

Teachers' professional development: active approach and meaningful learning in the instruction in english as a foreign language

Richard Manzano

e1311422214@live.uleam.edu.ec

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2281-8159>

Student at Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí, Ecuador
Member of the research project Comprensión lectora y Escritura Académica

María Cristina Basantes

maria.basantes@uleam.edu.ec

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5184-9643>

Professor at Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí, Ecuador
Member of the research group Innovaciones Pedagógicas para el Desarrollo Sostenible
Member of the research project Comprensión lectora y Escritura Académica

Jhonny Villafuerte-Holguín

Jhonny.villafuerte@uleam.edu.ec

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6053-6307>

Professor at Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabi, Ecuador
Leader of the research project Comprensión lectora y Escritura Académica

ABSTRACT

This study aims to contribute to the professional teacher's development proposing the use of active and meaningful learning to improve English Language instruction. The research team used qualitative and quantitative educational research approaches to collect information. The participants were 76 people among high school students, trainee teachers, and teachers in service in Manta, Ecuador. The Likert scale questionnaire, survey, and open-ended interview questions were used to gather information. Results allowed the research team to determine that the traditional methodology used for the instruction limits the students' engagement and motivation for learning English as a foreign language. It concluded that an active approach and meaningful learning could improve student-teacher feedback creating a positive synergy and better educational environments. EFL classes should be more active and exciting for students to answer according to their local context and interests. In the same way, lessons should be supported with the scaffolding process for building more meaningful lessons to remember.

Keywords: *EFL; active approach; meaningful learning; synergy; rapport.*

Correspondencia: ciro. e1311422214@live.uleam.edu.ec

Artículo recibido 24 diciembre 2022 Aceptado para publicación: 24 enero 2023

Conflictos de Interés: Ninguna que declarar

Todo el contenido de **Ciencia Latina Revista Científica Multidisciplinar**, publicados en este sitio están disponibles bajo

Licencia [Creative Commons](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) 

Cómo citar: Manzano, R., Basantes, M. C., & Villafuerte-Holguín, J. (2023). Teachers' professional development: active approach and meaningful learning in the instruction in english as a foreign language. *Ciencia Latina Revista Científica Multidisciplinar*, 7(1), 1514-1537. https://doi.org/10.37811/cl_rcm.v7i1.4496

Desarrollo profesional del docente: enfoque activo y aprendizaje significativo en la enseñanza del idioma inglés como lengua extranjera

RESUMEN

Este estudio tiene como objetivo contribuir al desarrollo del profesional docente proponiendo el uso del aprendizaje activo y significativo para mejorar la enseñanza del idioma inglés. El equipo de investigación utilizó enfoques de investigación educativa cualitativos y cuantitativos para recopilar información. Participaron 76 personas entre estudiantes de secundaria, docentes en formación y docentes en servicio de Manta, Ecuador. Se utilizó el cuestionario de escala Likert, la encuesta y la entrevista de preguntas abiertas para recolectar información. Los resultados permitieron al equipo de investigadores determinar que la metodología tradicional utilizada para la instrucción limita el compromiso y la motivación de los estudiantes para aprender el inglés como lengua extranjera. Llegó a la conclusión de que un enfoque activo y un aprendizaje significativo podrían mejorar la retroalimentación entre estudiantes y maestros creando una sinergia positiva y mejores entornos de aprendizaje. Las clases de EFL deben ser más activas y emocionantes para que los alumnos respondan al contexto local y a los intereses de los alumnos, y las lecciones deben respaldarse con el proceso de andamiaje para construir lecciones más significativas para recordar.

Palabras clave: EFL; enfoque active; aprendizaje significativo; sinergia; rapport.

INTRODUCTION

The exploration of public education institutions in Ecuador showed learners' low interest in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Students reach low scores in reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills linked with the acquisition of the English language. They finish high school without reaching the EFL knowledge required by the government policy (Intriago, Villafuerte, Bello, et al., 2019). It is a problem that implies a limitation of global communication and access to information in the current global society.

Active learning is an approach where learners take a more active role in the learning process by building knowledge and understanding. Students usually do activities in response to the opportunities for education designed and offered by instructors (Yule, 2017). However, it is also relevant to understand that motivation for study requires connections between the new information and the didactic material used to create a more meaningful school setting.

Constructivist learning emphasizes that individuals build their own knowledge, connecting new ideas and experiences to previous knowledge and situations. Learners can assimilate new information into an existing framework or can modify that framework to accommodate new information that contradicts prior understanding.

According to Badroeni (2018), active learning pedagogy is considered to be a significant component in the field of language teaching because it has been shown to be effective in helping students learn and retain new information. By actively participating in the learning process, students are more likely to engage with the material and to develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Active learning pedagogy can also be used to meet the diverse needs and learning styles of different students, making it a valuable tool for language teachers.

There are several challenges or factors that can impact the effectiveness of active learning pedagogy in language teaching. Some of these challenges or factors may include:

Teacher preparedness: Teachers need to be prepared and trained in active learning techniques in order to use them effectively in their classrooms.

Class size: Active learning activities often require more interaction and participation from students, which can be difficult to manage in larger class sizes.

Student engagement: Some students may be more resistant to active learning activities, and it can be challenging to engage all students in the learning process.

Curriculum constraints: It may be difficult to incorporate active learning activities into a traditional curriculum that is focused on lectures and textbook learning.

Time constraints: Active learning activities can take more time to plan and implement, which may be a challenge for teachers with limited time.

According to Young (2018), these are some of the major themes that can impact the effectiveness of active learning pedagogy in language teaching. By understanding and addressing these challenges or factors, teachers can create more effective and engaging learning environments for their students.

Active learning approaches also often embrace the use of cooperative learning groups, a constructivist-based practice that places particular emphasis on the contribution that social interaction can make. Lev Vygotsky's work elucidated the relationship between cognitive processes and social activities and led to the sociocultural theory of development, which suggests that learning takes place when students solve problems beyond their current developmental level with the support of their instructor or their peers.

In addition to the evidence that active learning approaches promote learning for all students, there is some evidence that active learning approaches are an effective tool to make classrooms more inclusive. The effects of active learning on students in the University of Washington's Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) were enrolled in an introductory biology course (Haak et al., 2011) offering a route to meaningful learning.

Although, the cognitive process varies because each person has different learning styles and different priorities. Such conditions demand teachers to revise their teaching practice to answer more efficiently to learners' expectations and needs.

To answer the questions "why" and "how to solve" the educational problem, researchers decided to propose teachers to have classes that increase the students' motivation for learning using meaningful learning and improving active work in pairs and groups. It is a contrast to traditional education in which students take the passive role of listeners, rather than participating directly in their learning process. **The research questions to answer in this study are:**

- 1) What are the EFL teacher practices for the assessment of EFL communication skills?
- 2) What is the contribution of active and meaningful learning to high school students' communication skills?

3) What is the participants' level of acceptance for the use of active and meaningful learning?

This study begins with a literature review about (a) motivation for learning and attentional networks, (b) linguistics, and (c) a review of the concepts of Meaningful and Active learning, Cultural responsibility and language cognitive dissonance. This research uses a mixture of quantitative and qualitative socio-educational research approaches in the data collection.

The second-order research team analyzes elements from the English language sessions which imply methodology, the teaching approach, curricular adaptations, teachers' experiences, portfolio, and lesson plans.

This study aims to improve high school students' confidence by using the active approach and meaningful learning for expressing ideas and feelings using English as a Foreign Language.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Motivation for learning and attentional networks

To Dornyei (2005: 65), motivation in terms of language learning "provides the primary impetus to initiate L2 learning and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process". In addition, motivation refers to a set of reasons people have to do something specific. Thus, motivating behavior is a vigorous, directed, and sustained action.

Intrinsic motivation for learning appears when students enjoy learning a foreign language for their own sake. Meanwhile, extrinsic motivation is when students are persuaded to do activities that can help them to acquire the target language. Consequently, language learners with intrinsic motivation can be susceptible to producing positive learning results, despite extrinsic motivation is more associated with negative learning outcomes that can happen if the student does not progress in the EFL acquisition. In other words, intrinsically motivated learners retain the content for a longer period, and this retention is self-sustained.

According to Sopantini (2014), individual teachers, schools, and principals may face challenges in implementing active learning pedagogy. These challenges may include a lack of confidence or experience in using active learning techniques, resistance to change, student characteristics that do not align with active learning methods, classroom

environments that are not conducive to active learning, and curriculum or time constraints that make it difficult to incorporate active learning activities.

Furthermore, Gardner in Hall (2011) describes motivation as an abstract and complex concept used to describe human behavior. With a plethora of definitions, this continues to highlight just how complex motivation is, more so as a variable factor for L2 learners due to the dependency on different situations and conditions. For instance, some learners in L2 are less motivated to communicate with the target language society, whereas it is the exact opposite for other learners. Gardner adds that learners' motivation in L2 is affected by individual attitudes and willingness to engage in the language learning process, which means motivation, is strongly associated with attitude. Several points arise from the above definition particularly the need for teachers to effectively engage and maintain the learners' interest and appreciate their efforts until their goals are achieved. It is important to note that the goal achieved can vary, whether it is conducting various types of activities in a classroom or learning a language for a long period of time. Loewen and Reinders (2011: 119) define motivation as "a psychological construct that refers to the desire and incentive that an individual has to engage in a specific activity". This broad definition provides a strong foundation for the overall concept of this area of study. However, motivation implies not only a desire to learn a language but also a measure of an individual's attitude toward working and striving to achieve a learning objective, without self-discipline and autonomous effort. In addition, motivation itself would not be sufficient to produce desired language learning results in the long term (Cevallos, Intriago, Villafuerte, et al., 2017). Thus, motivation contributes to the transformation of the learning process as a key positive learning element.

Linguistics approaches to get meaningful learning.

To Deutscher (2010), Wilhelm von Humboldt proposed that languages promote ways of thinking and living because of people's likes, needs, and trends as the solutions to adapt EFL lesson plans for having more effective results. Thus, language encourages people's ways of thinking, so different linguistic and cultural groups are more likely to think in diverse ways.

Baggini (2013) links both the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and Chomsky's work back to the philosopher Immanuel Kant to affirm that people's minds shape experiences to understand a message better.

Crucially, repeated exposure to hate speech desensitizes people to it and increases prejudice towards people from minority groups. To end, the importance of how we, the mentors, carry out the language in our students' minds will be decisive.

Fields like neuroscience and the language of threat have been found to have a physiological effect on the brain (Weisholtz et al., 2015). Meanwhile, Yule (2017: 304) affirms that "the human manipulates the language, not the other way around."

A milder, less controversial version of linguistic determinism is linguistic relativity. This proposes that "language encapsulates the world view of the community that speaks it" (Ballard, 2016: 175). Thus, people express thinking through language, linguistic relativists shape thinking around a concrete experience. The effectiveness of linguistics has also been established in social psychology; for instance, recent research by Bilewicz and Winiewski (2017) explores hate speech.

Professional development for teachers can be an important way to support their growth and improve their ability to teach English as a foreign language (EFL). One effective approach to professional development is an active approach, which involves teachers actively participating in their own learning and taking a hands-on approach to acquiring new knowledge and skills. This can be contrasted with a passive approach, in which teachers simply attend lectures or workshops without actively engaging with the material.

Meaningful learning is also an important aspect of professional development for EFL teachers. This involves helping teachers to make connections between new knowledge and their own experiences and to apply what they have learned to their teaching practices. This can be achieved through activities such as action research, lesson study, or collaborative inquiry, in which teachers work together to reflect on and improve their teaching practices.

There are many different professional development opportunities available for EFL teachers, including conferences, workshops, online courses, and degree programs. It is important for teachers to choose training opportunities that are relevant to their needs and interests, and that allow them to engage in meaningful learning and take an active approach to their own career growth.

Effective teacher professional development (PD) can have a positive impact on teachers' knowledge, skills, and practices, as well as on student learning outcomes. According to a

review of research on teacher PD by Ubit (2017), **several key factors have been identified as important for the success of teacher PD programs:**

Active learning: Teacher PD programs that involve active learning, such as workshops, coaching, and collaborative learning, have been shown to be more effective than traditional lecture-based PD.

Relevance to teachers' needs and interests: Teacher PD programs that are tailored to teachers' specific needs and interests are more likely to be engaging and effective.

Sufficient duration: PD programs that are of sufficient duration (e.g., multiple days or weeks) tend to be more helpful than shorter programs.

Follow-up and support: PD programs that include follow-up support and opportunities for teachers to apply what they have learned in the classroom are prone to represent more benefit than those that do not.

Collaboration and teamwork: Teacher PD programs that involve collaboration and teamwork can be more successful at promoting the sharing of ideas and the development of new teaching practices.

By taking these factors into account, educators and school leaders can design and implement teacher PD programs that are more likely to be fruitful for the improvement of teachers' knowledge, skills, and practices.

Learning by Doing: "An Empirical Study of Active Teaching Techniques" is a research study published in the Journal of Political Science Education in 2011.

The study was conducted by a team of researchers at the University of North Dakota, and it examined the effectiveness of different active teaching techniques on student learning outcomes in political science courses. The researchers found that students who participated in active learning activities, such as class discussions, problem-based learning, and collaborative group work, had significantly higher levels of learning and retention compared to students who were taught using more traditional methods, such as lectures.

The study suggests that active teaching techniques can be an effective way to engage students and improve their learning outcomes. There is a vivid example of how the use of a good approach can be effective in our Neuronal Connections.

Conceptualization of Meaningful and Active learning, Cultural responsibility, and Language cognitive dissonance.

Acquiring information produces modifications in the information acquired and in the linked cognitive structure. It means that significant new knowledge must interact with the same existing knowledge structure. Thus, teaching corresponds to the moment when a person intentionally helps another to learn something new. However, individual knowledge is not a concrete and directly observable object, but a set of mental representations constructed from the interpretative dynamics established in learners as a new perception of the surrounding world that can be influenced by different representations of the same knowledge as a direct effect of the active learning because most of the books written about college teaching before 1990 considered tips on how to give more effective lectures. But Bonwell & Eison (1991) state that college teachers received a whole new perspective to provide students with more experiential learning activities to reflect on the meaning of those activities.

Active learning is an instructional approach in which all students are asked to engage in the learning process. Active learning stands in contrast to "traditional" modes of instruction in which students are passive recipients of knowledge from an expert. Active learning implies more than having students simply watch, listen, and take notes about the teachers' explanations. When a teacher uses the Active learning method learners will ask questions frequently, posing a problem or any other issue, maybe working individually or in small groups to come up with the response on a given time to complete a task.

Approaches associated with active learning include (a) Student-centered, or learner-centered instruction: students play an active role in their learning, with the teacher as an activator of learning, rather than an instructor, (b) Inquiry-based, problem-based or discovery learning: learners learn by addressing and posing questions, analyzing evidence, connecting such evidence to preexisting knowledge, drawing conclusions, and reflecting upon their findings, (c) Experiential learning: describes someone learning from direct experience (Allen, 2016). In addition, teachers should review and activate students' prior learning and help them to link the old to the new material to (1) Provide constant feedback on contributions made by every learner (2) New knowledge should be presented piece by piece in small steps with enough opportunities for well-scaffolded

practice and review, and (3) Learners need adequate time to process new information. Students generally need to engage with fully explained content at least three times.

The role that cultures play in language learning is critical. Good knowledge of it will help us to cope with many situations that will arise daily. Teaching and learning a foreign language do not rely on achieving perfect pronunciation of the language studied. It is also about transmitting and bringing together the civilizations of both the territory of origin and the target language (Ruiz et al., 2008). Thus, using web pages, music, film literature or stereotypes can cause students to feel motivation and a great acceptance of learning English because those resources will transport learners towards a new culture.

Culturally responsive instructional approaches are engaging and participatory. They use diverse instructional models to scaffold learning by using students' cultural knowledge to teach new concepts, connect experiences inside and outside the classroom, and master new.

This kind of approach can lead instructors toward students' socio-emotional, and learning needs of culturally and linguistically safe, support, and challenge.

Thus, the theory of cognitive dissonance refers to the instruction process' lack of correspondence between the affective, cognitive, and behavioral components that a class contains. This contradiction between thought and behavior generates, in most cases, significant changes both in the assessment and learners' acceptance of the class. Therefore, students could suffer conflicts and emotional imbalance about the ideas which they have always handled, generating feelings of discomfort or displeasure. Among the previous studies quoted in this research appear Bonwell & Eison (1991), who worked the instructional activities involving students in doing things and thinking about what they are doing. On the other hand, active learning implies that students are engaged in their own learning. Active teaching strategies have students do something other than taking notes or following directions, they can participate in activities to construct new knowledge and build new scientific skills (Handelsman, Miller, and Pfund, 2007). Active learning engages students in the process of learning through activities and/or discussion in class, as opposed to passively listening to with expectance. It emphasizes higher order thinking and often involves group work (Freeman et al., 2014).

In addition, Cummins (2000) states that learners must be recognized as having a lot of prior knowledge about the world, subject contents, and language, but this is hard for

teachers to see if they do not share the L1 (first language), as Spanish is in Ecuador.

One role of language teachers is to enable learners to transfer their prior learning into the second language in an implicit way through activities and flipped classrooms, in our case English.

In other words, "conceptual knowledge developed in one language helps to make input in the other language comprehensible" (Cummins 2000: 39). This is particularly useful for teaching children who have moved to English-speaking countries, and who have already had some years of schooling in Spanish.

However, understanding that language requires purposeful practice and poses challenges to the strongly fluency-focused approach of communicative language teaching. It also challenges Krashen's acquisition model, in which language structures are not explicitly taught, but simply acquired through exposure to lots of languages. It supports a more eclectic TESOL pedagogy, in which teachers do not follow any method for teaching dogmatically, but plan lessons reflectively (Spiro, 2013), based on the human brain learning process.

As a result, students make an effort to actively construct their knowledge (Carr, Palmer, & Hagel, 2015). Subsequently, learners can work on the projects and create group presentations in class (Wang, Teng, & Lin, 2015).

Finally, neuroscience suggests that brains require that things have a sense and a meaning to retain new information (Sousa, 2017). In other words, it should be something that learners need, feel motivation and interest in acquiring it. In addition, new knowledge contributes to increasing current learners' proficiency in the acquisition of the foreign language.

Thus, when the teacher should set teaching goals and choose appropriate assessment methods to develop a perfect curriculum. Besides, teachers need to check the resources they can use in the classroom and consider students' prior knowledge.

METHODOLOGY

This research used the socio-critical paradigm and a mixture of qualitative and quantitative socio-educational approaches. The research team proposed an educational intervention that uses active and meaningful learning methodologies. Participants in the learning process and instructors paid particular attention to the lesson's structure, organization of contents, and sequences for exposing learners to new information as an

optimal instruction process. The researcher team assessed and compared participants' achievement in EFL pretest and posttest to determine the contribution of active and meaningful approach in the participants' EFL acquisition process.

Psychological theories hold that the general cognitive mechanisms offer better results rather than any specialized modules in the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) process. This category embraces behaviorism, cognitive psychology, connectionism, processability theory, and interactionist perspectives (Spada & Lightbown, 2010). Thus, there exists an intimate relationship between culture and mind which influences the language learning process.

The participants

Participants were seventy-six, among high school students of 16-17-year-old (38%), students teaching of 21-22-year-old, (49%), and teachers in service of 30-45-year-old (13%).

Table 1. Participants

Sex	High school students	Students teaching	Teachers in service	Total
Female	18	26	5	49
Male	11	11	5	27
Total	29 (38%)	37 (49%)	10 (13%)	76(100%)

Source: research project (2020-2021).

The selection criteria used for selecting the participants were:

To attend the educational institution that collaborates in this research as a student

To reside in Manta-Ecuador

To accept the invitation to participate in this research

The research team has kept the participants anonymous for seven years. The information and data collected can be used only for educational purposes. Every participant signed the consent information letter before beginning the research process.

Instruments

The instruments used in this research are the following:

- Interview guide.

The instrument allowed determining the most frequent teachers' practice for assessing students' communication skills in the English language. An expert panel, integrated with

three professors from the Ecuadorian ULEAM, evaluated the instrument. They recommended reducing from 15 to 8 the interview questions and organizing the interview questions according to the categories (1) students' missing understanding in EFL, (2) creation of real situation contexts in the classroom, and (3) monitoring of learners and the EFL assessments.

- **Likert scale questionnaire**

The instrument's purpose was to collect data on teachers' attitudes and motivation for using active and meaningful learning in EFL classes under the inclusive education approach. The Likert scale included the subcategories: (1) Teachers' communication style approach, (2) Teaching methodology for EFL instruction, (3) Teachers' communicative skills, (4) Assessment process, and (5) Didactic resources used in EFL instruction. The instrument obtained 0.957 accuracies in the Chronbach Alpha index evaluation, which represents strong instrument reliability. The instrument used an electronic format following local regulations to avoid COVID19.

- **Survey format**

This instrument allowed to assess the students' acceptance level of the proposal of the intervention plan based on active and meaningful resources. According to Nehm & Schonfeld (2007); Sinatra et al. (2003), the acceptance level is defined as a "systematic evaluation of the evidence." The instrument was evaluated by an expert panel of three professors subscribed to the ULEAM University in Ecuador. The instrument used a paper format, and the execution took place at the learners' educational institution for 45 minutes.

Procedure

The procedure followed in this research is explained below.

Stage 1: The research team chose and evaluated the interview guide in Sep./2020. The interviews took place in Oct./2020. The research team conducted face-to-face interviews for 90 minutes. The interview took place in the informants' work location in Manta-Ecuador.

Stage 2: The research team designed the educational intervention plan took three months, from Jan./ 2021 to Mar./2021. The research team adjusted the educational plan to use active and meaningful learning during the educational intervention plan for testing.

Stage 3 consisted of applying the educational intervention between May-Aug. /2021 in Manta-Ecuador.

Stage 4: Survey to determine the participants' acceptance of the educational intervention using active and meaningful learning. The research team shared the instrument with participants using a Google form in Aug./2021.

Stage 5: The research team designed and evaluated the Likert scale questionnaire to collect the data in Aug./2021. The evaluation of the instrument took place in Sep./2021. The instrument was conducted using a Google form at the end of Sep./2021. The research team used the digital app WhatsApp and e-mail to spread the Likert scale questionnaire to the informants.

Stage 6: The analysis of the information and data collection took place in Oct./2021 using SPSS and Atlas Ti. V8.

RESULTS

The presentation of results follows the logic of the research questions that appear in the introduction section.

In answer to question 1: What are the most effective EFL teacher's practices used for assessing EFL learners' communication skills? Table 2 shows the information collected by the interview referring to EFL teachers' practices used for assessing learners' communicational skills. It also allows inferring information about the EFL lessons' adaptation to educational students' needs, and resources and didactic materials used for EFL instruction in Manta-Ecuador.

Categorical tree:

Categories:

- Students' listening skill evaluation

Subcategories:

- Students' missing understanding: high, medium, low levels.
- Students' assignments: a very clear, clear, not clear process.
- Students' speaking skill evaluation

Subcategories:

- Individual or group work
- Local context: High, medium, or low level
- Students' Reading and writing skills evaluation

Subcategories:

- Permanent learning assessment, or eventual assessment.
- Adaptation of teaching strategies to students' needs in evaluation procedures

Subcategories:

- Students' ages, or students' preferences.
- Students' cognitive difficulties.
- Resources and didactic materials used in EFL inclusive lessons

Subcategories:

- Digital material use frequency: high, medium, low
- Workshops use frequency: high, medium, low.

Table 2. Teachers' practice for EFL communication skills assessment.

Question	Evidence	Subcategories
Category 1: Students' listening skill evaluation		
How do you verify the student has understood the instructions for evaluations?	<p>11: 5'20: "There are some ways of verifying it, such as asking them if the instructions are clear, or explaining to them some missing understanding."</p> <p>11: 9'00: "At first, I just give the explanation for every single assignment, in case they don't get it, I used examples to clear their assignments...like using pictures or videos for them to get it."</p>	<p>Students' missing understanding: High level.</p> <p>Students' assignments: clear process.</p>
Category 2: Speaking skill evaluation		
What type of alternative assessment have you developed with students with disabilities (auditive - oral - visual)?	<p>12: 7'10: "Well, I had not had many situations like this, but if I ever have that, I try to guide face-to-face the learner, in order to work with students in a condition of disability."</p> <p>12: 11'04: "Realia, most of the time I adjust some activities to face real situations at assessments."</p>	<p>Individual work with the student.</p> <p>Local context: medium level</p>
Category 3: Reading and writing skills evaluation		
What type of assessment instrument would you use for students with reading and writing difficulties?	<p>14: 31'07: "Diagnostic test, screening, and progress monitoring assessments."</p> <p>14: 43'06: "I would use activities based on weak skills. Teachers can detect learners' difficulties to read and write in daily lessons."</p>	<p>Permanent learning assessment.</p> <p>Permanent learning assessment.</p>

Category 4: Adaptation of teaching strategies to students' needs in evaluation procedures		
Do you consider the different cognitive students' needs when evaluating them?	<p>I3: 19'18: "According to the level, the learner's capabilities, the interest of their ages, and the topic class."</p> <p>I3: 21'09: "I strongly agree with that. Students need a teacher who considers students cognitive learning difficulties."</p>	<p>Students' ages, and topics preferences.</p> <p>Students' cognitive difficulties.</p>
Category 5: Resources and didactic materials used in EFL inclusive lessons		
What materials and tools do you use for improving in inclusive EFL lessons?	<p>I4: 51'02: "Songs, website pages, some scripts, pictures description, and peer evaluation."</p> <p>I4: 58'01: "As far as I'm concerned, all institutions are asked to include this workshop when referring to special needs learning."</p>	<p>Digital material: high frequency.</p> <p>Workshops: medium frequency.</p>

Source: Interview with the EFL teacher (Jun/06/2021).

Concerning the learners' communication skills in the use of English language the evidence shows participants have limitations in EFL understanding in listening skills. Instructors rather group activities and the level of context used in classes is medium. Meanwhile, instructors prefer to use permanent assessment on the reading and writing practices. The adaptation of teaching strategies to learners' needs considers their age, topic preferences, and learners' cognitive difficulties. Instructors prefer to use digital material with more frequency than workshops.

In answer to question 2: What are the EFL students teaching and teachers in-service' knowledge, intercultural attitudes, and disposition for inclusive education in active and meaningful learning? Table 3 shows the students teaching and teachers in service' answers to the Licker questionnaire.

Table 3. Knowledge, intercultural approach attitudes, and disposition for inclusive education in active and meaningful learning at the English language classroom.

Item	SD	D	ND/NA	A	SA
Teachers' knowledge to create active and meaningful learning					
1. I know teachers require a good communication style to create active learning lessons.	6,4%	6,4%	27,7%	38,3%	21,3%
2. I consider that an English language teacher must know how to motivate learners for active learning lessons	4,3%	0,0%	12,8%	21,3%	61,7%
3. I understand that a good English language teacher demands learners' enforcement in meaningful learning.	2,1%	12,8%	40,4%	19,1%	74,5%

Teachers' professional development: active approach and meaningful learning
in the instruction in english as a foreign language

4. I know a good English language teacher must be spontaneous in active classes.	6,4%	2,1%	38,3%	21,3%	31,9%
5. I know that a good English language teacher must be friendly to create meaningful learning environments.	4,3%	0,0%	25,5%	27,7%	42,6%
6. I know an English language teacher must be trained to work using active and meaningful learning.	2,1%	2,1%	12,8%	29,8%	53,2%
7. I know that English language teachers should have a wide human knowledge to generate meaningful classes.	4,3	2,1	10,6	21,3	61,7
8. An English language teacher must demonstrate good control of the class when execute active learning.	2,1	0,0	14,9	23,4	59,6
9. The workload of the English classes must be 80% students 20% teachers	17,0	4,3	19,1	21,3	38,3
10. It is better to share to students a global idea of a topic instead of translating word by word in English language meaningful lessons.	17,0	4,3	19,1	21,3	38,3
Teachers' attitudes to work with active and meaningful learning					
1. I think grammar approach for English language class can be boring for learners.	4,3	10,5	25,5	23,4	37,2
2. During the learning process in the English class, I connect with other cultures	0	4,3	12,8	25,5	57,4
3. I think students feel more motivated when having classes with English language native teachers.	2,1	8,5	14,9	27,7	46,8
4. I detest those English books which show foreign contexts instead of the Ecuadorian.	10,6	12,8	29,8	29,8	17,0%
5. I like roles play and other activities in English language class.	6,4	2,1	27,7	42,6	21,3
6. I feel comfortable when I realize that English doesn't come from a unique country, there are variations.	2,1	2,1	4,3	34,0	57,4
7. Communicating ideas and feeling using English language is the most important.	19,1	6,4	10,6	12,8	51,1
8. Understanding the different English language accents will improve the students' motivation for learning the target language.	12,8	13,9	8,5	19,1	44,7
9. I feel that English language lessons also imply to share cultural values.	0	0	19,1	40,4	40,4
10. I agree with customizing the resources and materials of English with Ecuadorian provinces.	4,3	10,6	25,5	23,4	36,2

Teachers' disposition for inclusive education					
1. It is mandatory to create institutions of English for students with special needs.	6,5	6,5	12,8	25,5	48,9
2. A crowded classroom doesn't allow teaching English in good conditions.	6,4	2,1	38,3	29,8	23,4
3. Teaching English using technology has helped people with reduced mobility.	0	0	19,1	29,8	51,1
4. I can detect a student has Asperger syndrome	6,4	8,5	42,6	25,5	17,0
5. I am well trained to work with students diagnosed with Asperger syndrome.	8,5	14,9	42,6	17,0	17,0
6. I react calmly when a student having Asperger syndrome critic my English class,	2,1	2,1	55,3	23,4	17,0
7. I am aware of not stressing students with any disability.	0	6,4	25,5	34,0	34,0
8. I hate having to wait for the diagnosis of any student with a disability before planning my English language class.	10,6	6,4	44,7	21,3	17,0
9. All teachers must research their student's disabilities related to EFL acquisition	2,1	2,1	8,5	29,8	57,4

Source: Research project results from Liker questionnaire (December/05/2021).

Note: SA=strongly agree, A=agree, N/A/D=No agree and no disagree, D=disagree, SD=strongly disagree.

In every item participant answered positive knowledge, attitudes, and disposition to work the active and meaningful learning. However, 65% of female teaching students and teacher's in-service show more availability to use active and meaningful learning in EFL classes on the inclusive education in comparison to male teachers.

In answer to question 3: What is the contribution of active and meaningful learning to high school students' communication skills? The table 3, shows the changes in students' EFL communication skills reported before and after the execution of the educational intervention using active and meaningful learning.

Table 3. Contribution of active and meaningful learning to EFL high school learners

Assessment	Participants	Sex	Speaking	Listening	Writing	Reading
Pretest	18	Female	4.0	5.0	4.0	6.0
	11	Male	4.0	6.0	4.0	5.0
<i>Overage</i>			4.0	5.5	5.0	5.5
Posttest	18	Female	7.0	7.0	6.0	8.0
	11	Male	6.0	6.0	5.0	7.0
<i>Overage</i>			6.5	6.5	5.5	7.5

Source: Students achievement in pretest and posttest assessments (2020-2021).

It is possible to see a significant change when comparing the pre-test and post-test results.

Speaking skills reports in the pretest 4.0/10 which increased to 6.5/10 in the posttest. It represents an improvement of 2.5 points in students' achievement.

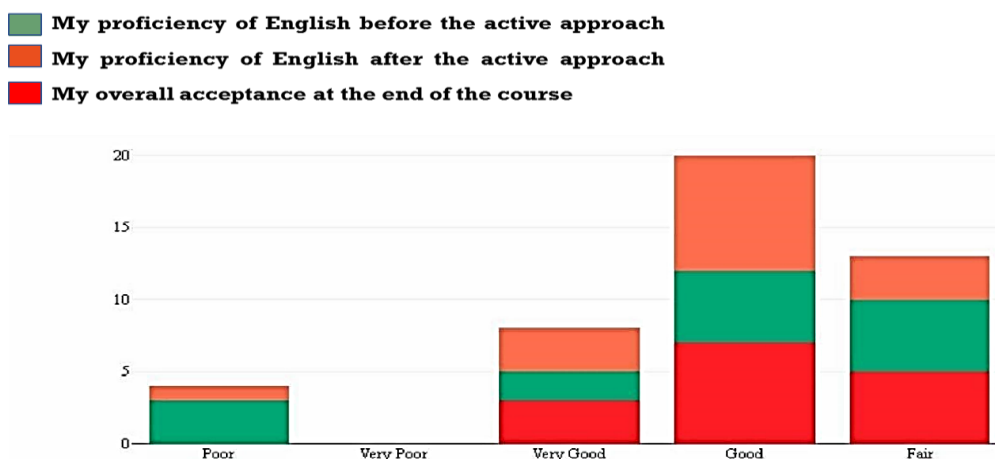
On the other side, the listening skills result during the pretest showed an average of 5.5/10 lower than 6.5/10 at the posttest, which shows how students boost their listening by 1 point.

Grammar reference in EFL shows a small change comparing the pre-test 5.0/10 with the post-test 5.5/10 of writing skills in both, female and male participants.

Reading skill: It reports a high difference of 2.0 points between pre-test 5.5/10 and post-test 7.5/10 in the reading skills. Learners master the reading comprehension section, and consequently, their vocabulary acquisition has raised in word range.

Question 3: What is the participants' level of acceptance of the use of active learning and meaningful learning? Graph 1 shows the results of the survey concerning participants' acceptance of the proposal of EFL instruction using active learning and meaningful learning.

Graphic 1: Students acceptance of the classes using the active approach



Source: a survey to high school students 01/06/2020.

DISCUSSION

The information collected improves students' interest in learning EFL in Ecuador. Thus, the results ratify the position of Bonwell & Eison (1991) concerning that the teaching approach, resources, assessment, and methodology could increase the students' engagement and improvement of their scores in the subject of English language.

The perspective of Cummins (2000) about learners' previous knowledge as the door to introduce the target language and the mother tongue as a channel to give briefings. Due to the participants' communication skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing reported an average of 4.0/10 in the pretest and 6.5/10 in the posttest after the educational intervention using active learning and meaningful learning.

This study's results match the position of Freeman et al. (2014) when they argue the role of creative thinking during activities; therefore, a positive social network will improve learners' class participation.

However, the observation of the participants' work during the educational intervention allows the research team to affirm the position of Carr et al. (2015) concerning the pupils' effort required to build new knowledge.

Nevertheless, the learners' disadvantage is the lack of exposition to communicative situations using EFL in locations outside the educational institution. It is a factor that negatively influences the EFL acquisition process in the lessons' long-term memory because Ecuadorian people do not use English as a code for daily activities. The situation that ratifies the position of Krashen (1986) concerning the learners' context is a crucial factor for EFL learners.

The analysis of the data during the interview category 4: I3 at 19:18 implies that instructors can use active learning and meaningful learning to work with students with special needs and cognitive learning difficulties. Consequently, teachers can create new lesson plans based on learning in harmony with Spiro (2013).

In addition, the assessment procedure should be adapted to the pupils' needs focusing on the development of the neuronal system.

It ratifies the position of Sousa (2017) when they affirm that learners are engaged in beautiful things. It is a code of conduct that mentors must follow to adapt to future English sessions.

In addition, among the reasons EFL teachers must use active learning and meaningful learning even though many resources used in realia classes use tools originally from foreign countries having different contexts use. Sadly, it is a process that causes the reduction of cultural features in the teaching process of EFL.

Finally, three-quarters of the student's acceptance of the proposal using active and meaningful learning for improving the EFL acquisition process is optimistic. It allowed the

research team to determine the educational intervention's positive level of effectiveness and effectiveness. Those results connected the results of this research project to Wang, Teng, & Lin (2015) concerning the importance of the materials and resources used in the teaching process.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the literature review and the results obtained during the empiric stage, the research team declares 100% compliance with the proposed objectives for this research. Thus, active and meaningful approaches can contribute positively to enhancing student engagement and EFL acquisition. The teacher can reconfigure techniques, lesson plans, and assessment instruments, avoiding any tedious, repetitive, and traditional methodology to reduce the potential motivation in the English lessons. Results show that student knowledge of the English language has increased comparing the results in the pretest and posttest. However, students showed to increase in their motivation for learning EFL and improved their confidence in using the target language. There are two relevant aspects that support students' EFL acquisition. This research's weakness lies in the sample size focused on a high school EFL class. It does not allow any generalization. However, the information generated allows for setting the path that can be used to contribute to improving EFL in similar contextual educational institutions.

Active learning is a teaching method that involves encouraging students to take an active role in their own learning process, rather than simply receiving information from a teacher or instructor. Some strategies for implementing active learning in English language instruction may include:

Collaborative group work: Students work together in small groups to solve problems, discuss texts, or complete projects.

Inquiry-based learning: Students are given a question or problem to investigate and are encouraged to find their own answers or solutions through research and analysis.

Problem-based learning: Students are presented with a real-world problem to solve, and must use their English language skills to research, analyze, and propose a solution.

Role-playing: Students take on different roles in simulated situations, using their English language skills to communicate and interact with one another.

Debate: Students engage in structured, formal debates on a variety of topics, using their English language skills to present and defend their positions.

Overall, the goal of active learning is to engage students in the learning process, encouraging them to take ownership of their own education and think critically about the material they are learning.

Finally, the researcher team invited the scientific community to direct efforts to reply to this study using a more significant sample.

REFERENCES

- Allen, M. W. (2016). *Michael Allen's guide to e-learning*.
- Baggini, J. (2013). *Philosophy: Key themes*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ballard, K. (2016). *The stories of linguistics: An introduction to language study past and present*. London: Palgrave.
- Bilewicz, M., & Winiewski, M. (2017). Exposure to hate speech increased prejudice through desensitization. *Aggressive Behavior, 44*(2), 136–146.
- Bonwell, C. C., & Eison, J. A. (1991). *Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom*. ASHEERIC Higher Education Report 1. Washington, D.C.: George Washington University.
- Badroeni. (2018). Improving students' motivation in speaking English through active learning strategy. *Research and Innovation in Language Learning, 1*(2), 76- 88.
- Carr, R., Palmer, S., and Hagel, P. (2015). Active learning: the importance of developing a comprehensive measure. *Active Learning in Higher Education 16*, 173-186.
- Cevallos, J., Intriago, E. Villafuerte-Holguín, J., Molina, G., & Ortega, L. (2017). Motivation and Autonomy in Learning English as Foreign Language: A Case Study of Ecuadorian College Students. *English Language Teaching, 10* (2), 100-113. doi: 10.5539/elt.v10n2p100
- Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Deutscher, G. (2010). *Through the language glass: Why the world looks different in different languages*. London: Arrow.
- Dornyei, Z. (2006) *Motivation, Language Attitudes and Globalisation*. Multilingual Matters Ltd. kl
- Freeman, S., Eddy, S.L., McDonough, M., Smith, M.K., Okoroafor, N., Jordt, H., and Wenderoth, M.P. (2014). Active learning increases student performance in

- science, engineering, and mathematics. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA* 111, 8410-8415.
- Haak, D.C., HilleRisLambers, J., Pitre, E., & Freeman, S. (2011). Increased structure and active learning reduce the achievement gap in introductory biology. *Science* 332, 1213–1216.
- Handelsman, J., Miller, S., and Pfund, C. (2007). *Scientific teaching*. New York: W.H. Freeman.
- Hall, G. (2011) *Exploring English Language Teaching Language in Action*. London: Routledge.
- Hackathorn, J., Solomon, E. D., Blankmeyer, K. L., Tennial, R. E., & Garczynski, A. M. (2011). Learning by doing: An empirical study of active teaching techniques. *Journal of Effective Teaching*, 11(2), 40-54.
- Intriago, E., Villafuerte, J., Bello, J., & Cevallos, D. (2019). Teaching and learning english at the university: challenges from the ecuadorian context. In A. Bon, Pini, M., & Akkermans, H. *Culture, citizenship, participation in Comparative Perspectives from Latin America on Inclusive Education*. Amsterdam. Pangea.
- Krashen, S. (1986) 'Bilingual education and second language acquisition theory', in California State Department of Education (ed.) *Schooling and Language Minority Students: A Theoretical Framework*. Sacramento, CA: Department of Education.
- Loewen, S. and Reinders, H. (2011) *Key Concepts in Second Language Acquisition*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Millis, B. J. (2012). Active Learning Strategies in Face-to-Face Courses.
- Nehm, RH, & Schonfeld, IS. (2007). Does increasing biology teacher knowledge of evolution and the nature of science lead to greater preference for the teaching of evolution in schools? *Journal of Science Teacher Education*, 18(5), 699–723.
- Ruiz, C., Paredes, N., Macizo, P., & Bajo, M. T. (2008). Activation of lexical and syntactic target language properties in translation. *Acta Psychologica*, 128, 490–500.
- Sousa, D. (2017). *How the brain learns* (5th ed.). London: SAGE.
- Sopantini. (2014). Reforming teaching practice in Indonesia: A case study of the implementation in primary schools in North Maluku. (Master's thesis). University of Tasmania, Tasmania.

- Spiro, J. (2013). *Changing methodologies in TESOL*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Spada, N. & Lightbown, P. M. (2010). 'Second Language Acquisition', in Schmitt, N. (ed.) *An Introduction to Applied Linguistics* (2 ed.) Abingdon: Routledge. Nd
- Sinatra, GM, Southerland, SA, McConaughy, FM, & Demastes, JW. (2003). Intentions and beliefs in students' understanding and acceptance of biological evolution. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 40(5), 510–528.
- Ubit, F. (2017). A review of effective teacher professional development [Paper presentation]. Proceedings of the 1st National Conference on Teachers' Professional Development 2017, Banda Aceh.
- Wang, B.T., Teng, C.W., & Lin, Y.H. (2015). Let's go traveling—project-based learning in a Taiwanese classroom. *International Journal of Information and Education Technology*, 5(2), 84-89. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7763/IJJET.2015.V5.481>.
- Weisholtz, D. S., Root, J. C., Butler, T., Tüscher, O., Epstein, J., Pan, H., Protopopescu, X., Goldstein, M., Isenberg, N., Brendel, G., LeDoux, J., Silbersweig, D. A., & Stern, E. (2015). Beyond the amygdala: Linguistic threat modulates peri-sylvian semantic access cortices. *Brain and language*, 151, 12–22. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bandl.2015.10.004>.
- Yule, G. (2017). *The study of language* (6th ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Young, S. (2018). Indonesia's active, creative, effective and joyful learning from a university teacher training program to high school classrooms. *Indonesian Research Journal in Education*, 2(1), 7-31.