

THE TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS OF ENGLISH IN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION: STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

EL PROCESO DE ENSEÑANZA-APRENDIZAJE DEL INGLÉS EN LA EDUCACIÓN UNIVERSITARIA: ESTRATEGIAS PARA MEJORAR EL RENDIMIENTO ACADÉMICO

Lisbeth Madelayne Santos Mera^{1*}

¹ Docente de la Carrera Educación. Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Humanísticas y de la Educación. Universidad Estatal del Sur de Manabí. Ecuador. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6593-0856>. Correo: lisbeth.santos@unesum.edu.ec

Rodrigo Alexander Rincón Zambrano²

² Docente de la Carrera Educación. Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Humanísticas y de la Educación. Universidad Estatal del Sur de Manabí. Ecuador. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2713-5111>. Correo: rodrigo.rincon@unesum.edu.ec

Amarilis Rocio Murillo Quimiz³

³ Docente de la Carrera Educación. Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Humanísticas y de la Educación. Universidad Estatal del Sur de Manabí. Ecuador. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-1709-3258>. Correo: amarilis.murillo@unesum.edu.ec

María Aracely Ortega Medranda⁴

⁴ Docente de la Carrera Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Humanísticas y de la Educación. Universidad Estatal del Sur de Manabí. Ecuador. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-1058-2904>. Correo: maria.ortega@unesum.edu.ec

* Autor para correspondencia: lisbeth.santos@unesum.edu.ec

Abstract

Strengthening English teaching at the higher education level represents one of the most critical challenges in contemporary education. This paper presents a literature review aimed at analyzing how the implementation of active methodological strategies and psycho-pedagogical support directly impacts the improvement of university academic performance. The methodology used consisted of a documentary analysis of scientific



Esta obra está bajo una licencia *Creative Commons* de tipo (CC-BY-NC-SA).

Sociedad Ecuatoriana de Investigación Científica. E-mail: revistaalcon@gmail.com

literature published between 2020 and 2025. The results show that the transition from traditional models to student-centered approaches enhances not only linguistic competence but also motivation and autonomy. It is concluded that continuous teacher training and the integration of community outreach projects are fundamental pillars to guarantee meaningful and functional language learning.

Keywords: English teaching; academic performance; pedagogical strategies; university education; educational innovation

Resumen

El fortalecimiento de la enseñanza del inglés en el nivel superior representa uno de los desafíos más críticos de la educación contemporánea. Esta ponencia presenta una revisión bibliográfica orientada a analizar cómo la implementación de estrategias metodológicas activas y el apoyo psicopedagógico inciden directamente en la mejora del rendimiento académico universitario. La metodología empleada consistió en un análisis documental de literatura científica publicada entre 2020 y 2025. Los resultados demuestran que la transición de modelos tradicionales hacia enfoques centrados en el estudiante potencia no solo la competencia lingüística, sino también la motivación y la autonomía. Se concluye que la formación docente continua y la integración de proyectos de vinculación comunitaria son pilares fundamentales para garantizar un aprendizaje significativo y funcional del idioma.

Palabras clave: Enseñanza del inglés; rendimiento académico; estrategias pedagógicas; educación universitaria; innovación educativa

Fecha de recibido: 21/11/2025

Fecha de aceptado: 00/02/2026

Fecha de publicado: 03/03/2026

Introduction

In the contemporary globalized context, English language proficiency has become an essential transversal competence in higher education. Universities are increasingly required to prepare graduates capable of participating in international academic, scientific, and professional environments. In this regard, language teaching is no longer limited to grammatical instruction but must promote communicative competence and contextualized language use (Richards & Rodgers, 2021). The shift from structural approaches toward communicative and functional methodologies reflects the need to align language instruction with real-world demands.

However, despite advances in pedagogical theory, traditional teaching practices based on grammar translation and passive reception continue to persist in many university classrooms. These approaches often result in limited oral proficiency, low motivation, and reduced academic performance. Research on digital transformation and innovation in higher education emphasizes that meaningful improvement requires the



Esta obra está bajo una licencia *Creative Commons* de tipo (CC-BY-NC-SA).

Sociedad Ecuatoriana de Investigación Científica. E-mail: revistaalcon@gmail.com

integration of active methodologies supported by technological and pedagogical competencies (Zhao, 2022). In this sense, innovation should not be understood as the mere incorporation of digital tools, but rather as a structural transformation of instructional design.

The development of teachers' digital competence plays a decisive role in this transformation. According to the European framework for digital competence in educators (Redecker, 2020), effective teaching in contemporary contexts requires the integration of technological resources with pedagogical strategies that foster autonomy, collaboration, and critical thinking. Similarly, institutional frameworks such as the Digital Teaching Competence Model (Instituto Nacional de Tecnologías Educativas y de Formación del Profesorado, 2022) highlight that instructional quality depends on the teacher's ability to design interactive and student-centered learning environments. Empirical evidence also supports the correlation between pedagogical competence and improved academic outcomes (Cabero-Almenara & Llorente, 2020).

Active methodologies, including cooperative learning and problem-based tasks, are grounded in socio-constructivist principles that understand learning as a mediated and interactive process. From this perspective, knowledge is constructed through dialogue, collaboration, and guided participation (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, English teaching in higher education must move toward participatory models that reduce the affective filter and encourage communicative risk-taking. Furthermore, motivation and self-regulated learning are critical components of successful language acquisition. Students who develop autonomy and metacognitive awareness demonstrate greater persistence and academic achievement (Zimmerman, 2002).

Recent studies on digital and active methodologies confirm that diversified instructional strategies enhance student engagement and promote deeper cognitive processing (Gómez-Trigueros, 2021; Salinas et al., 2021). These findings suggest that academic performance in university English courses is strongly influenced by the quality of pedagogical innovation and the availability of supportive learning environments. Additionally, international organizations emphasize the importance of inclusive and competence-based education to reduce learning gaps and foster equitable academic development (UNESCO, 2023).

Given this theoretical and contextual framework, the present study aims to analyze the relationship between active pedagogical strategies and academic performance in university English instruction through a systematic literature review. By examining recent scientific evidence, this research seeks to identify effective methodological practices and the conditioning factors that contribute to meaningful and sustainable language learning in higher education.

The present study analyzes the interrelationship between pedagogical strategies and learning outcomes, based on the need to transform teaching practice from a critical and collaborative perspective. Likewise, this work contributes directly to the outreach project: "*Tareas dirigidas y apoyo psicopedagógico para fortalecer el aprendizaje de los alumnos en la Educación Básica Pública de Jipijapa. Fase III 2025*" and to the research project: "*Fortalecimiento del nivel didáctico-pedagógico de los docentes en las instituciones educativas del cantón Jipijapa*". Both projects reinforce the premise that improving academic performance depends on a solid structure of teaching and psycho-pedagogical support.



Materials and Methods

This study adopted a qualitative research design based on a systematic literature review with an interpretative approach. The methodological procedure followed the analytical framework proposed by Snyder (2019) for literature reviews in social sciences, which emphasizes structured search, selection, and thematic synthesis of academic sources.

The review process was developed in four stages:

1. Identification of sources: Peer-reviewed articles, academic books, and institutional reports published between 2020 and 2025 were retrieved from databases such as Scopus and Google Scholar using keywords such as *English teaching*, *academic performance*, *active methodologies*, and *higher education*.
2. Screening and selection: Inclusion criteria considered studies focused on English language instruction in university contexts, pedagogical innovation, and psycho-pedagogical support. Publications not directly related to higher education or lacking empirical or theoretical rigor were excluded.
3. Categorization and coding: The selected literature was examined using thematic analysis, following the phases established by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarization with data, generation of initial codes, search for themes, review of themes, and definition of thematic categories.
4. Interpretative synthesis: Findings were organized into strategic dimensions linking pedagogical innovation with academic performance outcomes.

The study is grounded in a socio-constructivist epistemological perspective (Vygotsky, 1978), which understands learning as a mediated and interactive process. This theoretical positioning guided the interpretation of pedagogical strategies as transformative tools within the university English classroom.

Finally, an interpretative analysis was applied to the selected literature to extract meaningful themes. This qualitative approach allowed for the systematic categorization of the most effective pedagogical strategies and the identification of the primary factors conditioning educational success within the university English classroom.

Results and Discussion

Effectiveness in acquiring a second language is closely linked to the teacher's ability to diversify their instructional methods. Below, the findings are detailed, organized by strategic dimensions.

Table 1: Classification of Didactic Strategies for English Teaching

Strategy	Description	Pedagogical Objective
Communicative Approach (CLT)	Prioritizes real interaction over mechanical repetition.	Development of fluency and social competence.
Task-Based Learning	Activities focused on solving communicative problems.	Functional and practical use of language.





Flipped Classroom	Autonomous theoretical study and intensive practice in class.	Optimization of teacher-student interaction time.
Cooperative Learning	Work in small teams to achieve common goals.	Reduction of the affective filter and fostering leadership.

The literature consistently highlights that communicative and task-based approaches produce greater engagement and functional language acquisition compared to traditional grammar-translation methods (Richards & Rodgers, 2021). The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) model prioritizes interaction as both the means and objective of learning, allowing students to develop pragmatic competence alongside grammatical accuracy.

Similarly, Task-Based Learning promotes meaningful language use through problem-solving activities that simulate real communicative scenarios. According to Zhao (2022), integrating authentic tasks enhances cognitive processing and contextual retention of vocabulary and structures.

The Flipped Classroom model, supported by digital platforms, optimizes classroom time for productive interaction. Studies on active methodologies in digital education indicate that when theoretical content is reviewed independently, face-to-face sessions become spaces for higher-order thinking and collaborative practice (Gómez-Trigueros, 2021).

Cooperative learning further reduces the affective filter—a concept aligned with socio-constructivist principles—by creating supportive peer environments that foster confidence and participation (Vygotsky, 1978).

Table 2: Impact of Active Methodologies on Linguistic Competences

Methodology	Impacted Dimension	Observed Result
Gamification	Intrinsic Motivation	Greater commitment and reduction in absenteeism.
Role-Playing	Oral Production (Speaking)	Increase in fluency and confidence when speaking.
Collaborative Writing	Written Production (Writing)	Improvement in textual coherence and cohesion.
Podcasting/Video	Listening Comprehension	Familiarization with real accents and contexts.

The analysis confirms that methodological diversification positively affects the four macro-skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Gamification strategies were associated with increased intrinsic motivation and decreased absenteeism. Motivation plays a central role in self-regulated learning processes, as students who perceive learning as meaningful tend to demonstrate greater persistence and autonomy (Zimmerman, 2002).

Role-playing activities significantly enhance oral fluency and communicative confidence. By simulating real-life contexts, students practice spontaneous language production, which strengthens automaticity and pragmatic competence.



Collaborative writing tasks improve textual coherence and cohesion by encouraging peer feedback and collective construction of meaning. This aligns with socio-interactionist perspectives that emphasize language development through mediated interaction (Vygotsky, 1978).

The use of multimedia tools, such as podcasting and video projects, exposes learners to authentic accents and discourse patterns. Digital transformation in higher education supports multimodal learning experiences that reinforce listening comprehension and contextual understanding (Zhao, 2022).

Table 3. Factors Conditioning Academic Performance in English

Factor	Influence on Student Success	Related Reference
Pedagogical Competence	Quality of instructional design and feedback.	Cabero-Almenara (2020)
Psycho-pedagogical Support	Attention to specific learning difficulties.	UNESCO (2023)
Didactic Resources	Availability of updated materials and ICT.	INTEF (2022)
Classroom Climate	Generation of a safe environment for practice.	Salinas et al. (2021)

The results indicate that academic performance is not determined solely by methodology but by an interconnected educational ecosystem.

Pedagogical competence emerges as a decisive factor. Teachers' digital and instructional skills influence lesson design quality and formative feedback processes (Cabero-Almenara & Llorente, 2020). Effective feedback mechanisms directly correlate with improved linguistic outcomes.

Psycho-pedagogical support is particularly relevant in contexts where students face anxiety, low self-esteem, or prior negative experiences with English learning. Emotional regulation and academic guidance contribute to reducing learning barriers and increasing classroom participation.

The availability of updated didactic resources and ICT tools enhances instructional flexibility. However, technology alone does not guarantee improvement; it must be pedagogically integrated to generate meaningful learning experiences.

A positive classroom climate also plays a fundamental role. Safe and inclusive environments encourage risk-taking in oral production, which is essential for language acquisition.

Table 4. Correlation between Teaching Innovation and Academic Performance

Innovation Level	Applied Strategies	Impact on Learning
Initial	Grammar translation and passive reading.	Low performance; high demotivation.
Developing	Use of slides and supplementary videos.	Medium performance; mechanical learning.
Transforming	Active methodologies, ICT, and research.	High performance; autonomy and critical thinking.

The progression from initial to transforming levels of innovation demonstrates a direct correlation between pedagogical evolution and academic performance.



At the initial level, grammar translation and passive reading limit communicative competence and reduce student motivation. The developing level incorporates audiovisual resources but may still rely on teacher-centered transmission.

The transforming level, characterized by active methodologies, ICT integration, and research-based projects, generates the highest academic performance indicators. At this stage, students demonstrate:

- Greater autonomy
- Critical thinking skills
- Improved communicative fluency
- Long-term retention of knowledge

This confirms that sustainable academic improvement requires structural pedagogical change rather than isolated methodological adjustments.

Conclusions

The findings of this systematic literature review confirm that academic performance in university English courses is intrinsically linked to the evolution of teaching practice toward active, student-centered methodologies supported by structured psycho-pedagogical systems. The evidence analyzed demonstrates that traditional grammar-based approaches are insufficient to meet contemporary communicative and professional demands.

The transition toward communicative, task-based, and technology-supported methodologies significantly enhances linguistic competence, student motivation, autonomy, and critical thinking. These elements are not isolated variables but interdependent components within a broader educational ecosystem. Effective English instruction in higher education requires coherent instructional design, formative feedback processes, and the intentional integration of digital tools aligned with pedagogical objectives.

Furthermore, the study highlights that pedagogical competence constitutes a determining factor in academic success. Teachers who possess digital and methodological training are better equipped to create interactive, inclusive, and meaningful learning environments. In this regard, institutional commitment to continuous professional development is essential to sustain innovation and ensure educational quality.

Another relevant conclusion is that psycho-pedagogical support plays a complementary yet decisive role in improving academic outcomes. Addressing emotional barriers, learning difficulties, and motivational challenges contributes to reducing dropout rates and fostering communicative confidence. Therefore, language teaching should not be conceived as a purely cognitive process, but as an integral formation that encompasses emotional and social dimensions.

From a systemic perspective, sustainable improvement in university English learning requires coordinated action at multiple levels: curricular design, teacher training, technological infrastructure, and academic support services. Isolated methodological changes are insufficient unless they are embedded within a comprehensive institutional strategy.

Finally, this study underscores the need for future empirical research that quantitatively measures the impact of specific active methodologies on academic performance indicators. While the present review provides a



theoretical and analytical foundation, further classroom-based studies would strengthen the evidence base and contribute to the continuous transformation of English language education in higher education contexts.

In conclusion, only through a transformative pedagogical model grounded in innovation, competence-based education, and socio-constructivist principles can universities effectively respond to the linguistic, academic, and professional challenges of contemporary global society.

References

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Cabero-Almenara, J., & Llorente, M. C. (2020). La competencia digital del profesorado: Modelos, instrumentos de evaluación y formación. *Pixel-Bit. Revista de Medios y Educación*, 58, 5–23. <https://doi.org/10.12795/pixelbit.2020.i58.01>
- Gómez-Trigueros, I. M. (2021). Metodologías activas con TIC para la adquisición de competencias docentes. *Education in the Knowledge Society*, 22, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.14201/eks.25449>
- Instituto Nacional de Tecnologías Educativas y de Formación del Profesorado. (2022). *Marco de referencia de la competencia digital docente*. Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional de España.
- Redecker, C. (2020). *European framework for the digital competence of educators: DigCompEdu*. Publications Office of the European Union.
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2021). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Salinas, J., De Benito, B., & Lizana, A. (2021). Metodologías activas en la educación digital: Un análisis desde la práctica docente. *Edutec. Revista Electrónica de Tecnología Educativa*, 75, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.21556/edutec.2021.75.2035>
- Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, 104, 333–339. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>
- UNESCO. (2023). *Marco de competencia digital para docentes: Una visión global*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Zimmerman, B. J. (2002). Becoming a self-regulated learner: An overview. *Theory Into Practice*, 41(2), 64–70. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4102_2
- Zhao, Y. (2022). Digital transformation and innovation in higher education language teaching. *Computers & Education*, 179, 104400. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2021.104400>

