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THESIS REPORT:

LUDIC – COOPERATIVE BASED DIDACTIC STRATEGY TO
IMPROVE THE STUDENTS´ COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE
IN ENGLISH AT THE A1 LEVEL ACCORDING TO THE
COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR
LANGUAGES AT PUCE ESMERALDAS, 2018

TESIS DE GRADO:

ESTRATEGIA DIDÁCTICA LÚDICA – COOPERATIVA PARA
MEJORAR LA COMPETENCIA COMUNICATIVA EN INGLÉS DE
LOS ESTUDIANTES EN EL NIVEL A1 DE ACUERDO AL
MARCO COMÚN EUROPEO DE REFERENCIA PARA LAS
LENGUAS EN LA PUCE ESMERALDAS, 2018

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Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copies of the dissertation to the Graduate College. I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

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STATEMENT BY THE AUTOR

I, Viviana Elizabeth Clavijo Cedeño, affirm that the investigation in the present thesis report research is totally unique, authentic, and personal.

The content of this research is a limited legal and academic responsibility of the author and “PUCESE.”

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ABSTRACT

With the purpose to design a didactic strategy to improve the students' communicative competence at the A1 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages, a qualitative - quantitative investigation was done in the PUCE Esmeraldas, from July 20th to October 15th, 2018. The analytic, synthetic and hermeneutic methods were used. The techniques of survey and observation were applied to twenty students and five English teachers of the A1 level of General English. The results revealed that English teachers use the following strategies: group work, pair work, and the students' learning strategies are: asking questions and practicing. However, the students' communicative competence is affected by difficulties in listening and speaking. The teachers need a ludic strategy to help the students overcome the difficulties in the diagnosed skills. This coincides with previous studies about the need to design a ludic strategy in relation to the students' needs. The mentioned results permitted the design of a Ludic Cooperative – based didactic strategy based on students' cooperative work through activities in which games, songs and role plays are used.

KEY WORDS: Ludic – cooperative; didactic strategy; communicative competence; General English; A1 level.

RESUMEN

Con el propósito de diseñar una estrategia didáctica para mejorar la competencia comunicativa en el Nivel 1 de Inglés de los estudiantes, de acuerdo al Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las lenguas, una investigación cualitativa – cuantitativa fue realizada en la PUCE Esmeraldas, desde Julio 20 a Octubre 15, del 2018. Fueron usados los métodos analítico, sintético y hermenéutico. Las técnicas de encuesta y observación fueron aplicadas a 20 estudiantes y 5 maestros de Inglés de los niveles A1 de Inglés general. Los resultados revelaron que los profesores de Inglés usan las siguientes estrategias: trabajo en grupos, trabajo en pareja, y las estrategias de aprendizaje de los estudiantes son: elaborar preguntas y a través de la práctica. Sin embargo, la competencia comunicativa en los estudiantes se ve afectada por dificultades en la escucha y el habla. Los maestros necesitan una estrategia lúdica para ayudar a los estudiantes a superar las dificultades en las destrezas diagnosticadas. Esto coincide con los estudios previos sobre la necesidad de diseñar una estrategia lúdica que tenga relación con las necesidades de los estudiantes. Los resultados mencionados permitieron el diseño de una estrategia didáctica lúdica – cooperativa, basada en el trabajo cooperativo de los estudiantes a través de actividades en las que los juegos, las canciones y juegos de rol son empleados.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Lúdica – cooperativa; estrategia didáctica; competencia comunicativa; Inglés general; Nivel A1.

INTRODUCTION

THEME PRESENTATION

English is a worldwide language that opens many opportunities in many aspects of life: business, communication, medicine, meeting other cultures and others.

In Ecuador, the Ministry of Education has included, in a compulsory way, the teaching of the English language in the primary, secondary and superior levels. In addition, the government has provided English books for students and teachers' training. Besides, teachers are also well prepared to teach the language at the different levels of education.

Despite of all of these efforts to improve the teaching- learning process in the English language, the students are still presenting difficulties in the development of the communicative competence.

The problems emerge for different reasons, lack of interest in the students to learn the English language, some teachers do not use the appropriate method to catch the students' attention, in some cases they do not have the enough implements for an appropriate teaching.

All these aspects do not allow the students to learn the English language and develop the communicative competence. However it is possible to improve this situation if teachers teach the students about the importance of learning the English language, also if the institutions provide the teachers with constant training and materials and implements to work adequately in class, if teachers start using innovative and funny methods to teach them; because that is the crucial part, to catch the interest of the students when teachers are giving the explanations and doing activities; because it is in that part in which the students interiorize the information received.

For this reason, the Ministry of Education is still working in the improvement of the English teaching process. As Herrera (2016) mentioned, this can be achieved by means of the implementation of a program; consisting of leveling the students' knowledge gradually to give them more scholastic and rental chances.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The majority of the students in Esmeraldas do not go to the universities with the required level of English. There are diverse issues concerning the English language teaching; one of the principal is the difficulties that the students present when studying the English language as a subject.

The current requirement is that the students start the university studies with the B1 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. However, the existing difficulties related with the poverty of didactic strategies in some teachers, and the lack of inclusion of the English subject in the curricular design in previous courses, in some schools, have conditioned that the majority of the students come to the universities with an A1.1 level; in some cases with a lower level, what means, a total ignorance of the English language. This situation occurs at PUCE Esmeraldas in the first English levels.

According to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages, students can develop a communicative competence at the A1 level if they develop listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities until that level. Nevertheless, the previous investigations done with some teachers that teach to this level has permitted to verify that the students of the first levels have lack of development in these macro language skills.

In order to face the challenging situation expressed before, it is necessary to look for effective teaching strategies to teach, which may contribute to improve the students` communicative competence in English since the first level, which is A1. Therefore, this investigation has, as the main problem to be solved:

Which didactic strategy can help to improve the students` communicative competence in English, at the A1 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages in the PUCE Esmeraldas, 2018?

JUSTIFICATION

English is a global language, for this reason it is taught in all the educational institutions. However, the majority of the students present difficulties in the English learning process, one of them is the lack of interest to learn this language.

In the majority of cases, teachers do not have enough knowledge about effective didactic strategies to use for developing the students' communicative competence in the English language. It causes that the students get bored and lose interest to pay attention in class and consequently they cannot learn. One important aspect that help the students learn is the attention; through it they can catch the information, interiorize it and learn.

With this research, a Ludic Cooperative based didactic strategy was designed as a tool that English teachers should use in the PUCE Esmeraldas to improve the English level of beginners. Teachers, in order to help the students to have and maintain interest in learning, should be active when teaching, they must use a variety of resources and activities such as games, songs, role plays, among others.

The use of a Ludic Cooperative based didactic strategy in class is going to be through the implementation of games, music, role – plays, which is very important and necessary to help the students feel motivated, interested in learning the language. Teachers should implement them when teaching, to activate the students' brain in the improvement of the communicative competence of the English language.

This research contributes to the development of the didactics of English in the PUCE Esmeraldas and in other schools in this province and the country.

OBJECTIVES

General Objective:

To design a didactic strategy to improve the students` communicative competence in English at the A1 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages, in the PUCE Esmeraldas, 2018.

Specific Objectives:

1. To diagnose the A1 level students` communicative competence in the English language.
2. To determine the English teachers` didactic strategies to teach English to students at the A1 level of English.
3. To identify the A1 level students` English learning strategies.

CHAPTER I

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Scientific – theoretical basis

1.1.1 What are didactic strategies?

De la Torre (2005) explained the term didactic strategy as “the technique that is employed to manage, in a more efficient and systematic manner, the teaching – learning process” (p.4). He mentioned the components that interact in the process; the teacher, the students, the subjects, the learning context and the methods to use.

Teachers and students can use didactic strategies. The teacher uses them as tools that help to reinforce the teaching learning process. And for the students they are the actions used to learn. Dinuta (2013) affirms that “didactic strategies offer solutions for teaching and learning by combining different methods, processes, didactic means and forms of specific organization” (p.299).

Didactic strategies allow teachers and students to improve the teaching – learning process, through a variety of activities.

1.1.2 Strategies to use for teaching English language learners (ELLs)

When teaching English, it is important to use different strategies in order to catch the students’ attention. Haynes and Zacarian (1998) have proposed seven strategies that professors can use when teaching. They are: Provide comprehensible input for ELLs, make lessons visual, link new information to prior knowledge, determine key concepts for the unit and define language and content objects for each, modify vocabulary instruction for ELLs, use cooperative learning strategies and modify testing and homework for ELLs. For a better understanding of the strategies mentioned, each of them are explained below.

- Provide comprehensible input for ELLs.- Krashen (1981) said that a language can be learned by hearing and comprehending the essence of it. It is important that

teachers use mimics, gestures, body movement and speak in a clear way to the students in order to provide a good explanation of the lesson.

- Make lessons visual.- Students learn better when they associate words with images. For that reason, it is good to teach them using materials such as: flashcards, drawings, pictures, videos.
- Link new information to prior knowledge.- When the teacher wants to introduce a new topic, it is recommendable to ask the students about the knowledge they have about the topic. For example, professors can ask for information about the experiences they have related to it or about the references, they have heard around the world. In that way teachers can realize to which extend students know about culture.
- Determine key concepts for the unit and define language and content objects for each.- Teachers in each class have to show the students, on the board, the objectives that they want to fulfill in each lesson, and they have to be designed according to the content.
- Modify vocabulary instruction for English language learners (ELLs).- Professors must teach the students new words and phrases using images that help them interiorize the meaning of the words. Another aspect is that teachers have to teach the students the pronunciation of the words and phrases by showing them how to do it.
- Use cooperative learning activities.- Students can work in class in pairs or in groups of four. In that way students can share ideas and opinions about any topic. They can be grouped mixed, it means students that know more about the subject with the students that have some problems of learning, providing cooperation in the learning process among the students. In this kind of work, students need to be supervised. The teacher has to walk around the students in order to control that they are working.
- Modify testing and homework for ELLs.- Referring to testing students, teachers have to take into consideration that they should vary the way in which they assess

students learning by oral and writing skills, and it must be in concordance with the level the students have. For that, the knowledge the teacher has taught to the students is what he or she is going to assess. In the same way, teachers must provide the students with some kind of guide or relevant information about the topics they teach in class in order to let the students study for the evaluations.

All these strategies proposed by Haynes and Zacarian (1998) are very important in the teaching learning process and they are connected each other. Each strategy has its own function in the teaching process because it helps the teacher in relation to how to teach the students, how to manage, control and guide the class. Also, it helps the students in their learning process because it guides them to acquire the knowledge in an organized way.

1.1.3 Strategies used to learn

Weinstein and Smith (2016) mentioned six strategies that the students can use when studying:

1. Spaced practice.- Students must study every day, around four or five hours, and check the contents they received in class, and also give a brief reading to the previous lessons in order to refresh the knowledge.
2. Retrieval practice.- Trying to write about things the students can remember. For example if the lesson is about verbs, the student can start writing the verbs that he or she already knows, and then check which verbs are missing in the list and study them. Another way to study is by means of practicing with another person. That person can give the student a comment about how to do it in a better way, if it is the case of a presentation.
3. Elaboration.- The students can formulate questions and look for the answers in their notes, and analyze them with their partners. In addition, the students can relate the contents with memories or experiences they have.
4. Interleaving.- The students study the ideas one by one, isolated, then in disorder. But before passing from one idea to another it is important to understand and have the previous idea clear.

5. Concrete examples.- Students can study by means of using the examples that the teacher provides in the classroom and also they can look for other examples in the internet.
6. Dual coding.- In dual coding students learn by combining words and visuals. For example, when children are learning, it is recommendable to use images, pictures of the words they are trying to learn. For adult students for example, they can try to say the meaning of the word in order to interiorize it.

The mentioned strategies may be good for developing the students' English language communicative competence because each strategy helps the students as a guide to study in an organized manner. If the students spend at least two hours a day to study consciously, if they ask the teacher when they have doubts, if they study by means of looking for information using other resources, if they practice the language every day they can improve and learn the language.

1.1.4 Communicative competence

1.1.4.1 Definition of Communicative Competence

Hymes (1972) referring to communicative competence said that it “enables language users to convey their messages to others and to understand others' messages within specific contexts. It also implies the language learners' ability to relate what is learnt in the classroom to the outside world” (p.102).

When a student has developed communicative competence, he or she is able to give and receive messages to other students in any context and they are capable to understand them. Also, the learner can apply what he or she has learned in the class outside the classroom.

Leightbown and Spada (1999) and Power, (2003) state that communicative competence “is defined as learners' ability to efficiently express what they mean in the target language and successfully achieve communication in real – life situations” (p.161). It means that the communicative competence has to deal with the capacity and performance that the students have to communicate using the English language in all aspects of life.

Brown (2007), referring to Canale and Swain (1980), stated four components of communicative competence. They are grammatical competence; that has to deal with the structure of the words, the coherence and correct order of the sentences and how they are pronounced. Discourse competence; how to join sentences to form an understandable text. Sociolinguistic competence; referred to how it is the language used in the different context of communication. Strategic competence; that contains two elements: verbal and non – verbal communication.

1.1.5 What is the Common European Framework of Reference for languages?

According to the Council of Europe, the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (1971) gives a general guide for the creation of the syllabus related to language, information about the exams, referred to the texts that the students and the teachers are going to use. It also mentions what kind of language students need to learn in order to communicate adequately (p.1).

This guide contains information about the different levels of English that students can achieve. The levels are: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2 and are ascending from the easy contents to the complex ones.

In the following table, it is shown the common reference levels that are designed at different stages according to the necessities students may have to learn the English language.

Table 1. Different levels of English according to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages

Basic User	A1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students comprehend and use simple expressions of daily life and they can use them to communicate. - Students are able to introduce themselves and others. - Students can formulate and respond questions using wh, referring to personal details.
	A2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students are capable to comprehend basic information of family, shopping and work. - Students can communicate using simple expressions related to daily activities. - Students are able to make a description of their background.
Independent User	B1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students are able to manage aspects referred to familiar contexts, also aspects related to school, work and fun. - Students can create stories about things they are interested in. - Students are able to talk about life, personal experiences and hopes, and share in brief their thoughts and plans for the future.
	B2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students can comprehend ideas related to topics of their specialization studies. - Students can interact with a certain level of fluency and spontaneity with native speakers. - Students can analyze texts and talk about advantages and disadvantages of any topic.
Proficient User	C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students are able to understand longer texts and make an analysis of them. - Students are capable to express themselves in a fluent and spontaneous way. - Students use the language for academic, social and professional intentions. - Students can write texts in a clear, well structured, and organized way.
	C2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students can comprehend things that they hear or read. In addition, they can make summaries of written or spoken information. - Students are able to express in a precise, fluent and spontaneous manner, even in complex aspects.

Source: The Common European Framework of Reference for languages (1971). Learning, teaching, assessment.

1.1.6 Neuroscience in the learning process

1.1.6.1 What is Neuroscience?

Neuroscience is a science that studies how the neurons in the brain and the nervous system work either in people or in animals, and in cases of health and disease. People, in order to do many activities in the daily life, like studying, working, meeting other people, speaking, writing, listening, reading, analyzing concepts, are guided by the brain.

Since the beginning of life, people are constantly learning and some scientists in the world are analyzing how the brain works in order to know it deeply and with the purpose of taking advantage of the positive and negative things it has.

Vorhauser (2011) presented three big elements that contain the features of the learning process and have direct relation with the functioning of the neurons in the human brain. These elements are: How students learn, limitations to learning and implications for best practices. But, I will explain below the two most important.

1.1.6.1.1 How students learn

Each student has its own way to learn, it depends on different aspects like age, level in which he or she is, social status, if the student presents disabilities, motivation he or she has to learn. In this part, some of the aspects related to how people learn will be mentioned.

- a. Neural networks and neuroplasticity. - Since children, people grow with around 100 billion neurons and with the pass of the years those neurons suffer some changes. They are in charge of receiving and transmitting information from the environment.
- b. Attention. - Attention is an important part in the learning process, because it is through observation by means of which students can get the idea of the teachers` explanation. Students focus their attention on things they are interested in and cannot pay attention for a long time, because the cells are designed to work in short times and by intervals because they need to recuperate and refocus.

- c. Memory.- At the moment to observe something, the neurons are working in saving the information in some parts of the human brain, then the information is memorized either for a short and long time. Contents that students have learned by analyzing tend to last much more time than things that students have learned by the memorization process.
- d. Use it or lose it.- Neuroscientists have studied how neurons work and they have discovered that if a student receives mental and persistent training, through activities like reasoning, analyzing, creating, the appearance of the new neurons can occur leaving aside the old ones. For that reason, it is essential to let the students reason and construct their own knowledge in order to activate and stimulate the neurons.
- e. Motivation, failure and learning.- Motivation is an important aspect in the learning process because it helps the students to learn the language successfully. Also, errors are an essential part when learning because in that way teachers can notice which of the knowledge they have taught need to be checked and reinforced.
- f. Conditions for learning.- It is important that the students have good conditions when learning; for example, the environment in which the students study must be quiet, without noise, in order to let them concentrate.
- g. Physical.- Students must be in good physical conditions when learning; it means they have to take care of their nutrition and the correct time of sleeping, that must be around 8 hours.
- h. Collaboration.- People learn by means of observation and experiences they gain through the pass of the time, and also they learn from the different environments in which they are. When the students work in groups, they develop the sense of collaboration, because they have to work together to complete a task or achieve some goals.

It is very important to take into consideration these aspects related to Neuroscience, in order to know deeply and take advantage of the things that have to deal with the functioning of the neurons in the brain with the purpose of developing communicative competence in English.

1.1.6.1.2 Limitations to learning

In the learning process, inside of the human brain there is a part called prefrontal cortex that is in charge of planning, organizing, reasoning, understanding information and taking decisions. Studies done by scientists indicate that this part of the brain continues evolving through the pass of the time; this indicates that the human being is capable to learn and achieve many things in life.

But people have also some aspects that limit their learning process; they are the stress and learning barriers.

- a. Stress.- Students do not respond in the same way when they have stress, some of them take advantage of the positive things they have and try to handle the difficulties, while others feel bad, with problems on focusing their attention to learn. For that reason, it is very important that teachers know their students in order to teach them using strategies that help them to forget their stress and feel comfortable in the class, because it is in that way in which the students are going to learn successfully.
- b. Learning barriers.- There are three aspects that are involved in the learning process and if they are not managed correctly they can cause problems in it. They are:
 - Content.- If the teacher does not know how to teach the content appropriately, it will cause problems in the development of the learning process. The content that the teacher is going to teach must be useful, and the way of teaching should be different, interesting, with the purpose of catching the students' attention in class, using strategies or methods that help the students to be concentrated in class.
 - Incentive.- It is very important that the teacher talks to the students about the importance of learning the language, to let them know about the benefits and the opportunities that they can have if they have the communicative competence in the English language, motivate and encourage them to learn the language through the use of diverse activities in class. If the students do not know the importance of learning the language, they are not going to be interested and motivated to learn it; and when the students have no motivation and interest, they will not learn.

- Social.- Teachers have to take into consideration that students learn in a better way when they do different and funny activities; for that reason, they must work in pairs or group activities to develop in them the sense of interaction. Also, it is good to use ludic activities to offer a better understanding and learning of the language and to integrate all the students in the learning development.

Teachers must take into consideration some aspects when teaching, like the content to be taught, which must be useful for the students, and the necessities and likes of them. Besides, teachers must motivate the students by letting them know how important it is to learn a language. So they must teach them in an innovative way to activate their interest for learning. One way to innovate in the English language teaching – learning process can be through the use of ludic activities, such as games, role – plays, music.

1.1.7 The Socio – Cultural Approach to Language Teaching

The Socio Cultural Approach is a theory developed by Vygotsky (1978) that has to deal with the process of learning in a global way, especially in relation with the language learning that with the pass of the time was improved by other authors through the implementation of the language acquisition by means of interaction with others.

In the teaching - learning process there are two important aspects to take into consideration while teaching: Mediation and meaning.

Mediation has to deal with the instrument, the tools that the teacher uses to catch the students` attention. In the case of children, it can be through pictures, images, gestures, because they learn better by visual aids. In the case of adults, it can be by means of videos and images.

When dealing with meaning, it is being referred to the different explanations that a word can have and it is learned through the interaction with other people. Vygotsky, (1987) expressed that “Humans develop the ability to acquire meaningful speech in their interaction with others. For example, in their interactions with adults, children continually ask the names of things” (p.16).

The teacher is a model for the students, providing them explanations about the language, either by means of speaking or by writing.

1.1.8 Zone of Proximal Development

Vygotsky (1920) introduced the term Zone of Proximal Development, as “the distance between the actual development 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” (p.238).

The Zone of Proximal Development refers to the process that a learner undergoes to get future results in learning. In other words, when the students are learning, they learn by themselves, by constructing their own knowledge; but when some difficulties appear in the process, the learners need some help and guidance in order to clear out doubts and reinforce their knowledge. A teacher, a partner, can give that guidance or any other person that has domain of the topic.

When a student studies with other students, he or she is capable to acquire the knowledge in a better way, because in that way he or she can enrich and improve through the different ideas and opinions from others.

The Zone of Proximal Development has relation with the methods used by the teacher, because according to the way the teacher uses them to teach the students, they can learn progressively. Teachers must know about the different methods to teach in order to use them appropriately in accordance with the characteristics and needs of the students.

1.1.9 Methods to teach English

Methods are the different ways in which the teacher teaches the students. There are several methods to teach. Through the pass of the years, some of them were changing or modifying their procedure. These methods are designed for all the educational levels. The most important ones are Grammar translation, Direct, Audio Lingual, Total physical Response and the Communicative Method.

Grammar Translation method.- Brown (2001), stated that this method has been used since the history and it is based on teaching the grammatical rules, about the correct use of the words. This method has a strong relation with the mother tongue, to offer a better explanation of the grammar structures.

Direct Method.- As Brown (2001) mentioned, this method is taught just by using the language students need to learn, in this case, English. The explanations are given in English, there is no translation, this method tries to foster interaction among the students, and to work using this method is preferable to do with small groups.

Audio Lingual Method.- According to Hernández (2000), this method is focused on the oral and listening skills, for that reason teachers teach the students vocabulary by using images because by associating them they can learn in a better way. (p.144). Also Brown (2001) mentioned that this method is inductive, teaching words from vocabulary, the pronunciation is relevant and they learn it through repetition activities.

Total Physical Response Method.- Alcalde (2011) stated that this method is based on physical actions, the teacher gives an order and the students have to do it or it can be also, the students give the order and the teacher does the action (p.17). Also Alcalde mentioned that this method must be developed preferably with beginners students who can learn the language in a dynamic way.

Communicative Method.- According to Hernández (2000) mentioned that in this method the most important part is to develop the four skills of the language. Learning a language requires following steps, this method is focused principally on the development of the communicative competences.

Alcalde (2011) mentioned that in this method, in order to develop the communicative competence of the students, activities like dialogues, and other different and funny activities contribute to the interaction among students.

The teaching methods are an essential part in the teaching learning process and they are designed for all levels. It is necessary to know their functioning with the purpose of using them appropriately when teaching. Also, teachers can adapt or change some

things when using them, according to the necessities and features students can have. Methods help students to understand and interiorize a topic in a better way.

1.1.10 Definition of Ludic strategy

A Ludic strategy is not a method. It is a kind of procedure about the teaching learning process that is used to give solution to learning difficulties inside the class. This ludic strategy is based on the teaching through the use of games, dramatizations, role plays, and music (Siek, 2016).

This strategy motivates and engages the students to learn in a funny and interesting way. The activities can be developed with all the educational levels; primary, secondary, and superior levels and they can be organized individually, in pairs or in groups. This can vary according to the content of the lesson and the kind of activity that the teacher wants to do with the students.

1.1.11 Cooperative Learning

1.1.11.1 Definition of Cooperative Learning

In the learning process, it is necessary to apply different ways to teach, one of them emerges from the cooperation between students. Johnson and Holubec (2013) stated that “Cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning” (p.841).

In Cooperative Learning, students work in groups of 3 or 4 in an activity assigned by the teacher to share ideas and work among them, and it is instructional because the students have to follow the indications given by the teacher about how to carry out the task.

When the students work cooperatively, all of them should help to achieve the same aim, each one of them has the responsibility to contribute with any idea, thought, suggestion, and recommendation to complete the activity. The teacher designs the activity considering aspects like the level of the students, the content he or she wants to teach, the learning difficulties some students have in order to join them to the groups appropriately, give the students clear instructions and always be monitoring their work in order to avoid distractions and waste of time.

1.1.11.2 Types of Cooperative Learning

According to Johnson et al, (2013), Cooperative learning is divided in four types: “formal cooperative learning, informal cooperative learning, cooperative based groups and constructive controversy” (p.841).

Formal Cooperative Learning.- In this kind of work, some students work together in an activity for many weeks to acquire reciprocal learning and developing determined tasks. The functions of the teacher in this part are: let the students know about the objectives of the work, organize how many students are going to conform the groups, the materials they are going to use and indicate the students the functions to do. Also the teacher gives the students some indications about how to work and explain them how they are going to be evaluated. Besides, the teacher has to monitor the students with the purpose of helping them if it is necessary and the evaluation that it is very important to do in order to know the learning progress the students have.

Informal Cooperative Learning.- Students are grouped together for a few minutes of the class and they have to develop an activity with the purpose of reinforcing any topic, the teacher explains it and after that the students do the task, it allows the teacher to know if the students have understood the content of the lesson. As in the previous kind of work, the teacher gives the students clear instructions to be done, and monitors the students.

Cooperative Based Groups.- Heterogeneous students are grouped together to work in an activity. The purpose of this type of work is that the students can help and improve each other. This kind of work promotes inclusion of the students who have learning difficulties, helping them to construct confidence and motivation to learn.

Constructive Controversy.- In this type of Cooperative Learning, students that have different ideas and opinions about any topic try to look for an agreement. Students are grouped of four, in a heterogeneous way, the teacher gives the students a topic and they have to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of it.

To let the students work in groups is an enriching experience for them because it fosters collaboration and interaction among the students. In that way, they can learn

many things from ideas and opinions of their classmates. Teachers can also implement the use of ludic activities to do in groups to give the students a different and comfortable learning environment.

1.2 Previous studies about the use of didactic strategies to develop the students` English language communicative competence

Navarro and Piñeiro (2012) did an investigation with practitioner students while they developed their practices in institutions of secondary teaching in Costa Rica. He provided 32 didactic strategies to use for teaching the foreign language to the students. He used the methods: Total Physical Response, Audio Lingual and Direct Method. The strategies were designed according to the contents included in the curriculum of the Ministry of Education of that country. The strategies were modified based on the students` likes and interests and the time to do these strategies does not exceed 20 minutes and are based on games and group works. These strategies have relation with the level of the students and the corresponding skills that the teacher wants to develop in them.

Posso, Sepúlveda, Navarro and Laguna (2015) researched through an investigation the effect of the use of a ludic strategy in the students of third grade of Brasilia Bosa School District in Colombia. The majority of the students presented problems of behavior, for that reason some of them were selected in order to be evaluated as well as some teachers that worked with them. A project based on ludic activities was developed in order to help the students to improve their behavior. Students were evaluated through a survey and the teachers were evaluated by means of an interview. The results demonstrated that the students presented changes in their behavior because the teachers started teaching them, using games, songs, activities that gave the students a chance to express their feelings, thoughts and learn in a different and comfortable environment.

Gómez, Molano and Rodríguez (2015) did an investigation about ludic activities as pedagogical strategy to strengthen the learning in children of Niño Jesús of Praga School in Colombia. It was a formative investigation process that was carried out with kids of preschooler levels in that institution. Also, there were applied instruments such

as observation to the students attitudes to know them deeply in relation to the learning process and a survey applied to the parents to know the problematic to look for a solution of that problems. That investigation showed the importance and necessity of the use of a Ludic Methodology to teach the students, as the students are very active in this age, the ludic activities helped them to develop the physical and communicative skills through learning in a comfortable, relaxing and funny environment.

Estupiñán (2014) made an investigation about the use of the Ludic Methodology with children of the Second Basic grade at Velasco Ibarra School in Esmeraldas city, Ecuador. The students of that institution had learning difficulties because the teachers did not know how to teach them appropriately, so they was not interested and motivated to learn the English language. For that reason, a handbook was designed and propose for the teacher usage and with the purpose of helping the students to learn in a different and funny way. The handbook was designed according to the level and necessities of the students, also taking into consideration the content of the English book. The handbook contained diverse and interesting kind of games with different topics to develop in class with the students.

1.3 Legal foundation

The National Assembly in Ecuador, in the article 26 of the Constitution of the Republic recognized education as a right that people perform in their lives and an inescapable and inexcusable duty. It constitutes a priority area of the public policy and of the state investment, guarantee of the equality and social inclusion and indispensable condition for the good living.

1.3.1 Ecuadorian in-Service English Teacher Standards

The Ecuadorian in – Service English Teacher Standards is a document based on the writings developed by English teachers to people who speak other languages. This text is divided into five parts, but in this investigation three of them will be mentioned: Language, Culture and Curriculum Development.

According to the Ecuadorian government, in Language, teachers have knowledge about all the parts that conform it and they use that knowledge to help the students to develop the four skills of the language.

In Culture, teachers teach the students about the different cultures from other countries in relation to the languages, values and beliefs.

In Curriculum Development, teachers use their knowledge and creative part to plan, organize and monitor diverse strategies to teach the students.

CHAPTER II

MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Type of investigation

This investigation was of a mixed type; qualitative and quantitative, because there were data and qualitative techniques that were used. It was applied in the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador in Esmeraldas, located in Espejo and Santa Cruz streets.

The teaching of the English language in the university is mandatory in all the different careers. It is taught as a foreign language in the first six levels of the career. The A1 level is imparted in the second level of the career.

Population and sample

The Population was formed by twenty students from the Nursing career, who receive the A1 level of English and of 5 English teachers.

The Sample was selected at random. It coincides with the population.

2.2 Conceptual definition and operationalization of the variables (Appendix A)

The variables of this investigation were the following:

- Dependent: Communicative competence
- Independent: Didactic strategy

2.3 Methods of investigation

The methods used were: Analysis, Synthesis and Hermeneutics. They were used to analyze the results and the most important theories about the use of didactic strategies to teach the students, that may support this investigation and to synthesize the relevant information.

The Hermeneutic method was used for interpreting the most relevant information analyzed in the theoretical framework. Moreover, it helped to interpret the results obtained with the application of the techniques.

Descriptive statistics was used to process the data obtained with the application of the techniques.

2.4 Techniques of investigation

The techniques that were used were:

Observation: It was applied during six days to the English teachers at PUCE Esmeraldas and to the students from the A1 level of the Nursing career from the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador in Esmeraldas.

Survey: It was applied to English teachers in order to know which didactic strategies they apply when teaching, also to the students, to know their communicative competence in English and their learning strategies.

2.5 Instruments

To collect the data, the instruments designed were according to the different techniques that were used:

For the technique of observation directed to the teachers (Appendix B), a guide with four items was used: Listening, Reading, Speaking and Writing skills. Moreover, a guide of observation for the students (Appendix C), in which the four skills of the English were observed.

For the technique of survey, a questionnaire (Appendix D), was used, which contained open and close questions in relation to the indicators to be evaluated.

2.6 Data processing

The information obtained from the application of the different techniques was tabulated manually. The data was taken to figures and tables using the Microsoft Excel program.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

3.1 Results of the observation applied to teachers

The observation, which was applied to teachers from PUCE Esmeraldas, was described by indicators.

In the observation applied to teachers, referring to the Listening skill, the teacher sometimes teaches the students using the target language, the listening activity goes according to the level students have, also she gives the students the appropriate time to work and ask questions related to the activity.

Related to the Speaking skill, the teacher sometimes uses the target language in the classroom; the teacher sometimes corrects the students in the pronunciation, and not always encourages students to talk.

Talking about the Reading skill, the teacher sometimes motivates the students to read using stories, the teacher always uses the English book to work in class and sometimes makes activities like reading comprehension.

Referring to the Writing skill, the teacher sometimes encourages students to write about any topic and correct them if they have errors.

The information obtained through the teachers` observation showed important aspects to take into consideration like:

- Teachers should use other resources apart from the English book to teach the students or adapt certain activities to work in class to provide the students a different learning environment.
- It is very important that the teacher uses the target language inside the classroom, motivates and encourages students to use it as well, because in that way they can break the fears to talk in public and make mistakes and consequently learn and improve the language.

3.2 Results of the observation applied to students

In the observation applied to students, referring to the Listening skill, the students sometimes pay close attention to the audios, some students have the required knowledge to do the activity and some others do not; for that reason, they do not understand the information they hear.

Related to the Speaking skill, the majority of the students do not pronounce the words and expressions correctly and have difficulties in fluency, besides, they do not use the correct grammar rules.

Talking about the Reading skill, the students sometimes read the information and underline the most important parts of it, and the majority of them understand the information.

In relation to the Writing skill, the majority of the students use the examples provided by the teacher to write and some of them have the required knowledge to write.

The information compiled through the students' observation showed relevant aspects: the students need to learn through models and examples, through interesting activities that activate them to learn the language.

3.3 Results of the survey applied to teachers

In relation to the development of the Writing skill, as can be seen in figure 1, the majority of teachers (80%) considered the most important, the production of ideas and the correct use of grammar rules, followed by a 60% that indicates that they also consider it is important the appropriate use of vocabulary.

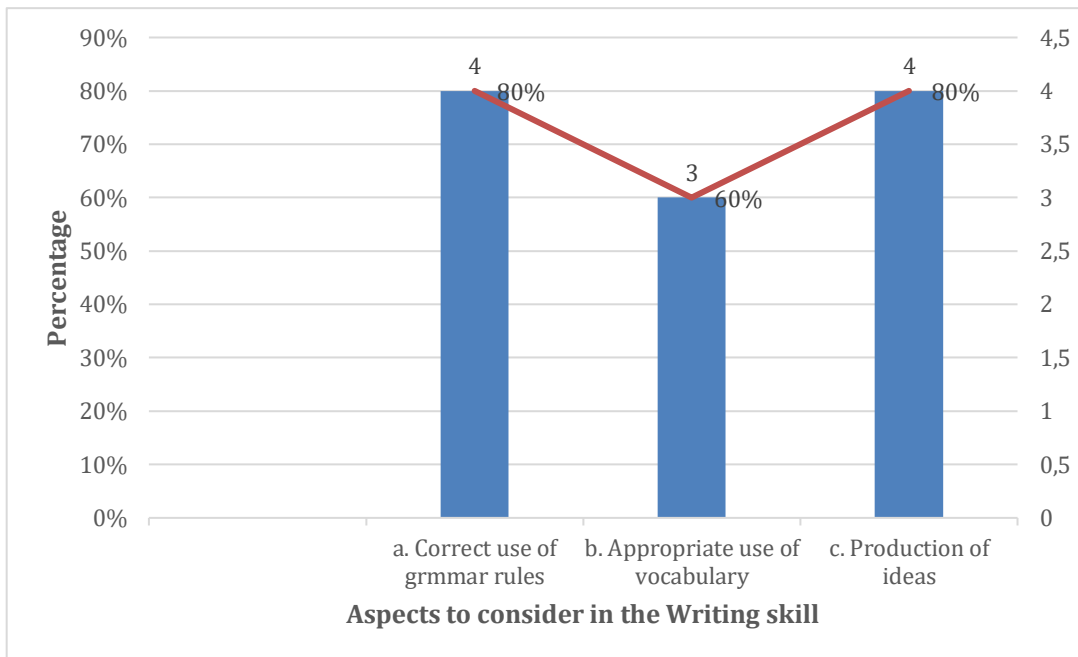


Figure 1: Teaching the Writing skill
Source: Survey applied to teachers

In accordance with the use of the language when teaching, as shown in figure 2, the 80% indicates that the teachers use both languages to teach, the mother and the target languages.

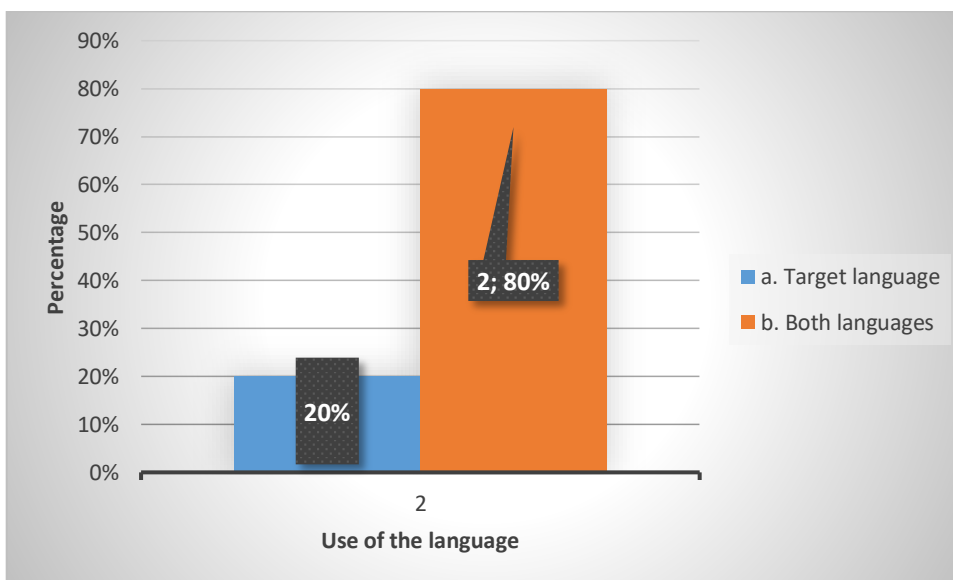


Figure 2: Use of the language
Source: Survey applied to teachers

In regards to the ways of enhancing the learning process, a 100% indicates that the teachers prefer to work in pairs, as illustrated in figure 3.

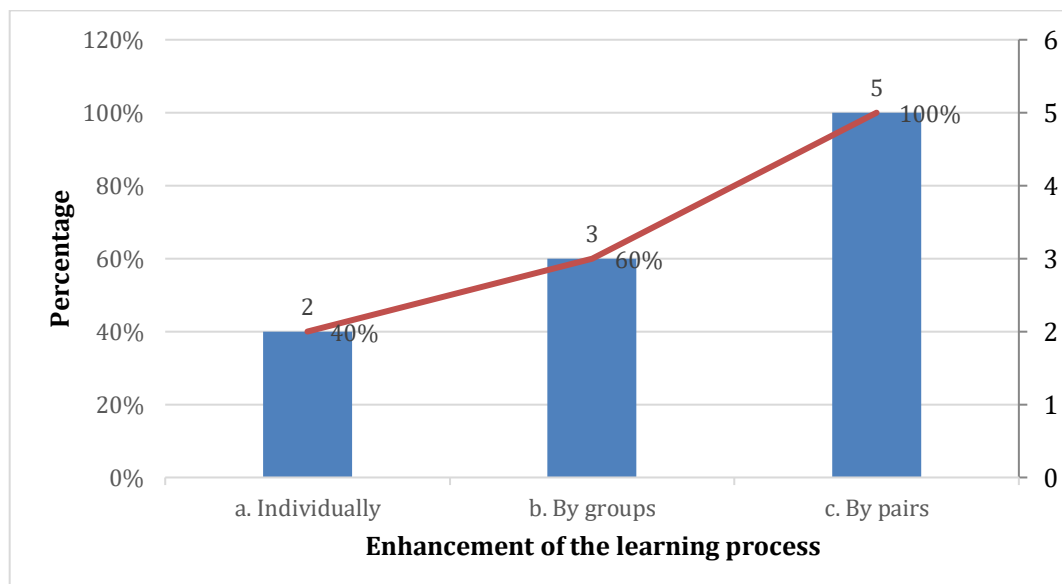


Figure 3: Ways to enhance the learning process

Source: Survey applied to teachers

According to the development of the Reading skill, figure 4 shows that the 80% of the teachers prefer to develop it through reading stories.

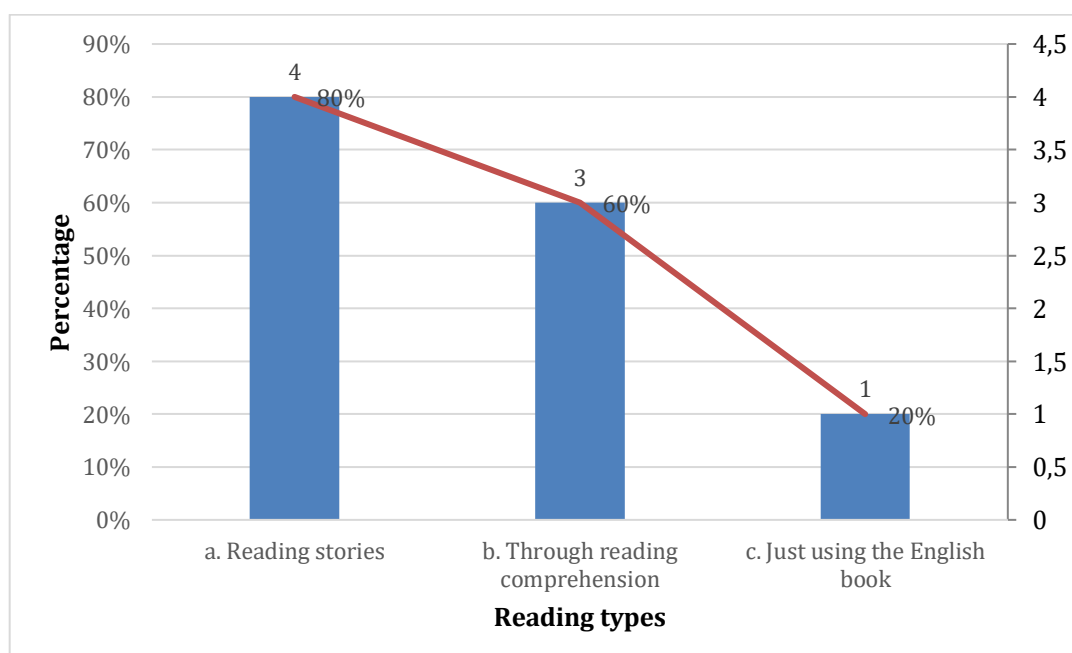


Figure 4: Development of the Reading skill

Source: Survey applied to teachers

In relation to the material aids used when teaching, a 100% indicates that the teachers prefer to use videos, as represented in figure 5.

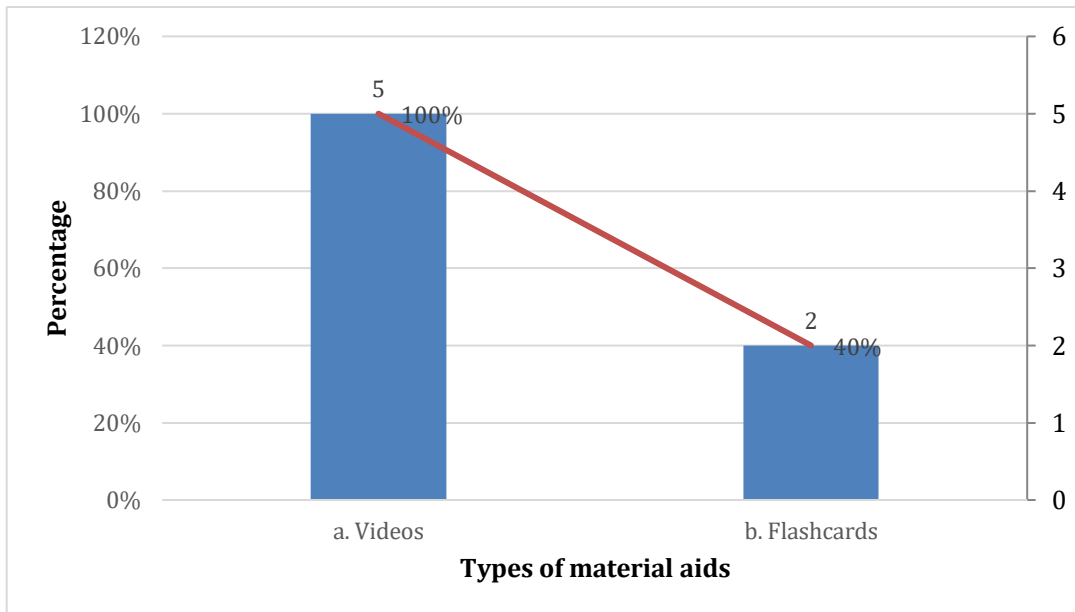


Figure 5: Use of material aids for teaching
Source: Survey applied to teachers

Talking about the methods used while teaching, a 100% shows that the most used method is Communicative language teaching, as illustrated in figure 6.

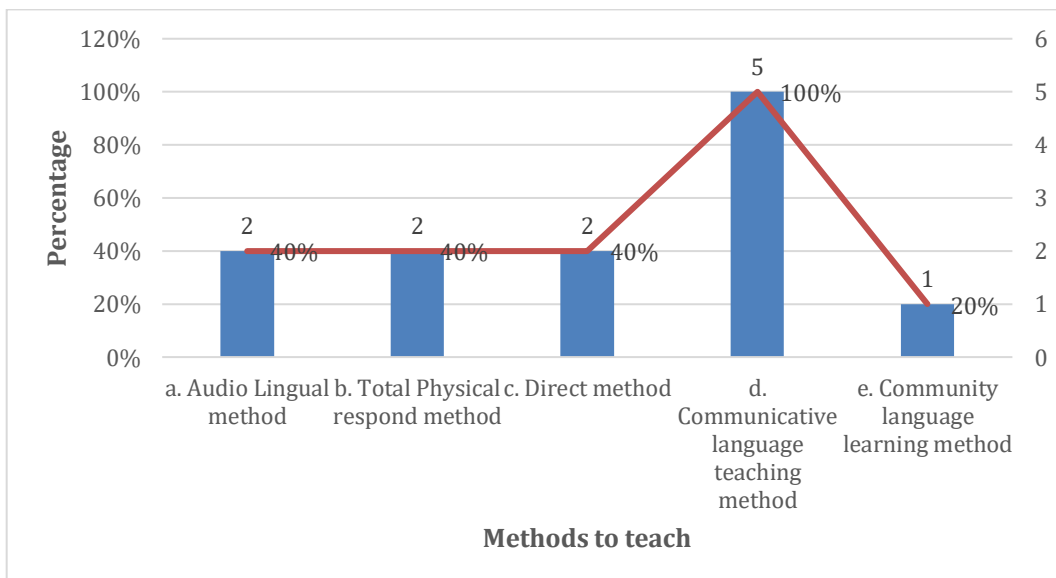


Figure 6: Methods used to teach
Source: Survey applied to students

As figure 7 shows, in accordance with the use of the ludic methodology in class, a 40% indicates that teachers sometimes use it when teaching and others do not.

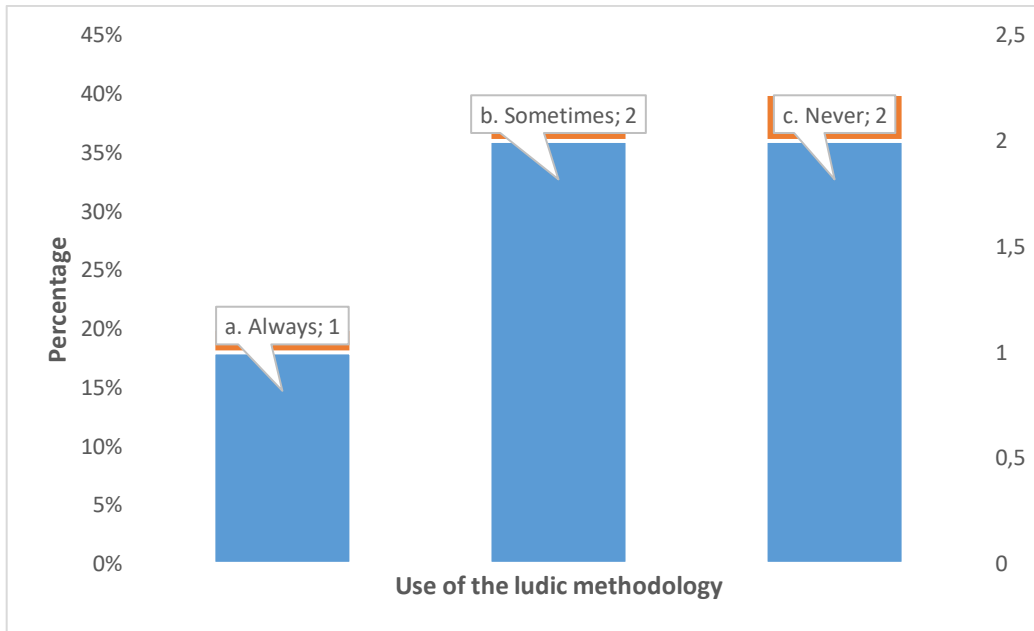


Figure 7: Use of the ludic methodology
Source: Survey applied to teachers

3.4 Results of the survey applied to students

In relation to the way students practice for a lesson, the 80% indicates that they prefer to study writing about things they can remember, as shown in figure 8.

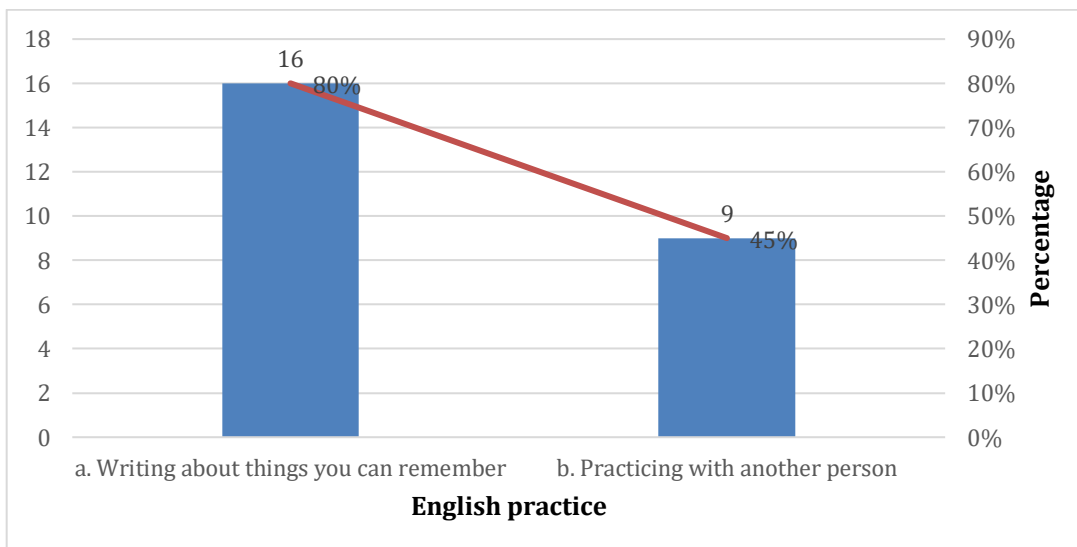


Figure 8: English practice
Source: Survey applied to students

Talking about the ways students learn new vocabulary, as represented in figure 9, a 45% indicates that they prefer to learn it through memorization.

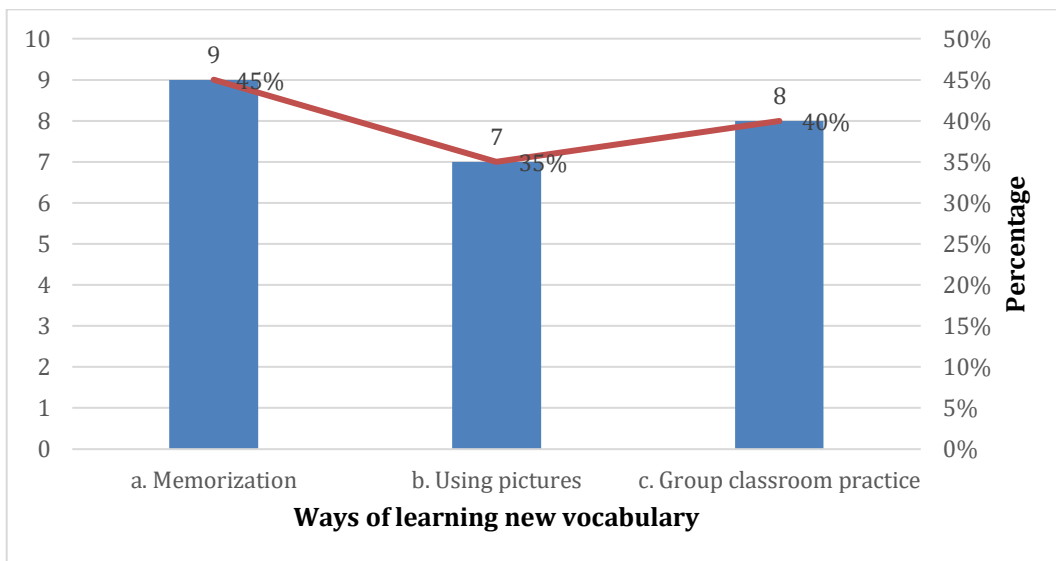


Figure 9: Learning new vocabulary
Source: Survey applied to students

Referring to the development of the Listening skill, figure 10 shows that the 60% of the students like to learn English through listening to music.

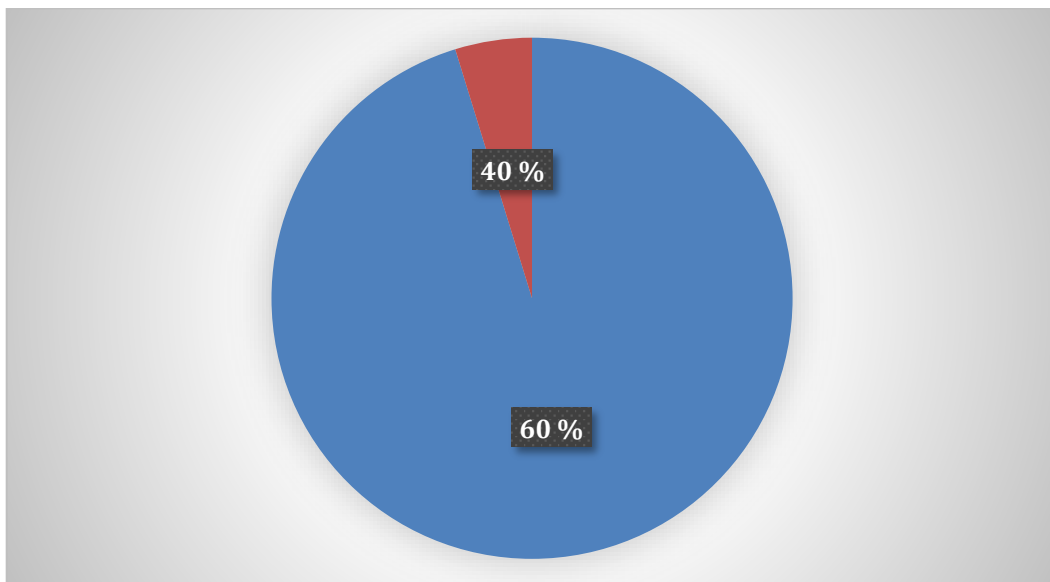


Figure 10: Development of the Listening skill
Source: Survey applied to students

Talking about the development of the Speaking skill, the results revealed, as shown in figure 11, that the 75% of the students indicated that they like to learn it through role-play activities.

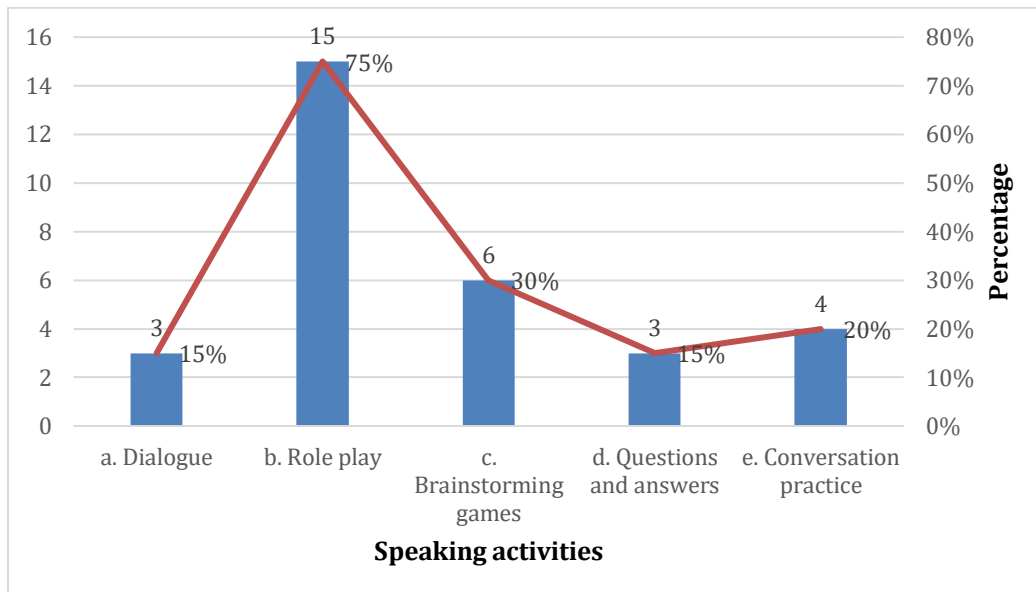


Figure 11: Activities to develop the Speaking skill

Source: Survey applied to students

Related to the development of the Reading skill, the 60% of the students indicated that they like to develop it through story – creation, as illustrated in figure 12.

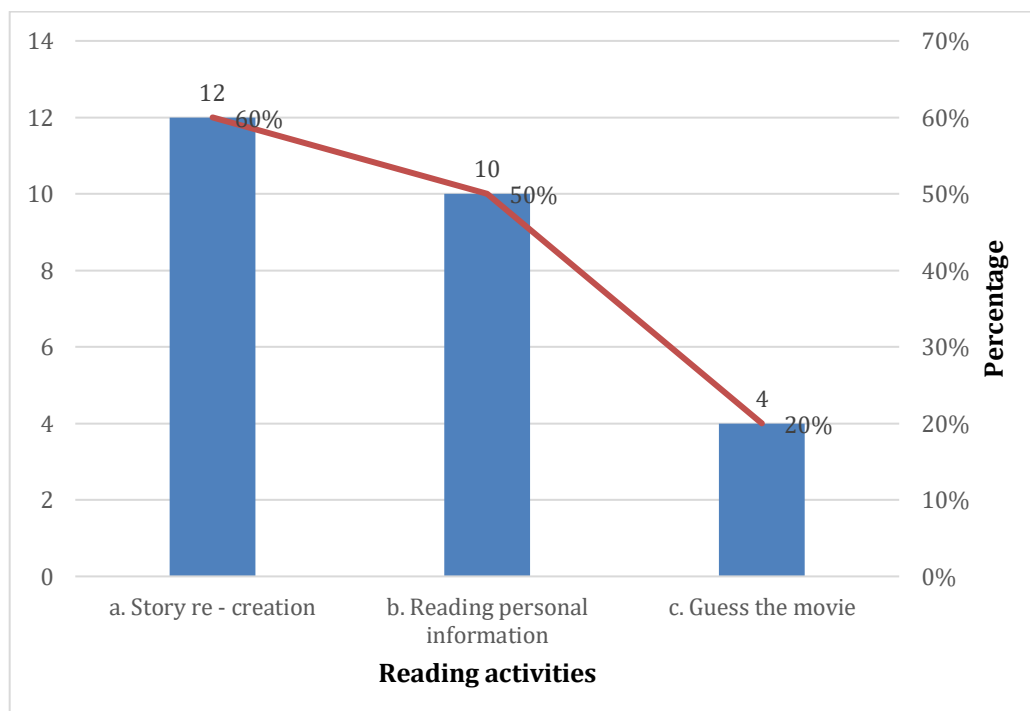


Figure 12: Development of the Reading skill

Source: Survey applied to students

Referring to the development of the Writing skill, in figure 13, the 40% of the students responded that they like to develop it through descriptive writing and the last vacation activities.

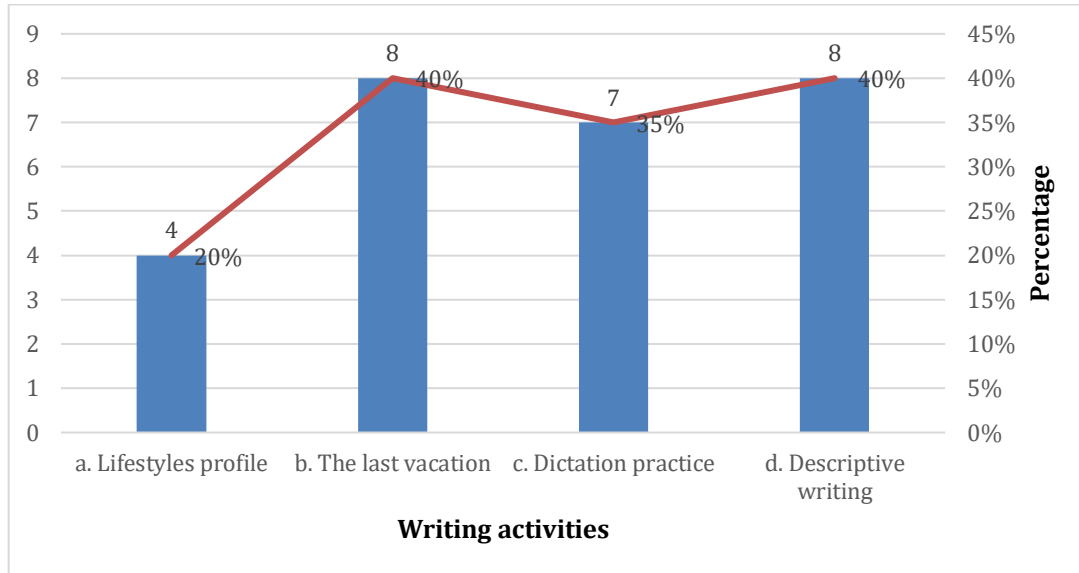


Figure 13: Development of the Writing skill

Source: Survey applied to students

In the representation of the figure 14, in relation to the ways for practicing English, the 55% of the students answered that they prefer to practice with their classmates in groups.

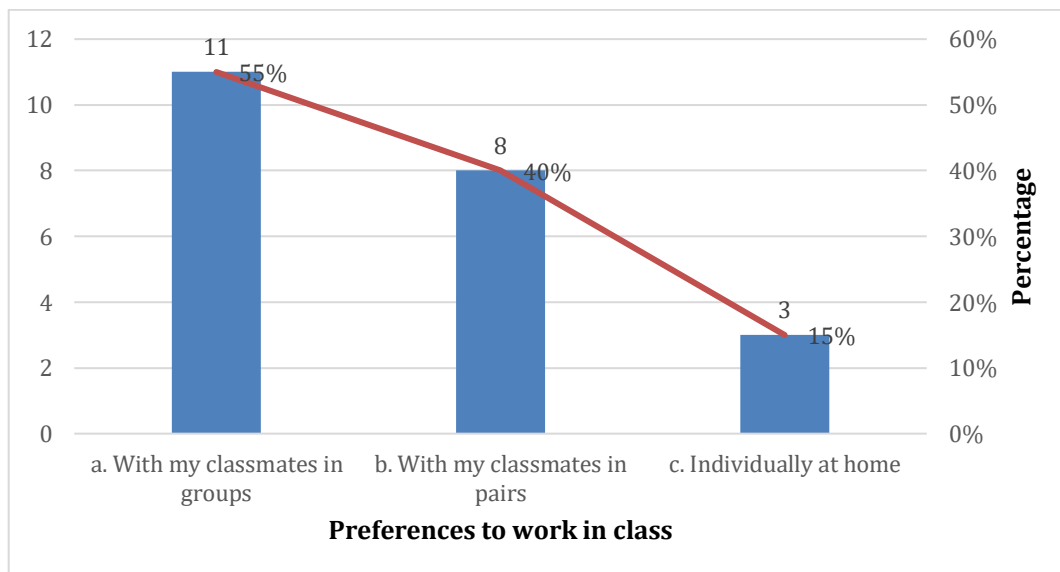


Figure 14: English practice

Source: Survey applied to students

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The objectives determined in this investigation were accomplished, establishing the importance of the use of a ludic didactic strategy as a procedure to teach the students in order to develop the communicative competences of the English language.

These results share similar and important aspects to take into consideration relating the likes and interest of the students when designing a strategy, and the level students have and the skills that are necessary to develop in the students, as Navarro and Piñeiro (2012) stated.

The results of this investigation indicated that some of the students have difficulties in learning the English language; for many reasons, some of them do not pay attention in class, some others do not study by themselves, others do not present interest in learning. These results have certain relation with the studies made in Brasilia Bosa school by Posso, et al (2015), because the students of that institution also have difficulties in learning English for having bad behavior like: the students do not pay attention and interrupt the class, they have lack of interest to learn, some of them have personal problems in their home.

But, when the ludic strategy was applied in that institution, the students changed their attitudes to learn, they were more interested and enthusiastic about learning because teachers started using games, songs, and others to teach the students, offering them a different and funny learning environment. In this investigation, when the students were asked about their necessities and likes of learning, they answered that they would like to learn in a different way, by using music, games, role plays and other interesting activities.

In the same way as Gómez, et al (2015), through an observation made to the students of preschooler levels and through realizing that the students were very distracted in class, and after making tests to know if the use of a ludic strategy help to achieve

better results in the learning process, a conclusion was encountered, that teaching by using a ludic strategy is an excellent option to use with kids because it helps them to put their energy in doing diverse activities like singing, drawing, dancing. For children it is good because it helps to concentrate in the learning process without having stress and having fun at the same time. Also for teenagers and adults because it fosters motivation and interest for learning.

The majority of the teachers in the different levels of education do not employ interesting strategies or methods to teach the students, they are used to work just with the English book, they do not create diverse ways of learning in order to catch the attention of the students, which causes lack of interest and motivation to learn the English language. No matter the level or age of the students, it is very important to offer them a funny and comfortable environment to obtain successful results in learning. It coincides with the results indicated by Estupiñán (2014) that stated that some teachers have difficulties in the teaching process, they realized that the students are not interested in learning the language. For that reason, Estupiñán created a handbook that can collaborate in the teaching learning process, through the use of a variety of activities that help the students in the development of the four skills of the language. This handbook and the strategy that I will propose will help the teacher and the students to improve the development of the English class.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

- A ludic strategy fosters motivation and engagement of the students in the learning process, by using games, songs, music, etc.

- Teachers teach the students using videos, flashcards, by reading comprehension stories, conversation practice, among other techniques.

- The students` learning strategies are to learn new vocabulary by memorizing and using pictures and develop the reading skill by using story creation and reading personal information. They prefer to work in groups and pairs, also work in ludic activities like role – plays, brainstorming games and using music.

- It is necessary to design a ludic – cooperative based strategy to improve the students` communicative competence of the English language, based on the use of music, games and role – plays.

CHAPTER VI

RECOMMENDATIONS

- To teachers, to let the students work cooperatively in pairs and in groups to improve their active participation in class, letting them develop their English language communicative competence at the A1 level.

- To the English Department Director, to organize an upgrading course for English teachers in order to train them on the use of the didactic strategy proposed.

- To teachers and investigators, to implement the strategy proposed in the English language teaching learning process to develop the students` communicative competence with the use of games, music, songs, to motivate and engage the students to learn the English language.

PROPOSAL

LUDIC - COOPERATIVE BASED DIDACTIC STRATEGY TO IMPROVE THE A1 LEVEL STUDENTS` ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE.

To teach in a different way, using a ludic strategy, teachers can use some kind of activities like playing using domino, using a roulette, using board games that can be done with different topics. These activities can be done individually or in groups to integrate the students and can be designed to develop the four skills of the language, it can vary according to the learning necessities of the students.

General Objective: To improve the students` communicative competence of the English language through the application of ludic activities.

STAGE 1

Students' preparation for learning

Objective: To prepare the students to learn the English language.

Procedures

- To introduce the game with materials like flashcards and videos.

Teacher' actions

- First, using a video explain the students about the topic presented and about the pronunciation of the words in a clear and loud voice.
- Second, give examples about how to use the topic presented to guide the students.
- Third, ask some students if they understood the explanation.
- Then, if any student has not understood well or has some doubts, explain again using examples.

Students` actions

- The students have to pay close attention to the video and the explanation given by the teacher.

- The students can ask the teacher if they have some doubts about the construction or the pronunciation of the words in the referred topic.
- The students can work individually, in pairs or in groups; it depends on the teacher decision.

STAGE 2

Students` performance in the proposed activities

Objective: To allow the students to construct their own knowledge.

Procedures

- To give instructions to the students about the activity they are going to develop in class.

Teacher`s actions

- First, explain the students the way they are going to work on.
- Second, explain the students in what way they are going to work, it can be individually, in pairs or in small groups; it depends on the topic the teacher is going to teach.
- Third, explain the students about the materials they are going to use in the activity. The teacher can show the students a video to explain better the topic, also he or she can use flashcards with some pictures to illustrate the information in a better way.
- The teacher has to explain the students about the time required for the activity and respect it.
- The teacher has to ask some students to know if they have clear the idea about what they have to do and explain again if the idea it is not clear.
- The teacher has to tell the students to respect the ideas and opinions from their classmates.
- The teacher has to ask the students to pay attention to their partners to give comments about their work at the end of the activity.

Students` actions

- Students have to pay attention to the instructions given by the teacher.

- If the students have doubts, they have to ask the teacher to comprehend the information in a better way.
- Students have to organize them fast according to the teacher demands. If they are going to work in groups, they have to select a leader to guide them.
- Students have to respect the time to work given by the teacher.
- Students have to demonstrate active participation in class.
- Students have to respect the ideas and opinions from others.
- Students have to pay close attention to their partner`s work because at the end of the activity they have to make comments about what the other students have said.

STAGE 3

Evaluating the students` communicative competence

Objective: To determine if the students have learned about the content presented.

Procedures

- The students are going to be evaluated while they are developing the activities.

Teacher` actions

- The teacher must ask some students about the given explanation to know if they understood.
- The teacher must make a review to let the students comprehend better the topic and the task to do.
- The teacher has to give the instructions about the work to develop and of the time to do the activity.
- When the students are working in groups, the teacher has to constantly monitor them to avoid distractions and waste of time.

Students` actions

- The students have to present their work in front of the class.
- One member of the group is going to present it to the class.

- The students in some cases have to exchange their work with the purpose of being evaluated by their classmates.
- The other students have to pay attention to the presentations developed because they have to make comments about the information they heard.

LUDIC - COOPERATIVE BASED DIDACTIC STRATEGY THROUGH THE USE OF GAMES

GAME 1

General Objective: To improve the students` communicative competence of the English language through the application of a game.

STAGE 1

Students` preparation for learning

Objective: To prepare the students to learn the English language.

Procedures

- To introduce the game to the students showing them the materials to use

Teacher` actions:

- First, the teacher has to show the students the materials they are going to use to play the game. In this case, it would be through the use of a dice and some cards.
- Second, the teacher has to give the materials to the students and a brief explanation about the topic they are going to work on.
- Third, the teacher has to show the students through an example how to play the game.

Students` actions:

- The students have to pay attention to the instructions given by the teacher.
- The students have to organize the materials they are going to use.

STAGE 2

Students` performance in the proposed game

Objective: To allow the students to construct their own knowledge.

Procedure 1

- To give the students instructions about how to play the game.

Teacher` actions:

- First, the teacher has to explain the instructions of the game, that are the following ones:

Game with the use of adjectives with endings in ed – ing

Objective of the game:

- This game allows the students to develop the communicative competence in the English language.

Materials to play:

- A dice
- Game cards with different places.

Instructions to play the game:

- The students have to form a circle.
- The first student who is going to play has to throw the dice and take one game card.
- Then, the student has to say a sentence using the ending that is shown on the dice and the game card that he or she selects.

For instance:

If appears an ED ending and the student selects a game card related to the beach, the sentence could be: I felt so RELAXED when I was in the beach.

If appears an ING ending, the student has to say another sentence in relation to the game card, that in this case is about the beach. So, the sentence could be: To visit and swimming in the beach is a RELAXING experience.

- After that, another student has to throw the dice, select a game card and say a sentence in relation to the ending ED or ING and the card selected. And continue in that way. If a student makes a mistake, he or she has to do a penance like singing, dancing, spell his or her name in English, and others.

Note: This game can be adapted according to the learning necessities the students can have.

- Second, ask any student to know if they understood the information given about the topic they are going to work on, and after that ask about the way to play the game.

Procedure 2

- To let the students participate in the planned game.

Teacher`s actions:

- The teacher has to form the groups to play the game.
- The teacher has to give the students another explanation of the game and ask one of the students if they understood how to play.
- The teacher has to designate a leader to each group that guide them.
- The teacher has to provide the students an example about the game.
- While the students are developing the game the teacher has to monitor them.

Students` actions

- Any student of the group has to talk about what they have to do in the game.
- The students of the group have to select a leader to guide them.
- The students have to participate in the game according to the turns each one of them has and to the instructions given to them.
- If any student commits a mistake, he or she has to do a penance.
- The students have to pay attention to the participation of their classmates and respect them if they do or say something wrong.

STAGE 3

Evaluation to the students in the development of the English language skills.

Objective: To determine if the students have learned about the presented content.

Procedure

- To evaluate the development of the four skills of the English language in the students.

Teacher`s actions

- The teacher is going to be in front of the students observing all of them and giving turns to the students to participate.

- The teacher can help any student if he or she has a doubt.
- The teacher has to always be monitoring the students to avoid distractions and controlling the time to do the activity and making sure to put a penance for the student who commits a mistake.
- The teacher at the end of the game can ask the students their opinions about the game, if they liked it and if they have any suggestion or comment to improve in it.

Students` actions

- Each student has his or her own function to do in the activity.
- In each group, one member of the students is going to be the leader of them and he or she has to guide the group, indicating them about the turns they have to participate, giving the turns to the next person, controlling the time.
- One person of the group, it can be the leader of it, has to make a comment or give a suggestion of the game to improve it.

GAME 2

General Objective: To help the students improve in the development of the communicative competences of the English language through the use of a game.

STAGE 1

Students` preparation for learning

Objective: To prepare the students to develop the four skills of the English language.

Procedures

- To introduce the game to the students showing them the materials they are going to use.

Teacher` actions:

- First, the teacher has to indicate the students the name of the game that in this case is called Domino game and talk about the objectives he or she wants to accomplish with the game.
- Second, the teacher has to tell the students about the materials they are going to use to play the game.
- Third, the teacher has to explain the students the way they are going to work on.

Note: This game can be adapted according to the learning necessities the students can have.

STAGE 2

Students` performance in the proposed game

Objective: To let the students construct their own knowledge.

Procedures

- To give clear instructions about how to play the game

Teacher`s actions:

- First, the teacher has to give examples in relation to the topic the students are going to learn with the game.

- Second, the teacher has to ask the students to form groups of four or five students and give them the pieces of the domino which are small pieces with written words of verbs, prepositions and adverbs.
- Third, the teacher has to explain to all the students about how to play the game and the time required to do it.

Students` actions:

- The students have to form the groups and select a leader to guide them.
- The students have to organize the materials they are going to use in the game.
- The leader of the game is going to set the first piece to start it.
- The students are going to play by turns, each participant has ten seconds to form a phrasal verb.
- The first student who is going to play has to look for a term of the phrasal verb in the pieces and write a sentence on the board.
- If the student does not find the appropriate term to complete the phrasal verb lose one turn.
- Then, the following student has to look for a term to form a phrasal verb and make a sentence, and so on.
- The student who has less pieces or nothing at the end of the game is the winner.

STAGE 3

Evaluation to students in the development of the English language skills.

Objective: To know if the students have comprehend the content of the lesson.

Procedures

- To evaluate the students in the development of the communicative competences.

Teacher`s actions

- The teacher has to constantly monitor the students to know if all the participants are working.
- The teacher has to ask the students at the end of the game if they liked it and ask for comments about it to make improvements.

Students` actions

- The students have to participate actively and respect the turns and ideas from their partners.
- The students have to help the student who has any problem.
- The students have to give comments about the game.

LUDIC - COOPERATIVE BASED DIDACTIC STRATEGY THROUGH THE USE OF SONGS

General Objective: To integrate the communicative competences of the English language through the use of songs.

STAGE 1

Students` preparation for learning

Objective: To prepare the students for the activity.

Procedures

- To introduce the activity by showing the students the way they are going to work on.

Teacher`s actions:

- First, the teacher has to give a brief explanation about the topic, in this case is going to be about verbs in present, past and past participle.
- Second, the teacher has to use a song according to the content and the level of the students.
- Third, the teacher has to explain the students in what way they are going to play.
- Then, the teacher has to ask some students about what they have to do to know if they understood the given explanation.

Students` actions:

- The students have to pay attention to the teacher` indications.
- The students have to form a circle to do the activity.
- The students have to follow the instructions given by the teacher to do the activity.

STAGE 2

Students` performance in the proposed activity

Objective: To give space the students to produce their own learning through the use of songs.

Procedures

- To give indications about how to develop the activity

Teacher`s actions:

- The teacher has to ask the students to form a circle and he or she has to be with them, guiding them in the activity.
- The teacher can use a tape recorder to play the music.
- The teacher has to explain briefly the instructions to play and ask one of the students to know if they have understood.
- The teacher has to select a student to give an example for the students about the activity.

Students` actions:

- The students are going to form a circle and they have to pass a little ball between them.
- The teacher is going to play the music and when the music stops the person who has the ball has to say the verbs in present, past and past participle and write them on the board. If that student makes a mistake in one of the verb, he or she has to sing his favorite English song or do a penance.
- In that way, the activity continues until the majority of the students have participated.

STAGE 3**Students` evaluation in the development of the English language skills.**

Objective: To know if the students have learned about the content taught.

Procedures

- To evaluate the students in the development of the communicative competences.

Teacher`s actions:

- At the end of the lesson, the teacher gives the students a piece of paper with one or two verbs, they can be in present, past or past participle and the students have to complete it and write a sentence using one of them.
- The teacher has to give an example to let the students know how to do it. For example: The verbs do and did. The missing verb is done. The sentence could be: I have **done** my homework.

Students` actions:

- The students have to write the missing verb and a sentence in the piece of paper.

LUDIC - COOPERATIVE BASED DIDACTIC STRATEGY THROUGH THE USE OF ROLE – PLAYS

General Objective: To let the students develop their English language communicative competence through the use of role – plays.

STAGE 1

Students` preparation for learning

Objective: To prepare the students for the role – play activity.

Procedures:

- To give the students instructions in relation to the way they are going to work on.

Teacher`s actions:

- The teacher has to indicate the students they are going to work in a practice activity.
- The teacher has to explain briefly the topic to refresh it.
- The teacher has to ask the students to know if they are clear in the topic.
- Then, the teacher has to give the instructions to do the activity.
- The teacher has to give an example about how to do the exercise.

Students` actions:

- The students have to pay attention to the explanation of the teacher.
- The students have to ask if they have doubts about the topic they are going to work on, to be clear to do the activity.

STAGE 2

Students` performance in the proposed activity

Objective: To allow the students build their own knowledge.

Procedures

To give instructions about how to do the activity.

Teacher`s actions:

- The teacher is going to give the students different cards with some clues to make questions using the Present Perfect tense.

- The teacher is going to play a relaxing music during the game.
- The teacher has to ask the students to walk around the class, they have to act and ask a partner a question in Present Perfect tense and the other student has to answer it.
- When the teacher stops the music the students have to exchange the partner and ask a question again to other student.
- The teacher has to supervise the students` work to see if they are working and to avoid distructions.

Students` actions:

- The students have to walk around the class, they have to act and ask to other student a question using Present Perfect tense, and when the music stops the student has to interchange a partner, maybe he or she has to make a question or answer it.

STAGE 3

Students` evaluation in the development of the English language skills.

Objective: To evaluate if the students know about the construction of the Present Perfect tense in the proposed activity.

Procedures

- To evaluate the students in the development of the communicative competences.
-

Teacher` actions:

- To walk around the class to check the students` work.
- Ask the students to give comments about the collected answers.

Students` actions:

- At the end of the activity, the students have to give comments about the collected answers from their classmates.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION AND OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE VARIABLES

Variables	Conceptual definition	Operational definition	Dimensions	Indicators
<p>Dependent Variable: Communicative competence</p>	<p>Communicative competence enables language learners to convey their messages to others and to understand other`s messages within specific contexts.</p>	<p>Communicative competence is the students` development of the four main skills of the language: listening, speaking, reading and writing</p> <p>The use of varied materials and activities in the English lessons to facilitate and activate the teaching – learning process.</p>	<p>Listening comprehension Speaking Reading comprehension Writing</p>	<p>Comprehension of a listening text. Production of language in communicative activities: Fluency, pronunciation, accuracy. Comprehension of a reading text. Production of ideas: Orthography, Grammatical correctness, Syntax, Meaning.</p>
<p>Independent Variable: Didactic strategies</p>	<p>A procedure, or a set of steps or abilities that a student acquires and employs in an intentional way as a flexible instrument to learn significantly and solve problems and academic demands.</p>	<p>The use of varied materials and activities in the English lessons to facilitate and activate the teaching – learning process.</p>	<p>Teaching strategies:</p> <p>Learning strategies</p>	<p>Repetition Contextualization Cooperation Questions for clarification</p> <p>Spaced practice Retrieval practice Elaboration Interleaving Concrete examples Dual coding</p>

APPENDIX B

GUIDE OF OBSERVATION TO TEACHERS

Objective: To determine the English language teaching strategies to improve the students' communicative competence.

Observer: _____

Level: _____

Professor: _____

Date: _____

LISTENING SKILL:	Always	Sometimes	Never
The teacher uses the target language inside the classroom.			
The listening activity goes according to the level the students have.			
The teacher teaches the students using videos.			
The teacher allows the students to listen to conversations and dialogues from a CD.			
The teacher gives students the adequate time to work.			
SPEAKING SKILL:	Always	Sometimes	Never
The teacher uses the target language in the class.			
The teacher shows the students about how to pronounce words and expressions.			
The teacher encourages students to talk about any topic.			
READING SKILL:	Always	Sometimes	Never
The teacher motivates students to read using stories.			
The teacher uses just the English Book to work in class.			
The teacher makes activities like reading comprehension.			
WRITING SKILL:	Always	Sometimes	Never
The teacher teaches the students how to write correctly taking into account the grammar rules and punctuation.			
The teacher encourages students to write small paragraphs about any topic.			
The teacher motivates the students to write.			

APPENDIX C

GUIDE OF OBSERVATION TO STUDENTS

Objective: To determine the English language learning strategies to improve the students' communicative competence.

Observer: _____

Date: _____

Level: _____

LISTENING SKILL:	Always	Sometimes	Never
The students pay attention to the listening activity that the teacher provides to them.			
The students have the required knowledge to do the listening activity.			
The students understand the information they hear.			
SPEAKING SKILL:	Always	Sometimes	Never
The students have developed fluency in their speech.			
The students show in their speech the correct use of the grammar rules.			
The students pronounce correctly the expressions.			
READING SKILL:	Always	Sometimes	Never
The students read many times in order to have the idea of the topic clear.			
The students underline the most relevant information of the topic.			
The students comprehend the information they have to read.			
WRITING SKILL:	Always	Sometimes	Never
The students have the required vocabulary to write about a topic.			
The students use the examples that the teacher provides to them to do the activities.			

APPENDIX D

SURVEY TO BE APPLIED TO TEACHERS OF THE PONTIFICAL CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF ECUADOR IN ESMERALDAS

Objective: To determine the English language teaching strategies to improve the students' communicative competence.

1. At the moment to teach the students about writing skill, which aspects do you consider the most important?

Fluency

Correct use of grammar rules

Appropriate use of vocabulary

Production of ideas

2. What language do you use for teaching?

Target language

Mother tongue

Both languages

3. In which way do you work in class in order to enhance the learning process?

Individually

By groups

By pairs

4. In order to develop the Reading skill, which of the techniques do you consider are most useful to teach the students?

Reading stories

Through reading comprehension

Just using the English book

5. When teaching to the students, what kind of materials aids do you use?

Videos

Flashcards

6. Which of these methods do you use the most to teach the students?

Audio Lingual method

Total Physical response method

Direct method

Communicative language teaching method

Community language learning method

Suggestopedia method

Grammar translation method

Silent way method

7. Do you use a ludic methodology (games, songs, role - plays, poems) in class?

Always

Usually

Sometimes

Never

APPENDIX E

SURVEY TO BE APPLIED TO THE 2ND LEVEL STUDENTS OF GENERAL ENGLISH OF THE PONTIFICAL CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF ECUADOR IN ESMERALDAS

Objective: To determine the English language learning strategies to improve the students' communicative competence.

1. How many hours do you spend to study every day?
 - From 0 to 2
 - From 2 to 5
 - I do not study
2. When you have to study for a lesson, how do you practice?
 - Writing about things you can remember.
 - Practicing with another person.
3. In which way do you learn new vocabulary?
 - Memorization
 - Using pictures
 - Group classroom practice
4. Select which of these activities help you in the development of the Listening skill
 - Through music
 - Through conversations
5. Select which of these activities do you like to do in class to develop the Speaking skill?
 - Dialogue
 - Role play
 - Brainstorming games
 - Questions and answers
 - Debates
 - Conversation practice

6. Which of these activities do you like to do in class to develop the Reading skill?
- Story re – creation
 - Sequence reading
 - Reading personal information
 - Guess the movie
7. Put a tick in the activities that you like to do in class to develop the Writing skill.
- Lifestyles profile
 - Let`s talk about Paul
 - The last vacation
 - Dictation practice
 - Descriptive writing
8. How do you think English practice is better?
- With my classmates in groups
 - With my classmates in pairs
 - Individually at home