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INTEGRATING CULTURE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING PROCESS

**INTEGRANDO LA CULTURA Y LA TECNOLOGÍA EN EL
PROCESO DE APRENDIZAJE DEL INGLÉS**

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Integrating Culture and Technology in the English Language Learning Process

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ABSTRACT

This article titled "Integrating Culture and Technology in the English Language Learning Process" aims to explore how integrating local culture and technology can enhance the English learning process for ninth-grade students in a rural Colombian school. Using a qualitative action-research approach, strategies combining regional cultural elements and technological tools, such as Canva, were implemented to boost students' motivation and performance in English classes. Data collection methods included structured interviews, classroom observations, and the analysis of artifacts such as brochures created by the students. The findings showed that students established a stronger connection with the content by linking their culture to language learning, resulting in improved comprehension and engagement. The study concludes that incorporating culture and technology in the classroom can create a more meaningful and motivating learning environment, though longer-term interventions are necessary to assess its long-term impact.

Keywords: cultural integration, technology in education, english language learning, motivation in rural education, action research

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Integrando la Cultura y la Tecnología en el Proceso de Aprendizaje del Inglés

RESUMEN

Este artículo titulado "Integrating Culture and Technology in the English Language Learning Process" tiene como objetivo examinar cómo la integración de la cultura local y la tecnología puede mejorar el proceso de aprendizaje del inglés en estudiantes de noveno grado de una escuela rural en Colombia. A través de un enfoque cualitativo de investigación-acción, se implementaron estrategias que combinan el uso de elementos culturales regionales y herramientas tecnológicas como Canva, para fomentar la motivación y el rendimiento de los estudiantes en clases de inglés. Los métodos de recolección de datos incluyeron entrevistas estructuradas, observaciones en el aula y análisis de artefactos como folletos creados por los estudiantes. Los resultados indicaron que los estudiantes mostraron una mayor conexión con el contenido al vincular su cultura con el aprendizaje del idioma, mejorando su comprensión y participación. Se concluye que la inclusión de la cultura y la tecnología en el aula puede generar un entorno de aprendizaje más significativo y motivador, aunque se requieren intervenciones más prolongadas para evaluar su impacto a largo plazo.

Palabras Clave: integración cultural, tecnología en educación, aprendizaje del idioma inglés, motivación en educación rural, investigación-acción

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INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly globalized world, teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) has gained significant importance in education. However, in rural contexts in countries like Colombia, the challenges faced by both students and teachers are significant, especially in terms of motivation to acquire a new language and access to technological tools. The lack of integration of local culture in the English teaching process and the limited availability of technological resources have generated gaps in students' learning, which are reflected in their low performance and low interest in the language.

This research project was conducted at a rural teacher training state school during our practicum, where we identified a clear disconnect between innovative English teaching methods and the cultural and technological needs of the students. According to a needs analysis conducted, we clearly identified the problem that we decided to address in the research: the lack of adapting English teaching to students' cultural realities and incorporating technologies that facilitate the learning process.

Based on the aforementioned, we proposed an innovative approach that combined English teaching with the integration of local cultural elements and the use of technological resources. This approach was intended to create a dynamic and meaningful learning environment to establish a relevant connection between students, their own culture and community, while developing their English language skills.

This research article is structured as follows: it begins with the presentation of the research topic and the identification of the problem, followed by the research question and the study objectives. Next, it explains the reasons for conducting this study, continues with the norms or principles guiding us as researchers, reviews the theoretical framework where existing literature related to our topic is examined, describes the methodology used to analyze the data, presents the study results supported by literature related to our findings, draws conclusions, and finally lists the sources of information.

The justification for this study lies in the urgent need to address deficiencies in English teaching in rural contexts, where the lack of technological resources and cultural disconnects significantly limit learning. While research exists on integrating technology into English teaching, little exploration has been done in Colombia on how combining technology and culture can be effectively applied in rural settings. The purpose of this study was to fill this gap by providing a model that enhances the relevance and



significance of learning, fosters cultural identity allowing students to develop a sense of pride in their culture, and helps students interact effectively in a globalized world. Additionally, it promotes innovation in English teaching through the use of technological resources that encourage dynamic and unconventional learning, leading to improved student motivation and participation. The research has the potential to influence future educational practices, offering valuable insights for educators and future related studies interested in enhancing the quality of education in rural educational contexts.

Research questions

1. How does integrating culture and technology in the English language teaching process support a contextualized learning environment?
2. How can the integration of electronic devices with cultural and technological contexts help overcome potential resource limitations or ineffective management in English language classrooms?

Research objectives

1. To describe how the integration of the electronic devices and digital resources within the school environment mitigates resource constraints and improves English language teaching process.
2. To determine whether or not the interactive and culturally relevant activities engage students in their English language learning process.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this research focuses on the interrelation between cultural appropriation and the use of technologies in the English learning process. This need has arisen due to the lack of cultural integration in education, influenced by foreignism. This study aims to integrate culture and technology into the English teaching process. In that sense the concept of culture was explored in depth to subsequently observe its impact on teaching English through technology, taking into account contextual learning. The criteria considered in our research as theoretical postulates are explained below:

Culture in EFL contexts

Culture is an important element in EFL environments as it encompasses many significant aspects related to a language such as music, customs, traditions, dances, foods, among other things. While it is



necessary for students to know their own language in order to learn another, it is essential for them to know their own culture to understand another. Therefore, it is valuable to consider this concept as a facilitating element for learning a new language.

Intercultural communicative competence was defined by Byram as "an ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds" (p. 35). In these terms, the notion is that indeed effective language learning involves more than being superficially introduced to other cultures; it is about developing the actual skills that make meaningful interaction with people from different cultural backgrounds possible. It is in this regard that making cultural understanding an integral part of language education becomes imperative, as it will help students negotiate and appreciate the complexities of culture.

In addition, Barnhardt and Kawagley (2005) support this view when they propose that the use of culture in the classroom should represent "blending the academic functions of the school with the cultural patterns of the community" (p. 12). They argue for using the local culture as a foundational unit for teaching that indeed provides meaningful tools to develop various activities or exercises leading to effective foreign language learning. This approach sets out to highlight an essential incorporation of relevant aspects of students' own culture into the EFL context, with a view to relating these with their cultural experiences in the process of learning the language.

However, Kramsch (1993) has critically commented on the way culture is represented in most EFL materials. For this reason, according to her, "Culture is not a thing, but a process. It is not a product, but a practice" (p. 125). Such critique shall bring into light the static and essentialist view of culture that often prevails in EFL resources. Kramsch's point brings into view how EFL materials need to progress beyond superficial and static representations of culture toward the dynamic and evolving nature of cultural contact. Only in that direction would such purposes more correspondingly align with those of intercultural competence in promoting deeper and more contextualized cultural understanding.

This will provide a framework within which intercultural competence becomes effectively entwined in foreign language acquisition and, at the same time, provides the necessary limitations and various criticisms of current EFL materials in terms of their nature. Indeed, it is only by ensuring that such



materials reflect the dynamic and interactive nature of culture that this would significantly enhance the students' ability to engage meaningfully with other cultural contexts.

Technology as a resource for EFL students

It is true that education is not static, meaning it is constantly evolving due to various factors, including technological advancements. Education is subject to numerous changes aimed at adapting to a changing society, leading to the evolution of teaching methods and educational tools over time to provide more relevant and effective education.

In EFL contexts, technology plays a crucial role as it directly relates to student motivation, fosters communication, increases autonomy, and allows for a more genuine approach to the target language (Gonzalez, 2016). As mentioned earlier, it has a positive impact on foreign language learning for students but also serves as a valuable resource for teachers. For instance, Beaven and Rosell (2021) highlight that "Technology-Facilitated Oral Homework (TFOH) is an umbrella term for the use of digital technologies that enable learners to record themselves speaking the target language and submit recordings to their teachers from outside the formal classroom environment" (p. 94). In our case, it was a motivating and useful tool because it allowed effective control of activities such as videos, which required students to record themselves. These tasks were mostly carried out outside the school environment, but sometimes also in the classroom, thus allowing us to have control over the progress made progressively in aspects such as speaking and pronunciation. Through the analysis of these assignments, improvements in the aforementioned elements as well as in students' motivation and performance were noted, making the implementation of these technological tools beneficial for both teachers and students.

This method improves the learning process overall and enables more individualized feedback by giving teachers a tool to monitor and assess language use in less regulated settings, in addition to giving students greater flexibility and practice chances.

Teachers may close the gap between formal instruction and language use in everyday situations by incorporating this kind of technology into the curriculum, which will ultimately create a more engaging and productive learning environment.



Contextual teaching and learning (CTL)

The CTL approach is a language learning strategy that emphasizes the process of student involvement in finding material and relating it to real-life situations, and applying it in everyday life (Tessmer & Richey, 1997). Teaching a foreign language based on students' context and experiences promotes meaningful learning, which leads to students feeling identified, motivated, and receptive to learning the target language.

Dewey's theory emphasized aligning curriculum and teaching methods with students' individual experiences and interests (Rodgers, 2002). According to this theory, students learn more effectively when the subject matter relates to their experiences, and they are actively involved in classroom teaching-learning activities (Nurhadi, Yasin, & Senduk, 2004). Contextual teaching and learning (CTL), in addition to fostering the learning of a foreign language (L2), significantly enhances student participation through motivation, as it creates a kind of intimate connection with the topic being taught. Contextual teaching and learning (CTL) is crucial in an EFL setting, as the learning relates to real life, making it more valuable for students and motivating them to participate effectively. Additionally, it prepares them for real life, as students learn to use the language in real-world situations.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

This study is grounded in the theory of action research, with key contributions from several authors in defining and guiding this approach. Dewey (1938), for example, contributes a theoretical basis that is centered around experience and observation in the educational process, with particular regard to how such practices can inform teaching. Lewin (1946) also goes ahead to support this action research; he goes ahead to endorse group inquiry, where the active participation in groups studies becomes a stepping stone to change and further improvement. Kemmis and Halkes (1982) then go ahead to give one the how-to of performing the action research showing steps and strategies necessary in conducting studies aimed at practical transformation and critical reflection.

Due to this, this paper adopts the approach of action research within a qualitative framework. This is evidenced by its focus on analyzing the impact of integrating cultural and technological elements as motivational strategies for English learning among ninth-grade students. Action research is



characterized by its iterative process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, aimed at solving practical problems while simultaneously contributing to theory and practice. As defined by Kemmis and Halkes(1988), “action research involves a collaborative and reflective process that seeks to bring about change through direct intervention in the learning environment” (p.5).In line with the action research methodology, this study employed a variety of data collection methods tailored to gather comprehensive qualitative data.

Research Design

This action research was carried out under qualitative research, since we aim to analyze the impact of implementing culture and technology as motivational strategies for English learning among ninth-grade students, field notes and structured interviews were used both at the beginning and end of the study, with students and teachers. The following problem had arisen: The teaching of English does not take full advantage in this case at rural normal school to integrate culture and technology to make learning experiences meaningful, relevant, and engaging for students.

Research context and participants

This study was carried out at a rural teacher training school in Colombia, during the first semester of the 2024 academic year. The institution serves students from rural areas where access to technological resources and exposure to English as a foreign language is limited. The rich cultural heritage of the region, including local traditions and customs, provided a valuable context for investigating how the integration of culture and technology could influence English learning.

The participants were 28 students from the ninth grade, aged between 14 and 16 years. They were chosen based on their consistent attendance and willingness to take part in the research. They presented diverse levels of prior knowledge in English, enriching the study by offering varied perspectives and challenges in the learning process.

Ethical Consideration

This study complies with Law 1581 of 2012, which safeguards participants' personal information, ensuring their privacy and anonymity, as established by the Congreso de la República de Colombia (2012). This research was conducted by preservice teachers B.A in Bilingualism with emphasis on English teaching who carried out their practicum at a rural normal school. This was made possible



through a voluntary, non-profit agreement between the university and the school. No financial compensation was provided for their collaboration or the information supplied.

Therefore, a consent letter was prepared and addressed to the school principal, with the purpose of expressing our intention to carry out our pedagogical intervention at the institution. Similarly, it was stated that data collection from students would be conducted for this purpose, and that all their data would be protected to ensure their privacy. Additionally, the time required for this process was taken into account, so as not to interrupt the normal development of educational activities. All of this was done to ensure that the collected data and information would be handled in accordance with established ethical protocols.

Participants included ninth-grade students aged between 14 and 16 years who were enrolled in the rural normal school and had regular attendance during the intervention period. These students were willing to participate and had provided verbal consent. Students with specific learning disabilities that fell outside the research's pedagogical focus, as well as those who missed more than the half of the intervention sessions, were excluded from the study to ensure consistency in the data collected. Additionally, any student who did not give or wanted the consent were automatically excluded. However, in our case, no one student objected.

Data Collection Methods

The sample consisted of 28 ninth-grade students, aged between 14 and 16 years. Qualitative data collected included over 30 hours of classroom observations, 18 interviews with students and teachers, and more than 50 artifacts (assignments and projects) produced by the students.

Following the action research methodology, this current study adopted a multi-method approach to data collection that would be appropriate to elicit comprehensive qualitative data. Structured interviews were carried out both at the start and toward the end of the study in order to compare how participants' attitudes and beliefs had changed over the period of the study. In structured interviews, the participant is asked the same set of pre-formulated questions in a specific order to maintain consistency and comparability between interviews (Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015). This was a method of data collection that was chosen for the purpose of systematically collecting information on perceptions regarding the motivational strategies used in this context by students and teachers.



Different observations were carried out during the whole study in order to capture the evolution of the intervention and the effect thereof in classroom dynamics. Observation is defined to mean the obtainment of information through watching or paying attention. In this study, data collection was done through systematic recording of behaviors, interactions, and events in their natural setting (Glesne & Peshkin, 2015; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Observations allow the researcher to get an inside account of participants' activities and a context in which they are conducted. Data on how culture and technology are integrated into teaching and learning was collected.

Also, analysis of the students' artifacts, projects, drawings were carried out both at the beginning and end of this study to juxtapose the quality and content of the work produced by students before and after the intervention (Eisner, 1991; Neuman, 2023). This approach informs on the learning processes of students and their understanding of the subject matter. The analysis of the above mentioned artifacts allowed an estimation of the efficiency of the motivational strategies in improving students' learning outcomes, knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

The data collection process was designed to capture the perspectives of both students and teachers regarding the integration of culture and technology in the English language learning process. By employing these tools, the research aimed to achieve a triangulation of data sources, enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

It is important to correctly choose the appropriate data collection methods for any type of research. In this case, these methods were chosen because they fit the needs and intentions of our research, considering that it is a qualitative study it is essential to design and select accurate data-gathering instruments, as this enables researchers to tackle, synthesize, and address their research endeavors effectively. For this study, which focuses on integrating culture and technology into the English language learning process, three primary data collection methods were employed: structured interviews, observations, and artifacts.

Structured Interviews. Structured interviews were conducted with both teachers and students to gather specific insights into the integration of cultural and technological elements in English learning. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018), structured interviews are a valuable tool in educational research for obtaining in-depth information through a consistent set of questions, which



facilitates the comparison and synthesis of responses across participants. In this study, the structured interviews provided significant insights into participants' comfort with digital tools, their understanding of cultural context, and their engagement with the learning material. This method was particularly effective in capturing detailed perspectives on the practical aspects of the intervention, thus contributing to a comprehensive understanding of its impact.

Observations. Observations were another critical instrument employed in this study. By systematically observing classroom interactions and behaviors, researchers were able to capture the real-time effects of integrating cultural and technological elements into the teaching process. Observations involved detailed note-taking during classes to document student engagement, participation, and responses to the instructional methods used. This method provided a comprehensive view of how students interacted with the content and each other, offering insights that could not be captured through interviews alone. Through observations, it was noted that students initially displayed varying levels of participation, with some showing reluctance to engage due to unfamiliarity with the content or technology. However, as the sessions progressed, there was a noticeable increase in student involvement, particularly when cultural elements relevant to their own experiences were introduced. This shift underscores the importance of cultural relevance in maintaining student interest and participation.

Artifacts. Artifacts, including student assignments and projects, were collected to assess the tangible outcomes of the integration of culture and technology in English teaching. These artifacts provided concrete evidence of students' learning progress and their ability to apply the concepts taught in class. By analyzing these materials, researchers were able to evaluate the depth of students' understanding and their proficiency in using cultural and technological elements in their language learning. The artifacts collected included digital presentations, multimedia projects, culturally themed essays, and brochures created using Canva. The analysis of the brochures, combined with observations and interviews, allowed for a comprehensive evaluation of how students represented and connected the cultural elements of their region to English learning. Observations showed that students incorporated detailed information about local traditions, significant figures, and cultural events, reflecting a deep understanding of their cultural heritage and their ability to communicate it in English. The brochures,



along with student responses during interviews, highlighted the importance of cultural relevance in learning.

Pedagogical Intervention

In response to the unique challenges faced by ninth-grade students in a rural school, this pedagogical intervention was crafted to weave local culture into the framework of English language learning. Conducted over six weeks, the intervention sought to create a bridge between students' everyday cultural experiences and the English language, fostering a deeper connection and making learning more relevant and engaging. Through a series of structured activities, students were guided to explore their cultural heritage while enhancing their English skills, culminating in the creation of culturally-rich materials using digital tools like Canva. This intervention was not only about improving language proficiency but also about empowering students to express their cultural identity through a foreign language, supported by modern technology.

Brochure Planning. In the first session, students participated in introductory sessions where the importance of culture in learning a new language was discussed and the brochure project was introduced to the students. They were informed about the importance of combining cultural aspects of their environment with English learning, and how this brochure would serve as a tool to express their knowledge in both areas. Topics included, such as local traditions, important cultural figures, and regional cuisine, were discussed.

Content Development. During subsequent classes, students focused on researching and writing in English about the selected topics. Each class was dedicated to a specific section of the brochure, such as the history of cultural figures, the description of local traditions, and the presentation of food festivals. This approach allowed students to delve deeply into each topic, enhancing their English skills while exploring their cultural heritage.

Technological Integration with Canva. As part of the technological intervention, students used the design tool Canva to create their brochures. They were taught by the pre-service teachers how to use various features of this digital tool to organize information, select templates and incorporate relevant images. The use of Canva allowed students to apply their technological knowledge in a practical way while designing an attractive and professional brochure.



Review and Feedback. At the end of each class, or in some cases at the beginning of the next one, students received feedback on the brochure section they had completed. This feedback focused on linguistic accuracy, content coherence, and design effectiveness. This process allowed them to make adjustments before moving on to the next section of the project.

Final Presentation. Finally, the students presented their projects to the rest of the class and to the three practicum teachers. These presentations were evaluated not only for their cultural and linguistic content but also for creativity and effective use of technology.

This pedagogical intervention was fundamental in a short-time getting students to connect their English learning with their culture, promoting a more meaningful and motivating learning experience. The methodology used allowed observing the direct impact of cultural and technological integration in the teaching process, providing a practical and contextualized approach that can be replicated in other similar educational environments.

RESULTS

Data Analysis

Data for this study were collected through structured interviews, observations, and artifacts produced by ninth-grade students at rural school in Saboyá. These data collection techniques were used at the beginning and end of the study to gain a comprehensive view of changes in students' skills and motivation.

Before analysis, interviews were reviewed and transcribed, observations were categorized, and student artifacts were digitized. Data cleaning was performed to ensure that all responses were clear and complete, removing any irrelevant data.

Content Coding and Categorization

The data collected, including the brochures, interviews, and observations, were manually coded to identify the main thematic categories present in the students' works. These categories include providing meaningful and innovative learning for community benefit and encouraging motivation and producing education outcomes. For instance, the brochures revealed how students selected and represented specific cultural elements, such as Boyacá traditions, their sense of belonging, and regional gastronomy, which was also supported by classroom observations and interview responses.



Furthermore, the evaluation of creativity and design in the brochures was integrated with the overall data analysis. Students demonstrated skills in using digital tools to create visually appealing and well-organized brochures. The choice of colors, typography, and information layout in the brochures was varied and often reflected an effort to make the content accessible and engaging. This creativity was also observed in classroom activities, where students applied these skills during the creation of their brochures, confirming their understanding of the content and their ability to apply it creatively using technological resources.

Additionally, the integrated analysis of the brochures, alongside other data collection methods, provided valuable insights into how the integration of culture and technology can enhance motivation and performance in English learning. Preliminary findings suggest that students not only improved their language skills but also developed greater cultural and technological awareness. This exploratory approach, combining all data sources, allowed key areas to be identified for further analysis in the study.

RESULTS

Providing Meaningful and Innovative Learning for Community Benefit

This category focuses on how English teaching can be used as a tool to connect students with their local culture and benefit the community as a whole. This category encompasses several subcategories, which are detailed below:

Appreciation and Representation of Local Culture in Learning. Integrating local culture into English classes allows students to connect language learning with their immediate cultural environment, which in turn facilitates the retention and understanding of new concepts. To develop this subcategory, we considered what two students shared with us during the second interview that was conducted.

Second interview transcription

Researcher 1: *How has the inclusion of local culture, specifically the culture of Boyacá, affected your understanding and learning of English?*

Student 1: *Learning English through the culture of Boyacá makes it easier to remember vocabulary and concepts because I associate them with things I already know, like the traditions and customs of our region.*



This aligns with Barnhardt and Kawagley's (2005) assertion that "blending the academic functions of the school with the cultural patterns of the community" (p. 12) is essential for effective education, as it provides meaningful tools for developing language skills in a culturally relevant context.

Innovation in English Learning through the Integration of Technological Resources. The use of technology has become a crucial resource in our classes, enabling students to access tools that facilitate autonomous learning. As evidenced by a student's response in the second interview and the field notes from different classes.

Second interview transcription

Researcher 1: What technological tools have been most useful to you for practicing and learning English?

Student 1: The use of applications like Duolingo and Quizlet has been very helpful. Also, the classes where we use videos and songs have really helped improve my listening comprehension.

However, challenges were also identified, such as the need to improve classroom management to maximize participation and the effective use of these resources.

Field notes, April 11th

Low motivation in independent work was observed among students, which was confirmed during our class observations, as most students opted to work in groups to complete tasks, and only a few worked on their own, even though the task did not require group work

Field notes, April 18th

The teacher tried to incorporate more interactive activities using technology, but some students were distracted and not fully engaged, indicating a need for better integration strategies.

This highlights the importance of creating a stronger connection between the cultural context and the technological tools used in the classroom to keep students engaged. Kormos and Wisdom (2021) emphasize the importance of overcoming digital divides in rural schools to ensure effective technology integration, stating that limited access to technological resources can significantly hinder student engagement and learning outcomes.



Identifying the Benefits of Learning English for the Community. An important aspect highlighted in our interviews was how students perceive learning English as a valuable tool for their future and for the benefit of their community. As evidenced by one student's response in the second interview.

Second interview transcription

Researcher 1: Will the knowledge you have gained during our classes and the implementation of our project positively impact your future?

Student 1: I feel that this approach has given me a stronger foundation in English, which will be very useful if I decide to study or work abroad in the future.

Additionally, according to Suryani et al. (2020), building students' sense of national identity is the basic element in facilitating them to be intercultural communicators since identity is required in global interaction. This shows how English teaching, when contextualized in local culture, can positively impact both students and the community by fostering communication with international visitors and contributing to economic development through tourism.

Encouraging Motivation and Producing Education Outcomes

This category examines how motivation and active participation in the learning process are essential to achieving positive educational outcomes. As previously mentioned, this category comprises several subcategories, which are outlined as follows:

Increasing Motivation and Participation in the English Learning Process. Observations made in class revealed that students were more motivated when they were allowed to use technological tools and participate in interactive activities. However, challenges related to classroom management and the lack of activities that fostered student agency were also observed. An example of this is reflected in the field notes.

Field notes, April 25th

It was observed that students did not do independent work due to their lack of interest in English. For example, when instructed to complete tasks individually, most preferred to work in groups, limiting their autonomous learning.

Field notes, April 18th



The teacher's attempts to engage students through debates and group activities were met with limited success, as students often reverted to passive roles, indicating a need for more targeted motivational strategies.

This underscores the importance of designing activities that not only foster engagement but also encourage independent learning with the goal of improving participation and seeking motivation, as highlighted by students who began to recognize tangible benefits of learning English.

Recognizing the Positive Effect of Learning. During our observations and interviews, we noticed that students began to recognize the tangible benefits of learning English. This is evidenced by a comment made by a student, which was noted in the first interview.

Second interview transcription

Researcher 1: What new skills or knowledge do you believe you have gained through the implementation of our project in the English classes?

Student 1: I have greatly improved my ability to speak in public in English and also my ability to understand more complex texts. Additionally, I have learned more about how my culture can be a bridge to understanding others.

Another student noted:

First interview transcription

Researcher 3: What new skills or knowledge do you believe you have gained through the implementation of our project in the English classes?

Student 4: Seeing the progress I've made in English gives me confidence in my ability to learn and succeed in other subjects too.

This recognition of the positive impact not only enhances student motivation but also reinforces the value of learning English as an essential skill for their personal and academic development.

English and Professional Development. Learning English is also perceived as a crucial tool for the students' future professional development. As noted in a student's response during the second interview.

Second interview transcription



Researcher 1: *Will the knowledge you have gained during our classes and the implementation of our project positively impact your future?*

Student 2: *I now have a better foundation in English, and I know this will be useful for job opportunities and higher education.*

Such reflections highlight how English proficiency is not only seen as an academic competency but also as a significant investment in their professional future. As reflected in the field notes.

Field notes, April 11 th

Students indicated that the learning acquired during the classes would provide them with a solid foundation to communicate in professional environments in the future.

Field notes, April 18th

"Students expressed a desire to further improve their English skills as they recognize its importance for their future careers, particularly in fields requiring international communication."

In short, learning English not only contributes to the academic development of students, it also becomes a key tool to open new opportunities in the professional field. Their mastery will allow them to access better job opportunities and perform effectively in international environments, consolidating their personal and professional success.

To answer the first research question, the factors that facilitate a contextualized learning environment for English include the integration of cultural elements and technology, which significantly increased students' motivation and participation. Implementing projects through tools allowed students to express their cultural identity in English, resulting in more meaningful and personalized learning. This approach not only enhanced their linguistic skills but also fostered a deeper appreciation for their local culture, supporting the creation of a contextualized learning environment. This finding aligns with previous studies emphasizing the importance of linking foreign language education with the student's cultural context (Suryani et al., 2020). Similarly, addressing the second research question, the use of electronic devices such as mobile phones and online learning resources fostered students' autonomy and active participation. Despite technological limitations, these tools enhanced classroom interaction and engagement, which was key to managing classroom dynamics more effectively. This approach provided



students with immediate work control, which, in turn, improved their learning and prepared them for future professional environments, as indicated by their reflections during the interviews.

Limitations

The integration of culture into the curriculum required significant preparation and adaptation by the teachers. The existing School curricula did not fully support this integration, meaning that adjustments had to be made on the fly. This sometimes resulted in less structured lessons, which could have impacted the consistency of the learning outcomes.

Finally, the study was conducted over a relatively short time period (six weeks), which limits the ability to draw long-term conclusions about the effectiveness of this pedagogical approach. A longer intervention might have provided more robust data on how these methods impact student learning over time.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings from this study suggest that integrating local culture and technology into English language teaching can significantly enhance student engagement and motivation, particularly in rural settings. The use of culturally relevant materials, combined with technological tools, creates a more meaningful and contextually relevant learning experience that helps students connect with the language on a deeper level. However, the limitations of technological access and the constraints of the existing curriculum must be addressed to fully realize the potential of this method. Future researchers should explore longer-term interventions and consider additional strategies for overcoming resource limitations in rural schools.

This study contributes to the understanding of how culture and technology can be integrated into the English learning process, offering a model that can be adapted in similar educational contexts to improve language learning outcomes and student motivation.

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