



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### ACTIVE METHODS IN THE TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AT THE PACIFIC NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

<sup>1,\*</sup>Johanna Guadalupe Vélez Cedeño, <sup>2</sup>Roberto Manuel Torres Rodríguez, <sup>1</sup>Luis Fernando Guerra Moreira, <sup>1</sup>María Angélica Rivadeneira Zambrano, <sup>1</sup>María Soledad Williams Zambrano

<sup>1</sup>Master in English Language Teaching, Ecuador, Bachelor of Science in Education Specialization English, UTM Ecuador, University Technique of Manabí, University lecturer, ULEAM Ecuador

<sup>2</sup>Doctor of Science Technique, Cuba, University Lecturer Faculty of Engineering in Tourism, University of Holguin, Cuba

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#### ABSTRACT

Using the active method in the second language learning process promotes the achievement of better results. The approach deals with the use of these methods in the Pacific National High School. We used investigation, observation, interviews and surveys to determine how often active method applications in English teaching at the School were used for the development of re-search and observation. The results showed low domain language achievement because the English Language teacher did not apply these methods, negatively influencing student motivation and outcomes in classes. The information obtained was the basis for the development strategies we recommended to be used for active learning in the English classroom.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning foreign languages today is a social need and a priority for multiple age groups, and for personal, academic, scientific, professional, and cultural uses, among others. In this context appears English, the most used language for the dissemination of scientific and technical information through magazines, books and the Internet. It is also the official language of various events held around the world (Valdés Linares *et al.*, 2010). Language study serves to teach the values and culture of other people. That is why, as part of cultural and linguistic development, foreign language study is included in different levels of education in many countries (Ibidem). Because of its importance, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 1998) considers learning a foreign language a consecrated right, since it represents the fundamental element of the formation of citizens of countries and of the world. Communicative competence in English is valued as an instrument of exchange, not only professionally but also in cultural matters of relevance

*\*Corresponding author: Johanna Guadalupe Vélez Cedeño, Master in English Language Teaching, Ecuador, Bachelor of Science in Education Specialization English, UTM Ecuador, University Technique of Manabí, University lecturer, ULEAM Ecuador.*

in the integral formation of the individual. This competence is not limited to the mastery of grammatical rules, but also implies the ability to know how and when to use knowledge, that is, to know, to know and to know. (Pibaque Pionce and others, 2015). And considering that language constitutes a form of expression of thought and an irreplaceable instrument for communication between human beings, it is the means of sharing knowledge, information and experiences. It is a support that creates, develops and consolidates social relations. (Ibidem). The fundamental role played by the communicative acquisition competences in the English language is evident for the professional development of the student, his social relations and his integral formation. It serves as support for cultural, academic, and professional exchange. The process of teaching this language has gone through different transformations over the years, which can be seen in the innumerable resources and methodologies used to optimize student learning. Continuing this trend, the National Government of Ecuador has increased efforts to achieve a method of language teaching in accordance with the new demands of the world today (Ministry of Education Ecuador, 2014). In the constant search for adequate levels of understanding, learning, and effective use of language instruction, methods, designs, activities, and procedures have been subject to constant changes as far as their pedagogical

approaches are concerned, according to the needs, requirements and conceptions of the teaching-learning process of each epoch. According to Castillo Morales and Benítez Menéndez (2008), in language teaching it is necessary to work on the student's voluntary and involuntary memory, his imagination and his will. To this end the student must feel obliged to memorize words and phrases and sentences and keep them in memory to use in the various activities that it performs. You also have to activate your imagination to make the language practice simulate a natural context, because you have to keep in mind that your students are learning the language outside the language environment. Therefore, make them participate in the creation of situations and use the language as if they were authentic.

In recent years there has been a proliferation of schools and institutes dedicated to the teaching of the English language, but the strategies and techniques used differ from the purposes of the new pedagogical proposals, which raise the importance of promoting learning environments that are grounded in the social practice of language. (Miramontes Arteaga, 2015). Whatever the conditions, the role assumed by the teacher in the teaching-learning process is of great importance. He or she must openly convey greater confidence and motivation as well as promote communication and values that achieve success in the process of teaching-learning. (Castillo Morales and Benítez Menéndez, 2008, Miramontes Arteaga, 2015). Ayala and Luzón (2013), in their analysis of recent publications, emphasize that the teacher is the most important element of the education system, although the strategies for the training of high quality teachers to meet current demands are questioned. The search for new ways and procedures to achieve better results in teaching a second language and in particular English is still a current problem. Today the student actively participates as the protagonist of his own learning, and the teacher facilitates the student's mastery of learning tools, methods and strategies that are decisive in achieving the objectives. Learning is characterized as a cognitive and motivational process. While learning, which refers to acquiring skills, knowledge, strategies, and skills, is essential, it is also necessary to want to do it, to have the disposition, the intention and the sufficient desire. The most outstanding specialists in this subject think that, in order to have good academic results, students need to have both will and skill, which leads to the need to integrate both aspects.

The communicative approach has prevailed in the last decades, and has been characterized by emphasizing ideas and generalizations in the integral formation of the student, which makes him a professional of greater preparation for business or other activities of his profile (Luzon, 2010). This approach aims to bring students to situations of communication, not as a product, but rather as a process, carried out with a concrete purpose, among concrete partners, in a concrete situation. It is therefore not enough for students to assimilate a set of data-vocabulary, rules, and functions; it is also imperative that they learn to use that knowledge to negotiate meaning. For this they need to participate in real tasks. (Pibaque Pionce and others, 2015). Ideally, all teaching and learning should be carried out in contact with real life, but it is not always possible or advisable, and therefore a series of means, resources or materials are used. Learning is characterized as a cognitive and motivational process that serves as a bridge between what is

taught and learned and the real world (Madrid, 2001). A language is not only a system of forms, structures and words; it is also a system of communicative acts. It is hoped that the means and resources employed will foster the development of communicative competence, which includes five sub-competencies: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discursive, cultural and strategic. The learning of languages takes place through processes that are personal and creative, global and cyclical, meaningful and in close relation with the interests, needs and mental schemes of the learners. (Ibid)

This is why finding strategies and methodologies that bring it closer to social reality in order to develop communicative competence becomes a necessity. In this sense the use of active methods becomes contributes significantly to the process of teaching English. The active method is a process that starts from the idea that to have meaningful learning, the student must be the protagonist of his own learning and the teacher, a facilitator of this process. The active methodology refers to all those particular ways of conducting classes that aim to involve students in their own learning process, understanding this as a personal process of constructing one's own thought structures (Alviárez *et al.*, 2005). Active methodology is based on the constructivist theory that emerged with the contributions of Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner and Ausubel, who consider learning as a complex process based on the student's prior knowledge (Alviárez *et al.*, 2005, Miramontes Arteaga, 2015). Among constructivist theory's educational premises are that language is the mediating instrument in the construction of cognitive structures and that the student is an active processor of learning. The constructive element of this is privileged as a factor of language development; knowledge is not a faithful copy of reality, but the inner construction of each individual. Thinking is formed as a result of subject-world interaction, and new concepts are generated from previous schemes and learnings. This is an active process: students construct new ideas based on their current and past knowledge; learn part of the their mental structure; recognize his/her ideas and prejudices on the subject, his level of logical thinking and his/her specific abilities.

According to constructivism, teaching is not simply a transmission of knowledge, but rather the organization of methods of support that allow students to build their own knowledge. Language is not learned only by registering in the brain, but also is learned by students constructing their own cognitive structure (Vargas Merina, 2009). Active methods consist of two elements: the first is activity; the second and main one is attitude, understood as an active learning stance by which the student discovers for himself, seeks a response, conducts research, checks data, relives historical facts, experiences aesthetic emotions, etc. Thus in the active methods, the pupil becomes the subject-agent of his own education. It could be said that the active methodology is a group of activities or dynamics, characterized by a pedagogical purpose, that directly involve the student in them, and that the exercise will help the student himself learn with the teacher as facilitator (Núñez Artiaga, 2008). The active methods affect mainly the interest and motivation of the student, in the student's creativity, in a greater freedom of choice of the student, in the student's work rhythm and individual characteristics, in the student's opening and communication with the others and in the clarity of the student's mental

schemes, built through group discussion, powerful instrument of intellectual development.

Among the tools most used for active teaching of English are:

- **Conceptual Maps:** Diagrammatic, hierarchical representations that organize meaningful relationships between concepts in the form of propositions that help students understand the meaning of the materials they are going to learn.
- **Words Maps:** Graphical representations of relationships between words, concepts or ideas of a text to facilitate the inference of meaning and analyze the structure of texts.
- **The Venn Diagram:** A graphical representation that schematizes the theory of set game to learn vocabulary by showing similarities and difference between items.
- **Gowin's V:** A heuristic technique that serves to illustrate the conceptual and methodological elements that interact in the knowledge building process and helps to deepen the structure and the meaning too.
- **The Portfolio:** A folder or an organizer of work done by the student during the study period for evaluation purposes; allows teachers to create in the student the sense of conservation, organization and consultation required to achieve and refresh situations and experiences in them (Alviárez *et al.*, 2005).

At present there is social agreement that the educational process should not take place in a context where the pupil remains as a passive subject and a simple receiver of knowledge. On the contrary, modern pedagogy, coincident with the educational process, must be active, dynamic and focused on learning, which implies the design of strategies that promote a permanent interaction between the learning subject and the knowledge object (Muñoz Restrepo, 2010 and Miramontes Arteaga, 2015). Methodological strategies are the teacher's fundamental tool to arbitrate, facilitate, promote and organize learning. They are formed in a cognitive operation series that the student carries out to organize, integrate and elaborate information and can be understood as processes or activity sequences that serve as the basis for intellectual accomplishment. They are chosen to facilitate the construction, permanence and transfer of information or knowledge.

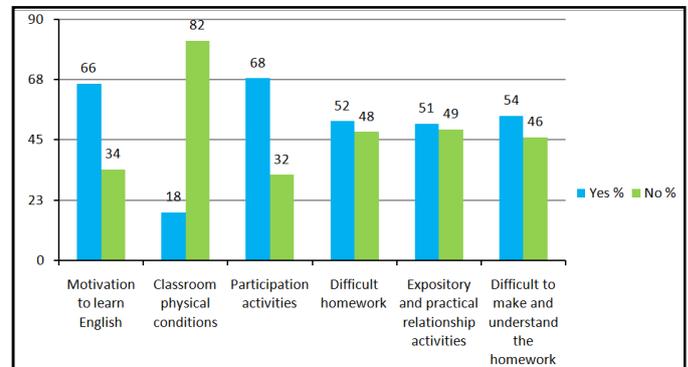
## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was performed from a descriptive, non-experimental viewpoint under a qualitative approach. The information collected was obtained through surveys, interviews and observation. The techniques and instruments used were: an interview to explore the knowledge and use of active methods; a direct observation guide to record the techniques, resources, and activities used by the teacher during their classes; and a student survey for language knowledge and teaching activities. The study was completed in the eighth grade of the National Pacific Ocean College in San Jacinto Manabí, where the observations were made in class, the survey was applied to students, and English language teachers were interviewed. The study was carried out by 4 licensed English Language teachers with multiple years of teaching experience and a total of 77 students.

## RESULTS

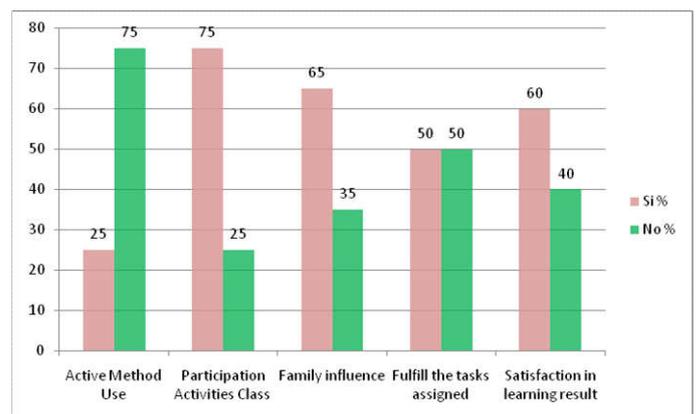
The diagnostic results performed are shown in Table 1, the survey applied to the students, and Table 2, the interview with the teachers.

**Table 1. Survey of students' performance**



In the participation activities case, 68% of students consider that they participate in class. In relation to specific activities, 12% participated in games, 17% in dynamic groups and the rest in other activities and participation types.

**Table 2. The English Language teachers interview result**



Regarding family influence in the student's motivation, the teachers consider that 50% of the students have a significant influence, and 15% believe that family motivation is somewhat of an influence. When referring to the fulfillment of tasks assigned to the students, 25% affirm that they almost always fulfill them; while 25% do so sometimes. The studied sample results reflect that the motivation to learn the English language in the students can be considered high (66%), but the necessary physical conditions are not available. In addition, the participation activities are not effective, as they present deficiencies in the task performance. Teachers acknowledge that they do not use task methods in teaching processes. This indicates that there are numerous teaching activities that are apparently not planned for teaching actively. This is corroborated by the observations and the interview with teachers. The teachers confirm the deficiencies in students' accomplishment of the tasks, but also a positive family influence (65% of teachers consider it to be positive). In general, the teachers consider themselves to be satisfied with the learning fulfillment.

The observation results (in particular classes) showed a low utilization of the active methods, which corresponds to the information obtained from the teachers through the interviews carried out. This low use of active methods contrasts with the trends defined in the consulted literature of an active constructivist teaching method as demonstrated in the theoretical analysis of this document.

### Conclusions

Second language study, especially of the English language, is a necessity for professional and human development, as well as for cultural and technological exchange, where this language occupies the fundamental space. The active methods constitute one of the tools of greater application in the teaching learning process, in the English language in particular, where the student becomes the active element of his own learning and the teacher a facilitator. The results obtained reflect a low utilization of the active methods by the professors of the school, which is reflected in the development of the tasks and communicative abilities of the student (50% of the students have problems with understanding and performing tasks assigned to them by English teachers). The results analysis showed the need to design strategies that allow teachers to be trained and motivated by the use of active methods to increase the academic achievement of students.

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