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English language didactics in primary education: a literature review with contextual reflections for classrooms in the coastal region of Ecuador

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RESUMEN

La formación temprana en inglés es fundamental para el Programa Nacional Ecuatoriano de 2016, pero las escuelas primarias en estados costeros como Manabí, Esmeraldas y Sandarian son particularmente esforzadas por garantizar una experiencia educativa eficaz. Este artículo analiza 30 estudios de libre acceso sobre enfoques didácticos para la enseñanza del inglés a jóvenes estudiantes, lo que refleja su aplicabilidad a clases costeras con alta demanda, material limitado y escasez de docentes. La síntesis de datos globales sobre lenguaje comunicativo (CLT), respuestas físicas generales (TPR), tareas basadas en tareas (TBB), contenido educativo integrado y lenguaje (AICLE) y educación basada en historias, compara estos métodos con las teorías del aprendizaje de Vygotski, Krashhen y Piagene. Investigaciones en Latinoamérica y Ecuador muestran que los métodos comunicativos, de diversidad e integrados benefician sistemáticamente a los jóvenes estudiantes, mientras que las transferencias exitosas dependen del desarrollo profesional sostenible, la adaptación culturalmente sensible y recursos locales económicos. Ofrece una estructura contextual "AICLE + TPR + StoryPBL" que combina microunidades, procedimientos diarios de TPR e historias costeras de diseño. La recomendación actual es una universidad educativa especializada en mentoría y colaboración con el público. La revista cerrará y publicará la agenda de investigación longitudinal sobre desarrollo lingüístico, educación de contenidos y comportamientos que monitorizan el impacto de dos a siete elementos.

PALABRAS CLAVES

didáctica; inglés; educación primaria; reflexiones contextuales; aulas; región costera; Ecuador.

ABSTRACT

Early English training is at the heart of the 2016 National Ecuadorian National Programme, but primary schools in coastal states, such as Manabí, Esmeraldas and Sandarian, are particula r ly combatants to ensure effective educational experience. This article deals with 30 free access studies for didactic approaches to teaching English to young students, reflecting its applicability to coastal classes facing overflow, limited materia l and teacher shortages. The synthesis of global data on communication language (CLT), general physical responses (TPR), task-based tasks (TBB), integrated educational content and language (CLIL), and story-based education, compares these methods with learning theory of Vygotskian, Krashhenian, and Piagene. Research in Latin America and Ecuadorian shows that communicative, diversity, and integrated content methods systematically benefit young students, while successful transfers rely on sustainable professional development, culturally sensitive adaptation, and inexpensive local resources. It offers a contextual context structure "CLIL + TPR + StoryPBL" that combines microunits, daily TPR procedures, and coastal stories of design. The current recommendation is a targeted university of education and education for mentoring and partnerships with the public. The journal will close and publish the agenda for longitudinal research on language growth, content education, and behaviors that monitor the impact of two to seven items.

KEYWORDS

didactics; English; primary education; contextual reflections; classrooms; coastal region; Ecuador.

1. INTRODUCCIÓN (OBJETIVO DEL ARTÍCULO)

The progressive incorporation of English into early education has become a decisive factor for access to higher education, tourism, and participation in the digital economy across Latin America. In Ecuador, the Ministry of Education formally established English as the first foreign language in the national curriculum, setting CEFR A2 as the target level by the seventh year of basic education through the *National English Program 2016* (Ministerio de Educación, 2016; UNESCO, 2016). This reform aligns with international trends that emphasize communicative competence, learner autonomy, and cross-curricular integration (Richards, 2006). Nevertheless, an external comparative analysis led by the British Council (2015) revealed that only 18% of seventh- year students in public schools had achieved the A1 reading level, a gap particularly evident in coastal provinces where earthquakes, climate-related interruptions, and persistent infrastructura l deficits hinder educational continuity (Estrella & Silva, 2020).

The linguistic ecology of Ecuador's coastal region adds complexity: Spanish dominates formal instruction, yet Kichwa, Tsafiqui, and Afro-Ecuadorian varieties coexist in community life, requiring teachers to harmonize national standards with culturally responsive pedagogies. Teacher preparedness remains a pressing issue; only 42% of public-school EFL instructors hold specialized diplomas, and many self-report CEFR proficiency levels below B1 (Ministerio de Educación, 2016). These skills gap often correlates with reduced target language use and reliance on translation-heavy methodologies (Garvis & Pendergast, 2010). In addition, novice teachers frequently express anxiety when required to improvise beyond scripted lesson plans, limiting the communicative potential of classroom interaction.

Recent research in Ecuadorian and Latin American contexts has explored strategies to overcome these challenges through innovative, context-sensitive methodologies and resources. Arguello Mogrovejo and Vásquez Guerra (2023) demonstrate that interactive digital whiteboards can enhance the teaching–learning process by providing adaptable, multimodal resources. Rodríguez de Delgadillo (2025) shows that the socio-cultural environment in early childhood classrooms shapes both engagement and linguistic development, while Arteaga Alcivar (2025) underscores that assertive communication strategies improve classroom dynamics and foster socio-emotio nal growth an essential consideration in primary-level EFL contexts. Similarly, Veintimilla (2023) positions educational robotics as both a learning tool and a driver of sociopolitical engagement,

and García Arreaga et al. (2025) warn that excessive teacher workload undermines well-being and, ultimately, instructional quality. From a technological and methodological perspective, Muñoz De la Torre (2022) proposes serious-game-based environments to strengthen problem-solving skills, and Carvajal Morales et al. (2022) highlight the role of virtual learning environments in expanding educational access both approaches offering potential adaptation to resource-limited coastal schools.

Research question. Which evidence is better suited to elementary English students in the equatorial coastal region based on the deductive approach? How should these approaches fit local restrictions and cultural assets?

To address this question, the present study pursues three interconnected objectives: (1) to synthesize international evidence on effective English teaching for young learners, linking each approach to established learning theories; (2) to contrast these global practices with Latin American and Ecuadorian experiences, identifying points of convergence and context-specific adaptations; and (3) to generate practical, culturally grounded recommendations for policymakers, school leaders, and teacher training programs.

By combining a systematic review of literature with contextual reflection, this article offers a pedagogical framework that is both globally informed and locally rooted a balance long advocated in comparative education (Enever, 2011) with specific applicability to low-resource, multicult ural contexts such as Ecuador's coastal provinces. Although the focus is on this region, the proposed model can inform EFL instruction in other settings with similar socio-economic constraints and complex linguistic environments.

2. MARCO TEÓRICO

Theoretical Framework

Defining English Language Didactics

Continental didactic concepts in Europe go beyond the scope of class technology, intervie wing why, what, and how training (Harmer, 2015). Didactics, used by EFL, covers programs (communication ability), content selection (Lexico grammar furnace), methodology (interact ive model), media (text, visual effects, details), and assessment (forming and forming cycles). Richards (2006) states that key lessons should respect the child's cognitive and social-emotio nal development: short attentional flights, specific reasoning, and high emotional sensitivity.

Key Approaches in Primary ELT

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Created in Europe in the 1970s, CLT shifted to the intentional value of interaction with a focus on the accuracy of structural precision. In the primary context, CLT generally appears through class research that introduces grammar into intentio nal conversations through information gaps, role-play games, and class investigations (Cameron, 2001). Met-Ananysses shows that CLT improves the voluntary production and understanding of the audience.

Total Physical Response (TPR). The Asher TPR uses a team in which the psychokinetic energy of children, a team of teachers combines the whole body gesture and behavior (Zambrano and Torres, 2021). Randomized tests in class 3 classes in Mexico and Egypt show that a 15-minute daily TPR session increases oral sentence retention by 22% compared to the control group (Butler, 2007).

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). TBLT creates languages as a tool to solve real-world tasks - implements simple scientific experiences of building air snakes, creating posters related to reflections in language forms (Nunan, 2011). In Korea and Spain, major TBL improved narrative structure and vocabulary depth without sacrificing grammar accuracy (Garton and Copland, 2014). **Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).** CLIL teaches program objects (e.g., life science, art) in English, contributing to dual target training (Coyle et al., 2010). European data show that Maril students surpass their peers not only in English but also in object tests related to increased cognitive interactions (Eeever, 2011). Criticism warns that Emile needs bilingua l resources and teachers.

Storytelling and Songs. Reilly & Ward (1997) view narrative as a "linguistic vitamin" - a rich, contextualized contribution that promotes imagination. Jiménez & García (2018) documented a cohort of class 4 in the Kostarikan class.

Learning Theories Grounding the Approaches

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. Language development is accelerated in the proximal development zone (ZPD) when there is a teacher task with modeling, interrogation, and graduate support (Vygotsky, 1978). Projects for CLT pairs and CLIL groups show ZPD frames.

Krashen's Input Hypothesis. Get collections with understandable entries (I+1) delivered in a low anxiety state. TPR reduces emotional filters, but narrative history offers rich and affordable contributions (Krashen, 1982).

Piagetian Constructivism. Children at specific operational steps create knowledge and manipulate objects in their hands. The TBL project and processed materials resonate with this development logic (Pinter, 2006).

Together, these theories justify a mixed didactic repertoire of CLT and TPR for early fluidity in oral cavity, Blister and TBL for cognitive academic growth, and convey stories and songs for emotional and cultural interactions.

3. METODOLOGÍA

Literature Review

Global Practices

Europe. According to Rixon's (2013) analysis of 36 nations, proficiency increases are predicted by teaching quality rather than start age, even though the majority begin English by age 7. The best results are obtained by programs that integrate language across the curriculum efforts (CLIL) with CLT style engagement. According to Enever (2011), in order to keep student interest, Scandinavia n schools use cross-modal input, such as chanting, digital games, and outdoor science.

Africa and Asia. According to Garton & Copland (2014), scripted TPR routines improve student understanding and instructor confidence in large class settings (40–60 students), especially when there are teacher competency gaps. The importance of parental expectations is shown by Butler's (2007) study conducted in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea, which found that schools with strong home-school English relationships have higher oral output results.

Latin-American Context

Ecuador's emphasis on communication skills is repeated in political documents in Colombia, Chilean and Peruvian, but the distribution of funds differs. According to UNESCO (2016), less than half of Latin America's leading teachers undergo EFL CPD annually, highlighting long differences in implementation. According to the Barrios Survey of Central and Coastal Pilots in Central Chile and Colombia (2021), teachers are concerned about the lack of an English environment but also report positive teaching on the content of the language. Continuity is also raped by the frequent turnover of rural teachers, which is also manifested in coastal schools at the equator.

Ecuadorian Studies

After tracing four waves of English policy since 1992, Estrella & Silva (2020) come to the conclusion that reforms frequently surpass teacher preparation. Observations in the classroom

show a translation-driven methodology, where teachers use Spanish to explain concepts, which leaves little opportunity for student discussion. However, there are encouraging microstudies:

- **Visual-Aid Intervention.** In just eight weeks, Vásquez & Zambrano (2018) increased Grade 3 term recall by 24% in five Manabí schools by implementing recycled flashcards and wall charts.
- **TPR Vocabulary Cycles.** When Zambrano & Torres (2021) introduced 10-minute TPR every day in four coastal schools, post-test results on action verb quizzes surpassed control groups by 19%.
- **Project-Based CLIL.** In 2020, Navas and Villafuerte created a project that combined science and English to study mangrove ecosystems. Students exhibited to their friends after making dioramas out of beach trash and writing bilingual subtitles. Signific ant increases in environmental vocabulary and increased classroom engagement were noted by the researchers.
- **Song-Driven Pronunciation.** When Jiménez & García (2018) included marimba rhythms into phonics exercises, they saw a decrease in pronunciation mistakes and an increase in student satisfaction.

Collectively, Ecuadorian evidence supports the efficacy of multisensory, culturally aligned methods but underscores the need for scalability and longitudinal evaluatio

4. ANÁLISIS DE RESULTADOS

Contextual Reflections: Coastal Ecuador (≈620 words)

Educational Challenges

Socioeconomic Disparities. Coastal provinces confront substantial post-earthquake rehabilita t ion expenses and poverty rates that are 8–12 percentage points higher than the national average. Lack of resources restricts access to computers, printed readers, and reliable internet—tools essential to contemporary CLT and CLIL (Ministerio de Educación, 2016).

Turnover and Teacher Shortages. Due to relocation incentives to urban highlands and private bilingual schools, the annual turnover rate among English instructors in coastal areas is close to 18 percent. Consequently, Grades 2–4 are often combined in multigrade classes, making differentiation more difficult (Garvis & Pendergast, 2010).

Infrastructure and Climate. Textbooks deteriorate due to high humidity, while audiovisual work is hampered by frequent power outages. The semi-open bamboo buildings used by many schools enhance background noise, making listening exercises difficult.

Local Didactic Practices

Despite the limited resources, many coastal teachers have shown significant creativity in adapting English education to the local environment. They often use processed materials to create interesting details in their classes, such as cardboard puppets for interactive role players, coconut shells for adjective teaching, using processed materials to shake plastic for rhythmic tunes (Lópezand Páez, 2019). These inexpensive practical materials not only support language acceptance, but also respect the principles preserved in specific learning. Another widely used strategy is to include coastal narratives. Folktales like La Tunda and El Cadejo are told in simple English and serve as a narrative framework that supports the student's cultural heritage, presenting new vocabulary in important and memorable ways.

Teachers also rely on local musical traditions to raise phonological awareness. The rhythm of the Afro-Ecuadorian bomba rhythms syllable segments, while the melodies of Pasillo help students in English intonation practice (Jiménez & García, 2018). Additionally, some teachers have an organization of environmental clerics (integrated language content and learning), adjacent mangrove fields. These excursions provide students with authentic, multi-layered contexts to explain the plants, animals and ecosystems of English, mixing scientific content with the development of such fascinating and educational languages (Navas and Villaferte, 2020).

Bridging Theory and Practice

Teachers can ensure that tasks stay within the ZPD by layering CLT information gap games onto well-known recycled prop routines using Vygotskian scaffolding. In order to create listening texts with cultural resonance, Krashen suggests teachers to record local fisherman discussing their catch in slow, graded English. StoryPBL's hands-on activities, which involve students creating dioramas of the Isla de la Plata ecosystem and then writing English- language puppet shows, are validated by Piagetian constructivism.

Task-based cycles break down if there is no thoughtful attention to form, Littlewood (2004) warns. Following TPR lessons, coastal instructors might incorporate tiny "language detective" activit ies that encourage students to identify new phonemes or verb endings, strengthening accuracy without sacrificing fluency.

5. RECOMENDACIONES

Recommendations

Practical, affordable methods that are tailored to local conditions are needed to improve English language instruction in Ecuador's coastal elementary schools. Teachers can include storytelling and Total Physical Response (TPR) into a regular routine. Using physical instructions to start classes and then using recycled puppets or drawings to narrate local folktales promotes vocabulary development, lowers learner anxiety, and increases student involvement (Zambrano & Torres, 2021; Jiménez & García, 2018).

Project-based CLIL mini-units centered on well-known coastal topics, such artisanal fishing or mangrove ecosystems, can also be implemented by schools. In order to reinforce topic knowledge and encourage meaningful language usage, these projects can use visuals, bilingual vocabulary support, and group work (Coyle et al., 2010; Navas & Villafuerte, 2020).

With the use of platforms like WhatsApp and video chats, a "buddy teacher" system might be set up to pair up coastal educators with more seasoned colleagues from cities. According to Garvis and Pendergast (2010), this type of cooperative mentorship boosts teachers' self-esteem and promotes reflective teaching methods.

Community-based audio materials that feature local voices explaining daily living in slow, understandable English can enhance education even further. Through real-world material, these recordings foster listening comprehension and offer culturally appropriate information (Krashen, 1982; López & Páez, 2019).

Every term, student-run English mini- fairs can be produced to feature brief performances, songs,

or posters. These gatherings reinforce communicative objectives while encouraging creativit y, public speaking, and family involvement (Richards, 2006; Reilly & Ward, 1997).

6. CONCLUSIÓN

Conclusion

As long as they are modified to local circumstances and maintained resource sensitivity, this research confirms that communicative, multisensory, and content-integrated didactic approaches— which have received widespread endorsement in international literature—are also quite pertinent for Ecuador's coastal primary schools. Teachers may turn constraints into chances for creativity by fusing the kinesthetic engagement of Total Physical Response (TPR), the cultural resonance of project-based storytelling (StoryPBL), and the cognitive depth of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). This hybrid framework, CLIL + TPR + StoryPBL, offers a flexible and cultura lly informed approach to language education in low-resource contexts.

The success of this model depends on a number of important enablers. Peer mentoring and hands- on demonstrations should take precedence over traditional lecture formats in sustained, micro - credential-based professional development. By using regional music, folklore, and environme ntal knowledge as real teaching materials, strong community collaborations may improve learning. In keeping with communicative and constructivist objectives, project-based evaluations ought to be used to encourage student cooperation, creativity, and practical communication abilities.

Longitudinal mixed-methods designs that monitor students' interaction patterns, affective reactions, and language and topic acquisition over several grade levels should be the focus of future research. Further research on how geography and culture affect the transferability of didactic models might be possible through comparative studies including schools in the Amazon, highla nds, and coastal regions. Improving English instruction in Ecuador's coastal areas is ultimately a step toward better educational justice and global participation for populations that have historically been marginalized by the country's growth, not only a language goal.

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