part of the students, they result in a precarious command of the language.

Consequently, the promotion of using the theater as a participatory, interactive, and dynamic strategy may be unpractical. However, it is possible to strengthen oral expression and its different dimensions during its development. Thus, students feel that they can develop and use English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in other communicative spaces. To Salazar Calderón (2015), teachers' mission is to develop listening and speaking skills in students, through the communicative techniques of role-playing and discussion in apprentices. They are experiential activities transforming the cognitive experience into practical and valuable acts. Students enjoy the process of the participatory strategy generating better results in personal areas such as security and trust inside a cooperative environment to promote respect for the opinion of others. But above all, motivating that the team members' contributions are assertive. In such a way, students perceive that said contribution is significant, thus raising their self-esteem.

### **Experiential activities for meaningful learning**

Teachers use the participative strategy to stimulate students with visual or auditory elements of curiosity, causing multiple sensations that lead them to increase intrinsic motivation to capture students' attention in an effective and timely manner toward new learning.

The experiences can be cognitive or experiential that occur daily within their family or social environment. The introduction of a new class pro-

positional begins on the right foot. It continues to develop harmoniously. The apprentices need to feel connected with the latest knowledge to slightly give way to active participation in the class and the development of the different techniques presented by the tutor. Esteban Guitart (2020).

The theater indirectly allows for the exploration of personal angles and self-esteem in the students, who show themselves predisposed to let themselves before acquiring new knowledge. The development of their skills is effective, and they are allowed the freedom to apply their creativity, charisma, and expressiveness, which effectively makes them protagonists of learning. The experiential practice and even the personal contribution within the activities turn the experience into a cognitive process of positive contribution to the students.

**Charism, an assertive connection**

It becomes a primary element when establishing a personal and even more educational connection between teachers and learners. Teachers take advantage of it to achieve great objectives within the bilateral relationship between student and teacher. Arancibia Gaete (2016) mentions the importance of installing this new style of leadership that seems more horizontal, distributed, and transformative.

**Charism, an assertive connection**

Arancibia Gaete (2016) mentions the importance of installing this new style of leadership that seems more horizontal, distributed, and transformative. It becomes a primary element when establishing a personal and even more educational connection between teachers and learners. Teachers take advantage of it to achieve great objectives within the bilateral relationship between student and teacher. When students feel the teacher’s charisma, showing a gesture, a look, emotional support, and above all, a smile, students become fully cooperative participants in receiving new learning. The tutor immerses himself in a pleasant environment and enjoys doing his job; he magically connects with the group and effectively shapes the skills to develop collectively and individually (Yarleque Wong, 2018).

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To apply theater as a teaching strategy, the guiding teacher must transmit strength, human warmth, and a positive attitude relevant to the bond with his group of students. We must understand that the true path to the success of our actions depends on the vocation to teach with charisma, use a pedagogy with total self-confidence, and influence children in the appropriate way to take an active part in the instructional process.

It intends to allow students to feel that they have part of the control of their acquisition processes in the face of new knowledge that is an essential part of the objective to achieve within the curricular system. However, they motivate their classmates to carry out an activity consciously and funnily. Thus, a charismatic person can achieve significant changes, as Guzmán Aranda (2019) mentioned, indicating a positive contribution to the effective execution of teaching activities, even when classes are virtual. Then, students can understand that theater is a teaching strategy for their use of the English language. However, charism is an important key that connects teachers and students for transmitting knowledge in a friendly route.

The charismatic teacher can achieve significant changes in education, generates spaces of trust in the student, and is shown as a leader or guide during the process without leaving aside the authority that must prevail in the different educational encounters, according to Guzmán Aranda (2019). Confidence in our students offers the possibility of working harmoniously. In addition to strengthening their development, it makes students participate in the different activities without any fear of making mistakes when applying the different teaching strategies.

### **The art of educating the heart and the mind**

Education is the art developed according to the different realities surrounding it. To Picardo (2019), having the ability to educate the heart implies educating with paternal love, being more parents than teachers; where the others stop, we begin. Parental surveillance solidifies cognitive skills, enlivens the school environment, and creates a special bond

in the student-teacher relationship. Working with mind and heart implies getting to know the local youth, adolescents, and children; knowing their potential and strengthening their self-esteem, generating that the learning is effective.

Educating human beings is not easy, especially when learners have personal and cognitive difficulties (García Centeno & Flores Fajardo, 2016). Understanding that the pupils receive the knowledge during the class meetings, using communication channels for transmitting knowledge suffers interferences that can be from the same environment or at the same time emotional, which produces deconcentrating and loss of the channel that transmits a message. These factors result in a mistake in terms of the objective that teachers have for each class, and learners' achievement does not develop enough of the skills expected. It only indicates that teachers prioritize educating minds and not learners' interests.

The student goes through all kinds of situations with their different mistakes, personal and family, and even their limitations. They are in the process of forming and stabilizing their emotional maturity. It is essential to understand that we must know how to deal with these inconveniences. When people have a lucid look at them, rescuing their potentialities, and at the same time understand that they are in a personal learning process, they can achieve an effective result from all angles. Being clear that students need our permanent parental tutoring creates a special assertive bond for their training.

The education process will be successful to the extent that we positively impact the students. Students go through a complex teaching-learning process. Since their training from all angles and the information they continuously process is received from different sources in their environment, which leads a teacher to continually guide them in selecting from said information that is assertive, as corroborated by Cerda et al. (2018). Teachers are the experts in directing that learning without forgetting that learners are the educational objectives.

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The empathy that we manage to develop during our classes forms collaborative learning, in which the contribution and participation of the group are required, generating enriching spaces within our classrooms. Getting students to get the practical knowledge that allows them to develop promptly within society may be possible when they feel that they are not judged and rather understand that each contribution they make is significant. It contributes positively to the students' minds, raising awareness of learning based on their mistakes during the teaching process. The mistakes they may make throughout their school period offer possibilities to strengthen the knowledge acquired.

Having the power to educate based on errors, as mentioned by García Arias (2020), contributes to self-esteem, security, and spontaneity of knowledge. When the student recognizes his mistake and corrects himself, he opens his mind to a world of knowledge that is productive and assertive towards himself and others.

### **Neuroscience in education**

Neuroscience is discovering and studying how the brain works to acquire student learning (Basurto Vélez, & Zambrano Mendoza, 2020). This study is closely linked as a link between knowledge of brain functioning and education to improve educational practices hand in hand with teaching work and their awareness of the processes involved in learning.

The valuable contribution of neuroscience within the classroom improves practices within class meetings, transforming the teacher's paradigm and strengthening learning more than teaching. What is new and relevant facilitates motivation and the acquisition of knowledge.

Most people's working memory locates in the lobes of the brain. Although minor wrinkles are unique to each brain, according to a study by Besserra-Lagos et al. (2018), many of them are common to all brains. These folds form a set of four lobes that tend to specialize in different functions (Sousa, 2014). At the front of the brain are the frontal lobes,

which are responsible for executive control regarding planning and thinking; it also contains the area of self-will regulating the excesses of the emotional system. Concentration occurs in this area (Geday & Gjedde, 2009), and the frontal lobe matures slowly. It is a critical reason adolescents are more likely to indulge in their emotions, activating the learning stimulus when they feel the connection with their teacher.

### **Mirror Neurons in the Teaching Process**

“The areas of the brain process both the production and the perception of movement...” Mendoza (2020). Teacher attitudes toward pedagogical development influence the student, who in turn receives the information and processes it in his way to be able to use it during the class; the teacher must have a good predisposition to transmit his knowledge to the students.

It is just like a child who is just learning to babble. Since the brain is genetically predisposed, students acquiring a second language begin to imitate sounds and pronunciations, and the language areas become active, allowing knowledge to be adequate. Regarding EFL teaching, the repetition of words and the development of the production of sounds in a conscious way becomes a contribution significant to communication and memory. The learner involves in the assertive application of the language.

### **Use of funny teaching strategies intimes of pandemic for covid19**

The moment we decided to apply theater as a teaching strategy to students was crucial because the Covid 19 pandemic hit the economic system; Many families were affected by the confinement. However, education did not stop; there were significant changes in the educational system (Vergara & Gómez, 2021). On the other hand, families with a complex economic reality due to belonging to the informal trade led the researcher team to make decisions that would not affect school permanence and thus reduce dropouts. Learners would not maintain a virtual connection with their teachers but instead, receive their homework weekly and submit it to the tutor (Zambrano & Vera, 2020).



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Dealing with these inconveniences knowing the different realities that our young people were going through, it was almost impossible to motivate them to maintain permanent connectivity towards the realization of said project. However, we took the initiative to extend the general invitation to the high school group to be part of an English language learning program and develop their communication skills. We also made it clear that the primary requirement would be that they should maintain connectivity for eight successive days for the respective reviews and teacher tutoring. They understood that the acceptance was uncertain and, above all, the commitment of the students to carry out the activity. We started with a minority group. As expected, some students wanted to enter. However, it was impossible due to the economic situation since they had to invest money in daily internet recharges to be able to enter virtual meetings. In some cases, they felt an emotional commitment and gratitude towards the teacher who made the invitation. In other cases, they hoped that they would be rewarded with an extra-score in the subject to avoid losing the year students.

### **Indications within cognitive activities**

When the student feels he is the author of an essential change in the generations, he indirectly commits himself to do his best, as stated by Buzón De La Hoz (2021).

In this project, it was made clear that there would be no reward for the qualifications of the study program offered by the academic unit. Instead, the project's true intention was to improve students' oral expression through the use of theater as a learning strategy.

The instructions show respect for the members and commitment to start and finish a process. In this way, the teacher takes advantage of the individual motivations of the students and leads them to understand the use of cognitive activities, directing them to stimulation that provides opportunities for teamwork. They are involved in a genuinely effective change in the following generations with their participation.

As teachers, we intend to raise in our students that learning English as a second language improves the opportunities they could have with their mastery, as stated by Guzman Quiroga & Ojeda Domínguez (2021). In the educational field, they are very assertive, so we decided to explain our professional intention about learning the language, encouraging them to learn it during an immersive experience and, above all, that they would be the protagonists of an important project in the educational field.

### **Role of the student in the teaching process**

They felt concerned, knowing they had to convince their families to generate a financial budget for Internet recharges to participate in the virtual meetings. In addition, they had to develop their creativity in terms of costumes and elements that they would need for the different characterizations of the characters of the assigned play by recycling material that they had at home.

Students living in rural areas had to walk several kilometers to get a signal on their mobile devices and stay within the program. On the other hand, students whose parents had to go out to work in informal commerce had to leave their younger siblings in charge of housework and schoolwork and be present at each tutorial. Another case was adolescents who spent alone without control of their parents, being able to waste their time with the evil influences of gangs in the neighborhoods. They felt pleased to have been taken into account to make a necessary change and wanted to be part of this project.

The realities were many, but their permanent motivation was to be part of something transcendent. The teacher looked lucid at them and received a vote of confidence.

The students made an effort to belong to this group of changes and convey that learning the English language can be fun. They appreciated being part of an essential change in education, and they had to

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understand that they were protagonists of the learning process. They are the actual social change. The teacher must start by empowering them, offering that vote of confidence they need to appreciate that their contribution is significant within society, as mentioned by Mendoza et al. (2021).

### **Role of the teacher in the teaching process**

Through this experience, the teacher becomes a guide, a friend, someone who understands the different problems that may arise, but at the same time, that commitment prevails over education. The teacher must generate an environment of trust where the student feels comfortable communicating in any situation, remembering that people deal with different realities daily. Silva Quiroz & Maturana Castillo (2017).

Regarding the activities executed during the meetings, it is crucial to clarify that mistakes are fundamental when learning new things. The learner must be productive and even be able to detect the solution to said error. In this way, the atmosphere becomes pleasant, and the classmates can see the mistakes and make immediate corrections under a framework of respect. The other group members feel an essential and effective appreciation of teaching.

Understanding that teacher vocation leads to having more humanity among the peers entails naturalness and spontaneity in interaction, leading to enjoying the work; knowing the students' emotions and their different realities offer the opportunity to improve cognitive skills. When the student knows that facet of the teacher, his laughter, and the experiences generated within this stage, we make the objective easier to achieve, as stated by Silva Quiroz & Maturana Castillo (2017).

### **The key is collaborative work**

Once the work teams were formed, and after the instruction's explanations, the journey of equating the groups in which each member had to contribute significantly to achieve the common objectives began. Stu-

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dents integrated groups according to their potential. They had a virtual meeting space in which the theater read by each of the members of the assigned work was applied, and they had the opportunity to choose the character with whom they could develop their potential. This condition helped them feel confident and comfortable interpreting what they had to do.

Between laughter and spontaneity, the atmosphere was taking a pleasant turn. The students noticed that they had total freedom to make suggestions about each player's character and that of their classmates, which slightly allowed the integration to be effective. There was respect for the opinion of others, and the other team members valued their contributions.

Regarding the characterization of the characters, the students were allowed to display their creativity. The personal contribution of each one managed to make the members of the story unforgettable and essential to the team. Their presence was significant for the development of the play.

The theater strategy and activities, such as reading in a group, allowed students to feel comfortable during the interpretation of characters. Thus, the students had the opportunity to choose the character with whom they felt comfortable in the interpretation of what they had to do. Developing the theater strategy read in a group way allows students to feel comfortable during the interpretation of characters. They contribute with personality traits in creating the different scenes and feel free to suggest changes in their character interpretations in others; this type of input forges a timely connection between team members, as corroborated by Aguirre Sotomayor (2017).

During the listening practice, researchers managed to work on the listening skill and the teacher's guide with prompt corrections. In addition, they developed reading skills, pronunciation, and expressiveness in

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each scene. It managed to find the true intention of the theater strategy, which is effectively cognitive development in all its stages (Valdiviezo López, 2016). It contributes to personality traits in creating the different scenes. Feel free to suggest changes in the interpretations of both their characters and those of others; this type of input forges a timely connection between team members, as corroborated by Aguirre Sotomayor (2017).

During the moment of listening to the team members' intervention, the teacher worked on the listening skill and guided due corrections promptly to improve the cognitive development in all stages (Valdiviezo López, 2016).

### **Conclusions**

It concludes that the use of theater as a teaching strategy encourages learners to indirectly display their commitment through self-learning spaces since individual evolution minimizes delays and strengthens teamwork during rehearsals. Learners feel good when they achieve their goals. In addition, the sense of responsibility makes learners understand the importance of knowing their lines as part of a work of art. Acting the scenes became a habit, a team commitment.

Indeed, theater as a strategy contributes to developing cognitive skills in English as a Foreign Language. During this process, the students in the rehearsals see the need to make recordings that will later help them continue reviewing the lines in their free moments. At the same time, they continue to strengthen listening skills accompanied by repetitions that the learner can apply until they feel sure of expressing the content and improving their pronunciation and vocabulary.

Self-learning allows the timely correction of pronunciations, application of vocabulary, ease of communicative expressions, broadening active listening and collaborative work, achieving a complete concept of the new learning, and increasing interest in the acquisition and assertive application of the language.

In this way, the motivation to master the content continues to be the main driver for the student, resulting in an effective personal contribution within the group, raising self-esteem, security, and confidence in each of them. In addition, with this individual contribution, they invite the rest of the team members to feel capable and confident of receiving learning significantly, as corroborated by Grajales-Acevedo & Posada-Silva (2020).

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**1ª EDICIÓN**

*Reading Comprehension and Academic Writing:*  
**RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

## **CHAPTER X**

STIMULATION OF STUDENTS WITH  
ASPERGER'S SYNDROME FOR IMPROVING  
READING AND WRITING SKILLS IN THE  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE:  
DRAWING AND PAINTING

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### **Stimulation of students with Asperger's Syndrome for improving reading and writing skills in the English language: Drawing and Painting**

### **Estimulación de estudiantes con síndrome de Asperger para mejorar las destrezas de lectura y escritura en idioma inglés: dibujo y pintura**

#### **Abstract**

Encouraging the reading and writing of the English language is challenging for teachers, especially when working with students who have special educational needs. This work aims to improve reading and writing practices in English as a foreign language in the care for students with Asperger-syndrome. This case study was carried out with a 15-year-old student, diagnosed with Asperger's, who lives in Manta, Ecuador. The research team developed an educational intervention that consists of the use of artistic drawings and paintings as resources to stimulate reading and writing. The results show favorable changes in the attitude towards reading and writing during language practices, which improves their school performance and strengthens their communication skills in the use of a foreign language. It is concluded that the use of artistic techniques of drawing and painting contributes to the improvement of the attention and collaboration of the student. The use of the arts can contribute to the improvement of the attention of students with special educational needs in the school context.

**Keywords:** Asperger, arts, writing, educational inclusion, English, foreign language, reading.

#### **Resumen**

La estimulación de la lectura y escritura del idioma inglés es un reto para los docentes, especialmente cuando se trabaja con estudiantes que tienen necesidades educativas especiales. Este trabajo tiene como objetivo mejorar las prácticas de lectura y escritura en idioma in-

glés como lengua extranjera en la atención a estudiantes con síndrome de Asperger. Este estudio de caso se llevó a cabo con un estudiante de 15 años, diagnosticado con el síndrome de Asperger, y que habita en la ciudad de Manta, Ecuador. El equipo investigador elaboró una intervención educativa que consiste en el uso de dibujo artístico y la pintura como recursos para la estimulación a la lectura y escritura. Los resultados muestran cambios favorables en la actitud hacia la lectura y escritura durante las practicas idiomáticas, lo que mejora su rendimiento escolar y fortalece sus destrezas comunicativas en uso de una lengua extranjera. Se concluye que el uso de técnicas artísticas del dibujo y la pintura aportan al mejoramiento de la atención y colaboración del estudiante. El uso de las artes puede aportar al mejoramiento de la atención de los estudiantes con necesidades educativas especiales en el contexto escolar.

**Palabras clave:** Asperger, arte, escritura, inclusión educativa, Inglés, lenguaje extranjero, lectura.

### **Introduction**

The work with students diagnosed with Asperger's arose due to the lack of didactic strategies focused on their motivation for learning. However, this does not prevent teachers from meeting these students in their classroom and this is a problem to be solved through educational research.

According to Barnhil (2016), Asperger syndrome can be understood as a developmental disability associated with people's verbal and non-verbal communication abilities. Such condition negatively influences social relationships by restrictive and repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests, and activities. This condition influences the students' relationships with their colleagues and instructors.

Concerning inclusive education and the work with students with special needs, the Ministry of Education states:

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Inclusive Education must be conceived as a process that allows addressing and responding to the diversity of the needs of all students through greater participation in learning and reducing exclusion from the educational system. This implies changes and modifications of content, approaches, structures, and strategies based on a common vision and the conviction that it is the responsibility of the Educational System to educate all children and adolescents (p. 25).

Ecuador reports relevant advances in inclusive education, especially on the legal framework. However, the educational practice and inclusive culture require improvement (Villafuerte et al., 2017). This study addresses possible didactic strategies that can help students with Asperger to have a better learning experience. As shown by Gracia Mata & Jiménez Olivenza (2017) when proposed the use of recreational-sports activities and social integration to create a substantial improvement in the academic performance of these students. In the same way, Fernández Quijanés (2016) proposes activities using the principles of art therapy. It is possible to enhance the skills of the participants and improve their quality of life, personal, educational, social, cognitive, and emotional development.

The research questions guiding this study are the following:

- Is art useful for teaching English as a foreign language?
- Do parents agree with these techniques?
- Is the child interested in learning this way?

This work aims to improve reading and writing practices in English as a foreign language in the care for students with Asperger-syndrome.

### **Literature review**

#### **Asperger's Syndrome**

Asperger's Syndrome is a pervasive developmental disorder, described by Hans Asperger in 1944, which is characterized by marked social disturbance, communication difficulties, a deficit in playing ability, and



a range of repetitive behaviour and interests, without significant delay in learning (Naranjo-Florez, 2019)

During the Second World War, this doctor worked with children who performed well in many areas but poorly in others. Some were good in mathematics, natural sciences and thus they showed great intellectual ability, it was difficult for them to relate to their peers having control of their motor skills. They also lacked verbal ability.

These results are like those reported by Leo Kanner. He treated different boys and girls who presented similar characteristics with differences in certain areas. Some of them spoke normally while others barely pronounced a word and some of them did not pay attention when they were spoken to. Although these were more linked to the autistic syndrome. Therefore, additional studies were carried out, it was finally possible to separate the concepts and diagnoses of an autistic person and a person suffering from Asperger's syndrome, without forgetting that one is derived from the other (Cererols, 2016).

It should be mentioned that this syndrome has been defined multiple times by different authors, according to Barnhil (2016). Asperger's syndrome is a developmental disability, which is defined by disorders in social relationships, verbal, and non-verbal communication, and by restrictive and repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests, and activities. In some cases, there may also be rituals and routines.

Over the past two decades, there has been a large number of recognized characters who have suffered from this syndrome, among them we can find from scientists such as Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein, Charles Darwin to actors such as Elon Musk, Anthony Hopkins, Tim Burton and Greta Thunberg.

Regarding their characteristics, it is possible to find countless information and individuals who have this syndrome and suffer different effects

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from one case to another. Individuals have different types of personalities according to experiences they have had throughout their lives, and they do not all have the same traits or develop the same skills despite being within the same spectrum.

Starting with their way of relating, one of the characteristics that stand out the most is that these children do not have good social skills. It is difficult for them to start friendships, not take things so personally or differentiate between a comment and a joke. In these cases, the individual is often upset. According to Flores (2019), they have difficulties in keeping secrets, understanding metaphors, ironies, and humor, they do not establish adequate eye contact, they want to guide the conversation, but they have a one-sided conversation, with pedantic language, about a defined and routine topic.

This study aims to explore teaching alternatives for those students who suffer from this syndrome and are not correctly integrated into the educational environment due to a lack of information from teachers, parents, and instructors.

In 2018, Albert and Velez pointed-out that:

These people tend to say what they think even though it is not socially correct because they are extremely sincere, have difficulty interpreting the state of mind or intentions of classmates, teachers, family members, and people around them. They hardly ever talk about their own or other people's feelings, thoughts, or intentions. A boy with AS has feelings and can be affectionate, but the way how he expresses or interprets those emotions is different, has little or no ability to anticipate events. Generally, they tend to accumulate information in an exaggerated way on specific topics, in which they manage to be experts but limit their curiosity about other aspects. They present an extraordinary mechanical and photographic memory that allows them to accumulate information even without understanding its meaning (p. 3).

During their first years of life, they present hyperactivity and when they reach adolescence some tend to develop anxiety, depression, and obsessive-compulsive disorders that are usually linked to the obsessive behaviors that these individuals commonly have. Physically, these students are a bit slow, their hands are weak, and high motor activities are difficult for them. It is hard for them to follow rhythms; some tend to be underweighted and even suffer macrocephaly.

It must be considered that further analysis showed that the characteristics also vary according to the degree of disability that everyone has since not all have the same percentage of Asperger's Syndrome.

**Table 1.** Weaknesses and strengths of students with Asperger syndrome.

Strengths	Weaknesses
They are sincere and objective. They are noble, faithful, and loyal. They have a good memory. They tend to have great technical vocabulary. They are experts in what they like.	They have trouble understanding rules of social interaction. They do not usually share emotions or concerns. They find it difficult to start conversations. They have unusual worries that sometimes haunt them.

**Source:** Recovered from Salu Spot (Lopez Fresco, 2015).

These findings have significant implications for the understanding of how people with Asperger's act, at present. It is possible to know more about Asperger Syndrome since relevant personnel worldwide have publicly exposed that they suffer from it, such as Elon Musk (founder of SpaceX, Tesla Motors, among other companies) and Greta Thunberg (environmental activist), when people who have this type of influence give their testimonies; this causes the population to learn what this syndrome is about and create awareness.



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In general, people who suffer from this syndrome attend normal educational centres where teachers are not fully trained to handle this type of case, since there are not many specialized centers for children with Asperger's, even fewer in Ecuador. For this reason, it is their parents or relatives who oversee the true development of their children, as it is this shows that parents also attend the stimulation sessions and provide help at the time of doing homework, apart from offering guidance in other activities.

The theory of neurodiversity has also emerged (a term attributed to the sociologist Judy Singer), which affirms that autism is a normal variation of the human genome or the connectivity of the white matter of the brain. Groups of individuals within the spectrum, particularly within the Aspie community, took advantage of the popularity of the neurodiversity movement to challenge conventional thinking about whether autism needs to be cured. Many individuals with high-functioning autism, like Temple Grandin, do not regret having autism and consider having the condition to be a benefit, not a detriment. This has led to endless philosophizing about whether people should try to “cure” autism or focus our efforts on acceptance and the best accommodations for the physical needs of these individuals (Casanova, 2013, p. 25).

According to McCrimmon (2018, p. 46):

Asperger's syndrome has become socially popular, with characters in movies such as *The Accountant* and television shows such as *Community* being portrayed as either having the condition or displaying traits commonly associated with it. An interesting social phenomenon also began to occur in the early 2010s, in which those with Asperger's began to personally identify with their clinical label — referring to themselves as “Aspies” or other similar terms that represent their unique attributes and characteristics. Indeed, it is this personal identification that has led to some of the most personal or emotional responses to the changes in diagnostic terminology, with Aspies often rejecting the term ASD.

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This is how today the term “Asperger” has disappeared from clinical use, however other people continue to use it to refer to certain types of individuals. It is interesting to see how little by little, society has been informed about this type of condition and how it has integrated it not only into the lives of those who know or live with someone who suffers from this spectrum but making it known to others, as well through news, television and even movies.

**Inclusive education**

The research has also shown that a student who presents traits or characteristics that position him within this spectrum of autism is not capable of thinking the same as the rest of his peers, therefore everything that is decided to teach must be presented to him in a logical and very concrete way.

Velazques, Quiceno, & Tamayo (2016, p.29) argue:

Within this framework, the fact that teachers can be transforming agents of IE in the classroom takes greater force, since they can achieve wonderful results with the provision and organization of space for interaction in the classroom, the provision of a motivational climate for learning, the use of different didactic materials and favourable didactic strategies for the entire student population, and a methodological and flexible diversification with which it is possible to attend the generality of the group, but at the same time stop in the particularity of each student.

The findings of this study suggest that the responsibility also falls on us to be able to treat students with these conditions and many others that people can find throughout educational teaching. Inclusive education is a global change in the educational system, which affects all students with a double objective: to achieve the success of all, without exceptions, in school; and fight against any cause or reason for exclusion, in any of its variants of segregation and/or discrimination (Muntaner et al., 2016).

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According to Zamora (2016), teachers must ensure that students do not lose motivation when they are evaluated because in many cases, learning a language can be stressful. The goal is that they can improve their English skills even if they do not reach the required level, that is, priority will be given to the way the students advance, not to their final grade. It can thus be suggested that feedback should be provided appropriately to maintain a pleasant class environment. Zamora highlights that this will help pupils feel motivated and relaxed, promote good relations between students and teachers, and contribute to a good flow of information when questions or comments arise.

To include or stimulate these students to learn, teachers need to apply different strategies for the content, the tasks and the instructions given in class. Martos (2019) exposes certain didactic proposals used to teach English to students that are within this autism spectrum disorder:

1. Create an optimal learning environment. The arrangement of a place is how the spaces, furniture, and materials are set.
2. Come up with visual strategies. All visual materials are components of great support for students with autism for learning, communicating, regulating their behavior, and expanding their understanding.
3. Have a bank of activities. The visual agenda enables them to be well prepared to develop the planned activities.
4. Explain the instructions and expectations from the class at the beginning of the lesson. What is new or different for them tends to cause anxiety. Anticipating is essential so that the novelty or changes do not impress them.
5. Give instructions appropriately. Usually, they do not follow directions and remain with their activity as if they did not hear.
6. Demand the same standards of behavior. Autism is no justification for forgetting to comply with regulations. Teachers must enforce the rules, but without showing anger, rage or discomfort.
7. Praise and recognize achievements. They need many strategies that help them to broaden their interests and understand the reactions of other people to learn how to behave appropriately.

Finally, González-Alba, Cortés-González, & Mañas-Olmo (2019, p. 343) postulate two elements from an educational perspective to work on them:

On the one hand, it is necessary to rethink how to act according to some diagnostic features of AS that do not focus exclusively on the curricular content, but rather on exploring new didactic forms and strategies that can lead to the diversity of the classroom without having to isolate or continually exclude students. In other words, the didactic application itself and the logic of strategic procedures must be inclusive and designed from diversity, which, in turn, contains and contemplates specific processes for the SA, in this case.

On the other hand, to achieve this end and following what was previously stated throughout this article, coordinated work between educational agents and diagnostic agents is essential for the optimal development of school plans; In many cases, it leads us to understand that teacher training or retraining is an essential tool in this regard.

**Arts as a pedagogic resource for teaching reading and writing in the English language**

The set of all these metalinguistic capacities that are developed in each school grade favors the learning processes of other educational disciplines, prepares the student to conceptualize the two linguistic systems, and contributes to the development of the mother tongue. The development of symbolic, abstract, and logical skills is more noticeable in bilingual children than in those who speak only one language (Rueda & Wilburn, 2014).

For many years it has been thought that it was the motor, cognitive, communicative, and affective sensory development, along with balanced nutrition and health, are the fundamental factors that should guide the education of young children. It was certainly true, and it still is, but it did not respond to a complete vision of children's evolution. In recent times,

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neuroscientific, evolutionary, and pedagogical research has highlighted that creativity and artistic education, through music, painting, theatre, song, or dance, must be part of the fundamental axes of a good educational project (Marchesi, 2014, p. 7).

Each of the people has the right to an education in and through the arts, which is within the benefits that the state can provide, thus strengthening their interest and link with culture but the reality is that in many countries, this is an abandoned field. Education through art does not play a leading role throughout the teaching and learning process and is often not even taken seriously by both teachers and students (Cartagena, 2015).

If teachers begin to apply artistic techniques in their classes, it will not only make students interested in learning, but it will also allow them to improve their way of communicating and relating to others, their self-esteem and sense of belonging will increase, and they will be able to have more criteria and values. Demonstrating what they learn through art not only allows them to show their way of capturing what is being taught but also helps them to express their emotions, that is, it will not only help them to grow cognitively but also personally.

According to Mayoral (2016, p. 12):

In recent years, the teaching of English has become increasingly important in the field of educational research and applied linguistics, in addition to other disciplines such as educational psychology focused on emotional intelligence. The most recent contributions come from the neurosciences, where the development of neural connections through language learning is explored. These new ways of looking at language learning have given the subject a multidisciplinary character.

If instructors guide this around students with Asperger's they will find countless research that supports how art is one of the best alterna-

tives to help them express what they think, develop their personality and even control behaviors that can affect themselves. Helping them improve their way of communicating with others, according to Sansalosi (2016, p. 189):

Adolescents with Asperger's syndrome tend to lack the need for relationships, although not all. However, art therapy can serve as a path to have a heightened sense of self-awareness. I think, therefore I exist, as Socrates would say. Being able to experiment with the self is a developmental process. It can be very difficult for some children and is particularly doable or perhaps easy for others.

In this way, Estevez y Rojas (2017) argue that artistic practice and enjoyment provide conditions that activate the cognitive, affective, and behavioral spheres of the human being from the earliest ages. Perception, memory, emotions, and motivations are essential processes in the development of girls and boys, to which the artistic experience contributes powerfully, enabling lasting and valuable impressions in the formation of their personalities. Loyola (2019) tells us that developing students' oral communication in the English language is one of the main focuses of the teacher, as it gives the speaker a big advantage such as allowing the speechmaker to reflect clear thinking at the time of transmitting his message. An effective English speaker gets the audience's attention and keeps it until he finishes his message.

Promoting education through artistic expressions will help make this process more natural for students. Thereby, teachers will be able to make use of musical instruments, dance, make sculptures, act, take photographs or draw to teach the foreign language. In some cases, the use of speaking through dialogues or role-plays.

During foreign language classes, the student is in constant interaction with his peers through dialogues and monologues prepared based on a theatrical performance, planned by the teacher. The student who lear-

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ns to communicate in a foreign language, when reading or listening to dialogues or monologues extracted from literature, learns to develop Reader-Text Interaction. He gets involved, shares the fantasy game with the author, and enjoys learning the language. knows that he is listening to or reading a made-up story, but they agree to believe it as if it were not fiction because the literary text can provoke convincing emotions and sensations (Scott et al., 2019, p. 124).

To Corozo (2020) arts reveal how there are already places specifically dedicated to teaching English through art, such as Alternative Theater of the Colegio Normal Superior María Montessori, which objective is to allow students to learn English through theatre while practicing pronunciation with scripts and memorizing grammatical structures. Baudolin Corporation further aims to foreign languages through theatrical games, music, plastic arts, and literature seeing its art as a tool that provides a more effective space when learning the language.

These are some of the examples and guidelines of how art has been implemented in education and how these strategies help and facilitate students with Asperger's syndrome to better integrate it into classes, although this is still an issue for many people.

Among the previous studies of this research Alvarez (2018), demonstrates how art (photography, drawing, mimicry) gives students the possibility to let themselves be carried through the expression of their feelings and ideas, which results in their inclusion in the classroom. The work of Ortiz (2018) adds that children with Asperger's syndrome don't have any disturbance or cognitive alteration which may place them in a learning slowdown stage; however, they might have some difficulties if the psychosocial environment is not considered. Finally, Escobar (2020) together with the inclusive Choir Cantatutti explains to us how personal relationships are improved by stimulating learning with new techniques, which in turn promotes the concentration and interest of the students.

## **Methodology**

This work supports the postmodern paradigm which states that the mixed methodological approach can be applied to students with Asperger's syndrome. The instruments used in this study are life history, interviews, and surveys.

## **Presentation of the case study**

To protect the student's identity, the research team decided to name him "Carlos". This is a 15-year-old student (this study has been carried out since he was 14 years old), who was detected with Asperger's syndrome when he was six and was studying at the Gabriela Mistral educational institution. The person who made the diagnosis was a private specialist known to his parents. She recommended that they continue helping him in the way they were already doing it (taking him to speech therapy, helping him control himself when he had a stress crisis) Through the information that Carlos's mother provided, it can be inferred that he had certain inconveniences during his early years in his educational environment due to his hypersensitivity, but he always had support from his classmates. Upon entering school, he had difficulties socializing with his new classmates and starting friendships, as he does not always function perfectly in this area. However, he has managed to establish friendships as he is a kind and caring boy. His teachers are aware of his condition and have guidelines on how to help him, despite that the parents ask that they treat him like a normal student and demand the same way as the rest. There have been occasions where Carlos feels that he will not be able to continue with his studies, but his mother is always there to support him.

## **Procedure:**

Stage 1: Selection of the participant. This student was contacted through a staff member from the educational institution Olga Meza Santana. The pupil currently lives in Manta with his parents and is studying the tenth year of basic education. His mother was invited to participate in this study. She has signed the consent letter and agreed to collaborate.



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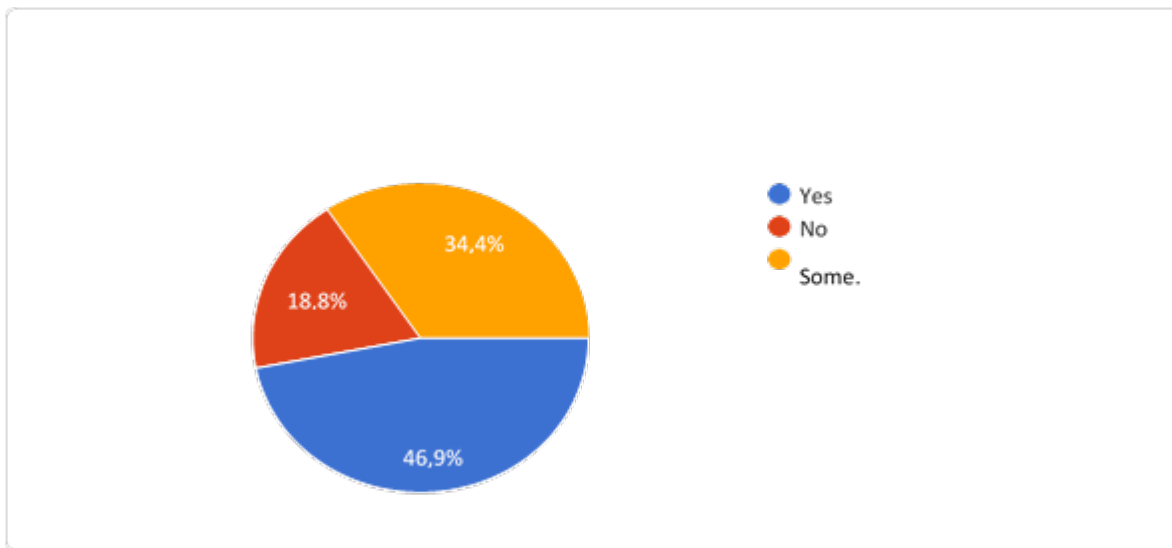
Stage 2: Instruments. Design and Evaluation. An interview with Carlos's mother was conducted to know her opinion about implementing artistic strategies for the teaching of her son. A life story was also made to know more information about the student, his relationship with his family, classmates, teachers and finally a survey to obtain data on how much teachers know about Asperger's syndrome, how their classes are adequate to address one of these cases and more aspects within the classroom.

Stage 3: Execution. This research process has been run on a semi-face-to-face basis since 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic. Some instruments were applied virtually, while meetings were held face-to-face. Stage 4. Final analysis of information collected during the educational intervention.

### Results

Results are exposed following the order of the research questions presented in the introduction section of this document.

**In response to question 1:** Are EFL instructors prepared to teach English as a foreign language to students with Asperger syndrome? The data obtained using a survey administered to EFL instructors concerning their knowledge and competencies to work with students with Asperger syndrome are presented as follows.



**Graphic 1.** Instructors' knowledge about Asperger syndrome.  
**Source:** The educational project.

The research team addressed issues regarding the inconveniences that arise when developing activities for the integration of children. The teachers stated that some of the students do not collaborate with discipline or are sometimes aggressive. In the same way, they indicated that on many occasions parents do not accept that their child has a problem, which makes it difficult to address this situation. These types of classes require a lot of time and patience, but generally, classrooms have many students, and it is difficult to dedicate oneself specifically to one of them.

**In response to question 2:** What are the parents' perceptions about how instructors work with students with Asperger syndrome. The evidence collected using an interview is presented in table 2.

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**Table 2.** Parents' perceptions about instructors' work with students with Asperger syndrome.

Categories	Evidence
Do you consider that the current educational system satisfies the cognitive needs of your child?	<i>"Yes, at school yes. In addition, they adapt to the needs that he has, help him to cope with his fellow students in his environment since he has a cognitive condition"</i>
Do you think the chores you send your child encourage them to work creatively?	<i>"Sometimes, because they send him tasks that he has to design to be creative in each of his subjects. When creating a music video, for example."</i>
Do you think your child is creative? Do you motivate him at home to explore and expand his imagination?	<i>"Of course, he is, I motivate him. We currently have the internet as a tool, and it helps him prepare and stay informed. Reading, investigation, among others, is ingrained in him."</i>
What do you think about teachers implementing new forms of teaching? Do you prefer traditional teaching?	<i>"No, I prefer the current one. Since pedagogy is different, today they motivate the students more. It is something extraordinary, it seems very good to me that the teachers are trained so to better reach a student."</i>
Do you believe that implementing artistic learning options could cause a distraction?	<i>"No, not to me. For me, it is very good that this is implemented because it is good that they learn and develop their artistic side, it helps them develop more skills and while the parents are attentive in their study process, I do not think that distraction would occur."</i>

**Source:** interview Oct/2021.

**Comments.** -The mother of the family has a son with Asperger's syndrome, for this reason in one of the answers she argues that she is satisfied with the education they give her because on certain occasions they must adapt it to their needs like when certain parts of the lesson are repeated or by providing multiple examples of a specific matter.

**In response to question 3:** How can artistic drawing and painting be used to stimulate students with Asperger Syndrome in Reading and writing practices? See table 3.

**Table 3.** Academic intervention plan.

Activities carried out / Materials required	Results and observations
<p>Date: 12/4/2020 <i>Approach and diagnosis.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The first approach was made with the mother of the student who was chosen for the investigation.</li> <li>- Notebook and pen.</li> </ul> <p>-First meeting with the student to determine his level of English, retention, and other aspects in terms of their academic development.</p>	<p>Through this approach, it was possible to know how the student should be treated for subsequent classes. With the mother's testimony, it was possible to have a previous criterion. This is what she expressed:</p> <p>Before the school year began, I talked to the teachers about the things they don't understand, their way of being, sometimes they get stressed or worried a lot when they don't understand.</p> <p>There are complicated things, but I have told the school to be patient and repeat, not by making things too easier for him but to guide him, being clear and letting him try.</p> <p>Then I had a short meeting with the student, I introduced myself and told him what we were going to do. I tried to make him feel confident so that he would not feel tense. I also told him that nothing he would do would be graded or have consequence.</p> <p>I began by instructing him to write down the objects that he saw in the room where we were (see annexes). Later I asked him to write the animals, colors, and other objects in English. I could see that he was better with colors than with the rest of the categories and that he preferred writing short words.</p> <p>Despite being surrounded by numerous objects, most of them did not catch his attention. After giving him clear instructions, he did not understand them well. Perhaps because he was a bit distracted by one of his pets passing through the room at the time, or perhaps because a deeper explanation was necessary. He certainly needs to expand his vocabulary but at the same time, he must improve his attention.</p>

### **Discussion**

Concerning the data collected by Zamora (2016), who states that through the use of art in classes, it is possible to have a more relaxed environment to work with the student. It can be argued that this study manages to corroborate this because when it came to freer activities, the student did not feel tense or stressed and could draw calmly, thus he could associate the vocabulary to its meaning without worrying about not remembering words.-

On the other hand, Ortiz (2018) indicates that students with Asperger's do not have any cognitive difficulties that place them in a lower position to learn, however it is considered that this may vary according to the cases. In the case of Carlos, it was necessary to repeat certain words depending on the activities. His level of English could be more advanced, but it is possible to attribute this to the fact that this subject is not of his interest to. Aspies are people who know a subject perfectly if they are passionate about something in concrete.

Escobar (2020) argues that by implementing strategies related to art in the classroom, it will be possible for the student to also improve his social relationship with his classmates, nevertheless, this could not be verified due to the Covid19 health emergency. This study was carried out in a blended manner only between Carlos, his representative, and the researcher.

According to the survey carried out on a group of teachers, the researcher was able to know that almost half of them are aware of what Asperger's syndrome is even when they would not be prepared to treat one of these cases within their classroom. Some of them do not believe they are qualified to confront these problems and it is precisely there where the importance of this research stands out. The constant innovation of language education requires applying all the necessary techniques to better capture the attention of students and change the perception that some have about being capable or not. Each student is responsible for

bringing out their skills and imagination, but this is where teachers play an elementary role in helping their apprentices, encouraging them to take direct action on the knowledge acquired. Along with this, the children will be able to notice their progress and develop discipline.

As a result of the classes given, it was possible to realize that the techniques that are in mind are favorable the teaching and learning process, anyhow, it is not an easy task. The subject selected for the research does not have the English level required for the grade he is studying; therefore, it was difficult to proceed with what was established and I had to modify the topics in the future to teach classes with basic English topics. The child showed interest in certain artistic expressions and was also attentive during the videos that spoke about the life of a certain artist. In other words, this did get his attention.

This research contributes to the fourth objective of sustainable development: ***guarantee an inclusive and equitable quality education***, and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, since our study revolves around finding new alternatives to teach English classes to a student with another type of educational needs.

Thus, throughout this project, it can be observed how it also contributes to various educational standards which involve inclusiveness and equity for students, which from my point of view are essential for psychosocial development and quality education that all boys and girls deserve regardless of their economic or religious position. It has been feasible to determine that art is a very creative way of teaching English and associating children with aspects that previously may not have been considered for their proper cognitive development. But instructors have to keep in mind that convincing school authorities are also a key step in its implementation. Hence disseminating information about the importance of art beyond the headmasters would foster creativity and responsibility will be developed in the students who will witness their progress.

## RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

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During the completion of this investigation, the researcher was able to experience much more than imagined based on professional development as a teacher. Teaching a child with different abilities is a new world. In some situations, it can be complicated, but it must be borne in mind that they are giving the best of their abilities. The inspiration of this study topic was to give children with Asperger's the opportunity to have an alternative to demonstrate their knowledge and that learning is not something hard for them. Researchers argue that it is extremely important to know about this syndrome due to the lack of diagnoses that are available in our country. A teacher who knows the characteristics and aspects mentioned in this research will be able to intervene together with the parents to act and carry out planning according to the student's needs.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the literature review and the results obtained in the empirical part of this research, the authors declare the reach of the aims. Thus, the implementation of drawings, paintings, appreciation of works through audiovisuals help to capture the attention of these children making the classes interesting for them thus contributing to their development not only in the matter but also socially. On the other hand, activities to analyze more traits of the student could not be carried out. Instructors prefer having more face-to-face approaches to be able to collect more characteristics during their performance in classes since they could not be carried out due to the Covid-19 health emergency. Teachers must research this type of problem to be ready and know how to act in front of the different needs of our students.

Based on the bibliographic review and the results obtained in this study, the authors declare the fulfilment of the proposed objectives.

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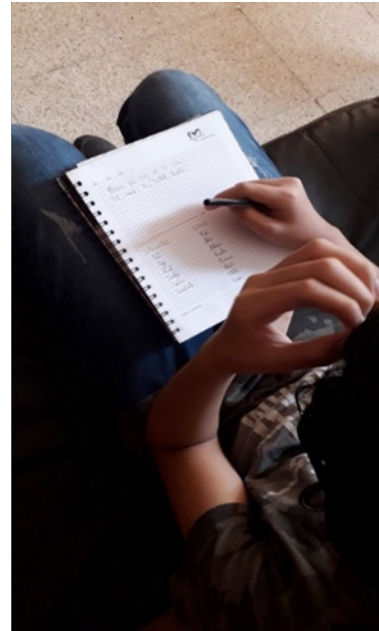
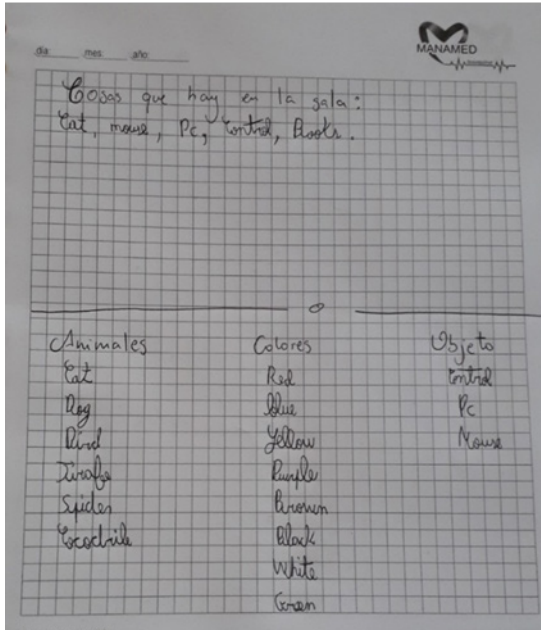
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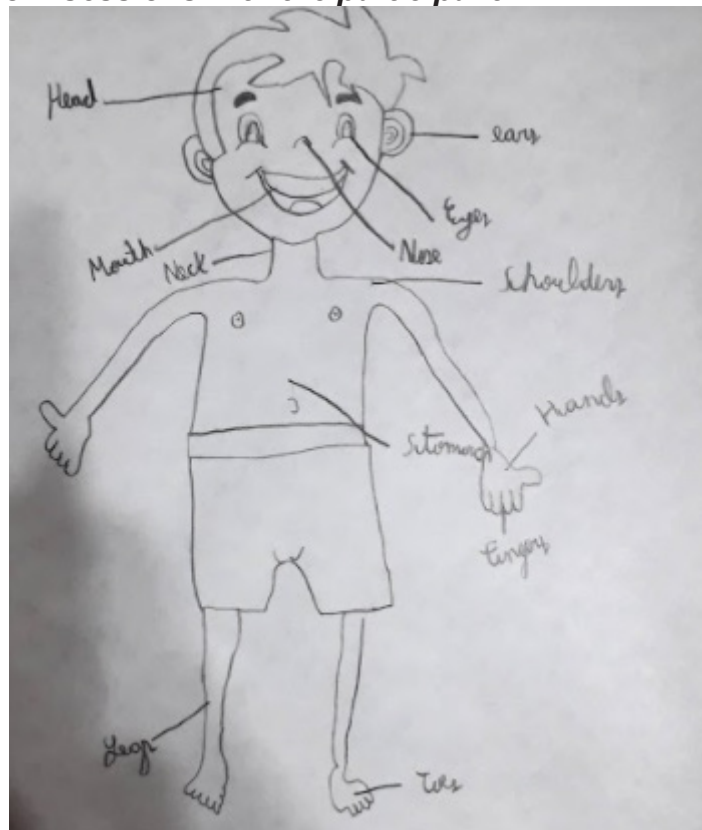
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Annexes

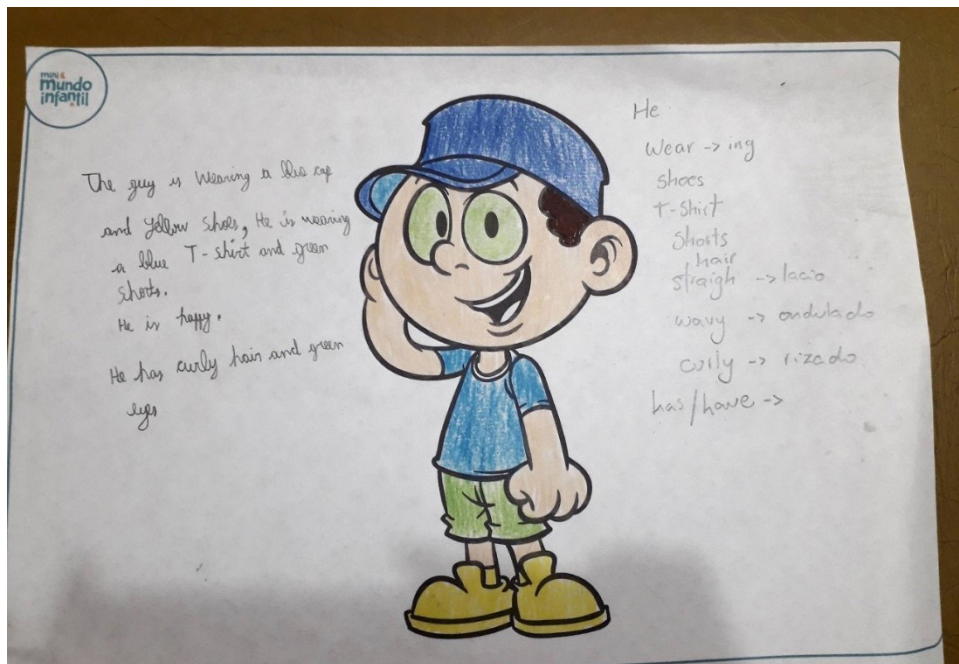


Evidences of work sessions with the participant



First session

## Reading Comprehension and Academic Writing:



### Third session

#### Lesson plan example

Time 40 mins	Framework Stage	Procedure Teacher will... Students will...	Interaction T-S/S-S VAKT	Materials Needed	
5 mins.	pre	At this stage, I will show the child a music video about the parts of the body. (Annexes) (Students working individually) Paper, pencil.	The student will listen and watch the video	T-Ss	Computer.
10 mins.	D	I will ask the child to draw a picture and find the names of the body parts.	Draw	SS (students working individually)	Paper, pencil
10 min	D	I will ask the student to show me the drawing of her and pronounce the words of the vocabulary learned	Show. The result of your activity.	SS	Paper

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### Record # 3

Date/Stage	Activities carried out / Materials required	Results and observations
27/01/21	<p>- Color and describe illustration.</p> <p>-For this activity a printed sheet, coloured pencils and a pencil will be used.</p>	<p>In this activity, the student had to colour an illustration that has a child (see annexes). Making use of colours, clothing vocabulary and physical characteristics. The student had to make a description of what he coloured and form a short paragraph in which he transcribed this description.</p> <p>During this activity, I could observe that the student has difficulties forming sentences regarding the use of certain verbs (has/have). He has the main idea, but the lack of vocabulary does not allow him to complement his sentences, this is not because they have not been taught before because the theme applied today was simple.</p> <p>I believe that this has to do with the lack of memory and use of the language daily.</p> <p>At the time of carrying out the activity, the child was a little anxious, he is very expressive, and you could tell when it was difficult for him to remember a word.</p> <p>It is worth mentioning that before carrying out the activity the young man was playing video games, which his parent has stated that it is a great distraction for him because when he is asked for help in something or he must do homework, he cannot perform these activities with complete peace of mind because of his desire to continue playing.</p>

### Lesson Plan 3

Time 35 mins	Fra- mework Stage	Procedure Teacher will... Students will...	Interaction T-S/S-S VAKT	Materials Needed	
5 mins.	pre	Explain to the student what is going to be done.	The student will listen to the instructions.	T-Ss	Worksheet.
15 mins.	D	Guide the student and ask questions.	Paint and answer questions.	SS -T	Worksheet and coloured pencils.
15 min	P	Help the student with his description.	Write his description with the help of the teacher.	SS-T	Worksheet and pencil.



**Report # 4**

<b>Date/Stage</b>	<b>Activities carried out / Materials required</b>	<b>Results and observations</b>
29/01/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Show a small video.</li><li>-Explain and socialize about Fernando Botero and his works.</li><li>-Show images of Botero's works.</li><li>-For this activity, we will use a computer to observe the video and images.</li></ul>	<p>When showing the video to the child, he observed it, later we proceeded to observe a work of the selected artist (see annexes) and I asked him to list the things he saw. During this activity I was able to realize that he has several gaps in his vocabulary regarding different topics, I also asked him to form a sentence and there are pronouns that he does not remember or does not know, he does not have a clear knowledge of the verb tenses which was a great inconvenience for being able to continue with the rest of the activities.</p> <p>These are subjects of which he should already have knowledge due to his school level but apparently, he only knows certain words or phrases, but he is not sure in which grammatical classification they belong. Despite this, I proceeded with what I could, and we listed the words that he knew.</p> <p>Regarding the association of the painter that we saw on the video, he was able to retain and comment on the information that he observed and heard, due to his level of English, I selected the video in Spanish to later comment on it in English.</p>

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### *Lesson Plan 4*

<b>Time 30 mins</b>	<b>Fra- mework Stage</b>	<b>Procedure Teacher will... Students will...</b>	<b>Interaction T-S/S-S VAKT</b>	<b>Materials Needed</b>	
10 mins.	pre	At this stage, I will show the child a video about the painter Fernando Botero.	The student will listen and watch the video.	T-Ss	Computadora.
5 mins.	D	I will ask the child to tell me what caught his attention in the video.	Share thoughts and answer questions.	SS-T	
5 min	D	We observe two simple works of the painter.	Observe	SS	Computer
10	P	I ask the student to list the objects or things they see in the paintings.	Write	SS	Paper

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## **CHAPTER XI**

### BOUNDARIES THAT MARKED A NEW BEGINNING, RECORDS OF A TEACHER IN PREDICAMENTS

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### **Boundaries that marked a new beginning, records of a teacher in predicaments**

### **Fronteras que marcaron un nuevo comienzo, registros de un maestro en apuros**

#### **Abstract**

This chapter systematizes a collaborative work experiences with an autistic child during a research project carried out at Pío XII high school in Santo Domingo de los Tsachilas in Ecuador. This work uses the ethnographic method to collect and analyses the voices of the participants about their transformig process as teachers with an inclusive perspective. Researcher team designed an educational intervention that combine technological means, neuroscience and emotional education. The results may benefit English teachers with a testimonial process and guide other researchers on their transforming process.

**Keywords:** autism, emotions, inclusive education, teaching English language.

#### **Resumen**

Este capítulo sistematiza una experiencia de trabajo colaborativo con un niño autista durante un proyecto de investigación realizado en el colegio Pío XII de Santo Domingo de los Tsachilas en Ecuador. Este trabajo utiliza el método etnográfico para recoger y analizar las voces de los participantes sobre su proceso transformador como docentes con una perspectiva inclusiva. El equipo de investigadores diseñó una intervención educativa que combina medios tecnológicos, neurociencia y educación emocional. Los resultados pueden beneficiar a los docentes de inglés con un proceso testimonial y orientar a otros investigadores en su proceso de transformación.

**Palabras clave:** autismo, emociones, educación inclusiva, enseñanza del idioma inglés.



## **Introduction**

Teachers are often told, “you must have the vocation to be able to teach,” but that is not always the reality. Here emerge the research question: What happens when instructors face students diagnosed with autism?

This work presents the research team’s reflection on the experiences lived when they taught the English language to a student diagnosed with Autism. It also includes the lesson plan tool that can be useful for the readers.

When people begin university studies to become English language teachers, have personal goals like traveling and working as an interpreter, but difficulties appear during the training process. Thus, the pre-professional practices can transform teaching teachers at schools, which at the beginning become very difficult because they had no training for working with children with intellectual needs. Additionally, at the University training, teachers learn general information about activities and grammar structures. However, nothing compared to real-life, where instructors have to use all this knowledge, strategies, and teaching techniques focused on general teaching.

This chapter aims systematizes a collaborative work experiences with an autistic child during a research project carried out at Pío XII high school in Santo Domingo de los Tsachilas in Ecuador.

## **Methodology**

This work uses the sociocritical paradigm and the techniques of ethnography to collect information to reconstruct an experience of teaching English as a foreign language to a student diagnosed with autism. This work also uses the hermeneutic to interpret the participants voices.

The participants are the researche team and the student with autism colled for this process as “Steve”.

### **Results**

The research team reflection are organized following the logic of the facts durign the profesional practice process.

### **Ethnography**

#### **The process of transformation**

“When I began to teach, I realized that it was not so easy. That is when I decided to go on a new path, to get a new direction and more expertise in the teaching field, but I still lacked much more”.

In the classroom, teachers meet many students from different realities; teaching them the same way is not valid.

“I was blinding myself to a reality opposite to the real one. I found myself always using a single style of activities for learning”.

At one point in my career, the need arose to attend a center specializing in students with special educational needs; after going through that workshop, I realized that not all students are the same as I believed. There was a different reality, and each student had a way of learning; after finishing the workshop, I saw the need o fulfill this profession with passion and knowledge.”

“I returned to the University and proposed to my research team during the final degree project to work with inclusive education. We decided to work on an article that would give help to teachers who work with children with special needs. There is some frustration because teachers know what it is like not to know how to work with a student with a specific case of attention. Many of us have thought: “these children need to work with professionals in special education. We cannot attend to them the way they need. ¿Can we not have them in our classrooms? When the truth is that we are wrong, we do not feel capable of working with students having academic needs”.

“My project partner and I decided to work with a confirmed case observed in the classroom, a child with ASD (autism spectrum disorder), but how would we do it? How would we make this project work if even we were not clear about how to work with it? “

Sutton (2018) lists the difficulties that these types of challenges a teacher can find in class becoming a big challenge. In addition, we had the great satisfaction of helping teachers and students; since we started working, we realized that we were wrong because there was no information, no support, and no material for us. However, we were involved with the topic, and many teachers have worked with it.

The biggest question we faced was: What will happen if we want this student to learn a foreign language? That was the most ambitious goal because we had to show how teaching a foreign language to a student with autism can be complex but not impossible.

### **The autistic child in an ordinary school**

We met the child called “Steve”. He studies at Pío XII Marista Educational Unit, located in Santo Domingo de Los Tsáchilas, Ecuador. The project aimed to develop oral expression in the English language in a student diagnosed with ASD. The student was in his fifth year of primary school. The diagnosis given by the specialist was; autism spectrum disorder in need of help in the social community with restricted and repetitive behaviors. The teaching sessions used the Zoom application in the afternoon.

We decided to work with his reality, to start a project with him that we hope will not end because we saw that it is beneficial and can also guide those who do not know how to work with individual differences in the classroom. Uva et., (2021) mention that there will be situations with autistic children that must be faced, we thought it would be the same as working with a student of the regular grade. However, when we included him in our first meeting, we realized that he needed his mother to

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talk to us. He was afraid and did not want to be without her. Immediately the mom explained that Steve was scared and did not feel comfortable with our presence, and since we did not want them to be uncomfortable during the session, we asked the mom to be present at the next meeting too. As the sessions went by, we noticed that Steve felt more comfortable, so we decided to explore with him some of the selected strategies, of which we could appreciate that he works better with music since he likes to sing.

Before moving forward, it is essential to mention what ASD (autism spectrum syndrome) is; for González-Mercado et al. (2016), people with this disorder are sensitive to noise and light; In addition, they are more easily distracted by any stimulus. Therefore, we had to look for the most appropriate environment to facilitate us to reach the student optimally because when working with students with this disorder, the reduction of distractors is necessary. Additionally, keeping it close to the teacher without isolating him is more convenient since it is easier for the teacher to monitor his progress. As teachers, our responsibility is to attend to each necessity presented to us in the classroom. Connecting with our students, getting to know them, and exploring their differences are vital; consequently, preparation must be constant.

### **How do we identify students with NEEDS?**

Students who require unconditional support throughout their schooling should receive respect and inclusion like regular cycle students. Based on our experience, we can assure is not easy to identify students with special learning needs since students can present; attention limitations, behavioral disorders, easy inattention, and looking towards a blind spot. However, these aspects do not mean they have some particular learning condition. It may be that the subject is not attractive enough to their eyes and, as a result, their behavior in the classroom. Therefore, observation is the key and plays a vital role in identifying each case (Blackburn & Bradley, 2021).

Hernández Barrera et al. (2019) discuss family denial as an inclusive factor in the educational process of children with learning difficulties. It is essential to work hand in hand with parents, but in many situations and circumstances, they are the ones who refuse to recognize that their children have some special needs. We faced a similar situation when we decided to integrate more students or children into our project at a certain point in our research. We decided to post on Facebook that we offered free classes to children with ASD. We wanted to explore using a web application, which we found helpful in working the second language with students with this syndrome. At first, our expectations were big, and surprisingly we did not receive any other response than likes to the post.

It means not all people are willing to “expose” their children. We could say some parents do not accept help or doubt someone wanting to help them. Often, we meet parents who refuse to receive a diagnosis from a professional. It makes us as teachers even more committed to our pupils. It commits us to make our work a magnificent experience, to show parents and students they can always count on us. They can also trust that they will get the help they need.

### **Warning signs inside the classroom**

Wise (2017) mentions the importance of identifying children with special needs. The sooner we identify the learning difficulties in a student, the faster and more effective the response to this need will be. At the beginning of the new school year, we found a somewhat unique case, a student was asked to read a fragment of a book and could only understand by babbling. We realized this student had an intellectual need since he was joining classes first time just that day. There had not been prior preparation. Therefore, it was not known how to respond to this situation. From that moment on, the investigative work began again with a new reality.

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For this experience, We must affirm that many students require our attention. Here we present the main warning signs that we must consider to identify special needs in a classroom. Taking into account that these signs will not only help us to identify children with ASD but also children with some other special conditions (Aranda-Mora, 2015).

- We see that lack of smile in the students.
- Students do not look directly into the eyes.
- Students have delayed language acquisition and do not interact with the rest.
- Students have unexpected reactions.
- Unusual profile of skills and weaknesses (e.g., poorly developed social and motor skills, gross motor awkwardness).

### **Working with emotions**

People think emotions seem impossible to work. Maybe they are unimportant for many teachers. However, we dare affirm that emotions are interesting, but teachers must learn how to work the emotions. They will help in the professional practice in a more harmonious way inside and outside the classroom.

What do we do if a child is angry?

What do we do if a child is too happy?

What do we do when our students are distracted? If we do not know how to work with these emotions, we probably lose a great opportunity to help students deal with the emotions. It can help teachers integrate the classroom and indirectly work more collaboratively because by knowing how to control students' emotions, we can help them control frustration and anger (Domingo, 2021).

We must look at each child's behaviors, especially if the student shows behaviors of violence; In addition, it is imperative to analyze which affective world the student lives in and his emotional expressions. The

body expression can give teachers many clues, some movements can be repetitive, and it may be that at some point, the student isolates himself/herself and show sadness. Teaching them to put themselves in the other's situation is essential.

**Working with the failures (trial-error)**

it is necessary to understand that teachers can make many mistakes during the teaching-learning process. Teachers should learn how to get the good out of these and get up from our falls; Students will be affected by teachers' decisions, and consequently, teachers must be careful (Rach et al., 2013).

One of the frequent mistakes is to think that the teacher already has the right strategies to work with the students and think that this task would be easy. Another mistake is to give the child a painting or a simple activity to work on alone while we work with the regular students.

When talking about a child with autism, people think they cannot show affection. However, when working with Steve, we observed that the child was in his safe zone with his mother, and we denoted affection between both; therefore, it was possible to work effectively with him.

Working with empathy is a clue. Seeing what children want or need will help a lot. Empathy does not judge but alludes to the person and not exclusively to the solution for each student.

Working in an inclusive classroom is necessary: How often are teachers who exclude students with special needs from regular students? Teachers must try to make students integrate by themselves through collaborative work. Teachers also can achieve that the same classmates are the ones who include students with intellectual needs without any discrimination, helping them to learn from each other (Sutton, 2018).



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Many teachers feel sensitive to everything related to inclusive education; however, the most important is to transform the classroom's mind, time, and space. Teachers should use neurodiversity and emotional education in the classroom to improve inclusive educational practice.

During the pandemic: Who did not feel afraid to see that we had to teach through online platforms?

Authors confess that teaching through a computer was not easy for anybody. Indeed, the computer can never replace the teacher, but we can use it well by using the appropriate resources to teach (Hernández-Amorós & Urrea-Solano, 2017).

**Lively strategies that can help y** During this process, we found some applications and platforms that helped us in this beautiful work, and while it is true that we found many, it is also true that in our case not all of them caught the attention of our students; therefore, we will share those which worked for us with greater acceptance.

**Avatars in Voky:** this is a virtual platform where the student can work with avatars; in the autistic case, the students work alone because, they cannot or do not like to engage with the rest of the students in certain cases, we saw it as proper to work virtuality in this website. In the same way, it was indicated to develop oral expression in the second language. The response we received from Steve was positive, he sent us his audios promptly and used different characteristics in his avatars.

**Pictograms:** through the pictograms, we worked on basic vocabulary using daily routines, we showed him the pictogram while he was listening to the audio of it with the routines, then he had to repeat, all this with the ultimate goal of establishing an interview and from there we denote that it can be possible to work this type of strategies.

**Comics:** a fun way we found to work with a second language was the usage of comics, the pupil had to relate his daily activities through images; at this stage, he had to make drawings and paint and then express with words what he did in his day, although, he had some difficulties articulating the words properly, the activity could be carried out.

**Brainstorming:** this is an activity which gets lots of attention and interest from the student; at one point in the class, we said to the student: guess what? he did not know what was going to happen, and then we presented him with the clay and then asked him to make any image with this material, after that we would guess what he was doing. At the beginning, we worked this activity in Spanish so that he feels more confident, then we did it in English and he was more familiarized, the activity was carried out successfully.

### **Class planning**

To follow, we present a class plan that was used, this can serve as an example for anyone in the development of a classroom with regular students and students with specific needs, whilst we attempt to work in an inclusive classroom and everyone enjoys the activity.

TOPIC: Likes and dislikes.	LEVEL: Elementary (A1) fifth grade	Time: 30 minutes
Target language (vocabulary)	Likes and dislikes - Hobbies.	
Skill in focus:	Speaking	
Elementary skill focus:	Speaking and listening	
Lesson objective:	Identify the expressions when talking likes and dislikes and applied in real situations.	
Methodology	Communicative approach	
Development	Students have to express likes and dislikes according to what they like to do in their free times. Explain and express through Voky platform with their own avatars short sentences: e.g., I like listening to music but I don't like reading books.	

### **A renewed teacher**

Children need teachers with patience, better trained and willing to learn with them. The experience of teaching children with intellectual needs is relevant to every English teacher. This experience completely transformed our teachers' minds because we know we must continue our training by looking for more strategies to meet new circumstances or students' needs. Hence, every new challenge will be received with a good attitude and positive predisposition due to this experience.

During the first classes, it was important just the result, so we used the same process as the whole class. Now we know that was not the right way, and it is essential that the student enjoys the process and knows its actual value without worrying about the grade he can obtain because the students do not represent a grade. They represent values, and they represent life.

We also know that we can get an opportunity out of conflict. We are now aware that as teachers and people, we must be above conflict, we can open our world, and from our students, we can get different opportunities.

### **Recommendations**

"The bad is not bad, the bad is good," and this phrase will always remain in our minds because of all those demanding situations teachers can face and transform them into good things. Teachers should get training and research based on that; we will try new things then; the bad is good.

Teachers should give clear and precise instructions. These should be simple and not complicate the learning process using words or instructions that students may not understand.

Teachers must use audiovisual material to offer the students the opportunity to explore the environment in which we are developing the lesson.

Teachers should ask students about the topics of interest to encourage them to participate and work with various materials that explore the neurodiversity of the classroom.

Indeed, teachers should not, for any reason, isolate students who need support from regular students; on the contrary, teachers must include them at all times in the social field. However, teachers must develop specialized and individualized activities to improve individual and continuous support.

### **Lesson learned and final reflections**

During this process, we learned that a student deserves respect and that we are not working with robots. Teachers deal with souls eager to receive knowledge and deal with people. Therefore, teachers should put themselves in student's situations. Using empathy, teachers will realize what students need to improve. Dear colleagues, it is the only way, if we are not willing to do it, I think we should look for another career that fills us with more passion and thus we would be happier in it, but we cannot play with the education of a person who depends on us.

Remember that teachers are the soul of the school who forges students' future. If teachers do not do it the right way, they send children full of frustration to the world and unfulfilled dreams, and then teachers are the ones who have that splendid power in our hands.

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**1<sup>RA</sup> EDICIÓN**

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**PART XI**  
SOCIO-EMOTIONAL EDUCATION



**1<sup>RA</sup> EDICIÓN**

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**CHAPTER XII**  
SOCIAL ABILITIES DEVELOPMENT OF  
UPPER BASIC GENERAL EDUCATION  
STUDENTS OF ENGLISH CLASS IN  
ECUADOR

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**Social abilities development of upper basic general education students of English class in Ecuador**

**Desarrollo de habilidades sociales en estudiantes de educación general básica superior de la clase de inglés en Ecuador**

**Abstract**

The development of social abilities is an essential topic in society because those interpersonal relationships are the ones that provide a wide uncovering of oneself and its social environment. These abilities can be learned and developed through practice. During adolescence, these abilities represent a fundamental value. During this stage, students develop their personality and feel the need to turn away from family and tend to come closer to friends, in other words, the foundation of their adult social life during this period. Therefore, it becomes essential to develop the students' social abilities to establish relationships, get integrated, interact, and communicate with others in an effective and mutually satisfactory manner, thus guaranteeing their holistic development, considering that educational establishments represent places of social coexistence. Having a good repertory of social abilities will allow them to express their emotions, feelings, needs, and opinions, which translates to personal welfare and life quality. Moreover, today there is more consideration about developing relationships with others due to the situations lived during the COVID19 pandemic outbreak, where social isolation was experimented with and the encountered emotional consequences.

**Key words:** communication styles, educational innovations, English as a foreign Language, social abilities.

**Resumen**

El desarrollo de las habilidades sociales es un tema importante en la sociedad, pues son las relaciones interpersonales las que propician un amplio descubrimiento del sí y su entorno social. Estas habilidades



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pueden ser aprendidas y desarrolladas con la práctica. En la adolescencia estas cobran un valor fundamental, ya que es en esta etapa cuando los estudiantes desarrollan su personalidad y sienten la necesidad de alejarse de la familia y acercarse más a sus amistades, es decir, se sientan las bases para desenvolverse como adultos en la sociedad. Por lo tanto, resulta imprescindible desarrollar las habilidades sociales de los estudiantes, para que puedan relacionarse, integrarse, interactuar y comunicarse con los demás de manera efectiva y mutuamente satisfactoria garantizando así su desarrollo holístico. Considerando que los establecimientos educativos son espacios para una convivencia social. Tener un buen repertorio de habilidades sociales les permitirá a los estudiantes expresar las emociones, sentimientos, necesidades y opiniones, lo que se traduce en el bienestar personal y calidad de vida. Además, hoy en día existe mayor consideración a relacionarse con los demás debido a la situación vivida en la pandemia del COVID19, donde se experimentó el aislamiento social y las consecuencias que tiene en nuestras emociones.

**Palabras clave:** estilos de comunicación, innovaciones educativas, inglés como lengua extranjera, habilidades sociales.

### Introduction

The development of social abilities in students of Upper primary education is a problem that incises in the teaching-learning process. It allows people to express feelings, desires, opinions, or rights adequately and the incapacity to commute with others satisfactorily. The incompetence to solve problems in a pacific way is related to rejection, social isolation on their own, inefficiency to defend their rights, and verbal and physically aggressive behaviors towards their classmates and teachers.

For this reason, during the English classes, there must be established activities that help develop the student's social abilities since the solution to this problem is of common interest to all those educational actors. The Organic Intercultural Law of Education (Ley Orgánica de Educación-LOEI,

2011) establishes that to ensure the integral development of the students for the construction of social relationships framed on the respect for people's dignity, acknowledgment, and the value of differences.

Despite the efforts of educational institutions and the Ministry of Education of Ecuador, students still have difficulties relating and communicating with other people and do not have good emotional self-control.

Based on the above, the development of social and emotional skills is of great importance for society since these are essential to relate, integrate, interact, and communicate effectively and mutually satisfactorily. It is worth mentioning that social skills and emotional intelligence are not established at birth but can be developed throughout life since they are constant actions of students in educational institutions (Carrillo, 2015).

Students must relate well to others, cooperate, work as a team, manage and resolve conflicts, act within the general vision, form and carry out personal projects, and defend and assert rights. These elements are closely linked to social skills, considering that they are the set of feelings, attitudes, desires, opinions, or rights that a person must achieve their goals and maintain excellent personal relationships based on respect (Caballo, 2007).

### **Conceptualization**

This section mentions the existing conceptualizations directly related to the research topic.

### **Ability**

The current formation of skills in students is of great interest since they constitute a determining factor in predicting academic performance, achievement results, well-being, future incorporation into work, and, most importantly, the formation of capable citizens. To integrate productively and harmoniously into society and prepare to manage their life projects.

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A person can creatively use knowledge, habits, actions, and activities in theory and practice to achieve a specific goal or purpose (Ortiz, 2016). The human ability constitutes the knowledge in action to provide a successful solution to certain situations with a consciously established purpose (Sixto & Márquez, 2017).

### **Social Abilities: concept and definition**

It is impossible to define the concept of social skill due to its multidimensional nature and similarity with other related concepts. The word is frequently associated with social and interpersonal competence, social intelligence, and adaptive skills. Caballo (1993) states that among the difficulties in defining a social skill are: the studies in which different terms refer to the concept and the dependence of social behaviors on the changing context. In addition, the definitions of social skills have focused more on descriptions of behaviors, that is, the capacities or consequences resulting from executing those behaviors.

Social skills are a series of behaviors that allow the individual to express their feelings, attitudes, desires, opinions, or rights appropriately in an individual or interpersonal context and facilitate the resolution and reduction of problems since the behaviors of others (Caballo, 2007).

Social skills are a group of learned behaviors that satisfy the needs of communication with others and the demands of social situations (Lacunza & Contini, 2011).

Social skills are a set of observable behaviors, thoughts, and emotions that help people relate effectively to others and avoid disrespect (Roca, 2014).

It is the ability to establish excellent relationships with partners by influencing them (Navarro & Díaz, 2015).



**Characteristics**

Because of the incredible variety of existing definitions of social skills, common characteristics allow the understanding and adequate conception of social skills.

According to Iribarren (2014), social skills are behaviors that are not innate or personality traits. Therefore, they are acquired, taught, or improved through learning in the interaction between people in a specific environment or context; they include verbal, nonverbal, cognitive, emotional, and physiological components and increase social reinforcement and mutual satisfaction.

According to Lacunza and Contini (2011), social skills have the following characteristics:

- Heterogeneity and social skills comprise various behaviors at different developmental stages, levels of functioning, and in all contexts of human life.
- Interactive nature of social behavior refers to the interdependent set of acts appropriate to listeners in each environment, appears in a defined sequence, and occurs in an integrated manner.
- Situational specificity of social behavior is essential to consider sociocultural contexts.

**Importance**

Social skills are essential in the lives of all human beings. They help people increase their quality of life, allowing access to healthy self-esteem, understanding verbal and non-verbal communication, making or rejecting requests, resolving interpersonal conflicts, or responding effectively to criticism and irrational other people’s behavior (Roca, 2014). Therefore, social skills enable an optimal intra- and interpersonal relationship with the environment, influence decision-making, and appropriately face difficult situations, facilitating cooperative work (Núñez, 2005).

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That is why the development of social skills has enormous relevance in the educational system since they allow the child or adolescent to assimilate roles and social norms, acquire social and cultural reinforcements, and obtain superior school and social achievements. Thus, people with adequate social skills function better in the school, social and emotional fields. It is worth mentioning that the family is the environment where skills and competent forms of action to learn something new. Its influence coincides with those of the school and peers. Consequently, it is essential to consider the role of the three contexts (Tantaleán & Romero, 2017).

### **Intelligence**

The ancient Greeks shaped the first perceptions about intelligence using the expression: “Almost everything we can find in our head” (Enzensberger, 2009, p.11). The word intelligence comes from the term’s logos and nous. Logos means to collect, gather, join, choose, choose, count, enumerate, compute, refer, say, speak, and corresponds to the one developed in an argued discourse and nous, is related to the faculty of thinking, reflecting, meditating, perceiving, and memorizing (Martin, 2007).

### **Emotional Intelligence: concept and definition**

Edward L. Thorndike, in 1920 defined *social intelligence* as the essential ability to understand and motivate other people. In the same way, David Wechsler, in the 1940s, stated that for an intelligence test to be valid, it had to consider emotional aspects. In 1983 Howard Gardner laid the first foundations of emotional intelligence with the seventh of his intelligence, the so-called interpersonal intelligence, which is very similar to emotional intelligence (Molero et al., 1998).

However, in 1985, thanks to Wayne Payne’s doctoral thesis entitled: “A study of emotions: the development of emotional intelligence,” the term emotional intelligence appeared for the first time. Ten years later, the psychologist and journalist Daniel Goleman spread the term with the

publication of his book Emotional Intelligence (Montalvo, 2015). Likewise, it is necessary to point out that the term “Emotional Intelligence” was promoted by Salovey and Mayer in 1990; for these authors, it is a type of social intelligence that allows controlling one’s emotions and using the information that serves for thought and actions for personal and community benefit (Centeno, 2018).

In addition, people direct their behavior according to their emotional needs, impulses, and values. Thus, emotional intelligence includes empathy, expression, understanding of feelings, temper control, independence, adaptability, sympathy, interpersonal problem solving, persistence, friendliness, kindness, and respect. It should note that these authors have been reformulating the original concept in their successive contributions.

**Neuroscience**

Science aims to understand how the nervous system produces and regulates emotions, thoughts, behaviors, and essential bodily functions. Neuroscience aims to clarify how the brain learns, processes, records, and evokes information (Maureira, 2015).

Neuroscience encompasses a wide range of questions about how the nervous system organization. Knowing how the brain works allows people to understand human behavior and the neurological windows of learning, developing techniques to educate more efficiently and reinforce learning processes (Purves et al., 2007).

**Neuroeducation**

It is the relationship that exists between neuroscience and education to transform the teaching-learning process. Neuroeducation allows emotions to manage to enhance learning, identify the neurological causes that can be related to school failure, and improve strategies for educational development and teaching processes. That is, configure learning in the way that best fits the development of our brain (Campos, 2014).

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Neuroeducation tries to use neuroimaging knowledge to understand how the brain interacts with its environment in each teaching-learning process and apply methodologies that help reduce learning dysfunctions, allowing the educational mission to be developed more efficiently (Béjar, 2014).

### **Social Brain**

Some studies prove that there are brain circuits that intervene both in the formation of self-awareness and in empathic ability. The social brain allows for better social interactions that allow more effective and meaningful learning to solve problems (Montiel & Martínez, 2021).

### **Methodology**

This research uses the qualitative research approach. In addition, the research team chose ethnography and self-ethnography to collect information. The participant is a student of a public school and an English language teacher. She narrates her experiences in the teaching process. This work also presents lesson plans to support the comprehension of the educational intervention executed in this research.

### **Results**

#### **Context: Ethnography**

I am Gina Mendoza, a teacher at the Fernando Chávez Reyes School in the City of Santo Domingo, Ecuador. As of June 1, 2020, we virtually started the 2020-2021 school year due to the COVID -19 pandemic. I assigned the Tutoring of the ninth year "A." The institution's authorities determined that at the Upper Basic General Education level, each tutor teacher would teach the eight subjects of the curricular mesh. In response to the new reality, the authorities, parents, and teachers agreed that the connection with the students would occur two days a week (Monday and Wednesday) through Zoom, Messenger rooms, and WhatsApp chats. During the classes, the informant explained the contents of the pedagogical files issued by the Ministry of Education of Ecuador. At the same time, he worked on the development of the students'

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social skills, taking as a precedent the research carried out in the 2019 - 2020 school year found in a fact-perceptible way that EGB Superior students had deficiencies or limitations in the development of these skills. Considering that with the partial application of the Social Skills Training Manual: two modules, "Communication" and "Self-knowledge and Self-esteem," a positive impact was evidenced in the sample: the students expressed their feelings, attitudes, desires, opinions, thoughts, or rights adequately; Conflicts and reduced through good communication. Likewise, the participants discovered and valued the qualities, virtues, strengths, and characteristics of themselves and others.

In the 2021-2022 school year at the EGB level, I teach the subject of English to students in the eighth, ninth, and tenth years of EGB Superior who are between 12 and 15 years old. Teachers connected to classes through the Microsoft Teams platform at the time established by the authorities of the educational unit. Research teams address academic content and social skills, supported by the study of neuroscience that brings teachers closer to understanding the mechanisms that regulate nervous reactions and behavior control. The brain knows how to learn, processes information, and controls emotions, feelings, and behavioral states. It is fragile in the face of specific stimuli to promote emotional intelligence through pedagogical innovation and thus transform the educational system.

### **Lesson plan:**

In the table 1 is presented a lesson plan executed in the empiric stage of this research.

**Table 1.** Class Matrix Planification.

Topic:	Simple Present with verb TO BE.
Class Objective:	O.EFL 4.1 Identify the main ideas, some details, and inferences of written texts, to produce level-appropriate critical analysis of familiar subjects and contexts. O.EFL 4.6 Write short descriptive and informative texts related to personal information or familiar topics and use them as a means of communication and written expression of thought.



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Learning achievements:	Students will understand that we need to use different strategies to solve different social, economic, environmental, and cultural problems. We need to communicate well and act independently.
Values	Conflict resolution, critical thinking, communication skills, decision making
Emotional containment	Conflicts are opportunities to learn. Conflict resolution requires skills that reduce tension, not increase it.
Skills and Performance criteria:	EFL 4.3.1. Understand main points in short simple texts on familiar subjects. (Example: news about sports or famous people, descriptions, etc.) EFL 4.3.2. Make use of clues such as titles, illustrations, organization, text outline and layout, etc. to identify and understand relevant information in written level-appropriate text types
Learning Outcomes:	I.EFL.4.11.1. Learners can understand main ideas and some details in short simple online or print texts on familiar subjects, using contextual clues to help identify the most relevant information. (Example: title, illustrations, organization, etc.) (I.2, I.4)
Required Materials:	Microsoft Teams Internet Pens Notebook or Sheets File

# Reading Comprehension and Academic Writing:

Source: research project (2021).

## Class Execution Steps:

### Warm-up (books closed)

Play a counting rhyme to present greetings and introduce oneself. Write this drill on the board: Hello/Hi/Good morning. My name is... Direct students' attention to pronunciation and model the exercise. Give four or five markers to students and explain that they have to pass the markers around while you say: Eeny, meeny, miny, moe, / Catch the tiger by the toe. / If it hollers, let it go, / Eeny, meeny, miny, moe. When you say the last moe, the students who have the markers say the drill and leave the game. Start the game over and encourage them to use all the greetings.

### Presentation 1. Listen and read.

Draw students' attention to the pictures. Describe the number of people and the surroundings. Teachers encourage students to listen to and follow the conversations in the book by using their fingers. It can help them associate speech with written words. Play each conversation and have them repeat aloud to correct pronunciation.

Practice: Match the questions with the answers.

First, remind students that "match" means "connect" to ensure they understand the instructions. Remember that a clear understanding of the activity permits accuracy in the answers. Get students familiar with the information by asking volunteers to read the two columns aloud. Tell students to read the questions individually and use exercise 1 as a model. Use the first answer to source: research project (2021).

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First, remind students that "match" means "connect" to ensure they understand the instructions. Remember that a clear understanding of the activity permits accuracy in the answers. Get students familiar with the information by asking volunteers to read the two columns aloud. Tell students to read the questions individually and use exercise 1 as a model. Use the first answer to model the exercise and have them compare it with a partner. Then monitor as the students work.

Use of knowledge: Complete the sentences. Then, introduce yourself to the class.

Direct students' attention to the Speaking Strategy and model the activity using your information. Encourage them to replace the information in the caption to put the strategy into practice. Have them exchange their (personal) information with a partner. Encourage them to give each other feedback on pronunciation. Remind students that practicing with others helps them enhance their oral skills.

### Extra-ideas

Model exercise 2 with some students to practice questions and answers. Have learners work in pairs to role-play the questions with their information. Ask volunteers to perform before the class and have students clap to choose the best performance. Remember that social recognition increases motivation.

### Presentation 2

Go back to exercise 1. Complete the chart with am, are, and is.

Motivate students to complete the Reflect on Grammar and Useful Expressions charts. Ask students to share their answers. Ask them to conclude by using the verb to be to talk about the name, age, country, and phone number. Ask students to read the questions from the chart and correct pronunciation. Refer students to the Pronunciation box and choose volunteers to pronounce. Emphasize the use of contractions.

Explain that they are common in informal speaking, while entire sentences are used in the formal writing (a letter).

### Social skills: Communication

Play "Hot Potato" to practice asking for and giving personal information. Write the questions from the Useful Expressions chart on the board. Take a ball to the classroom and ask students to make a circle. The person who has the ball asks a question from the board and throws the ball. The person who catches the ball answers, asks a different question, and throws the ball to a different person. Play music while students do the practice. When you stop the music, the person who has the ball, the "Hot Potato," is out. Remind students that repeating helps them internalize language structures.

Complete the chat with the verb to be and the priceless expressions.

Write the following synonyms on the board to help students understand the dialogue: hey = listen; right = correct; curious = interested; sure = OK. Then tell students to complete the conversation with what they learned; exercise 4. Advise them to pay attention to keywords like nationality, country, city, and numbers to find out the questions. Check their answers.

Refer students to the Key Expressions chart. Remind students of formal and informal language and give some examples from the book: How are you? What is up?

Use of knowledge: Listen and check the correct option to complete the sentences.

Draw students' attention to the Listening Strategy. Encourage learners to use the strategy by focusing on the person's specific information: country, city, age, and telephone number. Remind them it is not necessary to understand everything. Prepare students for the listening by giving them time to read and get familiar with the options. Play the audio more than once for students to complete. Check answers as a group.

Odel the exercise and have them compare it with a partner. Then monitor as the students work.

Use of knowledge: Complete the sentences. Then, introduce yourself to your classmates.

Direct students' attention to the Speaking Strategy and model the activity using the information. Please encourage them to replace the information in the caption to put the strategy into practice. Have them exchange their (personal) information with a partner. Please encourage them to give each other feedback on pronunciation. Remind students that practicing with others helps them enhance their oral skills.

### Extra ideas

Model exercise 2 with some students to practice questions and answers. Have learners work in pairs to role-play the questions with their information. Ask volunteers to perform before the class and have students clap to choose the best performance. Remember that social recognition increases motivation.

### Presentation 2

Go back to exercise 1. Complete the chart with am, are, and is.

Motivate students to complete the Reflect on Grammar and Useful Expressions charts. Ask students to share their answers. Ask them to conclude the use of the verb to be to talk about the name, age, country, and phone number. Ask students to read the questions from the chart and correct pronunciation. Refer students to the Pronunciation box and choose volunteers to pronounce. Emphasize the use of contractions.

Explain that they are common in informal speaking, while entire sentences are used in the formal writing (a letter).

### Social skills: Communication

Play "Hot Potato" to practice asking for and giving personal information. Write the questions from the Useful Expressions chart on the board. Take a ball to the classroom and ask students to make a circle. The person who has the ball asks a question from the board and throws the ball. The person who catches the ball answers, asks a different question, and throws the ball to a different person. Play music while students do the practice. When you stop the music, the person who has the ball, the "Hot Potato," is out. Remind students that repeating helps them internalize language structures.

Complete the chat with the verb to be and the priceless expressions.

Write the following synonyms on the board to help students understand the dialogue: hey = listen; right = correct; curious = interested; sure = OK. Then, tell students to complete the conversation with what they learned in exercise No. 4. Advise them to pay attention to keywords like nationality, country, city, and numbers to find out the questions. Check their answers.

Refer students to the Key Expressions chart. Remind students of formal and informal language and give some examples from the book: How are you? What is up?

Use of knowledge: Listen and check the correct option to complete the sentences.

Draw students' attention to the Listening Strategy. Encourage learners to use the strategy by focusing on the person's specific information: country, city, age, and telephone number. Remind them it is not necessary to understand everything. Prepare students for the listening by giving them time to read and get familiar with the options. Play the audio more than once for students to complete. Check answers as a group.

Evaluation: Workbook Unit 1 Lesson 1 Activities 1, 2, 3,4,5. Lesson 2 Activities 1, 2, 3,4.
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**Source:** research Project (2011).

### **Recommendations for the reader**

The training of social skills is a challenge in current education, even more so in the new reality after living the pandemic experience. Readers are encouraged to go through the exercise of committed teaching, responsible, and fun to contribute to the comprehensive training of students. It includes the use of social skills activities as a methodological strategy in their curricular plans. Thus, the contribution to their students' intellectual and social development and considering the importance of guide. The procedure must carry out activities that allow the development of social skills and promote emotional intelligence.

### **Conclusions**

Social skills are not innate; people learn about them throughout their life. They generate well-being, help increase the quality of life, develop healthy self-esteem, understand verbal and non-verbal communication, make or reject requests, resolve interpersonal conflicts, respond effectively to criticism, and influence decision-making.

The academic units are the most suitable means to implement training programs for social skills. In the Ecuadorian educational system, they currently appear in very as part of the different areas of the Curriculum of the Ministry of Education of Ecuador, which hinders its development. Teachers must be open to directing the academic units to implement activities that contribute to developing social skills and emotional intelligence. This process is complex and requires the effort and cooperation of all the actors in the educational sector. During the implementation of the activities, it was possible to show that they positively impacted the students because they expressed their feelings, attitudes, desires,

opinions, thoughts, or rights adequately. It reduces conflicts through good communication. Likewise, the participants discovered and valued the qualities, virtues, strengths, and characteristics of themselves and others; therefore, this research presented favorable results.

It is necessary to train the educational community on the importance of developing social skills and promoting students' emotional intelligence to become involved in applying the manual. Students who present a more significant development of social skills will obtain higher academic and social achievements since they will function better in the school, social and emotional spheres.

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**CHAPTER XIII**  
NEUROEDUCATION AND THE  
STRATEGIES USED FOR THE VIRTUAL  
TEACHING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
GRAMMAR

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## **Neuroeducation and the strategies used for the virtual teaching of English language grammar**

### **La neuroeducación y las estrategias utilizadas para la enseñanza virtual de la gramática del idioma inglés**

#### **Summary**

Teachers seek mechanisms for change and innovation through teaching-learning methods and strategies combined with neuroscience. These strategies transmit sensations that favor humor and consider them helpful in stimulating creativity, reasoning, and motivation. This work aims to systematize strategies to help students understand the contents faster and enhance the fun of learning the English language using the Foldable technique with open educational online applications. The research opted for the action research method. The design focused on the students of the Instituto Tecnológico Superior Tsáchila within the language department, clearly on first-level students aged between 18 and 35 who worked within Google's virtual platform workspace, Kahoot and Lyrics in the English language. The results show that this technique improved their learning mainly due to its interactive nature.

**Palabras clave:** educational innovation, English as a foreign language, teaching methodology, neuroscience.

#### **Resumen**

Los docentes buscan mecanismos de cambio e innovación a través de métodos y estrategias de enseñanza-aprendizaje combinados con la neurociencia. Estas estrategias transmiten sensaciones que favorecen el humor y las consideran útiles para estimular la creatividad, el razonamiento y la motivación. Este trabajo tiene como objetivo sistematizar estrategias para ayudar a los estudiantes a comprender los contenidos más rápido y mejorar la diversión de aprender el idioma inglés utilizando la técnica plegable con aplicaciones educativas en línea abiertas. La investigación optó por el método de investigación acción. El diseño



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se enfocó en los estudiantes del Instituto Tecnológico Superior Tsáchila dentro del departamento de idiomas, claramente en estudiantes de primer nivel entre 18 y 35 años que trabajaban dentro del espacio de trabajo de la plataforma virtual de Google, Kahoot y Lyrics en idioma inglés. Los resultados muestran que esta técnica mejoró su aprendizaje principalmente debido a su naturaleza interactiva.

**Palabras clave:** innovación educativa, inglés como lengua extranjera, metodología de enseñanza, neurociencia.

### Introduction

It is essential to know that the brain is not something so simple that, if it could be understood, people would be so simple that they would not understand each other (Fontiñán, 2020). Thus, language and communication differentiate people from the rest of living beings. It was necessary to execute such brain processes at different scales and changes in the functions of some parts of the human body. The scientific community agreed that intelligence and language evolved simultaneously and that without one, the other could not exist. Language and intelligence are significant for developing human behavior and personal and social interaction.

The inseparable companion of the human being has been the language. Language is not limited to the word, the utterance, or the argument. Since communication without words exists long before starting to speak, such an event is given in babies when they establish non-verbal links with whoever interacts with them, thus understanding the value of smiling and that when crying, they get someone's attention. These actual events occur long before the long-awaited first word. (Diaz, 2015). To González (2016), neuroeducation emerges as a discipline focused on offering new paradigms in the educational model that categorically improves the educator's activities in the classroom. The global consensus determines that one can only learn through the brain. In the brain, we find the answer to transformation, and it is in the brain where trans-

formation will occur: in the brain of the teacher and the brain of the student; neuroscience has allowed us to understand a range of cognitive, social, emotional, moral and physical skills that must learn, developed, practiced and used in each school scale to shape and consolidate in children's minds the basis of all subsequent knowledge.

In Ecuador, persist weaknesses in the entire educational system. On the other hand, the interest of teachers in changing and innovating teaching-learning methodologies is due to the situation worldwide. However, there is still a long way to go in education, and expectations to improve it has advanced with the support of technology mean. It is essential to recognize that technology has made many changes in the life of every human being. At the same time, it is complicated to follow the pace of such unstoppable and unpredictable progress that it has, but, even so, it has been so far a significant factor in shaping our society (Béjar, 2014).

In addition, Béjar (2014) states that “technology has catapulted neuroscience to the forefront of frontier knowledge in a short time. The recent technoscientific study of the brain produces new insights into our learning patterns worth looking at.” (p. 49).

It is here where neuroeducation becomes a framework where the brain knowledge can interact with the environment surrounding, teaching, and learning from people's life (Mora, 2014). Thus, it works with the knowledge-based on neuro-imaging in which it makes the brain interact with its environment in each teaching-learning process. In addition, the look of neuroeducation can lead teachers to harmonize teaching methodologies and students' learning techniques (Béjar, 2014). Likewise, neuroeducation is a basis that teachers can use to focus on strategies and teachings that establish a dynamic, fun, and cooperative relationship in the teaching-learning process and thus can contribute to the integral formation of students (Andrade et al., 2020).

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Naiman (2017) states that creativity allows the individual to perceive learners' environments differently, encouraging them to discover perspectives others cannot observe. Interactive strategies as a resource in the teaching-learning process allow students to awaken their creativity and look at the English language as an attainable, dynamic goal with more significant opportunities for professional growth.

This work aims to help students understand the contents faster and enhance the fun of learning the English language using the Foldable technique with open educational online applications.

### **Conceptualization**

#### **Learning a language through virtuality.**

All people are born with specific characteristics, personalities, talents, or gifts that develop effectively as time goes by. However, one of the most important legacies an individual acquires at the beginning of his or her life, regardless of his place of birth, is his mother tongue, which is learned naturally over the years. From there, different situations incite people to develop and acquire new knowledge; one of them is learning a language different from their mother tongue, in this case, English. Since English is the most spoken language in the world, it has to develop students at all academic levels. After that, the interest in improving their learning is also born since it is considered the official language in the world.

However, many countries do not teach it because they prefer to have their native language. However, how important is it to learn English? Many young people ask themselves this question when they get to school, will English help in the career I plan to pursue? The answer is yes. That is why half of the world's population has decided to start studying and learning English, whether for pleasure, business, study, or work. It has been a long time since this language has been generalized, and it has started to be taught and learned from the most common things such as books, CDs, etc. Nowadays, as it is well known, the invention of the

internet has globalized the learning of this language, improving every day its teaching, and learning through a lot of information, applications, websites, and tools that had never been seen before, giving more importance to learn this language.

### **Didactic strategies and technology**

When talking about didactic strategies, there is a scheme in which technology should be mentioned. At present, information, and communication technologies (ICT) make possible the creation of new learning environments and environments that allow teachers to give a positive turn to the educational process, thus improving the quality of learning English grammar (Pérez and Telleria, 2012). The new paradigms within the educational field and the challenges faced by teachers, it is necessary to obtain a balance between technology and the teaching-learning process.

In addition to that, the implementation and use of open educational resources (OER) that support teachers in creating interactive didactic material to be used in the classroom. Technology contributes to promoting the teaching-learning process and motivating students in this process (Mendoza, 2020). Thus, three important components are defined: pedagogy, content or subject matter, and technology; strengths that, when acquired by the teacher, will promote new skills for the improvement of their students, in a didactic, fun, and motivating way.

OERs allow adaptations of different materials, which help to promote the active participation of students through didactic strategies; stimulating autonomous learning and a range of creative experiences given by the teacher to improve each skill involved in the teaching of the English language. In this work, the Foldable didactic strategy is mentioned.

### **Interactive strategies; resources in the teaching of English language grammar**

When discussing teaching and learning strategies of a foreign language, it is necessary to establish differences and define concepts, emphasizing teaching strategies and learning strategies. The interesting thing to know about the remarked difference between one and the other resource is that teaching strategy offers a pedagogical aid. It is used by educators, instructors, or guides, in the learning process. On the other hand, learning strategies internalize a process in students since they are behaviors that facilitate learning, and for this, they use a lot of resources, activities, and means (Peralta, 2016).

However, within the classroom, both teaching and learning strategies are vital in the educational environment because they have the same objective. Nevertheless, it is necessary to remember that it depends not only on the strategies used but also on how teachers use them. Thus, when teachers do not use the strategies correctly, they can fail in any area of instruction. Teaching a language tends to be boring and annoying if the student is not motivated dynamically and innovatively. Every language teacher indeed acquires skills to teach. They select the best strategies so that a student who learns a foreign language can develop the four skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening. In the execution of a didactic and interactive strategy, the teacher and the student take part simultaneously. For example, the teacher is innovative, allowing the students to acquire autonomous knowledge through elaborating their learning material.

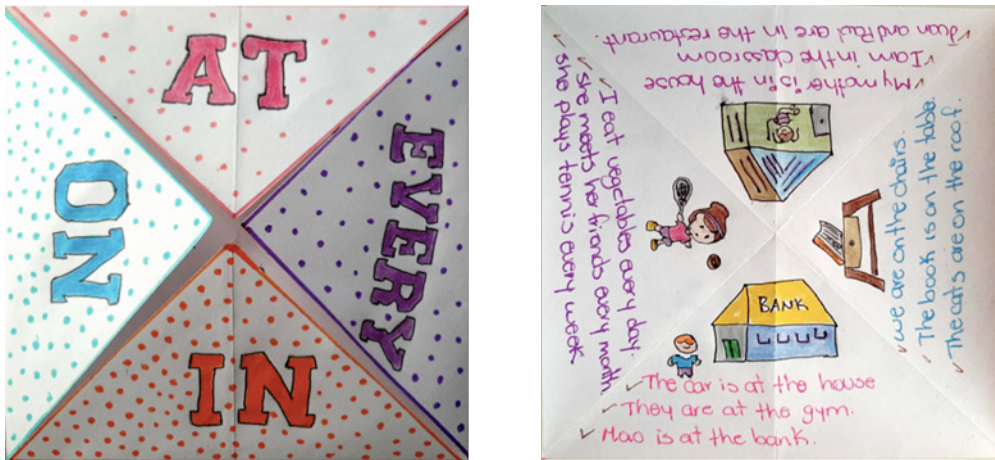
### **Foldable, creative, and innovative for foreign language learning**

When every human being is born, learn the mother tongue by listening and interacting with other speakers. They learn to write from the moment they attend school and understand the grammatical rules and all their derivative, but what happens when they listen and wants to learn a new language? It is here where the need to look for methods and strategies to remember becomes necessary. English is a worldwide spoken

language, being this a reason to prioritize the teaching at an early age, achieving in this way to establish the basis for learning this language. Teachers around the world have searched for the best strategies to teach English. While it is true that children can absorb everything, adults also acquire knowledge, although not in the same way. Now, when talking about the “Foldable” strategy, A didactic and fun way to learn the English language at school and college.

Interactive “foldable” graphic organizers would allow teachers to provide their students with structured learning activities that enhance the development of foreign language learning skills and become learner-managed resources. They are making the foldable because it is a didactic learning strategy and help that, guided by the teacher, enables students to create messages in English in an organized, clear, and coherent way. The advantage of this material is that students can make it while learning the English language. It is possible to note that students have a better appreciation of learning another language when they involve in methodologies, methods, and strategies that the teacher uses in the classroom to support this language’s teaching and learning process. It is necessary to emphasize that the designs are essential but how to use them is the key. The teacher can use a thousand and one tools to teach, looking for the most feasible way for the students to develop their communication skills. However, it is not a contribution when they do not accurately use the strategy.

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**Illustration 1.** Foldable applying the grammar of the English language.

During the study carried out with the students of the Instituto Superior Tecnológico Tsa'chila, the students had an excellent reception to the proposed strategy, such as the "Foldable" that, together with the Open Educational Resources (OER), can achieve a better students participation. In addition, students react better when the teacher has a positive attitude towards the teaching process. Teaching-learning process

### Methodology

This work uses action research to improve Ecuador's English language teaching process. This work includes the educational intervention plan.

### The participants:

The educational intervention focused on the students of the Instituto Superior Tecnológico Tsa'chila, specifically within the language department, students of the first level, who are between 18 and 35 years old respectively, with whom we have worked within the Google virtual platform: Workspace.



## **Lesson plan**

### **Subject Description**

The subject Foreign Language level I contributes strategically to the formation of the students of the career to make English the most important and necessary language of today since it is understood as the language of the dominant countries worldwide.

On the other hand, nowadays it is essential to be trained in the English level not only for work purposes but also to communicate, to access more knowledge and information. It will strengthen the ability to generate relevant and timely questions and answers to cases or issues in general, promoting the need to articulate effectively in the community.

### **General teaching objective**

Understand and use familiar everyday expressions and basic phrases to satisfy a concrete type's needs. Introduce themselves and others, and can ask and answer questions about personal details, such as where they live and talk about people they know and things they own. Interact in an elementary way with others simply, provided the other person speaks slowly and clearly and is willing to help. Ask for and give basic personal information about their home, belongings, and people they know.

Subprocess:

Introducing myself

Greeting and farewells

Talking about people

Famous people

Providing personal information

Jobs around the world

Things at home

Giving directions and places

What is your neighborhood like?

My daily routine

Do you play soccer?



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### Learning outcomes by competencies

Learning outcomes	Assessment and evaluation process
The student expresses him/herself and interacts orally in common communication situations in a comprehensible and appropriate manner and with a certain level of autonomy.	Assessment: Interacts with peers in a comprehensible and appropriate manner.
Correctly uses the basic phonetic, lexical, structural, and functional components of the foreign language in real communication contexts.	Evaluation Writes and reads conversations in English Exposition
Writes simple texts with different purposes on different topics using appropriate resources of cohesion and coherence.	Evaluation: Writes essays using correct grammatical structures.
Appreciates the foreign language as an instrument of access to information and as a tool for learning diverse contents.	Evaluation: Using a primer can make very short, rehearsed statements of predictable, learned content that are intelligible to listeners who are willing to concentrate.
The student expresses him/herself and interacts orally in common communication situations in a comprehensible and appropriate manner and with a certain level of autonomy.	Assessment: Interacts with peers in a comprehensible and appropriate manner. Recognizes forms of communication through primers
Correctly uses the basic phonetic, lexical, structural, and functional components of the foreign language in real communication contexts.	Evaluation: Writes and reads conversations in English, Exposition

### Methodological Strategies:

Methodological Strategies	Purpose
Expository techniques: theoretical classes.	Verbally present information
Seminars-workshops	Builds knowledge through interaction and activity.
Practical classes	Shows how students should act, through which the teacher seeks to develop in the classes the four skills: listening, speaking, writing, and reading.
Externships	Allows for personalized attention to the students.
Tutorials: - Lecturas dirigidas	Directed readings Interacts with a given group.
Group study and work: - Discussion - Brainstorming	Develops self-learning skills.
Study and independent work: - Case Studies	Verbally presents reflective, active, active, sensitive, intuitive, visual, verbal, sequential and global learning information.



### **Didactic resources**

Conventional didactic materials	- Book, photocopies, newspapers.
	- Sheets, cardboard, colored markers.
	- Brochures-Separates
Audiovisual didactic materials	- Digital book, slides, and projectable images.
	- Audiovisual materials (video): audiovisuals, films and videos.
Technology applications and platforms	- Digital platform
	- Educational: Kahoot, lyricstraining, Quizz.
	- Interactive videos.

### **Recommendations**

Before beginning the reading of this research work, it is necessary to understand the essential episteme of the same; being necessary to understand that many times the rules of learning need changes in their paradigms to evolve.

The reader should try to analyze the text of this research work and not skip the basic concepts on the correct use of the Foldable strategy in teaching the English language. Once familiarized with the topic, the reader should practice the different skills learned and their usefulness so that it is not only theoretical knowledge but also grounded in practice.

To master the Foldable skill, teachers must implement several practices as pilot plans and reach the excellence of the strategy accompanied by the different platforms and educational resources. Be able to complement and positively develop the skills in learning English as a foreign language. Finally, it would be essential to carry out future research by taking into account the experience of other teachers and, in this way, improve the work of the research carried out.

### **Lessons learned in this experience**

In this research, the Foldable technique was used in conjunction with Open Educational Resources such as Kahoot and Lyricstraining, which were the basis for the teaching-learning of the English language

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in the first-level students of the Instituto Superior Tecnológico Tsa'chila. These strategies, combined with neuroscience, are linked directly with the psychology of colors, which has shown that specific colors, such as blue and green, transmit sensations that affect mood and are considered helpful in stimulating creativity, working on reasoning, and motivating. Therefore, concepts used for developing each foldable can help learners understand the contents faster and have more fun. In addition, it is vital to remember that teachers and students improve together with the learning process.

On the other hand, according to results obtained after the application of this technique, the students improved their learning, mainly due to its interactive nature, where the student learns while having fun.

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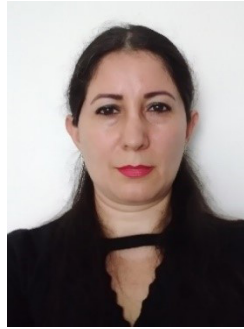


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