



Strengthening Communicative Competences in English for Teenagers

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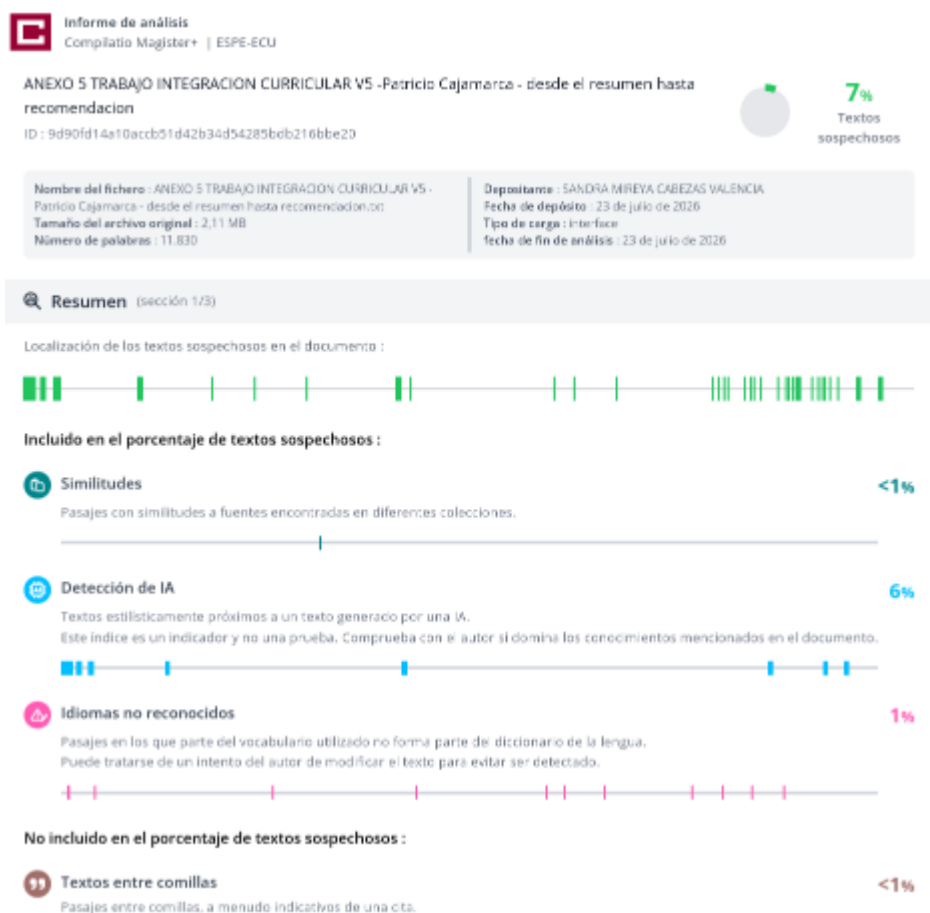
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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents for shaping me into the person I am; I owe many of my achievements to you. You raised me with strong values, but ultimately, you constantly motivated me to achieve my dreams.

Acknowledgment

First, I thank God for always giving me the strength to move forward, for guiding me on the path of good, and for giving me the wisdom to improve my professional work every day. I also thank my parents for providing me with the best education and life lessons. And finally, I thank my dear professors, who with their wisdom and guidance have accompanied me on this academic journey.

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Resumen

Frente al reto de fortalecer la comunicación en inglés dentro del contexto educativo ecuatoriano, esta investigación analizó la perspectiva estudiantil sobre las dinámicas de aula participativas y su influencia en el compromiso hacia el aprendizaje. Para ello, el abordaje metodológico combinó herramientas cuantitativas y cualitativas bajo un esquema exploratorio convergente, garantizando el levantamiento simultáneo de ambos tipos de datos. La muestra integró a 35 alumnos de nivel medio, a quienes se les administró un instrumento validado por dictamen de expertos que incluyó siete interrogantes demográficas y catorce reactivos tipo Likert, alcanzando una elevada consistencia interna (Alfa de Cronbach = .836). En forma complementaria, se entablaron entrevistas semiestructuradas con cinco informantes clave para indagar a fondo en sus vivencias personales de aprendizaje. De acuerdo con los datos recopilados, se constató una acogida bastante favorable hacia la inclusión de recursos tecnológicos y dinámicas interactivas, elementos vinculados a un aumento directo en la participación y el compromiso durante las sesiones de clase. Sin embargo, en rubros como la aplicación de estrategias, la autoevaluación del desempeño y la estructuración del discurso comunicativo, la postura del alumnado tendió hacia la neutralidad. Pese a la evidente cautela de los participantes para valorar el avance en su nivel lingüístico, los datos confirman una marcada aceptación hacia las dinámicas centradas en el alumno.

Palabras clave: competencia comunicativa, aprendizaje interactivo, enfoques centrados en el estudiante, percepción estudiantil.

Abstract

This study explored teenagers' perceptions regarding the improvement of English communicative competence through interactive and student-centered approaches in an Ecuadorian educational context. The objective was to analyze students' perceptions of these pedagogical strategies and their relationship with motivation and communicative competence. An exploratory mixed-methods approach with the converging design was applied, enabling the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously. The study included 35 secondary school students who answered a questionnaire that passed the expert validation process. The instrument used was made up of seven demographic inquiries and fourteen items measured on a Likert scale and showed a satisfactory level of reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = .836). Moreover, five students were involved in semi-structured interviews to better understand their perceptions and experiences of learning. The findings indicated positive perceptions of active classroom methods and digital materials linked by students to an increased interest, engagement, and motivation in learning English. Nevertheless, participants' responses were mostly neutral regarding communicative organization, strategy application, and self-assessment of language level, reflecting skepticism toward these issues. At the same time, findings from the interviews confirmed the survey results by exploring experiences in peer collaboration, independent learning techniques, vocabulary expansion, practice of pronunciation, and speaking confidence in detail. In summary, students' opinions of the use of active, student-oriented methods were largely positive, while the level of confidence in terms of development of communicative skills varied.

Keywords: communicative competence, interactive learning, student-centered approaches, students' perceptions.

Chapter I

Introduction

In the contemporary global landscape, English proficiency has been established as a primary determinant for professional and academic success, serving as the predominant lingua franca that facilitates cross-border and cross-disciplinary collaboration (Malykhin et al., 2024). The strengthening of communicative competence in English for teenagers is a multidimensional process that aims to develop the integrated capacity of the student to use language successfully for effective interaction in real-world contexts (Salvador et al., 2023). According to theoretical frameworks used to build communicative competence, it is much more than just knowing how to use grammar. The four primary components of competence are linguistic (rules of grammar/vocabulary), sociolinguistic (the appropriateness of the context), discourse (the order of speech in terms of connection and flow), and strategic (the ability to restore communication when there is a failure in communication) (Rahman, 1989, cited in Gutierrez & Gesmundo, 2023). The importance of this topic is reflected in the importance of learning. Self-perception of competence is a critical factor for students' ability to use English functionally (Huseynova, 2024). Motivating students to use mobile devices for language learning (MALL) leads to gamification of the classroom and allows the students to learn to be independent (Andino et al., 2025). Furthermore, an appropriate practice environment is critical for reducing language anxiety, while intercultural awareness prepares adolescents with a global vision necessary for future international cooperation (Zhu, 2025; Lee et al., 2023).

While there is a theoretical and curricular focus on the above-mentioned topics, there is a substantial gap between the pedagogical expectations for students and the actual performance of students. Students are frequently unable to articulate their ideas in a clear manner and with

spontaneity (Huseynova, 2024); they also continue to exhibit areas of weakness in grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary due to psychosocial influences, including a fear of making errors, and a lack of confidence around their peers (Samaranos & Biol Jr., 2024). This issue is deepened by the prevalence of traditional, teacher-centered instruction focused on the memorization of abstract rules that lack authenticity and relevance to 21st-century demands (Fauzi & Ridwan, 2025). Additionally, while mobile technologies offer great potential to mitigate stress, structural obstacles arise, such as the digital divide, lack of stable internet in rural areas, and distractions caused by device misuse, which are often perceived more as a hindrance than a learning tool (Andino et al., 2025). Without interventions focused on providing adolescents with functional language use as well as a supportive and emotionally safe environment, adolescent students will not develop the linguistic skills necessary to succeed globally (Wang & Ahmad, 2025).

Although the development of communicative skills has been extensively studied internationally, there is limited local evidence regarding EGB students' perceptions of Strengthening Communicative Competence in Ecuadorian EFL classrooms. Most previous research has focused on university settings or adult learners, leaving a gap in understanding how Ecuadorian teenagers experience the use of digital and active pedagogical strategies (Andino et al., 2025; Wang & Ahmad, 2025). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore students' perceptions regarding Strengthening Communicative Competence in English for Teenagers. To achieve this objective, an exploratory mixed-methods methodology is adopted. A survey will be administered to collect quantitative data related to students' perceptions about different digital strategies applied during EFL lessons, complemented by semi-structured interviews designed to gather qualitative insights about their own improvement and motivation to study English (Lee et al., 2023; De Wilde, 2025).

Problem Statement

In our current era of globalization, English has become the essential engine for international dialogue. There is still a significant gap between high-level curriculum expectations and the instructor's ability to deliver those same high expectations to learners (Huseynova, 2024). Consequently, learners frequently encounter barriers to the expression of their idea(s) as they develop their ability to communicate with spontaneity in some language form, i.e., spoken or written. For example, learner barriers in regard to grammar, spoken fluency/oral flow, and writing capabilities have been documented within multiple research studies (Malykhin et al., 2024; Salvador et al., 2023). This is not just a lack of study; it is a fundamental mismatch. Many times, students will discover that their language abilities will not work with the type of communication they need to do, which will create a lack of communication; thus, students will experience passive silence instead of the type of active communication necessary for them to function in the real world (Gutierrez & Gesmundo, 2023; Wang & Ahmad, 2025).

In addition to the academic aspect of skill development, these skills may be inhibited by the classroom psychological environment. This includes the reluctance of many teenagers to speak due to their fear of making mistakes and appearing inept in front of their peers (Fauzi & Ridwan, 2025). These internal hurdles are only exacerbated by external factors such as the constant "safety net" of using their first language and textbooks that feel disconnected from real life (Samaranos & Biol Jr., 2024). Furthermore, the double-edged sword of mobile devices creates a unique challenge; too often, phones are seen as a source of distraction rather than a gateway to learning (Andino et al., 2025).

The root of the problem, however, often lies in the structural persistence of teacher-centered methods. Much of today's instruction still revolves around memorizing abstract rules

that have lost their edge in the 21st century (Huseynova, 2024). Although mobile learning has tremendous potential, factors like the digital divide and insufficient teacher training limit the ability of technology to give students the timely, individualized feedback they require (Llaban & Protacio, 2025). Without a shift that prioritizes functional use and emotional safety, the linguistic ability of adolescents will remain stuck, unable to meet the aggressive demands of a globalized society.

Formulation of the Problem or Research Question

The following research question was developed to direct the study's development and address its main goal:

What are the perceptions and motivation levels of adolescent students regarding the pedagogical strategies used for strengthening their English communicative competence?

Objectives

General Objective

To analyze teenagers' perceptions regarding the improvement of English communicative competence through interactive and student-centered approaches in an Ecuadorian educational context.

Specific Objectives

To identify students' levels of motivation and their initial perceptions regarding the use of interactive digital activities

To explore students' personal experiences and opinions about the influence of digital activities on their perceived development.

Justification

The importance of investigating the strengthening of communicative competence in teenagers lies in the fact that, in today's global landscape, English mastery has become the primary determinant for professional and academic success. As Malykhin et al. (2024) explain, English serves as a global lingua franca that allows for communication among people of different countries and fields of study, enabling individuals to share information, convey intentions, and express complex feelings. Thus, having only a working knowledge of isolated grammatically correct structures is not enough to prepare youth for the needs of a global society. According to Salvador et al., (2023) communicative competence is defined as a necessary integration of the fundamental grammatical rules and the understanding of how language is used to accomplish communicative functions within certain social contexts. Therefore, this research is important because it will close the gap between the theoretical knowledge of the student learned within a classroom and the practical abilities of the student to act as an effective communicator in modern society.

In terms of theoretical and practical relevance, the intent of the study is to change the direction of teaching from conventional to models that reflect the student's identity and involvement. Llaban and Protacio (2025) introduce a fundamental theoretical perspective by suggesting that investment in language learning is not merely a matter of individual effort but is deeply shaped by students' social and psychological identities, as well as institutional opportunities to participate in meaningful language use. This theoretically justifies the need to create learning environments that foster the adolescent's personal commitment. According to Fauzi & Ridwan (2025), the best way to build confidence and fluency through teaching is to use Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Their perspective is that learning a language is best

achieved through use (practice) rather than through memorizing abstract rules. Consequently, many teaching practices are transformed through the research, providing the framework for moving from teacher-centered approaches to student-centered and interactive approaches in many daily (standard) classroom contexts.

The research described in this paper will have a social impact on educational equity and intercultural cohesion by positively affecting many actors in the education system. Andino et al. (2025) state that the use of M-learning in secondary education contexts has great social importance in countries such as Ecuador, where there are few opportunities to have access to immersion environments or to native speakers. These tools are extremely effective at providing pedagogical strategies to help students with lower initial language skills and overcome traditional barriers to motivation to learn. The competencies being developed not only benefit each person, but may also benefit society as a whole. Zhu (2025) states that developing intercultural communicative competence does more than improve English language learners' language skills; it is also a means of helping to develop adolescents' ability to adapt to a global environment, thereby providing a basis for future international collaboration among nations. The individuals who directly benefit from these competencies are teenagers, who will gain independence and social mobility; teachers, who will learn modern teaching interventions and methods for teaching English language learners; and educational institutions, which will better align curriculum to global communication standards.

Chapter II

State of the Art

This section of the outline reviews extensive research regarding the interactive and student-centered approaches to strengthening communicative competencies in English using an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom context designed for teenagers. Some of the variables studied in this review include interactive activities, gamification, and digital resources as independent variables influencing the sociolinguistic, discursive, strategic & linguistic competencies of students influenced by their linguistic self-confidence, metacognitive awareness, and personal engagement. Within the current literature, there is a widespread consensus on the need to shift English instruction from traditional, teacher-centered models toward methodologies that recognize the learner as an active agent in the construction of their own knowledge. According to Llaban and Protacio (2025), investment in language learning is considered more than just a cognitive effort; it also encompasses an adolescent's social identity and personal investment. Their findings indicate that adolescents with a high personal investment have more success using strategies to resolve communication barriers and demonstrate considerable strategic competence. Lee et al.'s (2023) argument for incorporating Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) into the classroom to enhance adolescent learner motivation is because ICC allows adolescent learners to consider language not just an abstract set of rules, but as a means to build relationships globally with other individuals and to learn about their world.

Regarding pedagogical strategies to boost participation and oral skills, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Instruction (TBI) stand out as the most influential models. Fauzi and Ridwan (2025) demonstrate that the use of CLT in secondary schools leads to

marked improvements in fluency and accuracy, as activities such as role-plays and group discussions force students to articulate ideas spontaneously; in their study, 85% of students were able to contribute effectively after an intervention based on these methods, compared to an initial 60%. Furthermore, Aliazas & Velasco (2023) also compare Content-Based Instruction (CBI) and Task Based Instruction (TBI) and conclude that both CBI and TBI significantly reduce hesitation in speaking under the CLT model, although vocabulary and pronunciation challenges remain post traditional education. Psychosocial barriers also hinder these methods. Samaranos and Biol Jr. (2024) suggest fear of failure and peer-related lack of confidence impede communicative competence; despite active methods, students often miss curriculum goals due to language anxiety and mobile device distractions.

Technological integration to support language learning, especially via MALL (Mobile-Assisted Language Learning), has been well documented as a strategic solution for these barriers. According to Andino et al. (2025), utilizing applications such as Duolingo (in 73% of situations examined), Kahoot, and Quizizz in Ecuador has helped enhance both the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary while also creating "low-anxiety" environments in which students can develop their language skills autonomously with immediate feedback. However, Wang and Ahmad (2025) warn that although technology facilitates virtual immersion and the "feeling of being there," the success of MALL critically depends on the student's digital literacy and the teacher's ability to integrate these tools into tasks with clear objectives, preventing app usage from remaining at a superficial entertainment level. On this point, studies differ: while some authors emphasize the motivational power of gamification for daily engagement, others, such as De Wilde (2025), argue that the determining factor in oral performance is not technology per se but prior receptive vocabulary knowledge; according to her longitudinal research, fluency

development in adolescents follows a non-linear trajectory that requires first reaching a basic "lexical threshold" for production skills to emerge and consolidate.

Despite advances in understanding sociolinguistic and discursive dimensions, a critical gap remains in the literature regarding the balanced integration of these sub-competencies. Gutierrez and Gesmundo (2023) point out that secondary students often reach advanced levels in grammar but remain at basic levels regarding discursive coherence and the strategic ability to repair conversation breakdowns. The continuing fragmentation in the curriculum indicates that students who are culturally adaptable and aware of the nuances of the interlocutor and who communicate syntactically accurate messages have not been adequately prepared to meet the demands of realistic intercultural communication. As Zhu (2025) illustrates, students' development of speaking skills in middle school will require familiarity with cultural constructs; being aware of cultural constructs facilitates students' expression of both factual information and sophisticated ideas and/or feelings in globally relevant settings.

Finally, addressing the local research gap is imperative. While mobile learning is well-documented in Asia and Europe, local evidence regarding Ecuadorian education students' perceptions of communicative competence in rural settings remains limited. Research on how the digital divide and infrastructure issues influence speaking ability and motivation is scarce. There are many research studies indicating that digital tools enhance confidence; however, the studies provide no agreement among researchers as to the best ways to support adolescents with low proficiency as they manage the following four dimensions of communicative competence. Furthermore, the lack of data on negative teacher perceptions and systemic challenges within the Ecuadorian EGB system necessitates this research to provide contextualized pedagogical recommendations.

Theoretical Framework

The strengthening of communicative competence in English through interactive and student-centered approaches for teenagers can be grounded in several learning and language-teaching theories that explain how meaningful interaction, active participation, and learner autonomy contribute to the development of speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. As the requirement of English language education is becoming a standard in Ecuador's secondary curriculum, where students experience a disconnect between viewing English as an academic course rather than a language that is used outside of school, the information provided through these theories provides a basis for understanding how teenagers measure their own advancement and authentic communicative competence (MinEdEcuador, 2016; UNESUM, 2023). The three primary theoretical perspectives that follow: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Constructivism-based Active Learning, and Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK), provide an integrated perspective for analyzing patterns of student perception in relation to their development of communicative competence.

Communicative Language Teaching and Perceptions of Competence

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) states that language acquisition will occur more naturally for learners via meaningful, real-world communication than through simply memorizing forms of grammar (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Therefore, in an EFL environment in Ecuador, CLT justifies using interactive, student-centered activities, including pair work, role-playing, simulations, and project-based assignments by having students create meaning, communicate their opinions, and respond in an authentic way during meaningful communication tasks (UNESUM, 2023). When teenagers are frequently engaged in such tasks, they gradually

develop all components of communicative competence, linguistic, pragmatic, discourse, and strategy, thus improving their ability to use English in real-life contexts (Robillos, 2023).

Recent empirical studies show that students exposed to CLT-aligned, interactive instruction report higher levels of perceived communicative competence compared to those who receive traditional grammar-translation teaching (Seemanath & Watanapokakul, 2024). In Ecuador, research on mobile-learning applications and communicative competence-oriented tasks with secondary-school students indicate that technology-enhanced interactive activities particularly strengthen listening, speaking, reading, and writing within a CLT framework (Robillos, 2023; Estacio et al., 2022). From a perceptual viewpoint, according to previous research, those teenagers who consistently utilize meaningful interaction will be more likely to view their own English use as being "useful" and "authentic", which positively influences their view of communicative competence when communicating in English with others.

Furthermore, the implementation of CLT is intrinsically linked to the "Willingness to Communicate" (WTC), a psychological state that determines whether a student chooses to speak English in a given moment. Recent scholarship suggests that CLT environments reduce the communicative anxiety often found in public schools, allowing students to perceive themselves as competent interlocutors even before achieving total linguistic accuracy (MacIntyre & Wang, 2021). This perspective is important because when there is little exposure to the target language, the teacher's ability to create a "safe communicative space" is what ultimately determines how these students view their own level of proficiency.

Constructivist Active Learning and Learner-Centered Approaches

Constructive Active Learning supports the idea that students create knowledge and skills through interacting with other students and participating in group activities (Piaget, 1970;

Vygotsky, 1978). With respect to EFL for adolescents, this theory supports student-centered approaches such as developing group projects, teaching one another, working together on problem-solving tasks, and learning together so that adolescents share their interpretations of meaning, build mutual knowledge, and receive responses from both their peers and their teachers (Brañas-García et al., 2025). If students take an active role in their own progress, they also learn about their own abilities and weaknesses, which has an impact on the way they view their ability to communicate.

Active-learning research conducted with EFL students in Latin America has demonstrated that using collaborative and experiential methods can have a strong positive effect on students' fluency, coherence, interaction skills, and self-efficacy (Seemanath & Watanapokakul, 2024). Qualitative information from student journals and interviews indicated that teens who took part in curricular games, role-playing, or project work also reported having more confidence in and are better prepared to use English outside the classroom (Robillos, 2023; UNESUM, 2023). The evidence from Ecuador classrooms shows that many teens feel they lack real-world opportunities to practice English, making the use of these active-learning approaches a form of bridging between what occurs in the classroom and how students view their communicative competence.

Another critical factor that impacts the outcome of these constructivist approaches is known as "Pedagogical Scaffolding," which is characterized by the gradual removal of the teacher's assistance (scaffold) as the student demonstrates increasing independence. Current findings support that in Mixed Ability Classrooms such as those in Ecuador, Active Learning provides for "Differentiated Instruction" with students measuring progress towards objectives at their own rate, thus removing the emotional burdens associated with a common timeframe for all

(Phan & Dinh, 2025). This individualized progression toward achieving constructive competence transforms passive learners into active users of the language and supports the constructionist view of the definition of competence as a socially constructed and individually recognized entity.

Potential integration of the TPACK Framework

Technology-enhanced tasks, for example, apps, digital games, video-based communicative activities, or online collaboration, the TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) describes how effective teaching emerges at the intersection of technological knowledge (TK), pedagogical knowledge (PK), and content knowledge (CK) (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). In the context of EFL for teenagers, TPACK helps explain how students' perceptions of communicative competence may be influenced by their exposure to well-designed, technology-based interactive activities (Robillos, 2023; Estacio et al., 2022).

In Ecuador, the findings of several studies conducted in secondary schools indicate that students demonstrate higher levels of engagement, motivation, and perceived self-efficacy in their ability to use the English language when teachers create interactive, student-centered activities that incorporate mobile applications and interactive digital tools to support the development of communicative competence (UNESUM, 2023). In other words, when teachers use CLT principles (Communicative Language Teaching) to guide the design of interactive, student-centered activities and ensure that the activities are aligned pedagogically and technologically, students will view those activities as meaningful and see them as contributing to their actual development of communicative competence.

Expanding on this, the modern application of TPACK must now account for "AI-Assisted Adaptability", where the teacher utilizes digital tools to provide immediate, automated feedback. Studies suggest that pre-service and in-service teachers who master this technological integration

enable students to develop a more accurate and positive self-perception of their communicative skills (Ren & Li, 2026). By reducing the time between a communicative attempt and its correction through digital media, TPACK creates a cycle of "micro-successes" that are essential for building the long-term confidence required to master a foreign language in a non-immersive context.

Conceptual Framework

Conceptualization of Communicative Competence in the EFL Context

From a basic standpoint, communicative competence is the ability to function in a language robustly and with meaning. Communicative competence involves not just knowing grammar, but also understanding how language can be used differently in different situations. Besides the relationship of the word(s) and concept(s) to each other in the production of speech (Salvador et al. 2023), communication goes beyond transmitting a clear message using language rules; students are also responsible for clearly communicating so others can easily understand their ideas (Gutierrez and Gesmundo 2023).

In many teaching approaches, this competence is divided into four main parts. The first type of competence is grammatical competence, which consists of pronunciation and grammar competence. The second type of competence is sociolinguistic competence; this type of competence refers to the way people use their language according to different cultural norms. Last, there is strategic competence; this type of competence helps the student when they do not know a certain word or when they make a mistake in their spoken language. Finally, discourse competence is related to organizing ideas so that they are clear and connected (Rahman, 2017).

Adolescents do not typically have a consistent ability to communicate because it varies based upon whom they communicate with at any given time (Huseynova, 2024). Therefore,

learners must learn how to alter their style of speaking. Additionally, the importance of these skills extends beyond the school into everyday life when much more casual forms of interpersonal speaking and communication are utilized (Gutierrez & Gesmundo, 2023).

As learners move through youth into adulthood, they usually begin by using single, straightforward grammatical structures to express ideas/feelings, and then generally progress to the use of more complex grammatical structures. Thus, communicative competence cannot be viewed as a collection of grammatical rules alone; it must also be considered as a continuum of skills from the simplest to more elaborate forms of expressing oneself. In addition to grammar, other attributes related to the development of fluency and adaptability are equally relevant when using language in various communication settings (Zhu, 2025; Huseynova, 2024).

Instructional Strategies for Developing Communicative Competence

Transitioning from traditional teacher-centred models of teaching to student-centred methodologies for increasing students' English language skills is necessary. One of the most important methodologies used in this transition process is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which focuses on the use of communication and interaction with others as the purpose by which language is learned. CLT is an example of a shift away from teaching students about the grammatical rules of language (i.e., abstract) and towards helping students to develop practical skills to help them speak (Fauzi & Ridwan, 2025). In addition, through the use of authentic environments, learners are encouraged to express their meaning spontaneously, which helps them gain confidence in many types of social settings (Aliazas & Velasco, 2023). Additionally, CLT has also shown success in implementing Task-Based Instruction (TBI) and Content-Based Instruction (CBI) in secondary schools.

As CBI defines language as a tool to learn about content and refers to content as a resource that can facilitate language learning, students' levels of class involvement are enhanced because they appreciate how English applies to their everyday lives. TBI describes an atmosphere where students have the opportunity to use other forms of target language freely to accomplish specific areas of communication by completing authentic tasks. Through their use of cooperative, interactive activities, both of these approaches can offer opportunities for students to raise their fluency of speaking, grammatical accuracy, and work together collaboratively with their classmates to complete technology-related activities (Aliazas & Velasco, 2023).

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Role-Play

A specific and highly effective instructional activity within these frameworks is the use of role-plays and simulations. Through engaging in activities that allow adolescents to enact their roles through real-life context and communicate using a language reflecting real-life communication (Samaranos & Biol Jr, 2024), students have an opportunity to engage and collaborate while developing their vocabulary, pronunciation, and appropriateness of expression, and contribute to an experiential learning environment.

Theme-based role-play facilitates higher levels of language complexity and negotiation of meaning. The design of the task and teacher support determine whether students will succeed, since students with low proficiency may have difficulty following instructions or may be outperformed by those who are more advanced. The teacher has a responsibility to facilitate the experience by serving as a mediator; therefore, the definitions of roles must be carefully defined to provide students with a high level of participation (Wang & Ahmad, 2025).

Elements and factors contributing to the acquisition of communicative skills

Communicative competence (CC) is a multidimensional construct that extends beyond linguistic knowledge. According to the foundational model by Canale and Swain (1980), cited in Salvador et al. (2023), CC is a synthesis of basic grammatical principles, sociolinguistic knowledge of how language is used in social settings, and discourse principles for combining utterances. There are four components of CC; linguistic competence (grammar and vocabulary), sociolinguistic competence (contextually appropriate use), discourse competence (cohesion and coherence), and strategic competence (ability to fix a breakdown or miscommunication) (Gutierrez & Gesmundo, 2023). For adolescents, the development of these competencies happens gradually as they learn from syntactic correctness to communicative fluency with the ability to improvise as they continue to develop cognitively (Zhu 2025).

A critical individual-difference factor in this acquisition is prior receptive vocabulary knowledge. Evidence suggests that vocabulary is the main predictor of success in L2 English speaking development; learners must reach a basic lexical threshold before productive speaking skills can effectively emerge. Vocabulary knowledge provides the foundation upon which learners listen, speak, and write, and it is significantly correlated with out-of-school exposure and intrinsic motivation (De Wilde, 2025).

Another essential element is language learning investment, which is shaped by a student's social and psychological identity. As noted by Norton (1995), cited in Llaban and Protacio (2025), the acquisition of English does not depend solely on individual effort but is deeply influenced by the available learning environments and institutional support systems. Students who perceive the language as a form of "linguistic capital" are more likely to invest

time and resources into learning, leading to higher levels of communicative proficiency and social mobility (Llaban & Protacio, 2025).

EFL Teachers' and Students' Perceptions on Communicative Strategies

The effectiveness of communicative strategies is often determined by how they are perceived and enacted by the classroom actors. Active teaching strategies such as role-playing and modeling, while generally regarded as valuable tools by teachers for enabling students to practice language in context by simulating real-life situations (Samaranos & Biol Jr., 2024), are typically viewed as difficult by many primary and secondary teachers, as their curriculum materials are frequently outdated and do not reflect the needs of today's students (Huseynova, 2024). Several teachers may prefer delivering instruction using traditional curriculum due, in part, to their difficulty managing large class sizes and the time constraints associated with using interactive learning activities (Samaranos & Biol Jr., 2024).

From the students' perspective, feedback regarding modern communicative strategies is overwhelmingly positive. According to survey results, over 80% of students believe that learning English is "more fun" with digital interactive tools as well as "less stressful." Instant feedback and the ability to learn at their own pace are among the things that motivate students most to participate (Andino et al., 2025). However, most students still feel that developing their communication skills is a significant challenge and experience anxiety when speaking in front of others (Samaranos & Biol Jr., 2024).

In addition to this, many first-year students provide a wide range of opinions about their skill level. Although many students assess their own language proficiency to be at an intermediate level, they still experience difficulty with grammar, speaking, and writing. There is a mismatch between students' perception of their level of proficiency and their actual level of

proficiency; this indicates a stronger need for more specific forms of support and assistance to be provided, rather than only responding to the student's perceived level of proficiency as identified in this study and in previous studies. Teachers need to work together to create opportunities for students to learn in a way that models the types of communication that are used in the real world (Malykhin et al., 2024).

Strengthening English Speaking Proficiency through Intercultural Experiences

The English language is the main mode of communication by which people worldwide connect within the current global environment, hence the need for Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) (Malykhin et al. 2024), which is the ability of an individual to communicate successfully with any other individual using their second or foreign language and from a different cultural and language background (Lee et al., 2023). To develop proficiency in speaking the target language, learners must learn the linguistic structure of the target language as well as learn about the culture in which the target language is used, including customs, values, and the non-verbal means of communication used in interculturally diverse settings (Zhu, 2025).

Instructional models such as "backward design" are particularly useful for integrating ICC, as they require teachers to focus on what students will ultimately be able to do with the language in intercultural encounters rather than just knowing its structure. Students who engage in 'cross-cultural experiential learning' have opportunities to receive a variety of cultural inputs from their peers, helping them to understand and develop their own sense of self/cultural identity as well as to appreciate the "otherness" of those with whom they interact cross-culturally (Lee et al., 2023). This process fosters cultural sensitivity and adaptability, which are crucial for confident and effective language use in real-life communication (Zhu, 2025).

Moreover, intercultural training enhances students' international vision and emotional connection; thereby, providing a strong base for future international collaboration. Students who recognize that language is a means for transferring culture through language develop an interest in learning to use the English language as a means for global collaboration and citizenship (Zhu, 2025). Research has found that including cultural content in the curriculum enhances students' intercultural competence and English literacy (Lee et al., 2023).

Strategic Solutions to Address Psychosocial and Environmental Hindrances

Adolescents face many psychosocial barriers that prevent them from developing their communicative competence (CC). Teenagers feel uncomfortable speaking in English mostly because they are anxious about the language, worried about making mistakes, and subsequently embarrassed to try and speak in front of others. Children will lose interest in any form of communication when they do not have a safe environment in which they can practice CC. To address these hindrances, research suggests creating a "low-anxiety environment" through natural, meaningful interactions and positive reinforcement. Collaboration with peers and peer mentoring programs is a critical solution for building adolescents' social skills and increasing confidence in hesitant learners (Samaranos & Biol Jr., 2024).

Environmental factors such as overcrowded curricula and limited resources also present major challenges. Teachers often report that they lack the time and proper books to support communicative instruction. A proposed strategic solution is the implementation of targeted remedial programs that provide additional, focused instruction to aid students' specific difficulties in speaking and writing. The primary purpose of these programmes should be to establish essential learning competencies and implement interactive strategies to close the gap of proficiency (Salvador et al., 2023).

The Digital Divide and Resource Limitations

The digital divide is one of the major barriers to an effective education in Ecuador. The main element of the digital divide is unequal access to mobile devices and unstable internet service in public schools. The digital divide is more than just the absence of devices; it also creates a "pedagogical exclusion zone" where students who live in rural and underprivileged areas do not have access to the flexible, technology-based instruction that their urban counterparts enjoy. This problem cannot be addressed simply by providing devices; the transition to Digital Inclusion Policies in a school context will also require schools to implement school-wide Wi-Fi so that students will have more opportunities to access technology and reduce the digital divide (Andino et al., 2025).

The "participation gap" is one aspect of the divide that impacts the development of oral language, in addition to infrastructure. The inability to complete technology-related tasks is directly related to students not having electronic devices as regular tools, and thus limits the amount of opportunity they have to build their levels of self-efficacy when completing these types of technology-related tasks (Salvador et al. 2023). Therefore, as is the case for any solution being proposed, it must be resistant to context in order to create a successful solution. For example, high-tech communicative tasks being given to students in a setting that does not have connectivity to the Internet are considered to be counterproductive and could be reinforcing students' feelings of academic deficiency. Therefore, the evaluation of curriculum development requires a shift in perspective related to the inclusion of "low-bandwidth" or offline mobile activities, thus allowing for success in meeting speaking and listening objectives, regardless of the socio-economic status of a student. The impact of this limitation on resources extends to the "educational gap", i.e., between having access to tools and actually using them effectively.

Research shows that simply having hardware without ongoing professional development usually results in the ineffective use of technology; specifically, the majority of apps are used as strictly entertainment rather than as tools for language acquisition. According to Wang and Ahmad (2025), in order for this to be successful, two tracks need to occur simultaneously: one is providing access to physical resources, and the second is providing professional development through "Mobile Pedagogy" to educators. This will aid educators in effectively utilizing digital tools in a manner to create goal-oriented communicative plans that are aligned with both the needs of individuals and that of Ecuador's EGB education system.

The psychosocial dimension of this divide plays a significant role in language acquisition. For a teenager, the inability to participate in digital-led classroom activities due to resource constraints can lead to social alienation and a diminished "Willingness to Communicate" (WTC). This environmental barrier acts as a physical extension of the affective filter, where the lack of a device becomes a source of anxiety. Overcoming these hindrances requires "Resource-Resilient Instruction," where interactive methodologies are prioritized over specific high-cost platforms, focusing the educational effort on strengthening communicative competence through adaptable and accessible media (Andino et al., 2025; Wang & Ahmad, 2025)

Transforming Communicative Instruction through Motivation and Technology

Technology integration, specifically Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), has changed the way students learn the English language. The use of mobile apps such as Duolingo, Kahoot, and Quizizz have helped create opportunistic and gamified environments, which are in step with the digital lifestyle of today's teens. These tools also promote self-directed learning, providing students with the ability to take charge of their own learning and the speed at which

they would like to learn, or find methods to motivate themselves. Providing immediate feedback to students regarding pronunciation and grammar, through the use of an application, decreases student anxiety and creates a safe place for students to practice prior to speaking with others (Andino et al., 2025).

Technology is also being used in a strategic manner to develop other specific skills. Tools like BBC Learning English and EWA provide students with real-world audio content and resources showing native-like pronunciation so that students can have more exposure to authentic English, as many of them do not have that experience outside of school (Andino et al., 2025). AI technologies like ChatGPT and voice assistants are increasingly opening up possibilities for students to fill in absent language barriers when communicating (Llaban and Protacio, 2025). Other forms of immersive technology, such as MMORPGs (massively multiplayer online role-playing games), provide synchronous, real-time communication between students around the world, adding another level of dynamic and effective learning experiences for students (Wang & Ahmad, 2025).

Overall, the transformation of communicative instruction requires teacher digital training. However, the successful implementation of these tools requires teachers to develop meaningful pedagogical plans that use technology as an integral part of their curriculum rather than using it occasionally for entertainment purposes. Providing educators with professional development in mobile pedagogy allows for successful digital interaction and measurable growth in language and communication (Andino et al., 2025).

These are the variables and dimensions identified for this study following a comprehensive analysis of the core concepts and definitions surrounding English as a foreign language as the primary lingua franca for global success

Variable 1: Interactive and student-centered approaches

The transition toward student-centered methodologies manifests a significant improvement in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) for adolescents. According to Fauzi and Ridwan (2025), students play an active role in the educational process because their views and experiences affect the success of study. Llaban and Protacio (2025) also clarify that this type of investment goes beyond the cognitive aspect since it contributes to the formation of student identity and gaining personal experience from their learning process.

Aliazas and Velasco (2023) emphasize that linking learning activities to adolescents' everyday lives and interests makes them feel motivated, since they believe that English is a relevant part of their lives. Following this, Lee et al. (2023) state that the integration of intercultural experiences into student-centered teaching expands students' viewpoints by allowing them to treat English as a means of communication within a society of different cultures.

Similarly, Wang and Ahmad (2025) maintain that proper planning of student-centered activities should ensure that the students are given fair opportunities to participate, taking into consideration the students' unique experiences, perceptions, and needs.

Therefore, this study took into account the following two dimensions for this variable.

Dimension 1: Interactive Classroom Practices

Interactive methods used in classrooms comprise games, role plays, and simulations that imitate real-life experiences. Aliazas & Velasco (2023) argue that role plays, in particular, let students traverse through situations like in a real-world setup while motivating them to use English like the way it is employed in everyday situations. Likewise, Samaranos and Biol Jr.

(2024) describe real-life scenarios as valuable classroom experiences that help students connect theoretical knowledge with practical communicative situations.

The incorporation of real-life topics together with collaborative interaction is frequently described as an important characteristic of engaging learning environments that respond to adolescents' interests and experiences. Wang and Ahmad (2025) suggest that experiences gained in situations like these promote peer interaction and provide an atmosphere in the classroom where students may feel comfortable taking part in discussions. Additionally, Lee et al. (2023) point out that intercultural experiences integrated into lessons offer students new views on life while requiring them to reflect on their own identity.

Current research also describes interactive classroom practices as learning experiences in which the communication of meaning is prioritized over complete linguistic accuracy, particularly during the early stages of oral practice. Ghafar et al. (2023), cited in Fauzi and Ridwan (2025), reported higher levels of speaking fluency among students who participated in collaborative oral tasks than among those who followed more traditional instructional approaches. Likewise, Salvador et al. (2023) suggest that interactive methodologies may also be incorporated into remedial instructional programs to offer additional opportunities for participation while addressing students' diverse communicative needs.

Dimension 2: Digital and Playful Support

Digital and playful support has become an increasingly relevant component by incorporating technological resources and gamified experiences into learning environments. As reported by Andino et al. (2025), mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) applications, for example, Duolingo and Kahoot, are often described as exciting digital spaces that stimulate learners to get involved in the process of learning English both in the classroom and beyond

classroom walls. Learners are then able to work at their level of proficiency and learning process. In addition, the literature emphasizes the use of gamification features experienced by students, for example, rewards, challenges, and immediate feedback in language learning applications. Campoverde Lopez et al. (2026) describe these features as components that students frequently associate with greater engagement and more meaningful autonomous learning experiences. In addition, Jara Chiriboga et al. (2025), cited in Fernández Cando et al. (2025), emphasize that adaptive platforms and virtual assistants offer learning experiences that can be adjusted to students' individual needs and proficiency levels.

A topic that comes up frequently in scholarly works is students' views on digital settings, which they consider to be the places where they can better practice English before entering routine communications in real life. Sánchez Piragauta (2022), cited in Andino et al. (2025), reported that students who completed oral activities through mobile applications commonly described lower levels of anxiety than those participating directly in live classroom performances. Nevertheless, Stockwell (2022), cited in Llaban and Protacio (2025), argues that students' experience with such technologies is based not only on being able to access digital tools but also on knowing how to use them as well as on the teachers' assistance in using technologies.

Variable 2: English Communicative Competence

The ability to communicate in English is often defined as a multilevel structure involving students' feelings about their capability to use English appropriately depending on the situation. According to Salvador et al. (2023), based on the work of Canale and Swain, communicative competence includes four basic types of knowledge: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic. Thus, communicative competence is regarded as not only being able to speak

grammatically correctly but also as knowing how to use English in real communicative contexts. Similarly, Gutierrez and Gesmundo (2023) state that this capacity that is learned in the process of growing up is highly important in terms of language acquisition because it enables people to acquire more complicated uses of language rather than simple grammar.

Communicative competence is not just knowledge of grammar and lexicon, according to modern research. According to Huseynova (2024), possessing grammar knowledge is not enough for learners to be successful communicators. As Malykhin et al. (2024) point out, students realize that they can apply their acquired knowledge but still have no communicative competence, which shows the actual need to have the experience of language application.

Today, communicative competence has been significantly tied to intercultural communication according to Lee et al. (2023), who state that the status of English as a global lingua franca has made cross-cultural communication all the more meaningful.

Dimension 3: Communicative Organization and Strategy Use

Communicative organization and strategy use refer to students' ability to organize ideas coherently and apply communication strategies when difficulties arise during interaction. According to Rahman (2017) as cited in Gutierrez and Gesmundo (2023), discourse competence deals with the proper use of cohesion and coherence in spoken and written formats. Halliday and Hasan (1976) as cited in Llaban and Protacio, also note that effective discourse organization leads to meaningful communication.

This aspect also consists of the strategies that are used by the learners to keep communicating despite their linguistic weaknesses. According to Llaban and Protacio (2025), those learners who use language more often, say they use paraphrasing, asking for clarifications

and non-verbal cues more frequently than others. Also, Rabab'ah (2016) as cited in Wang and Ahmad (2025) described success strategies in academic oral communication.

Another important point is using language appropriately in different situations. In their work Gutierrez and Gesmundo (2023), emphasize that even the students with a strong command of grammar still might face difficulties in the use of discourse and strategic competence.

Dimension 4: Self-Perceived Communicative Confidence

Self-perceived communicative confidence is seen as an important determinant of students' willingness to engage in speaking activities in English. According to De Wilde (2025), students who see themselves as possessing high communicative confidence often report higher levels of participation in second-language communication. Nevertheless, Malykhin et al. (2024) point out that even students with a good self-image regarding their communicative skills may not act sufficiently under the influence of grammatical or vocabulary problems. Issa (2018), cited in Chasi Hidalgo and Ichina Guangatal (2023), explains that reflective learning encourages students to examine their performance and recognize learning needs. Likewise, Brawns (2016), cited in Chasi Hidalgo and Ichina Guangatal (2023), associates reflective practices with students' perceptions of greater self-efficacy and awareness of their learning progress.

With metacognitive awareness, students can understand their language development reflectively. According to Teng and Wang (2022), cited in Fernández Cando et al. (2025), reflective thinking allows students to discover their positive attributes and pinpoint the areas that deserve some more practice. A quite similar phenomenon is described by Rubio and Thoms (2022), cited in Fernández Cando et al. (2025), who call experiential learning the approach that encourages students to reflect on their learning experiences and increase their understanding of their communicative abilities.

Capítulo III

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a convergent mixed-methods design to examine the process of strengthening communicative competence in English among teenagers through the use of interactive and student-centered approaches. The data gathered with quantitative methods gives a general sense of what students think about communication skills, being motivated to learn, and using interactive instructional techniques, while the data collected through qualitative methods provides an in-depth understanding of student perceptions and experiences with this form of instruction. Mixed methods are particularly useful in education research because they enable the researcher to study a phenomenon from multiple perspectives and create a wider-ranging analysis of how the learning process works (Karakoç Öztürk, 2024).

Research Approach

The research used an exploratory, descriptive, and interpretive approach. The purpose of the exploratory aspect was to identify trends, feelings, and experiences of individuals regarding how they develop their communicative skills instead of verifying pre-established hypotheses. The descriptive portion of the study allowed for a clearer picture to be produced of how students perceive the importance of both interactive and student-centered methods of learning English. The interpretive portion of the study sought to understand how students make sense of these experiences in their individual educational settings. This approach is particularly suitable for educational settings, as it stresses how people create meaning out of the real-life context of learning (Khalil & Alharbi, 2022). Furthermore, research conducted in digital learning environments suggests that students' previous experiences and familiarity with educational

technologies can influence the way they engage with learning activities and communicative tasks (Mekheimer, 2025).

Participants

The participants in this study were students from Bachillerato General Unificado (BGU) who were learning English as a subject in Unidad Educativa Jadán, a public educational institution in Ecuador. A total of 35 students, ranging in age from 14 to 17 years and enrolled from the first to the third year of BGU, participated in the quantitative phase of the research by completing the survey questionnaire. The sample was selected through non-probability convenience sampling. Five students who completed the survey participated in a semi-structured interview format to answer qualitative questions about their experience and reflect on the context of their responses to the survey. Students were selected based on their readiness to share their personal accounts regarding the research subject. Plenty of volunteers had positive views on AI tools used for data collection because they liked how the technology allowed for quick feedback and engaged them in the process of learning English. However, students also reported contextual challenges, including limited access to personal digital devices. Those who owned a device indicated that they were often distracted by social media while using AI applications for learning.

Instruments

Two primary instruments were used for data collection:

Quantitative Phase

A structured questionnaire composed of closed-ended questions was designed to collect quantitative and descriptive information regarding the strengthening of communicative competence in English for teenagers. The instrument consisted of two sections. The first section

included seven general questions intended to contextualize participants' demographic and educational information. The second section contained fourteen items directly related to the variables under investigation.

Of these fourteen items, six items corresponded to the independent variable, Interactive and Student-Centered Approaches. Items seven to ten examined the dependent variable, based on the perception that students have of communicative ability, whereas items eleven to fourteen dealt with students' motivation toward learning activities in English.

Within the questionnaire, participants recorded their options via a five-point Likert system, where they rated their agreement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), passing through the standard options of disagree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), and agree (4).

This allowed for degrees of agreement to be expressed by all participants based on their views towards Communicative Competency, Motivation, and Classroom Interaction.

The validity of this instrument's content was established by having two experts assess the relevance, clarity, consistency, and appropriateness of wording for each item based on the specified research objectives and variables. In addition, the reliability of the Questionnaire Instrument is demonstrated by the Cronbach's Alpha of $\alpha = .836$. Therefore, this instrument can be used as a reliable source of data collection.

Qualitative Phase

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five previously surveyed students. The purpose of these interviews was to obtain a richer and more detailed understanding of the perceptions, experiences, and attitudes identified during the quantitative phase of the study.

The interviews were open-ended in nature and addressed students' personal experiences with interactive and student-centered teaching methodology, students' perceptions regarding communicative competency development, and the level of motivation influencing students' participation in activities that facilitate learning English language skills. Interviews were conducted according to participants' availability and preferences.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative survey data to identify trends and general perceptions expressed by participants. By determining frequency and percentage distributions, patterns regarding communicative competence, motivation, and interactive learning strategies were able to be established from students' responses. Quantitative findings were organized in spreadsheets to facilitate the visualization of tendencies and relationships among variables (Karakoç Öztürk, 2024).

For qualitative data collected, since a convergent research design was used, direct quotes were extracted from the interviews with the participants in this study, and the data obtained from the quantitative component were then analyzed in greater depth, which enriched the information gathered. This approach provided researchers with a structured and methodical way to analyze students' experiences and discover shared perceptions related to the development of communicative competence (Berenshtein et al., 2023).

Ethical Considerations

This study followed established ethical guidelines for educational research. All participants received complete information about the purpose of conducting the study, the methods used, and their rights as participants in this research project, including their rights to withdraw at any point in time with no negative repercussions. Additionally, participation was

voluntary and conducted by way of informed consent, and to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, participants' names were replaced by codes, and the recording and transcript of the interview were renamed and securely stored. To protect their anonymity, all identifying information will be excluded from the final report of this study in an effort to safeguard the rights of the participants and ensure the research was conducted ethically through this research study.

Chapter IV

Analysis and Discussion of Results

This section reports the findings of the mixed-methods study to provide a comprehensive understanding of how interactive and student-centered approaches contribute to strengthening communicative competence in English for teenagers. The quantitative results obtained from the perception survey are complemented by qualitative evidence from semi-structured interviews, enabling a more detailed interpretation of students' experiences, perceptions, and learning processes.

The presentation of the findings follows the variables and dimensions established in the research framework. The independent variable, interactive and student-centered approaches, is examined through the dimensions of interactive classroom practices and digital and playful support. The dependent variable, English communicative competence, is analyzed through communicative organization and strategy use and self-perceived communicative confidence. Throughout this chapter, the statistical findings are supported by interview excerpts to provide a richer explanation of the patterns identified in students' perceptions and communicative development.

Table 1

Students' Levels of Agreement on Interactive Classroom Practices

Question	Level of agreement									
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Q1	1	2.9	2	5.7	10	28.6	19	54.3	3	8.6
Q2	1	2.9	5	14.3	14	40	12	34.3	3	8.6
Q3	1	2.9	1	2.9	9	25.7	21	60	3	8.6

Analysis

Table 1 presents the results for the Interactive Classroom Practices dimension. Overall, students reported positive perceptions toward interactive classroom activities. Over half the respondents agreed that they enjoy interacting with their peers through games or role-play (Q1, 54.3%), while the percentage of those who remained neutral is 28.6%. This finding can be further illustrated by the statement made by Student 3: *“I participate much more this way than when we just listen to the lecture”* (Student 3, Interview Q1). An even larger number of students (34.3%) agreed that they like tasks related to real-life situations (Q2), but this item also had the largest share of neutral responses (40.0%), which means that the students could have different preferences. Nevertheless, interview responses highlighted the collaborative value of these activities, as Student 4 explained, *“we share ideas, work as a team, and actively participate”* (Student 4, Interview Q2). The highest level of agreement was observed for the motivational value of game-like activities (Q3), with 60.0% of students agreeing and 8.6% strongly agreeing that points, challenges, and similar activities increased their motivation to learn English. This perception was reinforced by Student 1, who stated, *“I like overcoming challenges and earning rewards”* (Student 1, Interview Q3). Thus these results prove that both quantitative and qualitative data suggest that interactive teaching practices, especially those that are related to the gamification of the studying process, are effective for the stimulation of active engagement.

Discussion

The fact that 54.3% of respondents indicated their readiness to use games and role-plays in practice corresponds to the findings of Aliazas and Velasco (2023), who claim that these communicative practices promote continuous interaction and effective language acquisition. On the other hand, a high percentage of neutrality toward real-life topics (40.0%) may contradict the

opinion of Samaranos and Biol Jr. (2024), who believe these tasks are important for real-life practice while young people have difficulties because of a lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes.

The strong motivational impact of gamification (68.6%) is ratified by Andino et al. (2025), who maintain that tools like Kahoot and Duolingo foster autonomy and engagement through immersive environments. This trend is confirmed by Campoverde Lopez et al. (2026), who indicate the positive impact of a game-related environment on increasing fluency and participation because of lower anxiety levels. Thus, it can be concluded that interactive digital strategies play a key role in an innovative approach to teaching.

Table 2

Students' Levels of Agreement on Digital and Playful Support

Question	Level of agreement									
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Q4	0	0	0	0	10	28.6	20	57.1	5	14.3
Q5	1	2.9	1	2.9	13	37.1	17	48.6	3	8.6
Q6	0	0	1	2.9	7	20	17	48.6	10	28.6
Q14	0	0	1	2.9	7	20	23	65.7	4	11.4

Analysis

Within the Digital and Playful Support dimension, students demonstrated a generally positive attitude toward the incorporation of technology into English learning. Most participants agreed that they enjoy using digital materials such as apps and videos during English lessons (Q4, 57.1%), while 14.3% strongly agreed. This positive perception was echoed by Student 5, who commented, “*Apps let me practice every day and correct my mistakes*” (Student 5,

Interview Q4). The usefulness of mobile apps and websites for independent English practice also received favorable responses (Q5, 48.6%), although 37.1% of students remained neutral.

Supporting this finding, Student 1 explained, *“I can correct my mistakes immediately and continue practicing”* (Student 1, Interview Q4). Likewise, almost half of the participants agreed that they learn better when teachers incorporate digital tools into classroom instruction (Q6, 48.6%), and 28.6% strongly agreed. The highest level of agreement was recorded for students' willingness to continue using digital tools to improve their communicative competence (Q14, 65.7%), reflecting strong acceptance of technology as a resource for language learning. These findings are further reinforced by students' perceptions of digital activities in authentic communication, as Student 2 noted, *“I've learned to speak more naturally and confidently with others”* (Student 2, Interview Q5), highlighting the perceived contribution of technology to communicative development.

Discussion

The enjoyment of digital materials and the perception of enhanced learning through technology (77.2%) are ratified by Andino et al. (2025), who assert that mobile learning generates interactive environments that extend practice beyond the classroom while increasing intrinsic motivation. Likewise, Fauzi and Ridwan (2025) confirm these results by stating that applying digital instruments in communicative activities increases the engagement of students immensely and provides important possibilities for individual feedback. The findings suggest that technology is viewed as a significant driving force for improving speech production.

About independent practice and the willingness to continue using digital tools (65.7%), Campoverde Lopez et al. (2026) validate this positive trend by highlighting that gamified mobile platforms foster autonomous and highly meaningful learning processes for adolescent students.

For their part, Llaban and Protacio (2025) reinforce these data by demonstrating a strong positive relationship between investment in technological tools and the achievement of higher levels of communicative proficiency.

Table 3

Students' Levels of Agreement on Communicative Organization and Strategy Use

Question	Level of agreement									
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Q7	2	5.7	2	5.7	20	57.1	10	28.6	1	2.9
Q8	0	0	5	14.3	22	62.9	6	17.5	2	5.7
Q9	0	0	8	22.9	19	54.3	8	22.9	0	0

Analysis

Regarding the Communicative Organization and Strategy Use dimension, students' responses reflected more cautious perceptions than those observed in the previous dimension, with neutral responses predominating across all items. More than half of the participants selected the neutral option when asked whether they could adapt their English to different formal and informal situations (Q7, 57.1%), while 28.6% agreed with this statement. Although many students remained undecided, interview responses suggested that digital resources supported communication in different contexts. As Student 4 explained, *“I have learned to communicate in different social and everyday situations”* (Student 4, Interview Q5). A similar pattern emerged for organizing and connecting ideas in spoken or written English (Q8), where 62.9% of students remained neutral and only 17.5% agreed. This perception was supported by Student 3, who stated, *“I can express my ideas better”* (Student 3, Interview Q6). Likewise, over half of the participants expressed neutral perceptions regarding their use of communication strategies to

maintain conversations when they forgot a word (Q9, 54.3%), whereas 22.9% agreed. Nevertheless, students described using different strategies to overcome communication difficulties. For instance, Student 5 commented, *“I try to explain the idea using other words”* (Student 5, Interview Q7). Taken together, these findings suggest that although students recognized the usefulness of organizational and communication strategies, they were more cautious when evaluating their own ability to apply them consistently.

Discussion

The predominance of neutral responses regarding situational adaptation (57.1%) and discourse organization (62.9%) ratifies the findings of Gutierrez and Gesmundo (2023), who noted that learners often maintain basic levels in these dimensions despite their advancements in grammar. This uncertainty is further supported by Huseynova (2024), who argues that the acquisition of grammatical structures alone does not ensure the adequate use of language for real communication purposes. These results suggest that students still require significant teacher mediation to bridge the gap between structural knowledge and functional interaction.

Concerning the use of communication strategies (54.3% neutral), these findings contrast with Llaban and Protacio (2025), whose study showed that strategic competence was actually a strong area for students with high learning investment. However, the overall hesitation in these complex skills compared to technology-supported practices is consistent with Andino et al. (2025), who highlight that digital tools create low-anxiety environments for practice. This suggests that without the "shield" of technology, students are more exposed and unsure about their abilities to talk and think effectively.

Table 4*Students' Levels of Agreement on Self-Perceived Communicative Confidence*

Question	Level of agreement									
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Q10	0	0	4	11.4	20	57.1	9	25.7	2	5.7
Q11	1	2.9	3	8.6	13	37.1	16	45.7	2	5.7
Q12	0	0	2	5.7	17	48.6	15	42.9	1	2.9
Q13	0	0	6	17.1	16	45.7	10	28.6	3	8.6

Analysis

Responses related to the Self-Perceived Communicative Confidence dimension revealed generally positive perceptions, although neutral responses remained prominent in several items. More than half of the participants expressed a neutral view regarding the overall improvement in the complexity of English-language communication abilities due to the activities (Q10, 57.1%), while 25.7% agreed. Even so, interview responses reflected perceived progress, as Student 5 stated, *“I feel more confident speaking English now”* (Student 5, Interview Q8). In contrast, students expressed more favorable views about the role of digital and playful activities in increasing their confidence and reducing nervousness (Q11), with 45.7% agreeing and 37.1% remaining neutral. This perception was reinforced by Student 3, who commented, *“I am not so worried about making mistakes anymore”* (Student 3, Interview Q8). A similar trend was observed in students’ reflections on their own learning progress (Q12), where 42.9% agreed despite 48.6% selecting the neutral option. Supporting this finding, Student 2 explained, *“They allow me to learn new vocabulary”* (Student 2, Interview Q8). Finally, almost half of the participants reported neutral responses regarding setting personal goals to improve their

vocabulary and speaking skills (Q13, 45.7%), whereas 28.6% agreed. Although students were more cautious in evaluating this aspect, Student 1 highlighted the value of independent practice, noting, *“I can practice at my own pace”* (Student 1, Interview Q8). In general, it could be said that the results of these activities increased students’ confidence and language skills, along with the improvement which wasn’t noticed by the participants themselves.

Discussion

The positive perception toward digital and playful activities in boosting confidence (45.7%) is ratified by Andino et al. (2025), who emphasize that mobile applications foster low-anxiety interactive environments that encourage autonomous practice and increase students' intrinsic motivation. This trend is supported by Campoverde Lopez et al. (2026), whose research proves that gamified elements are highly effective in bringing about the engagement of students and lessening the negative experience or “fear of making mistakes” connected with oral communication. Therefore, it can be said that technology plays the role of psychological assistance in communication processes for teenagers.

On the contrary, the predominant neutrality regarding the overall progress (57.1%) and personal goal setting (45.7%) reflects the problems discussed by Malykhin et al. (2024), who argue that students experience the gap between their perceived competencies and real-life functional skills, which makes it difficult for them to carry out self-assessment. This uncertainty is further explained by De Wilde (2025), who notes that L2 speaking development is a non-linear process that involves significant individual variation, which may prevent students from perceiving steady or clear progress during early instruction. Consequently, while digital tools build immediate confidence, students still require guided teacher mediation to internalize their progress and set concrete linguistic objectives.

Chapter V

Conclusions

Based on the findings obtained in this research, the following conclusions were drawn.

The findings provided the answer to the research question in showing that adolescent students mostly demonstrated positive impressions and good motivation regarding the methods that were used in the process of teaching English communication. It was generally shown in the quantitative and qualitative analysis that the participants appreciated interactive activities in the classroom and the use of digital and fun tools in the learning process. The overall pattern of quantitative and qualitative evidence showed that participants valued interactive classroom practices and the integration of digital and playful resources as engaging learning experiences that encouraged participation, collaboration, and opportunities to communicate in English. However, students reported more negative views in this regard concerning their abilities to structure ideas, adjust language depending on the context, and use communication techniques; their responses in these categories were mostly neutral. Similarly, although students commonly described increased confidence and greater willingness to participate in English activities, they remained more reserved when evaluating their own communicative progress and personal goal setting. Taken together, these findings suggest that participants perceived interactive and student-centered approaches positively while recognizing different levels of confidence across the various components of communicative competence.

Regarding the general objective, which sought to analyze teenagers' perceptions regarding the improvement of English communicative competence through interactive and student-centered approaches in an Ecuadorian educational context, the integrated findings identified generally favorable perceptions toward these instructional practices. The results of

survey responses reflected students' positive perceptions of learning through cooperation, in-class interaction, the use of games, and technology. The information received from interviews elaborated the results further by providing the students' stories of involvement in the learning process, teamwork, and a high level of engagement during English classes. Students usually connect this learning experience with the possibilities of using the language in practice and participating in the lessons more confidently. At the same time, both sources of evidence indicated that perceptions related to communicative organization and self-assessment were more moderate, suggesting that students distinguished between enjoying these learning experiences and feeling fully confident about their own communicative abilities.

Regarding the first specific objective, which aimed to identify students' levels of motivation and their initial perceptions regarding the use of interactive digital activities, the findings indicated that students were highly motivated by interactive and technology-supported learning experiences. Gamified activities, collaborative tasks, and digital resources were perceived as enjoyable and engaging, while immediate feedback and authentic learning opportunities encouraged active participation and sustained interest in English learning.

When it came to the second specific objective, which sought to explore students' personal experiences and opinions about the influence of digital activities on their perceived development, the findings revealed that greater confidence in communication, independent learning, and real use of language were associated with digital activities. Still, students were quite careful when assessing their results regarding communicative skills, skills such as organizing thoughts and ideas, changing language for different contexts, and using communication strategies. These experiences complemented the survey findings, which showed generally positive perceptions of communicative confidence while also revealing considerable neutrality regarding communicative

organization, strategic language use, and personal progress. In general, it can be said that the results indicate that students appreciate the use of both interactive and digital activities in their English classes, although students have different understandings of how their own communicative competence has improved.

Recommendations

Drawing on the conclusions of this research, the following recommendations are offered to support educational practice and future research.

Future research could extend the present study by adopting an applicative approach, such as a quasi-experimental or experimental design, to examine students' English communicative competence before and after the implementation of interactive and student-centered approaches. The incorporation of a pre-test and post-test, together with qualitative evidence, would provide a broader understanding of students' learning experiences and complement the descriptive findings reported in this study.

Teachers are recommended to include interactive, student-centered, and game like exercises on a regular basis into their lessons of English to facilitate learners' communication, cooperation, and involvement. It must also be mentioned that the actual practice that students have will allow them to learn the methods of organizing their thoughts during their various communicative processes.

Schools should promote the pedagogical integration of digital resources by facilitating access to educational applications, multimedia materials, and online learning platforms that support English instruction. Moreover, possible in-service training related to using interactive teaching and innovative technology and approaches can bring more benefits for the teachers.

Students are invited to continue exploring digital resources beyond the classroom as a complement to their English learning experiences. The regular utilization of educational applications, online materials, and videos, as well as communication instruments, which include techniques such as paraphrasing, self-correction, and reflective learning, will lead to better students' understanding of their communication process.

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Appendices