

INTEGRATED SKILLS APPROACH IN THE ENGLISH LEARNING AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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RESUMEN

En estos días, el idioma inglés constituye una competencia clave para el aprendizaje permanente para toda a fin de mejorar el desarrollo personal. El objetivo del estudio fue identificar las estrategias del EIH aplicadas en el aula de inglés de la Escuela de Ingeniería Ambiental, ESPOCH-Campus Macas, durante el semestre abril – septiembre 2021. El enfoque de investigación fue un método cualitativo y cuantitativo denominado mixto. La modalidad básica fue la investigación de campo y bibliográfica. El diseño de investigación fue no experimental de tipo transversal. El nivel de la investigación fue descriptivo. La población estuvo conformada por 30 estudiantes y la muestra fue de tipo probabilística. La encuesta fue aplicada para identificar el nivel de comunicación del idioma inglés de los estudiantes y las estrategias de EIH. Así como también, una lista de cotejo fue aplicada durante la observación de aula para comparar la percepción de los estudiantes respecto a las estrategias de EIH. La información se analizó mediante estadística descriptiva a través de la distribución de frecuencia, y sus resultados se presentaron mediante tablas con valores porcentuales. Los resultados determinaron que el 93 % de los estudiantes desarrollan las habilidades del lenguaje de manera aislada prevaleciendo las estrategias tradicionales, y el 90 % de los estudiantes alcanzaron un bajo nivel de las competencias comunicativas. En conclusión, las estrategias de EIH están directamente correlacionadas con el aprendizaje de la lengua meta (L2).

Palabras clave: Enfoque Integrado de Habilidades (EIH), lengua meta, competencias comunicativas, estrategias tradicionales de aprendizaje.

ABSTRACT

TNowadays, English language constitutes a key competence for permanent learning for lifelong to improve the personal development. The objective study was to identify the strategies of the ISA applied in the English classroom of the Environmental Engineering School, ESPOCH- Campus Macas, during the semester April – September 2021. The research approach was a qualitative and quantitative method called mixed. The basic modality was a field and bibliography research. The research design was non-experimental of the transversal design. The level of the research was descriptive. The population were made up of 30 students and the sample was probabilistic type. The survey was applied to identify the level of communication in English language of the students and the ISA strategies. As well as, a checklist was applied during the observation classroom to compare the students' perception about the ISA strategies. The information was analyzing by descriptive statistic through frequency of distribution, and the results were presented by charts with percentage values. The results determined that the 93 % of the students develop the language skills in insolation way where prevalence the traditional strategies, and the 90 % of the students achieve a low level of the communicative competences. In conclusion, the strategies from ISA are directly corelated with the target language learning (L2).

Keywords: Integrated Skill Approach (ISA), target language, communicative competences, traditional strategies of learning

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1. INTRODUCTION

The efficiency English language communication nowadays in the university environment constitutes a key competence for lifelong because they will have better employment opportunities and can get into the globalization easily owing to the 75 % of scientific bibliography is in English and more the 56 % of the internet site are edited in English Language. Then, English is an international language of communication (Chávez et al., 2017, p. 769). In the same way, European Commission (2019) established the multilingual competence as a key competence for lifelong learning where English language is named as a 'lingua franca' in the majority countries from the world (p. 7).

According to EF English Proficiency Index (2021), Ecuador is located in 90 position from 112 countries and in Latin America is located in 18 position from 20 in English language communication. This means that, who were evaluated have the ability to introduce yourself in a simple way (name, age, city of origin), understand simple signs, and providing basic directions to a foreign visitor according to the very low band domain (EF EPI<450). Likewise, the results of the English Placement applied to the students of leveling at Guayaquil university (2019) established that the average knowledge in English language is only A1-Level according the Common European Framework of reference for language learning (2020), so the data contrast negatively with the established in the curriculum of English as a Foreign Language for students in Bachillerato General Unificado (2016) because the level of performance in English communicative competence is B1-CEFR level.

On the other hand, in university context, the requirement to get university degrees was to achieve a B2 level-CEFR. However, the expected level is lowered from B2 to B1 for all university degrees according to the recently reform of the Academic Regime Regulations (2019) due to the inconsistency existed in the English levels established in the curriculum to the different education levels in Ecuador because of the students have limited contact with the target language every day in our society (Krashen, 1981).

The limited communicative competence of the students is based on that the traditional approach for English teaching learning still prevails in English classroom nowadays. It means that the teachers focus the learning process in sound systems, grammatical structures and vocabulary, choral repetition of pre-established dialogues, and the language skills are learning in isolation by stressing skill orientation and rote memorization where teachers put a great deal of attention for reading and writing instructions (Matenovna, 2021). The practice of those learning strategies in English classroom do not allow to achieve a meaningful learning, so all of them are in contrast with the communicative approach established in Ecuador since 1993 by CRADLE project. In that case, Education system has to respond all requirements to improve English language communication.

Integrated Skills Approach (ISA) constitute an alternative to improve English language learning. It means that the teachers have to use of the four language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) in the learning process in classroom. So, the students have the chance to practice natural language interaction and encourage the students to learn target language (Sevy-

Biloon, 2018).

Previous studies, concluded that 'ISA' in classroom generate all the time real communicative scope (Waluyo, 2020, p. 176). Other study settled that English language skills have to be learned in integration to perform efficiency oral communicative competence (Stegall, 2021, p. 738). In the same way, Rahman & Akhter (2017, p. 38) mentioned that the students hardly ever get a chance to work with the integrated skills. Therefore, this study aims to establish the correlation between the ISA and the English learning process owing to ISA encourage learners to use English language naturally and improve language communication in target language (Brunfaut et al, 2020).

This study is relevant because the information gathering allows to identify the ISA strategies applied in the English classroom. Likewise, this investigation is very important because it gives enough information to the teachers about ISA to the future Foreign Language researches, which has a positive impact in the development of the communicative competence.

The objective of this study is to identify the strategies of the ISA applying in the classroom from second level in English subject from Environmental Engineering School, campus of Morona Santiago province – ESPOCH, located in Macas city.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research approach applied in this study was mixed method (qualitative-quantitative) according to Sampieri (2016) defined us "the set of systematic, empirical and critical processes that implies the recollection and

analysis of quantitative and qualitative data". Likewise, the basic research modality was the 'field research' because the phenomenon was studied in the place where it happens, and the 'bibliography research' because its study is based on the review of different bibliographies and documentary resources (Quishpe, 2021, p. 1662). Moreover, the research design was 'non-experimental of the transversal design' due to it is developed without the manipulations of the variables, thus the researcher registers the facts observed in real setting and fixed time (Pallela & Martins, 2012, p. 87). Finally, the level of the research was 'Descriptive' owing to its study focus on the relationship between the two variables instead of the data collecting (Hernández et al, 2014).

The study population was 30 students (men=16; women=14) belonging to 2nd level in English subject from Environmental Engineering career, in the campus of Morona Santiago province – ESPOCH, located in Macas city during the academic semester April – September 2021, because the 'population' in investigation refers to the set of data where procedures are used to develop the detailed study of a conglomerate of people. On the other hand, the sample in this study is the population because it is considered a small and finite population, also it is of the probabilistic type (Andrade et. al, 2018, p. 88).

The techniques applied for gathering information was the 'survey' applied to the students to know the perception of the communicative competence and 'observation' to identify the ISA strategies applied in the classroom.

First of all, the instrument of the survey was the 'questionnaire', whose items

were designed to measure the variable 'Strategies of Integrated Skills Approach' since the perception of the students. Then, the questionnaire was designed under the Linkert scale with a closed question and 3 measures scale (yes, sometimes, no) to measure attitudes and know the degree of conformity of the respondent. Besides, the 'validity' of the instrument was developed by the expert judge to include all the items are essential and eliminate undesirable items to a particular construct domain. Then, the judgmental approach to establish content validity involves literature reviews and follow-up with the evaluation by expert judges or panels (Taherdoots, 2016, p. 30). Furthermore, the 'reliability' of this instrument needed to be tested by applying the Cronbach Alpha coefficient (α), which value was $\alpha=0.7$, 'acceptable degree of reliability' because this value is > 0.5 and it is closed to 1. It means that the items are pointed in the same directions evidencing the homogeneity of the scale (Quishpe, 2020, p. 33).

Secondly, the 'checklist' was the instrument applied to the class observation to identify the variable 'English learning' because it allows the review of the certain indicators during the research process, their level of achievement or the absence of it (Pérez, 2018, p. 6). Consequently, the techniques and the instruments for gathering data were designed according to the objectives and the variables established in the investigation.

The analysis of the results was performed by descriptive statistics through frequency of distribution, and their results were presented by charts with percentage values. At the same time, 'triangulation' method was applied to describe the results gathering in this research owing to this consists in the verification and comparison

of the information obtained at different times through the different methods (Honorene, 2017).

Lastly, the results were interpreted by the relationship between the theory and the praxis during the teaching learning process of the target language according to each variable.

3. RESULTS

The results in this study showed that there are a limited number of strategies from Integrated Skills Approach (ISA) applying in English Classroom, so this causes interference in the development of the language skills as well as the fewest strategies from ISA in classroom hinder the efficient achievement of the student's communicative competence.

On the first variable called 'Strategies of Integrated Skills Approach' (ISA), the results in the question 'development all the skills of the language (listening, reading, speaking, writing) in one single lesson' showed that the students' perception has a high frequency in the scale 'NO' (66 %), it means that there is a linear relationship between statistical data and the scale of the students' perception in negative slope according to the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. Whereas, the scale 'sometimes' (27 %) presented a considerable perception in negative direction too. In contrast, the scale 'yes' has a very small relative frequency, thus only 6 % of the students pointed out a positive perception. Therefore, almost all of the students surveyed in this item indicated that the English language skills were developed in isolated way and not in integrated way (see Figure 1).

Could you tell me if you develop all the skills of the language (listening, reading, speaking and writing) in one single lesson?

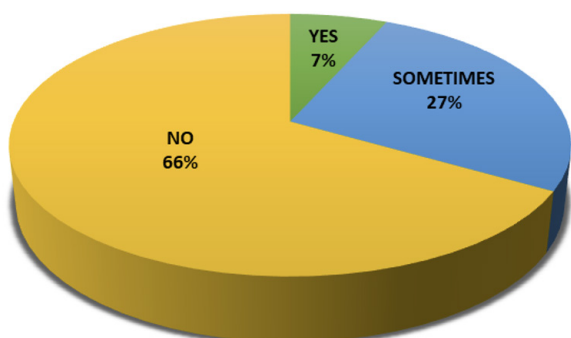


Figure 1. Integrated Skills Approach strategies
Note: Students' perception of Integrated skills strategies in English classroom.

On the same variable (ISA), the results registered during 'Observation classroom' in the 'Checklist' showed that still prevail mostly in English classroom strategies under the 'traditional approach' in teaching learning process, such as 'grammar-translation approach', 'direct approach', 'audiolingualism approach' and 'cognitive approach'. So, those strategies are in contrast with the Integrated Skills Approach strategies, where listening, reading, speaking and writing skills should be development jointly in order to encourage learners using target language (L2) naturally and improvement the communication in real context, thus the English learning process have to be holistic (See, Figure 2)

CHECKLIST:		
ESPOCH: CAMPUS OF MORONA SANTIAGO - MACAS		
CAREER: ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING	POA: 3	
SUBJECT: English Language		
SCOPE: Observation of the Learning Strategies in English classroom		
SEMESTER: April - September 2021		
STRATEGIES OF THE INTEGRATED SKILLS APPROACH	do	doesn't
Students' vocabulary control facilitates communication		X
The appropriate use of these structures and patterns facilitates communication		X
Can successfully initiate, maintain and close the discussion		X
Student is able to provide extra details spontaneously in the conversation		X
The message is clear and concrete and task input is fully used		X
STRATEGIES OF THE TRADITIONAL APPROACH	do	doesn't
Classroom as a teacher-centric	X	
Chalk and talk	X	
Teachers give lectures and students learn	X	
Class focus on grammatical rules	X	
Translating texts in books	X	
Vocabulary memorization in isolated words	X	

Repetition phrases or drills	X	
Dialogues memorization and recitation	X	
Frequently the instructions is given in mother language of the students	X	
Language skills is learning in isolate form	X	

Figure 2: Checklist for observation classroom
Note: ISA strategies applied in English classroom

On the second variable called 'English learning', in the question 'be able to communicate with others in English language' the results noticed that a large number student's perception (70 %) continues with the tendency towards the negative slope. Besides, a significant relative's frequency (20 %) follows the negative tendency perception in the scale 'sometimes'. Even though, few students denoted positive perception to talk through target language (L2), which must be considered in English learning process in classroom. Therefore, the majority of the students (90%) are not able to communicate in English Language with others English speakers (see Figure 3), so these results are just based on the student's perception.

Could you tell me if you are able to communicate with others in English language?

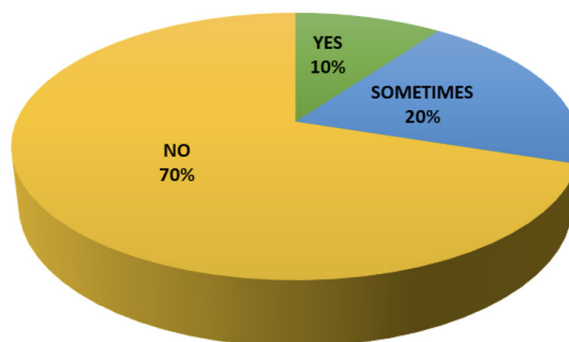


Figure 3. English Learning
Note: Students' perception of English language ability achieves for communication.

4. DISCUSION

The main findings founded in this research were the use of the segregated skills instruction in English classroom

during the target language learning and the limitation to communicate in English language with other English speakers.

First of all, the teaching-learning English process is in constantly changing, so the challenges of the 21st century are based on the improvement of the education system incorporating the new skills such as: learning and innovation skills; literacy skills; and life skills (Sulistyaningsih et al., 2019). Therefore, skill segregation is reflected in traditional approach since the language skills domain are performed in separate way where the language learning is naturally isolated from content learning (Pardede, 2020, p. 72). Also, the results showed clearly that teacher presents writing skills separated from speaking, and listening skills lonely from reading skills, prevailing 'Grammar Translation approach' where the learners analyze grammar and translate mother language to target language in writing skill preferably, so this practice generate an obstacle to an efficiently communication, as well as, 'direct approach' performed oral skills around questions and answers between the teacher and the student only; 'audiolingualism approach' use mimicry and memorization and the language is frequently manipulated without regard to meaning or context; and the 'cognitive approach' view to the language as rule acquisition but not habit formation (Renau, 2016, p. 83). Consequently, the students knew the language elements and rules but they did not know how to use them to communicate.

On the other hand, Integrated Skill Approach (ISA) is opposite to the traditional approach because it proposes the development of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and

writing) in holistic way to improve the communicative competence and the ability to use target language in the context of a particular situation inside of the domains such as personal, public, occupational and educational, thus learners can use the language in natural communication. In addition, the goal of the 'ISA' is to perform in learners the 'fluency', 'accuracy', and social-cultural competence (Aymane, 2016). According to Iftikhar & Aslam (2017), English language skills "should be taught in integration in order to arrive at ease in communication" (p. 48). In reference to this, Sreena & Ilankumaran (2018) pointed that "learners should develop both receptive and productive skills in both spoken and written discourse to perform target language efficiently by learning the four language skills interactively" (p. 670). Many investigations maintain that "the students improve their language skills with a good managed of the 'ISA', as well as, pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary" (Akmal et al., 2020).

Lastly, the students' perception showed that they had not been developing their language skills in integrate way that allows to get self-confidence to interact with English speakers efficiently. Thus, studies focusing on learners' and teachers' attitudes showed that the integrated skills approach supports not only learners but also the teachers (Hernawan, 2018; Zuniga, 2016). Hence, Yufrizal (2017) states that "communicative competence is the ability to use language, or to communicate in an accurate cultural manner in order to make meaning and achieve social activities with efficacy and fluency in long interactions". Likewise, Richards & Rodgers (2001) established that "a communicative task is fundamental

to achieve communicative competence". It means that 'teacher' has to facilitate the communication process in the classroom among all students and 'the students' have to be communicators, actively engaged in negotiating meaning and management their own learning through communicative tasks such as: predefined role play, small talk, manipulative instrumental function and pair activities (Hong, 2020). In addition, Melek (2018) proposes some collaborative activities such as: acting from the script, watching movies, listening to podcasts or songs, language game, giving speech-presentation-role play, reading in group.

5. CONCLUSION

- English language learning process is aligned to the traditional approach reflected in the language skills development in segregate way due to very scarce interactive activities, the lack of exposure to authentic English materials and the lack of motivation to learn the target language generates a passive role of the students, which cut down the communicative competence achievement in the students. It means that, the teachers should be constantly researching for new strategies, techniques, methods and approaches to increase of the students' performance in English language communication.
- The student's perception points out that the activities proposed by the Integrated Skill Approach in English classroom are a few, which allows to infer that the students achieve a low confidence to interact in target language due to the limited opportunities to communicate

in English language. Thus, the students are not ready to apply the target language as a means of communication in every life. Therefore, the teachers should take into account this study to apply 'ISA' activities in English lesson, which allows to practice target language in different stages in the same lesson to motivate and achieve confidence to interact among the English language speakers.

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