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ESCUELA DE DERECHO, EDUCACIÓN Y SOCIEDAD

CARRERA DE PEDAGOGIA DE LOS IDIOMAS NACIONALES Y EXTRANJEROS

RESEARCH REPORT

STRATEGY WITH THE USE OF AI TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION ABILITIES

INFORME DE INVESTIGACIÓN:

ESTRATEGIA CON EL USO DE IA PARA MEJORAR LAS HABILIDADES DE COMPRENSIÓN LECTORA DE LOS ESTUDIANTES

PREVIO AL TÍTULO ACADÉMICO DE:

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LÍNEA DE INVESTIGACIÓN:

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COMITÉ EVALUADOR

COMO MIEMBROS DEL COMITÉ EVALUADOR DEL TRABAJO DE INTEGRACIÓN CURRICULAR DE LA PUCE ESMERALDAS, CERTIFICAMOS QUE HEMOS LEÍDO EL TRABAJO ELABORADO POR MOLINA VERA LUIS SEBASTIAN, TITULADO *ESTRATEGIA CON EL USO DE IA PARA MEJORAR LAS HABILIDADES DE COMPRENSIÓN LECTORA DE LOS ESTUDIANTES*, Y SUGERIMOS SU APROBACIÓN POR CUMPLIR CON LOS REQUISITOS ESTABLECIDOS PARA LA OBTENCIÓN DEL TÍTULO DE LICENCIADA EN PEDAGOGÍA DE LOS IDIOMAS.

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La aprobación y aceptación final de este trabajo están condicionadas a la entrega, por parte del/la estudiante, de las copias finales del mismo. Por medio de la presente, certifico que he leído este trabajo elaborado bajo mi dirección y recomiendo que sea aceptado por cumplir con los requisitos exigidos para la obtención del grado correspondiente.

CERTIFICADO DEL DIRECTOR

Yo, Dr. Haydeé Ramírez Lozada, en calidad de directora de este trabajo, certifico haber revisado que el mismo cumple los requisitos de calidad, originalidad y presentación exigibles y que se han incorporado las sugerencias del tribunal al trabajo de grado.

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Dr. Haydeé Ramírez Lozada, PhD

DECLARACIÓN DEL AUTOR

Yo, Molina Vera Luis Sebastian, afirmo que la investigación contenida en el presente informe de investigación es única, auténtica y de carácter personal.

El contenido de este trabajo constituye una responsabilidad legal y académica legítima de la autora y de la PUCE Esmeraldas.

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Molina Vera Luis Sebastian
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DEDICATORIA

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Abstract

This research aims to improve university students' reading comprehension skills through the implementation of a strategy supported by Artificial Intelligence (AI). The study arises from the observation that students in Esmeraldas, Ecuador, face persistent difficulties in understanding and analyzing academic texts in English, often due to a lack of motivation or limited use of modern pedagogical strategies by teachers. The general objective of this research is to use an educational AI-based strategy that enhances reading comprehension, making the process more dynamic, interactive, and personalized. The methodology follows a mixed approach and a pre and post-test method, identifying students' main weaknesses by applying the AI-supported strategy shown in the research, and comparing results before and after the implementation. The expected outcomes include an increase in students' ability to interpret and retain information, as well as better engagement in reading tasks. The research also highlights the importance of integrating technological tools into language teaching, not only to strengthen linguistic skills but also to adapt education to current technological realities. At last, the study contributes to the ongoing efforts to modernize English teaching practices and promote more autonomous and motivated learners.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, reading comprehension, English learning, educational strategy, technology.

Resumen

Esta investigación tiene como objetivo mejorar las habilidades de comprensión lectora de estudiantes universitarios mediante la implementación de una estrategia apoyada en Inteligencia Artificial (IA). El estudio surge de la observación de que los estudiantes en Esmeraldas, Ecuador, enfrentan dificultades persistentes para comprender y analizar textos académicos en inglés, a menudo debido a una falta de motivación o al uso limitado, por parte de los docentes, de estrategias pedagógicas modernas. El objetivo general de esta investigación es utilizar una estrategia educativa basada en IA que mejore la comprensión lectora, haciendo el proceso más dinámico, interactivo y personalizado. La metodología sigue un enfoque mixto y un método de pre-prueba y posprueba, identificando las principales debilidades de los estudiantes mediante la aplicación de la estrategia apoyada en IA mostrada en la investigación, y comparando los resultados antes y después de la implementación. Los resultados esperados incluyen un aumento en la capacidad de los estudiantes para interpretar y retener información, así como una mayor participación en las tareas de lectura. La investigación también destaca la importancia de integrar herramientas tecnológicas en la enseñanza de idiomas, no solo para fortalecer las habilidades lingüísticas, sino también para adaptar la educación a las realidades tecnológicas actuales. Finalmente, el estudio contribuye a los esfuerzos en curso para modernizar las prácticas de enseñanza del inglés y promover aprendices más autónomos y motivados.

Palabras clave: inteligencia artificial, comprensión lectora, aprendizaje del inglés, estrategia educativa, tecnología.

Introduction

In the most recent centuries, teaching has emerged as the most common topic to talk about, the world is in constant change, along with the old ways of teaching such as methods, strategies or tools used in teaching are also changing. Classes were based mainly on books, blackboards, and printed handouts, but thanks to the emergence of technological advances, new tools have appeared that helped to improve or facilitate the process of learning in most of the schools or universities worldwide, and more specifically, an improvement has been noticed in the universities of Esmeraldas city. This improvement has come mainly from the implementation of technology in education. According to Smith et al., (2023) education and technology are both important as they continue to grow side by side, supporting the improvement of other important areas to foster human civilization advancement.

As said before, the gradual implementation of technology in society brought a lot of changes, in that sense Susilo et al., (2023) said that only by concept, technology can be understood as the application of human knowledge that was created to facilitate human tasks to make the span of life double or three times more comfortable. After some time, technology was applied to education, it led to create tools such as AI (ChatGPT, Deepseek, DeepL, etc), and how impactful it had become when used to improve education itself. According to Irisity (2024) “Artificial Intelligence or AI is a type of technology that allows computers to perform tasks that usually require human intelligence” (p.4), meaning that AI derives from technology and it was created to work for us, without any doubt it became a reliable and helpful aid when it comes to teaching, because it simplifies the process of learning for both students and teachers. This can be considered an important point to take into consideration, especially for teachers who do

not possess such tools and teach a second language to learners (such as English, French, and so on), technology will offer them with the necessary tools to achieve a true and meaningful learning for their students and show them how to enjoy the process of learning, changing the curriculum in order to adapt it regarding to the students' preferences, weaknesses, and capabilities. Also, Budhwar (2017) says that "the integration of technology into the classroom is a great way to reach the diversity in learning styles" (p. 55). This is mainly true due to the flexibility of technology, it can address each one of the students' preferences like audiovisual, kinesthetic and more.

Even if AI itself can serve the role as a teacher, according to Susilo et al., (2023) the teacher plays a very meaningful role that cannot be replaced by machine, as teachers can use these tools to mold the characteristics and personality of future members of society. Before AI was implemented in education, a perceivable problem was observed related to students' skills, possibly thanks to the lack of tools, strategies and techniques, there were some details that have room for improvement such as reading, reading is one of the four main skills of humankind, listening, speaking and writing are important as well, but we cannot overlook reading or any of the abilities, everything is important when learning a new language, we ought to master everything, from the roots, to the leaves, all of this is necessary in order to be able to speak a new language efficiently and with barely any mistakes. It has been noted that university students are having troubles while reading long and important pieces of information and other things such as articles from authors that published their works from an-English speaking country. For that reason and to help them understand these works, a strategy was proposed to aid these necessities and improve students' capabilities to be able to read clearly and with few mistakes while at the same time understanding all the information read.

Reading is a very important ability that goes unnoticed in class, and that should change, all teachers should start prioritizing more the use of reading in their classrooms. Thanks to AI there are many new tools to use that can help teachers overcome this situation and change things for the better.

Problem statement

In the current educational environment, university students in Esmeraldas are presenting problems in reading comprehension, they find it difficult to engage or be fond of reading. Additionally, teachers do not pay attention to reading, they might think that the other abilities such as listening or speaking are more important, thus leaving reading aside. It could also be that teachers do not have enough modern strategies to address these gaps in the students, this causes students to present problems when reading, understanding, and analyzing information thoroughly, especially long pieces of information such as articles or novels. It is a problem that has remained persistent for a long time and has not received the necessary attention to be solved. For that reason, the following question arises:

Question

How can the use of a strategy based on A.I improve reading comprehension?

General Objective

To evaluate the effectiveness of a strategy that improves students´ reading comprehension abilities based on the use of an A.I.

Specific Objectives

- To identify the students´ difficulties and estimated level when they read.

- To implement a specific reading comprehension strategy and test based on the A2 level.
- To compare the results of the students after an intervention.
- To determine the effectiveness of the strategy.

Four Basic Skills

When it comes to literature, learning or even communication, the four basic skills play an important role. The four basic skills are known as reading, listening, speaking and writing, the majority of people possess those skills, and also, when we are trying to learn a new language, sooner or later we realize that we need to have some sort of expertise in each one of them in order to properly learn a new language at its fullest. Al-Husseini and Khuraim (2010, as cited in Al-Jiboury, 2024) "stated that the importance of the four language skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, becomes evident for any language learner, especially learning it as an acquired language" (p.2).

Reading

Also seen as a way to communicate, and one of the most common skills that most human beings possess. Reading is an important ability that allows communication in some manner, and through reading, we can analyze and comprehend the different symbols, figures and images that represent a specific language. "Reading is a complex, purposeful, interactive, comprehending, flexible activity that takes considerable time and resources to develop. Reading is flexible, meaning that the reader employs a range of strategies to read efficiently "(Bojovic, 2010, p.1). In that sense, we can affirm that reading is a process that takes time and cannot be developed overnight and will require constant practice for improvements. It may be

hard at the beginning but once it is learned it is never forgotten. Also, according to Patel and Jain (2008):

Reading is certainly an important activity for expanding knowledge of a language. Without any doubt after domaining reading, the knowledge about a language will increase, we will be able to understand and remember words, ideas, complex sentences and even grammar. For many reasons, reading is important and it should be given due importance.

Reading Comprehension

Reading Comprehension is a complex process that involves the use of many things, such as cognitive and linguistic elements that are used or applied when someone wants to comprehend a text. Reading comprehension always involves the text and the reader; it is a relation that will never be different.

According to Snow (2002), reading comprehension can be defined as “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language” (p. 11). If we continuously interact with texts and written language, soon we will be able to construct our own meaning, our own concepts or ideas about the text.

Fadila (2024) also states that, “reading comprehension is a fundamental skill essential for academic success and lifelong learning” (p. 1). This is completely true, not only helps with academic success, but also in our whole lives, being able to comprehend successfully different types of information or data will help us to learn anything faster than ever.

Sociocultural development

The theory of sociocultural development, a very important theory created by Vygotsky, explores humankind as one being individually, and how humans (especially children) need to interact with humans or someone who knows a lot in order to learn, learn a language, culture, manners of speech and rules of society. For those reasons Rahmatirad (2020) said that "there is a big difference in the development of the child when he/she is in the company of more knowledgeable other" (p. 25). This development occurs often when we are surrounded with people that know more than us, mostly teachers, parents, peers and babysitters are the ones that can apply this theory more effectively, when we are near someone, we are both learning and teaching. According to Vygotsky, learning is a cultural phenomenon, whereas we learn from each other's culture and customs.

Zone of proximal development

The zone of proximal development is a theory created by Vygotsky, it explains how learning can be done, the theory says that in our brain occurs a process when we are learning something, there are two moments that this theory tells us, the first one is that part that we can do without any help, a book, a teacher, internet, nothing like that, just us alone, that is the current state or ability that we currently have, then after some guidance, we will be prepared enough to stop receiving that help and do that thing by ourselves, that's the zone of proximal development, is what we can and will be able to do.

Approach

An approach can be considered like a sort of theory, but it is more related to a specific way of doing things, it is like the process you must do to accomplish something, theories are more complex and complete than approaches, they can also serve as the solution to some issues or problems presented in certain areas, such as education, it can also be considered a philosophy, focused on psychological or cognitive aspects.

The Task Based Learning Approach

The Task Based Learning Approach is an approach that consist of students doing meaningful task for them, it is usually divided in 3 parts but some authors consider that there are really 4 parts, here students are going to develop a task in real life situations, enhancing oral communication but developing the use of the language as well. To have a deeper knowledge about the definition of a task, Nunan (2004) said that:

> A pedagogical task is a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form.(p. 4)

In that sense we can say that a pedagogical task is something that leads learners to go out of the box, go beyond the basic while comprehending and producing knowledge that will lead to results. Since the task is so meaningful, this means that the students can make the language the tool that they need to accomplish their goal, it can also enhance abilities such as reading or writing, according to how the task is developed by the teacher. Many of the tasks provided by the teacher should be meaningful for students, in other words, the tasks should matter to them, be something that they might like.

Antecedents

Fresneda (2022) centered in a control and experimental group, he applied some strategies based on reading comprehension and got some results before students did the SCOLA test, and after applying strategies based on reading comprehension, he observed that the students got better results after the exam.

Hidayat (2024) performed an experimental and control group, he used an AI personalized platform for reading comprehension, and the control group who did not use it, the results showed that the group who used the platform got better abilities in reading comprehension than the control group.

Panchana and Barreiro (2022) conducted a survey where they asked teachers to use strategies based on reading comprehension to improve their students´ reading abilities using the process of pre-reading, while reading and post reading. The results of the activities showed that students improved a lot since they started using the activities whit the strategies.

Nugrahawati (2024) did a course of inferential and literal reading that were held during 14 meetings, using the help of AI, he covered many skills that are needed for the improvement of literal reading.

Li, X., & Zhang, Y. (2024) used some AIs to generate adaptive texts for the students, the AI observed and carefully measured students' reading levels, adjusting the texts based on their performance, offering them a personalized, scaffolded learning experience and facilitating learning and improvement. After the use of the AI texts, students showed improvement in reading comprehension.

Weise (2024) designed a smart AI reading Assistant for reading comprehension, it was designed to help students with reading comprehension problems, tailoring them through the texts and giving them the needed assistance at the right moment.

Chea, P., & Xiao, Y. (2024) conducted a research, experimental group and interviews at Dali university in China, the sample consisted of 12 international students and 12 Chinese, they were divided in two groups, group A had access to AI, and group B was taught using traditional methods.

Cahyani, Dewi & Darmawan (2023) conducted a survey and tests, they gathered data from 200 students whereas at least 75% of the students regularly used AI as a tool and the other remaining relied on it completely, the tests they took showed that the overreliance of AI was not beneficial and that it hindered critical reading, but on the other hand, students who used AI moderately got better scores.

Silor & Silor (2025) conducted an experimental group and pre and post tests, they used AI with a group of students and with the other group they did not, resulting in the experimental group who used AI to foster reading comprehension get higher scores than the control group who did not use AI at all.

Methodological Framework

This research was carried out in Ecuador, Esmeraldas city, the population that was used for this research was university students, whereas a total of 46 students were selected as population, but only 20 out of the 46 were considered as sample. The level of the students was around A2-B1 as stated on the CEFR. They were around 18-20 years old.

The research was based mainly on a mixed approach, because both numerical and qualitative data were obtained and gathered as results, to later be examined thoroughly,

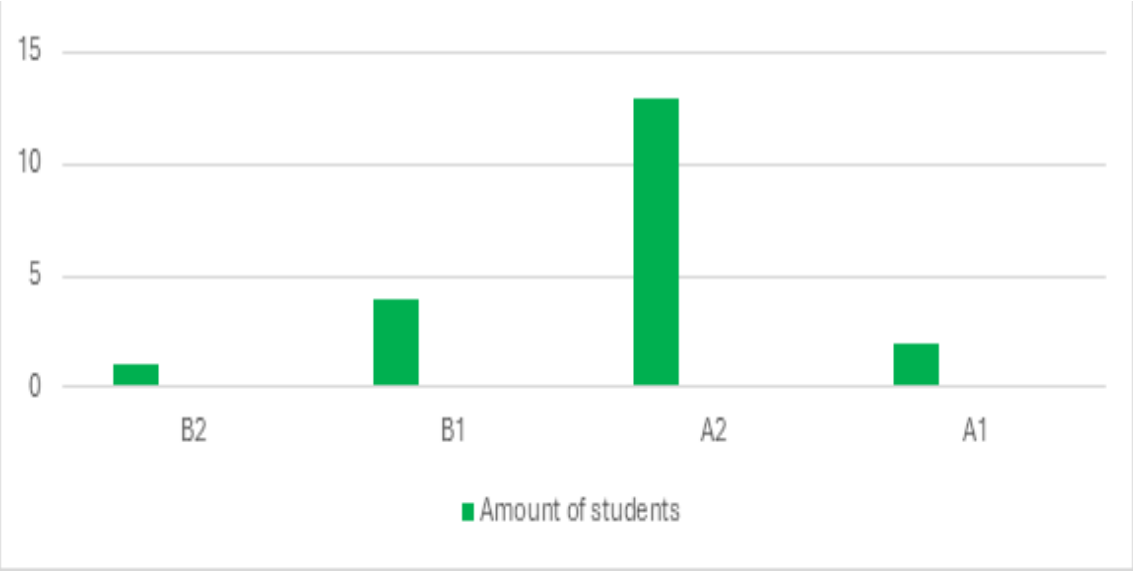
the research followed a quasi-experiment design as well to measure the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable, using a descriptive scope to explain the effectiveness of the strategy, it also used the pre and post test method, statistical analysis to analyze the numerical data and convergent design, because both qualitative and quantitative data are analyzed at the same time, as instruments a standardized test, with a questionnaire as instrument.

Results

The results in Figure 1 shows that out of the 20 students who have participated in the pre-test, most of the students are currently on an A2 Level of reading comprehension, few are on B1 and only one student achieved B2 Level of reading comprehension, and some remain on A1 Level of reading comprehension, this proves that there is a gap on the ability of reading comprehension of university students to meet the requirements needed for the level that they are currently in.

Figure 1

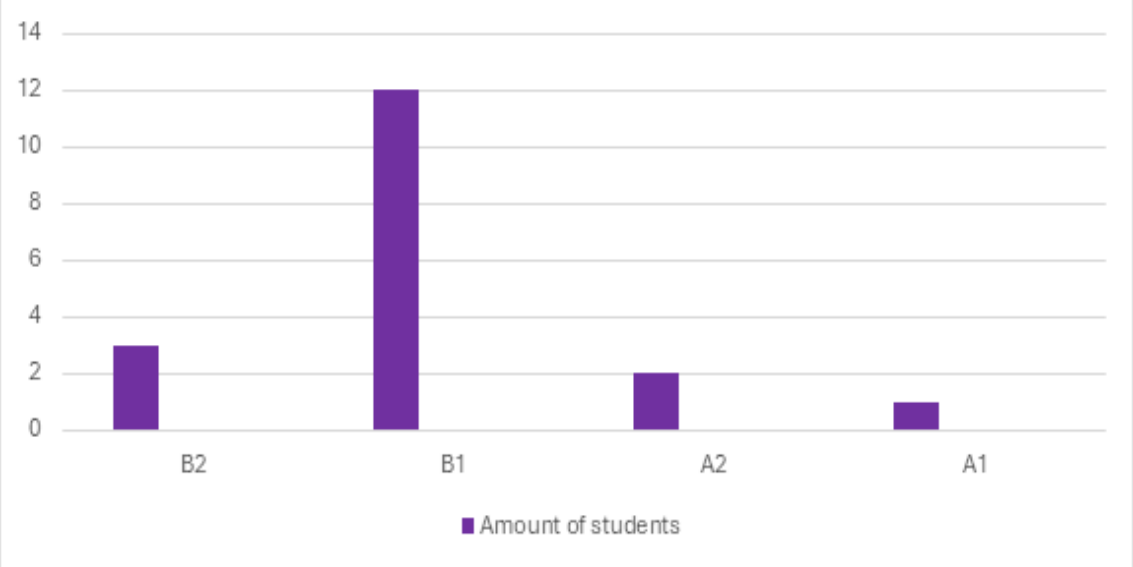
Students Average Level after Pre-test



In the second Figure, the results showed an improvement, many students that were in the A2 level before are now on the B1 Level after the intervention, and even some achieved B2 level. This proves that the implementation of the strategy was highly effective and truly helped the students to improve their reading comprehension skills, meaning that this strategy is useful and might be adapted to more educational institutions.

Figure 2

Students Average Level after Post-test



Proposal

A proposal is suggested to accomplish this research´s objective:

AI Enhanced Reading Comprehension (AI-ERC created by Zambrano et al.)

Stage 1: AI Reading Preparation

- Select free AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Rewordify)
- Adapt texts to students' level
- Simplify vocabulary & sentences
- Choose engaging topics

Stage 2: Guided Reading with AI

Teacher-led sessions with AI integration

Practice skimming & scanning

Create mind maps using AI

Work on group & individual tasks

Stage 3: Critical Evaluation

Compare AI-generated info with scientific articles

Answer comparative questions

Discuss pros & cons of AI in learning

Teacher monitors & assesses outcomes

In step #1, the teacher will be the one that settles the floor for the following steps, providing students with the prompts to generate the reading comprehension test through it, adapting it to their own levels, simplifying words and selecting the topics of their own.

In step #2, the teacher will lead some sessions or classes integrating AI, while working with groups or individual tasks, the teacher will ask students to use prompts to generate questions for practicing scanning and skimming or even use mind maps to simplify or synthetize the information.

Finally, in step #3 students will compare their results and the test generated with other scientific articles, will ask the AI to generate comparative questions to respond to them and discuss the pros and cons of AI in Learning. Lastly, the teacher will assess the outcomes and monitor the whole process.

Discussion

Many authors agree that using AI is beneficial for students who are learning another language such as English, the results showed that, AI truly helped students to learn better the foreign language, many authors recognize that AI is an important tool that opens many doors and ways to improve learning in classroom, for that reason, many researchers are investigating about AI´s input in education.

As shown in Figure 1, many students were in A2 Level, showing that they were still improving in each ability, but especially in reading, the average Level was A2, but regardless of that, there were some students who reached a higher level than A2, proving that some students already know how to read properly.

Then, as shown in Figure 2 many students achieved a higher level such as B1, proving that the strategy used with them is highly effective and that it can be a gamechanger, especially in education, since there are lots of ways to get advantage of this and help students to surpass and enhance their reading skills.

A significant improvement was observed in the findings, it is strongly related to some research, the findings corroborate the findings of Hidayat (2024), whose experimental group using an AI-personalized platform outperformed the control group, and Silor & Silor (2025), who also recorded higher scores in an AI-assisted experimental group. More specifically, the success of the AI-ERC strategy, particularly its first stage of adapting texts and simplifying vocabulary, offers practical validation for the work of Li

& Zhang (2024), who demonstrated that AI-generated adaptive texts facilitate a scaffolded and personalized learning experience leading to improved comprehension. The guided sessions and critical evaluation stages of AI-ERC were likely to foster a deeper cognitive engagement, that is necessary for comprehension, a process that Snow (2002) defines as "simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning." This structured support seems to have provided the necessary comprehension for students to develop greater understanding and abilities to read.

Conclusions

As a conclusion, we can say that the implementation of the AI-Enhanced Reading Comprehension (AI-ERC) strategy proved to be highly effective in improving the English reading comprehension level of university students. The post-test results, which showed most participants progressing from CEFR level A2 to B1/B2, confirm that the use of AI tools can address traditional pedagogical gaps and significantly enhance this key skill that is called reading. This study also confirms that artificial intelligence serves as a powerful facilitator and tool, not a replacement of the teachers. The intervention's success has proved that the strategy design (the three-stage AI-ERC strategy) where the educator's role evolved from a mere knowledge transmitter to a guide and critical mediator of technology, proving that the strategy is useful, and it works. This is also proof that the strategy itself is nothing without a solid methodology, strategy, or mindset.

Finally, the research validates that the application of the strategy or methodological model (AI-ERC) can be adapted in similar educational contexts with limited resources; by leveraging free AI tools, it offers a practical solution to modernize teaching practices, increase student motivation, and promote autonomous learning. Therefore, it is recommended to integrate these types of technology-supported strategies

into teacher training programs to foster the necessary competencies for nowadays, in a technology-driven world.

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