

Article

Analysis of the pedagogical proposal for teaching English and development of communicative competences of civil engineering students at University of Guayaquil



Análisis de la propuesta pedagógica para la enseñanza del inglés y el desarrollo de competencias comunicativas de los estudiantes de ingeniería civil de la Universidad de Guayaquil

Maria Isabel Vieyra Villala*
Mariela Alava Macias*
Michael Jose Ortega Tambaco*

Abstract

The importance of language training for professionals is highlighted, particularly in the context of the global significance of the English language. In Ecuador, the lack of emphasis on teaching foreign languages has led to challenges in English comprehension among students. A study at the University of Guayaquil aims to assess the impact of English language teaching methodologies on students' communicative competence in civil engineering. The research methodology involves observations, surveys, and analysis to improve English language programs and enhance student support. This comprehensive study seeks to identify challenges and

Master in Teaching English as a foreign Universidad de Guayaquil, maria.vieyrav@ug.edu.ec, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1983-3048>

Magister en Administración de Empresas Mención Telecomunicaciones, Universidad de Guayaquil, mariela.alavam.@ug.edu.ec, <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-8971-1304>

Magister en Negocios Internacionales, Universidad de Guayaquil, michael.ortegat@ug.edu.ec, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8576-7443>

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advantages in teaching English as a foreign language, emphasizing student development and linguistic skills.

Keywords: Linguistic competence, Pedagogical proposal, English for Specific Purposes, Language skills

Resumen

Se destaca la importancia de la formación lingüística de los profesionales, sobre todo en el contexto de la importancia mundial de la lengua inglesa. En Ecuador, la falta de énfasis en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras ha provocado problemas de comprensión del inglés entre los estudiantes. Un estudio realizado en la Universidad de Guayaquil pretende evaluar el impacto de las metodologías de enseñanza del inglés en la competencia comunicativa de los estudiantes de ingeniería civil. La metodología de investigación involucra observaciones, encuestas y análisis para mejorar los programas de inglés y mejorar el apoyo a los estudiantes. Este estudio integral busca identificar retos y ventajas en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera, haciendo énfasis en el desarrollo y las competencias lingüísticas de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: Competencia lingüística, Propuesta pedagógica, Inglés para fines específicos, Habilidades lingüísticas.

Introduction

The English language has become a global language, and so the study of foreign languages is increasingly being incorporated into the professional training of specialists across a wide range of profiles today. One expert has claimed that language training can help in all professional fields as stated, “The effectiveness of their language training will have a significant impact on how well they are able to address challenges related to their professional development and expand their relationships with foreign partners.” (Crystal, 2003). As this quote shows, language learning has a lot of benefits in the professional world to get more opportunities. Therefore, this is an important fact for people entering the modern professional world. In conclusion, the English language is a global language, and the study of the foreign language is increasingly important.

Furthermore, due to the lack of emphasis placed on teaching foreign languages, such as English, students in Ecuador of all educational levels had almost no ability to apprehend English and other

languages. Several decades ago, many academic programs did not require learning a second language. English was regarded as an elective topic in Ecuador meaning that each educational establishment had the discretion to include it or not in its curriculum. Thus, it is impossible to determine how many hours of foreign language instruction were provided to the typical Ecuadorian student during their public education years. To conclude, due to the lack of emphasis placed on teaching foreign languages in Ecuador, many students have a hard time understanding English.

The goal of this study is to establish the relationship between the pedagogical proposal for teaching English as a foreign language at the University of Guayaquil's Faculty of Mathematical and Physical Sciences and its impact on the development of communicative competence in students pursuing careers in civil engineering. Moreover, the goal is the identification of the advantages of new teaching-learning methodologies and learning objectives in relationship with linguistic development, and discover the challenges that students face when learning English as a foreign language. This may include analyzing student perceptions, levels of motivation, and engagement in the learning process. The study will also consider how technology can be used to enhance the teaching-learning experience for students. Overall, the data collected from this research project will provide valuable insights into how universities can improve their English language programs and better support their students.

The structure of this project was that of observations. First, observation sheets were given to instructors of the English courses. Afterward, surveys were provided to each student. Finally, in-class observations were conducted to validate the results of the study. All these steps created a critical-evaluative analysis of the educational proposal in terms of the student's development of communicative competence for the University of Guayaquil's civil engineering program.

This research report outlines my personal interest and justification for conducting this study. Afterward, research questions and objectives are presented. Then, theoretical backgrounds are explained that will be used to analyze the teaching currently used within the English department. The methodology section includes a description of the research approach, type, and tools. The study is then presented with practical information on how the study was conducted and carried out. After the study, results and an overall discussion on the observations can be found. Finally, the conclusion

which provides the final thoughts on the findings of this study is shown, and then the bibliography and appendix.

Behaviorist linguists like Thorndike (1921), Watson (1925), and Skinner (1957) contributed to the common understanding of learning in the first half of the 20th century by characterizing a system of behavioral responses to physical inputs. They thought that the formation of habits, operant conditioning, and reinforcements was key to the development of stimulus-response associations, with an emphasis on successful error-free learning in small, deliberate steps and stages. Therefore, drill practice and imitation of language learning would then be used to create, establish, and reinforce new habits.

Furthermore, according to behaviorist learning theory, from Skinner's work in 1968, learning is measured by how a learner changes their behavior, and learning environments should focus on behavior modification. This theory's educational implications include material presentation, question posing, and feedback to elicit learner responses, as well as rewarding accurate responses and repeating the cycle for effective learning. To sum up, Behaviorism is the methodology of repeated practice and being rewarded to learn the target language.

Materials and methods

Questionnaires and observation sheets were used for the analysis, from which concepts and results will be presented. Two questionnaires will be conducted for data collection: one focused on fourth-level English professors and another focused on eighty-seven students. Regarding to the methods, for the research was used a qualitative approach, to develop the following descriptions: Description of the research approach, Description of the research type and Description of the research tools as the proposed methodology follows the communicative approach, focusing on student-centered learning and real-life communication situations to enhance social interaction.

Results

English is the third most spoken language in the world, so mastering this language will be very useful when getting new job opportunities or applying for an international scholarship. Then, the response of 4.60%, from 4 students, indicates that their motivation to study English is the taste or interest they have for the subject. This may be

an indicator that the type of methodology used to teach the language does not include sufficient parameters to foster personal stimulation, and that the affective filter has not been activated in the learning lessons that the students have received. Finally, the smallest percentage corresponds to 3.45%, 3 students, who indicate that their learning motive is to pass the levels as a requirement to be able to graduate from their respective careers.

Regarding English level proficiency concerns the ability that students must have to take an international exam that certifies them as formal language users. The most notable result was 85.06%, issued by 74 students, who consider that they are not ready to take an international exam such as the TOEFL or the FCE; This is due — according to their answers— to the fact that their level of vocabulary, grammatical structures and both reading and writing skills are not at a satisfactory level. It should be mentioned that the mentioned exams certify a student as an independent user of the language at level B2, and the fourth level of the English subject in the Professional Careers of the University of Guayaquil reaches level B1, so the answer is understandable.

The percentage with the lowest value is 14.94% and corresponds to 13 students, who consider that they are ready to take the exam. The fact that a student is willing to take an exam is a great incentive for the Degree, since it is understood that he feels confident in the work that has been done during the teaching-learning process. To continue, the question related to language skills is mentioned. This parameter considers the four fundamental language skills (speaking, reading, writing, and listening) and indicates the percentage of language proficiency according to the study participants. The result with the highest percentage is the one that goes from 70% to 90%. This data corresponds to 44.83%, that is, 39 students surveyed. Students in this category state that the skills they master best are speaking, or the ability to speak.

This result correlates with general grades obtained by students in their final oral exams. In which most students exceed seven points out of ten. Moreover, these marks reflect that students have a good standard pronunciation and that they maintain correct intonation when expressing their ideas. Students can be classified as independent users of the language, who can hold a conversation on familiar and everyday topics for them.

Regarding listening and reading, students have an acceptable level of comprehension in both skills. This was observed in the classes

visited, since in each one it was verified that 100% of the students understood the instructions they heard from their professors.

Regarding reading, the results of the final exams reflect that students understand what they read in approximately 70%. Within reading comprehension, activities such as understanding main and secondary ideas and inferences from the reading must be considered. 33.33% of the observed classes used readings as part of the lesson, and it was observed that students participate in class and offer answers related to the previous activities.

On the other hand, the correction techniques used in most cases are permanent feedback. Professors correct their students constantly and immediately during their classes; however, they do not do so impertinently. The corrections are made in a written and verbal way, in an atmosphere of respect, so that the students do not feel emotionally affected. To finish this topic, we will talk about the use of the book by each teacher.

Regarding the use of the text, some similarities were found: 6 out of 6 participants use the book in part of their lessons. No extensive or straitjacket-like use is made of the text. Each teacher takes the text as a base, but includes additional activities, such as worksheets, PowerPoint presentations, additional readings, and extra grammar exercises, which is very useful for students, offering the possibility of expanding their knowledge beyond the basics. that the content of the book establishes.

Discussion

Regarding the formal and standardized evaluation system, the Coordination of Foreign Languages has standardized qualification rubrics in relation to oral and written production. All professors use these evaluation parameters within their lessons and in the exams that are taken in the middle and at the end of the semester.

In management, it is evident that all professors plan their classes in advance, and that they carry out their activities within the general guidelines proposed by the Coordination of Foreign Languages. The schedules that have been established for the lessons are fully complied with. All professors start and finish their classes at the scheduled time, and class attendance by students is fulfilled normally. If a student is more than 10 minutes late to class, they are allowed in, but this lateness is recorded as an absence.

The way in which professors keep their record of grades is part of the management. Each teacher has their own format for attendance

and grades that must be delivered at the end of the semester along with a portfolio of one of their students. The delivery of these documents allows demonstrating the work done during the academic year. It is also evident that the instructors teach their classes within an atmosphere of respect and consideration, which is the basis of the lessons that are taught and, according to the observations. The professors are friendly and maintain good interpersonal relationships not only with their students but also with their peers, colleagues, and superiors. This allows the work and academic environment to be conducive to the development of daily activities within the Civil Engineering Career Department.

The good pedagogical practices that have been evidenced within the department and have allowed the development of competences to be holistic. The practices not only consider the command of English as a foreign language but also considers other aspects, such as personal ones, which is essential in the development of language skills since it is important that students feel motivated.

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