



**Pontificia Universidad
Católica del Ecuador**
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ESMERALDAS

**PEDAGOGY OF NATIONAL
AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

ESCUELA DE EDUCACIÓN

**CARRERA DE PEDAGOGÍA DE LOS IDIOMAS NACIONALES Y
EXTRANJEROS**

RESEARCH REPORT

**AN INNOVATIVE TASK-BASED DIDACTIC STRATEGY TO
IMPROVE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' ENGLISH
COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE**

REPORTE DE INVESTIGACIÓN

**UNA ESTRATEGIA INNOVADORA BASADA EN TAREAS PARA
MEJORAR LA COMPETENCIA COMUNICATIVA DE LOS
ESTUDIANTES DE BACHILLERATO**

PREVIO AL GRADO ACADÉMICO DE:

LICENCIADO EN PEDAGOGÍA DEL IDIOMA INGLÉS

LINE OF INVESTIGATION:

INNOVATIVE DIDACTIC STRATEGIES AND METHODOLOGIES

Author

Jhonny Paúl Olavez Williams

Advisor

MGT. JOSE SUAREZ LEZCANO

MARCH, 2024

Trabajo de postgrado aprobado luego de haber dado cumplimiento a los requisitos exigidos por el reglamento de la PUCESE previo a la obtención del título de **Licenciado en Pedagogía de los idiomas nacionales y extranjeros.**

TRIBUNAL DE GRADUACIÓN

Tema:

Autor: Jhonny Paúl Olavez Williams

Mgt. Jose Suarez Lezcano f. _____

Directora de TFM

PhD. Haydeé Ramírez Lozada f. _____

Lectora 1

Mgt. Rebeca Naranjo f. _____

Lectora 2

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DEDICATORIA

Dedico este trabajo a Dios, quien me há ayudado com su infinita sabiduría y misericórdia. Toda la gloria y el honor a Él.

A mi madre, quien ha sido mi apoyo incondicional tanto económico como emocional durante toda mi vida y mi preparación profesional. No sé donde estaria sin tu ayuda, tu paciência y tus ánimos. Te amo, madre.

AGRADECIMIENTO

Agradezco infinitamente a mis profesores de carrera, quienes me han formado, educado y aconsejado tanto en el ámbito profesional como en el personal, dándome las pautas de cómo hacer mi trabajo como futuro docente y siendo mi guía de cómo afrontar cada situación.

A mi asesor quien, incansablemente, me ha ayudado y soportado en cada momento del proceso.

A la Unidad Educativa Fiscomisional “Sagrado Corazón”, por darme la oportunidad de implementar mi investigación en sus aulas y darme la bienvenida con brazos abiertos.

A todos y cada uno de ustedes, gracias.

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ABSTRACT

Gaining proficiency in English communication has become essential in today's worldwide culture. It is imperative that secondary school students have the skills necessary to communicate effectively in English, since it is becoming an increasingly valuable skill in both academic and professional settings.

The level of English communicative competence among high school students in the city of Esmeraldas is startlingly low, which severely impairs their capacity to hold meaningful and professional discussions in everyday settings. Because of this, the goal of this study was to propose a set of task-based didactic activities as the theoretical and practical foundations of a strategy to improve English communicative competence in high school students. The used methodology was mixed, with a descriptive scope. The researched variables were Communicative Competence and Task-Based Strategy. The sample was composed of 20 students to whom a survey and an interview were applied. All the analysis was possible using the Analysis and Synthesis, and the Hermeneutics methods. The results showed students' excellent performance in Fluency and Vocabulary, their interest in learning through debates on global issues was significant, Arts & Culture was the most popular topic for the students, drawing interest from the majority, public speaking was the issue most surveyed students felt was advantageous. Among the students, the highest interest was observed in Speaking Practice with most of them. It was concluded that this study set out to improve the communicative skills of high school students in English through Task-Based Language Teaching.

Keywords: Task-Based, Communicative competence, strategy, high school, interest.

RESUMEN

La adquisición del dominio de la comunicación en inglés se ha vuelto esencial en la cultura mundial actual. Es imperativo que los estudiantes de secundaria tengan las habilidades necesarias para comunicarse efectivamente en inglés, ya que se está convirtiendo en una habilidad cada vez más valiosa tanto en el ámbito académico como profesional.

El nivel de competencia comunicativa en inglés entre los estudiantes de secundaria de la ciudad de Esmeraldas es sorprendentemente bajo, lo que perjudica gravemente su capacidad para mantener discusiones significativas y profesionales en entornos cotidianos. Por ello, el objetivo de este estudio fue proponer un conjunto de actividades didácticas basadas en tareas como fundamento teórico y práctico de una estrategia para mejorar la competencia comunicativa en inglés en estudiantes de secundaria. La metodología utilizada fue mixta, con alcance descriptivo. Las variables investigadas fueron Competencia Comunicativa y Estrategia Basada en Tareas. La muestra estuvo compuesta por 20 estudiantes a quienes se les aplicó una encuesta y una entrevista. Todo el análisis fue posible utilizando los métodos de Análisis y Síntesis y Hermenéutica. Los resultados mostraron el excelente desempeño de los estudiantes en fluidez y vocabulario, su interés en aprender a través de debates sobre temas globales fue significativo, Arte y Cultura fue el tema más popular entre los estudiantes, atrayendo el interés de la mayoría, hablar en público fue el tema más encuestado de los estudiantes. consideró ventajoso. Entre los estudiantes, el mayor interés se observó en la práctica oral con la mayoría de ellos. Se concluyó que este estudio se propuso mejorar las habilidades comunicativas de los estudiantes de secundaria en inglés a través de la enseñanza del idioma basada en tareas.

Palabras clave: Task-Basketed, competencia comunicativa, estrategia, secundaria, interés.

INTRODUCTION

Theme Presentation

In today's globalized society, mastering communicative ability in English has become crucial. Secondary school students must acquire the abilities necessary to communicate effectively in English in a climate where doing so is becoming more and more important in both academic and professional settings.

Numerous researches have indicated that task-based teaching techniques are quite efficient in enhancing secondary school students' communicative proficiency in English. These tactics emphasize the practical application of learned material, encouraging oral and written communication in practical contexts. Students can build relevant communication skills that will enable them to successfully handle language and communication issues in the real world by employing authentic and meaningful projects.

As future English teachers, we are constantly learning how to speak and explain it through many ways and situations, but we cannot be sure if all the knowledge we earn is enough to teach our students to be independently proficient in a real-life situation in which we are required to use it. This is the reason why we must prepare them appropriately to face real situations in which they will have to use the expressions we tell them. As worldwide language instructors who need to hold up with the modern-day tendencies in education (and live aggressively while we land our dream job), we as educators have to continuously evolve and incorporate current coaching techniques into our lesson plans and coaching techniques. One technique that every instructor needs to be acquainted with is task-primarily based totally learning (TBL), additionally called task-primarily based totally language coaching.

Problem statement

In the city of Esmeraldas, the degree of English communicative competence among high school students is alarmingly low, significantly hindering their ability to engage in proficient and sustained conversations in real-life situations. As a consequence, Esmeraldas faces numerous challenges, particularly in its capacity to attract and

accommodate foreign individuals, specifically English speakers. The limited English proficiency of high school students in Esmeraldas prevents effective communication, cultural exchange, and collaboration with individuals from English-speaking countries, which could otherwise bring valuable opportunities for economic growth, educational advancement, and cultural enrichment.

The inadequate English communicative competence is attributed to various factors, including a lack of exposure to authentic English language environments, limited access to quality English language instruction, and a curriculum that predominantly focuses on grammar and vocabulary acquisition rather than practical language use. These factors contribute to a significant gap between the language skills acquired in the classroom and the skills required for effective communication in real-world settings.

Consequently, the question arises: How can Task-Based Teaching be effectively utilized to address the challenge of low English communicative competence among high school students in Esmeraldas?

Task-based teaching, with its focus on practical, meaningful tasks and authentic language use, has the potential to provide students with the necessary opportunities to develop their communication skills, enhance their fluency, and build confidence in their ability to engage in sustained conversations in English. By implementing Task-Based Teaching strategies, high school students in Esmeraldas can acquire the necessary skills to communicate effectively with English speakers, fostering cultural understanding, facilitating international exchanges, and opening doors to social, educational, and economic opportunities.

Justification

This investigation is motivated by the pressing issue of low English competence degrees among high school students in Esmeraldas City. The current state of English language proficiency in high schools reveals significant gaps and deficiencies that urgently need to be addressed. Specifically, there is a lack of comprehensive knowledge and skills in various aspects of English communication, including speaking, listening, and writing, which are essential for effective participation in real-life situations.

Supporting evidence from previous studies, surveys, and statistics highlights the extent of the low English competence in Esmeraldas City. These findings reveal a significant disparity between the language skills acquired within the classroom and the practical skills required for effective communication with English speakers. Such a discrepancy not only limits students' ability to engage in meaningful conversations with foreign individuals but also hampers the city's capacity to attract and accommodate English-speaking visitors.

Moreover, in addition to the low English competence, other challenges in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education further contribute to the problem. Motivation, for instance, plays a crucial role in language learning. However, the lack of intrinsic motivation among students towards English learning negatively impacts their engagement and progress. Additionally, language interference, stemming from the influence of the students' native language, can hinder accurate and fluent English communication. Furthermore, the scarcity of capable teachers who possess both linguistic proficiency and effective teaching strategies presents an additional obstacle to improving English competence among high school students in Esmeraldas City.

To address these challenges comprehensively, this research proposes the utilization of Task-Based Teaching as a cohesive contextual curriculum, rather than merely an ideology or technique. Task-Based Teaching provides a framework that incorporates ideas and best practices from classroom instruction, education theory, and practice-based research. By adopting this approach, the investigation aims to identify and emphasize crucial areas in language education that require attention and improvement.

The use of task-based learning is supported by extensive research and practical evidence, which demonstrates its effectiveness in promoting active learning, meaningful interaction, and language acquisition. By engaging students in authentic tasks and communicative activities, Task-Based Teaching fosters practical language use and develops the necessary skills for effective communication with English speakers. Furthermore, task-based learning is known to enhance student motivation, as it creates a dynamic and engaging learning environment that promotes active participation and ownership of the learning process.

By conducting this investigation and exploring the implementation of Task-Based Teaching, we seek to bridge the gap between classroom instruction and real-world

communication, empowering high school students in Esmeraldas City with the English language skills necessary for successful engagement in an international context. The findings of this research will not only contribute to improving English competence among high school students but also have implications for the city's economic growth, educational advancement, and cultural enrichment.

Objectives

General Objective: To propose a set of task-based didactic activities as the theoretical and practical foundations of a strategy to improve English communicative competence in high school students.

Specific Objectives:

1. To characterize the students' language level.
2. To identify students' general and specific interests in learning the English language.
3. To determine the most motivating topics to learn about for senior high school students.
4. To determine the social areas foreseen by the students where they could need to master English.
5. To design task-based activities for senior high school students.

CHAPTER I

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Scientific-Theoretical Foundation

1.1.1. Teaching Learning Process

1.1.1.1. Teaching

It is possible to define teaching as "the process of organizing the cognitive, practical, and critical exercise of the pupils that suggests the adaptation by them of the historical memory and the absorption of the ideal vision of the objects, their reflection, or spiritual reproduction." This definition shows how teaching influences students' entire lives, promoting socialization and the formation of values.

1.1.1.2. Learning

Learning is the dynamic process of appropriating the contents and methods of thinking, doing, living together, and being built in the socio-historical process, in which alterations are created as a consequence of the person's action and contact with others. reasonably robust and generalizable, enabling you to alter and evolve as a personality in response to reality.

1.1.1.3. Teaching Learning Process

In the book *Formative Learning and Human Growth*, the teaching-learning process is defined as a process of interaction between the teacher and the students through which the teacher directs the learning through adequate activity and communication, facilitating the appropriation of the historical experience. -social and the growth of the students of the group, in a process of personal and collective construction.

In the book *Didactics Theory and Practice*, they defend the criterion that "the teaching-learning process is complex, multifactorial, with multiple interactions, where the conditions are those that favor or hinder the process itself and the result". (García et al., 2004)

1.1.2. Communicative Language Teaching

CLT is described as "an approach to foreign or second language instruction which stresses that the objective of language acquisition is communicative competence" by Richards, et al. in the Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (1992, p 65). Different definitions and descriptions of CLT have been provided by other authors in the area (Howatt, 1984; Littlewood, 1981; Savignon, 1991; Scarcella and Oxford, 1992).

In general, CLT proponents suggest that learners will gain communicative competence through engaging with the target language in meaningful ways rather than just learning its grammar. The distinct individual demands of each student are taken into account by the communicative method. Learners may quickly and amicably acquire the required abilities by having the language applicable to the real world rather than the classroom.

Another important example of communicative competence is the work of anthropologist Edward T. Hall, who introduced the concept of context in communication and emphasized the importance of nonverbal communication in language use (Hall, 1959). The results of the study indicate that the TBLT approach had a significant positive effect on the experimental group's listening comprehension compared to the control group. The study also found that the learners in the experimental group had a more positive perception of their learning experience than those in the control group.

Wilga Rivers, in 1971, emphasized the importance of communicative competence in language learning and teaching, arguing that language instruction should focus on the development of communicative competence rather than just the acquisition of grammatical rules (Rivers, 1971). This approach to language teaching is known as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and has gained significant attention in recent years.

The antecedents of communicative competence can be traced back to the work of linguists such as Noam Chomsky, who developed the theory of generative grammar, which focused on the structure of language and the rules that govern it (Chomsky, 1957). However, Chomsky's theory did not take into account the social and cultural context in which language is used, which led to the development of communicative approaches to language teaching.

1.1.3. Task

A task is a meaningful and purposeful action that students do out as part of TBLT in order to accomplish a certain objective or result (Willis, 1996). In order to motivate language learners to interact and communicate in the target language, tasks are created to mimic real-life language use (Long, 2015).

According to Long (2015), tasks should have a few key qualities, such as authenticity (where the task accurately reflects real-world language use), complexity (where the task appropriately pushes learners), and meaningfulness (where the task is relevant to the learners.) Communication exercises that promote genuine engagement and meaningful communication among students are important, according to Willis (1996). In order to complete these activities, students must utilize language in context, which encourages the growth of both linguistic and pragmatic abilities.

1.1.3.1. Task-based Learning

Task-Based Learning (TBL) serves as the primary theoretical framework for this study, guiding the design and implementation of the innovative didactic strategy. TBL is an approach to language teaching that prioritizes the use of authentic, meaningful tasks as the central focus of instruction (Willis & Willis, 2007). It stems from the belief that language learning is most effective when learners are actively engaged in real-world communicative activities. TBL deviates from traditional language instruction by shifting the emphasis from grammar-focused exercises and drills to the completion of purposeful tasks that resemble real-life language use. Tasks are designed to simulate authentic communicative situations that learners might encounter outside the classroom, such as participating in a group discussion, giving a presentation, or engaging in problem-solving activities (Nunan, 2004).

1.1.3.2. Principles

A key principle of TBL is the integration of the four components of communicative competence: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). By engaging in meaningful tasks, learners have opportunities to develop and practice these essential language skills. They acquire not only the necessary grammatical structures but also

the sociolinguistic and discourse skills needed to navigate different social and cultural contexts.

TBL is grounded in the belief that language learning is a social and interactive process. Learners are encouraged to work collaboratively, engaging in pair or group activities that require negotiation of meaning, problem-solving, and information sharing (Willis & Willis, 2007). Through social interaction, learners are exposed to different perspectives, cultural nuances, and language variations, which contribute to the development of their communicative competence (Swain, 2000).

One of the strengths of TBL is its learner-centered approach. Learners are actively involved in the task planning, execution, and reflection processes. They take ownership of their learning and make decisions about how to accomplish the task, fostering autonomy and intrinsic motivation (Ellis, 2003). Learners' individual needs, interests, and goals are considered in task design, ensuring that tasks are relevant, meaningful, and engaging for them.

Long (2015) suggests task-based language teaching (TBLT) as an educational approach that is concentrated on significant and real-world tasks. According to Long, tasks give students the chance to communicate through language, fostering the growth of both linguistic and pragmatic competence.

According to Ellis (2009), meticulous task planning is necessary for successful TBLT implementation. He stresses the significance of striking a balance between the attention on task (language fluency) and concentration on form (language accuracy) during instruction. According to Ellis, providing opportunities for students to pay attention to and focus on language form inside purposeful tasks promotes more efficient language learning.

The idea of communication tasks is presented by Willis (1996) as the foundation of TBLT. According to her, communication exercises should model real-world language use and encourage fruitful dialogue among students. Willis stresses the value of engaging students in deliberate language usage that goes beyond drills and repetitive practice.

Skehan (1998) examines, within the TBLT paradigm, the cognitive aspects of language learning. In order to encourage language development, he emphasizes the

importance of task complexity. According to Skehan, cognitive engagement can result from assignments that are sufficiently difficult, which can help learners produce more language and improve their overall competency.

1.1.3.3. Task-based Learning in the Classroom

In a TBL classroom, the role of the teacher shifts from the traditional transmitter of knowledge to that of a facilitator and language resource. The teacher provides guidance, supports learners in the completion of tasks, and offers feedback on language use and accuracy. Error correction is viewed as an opportunity for learning and improvement, rather than a negative aspect (Willis & Willis, 2007).

TBL aligns with constructivist learning theories, such as Piaget's cognitive constructivism and Bruner's social constructivism. Learners actively construct their knowledge through meaningful tasks, drawing upon their prior knowledge and making connections to new language input (Piaget, 1970; Bruner, 1986). TBL provides a rich environment for learners to engage in authentic language use, negotiate meaning, and collaboratively construct their understanding of language structures and functions.

1.1.4. Constructivist theory

Constructivist theories provide a solid theoretical foundation for understanding the learning processes underlying Task-Based Learning (TBL) and its effectiveness in improving high school students' English communicative competence. Two prominent constructivist theories that align with TBL principles are Piaget's cognitive constructivism and Bruner's social constructivism.

Piaget's cognitive constructivism posits that learners actively construct knowledge through their interactions with the environment (Piaget, 1970). According to Piaget, learners assimilate new information into their existing mental structures (schemas) and accommodate these structures to accommodate new information. Within a TBL context, learners engage in purposeful tasks that require them to draw upon their prior knowledge and make connections to new language input. By actively participating in these tasks, learners construct their understanding of language structures and functions, gradually refining and expanding their linguistic competence.

Bruner's social constructivism emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural context in learning (Bruner, 1986). According to Bruner, learning is a social process that occurs through collaboration, negotiation, and shared meaning-making. In the TBL approach, learners are encouraged to work collaboratively in pairs or groups, engaging in meaningful communication and problem-solving activities. Through social interaction, learners not only exchange ideas and knowledge but also develop an understanding of cultural nuances, language variations, and communicative norms. The collaborative nature of TBL tasks fosters the construction of knowledge through social interactions, enhancing learners' communicative competence.

Both Piaget's and Bruner's theories emphasize the learner's active role in constructing knowledge and meaning. Within a TBL framework, learners actively engage in tasks that require them to use language in authentic, meaningful ways. This active engagement allows learners to make connections between new language input and their existing knowledge, leading to the construction of new linguistic skills and competencies.

Constructivist theories also highlight the importance of learner autonomy and self-regulation in the learning process. Learners are encouraged to take ownership of their learning, set goals, and monitor their progress. In TBL, learners have the opportunity to make decisions about how to accomplish tasks, choose relevant language resources, and reflect on their performance. This autonomy promotes learners' motivation, responsibility, and metacognitive awareness, enhancing their language learning experience. By incorporating constructivist principles into TBL, educators can create a learner-centered environment that fosters active engagement, collaborative learning, and the construction of knowledge. Learners become active participants in their own learning, building upon their prior knowledge and experiences to develop their communicative competence in English.

1.1.5. Sociocultural Theory

Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory places a strong emphasis on how social interaction and cultural setting affect cognitive development and language acquisition. Learning, in accordance with Vygotsky (1978), is a socially mediated process that takes place via interaction and cooperation with others. According to

Vygotsky, people pick up information and abilities through engaging in cultural activities in their social surroundings.

Sociocultural theory emphasizes the value of meaningful and genuine interpersonal contact in the context of language learning. Language acquisition is seen as a process assisted and scaffolded by more experienced people, such as instructors, classmates, and family members. To build knowledge and improve their communication skills, students participate in conversations, group projects, and collaborative activities. Learners internalize language and cultural norms through interaction, meaning negotiation, and exposure to various language settings (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

1.1.6. Zone of Proximal Development

Vygotsky defined the zone of proximal development as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (1978, p. 86).

Although Vygotsky added a few more general observations regarding the zone of proximal development, he never defined what constitutes "problem-solving under adult assistance or in partnership with more skilled peers" in his literature. Without such an assessment, it is impossible to identify with any degree of precision the level of prospective development and, by extension, the zone of proximal growth in general.

1.1.7. Experiential Learning

An educational strategy known as experiential learning places a strong emphasis on learning via hands-on experience and reflection. It makes the argument that people learn best when they actively participate in and critically reflect on real-world experiences. Concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation are all stages of the learning process (Kolb, 2014).

Experiential learning encourages the use of genuine and significant projects that relate language to practical circumstances. The use of communicative activities that allow learners to put their language abilities to use in real-world situations, such as role-plays, simulations, and problem-solving exercises, is recommended. Through

these interactions, students improve their language skills, cultural sensitivity, and communication abilities. Learning via reflection enables students to draw connections, examine their language use, and pinpoint areas for development.

1.1.8. Concrete Experience

Concrete experiences that entail active participation and first-hand exposure to the subject matter serve as the foundation for learning. These encounters lay the groundwork for learning and act as a starting point for introspection (Kolb, 2014). According to research, giving students practical experiences improves their capacity for information retention and application. Bandura (1977) and Kolb (1984) studies have shown that practical activities encourage deeper learning because they provide students the chance to actively examine and modify the subject matter. Concrete experiences improve memory and long-term comprehension by stimulating sensory input and activating several brain regions.

1.1.9. Reflective Observation

The act of reflecting is essential to learning. Students are urged to critically reflect on their personal experiences, ideas, and emotions. Learners obtain new insights and construct new understandings by watching and evaluating their experiences from various angles (Kolb, 2014).

Reflection encourages learners to examine their assumptions, consider alternative perspectives, and identify areas for improvement. Through reflection, learners can extract valuable insights, learn from their mistakes, and make meaningful connections between theory and practice.

The advantages of reflective observation in the learning process have been emphasized by a number of research. Researchers like Moon (2001) and Schön (1983) have stressed the importance of reflection in transformational learning and professional growth. Metacognition is facilitated by reflection, which enables students to become aware of their own thought processes and track their own

learning. Students may make sense of their experiences, pinpoint their strengths and limitations, and create growth plans by critically reflecting on them.

1.2. Antecedents

Xiuwen (2021) is the author of an article titled "Exploration and Practice of Task-Based Language Teaching in College English Teaching," which was published in the journal *Education and Information Technologies*. The article discusses the implementation of task-based language teaching (TBLT) in college-level English courses in China. Specifically, he examines the impact of TBLT on students' language proficiency, motivation, and overall learning outcomes. The study involved a group of 62 college students who participated in a task-based course, with data collected through pre- and post-course assessments, as well as student surveys. The findings suggest that TBLT can be an effective approach to promoting language learning, as it allows students to engage in meaningful, communicative activities that are relevant to their interests and needs. He also provides recommendations for future research and practice in TBLT in EFL contexts.

An experiment titled "How does task-based learning foster the development of speaking skills in the young learner classroom?" was conducted by Santos, V. (2018). This study's primary goal was to comprehend and apply task-based learning. The study concluded that while designing speaking exercises for younger students, teachers should take certain factors into account. The degree of task autonomy, the significance of pretend play in a child's environment, the activity's enjoyment factor, and the right amount of difficulty to engage students and match their skill levels were the recommended criteria.

Boonkit (2010) investigated the efficacy of a task-based strategy in the development of non-native speakers' speaking abilities in another research. By using eighteen undergraduate students as study participants, the project used action research. TBLT was used in the classroom, and in order to identify the students' speaking skills and limitations, interviews and recordings of the students' performances were conducted. The study's findings showed that the task-based educational approach was beneficial since it gave participants chances to communicate in various contexts. Students' self-confidence increased, and their speaking strengths were demonstrated by the originality of their ideas, while their speaking shortcomings were revealed by grammatical and pronunciation problems.

Albino (2017) made an effort to gauge how much ninth grade EFL students' speaking fluency has improved as a result of TBLT. Picture description tasks were used in this case study. In terms of speech output, grammatical precision, utterance elaborations, and interactive language development, students' speaking has improved. The results showed that the learners' vocabulary had grown and they were encouraged to talk in the target language without hesitation.

This last study conducted by Jiménez and Herrera (2018) aimed to investigate the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in improving the performance of Ecuadorian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The study involved a group of 20 high school students in Ecuador who participated in a TBLT course over a period of six weeks. The data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests, as well as observations and interviews with the students and the teacher. The results of the study showed that the implementation of TBLT had a positive effect on the students' performance in all language skills, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

In particular, the students' speaking and writing skills improved significantly, which can be attributed to the communicative nature of the tasks used in the course. The study also found that the students were more motivated and engaged in the learning process when using TBLT.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Context

This research was carried out at “Sagrado Corazón” High School, from Esmeraldas, Ecuador, in the school year 2023. This school is located on Olmedo Avenue and Eugenio Espejo Street. In there, all the school levels, Elementary and High School, have English teaching from A1 to B1.

2.2. Type of Research

This investigation followed a mixed approach, which is the combination of the quantitative approach, that is a research methodology used in empirical studies to collect and analyze numerical data to draw statistical inferences and make generalizations about a population) and the qualitative approach (a research methodology used to explore and understand the complexities of human behavior, experiences, and social phenomena).

The scope of this investigation was descriptive, which is a scientific method used to observe and describe the characteristics of a population, phenomenon, or event without attempting to influence or manipulate the variables being studied.

2.3. Population and Sample

The population of the study was composed of 120 students and one English Teacher from the Sagrado Corazón School in Esmeraldas, Ecuador.

The "Sagrado Corazón" Fiscomisional High School has the mission of promoting an integral, innovative, and quality education for adolescents and young people, framed in the pedagogy of Christ, training their teachers, committed to Christian and democratic values and principles, in an atmosphere of brotherhood and affection, transmitting knowledge to the students and developing their skills; guide them towards independence of judgment and promote their personal deployment and social development, educating them towards self-determination within

responsibility towards others, towards the recognition of ethical norms and values, tolerance and respect for the approaches of others.

The sample was selected intentionally. It focused on a group of Junior High School students who are involved in the school program (20 students) and one English teacher were included in the sample.

2.4. Hypothesis

Implementing an innovative Task-Based Didactic Strategy improves senior high school students' English communicative competence.

2.5. Variables

The variables in this study have been defined as follows:

Communicative Competence: Communicative Competence is stated as the collective proficiency level of high school students in using the target language across Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing skills.

Task-Based Didactic Strategy: The Task-Based Didactic Strategy is defined as a set of language teaching and learning activities designed to enhance high school students' communicative competence.

The Operationalization of these variables is shown in Appendix A.

2.6. Methods of investigation

The methods that will be used are:

Analysis and Synthesis: They were used to analyze the bibliography of the concepts and synthesize the most notorious theories and the previous background of the topics

that support this investigation. It will also be used to analyze the important information.

Hermeneutics: It was used to interpret the most important aspects of the theoretical framework. Additionally, it will contribute to make an interpretation of the outcomes from the technique applications.

2.7. Techniques of investigation

The techniques that were used are:

Test: This was applied to the research to make a test of the students' communicative competence and English performance in an overall view.

Documentary review: This technique was used for searching theories, concepts, antecedents, and applications of the several aspects and subtopics of this investigation.

2.8. Instruments

In order to collect the convenient data for this investigation, the instruments were designed regarding the previously mentioned different techniques:

For the technique of the test, a questionnaire was applied, it will contain 4 items, which are about speaking, listening, reading and writing activities, respectively.

For the documentary review, content analysis was used.

2.9. Data Processing

The information that was obtained from the application of the techniques will be processed manually. The data will be taken to different tables and graphics.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

A ten-question interview, which was applied to 20 students from a high school, was assessed with a rubric.

Overall, the results were valued to be quite favorable after analyzing the interview replies using the grading criteria. The majority of the participants' scores were between "Regular" and "Excellent," indicating strengths in language ability, fluency, clarity, and relevance to the questions designed. The scores for each criterion are shown in Table 1.

The analysis of the participants' learning preferences points to a wide range of interests and preferences in various contexts and domains for language acquisition. The results are summarized in the following ways. By observing the Fluency category, 20% of students scored Excellent, 25% of students showed Very Good Fluency, and 25% of students showed Fair Fluency. On the other hand, 30% of pupils received a poor rating. Three criteria—Clarity, Relevance to the Questions, and Vocabulary—display a parallel breakdown that provides a thorough understanding of pupils' linguistic proficiency.

Table 1
Students' language level according to the interview (n=20)

Criteria	E	%	VG	%	F	%	P	%
Fluency	4	20	5	25	5	25	6	30
Clarity	3	15	3	15	4	20	6	30
Relevance to the questions	2	10	4	20	4	20	6	30
Vocabulary	7	35	6	30	5	25	2	10
Total	16	100	18	100	18	100	20	100

Note: E= Excellent; VG= Very good; F=Fair; P= poor. Source: Interview. Source: Questionnaire

An overview of the interests of students in several facets of learning English is provided in Table 2. The data show how preferences are distributed throughout various learning contexts.

The findings show that students have differing preferences when it comes to certain facets of learning English. Notably, students' interests in learning through debates on global issues were significant, as seen by the 25.0% of them who strongly preferred this learning scenario. Furthermore, investigating English via cultural themes attracted a lot of attention, indicating the students' preference for a culturally integrated language learning environment.

Table 2

Students' interests in learning the English language

Items	S P	%	P	%	N	%	Not P.	%	S not p.	%
Learning through real-life scenarios	6	21.4	8	28.5	3	10.7	2	10.7	1	3.6
Learning through discussions about global issues	7	25.0	6	21.4	4	14.2	1	3.6	2	7.1
Exploring English through cultural topics	6	21.4	6	21.4	3	10.7	4	14.2	1	3.6
Preparing for future academic or degree goals through English	3	10.7	6	21.4	5	17.8	4	14.2	2	7.1

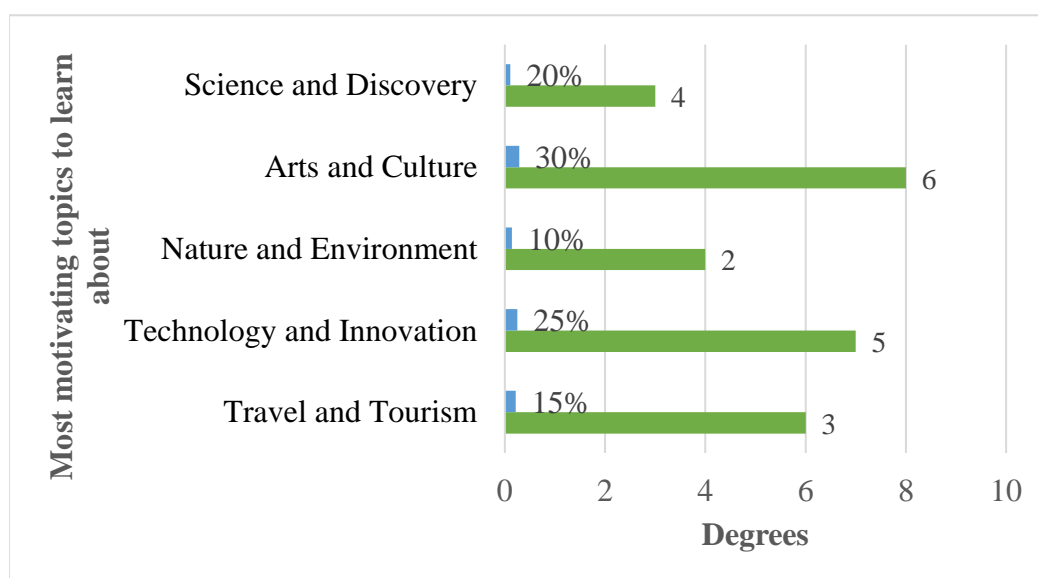
Note: SP= Strongly Prefer; P= Prefer; N= Neither prefer nor not prefer; Not P.= Not Prefer; S not P= Strongly not Prefer. Source: Survey applied to students.

A general revision of students' interests in a variety of fascinating themes or issues related to learning English is provided in Figure 1 The distribution of preferences across several thematic areas is displayed by the data.

The information shows how different pupils' levels of interest in fascinating subjects change when they study English. Remarkably, Arts & Culture was the most popular topic, drawing interest from 30% of students. Technology and Innovation came in second, with a significant preference shown by 25% for this topic area. In contrast, just 10.7% of students expressed enthusiasm for Science and Discovery. This indicates a lower level of interest in this topic.

Figure 1

Most motivating topics to learn about for the high school students surveyed.



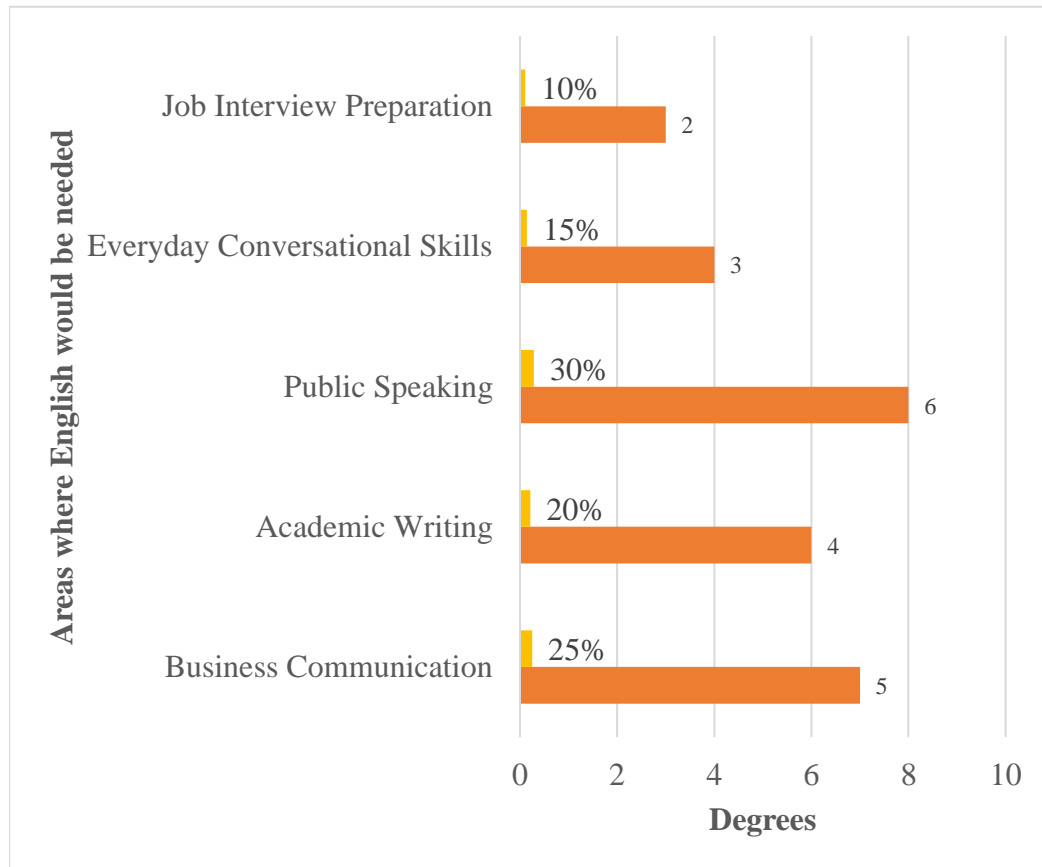
Source: Survey applied to students.

The students' opinions on the perceived value of several English language themes for their future development in the personal or professional fields are shown in Figure 2. The information displayed shows how preferences are distributed throughout various language learning domains.

The information shows how participants felt about the perceived value of several English language themes for their future development, whether personally or professionally. Remarkably, public speaking was the issue most people felt was advantageous, with 30% recognizing its significance. Business communication came in second, with 25% of respondents saying they thought it was important for future development. Conversely, Job Interview Preparation was viewed as having a lower degree of significance, as just 15% of participants thought it was important.

Figure 2

Foreseen Social areas where the students would need to master English.



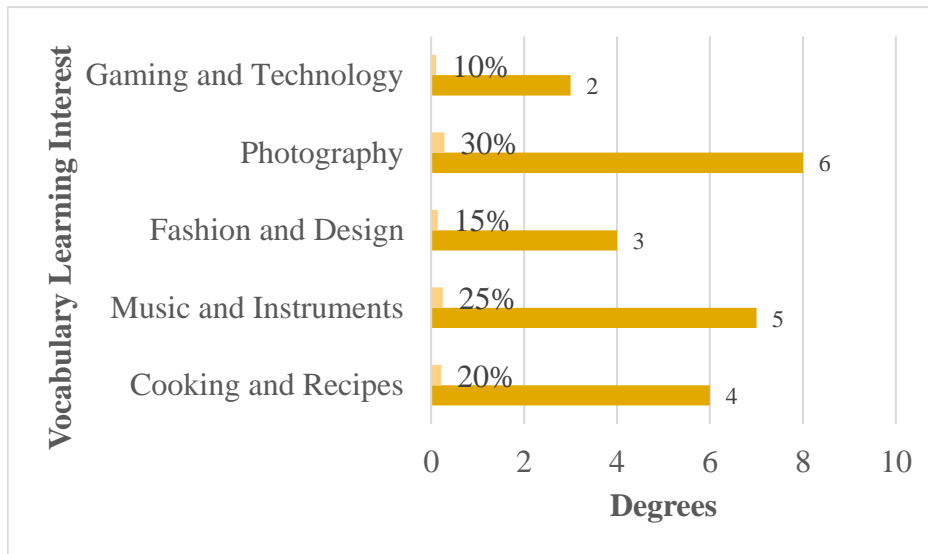
Source: Survey applied to students.

An overview of the participants' reported interest in acquiring English vocabulary related to particular interests can be seen in Figure 3. The information shows how preferences are distributed throughout different lexical areas connected to hobbies.

Four individuals expressed interest in cooking and recipes, making up 20% of the total interest. A slightly higher percentage of participants—five, or 25% of the total—expressed interest in music and instruments. Three people showed interest in fashion and design, accounting for 15% of the total interest. Among the subjects that attracted the most attention, photography ranked first with 6 participants, or 30% of the total. However, with just 2 participants—or 10% of the total interest—gaming and technology had a lesser degree of interest, but still noteworthy.

Figure 3

Vocabulary learning interesting topics for students.



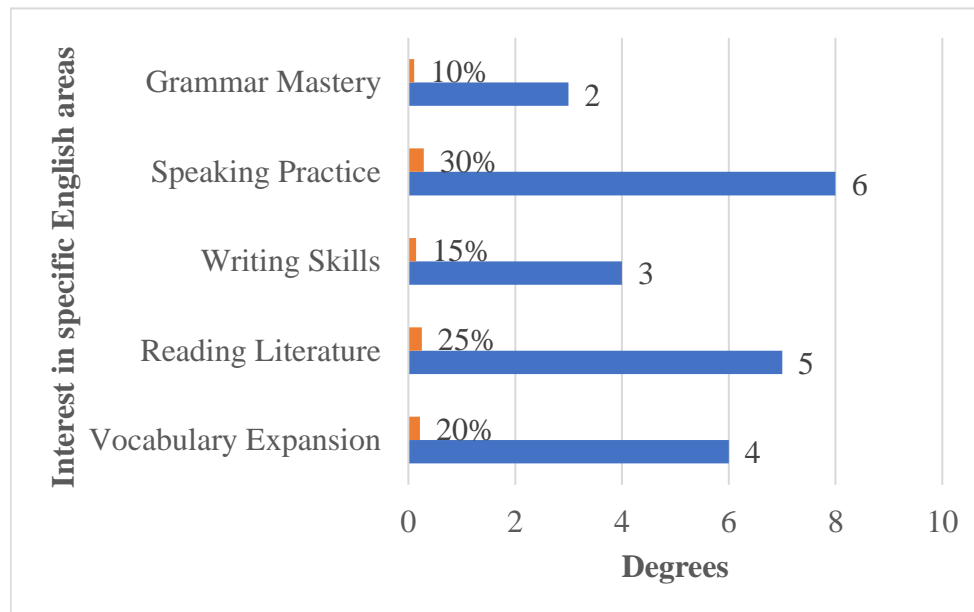
Source: Survey.

Another general review of the participants who reported specific interests in specific language learning areas is seen in Figure 4. This information explains how interests are distributed through different aspects of the English Language.

The highest interest was observed in Speaking Practice, with 30.00% (6 students) expressing a keen focus on honing their oral communication skills. Following closely, Reading Literature garnered 25.00% interest, with 5 students expressing a preference for literary exploration. Vocabulary Expansion ranked third in terms of interest, attracting 20.00% (4 students) who aimed to enhance their word knowledge. Writing Skills and Grammar Mastery held the least priority, with 15.00% (3 students) and 10.00% (2 students) interest, respectively. These findings provide insights into the diverse preferences of students in language development, highlighting a predominant emphasis on spoken communication skills.

Figure 4

Students' interest areas of language learning.



Source: Survey applied to students

After having all the needed information gathered, a set of task-based activities was designed as part of a proposal of possible activities that constitute theoretical and practical foundations of a strategy to improve English communicative competence in high school students.

A theoretical evolution toward more engaging and meaningful language learning experiences has been brought about in the dynamic field of language education by the confluence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Constructivism, and Sociocultural Theory. The objective of this thesis proposal is to integrate these significant educational frameworks, investigating their theoretical foundations and real-world implementations to establish the foundation for the development of tactics targeted at improving high school students' communicative proficiency in English.

The ideas of CLT are perfectly aligned with Task-Based Language Teaching, as promoted by Willis and Willis (2007), Willis and Skehan (2007), and Skehan (1998). The cornerstone of TBLT language acquisition is the accomplishment of meaningful

activities. These activities simulate real-world conversation and provide students the chance to use their language abilities in context, creating a more dynamic and learner-centered atmosphere. Constructivism, which has its roots in the theories of Piaget (1952) and Vygotsky (1978), holds that students actively create their own knowledge via interaction with the classroom setting. This approach emphasizes the value of assigning students activities that call for cooperation, critical thinking, and problem-solving in the context of language acquisition. Vygotsky (1978) introduced the Sociocultural Theory, which highlights the significance of social interactions and cultural background in the formation of cognition. This approach highlights the value of social contact and teamwork in the process of learning a language.

Through the integration of concepts from Constructivism, TBLT, CLT, and Sociocultural Theory, this research attempts to present a comprehensive framework that guides educational practices and offers useful advice for teachers.

Objective: To establish a set of theoretical and practical foundations for the design of strategies that will improve English communicative competence in high school students.

Speaking Activity: Act Out a Shopping Scene

Step 1: Overview

Describe the exercise and its goal, which is to practice speaking by simulating real-life shopping settings.

Give a brief description of the environment (a market) and the roles (clients and retailers).

Step 2: Assigning Roles

Assign students' responsibilities at random or in a deliberate manner to ensure that a mix of shopkeeper and customer roles are filled.

Step 3: Time for Preparation

Give students a few minutes to prepare important vocabulary words, idioms, and sentences linked to shopping in English.

Step 4: Act out

Students act out dialogues in role-playing. Urge them to use courteous language, haggle over rates, and request information.

Step 5: Give a briefing

Lead a class discussion to resolve issues, showcase effective language usage, and reflect on the role-play when it has finished.

Listening activity: Synopsis of News Reports

Step 1: Overview

Explain that your job is to listen to a news story and summarize the important aspects.

Step 2: Engaging in Listening

For the pupils, play the news report. Give your audience a reason to listen intently (e.g., identifying significant events, key facts).

Step 3: Making Notes

While listening to the news story, students scribble down key ideas and pertinent facts in their notes.

Step 4: Talk in Groups

Students should work in small groups to share notes and produce a summary together.

Step 5: Synopsis of Presentation

As each group gives a summary of their work to the class, speaking and listening skills are developed simultaneously.

Reading Activity: Examining Travel Brochures

Step 1: Overview

Describe the assignment: creating a presentation on a place and examining a travel brochure.

Step 2: Analysis of Brochures

Hand out travel pamphlets or offer electronic versions. Pupils examine the material, taking note of the main points, activities, and specifics.

Step 3: Talk in Groups

In small groups, students deliberate over their results, exchanging perspectives and organizing their speeches.

Step 4: Get Ready for Your Presentation

Using the data from the brochure, each group creates a presentation that highlights the main characteristics of the place.

Step 5: Showcase

Groups share their results while honing their oral communication and reading comprehension abilities.

Writing Activity: Group Narrative Composing

Step 1: Overview

Explain the assignment: to improve narrative writing abilities, groups will write stories.

Step 2: Establishing a Group

Assemble in pairs or small groups to ensure a range of language competence levels and diversity.

Step 3: Planning Your Story

Students work together to design their story's plot, cast of characters, and location.

Step 4: Composing Phase

By penning paragraphs or portions of the tale in turn, each student participates in the writing process.

Step 5: Examine and Modify

Groups edit and revise their joint tale, paying particular attention to language choice, coherence, and consistency.

Step 6: Sharing as groups present their collaborative work, they encourage students' writing and speaking abilities by having them share their experiences with the class.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

Upon analyzing several research about language teaching approaches and student achievements, a complex web of correlations and patterns emerges, providing a detailed understanding of the complexities of successful language instruction. The research conducted by Xiuwen (2021), Santos (2018), Boonkit (2010), Jiménez and Herrera (2018), and others on Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has demonstrated the strong effectiveness of TBLT in a variety of educational settings, from Chinese college-level English courses to classrooms with younger students and non-native speakers. Xiuwen's careful research uses in-depth pre- and post-course evaluations, as well as perceptive student questionnaires, to examine the complex effects of TBLT on language ability, motivation, and general learning outcomes. This coincidence highlights TBLT's global applicability and gives researchers and educators confidence to use it in a variety of settings, including classes with younger learners, non-native speaker situations, and college-level courses.

The effort of Santos focuses on the subtleties of task-based learning for younger students, clarifying important elements such task autonomy, the function of pretend play, the enjoyment component, and the careful balancing act between difficulty while creating speaking activities. Boonkit's research, which is conducted in the setting of non-native speakers, reveals via detailed interviews and performance recordings the transformational power of TBLT, enhancing self-confidence and revealing speaking strengths and limits. This knowledge may be used by researchers and educators to create speaking exercises that imitate real-world scenarios, improving language competency as well as everyday communication skills.

According to Jiménez and Herrera's study, TBLT improves comprehensive language abilities in Ecuadorian high school students. During a six-week intervention, speaking and writing proficiency significantly improved.

This theme carries over nicely into the domain of real-world language use, as demonstrated by the role-playing shopping scenario and the interview-based speaking competence evaluation. As the consistently positive findings of the interviews highlight, both approaches agree on how crucial it is to promote the use of language in everyday life. The usefulness of real-life simulations was confirmed by the participants, who not

only shown remarkable language competence but also noteworthy qualities in fluency, clarity, and relevancy to the asked questions. This coincidence provides important information for curriculum designers, allowing them to incorporate subjects that pupils find interesting and motivating for language acquisition.

Furthermore, there is a painful relationship revealed by the complex alignment between students' thematic interests and their perception of the relevance of language topics for future growth. The alignment of vocabulary interests and preferences in language learning domains highlights the critical need for customized and interest-based language instruction. Thirty percent of students find Arts and Culture to be a compelling theme, with Technology and Innovation coming in second with a considerable preference of twenty-five percent. On the other hand, 10.7% less interest in Science and Discovery indicates a lower degree of connection with this specific subject. By focusing on areas of greater interest, such as spoken communication or culturally relevant themes, researchers and educators may utilize this knowledge to customize language programs and improve the overall learning experience.

As it progresses, the combination of these discovered occurrences and presumptions creates a strong case for the use of flexible, useful, and interest-based language education strategies. This method, which accommodates the various requirements and inclinations of students, has the potential to improve both student engagement and competency, which sums up the fundamentals of successful language learning.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

This study was performed to improve the communicative skills of high school students in English through a comprehensive investigation, with the primary goal of suggesting a Task-Based didactic approach that is customized to the needs of pupils from Esmeraldas. The particular goals were important stops along the road.

The first goal was to describe the language proficiency of the students to establish a baseline for understanding their present competency. The results not only established a standard for communicative competency but also guided the next stages in the creation of a focused instructional approach.

The second aim, which identified students' general and specialized interests in studying English, shed light on the wide range of theme choices among the student body. This information was essential to develop a plan that would match language acquisition with their innate motivations and promote higher levels of involvement and engagement.

The third and fourth goals focused on determining what subjects senior high school students find most inspiring and which social contexts require proficiency in English. These realizations helped to ensure that the themes and settings chosen for Task-Based activities were relevant to students' lives and goals for the future.

The fifth goal was achieved with the creation of a sample of Task-Based activities by taking into account the students' language proficiency, interests, stimulating subjects, and possible social circumstances. These exercises are designed not just to improve language skills but also to pique students' interest and motivation, which improves learning outcomes and makes the process more pleasurable.

This thesis presents a thorough analysis and strategic design of the Task-Based didactic strategy as a solid response to the main research question regarding the efficacious application of Task-Based Teaching to address low English communicative competence among high school students in Esmeraldas. The suggested method offers a customized

approach to language instruction, striving to improve communicative skills and create a supportive and stimulating environment for learning English. It does this by incorporating the recognized language levels, student interests, stimulating themes, and social circumstances.

This study adds to the body of knowledge on language teaching tactics and has applications for educators and legislators who want to tackle particular difficulties in raising the level of English proficiency among Esmeraldas High School students.

5.2 Recommendations for teachers.

It is advised to incorporate task-based techniques into the language curriculum, highlighting theme areas that appeal to students' interests, by building on the synthesis of results and antecedents. A more interesting and productive learning environment may be created by developing a curriculum that integrates language instruction with discussions of global challenges, technology and innovation, and arts and culture.

Even though this study offers significant insights, there is still a need for more investigation. Subsequent studies might explore the enduring effects of task-oriented methods, taking into account the durability of enhanced language skills. Furthermore, delving into the dynamics of learners' choices as exemplified by the perceived significance of particular linguistic themes provides opportunities for further in-depth investigation.

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Appendix A

Operationalization of the variables

Objective: To identify students' general and specific interests in learning the English language.

Objectives	Variables	Conceptual definition	Operational Definition	Dimensions	Indicators	Techniques	Items
1. To diagnose the students' English Language Communicative Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependent Variable: Communicative Competence • Independent Variable: Task-Based Didactic Strategy refers 	Communicative Competence is defined as the overall ability of an individual to effectively and appropriately use language to interact and communicate with others in various real-life situations.	Communicative Competence is stated as the collective proficiency level of high school students in using the target language across Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening • Speaking • Reading • Writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening Comprehension Activity • Roleplay • Fluency • Pronunciation • Vocabulary • Reading Comprehension Activity • Grammar • Vocabulary • Paragraph 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test 	1
2. To plan Task-Based listening activities.							2
3. To plan Task-Based speaking activities.							3
4. To plan Task-Based reading activities.							4

<p>5. To plan Task-Based writing activities.</p>	<p>Innovative activities</p>	<p>to an instructional approach used in education, particularly in language teaching and learning, that centers on designing and implementing activities or tasks that engage students in authentic, real-life language use.</p>	<p>of language teaching and learning activities designed to enhance high school students' communicative competence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-Task • While-Task • Post-Task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening Activities • Speaking Activities • Reading Activities • Writing Activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentary review 	
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Criteria	Excellent	Regular	Basic	Poor
Score	4	3	2	1
Fluency	Demonstrates exceptional engagement, fluency, and spontaneity in responses; speaks confidently, with minimal pauses, and articulates ideas with ease	Engages actively, speaks fluently with occasional minor pauses, and conveys thoughts clearly and coherently.	Shows moderate engagement, with noticeable pauses, occasional hesitations, and some difficulty expressing ideas cohesively.	Demonstrates minimal engagement, frequent pauses, hesitations, and struggles to articulate thoughts clearly.
Clarity	Provides comprehensive, detailed, and vivid responses, offering rich details and clear explanations.	Provides clear and sufficiently detailed responses, offering coherent explanations and relevant details.	Offers some detail but lacks clarity or occasionally presents incomplete explanations.	Responses lack clarity, detail, and coherence, presenting vague or incomplete explanations.
Relevance to Questions	Consistently maintains relevance, addressing each question directly and effectively with well-structured responses.	Mostly remains on topic, addressing questions appropriately, with occasional minor deviations.	Demonstrates some deviation from the questions, occasionally losing focus on the topic.	Frequently deviates from the questions, showing limited relevance and coherence.
Language Proficiency	Demonstrates advanced language proficiency, using a wide range of vocabulary, accurate grammar, and complex sentence structures.	Displays good language proficiency with minor errors, using varied vocabulary and mostly correct grammar.	Shows basic language proficiency, with noticeable errors in grammar and limited vocabulary.	Language proficiency is below expectations, with frequent errors and limited vocabulary.

Appendix B Objective: To characterize the students' language level.

Appendix C



English Communicative Competence Interview Questionnaire

1. What do you enjoy doing when you're not at school?
2. How do you like to learn new things or study for school?
3. What helps you the most when learning English?
4. Can you share a story about something fun or interesting that happened while learning English?
5. What kind of books, movies, or TV shows do you like? Have you seen or read anything in English that you really enjoyed?
6. What makes a language class or learning English enjoyable for you?
7. Are there any specific parts of English that you find exciting or cool?
8. Do you prefer doing schoolwork by yourself or with friends? Why?
9. How do you usually spend time practicing English outside of school?
10. Can you tell me about a time when you felt really proud of something you did in English class?

Appendix D

Document Review

Objective: To design activities based on Task-Based Language Teaching.

Nro.	Document title	Author/s	URL, DOI or place to find it	Relevant information collected
1.	Task-Based Language Teaching: What Does It Really Mean?	Voxy	https://voxy.com/blog/task-based-language-teaching-really-mean/	TBLT is centered on meaningful tasks using target language (the language being learned) in real-life situations, as opposed to focusing on the target language on its own without any relatable or concrete context.
2.	The Task-Based Learning Approach and its Relationship to Class Management	Joselin Aravena Quintanilla, Paloma Méndez Bravo, Génesis Ordóñez Alarcón, M. Jesús Palominos Zamora, Paula Retamal Hernández, Valentina Tori Soto	https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=6529360	The Task-Based Language Teaching Approach (TBLT) contributes to improving classroom management and environment in the EFL context in Santiago through focusing on students' interests when designing and planning the tasks for the lessons according to their realities.
3.	Introduction to Task-Based Learning (TBL)	Sheila Corwin	https://www.teacheracademy.eu/blog/task-based-learning/	Jane Willis (1996) came up with A Framework for Task-Based Learning that includes coming up with tasks that revolve around a certain topic.

				This can be very useful for teachers looking for task ideas to engage their students during a lesson.
4.	A Task-based approach	Richard Frost	https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/teachers/knowning-subject/articles/task-based-approach	This article presents an overview of a task-based learning approach (TBL) and highlights its advantages over the more traditional Present, Practice, Produce (PPP) approach.