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**TEMA:**

**Cultivating Global Citizens: Shifting the Focus from Grammar to  
Communication in EFL**

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## **RESUMEN**

El estudio examina cómo la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) puede preparar a los estudiantes para desenvolverse en un mundo globalizado, desarrollando habilidades del siglo XXI como la comunicación, el pensamiento crítico y la adaptabilidad. A través de entrevistas semiestructuradas y observaciones en clase, se analizaron las prácticas de dos docentes de EFL enfocadas en promover la conciencia intercultural y la ciudadanía global. Se utilizó una metodología de estudio de caso, que permitió explorar a profundidad cómo estos docentes diseñaron e implementaron estrategias didácticas para integrar habilidades globales en el aprendizaje del idioma. Los datos obtenidos identificaron enfoques y prácticas específicas que favorecieron el desarrollo integral de los estudiantes, destacando la importancia de conectar el aprendizaje del idioma con las competencias necesarias para la vida en un mundo interconectado.

## **PALABRAS CLAVES**

conciencia lingüística, enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL), habilidades del siglo XXI, educación y dominio del idioma.

## **ABSTRACT**

The study examines how teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) can prepare students to thrive in a globalized world by developing 21st-century skills such as communication, critical thinking, and adaptability. Through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, the practices of two EFL teachers were analyzed, focusing on promoting intercultural awareness and global citizenship. A case study methodology was employed to deeply explore how these teachers designed and implemented instructional strategies to integrate global skills into language learning. The data collected identified specific approaches and practices that supported the holistic development of students, highlighting the importance of connecting language learning with the competencies needed for life in an interconnected world.

## **KEYWORDS**

language awareness, EFL, 21st-century skills, education, & language proficiency.

## 1. INTRODUCCIÓN (OBJETIVO DEL ARTÍCULO)

In a globalized world, where social networks have brought people together from all over the world, it makes sense for school students to receive preparation that places them in a position to succeed and lead successful lives as adults (Gacel-Ávila, 2012, p. 1). This preparation goes beyond traditional academic knowledge, emphasizing the development of key skills such as communication, critical thinking, and adaptability. By fostering intercultural awareness and promoting global citizenship, educators can equip students to navigate the complexities of an interconnected world effectively. Language education, particularly in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), plays a pivotal role in this transformation, bridging cultural divides and enabling meaningful dialogue across diverse communities. The following study presents the results of interviews and observations conducted with two EFL teachers whose students are prepared with a focus on developing 21st-century skills in an EFL class.

### Research Question

How do two EFL teachers describe their experiences in terms of challenges and opportunities using 21st-century skills to facilitate their students' development of language awareness and communicative competence?

## 2. MARCO TEÓRICO

### 21st-century skills

Desirable education skills encompass knowledge, abilities, and attitudes essential for students to thrive in today's globalized and technology-driven world. These skills are known as 21st-century skills and include critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, communication, adaptability, and digital literacy (see Table 1 for a detailed description). According to Trilling and Fadel (2009), 21st-century skills are "the skills that prepare learners for work, citizenship, and lifelong learning in a rapidly changing world" (p. 5). Similarly, the National Research Council (2012) defines these skills as "cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal competencies that enable individuals to face complex challenges in modern life" (p. 9).

The concept of 21st-century skills in education emerged in response to the demands of a globalized, technology-driven economy. The framework originated from the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21), established in 2002, emphasizes integrating critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity with core subjects (P21, 2009). Voogt and Roblin (2012) noted that these skills "reflect a shift from content-driven to competence-based

education to prepare learners for future challenges" (p. 301) 21st-century skills are deeply connected to the ability to communicate effectively in a globalized world, particularly through proficiency in foreign languages. These competencies enhance collaboration, problem-solving, and cultural bridging—key aspects of multilingual communication. According to Trilling and Fadel (2009), these skills empower students to navigate diverse contexts and confidently address global challenges. In the context of foreign language learning, communication extends beyond linguistic exchange, fostering empathy and intercultural understanding—critical for thriving in multicultural societies. This holistic approach strengthens students' readiness to succeed academically, socially, and professionally in international environments.

Table 1. 21st-Century Skills

Critical thinking and problem-solving	Analyzing information, forming judgments, and solving problems effectively.
Communication and Collaboration	Effective communication and collaboration are crucial.
Information Literacy	Information literacy requires efficiently accessing and critically evaluating information from reliable sources.
Media Literacy	Media literacy involves critically analyzing media messages to understand their construction, purpose, and potential influence.
ICT literacy	ICT literacy involves using technology to research, organize, evaluate, and communicate information ethically and legally.
Flexibility and Adaptability	Flexibility and adaptability require individuals to embrace change, incorporate feedback, and navigate diverse perspectives to reach solutions.
Initiative and Self-Direction	Initiative and self-direction involve setting and managing goals, working independently, and

	demonstrating a commitment to lifelong learning and skill development.
Social and Cross-Cultural Skills	Social and cross-cultural skills involve respectful interaction, effective communication, and the ability to work collaboratively with people from diverse backgrounds.
Productivity and Accountability	Productivity and accountability require effective project management, the ability to set and meet goals, prioritize tasks, and produce high-quality results.
Leadership and Responsibility	Leadership and responsibility require guiding and influencing others with integrity, leveraging their strengths to achieve common goals.

## International Baccalaureate (IB)

International Baccalaureate (IB) offers an internationally recognized educational framework for students aged 3 to 19, guided by its mission to develop inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring young people who strive to create a better and more peaceful world (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017). The IB program aims to develop students' knowledge and skills across various subjects while fostering their growth as internationally minded individuals (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017). Unlike other frameworks, the IB emphasizes intercultural understanding and holistic development, encouraging students to become active and compassionate lifelong learners (Nord Anglia Education, n.d.; Red Clay Consolidated School District, n.d.). The IB offers programs for primary school students ages 3-12; and middle and high school students ages 13 - 9 (Manya Group, 2022).

## Benefits of the IB Program

The IB program offers several advantages for students. Instead of focusing only on academics, it encourages students to explore and do well in multiple disciplines, fostering growth in areas like the arts and athletics (The Mapless School, 2022). In addition to that, the IB program emphasizes the development of essential skills for academic success. For example, through core components like the Extended Essay and Theory of Knowledge, students strengthen their



research, critical thinking, and time management abilities (International School Ho Chi Minh City, n.d.). An IB Diploma is also a valuable asset for students aspiring to attend university. It is widely recognized by universities worldwide and can often lead to advanced placement credits (Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, 2018). One more point, in today's interconnected world, the IB program fosters international-mindedness and intercultural understanding, preparing students to excel in a globalized society (The Mapless School, 2022). Finally, by challenging students with rigorous coursework and providing opportunities for independent learning, the IB program helps students develop confidence in their abilities (The Mapless School, 2022).

The IB program is implemented in schools around the world through authorized IB World Schools (Nord Anglia Education, n.d.). In Ecuador, the IB program has gained prominence as part of national efforts to enhance educational quality and prepare students for global challenges. It was introduced in Ecuador in 2006 and operates in both public and private institutions, supported by the government and the Ministry of Education (Ben Ross Schneider, Pablo Cevallos Estarellas, Barbara Bruns, 2018). Implementing IB requires extensive teacher training and resource adaptation to align with its rigorous standards. In Ecuador, challenges such as teacher training and resource allocation have been a roadblock to its expansion to more educational institutions, particularly in the public sector. The program's expansion is part of Ecuador's broader strategy to promote holistic and internationally benchmarked education standards (International Baccalaureate, 2023; Barnett, 2013).

One of the main goals of the IB is to develop citizens who are capable of communicating effectively in their first language and other languages. In the case of Ecuador, the foreign language that most schools teach their students is English. Traditional English teaching often emphasizes linguistic aspects such as grammar rules, and exercises like filling in blanks, matching, or circling correct answers. While these methods contribute to language proficiency, they often neglect critical elements like communication, social interaction, critical thinking, and self-management. As Trilling and Fadel (2009) highlight, 21st-century skills require fostering creativity, collaboration, and adaptability alongside linguistic competence. Moreover, communicative approaches better align with real-world demands, encouraging learners to use English in authentic contexts. The traditional model may advance accuracy, but it risks overlooking the holistic development of skills essential for thriving in today's interconnected, globalized world.

## Language Awareness and Communicative Competence

Language awareness and communicative competence are intertwined concepts that play crucial roles in effective communication. Language awareness involves an understanding of the nature and functions of language, including how it shapes thoughts, identities, and social interactions (Donahue & Branch-Smith, 2006). It encompasses conscious knowledge of the forms and functions of language, sensitivity to its nuances, and recognition of its impact on various contexts (Hymes, 1972). Language awareness enables individuals to critically analyze language use, understand its role in constructing meaning, and appreciate linguistic diversity. Communicative competence refers to the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in various social contexts (Donahue & Branch-Smith, 2006). It goes beyond simply knowing grammar and vocabulary; it encompasses understanding cultural nuances, context, and social norms that influence communication (Hymes, 1972). This competence involves selecting and applying appropriate communication strategies, achieving communicative goals in a socially acceptable manner, and adapting language use to diverse situations (Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013).

Language awareness enhances communicative competence by providing individuals with the knowledge and sensitivity to navigate diverse linguistic situations (Donahue & Branch-Smith, 2006). For example, understanding how language varies across different social settings can help individuals adapt their communication style accordingly (Hymes, 1972). Similarly, awareness of the impact of language on power dynamics and societal structures can contribute to more effective and ethical communication (Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013). Comparisons between languages can highlight sociolinguistic differences, such as varying levels of formality or directness, which can then be applied to improve communication (McConachy, 2018). Moreover, developing an intercultural perspective on language use, which involves understanding how language is used in different cultural contexts and reflecting on the impact of cultural assumptions on communication, is essential for effective intercultural communication. The concept of "language cultural awareness," which emphasizes the interconnectedness of language and culture, further highlights the importance of understanding cultural nuances for effective communication (Byram and Boye, 2017). Ultimately, by cultivating language awareness and understanding its multifaceted relationship with communication, individuals can become more effective and culturally sensitive communicators.

## Differences between language awareness and traditional grammar

Bourke (2008) argues that LA is different from traditional techniques used to teach grammar. He explains this idea by giving reasons for his argument. As he claims, traditional techniques

used to teach grammar are not used in LA, especially those found in grammar books. Moreover, LA is inconsistent with demonstration-practice-production, which is a common practice in foreign language classrooms to teach grammatical structures to students. As Bolitho et al. (2003) point out: "It is important to distinguish between teaching methods that advocate the transfer of explicit knowledge to learners and language awareness methods that are a reaction to this top-down transfer of explicit knowledge" (p. 251).

## Cultural Contextualization

Cultural contextualization in language learning means understanding and including the cultural background of the language being taught. It is the idea that language is not just a system of words and grammar but is deeply connected to the culture of the people who speak it (Byram, 2008). In teaching foreign languages, cultural contextualization helps students learn not only the language but also the social customs, values, and behaviors that are important in that language's culture. This approach helps students become more open-minded, aware of cultural differences, and better able to communicate in real-world situations (Risager, 2007). By learning about different cultures, students can also become more responsible global citizens, with the ability to interact respectfully and effectively with people from diverse backgrounds (Kramsch, 1993).

## 3. METODOLOGÍA

### Research Design

To answer our research question, we decided to use a case study methodology. Case study research is a research method that involves an in-depth and detailed examination of a specific "case" or phenomenon within its real-world context (Yin, 2014). This case can be an individual, a group, an organization, an event, or a process. The goal of case study research is to provide a rich and holistic understanding of the case by gathering and analyzing various forms of data, such as interviews, observations, documents, and artifacts (Bryman, 2012). Case studies are often used to explore complex issues, generate new theories, or evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.

### Participants and Settings

Our case study involved two English as a foreign language teachers working in International Baccalaureate schools. They participated in individual interviews and agreed to be visited in their classroom and observed while they taught their classes. To protect the identity



of our participants, we used pseudonyms to refer to them: Pedro and Pablo.

#### Pedro

The first participant is Pedro. He is 39 years old, and works at a public school located in the west of Ecuador. He has more than 15 years of experience working in public and private schools. He has taught general English, American Culture and EFL methods. He designs his classes to encourage students to analyze global issues, express their perspectives, and he likes to use technology responsibly. His lessons reflect inclusive environments that celebrate diversity and intercultural understanding in his attempt to align with the International Baccalaureate focus and attributes. When possible, he tries to facilitate engaging, inquiry-driven projects that connect language skills with real-world contexts, empowering students to address global challenges. To stay up to date in his professional growth, he regularly attends courses on integrating critical thinking and digital tools in education, apart from staying an active participant of global education training, learning from and sharing with others advances in the field of International Baccalaureate teaching.

#### Pablo

At 35 years of age, Pablo has been a teacher of English for 10 years, after obtaining his master's degree in TESOL and teaching license from a university in Ecuador. He teaches at a private English language academy and has taught courses in general English, science, literature, standardized test-taking, history among others. His teaching strategies involve project-based learning, CLIL methodologies, metacognition, and language skill development (speaking, and writing), He has been in charge of running language academies for various years using strategies directed to developing 21st-century skills through language learning.

#### Research timeline

The research study followed the schedule described below

Table 2. Timeline

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Nov 19. 2024   Nov 27. 2024   Nov 30. 2024   Dic 07. 2024   Jan 08. 2025

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Contacting  
teachers

Creation of  
Interview  
Questions  
and  
Observation  
Protocol

Conducting  
Interviews  
with 2  
teachers

Transcription  
and analysis  
of data

Member  
checking to  
corroborate  
findings of  
interviews

Project  
Write-up

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## Data Collection Instruments

In order to obtain data that gave us a point of departure to answer our research question, we implemented two means of obtaining the data: a semi-structured interview and an observation checklist. The answers from the interviews gave us a series of accounts of how the participants planned and designed their classes, how they conducted their classes, and additional information about their views on education, 21st-century skills, and other aspects relevant to their teaching and being an educator. The observation checklist was utilized to gather data on the specific teaching strategies and classroom moves they did in their schools.

### Interview

For this study, six semi-structured questions aligned with the research questions were employed. These questions addressed the challenges and opportunities that the participants faced in their English classrooms when using an approach that seeks to take advantage of 21st-century skills, and how these skills are developed within this approach. Two of the questions that we asked our participants were: (1) how do you define "language awareness" in the context of EFL teaching, and why do you think it is essential for fostering global citizenship among learners? and (2) how does language awareness help EFL students connect with diverse cultures and perspectives beyond just linguistic proficiency? The complete set of questions is provided in appendix one.

### Observation Checklist

The classroom observations helped us understand how teachers promote both language learning and global citizenship. An observation checklist is often used in research to systematically evaluate the presence or absence of specific elements, behaviors, or criteria.

(Smith, J. A., & Doe, R. L., 2020). The checklist we used was composed of ten categories: Classroom Environment, Learning Objectives, Teaching Strategies, Student Engagement, Communication and Language, Assessment and Feedback, Global Contexts & Links, Student Autonomy and Inquiry, Use of Resources, Conclusion and Reflection. Pedro was observed for two hours in two different classes while Pablo was observed only for one hour in two different sessions. The full version of this checklist is presented in appendix Two.

## Data Analysis

This study is grounded in text analysis; therefore, we used thematic coding. Thematic coding is a qualitative approach that involves identifying and recording words, phrases, and text passages that are relevant to our research question. These codes are then put together into categories which later on are rearranged differently until we identify a theme or themes that become salient and paramount in our research (Yin, R. K., 2014).

## 4. ANÁLISIS DE RESULTADOS

After conducting the interviews with the participants and carrying out observations in the participants' classrooms while they taught, we conducted an analysis of the transcripts and the observation notes. We provide a detailed account to answer our research question: How do two EFL teachers describe their experiences in terms of challenges and opportunities using 21st-century skills to facilitate their students' development of language awareness and communicative competence?

Using the concepts, opportunities, and challenges as guides for the organization of the data we collected, in the table below we try to present a summary of the salient themes according to the answers given by the two participants.

Table 2. Opportunities and challenges.

Opportunities	
Theme	Quotes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promoting cultural awareness and fostering respectful cross-cultural interactions through language learning</li> </ul>	<p>"Language is not merely a tool for communication, but a gateway to understanding the intricacies of different cultures. Through language learning, we promote cultural awareness and foster respectful cross-cultural interactions, encouraging learners to view the world through different perspectives and engage with global issues more meaningfully." (Pablo)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Importance of language awareness to develop and promote practical involvement in EFL</li> </ul>	<p>"Language awareness enhances both linguistic proficiency and cultural understanding by teaching students the social nuances of language use, fostering empathy, diversity appreciation, and meaningful global engagement" (Pablo)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integrating language skills with intercultural understanding through Project-Based Learning</li> </ul>	<p>"Project-based learning on global issues effectively integrates language skills with intercultural understanding, fostering empathy, social responsibility, and a sense of global community among students." (Pedro)</p>
Challenges	
Theme	Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Curriculum Limitations in Addressing Global Competence</li> </ul>	<p>"EFL curricula should include real-world issues and diverse cultural perspectives to reflect the complexities of the modern world. This approach aligns with the growing need for education that fosters global awareness". (Pedro)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A dual approach to language learning for global citizenship</li> </ul>	<p>"Besides having mixed-ability class issues, encouraging students with a sense of Global citizenship could be hard because they don't see the point of knowing about other cultures. In addition, they claim that they will never be in certain countries and will stay here forever" (Pedro)</p>

## 5. DISCUSIÓN

Our study inquired into a research question that explores the opportunities and challenges that Pedro and Pablo underwent as they taught English in International Baccalaureate schools.

### Opportunities

The first theme that emerged from the analysis of their response was Promoting cultural awareness and fostering respectful cross-cultural interactions through foreign language learning benefits both individuals and society in multiple ways, such as Enhanced Social Harmony. This theme is highlighted by Pedro when he says “In our increasingly globalized world, people from diverse backgrounds frequently interact. Broader Opportunities: Cultural awareness and cross-cultural interactions open doors to various opportunities, both professionally and personally.”

In a world with interconnected economies and societies, learning a foreign language and understanding other cultures is key to becoming a responsible global citizen. Language awareness in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching involves understanding how language functions culturally, socially, and pragmatically. It goes beyond grammar and vocabulary to encompass the ways language reflects identity and cultural values. Language awareness refers to how words and language are used within learning materials, shaping how students perceive and interact with different cultures and global issues. This awareness is essential for fostering global citizenship as it encourages students to appreciate diverse worldviews, respect linguistic diversity, and communicate effectively in multicultural contexts. By mastering a new language, individuals gain insight into different worldviews, customs, and traditions, fostering a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity. (Kurt, A., 2024). According to Pablo, “immersing students in topics related to various cultures and current issues, while using English as the medium, makes learning more meaningful and relevant”. His words are a potent statement that learners do not only need to enhance their language skills but also become aware of the diversity in how people live and behave in different contexts. A classroom implication of this fact is using English texts that discuss environmental challenges, cultural practices, or global political matters. These topics allow the students to see the real-world applications of language while fostering a deeper understanding of global citizenship (Risager, 2007). In addition to this, fostering language awareness supports students' ability to engage thoughtfully with global issues and different cultural perspectives. This perspective aligns with the idea that

language learning should go beyond grammar and vocabulary, promoting an active, socially conscious mindset (Byram, 2008).

The second theme that emerged is the Importance of language awareness to develop and promote a practical involvement in EFL. Language awareness and intercultural communicative competence assist students to become responsible local and global citizens through their education for living and working together in an interconnected world. During our interview, Pablo expressed that “language awareness enhances both linguistic proficiency and cultural understanding by teaching students the social nuances of language use, fostering empathy, diversity appreciation, and meaningful global engagement”.

Language awareness bridges these aspects mentioned by Pablo by encouraging learners to explore how language functions within various cultural contexts, enabling them to navigate diverse communicative settings. For example, understanding idioms, politeness strategies, or culturally specific discourse patterns improves language accuracy and promotes sensitivity to the values and norms of different cultures. Research shows that integrating language awareness into instruction helps learners develop metalinguistic skills, enhancing their ability to analyze and adapt to unfamiliar linguistic forms (Andrews, 2007). This adaptability is particularly valuable in fostering cultural empathy, as learners become attuned to the perspectives and experiences of others through language (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

An important result of language awareness is communicative competence, which goes beyond mere linguistic proficiency. Communicative competence helps EFL students connect with diverse cultures and perspectives by fostering an understanding that there are various ways of living and thinking outside their immediate communities. For example, when students are exposed to language materials that reflect the values, traditions, and experiences of people from different backgrounds, they not only learn the language but also gain insight into how people in other cultures navigate their daily lives. This approach aligns with the work of Byram (2008), who emphasizes that language learning should involve a deeper exploration of cultural contexts. It also supports the idea that students who engage with ambiguity are more likely to develop open-mindedness and flexibility, key components of global citizenship (Kramsch, 1993).

Our last theme Integrating language skills with intercultural understanding through Project-Based Learning, is a derivation from the fact that language awareness transforms linguistic learning into a holistic process that prepares students for meaningful global interactions fueled

by the power of collaboration. Working as a team in projects equips students to appreciate diversity and effective communication across microcultural and societal boundaries. Engaging in these practices of collaboration allows the students for personal growth and global citizenship. We can use Pedro's quote that says “Project-based learning on global issues effectively integrates language skills with intercultural understanding, fostering empathy, social responsibility, and a sense of global community among students.”

Through this quote, we can observe that Pedro values real-world problems, that through project-based learning authentic contexts for language use are created, allowing students to develop vocabulary, grammar, and communication skills while engaging in meaningful and real-life tasks. One example of this takes form when the students researched and presented about global challenges such as sustainability or climate change which was an opportunity for them to be immersed in activities that mirrored real-life interactions. Using project-based learning also enhances intercultural awareness, as students explore diverse perspectives and examine how language reflects cultural norms and values, even for groups that come from the same city, and whose parents are similar socioeconomically. Additionally, addressing global issues encourages empathy and social responsibility by helping students understand the lived experiences of others and their role in contributing to global solutions. When the projects are based on learning about sustainable practices across different countries, this inspires an appreciation for diverse approaches and fosters a sense of shared accountability (Larsen-Freeman, 2011). One last positive point of PBL emphasizes collaboration and self-reflection, which are essential for cultivating a global mindset. Through teamwork and introspection, students connect language learning with cultural and social dimensions, deepening their understanding of the world and their place in it (Beckett & Slater, 2005).

## Challenges

The first challenge that emerged from the answers provided by the participants was the Curriculum Limitations in Addressing Global Competence. In this regard, Pablo commented that “overcoming curriculum constraints and students’ difficulty in connecting language learning with global issues required thoughtful lesson planning to align linguistic objectives with critical thinking and global awareness activities”. But in addition to that he continued explaining that “overcoming challenges in integrating language learning with global awareness is essential because it ensures that students develop both linguistic competence and the critical thinking skills needed to engage with complex global issues.”

Careful lesson planning bridges the gap between the aspired lesson objectives by aligning language instruction with activities that promote deeper cognitive and cultural engagement. In today's interconnected world, EFL curricula can be significantly improved by incorporating themes of global citizenship, which would not only enhance language skills but also broaden students' understanding of cultural diversity and social responsibility. According to Pablo, "EFL curricula should include real-world issues and diverse cultural perspectives to reflect the complexities of the modern world. This approach aligns with the growing need for education that fosters global awareness. For instance, integrating topics like climate change, human rights, and cross-cultural communication helps students not only practice language skills but also engage with important global issues. Moreover, providing more professional development opportunities for teachers to incorporate intercultural communication and social justice into lessons can transform how language is taught (Bennett, 2018). Teachers who are trained to approach these themes can create richer, more meaningful classroom experiences. A project-based and experiential learning model can also be particularly effective, as it encourages students to actively apply their language skills in collaborative settings. By preparing students to navigate and contribute to a globalized world, EFL education becomes a tool for both linguistic proficiency and responsible citizenship (Darling-Hammond, 2020).

The second theme that emerged in the challenges category was A dual approach to language learning for global citizenship. Some students initially perceive language learning and global issues as disconnected, making it harder for them to engage fully in this combination (Byram, 1997). Effective lesson planning addresses this by creating meaningful links between language use and real-world contexts. Thus, aligning linguistic objectives with critical and global competencies equips learners to navigate an increasingly interconnected world. In assessing whether students are gaining language skills as well as the abilities needed to become global citizens, the dual approach described by Pablo highlights "the importance of both traditional language assessments and reflective activities that encourage critical thinking and empathy...[so that].. educators can ensure students not only master linguistic proficiency but also develop a broader worldview."

Encouraging a sense of global citizenship among students in mixed-ability classes can be challenging, particularly when some students fail to see the relevance of learning about other cultures. They may argue that they will never travel abroad or believe global issues do not impact their lives. These perspectives highlight the need for strategies connecting global



awareness to students' experiences and aspirations. For instance, having students reflect on cultural norms from different societies allows them to recognize diverse perspectives and fosters their ability to engage in global discourse (Byram, 2008). This method aligns with research suggesting that language learning should be interconnected with intercultural competence, as effective communication in a globalized world requires an understanding of cultural differences (Kramsch, 1993). Thus, this comprehensive approach not only improves students' language skills but also equips them with the mindset necessary to navigate complex, multicultural environments.

## 6. CONCLUSIÓN

In conclusion, the findings from this study suggest that EFL instruction that integrates cultural awareness and global citizenship provides significant opportunities for learners to enhance both their language skills and their capacity for cross-cultural understanding. However, the successful implementation of such an approach requires thoughtful lesson planning, the overcoming of curriculum constraints, and the creation of meaningful connections between language learning and global issues. By addressing these challenges and adopting strategies like Project-Based Learning, educators can cultivate not only linguistically proficient students but also responsible global citizens who are prepared to navigate the complexities of an interconnected world.

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