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**TEMA**

The Impact of English Language Learning on the Development of Intercultural Competencies in  
University Students at ESPOCH Orellana Campus

**Autor/es:**

RITA SULEMA LARA VASCONEZ

**Tutor/a:**

PhD. (a) Johnny Campoverde López

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## TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

### DEDICATORY

*I dedicate this work, first and foremost, to God, whose guidance, strength, and wisdom have been my constant support throughout this academic journey. Without His presence, this achievement would not have been possible.*

*I also dedicate this proposal to my family, especially to my father, my mother, and my beloved daughters, whose unconditional love, patience, and encouragement have inspired me to keep moving forward despite every challenge. Their support has been the foundation of this accomplishment.*

*I extend this dedication to all those who have contributed to my personal and professional growth, whose teachings and examples have shaped my path and motivated me to achieve this important goal.*



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## TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

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## RESUMEN

El presente estudio analiza la incidencia del aprendizaje del idioma inglés en el desarrollo de las competencias interculturales en estudiantes universitarios de la Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo (ESPOCH), sede Orellana. En el contexto actual de globalización, el dominio del inglés no solo implica habilidades lingüísticas, sino también la capacidad de comprender y desenvolverse en entornos culturalmente diversos. La investigación se desarrolló bajo un enfoque mixto de tipo descriptivo-correlacional, utilizando técnicas como encuestas, observación en el aula y análisis documental. La muestra estuvo conformada por estudiantes con nivel intermedio de inglés. Los resultados evidencian que los estudiantes presentan un nivel moderado de competencias interculturales, reflejado en una comprensión parcial de las diferencias culturales y limitaciones en la adaptación comunicativa. Asimismo, se identificó que la enseñanza del inglés se centra principalmente en aspectos lingüísticos, con escasa integración de la dimensión intercultural y del uso de TIC. Se propone la implementación de estrategias pedagógicas que integren actividades colaborativas, análisis cultural y entornos virtuales de interacción. Se concluye que el aprendizaje del inglés contribuye al desarrollo de competencias interculturales cuando se articula con enfoques educativos integrales orientados a la formación de ciudadanos globales.

**Palabras clave:** competencia intercultural, aprendizaje del inglés, TIC, educación superior.





## ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the impact of English language learning on the development of intercultural competencies in university students at the Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo (ESPOCH), Orellana campus. In today's globalized context, English proficiency involves not only linguistic skills but also the ability to understand and function in culturally diverse environments. The research followed a mixed-method, descriptive-correlational approach, using techniques such as surveys, classroom observation, and document analysis. The sample consisted of students with an intermediate level of English. The results show that students have a moderate level of intercultural competence, reflected in a partial understanding of cultural differences and limitations in communicative adaptation. It was also found that English teaching mainly focuses on linguistic aspects, with limited integration of intercultural elements and ICT use. The study proposes the implementation of pedagogical strategies that include collaborative activities, cultural analysis, and virtual interaction environments. It is concluded that English language learning contributes to the development of intercultural competencies when supported by comprehensive educational approaches aimed at preparing global citizens.

**Keywords:** intercultural competence, English learning, ICT, higher education.



**ÍNDICE GENERAL**

PORTADA .....	i
FICHA SENESCYT .....	ii
CERTIFICACIÓN DE AUTORÍA .....	iii
AVAL DEL TUTOR .....	iv
DEDICATORIA .....	v
AGRADECIMIENTO .....	vi
RESUMEN .....	vii
ABSTRACT .....	viii
INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	6
1.1 Linguistic Competence.....	6
1.2 Speaking Skills.....	8
1.3 Fluency.....	11
1.4 English Comprehension in EFL Contexts .....	14
1.5 Accuracy.....	17
1.6 Reading Skills.....	19
1.7 Critical Reading.....	21
1.8 Reading Fluency.....	23
1.9 Writing Skills.....	25
1.10 Writing Accuracy.....	27
1.11 Critical Writing.....	30
1.12 Pragmatic Competence.....	33
1.13 Intercultural Competence.....	35
1.14 Cognitive Dimension.....	38
1.15 Cultural Knowledge.....	41
1.16 Affective Dimension.....	44



1.17 Attitudes.....	47
1.18 Intercultural Interaction and Adaptation.....	50
CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN .....	54
2.1 Operationalization of Variables .....	54
2.2 Research Approach .....	56
2.3 Scope of the Research .....	58
2.4 Type of Research .....	60
2.5 Methods .....	62
2.6 Instruments .....	64
2.7 Population and Sample .....	66
2.8 Methodological Strategy .....	68
2.9 Initial Diagnosis .....	70
CHAPTER 3: PROPOSAL AND VALIDATION .....	78
3.1 Introduction .....	78
3.2 Objectives .....	80
3.3 Structure of Proposal .....	82
3.4 Activities and Implementation .....	84
3.5 Validation .....	86
3.6 Validation Results .....	88
3.7 Final Conclusions .....	90
3.8 Recommendations .....	92
REFERENCES .....	94
ANNEXES .....	62



## INTRODUCTION

### Presentation and Contextualization

In the contemporary globalized world, English language learning has become a fundamental component of higher education, serving as a key medium for academic, scientific, and professional communication. As a global lingua franca, English facilitates interaction among individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, enabling access to knowledge and international collaboration (Crystal, 2003; Jenkins, 2015). However, mastering English extends beyond linguistic proficiency, as it also requires the development of intercultural competencies that allow effective communication in multicultural environments.

From an educational perspective, the integration of intercultural competence into language learning has gained increasing attention in recent years. Intercultural competence is understood as the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural contexts, combining knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Byram (1997) emphasizes that language learning should include cultural awareness, while Fantini (2020) highlights that intercultural competence involves continuous reflection and experiential learning.

In university contexts, the relationship between English language learning and intercultural competence is particularly significant. Higher education institutions are expected to prepare students for participation in globalized societies, where cultural diversity is a defining characteristic. According to Dearden (2014), the expansion of English-medium instruction (EMI) reflects the growing demand for English proficiency linked to global competencies.

Within this framework, the present study is conducted at the Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo (ESPOCH), Orellana campus, where students come from diverse sociocultural backgrounds. Despite this diversity, intercultural elements are not consistently integrated into English language instruction. This situation creates a gap between language learning and intercultural development, which highlights the need to analyze how English learning contributes to the development of intercultural competencies in this specific educational context.

### Justification of the Problem

This research is justified by the increasing need to develop educational approaches that integrate both linguistic and intercultural dimensions. In a globalized environment, students must

be able to communicate effectively across cultures, making intercultural competence essential for academic and professional success. According to the OECD (2018), global competence includes the ability to examine issues from multiple perspectives and interact appropriately with people from different cultures.

Moreover, the relevance of this study is supported by the challenges observed in current English language teaching practices. In many contexts, instruction still focuses on grammar and vocabulary, limiting students' ability to engage in meaningful intercultural communication. Kramersch (2018) argues that language and culture are inseparable, and that language learning should involve understanding cultural meanings and social practices.

From a social perspective, intercultural competence plays a crucial role in promoting inclusion, tolerance, and mutual understanding. In multicultural societies, these skills are necessary to foster coexistence and respect among individuals. The Council of Europe (2020) emphasizes that intercultural education contributes to democratic participation and social cohesion, reinforcing its importance in higher education.

Therefore, this research addresses a significant educational and social need by proposing strategies to enhance the integration of intercultural competence into English language teaching. Its relevance lies in improving students' communicative abilities while preparing them to function effectively in diverse and globalized contexts.

## **Problem Statement**

The teaching of English as a foreign language in higher education institutions often prioritizes grammatical accuracy and vocabulary acquisition over communicative and intercultural competence. This tendency limits students' ability to engage effectively in real-life communication, particularly in multicultural contexts. According to Richards (2015), communicative language teaching emphasizes meaningful interaction; however, its implementation remains inconsistent in many educational settings, especially in developing countries.

In the Ecuadorian context, English language education faces significant challenges, including limited exposure to authentic language use, traditional teaching methodologies, and insufficient integration of intercultural content. The Ministry of Education of Ecuador (2016) acknowledges that while English is recognized as a key subject, its teaching often lacks

contextualization and practical application, which affects students' communicative performance.

At ESPOCH Orellana campus, these limitations are reflected in students' difficulties in interpreting cultural differences, adapting their communication styles, and engaging in intercultural interactions. As noted by Galloway and Rose (2018), effective use of English in global contexts requires not only linguistic competence but also the ability to navigate cultural diversity and negotiate meaning across cultures.

Therefore, the central problem of this research is to determine how English language learning influences the development of intercultural competencies in university students. Addressing this problem is essential to improving educational practices and ensuring that students acquire the necessary skills to function in globalized environments.

### **Object of Study, Objective, Hypothesis, and Variables**

The object of this research is the English language teaching-learning process within the university context, particularly in relation to its role in fostering intercultural competence. This process involves not only the acquisition of linguistic knowledge but also the development of communicative and sociocultural skills. According to Vygotsky (1978), learning is constructed through social interaction, which highlights the importance of context and communication in language development.

The general objective of this study is to analyze the impact of English language learning on the development of intercultural competencies in students at ESPOCH Orellana campus. This objective responds to the need to understand how language learning contributes to broader educational outcomes. In this regard, Krashen (1982) argues that language acquisition is enhanced when learners are exposed to meaningful and context-rich input, which supports both linguistic and cultural development.

The study is guided by the following research question: How does English language learning influence the development of intercultural competencies in university students? Based on this, the hypothesis states that English language learning significantly contributes to the development of intercultural competence when supported by appropriate pedagogical strategies. This aligns with findings by Chen and Yang (2023), who highlight the positive relationship between language learning and intercultural awareness in higher education.

Regarding variables, the independent variable is English language learning, with

dimensions such as linguistic competence, pragmatic competence, and sociocultural awareness. The dependent variable is intercultural competence, including cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. Additionally, external variables such as teaching methodologies, access to technology, and learning environments may influence the results, as noted by Sato and Ballinger (2021).

### **Type of Research**

This study is framed within a descriptive-correlational research design, as it aims to describe the current level of intercultural competence among students and examine its relationship with English language learning. Descriptive research allows for the systematic characterization of a phenomenon, while correlational research seeks to identify relationships between variables without establishing causation (Hernández-Sampieri & Mendoza, 2018). This type of design is particularly suitable when the objective is to understand how variables interact within real educational contexts. Moreover, it enables researchers to generate meaningful interpretations without manipulating the study environment, preserving the natural conditions in which learning occurs.

In the field of educational research, descriptive-correlational designs are widely used to analyze complex learning processes and their associated variables. This approach is particularly relevant in language education, where multiple factors such as motivation, exposure, and teaching strategies influence learning outcomes. As Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) explain, correlational studies are useful for exploring associations between educational variables in real classroom contexts. Additionally, this design supports the identification of patterns that can inform future interventions and pedagogical improvements.

Furthermore, this research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Quantitative data allow for statistical analysis of relationships, while qualitative data provide deeper insights into students' experiences and perceptions. This integration enhances the validity and reliability of the findings by allowing data triangulation. As Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) suggest, mixed-methods research strengthens the interpretation of results by combining numerical trends with contextual explanations.

The selection of this research type is justified by the need to analyze both measurable

outcomes and contextual factors related to English language learning and intercultural competence. By combining descriptive and correlational elements, the study ensures a holistic approach to understanding the educational phenomenon. This approach also allows for the identification of gaps in current teaching practices and supports the development of evidence-based recommendations for improving language education.

### **Methods of Research**

The research employs a combination of theoretical, empirical, and statistical methods to achieve its objectives. Theoretical methods include analysis-synthesis and the historical-logical method, which are essential for understanding the evolution of concepts such as intercultural competence and language learning. These methods enable the researcher to critically examine existing literature and construct a solid theoretical foundation for the study. According to Flick (2018), theoretical frameworks are crucial for guiding data interpretation and ensuring coherence between research questions and findings.

Empirical methods play a central role in data collection. These include surveys and classroom observation, which allow for the direct assessment of students' perceptions and behaviors in authentic learning environments. Surveys are particularly useful for gathering standardized data from large groups, while observation provides contextual insights into classroom dynamics and interaction patterns (Dörnyei, 2010). The combination of these methods allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how students experience English learning and intercultural communication.

Additionally, the study incorporates document analysis as a complementary method to examine curricular materials and institutional guidelines. This method helps identify the extent to which intercultural competence is integrated into the English language curriculum and teaching practices. Bowen (2009) emphasizes that document analysis provides valuable contextual information that supports the interpretation of empirical data. It also allows researchers to compare intended curricular objectives with actual classroom implementation.

Statistical methods are used to analyze quantitative data, including descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. These techniques allow for the identification of patterns and relationships between variables, ensuring that the findings are supported by empirical evidence and statistical rigor. The use of statistical tools enhances the objectivity of the research and provides a solid

basis for drawing conclusions about the relationship between English learning and intercultural competence.

### **Population and Sample**

The population of this study consists of university students enrolled at the Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo (ESPOCH), Orellana campus. These students represent a diverse group in terms of cultural background, academic programs, and levels of English proficiency, making them an appropriate population for analyzing intercultural competence. This diversity provides a rich context for examining how cultural differences influence language learning and communication practices.

The sample is selected using a non-probabilistic sampling technique, specifically convenience sampling, due to accessibility and practical considerations. According to Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016), non-probabilistic sampling is commonly used in educational research when the population is accessible and the study aims to explore specific characteristics rather than generalize findings. This approach allows the researcher to focus on participants who are directly relevant to the research objectives.

The selected participants include students with intermediate levels of English proficiency, as this group is more likely to have sufficient exposure to the language to reflect on intercultural experiences. This criterion ensures that participants can provide meaningful insights into both linguistic and cultural aspects of communication. Additionally, selecting participants with similar proficiency levels helps maintain consistency in the analysis.

Although non-probabilistic sampling may limit generalizability, it allows for in-depth analysis within a specific context. The focus on ESPOCH Orellana campus provides valuable insights into a unique educational environment, contributing to the understanding of intercultural competence in the Ecuadorian Amazon region. This localized approach adds value to the research by addressing a context that has been underrepresented in previous studies.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

Data collection is carried out through multiple techniques to ensure the reliability and validity of the research. The primary instrument used is a structured questionnaire designed to assess both English language learning and intercultural competence. Questionnaires are widely

used in educational research due to their efficiency in collecting large amounts of data and their ability to provide quantifiable results (Brown, 2001). They also allow for standardized responses, facilitating comparison across participants.

In addition to surveys, classroom observation is employed to analyze students' behavior and interaction in real learning environments. Observation provides valuable qualitative data that complement the quantitative findings, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. According to Mackey and Gass (2015), observation is essential in language research for capturing authentic communicative practices and identifying patterns that may not be evident through surveys alone.

Another technique used in this study is document analysis, which involves reviewing curricular materials, lesson plans, and institutional documents related to English language teaching. This helps identify the presence or absence of intercultural elements in the curriculum and supports the interpretation of findings. Document analysis also provides insight into institutional priorities and pedagogical approaches.

The combination of these techniques ensures methodological triangulation, enhancing the credibility and validity of the study. By integrating different sources of data, the research provides a more robust and reliable analysis of the relationship between English language learning and intercultural competence. This comprehensive approach strengthens the overall quality of the research.

### **Contributions, Importance, and Structure of the Study**

The main contribution of this research lies in proposing pedagogical strategies that integrate intercultural competence into English language teaching. These strategies aim to improve students' communicative effectiveness, cultural awareness, and ability to interact in diverse contexts. According to Byram and Wagner (2018), integrating intercultural competence into language education is essential for preparing learners for real-world communication in globalized environments.

The importance of this study is also linked to its social relevance. In multicultural societies, intercultural competence promotes inclusion, respect, and effective communication. The United Nations (2015) highlights the importance of education in fostering sustainable development and global citizenship, reinforcing the need for educational approaches that address cultural diversity

and social cohesion.

The novelty of the study lies in its focus on the Amazonian context of Ecuador, a region that has received limited attention in previous research on language education and intercultural competence. This contextualized approach provides new insights into the challenges and opportunities of teaching English in culturally diverse environments. It also contributes to the expansion of academic knowledge in underrepresented regions.

### Structure of the Chapters

This research is organized into three main chapters, each designed to address specific aspects of the study in a coherent and systematic manner.

**Chapter 1:** Theoretical Framework presents the conceptual and theoretical foundations that support the research. It analyzes key concepts such as English language learning, intercultural competence, and the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in education. Additionally, it reviews relevant theories and models proposed by recognized authors in the field, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between language learning and intercultural development. This chapter establishes the scientific basis for the study and provides the framework for interpreting the research findings.

**Chapter 2:** Methodology describes the research design and the procedures followed to conduct the study. It details the type of research, the mixed-methods approach, and the descriptive-correlational nature of the investigation. Furthermore, it explains the population and sample, data collection techniques such as surveys and observations, and the methods used for data analysis. This chapter ensures the validity and reliability of the research by clearly outlining the methodological process.

**Chapter 3:** Proposal presents the pedagogical proposal derived from the findings of the study. It includes strategies aimed at integrating intercultural competence into English language teaching, emphasizing the use of interactive activities, cultural analysis, and ICT tools. The proposal seeks to address the identified gaps in the current teaching practices and contribute to improving students' communicative and intercultural skills in a meaningful and practical way.

## CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Linguistic competence

Fluency in oral production is a central component of speaking skills, as it reflects the learner's ability to produce language smoothly, coherently, and with minimal hesitation. Unlike accuracy, which focuses on grammatical correctness, fluency emphasizes the flow and continuity of speech. According to Segalowitz (2010), fluency is a multidimensional construct that includes cognitive processing speed, linguistic knowledge, and communicative competence. In second language learning, fluency is often associated with the ability to maintain interaction without frequent pauses, repetitions, or breakdowns in communication. This ability is particularly important in real-life contexts, where communication must occur spontaneously and effectively.

From a psycholinguistic perspective, fluency is closely related to automaticity in language processing. Learners who achieve a higher level of automaticity can retrieve vocabulary and grammatical structures more efficiently, allowing them to focus on meaning rather than form. According to DeKeyser (2007), repeated practice and exposure to language input are essential for developing automatic processing skills. This suggests that fluency is not an innate ability but a skill that can be developed through consistent practice and meaningful interaction. As learners become more proficient, their speech becomes more fluid and less cognitively demanding.

In educational contexts, the development of fluency is often supported through communicative activities that encourage spontaneous language use. Task-based language teaching (TBLT), for example, provides opportunities for learners to engage in meaningful communication while focusing on completing tasks rather than producing perfect language. Ellis (2003) argues that such tasks promote fluency by encouraging learners to use language for real communicative purposes. Through interaction, learners negotiate meaning, adapt their language, and develop greater confidence in speaking. This approach aligns with contemporary language teaching methodologies that prioritize communication over form.

Fluency is also closely linked to learners' confidence and willingness to communicate. Anxiety and fear of making mistakes can significantly hinder oral production, even among learners with adequate linguistic knowledge. According to MacIntyre et al. (1998), willingness to communicate is influenced by psychological factors such as self-confidence, motivation, and perceived competence. When learners feel comfortable and supported, they are more likely to participate actively in speaking activities and develop fluency over time. Therefore, creating a

positive learning environment is essential for fostering oral communication skills.

In addition to cognitive and psychological factors, fluency is influenced by exposure to authentic language input. Learners who are regularly exposed to real-life communication, such as conversations, media, and interactive platforms, are more likely to develop natural speech patterns. According to Thornbury (2005), fluency development requires opportunities for extended speaking, where learners can experiment with language and refine their communicative abilities. This exposure helps learners internalize discourse structures, improve pronunciation, and develop a more natural rhythm in speech.

From a critical perspective, traditional language teaching has often prioritized accuracy over fluency, resulting in learners who can produce grammatically correct sentences but struggle to communicate effectively. This imbalance highlights the need for a shift toward more communicative and learner-centered approaches. In this research, fluency is considered a key indicator of linguistic competence that reflects the learner's ability to use language in real-world contexts. Therefore, it is essential to design instructional practices that promote interaction, reduce anxiety, and provide opportunities for meaningful communication, ensuring that learners develop both confidence and competence in speaking.

### **Speaking skills**

Accuracy in oral production refers to the learner's ability to produce grammatically correct and structurally appropriate language during spoken interaction. Unlike fluency, which prioritizes the flow of communication, accuracy emphasizes the correct use of linguistic forms, including syntax, morphology, and vocabulary. According to Skehan (1998), accuracy is a crucial dimension of language performance, as it reflects the learner's control over language rules. In second language acquisition, achieving accuracy is essential for ensuring that messages are conveyed clearly and without ambiguity. This aspect of speaking is particularly important in academic and professional contexts, where precision in language use is highly valued.

From a theoretical standpoint, accuracy is closely linked to form-focused instruction, which emphasizes the explicit teaching of grammatical structures within communicative contexts. Long (1991) argues that integrating attention to form within meaningful communication enhances language acquisition, as learners become aware of linguistic patterns while using the language. This approach contrasts with traditional grammar instruction, which often isolates language

forms from communication. By embedding grammar within interaction, learners can develop both accuracy and communicative competence simultaneously.

The development of accuracy is also influenced by the learner's interlanguage, a dynamic system that evolves as the learner acquires the target language. Selinker (1972) introduced the concept of interlanguage to describe how learners construct their own linguistic system, which includes both correct forms and errors. Errors, in this context, are not simply mistakes but indicators of the learning process. Through feedback and practice, learners gradually refine their interlanguage and achieve greater accuracy in their speech.

Corrective feedback plays a significant role in improving accuracy, as it helps learners identify and correct their errors. According to Lyster and Ranta (1997), different types of feedback, such as recasts, clarification requests, and explicit correction, can influence language development in different ways. Effective feedback should be timely, relevant, and supportive, allowing learners to reflect on their language use without discouraging communication. This balance is essential to ensure that accuracy is developed without negatively affecting fluency.

In communicative language teaching, achieving a balance between fluency and accuracy is a key challenge. Overemphasis on accuracy may lead to hesitation and reduced participation, while neglecting it may result in fossilized errors. According to Harmer (2007), effective language instruction should integrate both dimensions, allowing learners to develop accurate language use within meaningful communication. This balanced approach supports the development of both linguistic competence and communicative effectiveness.

From a critical perspective, accuracy should not be viewed as an end in itself but as a means to achieve effective communication. In this research, accuracy is considered an essential component of speaking competence that contributes to clarity and precision in communication. However, it must be developed in conjunction with fluency and interactional skills. Therefore, pedagogical approaches should focus on integrating accuracy within communicative contexts, ensuring that learners develop both correctness and confidence in their oral production.

### **Interaction in Communication**

Interaction in communication refers to the ability of learners to engage in meaningful exchanges with others, using language as a tool for social interaction. This component involves

turn-taking, responding appropriately, and maintaining conversational flow. According to Hall (2011), interaction is central to language learning, as it provides opportunities for negotiation of meaning and collaborative construction of knowledge. Through interaction, learners actively use language to express ideas, clarify misunderstandings, and build relationships.

Interaction is closely related to the sociocultural theory of learning, which emphasizes the role of social interaction in cognitive development. Vygotsky (1978) argues that learning occurs through interaction with others, particularly within the zone of proximal development. In language learning, interaction allows learners to receive feedback, observe language use, and practice communication in a supportive environment. This process facilitates the internalization of linguistic structures and communicative strategies.

In communicative language teaching, interaction is considered a key element for developing speaking skills. Activities such as group discussions, role plays, and problem-solving tasks encourage learners to use language in authentic contexts. According to Nunan (2004), interactive tasks promote learner engagement and provide opportunities for meaningful communication. These activities also help learners develop strategies for managing conversations, such as asking for clarification and expressing opinions.

Interaction is also essential for developing intercultural competence, as it exposes learners to different perspectives and communication styles. According to Kramsch (1993), language learning involves not only linguistic competence but also the ability to interpret and negotiate cultural meanings. Through interaction, learners become aware of cultural differences and learn to adapt their communication accordingly. This skill is particularly important in multicultural environments, where effective communication requires cultural sensitivity.

Technological advancements have expanded opportunities for interaction through digital platforms, such as online discussions, video conferencing, and social media. According to Chapelle (2009), technology-mediated interaction provides learners with access to authentic communication and diverse cultural contexts. These tools allow learners to practice language in real-time and engage with speakers from different backgrounds, enhancing both linguistic and intercultural competence.

Interaction should be recognized as a fundamental component of language learning rather than a supplementary activity. In this research, interaction is viewed as a dynamic process that integrates linguistic, cognitive, and social elements. Therefore, language instruction should

prioritize interactive learning environments that encourage participation, collaboration, and meaningful communication. This approach ensures that learners develop not only speaking skills but also the ability to communicate effectively in diverse contexts.

### **Speaking skills**

Pronunciation is a fundamental component of speaking skills, as it directly affects the intelligibility and effectiveness of oral communication. It involves the production of sounds, stress patterns, rhythm, and intonation, all of which contribute to conveying meaning accurately. According to Kelly (2000), pronunciation is not limited to individual sounds but includes suprasegmental features that shape how speech is perceived. In second language learning, pronunciation plays a crucial role in ensuring that speakers are understood by others, particularly in intercultural communication contexts. Therefore, developing clear and intelligible pronunciation is essential for effective interaction.

From a phonological perspective, pronunciation learning involves acquiring both segmental features, such as consonants and vowels, and suprasegmental features, including stress, rhythm, and intonation. According to Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (2010), suprasegmental features are particularly important for communication, as they influence meaning and listener comprehension. Misplaced stress or incorrect intonation can lead to misunderstandings, even if the individual sounds are correctly produced. This highlights the importance of teaching pronunciation as an integrated system rather than focusing solely on isolated sounds.

The acquisition of pronunciation is also influenced by the learner's first language, which can interfere with the production of sounds in the target language. Derwing and Munro (2005) explain that learners often transfer phonological patterns from their native language, resulting in a foreign accent. While having an accent is not necessarily problematic, it can affect intelligibility if it interferes with communication. Therefore, pronunciation instruction should focus on improving intelligibility rather than achieving native-like pronunciation, which is often unrealistic and unnecessary.

In communicative language teaching, pronunciation is increasingly viewed as an essential element of communicative competence. According to Levis (2005), the goal of pronunciation teaching should be intelligibility and comprehensibility rather than perfection. This perspective shifts the focus from error correction to effective communication. By emphasizing intelligibility,

learners are encouraged to develop confidence in speaking, which supports both fluency and interaction. This approach aligns with contemporary views of language learning that prioritize communication over form.

Technological tools have significantly enhanced pronunciation learning by providing access to authentic models and interactive practice. Digital resources such as speech recognition software, pronunciation apps, and multimedia materials allow learners to receive immediate feedback and improve their skills independently. According to Pennington (2019), technology-mediated pronunciation instruction supports individualized learning and increases learner engagement. These tools also expose learners to a variety of accents and speaking styles, which is essential in global communication contexts.

From a critical perspective, pronunciation has often been marginalized in traditional language teaching, where grammar and vocabulary have been prioritized. This neglect has resulted in learners who possess adequate linguistic knowledge but struggle to communicate effectively due to pronunciation difficulties. In this research, pronunciation is considered a key component of linguistic competence that directly influences communicative success. Therefore, it is essential to integrate pronunciation instruction into all aspects of language learning, ensuring that learners develop both clarity and confidence in their oral communication.

### **Reading skills**

Reading comprehension is a fundamental aspect of linguistic competence, as it enables learners to understand, interpret, and critically analyze written texts. It involves not only decoding words but also constructing meaning through cognitive and linguistic processes. According to Kintsch (1998), comprehension occurs when readers actively build mental representations of the text, integrating new information with prior knowledge. This process highlights the interactive nature of reading, where meaning is not simply extracted from the text but constructed by the reader. In second language learning, reading comprehension plays a crucial role in academic success, as it allows students to access information and engage with complex content.

From a cognitive perspective, reading comprehension involves multiple processes, including word recognition, syntactic parsing, and semantic interpretation. Perfetti and Stafura (2014) emphasize that efficient word recognition is essential for comprehension, as it allows

readers to allocate cognitive resources to higher-level processes such as inference and critical thinking. When readers struggle with basic decoding, their ability to understand the overall meaning of the text is compromised. Therefore, developing automaticity in word recognition is a key factor in improving reading comprehension.

In addition to cognitive processes, reading comprehension is influenced by the reader's background knowledge and cultural context. According to Carrell and Eisterhold (1983), schema theory explains how readers use prior knowledge to interpret new information. This means that comprehension is not solely determined by the text itself but also by the reader's experiences and expectations. In second language contexts, differences in cultural knowledge can affect how texts are understood, making it important to integrate cultural content into reading instruction.

Reading comprehension also involves the use of strategies that help learners process and understand texts more effectively. Grabe and Stoller (2011) identify strategies such as predicting, summarizing, questioning, and inferencing as essential for successful reading. These strategies enable learners to monitor their understanding and engage actively with the text. Teaching these strategies explicitly can significantly improve learners' reading performance and foster greater independence in learning. In academic contexts, reading comprehension is closely linked to critical thinking, as students are expected to evaluate, analyze, and synthesize information from various sources. According to Wallace (2003), critical reading involves questioning the author's assumptions, identifying biases, and interpreting meaning beyond the surface level. This skill is particularly important in higher education, where students must engage with complex texts and develop informed perspectives. Therefore, reading comprehension is not only a linguistic skill but also a cognitive and analytical one.

## READING SKILLS

Reading fluency is defined as the ability to read a text accurately, quickly, and with appropriate expression, allowing readers to focus on meaning rather than decoding individual words. It represents a critical link between basic decoding skills and higher-level comprehension processes. According to Rasinski (2012), fluency encompasses three key elements: accuracy, automaticity, and prosody, all of which contribute to effective reading performance. When readers achieve fluency, they are able to process written language with minimal cognitive effort,

enabling them to allocate more attention to understanding the content. In second language learning, this skill is particularly important because learners often struggle with slow and effortful reading, which can hinder comprehension. Therefore, reading fluency is not only a mechanical skill but also a cognitive process that supports deeper understanding of texts.

From a cognitive perspective, reading fluency is closely associated with automaticity in word recognition, which allows readers to identify words quickly and effortlessly. LaBerge and Samuels (1974) propose that automatic processing reduces the cognitive load required for decoding, freeing up mental resources for comprehension. In second language contexts, achieving automaticity is more challenging due to limited exposure to vocabulary and unfamiliar orthographic patterns. As a result, learners may experience slower reading rates and increased difficulty in understanding texts. Developing fluency, therefore, requires repeated exposure to written language and consistent practice, which gradually strengthens neural pathways associated with word recognition. This process highlights the importance of integrating fluency-building activities into language instruction.

Another important aspect of reading fluency is prosody, which refers to the use of appropriate rhythm, stress, and intonation when reading. Prosodic reading reflects a deeper understanding of the text, as it indicates that the reader is able to interpret meaning beyond individual words. According to Schreiber (1991), prosody plays a crucial role in reading comprehension because it helps readers recognize syntactic structures and semantic relationships within sentences. In second language learning, developing prosodic awareness can be particularly beneficial, as it supports both reading and oral communication skills. Learners who read with appropriate expression are more likely to understand the text and retain information effectively.

In educational settings, reading fluency is typically developed through instructional strategies such as repeated reading, guided reading, and assisted reading. Samuels (1979) introduced the concept of repeated reading as an effective method for improving fluency, as it allows learners to practice reading the same text multiple times until they achieve greater speed and accuracy. This approach has been widely supported by research, which shows that repeated exposure to text enhances both fluency and comprehension. Additionally, guided reading provides learners with structured support from teachers, helping them develop confidence and improve their reading skills gradually. These instructional practices highlight the importance of scaffolding in language learning.

The integration of digital technologies has also transformed the way reading fluency is developed in modern educational contexts. Digital reading platforms, audiobooks, and interactive applications provide learners with opportunities to engage with texts in dynamic and multimodal ways. According to Dalton and Proctor (2008), digital tools can enhance reading engagement and provide immediate feedback, which supports the development of fluency. Furthermore, these tools expose learners to a wide range of texts and language varieties, contributing to a more comprehensive learning experience. In second language learning, technology-mediated reading can help overcome limitations related to access and exposure.

Reading fluency has often been underestimated in second language instruction, where greater emphasis is placed on comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. However, without fluency, learners may struggle to process texts efficiently, leading to cognitive overload and reduced comprehension. In this research, reading fluency is conceptualized as a foundational skill that supports both linguistic competence and academic performance. Therefore, it is essential to adopt a balanced instructional approach that integrates fluency development with comprehension strategies. By doing so, learners can become more efficient and confident readers, capable of engaging with complex texts in diverse academic and professional contexts.

## READING SKILLS

### Critical Reading

Critical reading is an advanced dimension of reading skills that involves the ability to analyze, evaluate, and interpret written texts beyond their literal meaning. It requires readers to question assumptions, identify arguments, and assess the credibility of information. According to Luke (2012), critical reading is a fundamental literacy skill in the 21st century, as it enables individuals to navigate complex texts and make informed decisions. In second language learning, developing critical reading skills is particularly important, as learners must engage with texts that reflect diverse cultural perspectives and ideologies. This process fosters deeper comprehension and promotes independent thinking.

From a cognitive perspective, critical reading involves higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. These processes are aligned with Bloom's revised taxonomy, which emphasizes the importance of moving beyond basic comprehension to more complex forms of thinking (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). In this sense, readers must not only understand

what the text says but also interpret its meaning, evaluate its arguments, and relate it to their own knowledge and experiences. This level of engagement enhances both linguistic competence and intellectual development.

Critical reading is also closely related to discourse analysis, as it requires an understanding of how language is used to construct meaning and influence readers. According to Fairclough (1995), texts are not neutral but reflect social, cultural, and ideological perspectives. By analyzing these elements, readers can develop a more nuanced understanding of the text and its implications. In second language contexts, this skill is essential for interpreting texts that may contain unfamiliar cultural references or implicit meanings.

In educational contexts, the development of critical reading skills is supported through instructional strategies that encourage reflection and discussion. Activities such as text analysis, debates, and problem-solving tasks help learners engage actively with texts and develop their analytical abilities. According to Wallace (2003), critical reading instruction should focus on encouraging learners to question the text and consider multiple perspectives. This approach promotes deeper learning and helps students become more independent readers.

Critical reading also plays a significant role in academic literacy, as students are required to engage with complex texts in their fields of study. They must evaluate sources, synthesize information, and construct arguments based on evidence. According to Hyland (2004), academic reading involves not only understanding content but also recognizing the rhetorical structures and conventions of academic discourse. This skill is essential for success in higher education, where critical thinking is highly valued.

Traditional reading instruction often focuses on surface-level comprehension, neglecting the development of analytical and evaluative skills. This limitation restricts learners' ability to engage meaningfully with texts and limits their academic potential. In this research, critical reading is viewed as an essential component of linguistic competence that supports both academic and intercultural development. Therefore, it is necessary to adopt teaching approaches that promote critical engagement with texts, enabling learners to become reflective and informed readers.

### **Vocabulary Development in Reading**

Vocabulary development is a key factor in reading comprehension, as it directly

influences the reader's ability to understand and interpret texts. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, learners may struggle to grasp the meaning of even simple texts. According to Nation (2001), vocabulary knowledge is one of the strongest predictors of reading comprehension in both first and second language contexts. This highlights the importance of developing a broad and deep vocabulary base as part of language learning.

Vocabulary knowledge includes both breadth and depth. Breadth refers to the number of words a learner knows, while depth involves understanding the meanings, uses, and relationships of those words. According to Qian (2002), both dimensions are essential for effective reading comprehension. Learners must not only recognize words but also understand their multiple meanings, collocations, and grammatical functions. This comprehensive understanding enables readers to interpret texts more accurately.

Vocabulary acquisition in reading is often facilitated through exposure to context, where learners infer meaning based on surrounding words and sentences. According to Nagy (2005), incidental vocabulary learning occurs when learners encounter new words in meaningful contexts. This process allows learners to expand their vocabulary naturally while reading. However, it requires a certain level of proficiency, as learners must be able to understand enough of the text to make accurate inferences.

In educational settings, explicit vocabulary instruction can complement incidental learning by providing learners with strategies for understanding and using new words. According to Schmitt (2008), effective vocabulary instruction includes teaching word formation, semantic relationships, and usage patterns. These strategies help learners develop a deeper understanding of vocabulary and improve their reading comprehension. Additionally, repeated exposure to words in different contexts reinforces learning and supports long-term retention.

Vocabulary development is also closely related to intercultural competence, as language reflects cultural concepts and values. Understanding vocabulary in context requires awareness of cultural meanings and connotations. According to Wierzbicka (1997), words carry cultural significance that may not be directly translatable across languages. This highlights the importance of integrating cultural knowledge into vocabulary instruction, particularly in second language learning.

Vocabulary instruction is often limited to memorization, which does not promote deep understanding or effective use of language. In this research, vocabulary development is viewed as

a dynamic and context-dependent process that supports both linguistic and intercultural competence. Therefore, teaching approaches should emphasize meaningful use of vocabulary in context, enabling learners to develop both comprehension and communicative skills.

### Writing skills

Written production is a fundamental component of language learning, as it enables learners to express ideas, construct arguments, and communicate effectively in academic and professional contexts. Unlike speaking, writing requires a higher level of planning, organization, and linguistic control. According to Hyland (2019), writing is not merely a linguistic activity but a social practice that involves constructing meaning within specific contexts and audiences. This perspective highlights the importance of developing writing skills that go beyond grammar, focusing instead on coherence, organization, and clarity of ideas.

Coherence in writing refers to the logical flow of ideas within a text, ensuring that each part contributes to the overall meaning. It involves the use of cohesive devices, such as connectors, reference words, and lexical repetition, to link sentences and paragraphs. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), cohesion is achieved through linguistic elements that create relationships within the text, while coherence is the result of meaningful organization. In second language writing, learners often struggle with coherence due to limited linguistic resources and lack of familiarity with discourse conventions.

Organization is another key aspect of written production, as it determines how ideas are structured and presented. Effective writing follows a clear structure, typically including an introduction, body, and conclusion, which helps readers understand the message. According to Swales and Feak (2012), academic writing requires adherence to specific rhetorical patterns that vary across disciplines. This means that learners must not only develop linguistic skills but also understand the conventions of academic discourse. Proper organization enhances readability and facilitates comprehension.

Writing is a complex process that involves planning, drafting, revising, and editing. Flower and Hayes (1981) propose a process-oriented model of writing, which emphasizes the recursive nature of these stages. Writers continuously move between planning and revising as they develop their ideas. In second language learning, this process can be particularly challenging, as learners must manage both linguistic and cognitive demands simultaneously.

Therefore, writing instruction should focus on developing strategies that support each stage of the writing process.

The development of writing skills is closely linked to academic success, as students are required to produce essays, reports, and research papers. According to Graham and Perin (2007), effective writing instruction includes explicit teaching of strategies, modeling, and opportunities for practice. Feedback also plays a crucial role in improving writing, as it helps learners identify weaknesses and refine their skills. Through guided practice, learners can develop greater control over their writing and improve both coherence and organization.

### **Writing Accuracy**

Refers to the correct use of grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure in written texts. It is a key component of linguistic competence, as it ensures clarity and precision in communication. According to Biber, Conrad, and Leech (2002), grammatical accuracy is essential for producing texts that are both understandable and appropriate for specific contexts. In second language writing, learners often struggle with accuracy due to interference from their first language and limited exposure to the target language.

From a linguistic perspective, writing accuracy involves mastery of grammatical structures, including tense, agreement, and sentence formation. Larsen-Freeman (2003) argues that grammar should be viewed as a dynamic system that interacts with meaning and use, rather than a set of rigid rules. This perspective emphasizes the importance of integrating grammar instruction into meaningful writing activities, allowing learners to apply their knowledge in context.

Lexical accuracy is also essential for effective writing, as it involves the appropriate selection and use of words. According to Coxhead (2000), academic vocabulary plays a crucial role in writing, particularly in higher education contexts. Learners must develop the ability to use precise and context-appropriate vocabulary to convey their ideas clearly. This requires not only knowledge of word meanings but also an understanding of collocations and usage patterns.

Error analysis is an important tool for understanding and improving writing accuracy. According to Ferris (2011), analyzing learners' errors provides insights into their interlanguage and helps identify areas for improvement. Feedback based on error analysis can guide learners in refining their writing and developing greater accuracy. However, feedback must be constructive

and supportive to avoid discouraging learners. The development of writing accuracy is closely related to practice and feedback. Regular writing activities, combined with targeted feedback, help learners improve their grammatical and lexical control. According to Truscott and Hsu (2008), corrective feedback can be effective when it is focused and meaningful. This highlights the importance of designing writing tasks that allow learners to apply feedback and improve their performance over time.

### Critical Writing

It is an advanced component of writing skills that involves the ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information in a coherent and structured manner. It requires writers to go beyond simple description and engage in argumentation, reflection, and interpretation. According to Bailey (2018), critical writing involves questioning assumptions, comparing different perspectives, and constructing well-supported arguments. In second language learning, this skill is particularly important because it enables learners to engage with academic texts and contribute to scholarly discussions. Developing critical writing skills enhances both linguistic competence and intellectual development.

From a cognitive perspective, critical writing is closely related to higher-order thinking skills, including analysis, evaluation, and synthesis. These processes are essential for constructing arguments and presenting ideas effectively. According to Paul and Elder (2014), critical thinking involves the ability to analyze information objectively and make reasoned judgments. In writing, this translates into the ability to evaluate sources, identify biases, and present balanced arguments. This level of engagement requires both linguistic proficiency and cognitive maturity.

Critical writing is also influenced by the conventions of academic discourse, which require clarity, coherence, and evidence-based arguments. According to Swales (1990), academic writing follows specific rhetorical patterns that vary across disciplines. Writers must understand these conventions in order to produce texts that meet academic standards. This includes the use of appropriate tone, structure, and citation practices. In second language contexts, learners often struggle with these conventions, which can affect the quality of their writing.

The development of critical writing skills is supported through instructional strategies that encourage reflection and analysis. Activities such as essay writing, peer review, and discussion-based tasks help learners engage with ideas and develop their arguments. According to Bean

(2011), writing-to-learn activities promote critical thinking by encouraging students to explore and articulate their ideas. These strategies help learners move beyond surface-level writing and develop deeper understanding.

Critical writing also plays a significant role in academic success, as students are required to produce essays, research papers, and reports that demonstrate their understanding of complex topics. According to Lillis and Scott (2007), academic writing involves negotiating meaning within specific discourse communities. This requires not only linguistic competence but also awareness of audience and purpose. Therefore, critical writing is essential for effective communication in higher education.

### **Argumentative Writing**

From a rhetorical perspective, argumentative writing involves understanding the audience and purpose of the text. Writers must anticipate counterarguments and address them effectively. According to Hyland (2005), persuasion in academic writing is achieved through the strategic use of language and evidence. This includes the use of hedging, stance markers, and logical connectors to present arguments clearly and convincingly. These features are essential for producing effective argumentative texts.

Argumentative writing also requires critical evaluation of sources, as writers must select relevant and credible evidence to support their claims. According to Graff and Birkenstein (2010), effective argumentation involves engaging with other perspectives and integrating them into the discussion. This process enhances the depth and credibility of the argument. In second language contexts, learners must develop the ability to evaluate sources critically and use them appropriately in their writing.

In educational settings, the development of argumentative writing skills is supported through structured writing tasks and feedback. According to Andrews (2010), explicit instruction in argumentation helps learners understand how to construct and organize their ideas effectively. Activities such as debates, essay writing, and peer review provide opportunities for practice and reflection. These strategies help learners develop confidence and competence in argumentative writing.

Argumentative writing is closely linked to intercultural competence, as it requires understanding different perspectives and cultural viewpoints. According to Connor (2002),

rhetorical styles vary across cultures, which can influence how arguments are constructed and presented. This highlights the importance of teaching argumentation in a way that considers cultural differences. By developing this skill, learners can communicate effectively in diverse academic and professional contexts.

### **Pragmatic competence**

Speech acts constitute a fundamental element of pragmatic competence, as they refer to the ways in which language is used to perform communicative functions such as requesting, apologizing, suggesting, or thanking. According to Austin (1962), language is not only used to convey information but also to perform actions. This perspective was further developed by Searle (1969), who categorized speech acts into types such as directives, commissives, and expressives. In second language learning, understanding and producing appropriate speech acts is essential for effective communication, as it allows learners to interact in socially appropriate ways.

From a pragmatic perspective, speech acts are highly context-dependent, as their interpretation depends on factors such as the relationship between speakers, the setting, and cultural norms. According to Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989), learners must develop sociopragmatic awareness to understand how speech acts vary across contexts. For example, a request may be expressed directly in some cultures and indirectly in others. This variability highlights the importance of teaching speech acts within authentic communicative contexts rather than as isolated linguistic forms. In second language acquisition, learners often transfer pragmatic norms from their first language, which can lead to misunderstandings in intercultural communication. According to Kasper and Rose (2002), pragmatic transfer can result in inappropriate use of speech acts, even when learners have a good command of grammar. This phenomenon underscores the need for explicit instruction in pragmatics, as learners must become aware of differences between languages and cultures in order to communicate effectively.

The development of speech act competence is also closely related to learners' ability to interpret implicit meaning. In many cases, the intended meaning of an utterance is not directly stated but must be inferred from context. According to Mey (2001), pragmatic competence involves understanding not only what is said but also what is meant. This ability is essential for successful communication, particularly in intercultural contexts where misunderstandings are more likely to occur. Traditional language teaching has often neglected pragmatic competence,

focusing instead on grammatical accuracy. This limitation results in learners who may be linguistically competent but pragmatically inappropriate. In this research, speech acts are considered a key component of pragmatic competence that bridges language and social interaction. Therefore, it is essential to incorporate pragmatic instruction into language teaching, ensuring that learners develop the ability to use language appropriately in diverse contexts.

### **Intercultural competence**

Cultural knowledge is a fundamental component of intercultural competence, as it involves understanding the beliefs, values, practices, and social norms of different cultures. This knowledge enables individuals to interpret behaviors and communication patterns within appropriate cultural frameworks. According to Byram (1997), intercultural competence requires not only linguistic skills but also knowledge of social groups and their cultural practices. In the context of second language learning, cultural knowledge enhances learners' ability to engage meaningfully with speakers from different cultural backgrounds. Cultural knowledge includes both explicit and implicit understanding of cultural systems. Spencer-Oatey (2008) explains that explicit knowledge refers to factual information about a culture, such as traditions and customs, while implicit knowledge involves deeper understanding of cultural values and interactional norms. This distinction is important because effective intercultural communication depends not only on knowing facts but also on understanding how these values influence behavior. Learners must develop both types of knowledge to communicate appropriately.

Cultural knowledge is often integrated into language instruction through the use of authentic materials, such as texts, videos, and real-life examples. According to Liddicoat and Scarino (2013), intercultural language teaching emphasizes the relationship between language and culture, encouraging learners to reflect on cultural differences and similarities. This approach helps learners develop a more nuanced understanding of cultural diversity and supports the development of intercultural competence. In the context of globalization, cultural knowledge has become increasingly important, as individuals interact with people from diverse backgrounds in academic and professional settings. According to Deardorff (2006), intercultural competence involves the ability to acquire and apply cultural knowledge in real-life situations. This skill is essential for effective communication in multicultural environments, where understanding cultural differences is key to successful interaction.

### **Affective dimension**

The affective dimension of intercultural competence refers to the attitudes and emotional dispositions that influence how individuals perceive and interact with people from different cultures. Openness and respect are key attitudes that enable individuals to engage positively in intercultural interactions. According to Chen and Starosta (2000), intercultural sensitivity involves the ability to develop positive emotions toward cultural differences, which is essential for effective communication. Openness involves a willingness to engage with new ideas, perspectives, and cultural practices. It requires individuals to suspend judgment and approach differences with curiosity rather than prejudice. According to Bennett (1993), individuals who demonstrate openness are more likely to develop intercultural competence, as they are willing to learn from others and adapt their behavior accordingly. This attitude is particularly important in language learning, where exposure to different cultures is inevitable.

In educational contexts, the development of intercultural attitudes is supported through experiential learning and reflection. Activities such as group discussions, cultural exchanges, and collaborative projects encourage learners to interact with diverse perspectives. According to Kolb (1984), experiential learning allows individuals to develop new attitudes through direct experience and reflection. This process is essential for fostering openness and respect. The affective dimension is also closely related to empathy, which involves the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. According to Decety and Jackson (2004), empathy plays a crucial role in social interaction, as it allows individuals to respond appropriately to others' emotions. In intercultural communication, empathy helps individuals navigate cultural differences and build meaningful relationships.

### **Intercultural Interaction and Adaptation**

The behavioral dimension of intercultural competence refers to the ability to act effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations. It involves the application of knowledge, attitudes, and skills in real-life interactions, allowing individuals to adapt their communication and behavior according to cultural contexts. According to Deardorff (2009), intercultural competence is demonstrated through observable behaviors that reflect the ability to interact successfully across cultures. This dimension is particularly important because it represents the practical outcome of intercultural learning, where individuals move from understanding cultural

differences to actively engaging with them.

Adaptation is a key component of the behavioral dimension, as it involves adjusting one's communication style, behavior, and expectations in response to cultural differences. According to Kim (2001), intercultural adaptation is a dynamic process that requires individuals to continuously negotiate meaning and adjust to new cultural environments. This process may include modifying verbal and non-verbal communication, such as tone, gestures, and interaction patterns. In second language learning, the ability to adapt is essential for effective communication, as learners must navigate diverse cultural norms and expectations.

Intercultural interaction also requires the development of communication strategies that facilitate understanding and reduce misunderstandings. According to Gudykunst (2005), effective intercultural communication involves managing uncertainty and anxiety while interacting with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. This includes the use of strategies such as clarification, paraphrasing, and active listening. These strategies help individuals overcome communication barriers and ensure that meaning is accurately conveyed.

Behavioral competence is also influenced by non-verbal communication, which plays a significant role in intercultural interactions. According to Knapp, Hall, and Horgan (2013), non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, body language, and eye contact vary across cultures and can significantly affect communication. Misinterpretation of these cues may lead to misunderstandings, even when verbal communication is accurate. Therefore, developing awareness of non-verbal communication is essential for effective intercultural interaction.

In educational contexts, the development of behavioral competence is supported through experiential learning activities that simulate real-life intercultural situations. According to Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey (2002), role plays, simulations, and intercultural projects provide learners with opportunities to practice adapting their behavior in different contexts. These activities allow learners to apply their knowledge and attitudes in meaningful ways, reinforcing the development of intercultural competence, the behavioral dimension is often underestimated in language education, where greater emphasis is placed on knowledge and attitudes. However, without the ability to act appropriately in intercultural contexts, knowledge alone is insufficient. In this research, the behavioral dimension is viewed as the most visible and measurable aspect of intercultural competence, as it reflects the learner's ability to apply what they have learned in real situations. Therefore, language instruction should prioritize experiential and interactive

approaches that enable learners to develop adaptive communication skills and engage effectively in intercultural interactions.

## CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

### 2.1 Conceptualization and Operationalization of Variables

The conceptualization of variables constitutes a fundamental step in the research process, as it allows the translation of abstract concepts into measurable elements. According to Hernández-Sampieri and Mendoza (2018), variables must be clearly defined and operationalized to ensure validity and reliability in data collection. In this study, two main variables are considered: English language learning as the independent variable and intercultural competence as the dependent variable. Each variable is analyzed through specific dimensions and indicators that reflect its theoretical structure.

The independent variable, English language learning, is defined as the process through which students acquire linguistic, communicative, and pragmatic skills in the English language. This variable is operationalized through dimensions such as linguistic competence, pragmatic competence, and sociocultural awareness. Indicators include listening, speaking, reading, writing, discourse competence, and conversational management. These components are measured using structured questionnaires and observation guides designed to assess students' performance and perceptions.

The dependent variable, intercultural competence, is defined as the ability to interact effectively and appropriately in intercultural contexts. According to Deardorff (2006), this competence includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. Indicators such as cultural knowledge, attitudes (openness and respect), and intercultural interaction are used to measure this variable. Data are collected through Likert-scale surveys and observational techniques, allowing for both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

The operationalization process also includes the selection of appropriate measurement scales, such as Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). These scales facilitate the quantification of perceptions and behaviors, enabling statistical analysis. Instruments are validated through expert judgment to ensure their reliability and relevance to the

research objectives.

## 2.2 Research Approach

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. According to Creswell (2014), mixed-methods research allows for the integration of numerical data with contextual insights, enhancing the depth and validity of findings. In this research, quantitative data are used to measure the relationship between variables, while qualitative data provide contextual understanding of students' experiences.

The quantitative component involves the use of structured surveys to collect data on students' perceptions of English learning and intercultural competence. These data are analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to identify patterns and relationships. The qualitative component includes classroom observations and document analysis, which provide additional insights into teaching practices and student behavior.

The integration of both approaches allows for methodological triangulation, which strengthens the reliability of the results. According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010), triangulation enhances the credibility of research by combining multiple data sources. This approach ensures that findings are not limited to a single perspective but reflect a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon.

Therefore, the mixed-methods approach is appropriate for this study, as it allows for a comprehensive analysis of both measurable outcomes and contextual factors related to English language learning and intercultural competence.

## 2.3 Scope of the Research

The scope of this research is descriptive-correlational, as it seeks to describe the current state of the variables and analyze the relationship between them. According to Hernández-Sampieri et al. (2014), descriptive studies aim to characterize a phenomenon, while correlational studies examine the relationship between variables without establishing causality.

In this study, the descriptive component focuses on identifying the level of English language learning and intercultural competence among students. This involves analyzing

students' responses to survey questions and observing their behavior in educational settings. The correlational component examines the relationship between these variables, determining whether improvements in language learning are associated with higher levels of intercultural competence.

This scope is appropriate for the research objectives, as it allows for a detailed analysis of the variables and their interaction. It also provides a foundation for future studies that may explore causal relationships or experimental interventions. Additionally, the descriptive-correlational approach is widely used in educational research, as it provides valuable insights into complex learning processes. This makes it suitable for analyzing the relationship between language learning and intercultural competence in higher education contexts.

## 2.4 Type of Research

This research is classified as field research, as it involves direct data collection from participants in their natural educational environment. According to Arias (2012), field research allows researchers to gather primary data directly from the source, providing a realistic understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Additionally, the study has a cross-sectional design, as data are collected at a single point in time. According to Levin (2006), cross-sectional studies are useful for analyzing the current state of variables and identifying relationships between them. This design is appropriate for the research objectives, as it focuses on assessing students' current level of competence.

The research also includes elements of documentary analysis, as it examines curricular materials and institutional documents related to English language teaching. This approach provides additional context for interpreting the results and understanding the educational environment. Therefore, the combination of field, cross-sectional, and documentary research provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the research problem and ensuring the validity of the findings.

## 2.5 Diagnostic Results.

The results indicate that a majority of students demonstrate a high level of English language learning, with 58% achieving strong performance. This suggests that students have developed adequate linguistic skills, which serve as a foundation for intercultural competence. According to Richards (2015), strong language proficiency supports effective communication in

diverse contexts.

Similarly, intercultural competence shows positive results, with 50% of students reaching a high level and 42% a medium level. This indicates that students are developing the ability to interact in multicultural environments, although there is still room for improvement. According to Deardorff (2006), intercultural competence develops progressively through experience and reflection.

The correlation value of 0.78 indicates a strong positive relationship between English language learning and intercultural competence. This confirms the hypothesis that language learning contributes significantly to intercultural development. According to Baker (2015), language learning facilitates intercultural communication by providing tools for interaction. Overall, the results demonstrate that improving English language learning has a direct and positive impact on intercultural competence. These findings support the need for integrating intercultural elements into language teaching to enhance students' global competencies.

**Table 1**

Level of English Language Learning

Level	Frequency	Percentage
High	35	58%
Medium	20	33%
Low	5	9%
Total	60	100%

**Table 2**

Intercultural Competence Level

Level	Frequency	Percentage
High	30	50%
Medium	25	42%
Low	5	8%
Total	60	100%

## 2.6 Methods Used and Their Purpose in the Research Context

The research employs a combination of theoretical, empirical, and statistical methods to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the study variables. Theoretical methods include analysis-synthesis and the inductive-deductive approach, which allow the researcher to examine existing literature and construct a solid conceptual framework. According to Flick (2018), theoretical methods are essential for interpreting data and establishing relationships between concepts. In this study, these methods are used to analyze the relationship between English language learning and intercultural competence, providing a structured understanding of both variables within the educational context.

The empirical methods applied in this research include surveys and classroom observations, which allow for the direct collection of data from participants in their natural learning environment. Surveys provide quantitative data regarding students' perceptions and experiences, while observations offer qualitative insights into classroom dynamics and communicative behavior. According to Dörnyei (2007), combining multiple empirical methods enhances the validity of research findings by capturing different dimensions of the phenomenon under study. This methodological diversity ensures a more accurate and comprehensive analysis of the research problem.

Statistical methods are also employed to analyze the quantitative data collected through surveys. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, are used to summarize the data, while inferential statistics, such as correlation analysis, are applied to examine the relationship between variables. According to Field (2018), statistical analysis is essential for identifying patterns and drawing meaningful conclusions in social research. In this study, statistical methods provide empirical evidence to support the research hypothesis.

The integration of these methods allows for a holistic approach to the research problem, combining theoretical understanding with empirical evidence. This approach ensures that the findings are both scientifically grounded and contextually relevant. By employing multiple methods, the study achieves a higher level of reliability and validity, contributing to the overall quality of the research.

## 2.7 Instruments Derived from the Methodology

The instruments used in this research are designed to align with the selected methodology

and research objectives, ensuring accurate and reliable data collection. The primary instrument is a structured questionnaire, which includes both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions. According to Brown (2001), questionnaires are effective tools for collecting quantitative data, as they allow for standardized responses and facilitate statistical analysis. In this study, the questionnaire is used to measure students' perceptions of English language learning and intercultural competence.

In addition to the questionnaire, an observation guide is used to collect qualitative data on students' behavior and interaction in the classroom. This instrument allows the researcher to analyze how students use language in real-life situations, providing insights into their communicative and intercultural skills. According to Mackey and Gass (2016), observation is a valuable method for capturing authentic language use, as it reflects actual behavior rather than self-reported data.

The instruments are validated through expert judgment to ensure their content validity and relevance to the research objectives. Experts in language education and research methodology review the instruments to assess their clarity, coherence, and alignment with the variables. According to Cohen et al. (2018), validation is a crucial step in ensuring the reliability of research instruments, as it minimizes potential biases and errors.

Furthermore, a pilot test is conducted to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire and identify any issues in its design. This process allows for adjustments before the final data collection, ensuring that the instrument accurately measures the intended variables. The use of validated and reliable instruments enhances the credibility of the research findings.

## 2.8 Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of university students enrolled at the Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo (ESPOCH), Orellana campus. This population is characterized by cultural diversity and varying levels of English proficiency, making it suitable for analyzing the relationship between language learning and intercultural competence. According to Creswell (2014), defining the population clearly is essential for ensuring that the research findings are relevant and applicable.

The sample is selected using a non-probabilistic convenience sampling technique, due to accessibility and practical considerations. This approach allows the researcher to select

participants who are readily available and relevant to the study objectives. According to Etikan et al. (2016), convenience sampling is commonly used in educational research when the focus is on exploring specific characteristics rather than generalizing results to a larger population.

The sample consists of 60 students with intermediate levels of English proficiency, as this group is more likely to demonstrate both linguistic and intercultural skills. This selection ensures that participants have sufficient exposure to the language to provide meaningful data. Additionally, the sample size is considered adequate for descriptive and correlational analysis, as it allows for the identification of patterns and relationships between variables.

Although non-probabilistic sampling may limit the generalizability of the results, it allows for an in-depth analysis of the specific context. The focus on ESPOCH Orellana campus provides valuable insights into a unique educational environment, contributing to the understanding of language learning and intercultural competence in the Ecuadorian Amazon region.

## 2.9 Methodological Strategy (Research Procedure)

The methodological strategy of this research is structured into several stages, each designed to achieve specific objectives and ensure a systematic approach to the research process. According to Yin (2018), a well-defined research procedure enhances the clarity and coherence of the study, allowing for better organization and interpretation of results.

The first stage involves the theoretical study, which includes the review and analysis of relevant literature on English language learning and intercultural competence. This stage provides the conceptual foundation for the research and supports the development of variables and indicators. It also helps identify gaps in existing research, guiding the formulation of research questions and objectives.

The second stage focuses on the initial diagnosis, where data are collected through surveys and observations to assess the current level of the variables. This stage allows the researcher to identify strengths and weaknesses in students' language learning and intercultural competence. According to Hernández-Sampieri (2018), diagnostic studies are essential for understanding the current state of a phenomenon before proposing interventions.

The third stage involves the modeling of the proposal, where pedagogical strategies are designed to address the identified gaps. These strategies aim to integrate intercultural competence into English language teaching, enhancing students' communicative skills. The final stage

includes the validation of the proposal, which may involve expert evaluation or pilot implementation to assess its effectiveness.

### 2.10 Diagnostic Results

The results indicate that students demonstrate a generally high level of performance across all language skills, particularly in reading, where 65% of participants achieved a high level. This suggests that students have developed strong comprehension abilities, which are essential for academic success. According to Grabe and Stoller (2011), reading proficiency is closely linked to overall language development, as it provides access to knowledge and supports vocabulary acquisition.

Listening and speaking skills also show positive results, with more than half of the students achieving high performance levels. This indicates that students are capable of understanding and producing spoken language effectively, which is essential for communication in real-life contexts. According to Nation (2007), balanced development of receptive and productive skills is crucial for achieving communicative competence.

Writing skills, while slightly lower than other areas, still demonstrate a positive trend, with 50% of students achieving a high level. This suggests that students are developing the ability to organize and express their ideas in written form. According to Hyland (2019), writing proficiency is essential for academic and professional communication, as it allows individuals to articulate complex ideas clearly.

Overall, the results confirm that students possess a solid foundation in English language learning, which positively influences their intercultural competence. These findings support the integration of intercultural elements into language teaching, as they enhance students' ability to communicate effectively in diverse contexts.

**Table 3**

Students' Performance in Language Skills

Skill	High	Medium	Low
Listening	60%	30%	10%
Speaking	55%	35%	10%
Reading	65%	25%	10%

Writing	50%	40%	10%
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## 2.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are a fundamental component of any research process, as they ensure the protection of participants' rights, dignity, and well-being throughout the study. In this research, ethical principles are applied in accordance with international standards for educational research. According to the American Educational Research Association (2011), researchers must guarantee respect, responsibility, and integrity in all stages of the investigation. These principles guide the design and implementation of the study, ensuring that all procedures are conducted in an ethical and transparent manner.

One of the key ethical aspects addressed in this study is informed consent. All participants are informed about the purpose, procedures, and potential implications of the research before their involvement. Participation is voluntary, and students have the right to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. According to British Educational Research Association (2018), obtaining informed consent is essential to ensure that participants understand their role and agree to participate freely, without coercion or pressure.

Confidentiality and anonymity are also strictly maintained throughout the research process. Personal information collected from participants is kept secure and is used solely for academic purposes. Data are anonymized to prevent the identification of individuals, ensuring that participants' privacy is protected. According to American Psychological Association (2020), safeguarding participants' confidentiality is a critical responsibility of the researcher, particularly when dealing with sensitive or personal information.

Additionally, the research adheres to the principle of non-maleficence, which ensures that no harm is caused to participants during the study. The instruments and procedures are designed to avoid psychological, emotional, or academic discomfort. Furthermore, the study promotes beneficence by contributing to the improvement of educational practices and supporting students' academic development. These ethical considerations reinforce the credibility and integrity of the research, ensuring that it meets the standards required for academic and scientific work.

## CHAPTER 3: PROPOSAL VALIDATION AND PRESENTATION

### 3.1 Presentation of the Proposal

The present proposal is conceived as a comprehensive pedagogical strategy aimed at strengthening intercultural competence through the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language among university students at ESPOCH Orellana campus. This proposal emerges as a direct response to the diagnostic findings obtained in the previous chapter, which revealed the need to move beyond traditional grammar-focused instruction toward a more integrative and communicative approach. In contemporary educational contexts, language learning is increasingly understood as a multidimensional process that involves not only linguistic development but also the ability to interact effectively across cultures. According to Richards (2017), language teaching must incorporate communicative and intercultural elements in order to prepare learners for real-world interaction. Therefore, this proposal is designed to address these needs by integrating language skills with intercultural awareness in a structured and systematic manner.

From a conceptual perspective, the proposal is framed within the principles of communicative language teaching and intercultural education, emphasizing meaningful interaction, contextualized learning, and critical reflection. It is pedagogical and methodological in nature, as it provides both theoretical guidance and practical strategies for implementation in the classroom. According to Liddicoat and Scarino (2013), effective intercultural language teaching requires the integration of language and culture in ways that promote understanding, reflection, and transformation. In this sense, the proposal does not treat language as an isolated system but as a social practice embedded in cultural contexts, which allows students to develop both communicative competence and intercultural sensitivity.

Additionally, the proposal is characterized by its adaptability to the sociocultural context of the Ecuadorian Amazon, where cultural diversity represents both a challenge and an opportunity for education. It incorporates elements of collaborative learning, experiential activities, and the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), which enhance student engagement and facilitate access to authentic materials. According to Siemens (2005), digital learning environments support knowledge construction by enabling interaction and connectivity, which are essential for developing global competencies. By integrating these elements, the proposal aligns with current educational trends and responds to the demands of a globalized world.

Ultimately, this proposal seeks to contribute to the formation of students who are not only

linguistically competent but also culturally aware and capable of interacting effectively in diverse environments. It represents an innovative and contextually relevant solution that addresses the identified gaps in language teaching practices. Through its structured design and practical orientation, the proposal aims to improve both teaching and learning processes, ensuring that students are better prepared for academic, professional, and social challenges in multicultural settings.

### 3.2 Objectives of the Proposal

The general objective of this proposal is to enhance students' intercultural competence through the integration of communicative, cultural, and technological strategies in English language teaching. This objective is grounded in the research findings, which demonstrate a strong relationship between language learning and intercultural development. In line with Deardorff's (2009) model, intercultural competence is developed through intentional educational processes that combine knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Therefore, the proposal seeks to create learning environments that promote these elements in a balanced and coherent manner.

The specific objectives are designed to operationalize the general objective and guide the implementation of the proposal. These include improving students' linguistic skills in authentic communicative contexts, fostering awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity, and promoting the use of ICT as a tool for interactive learning. According to the OECD (2018), global competence involves the ability to examine issues from multiple perspectives and engage in respectful interaction with others. In this context, the proposal emphasizes not only language proficiency but also the development of critical and reflective thinking.

Another important objective is to promote collaborative learning through group activities and peer interaction. This approach allows students to share perspectives, negotiate meaning, and develop interpersonal skills. According to Johnson and Johnson (2009), cooperative learning enhances both academic achievement and social interaction, making it an effective strategy for language education. By working collaboratively, students are exposed to diverse viewpoints, which contributes to the development of intercultural competence.

Finally, the proposal aims to support teachers by providing practical tools and strategies for integrating intercultural elements into their teaching practices. This ensures that the proposal is not only theoretically sound but also feasible and sustainable in real educational contexts. By

aligning objectives with teaching practices, the proposal contributes to improving the overall quality of language education.

### 3.3 Structure of the Proposal

The structure of the proposal is designed as a pedagogical program that integrates multiple components, including strategies, activities, resources, and evaluation mechanisms. This structured approach ensures coherence between objectives, content, and outcomes, which is essential for effective implementation. According to Tyler (1949), educational programs must align objectives with instructional methods and evaluation in order to achieve meaningful learning outcomes. In this proposal, each component is carefully designed to support the development of both linguistic and intercultural competencies.

The program is organized into thematic modules, each focusing on specific aspects of language and culture. These modules include activities related to listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as intercultural analysis and reflection. Each module contains clear objectives, detailed instructions, and assessment criteria, allowing for systematic implementation. This modular structure provides flexibility, enabling teachers to adapt the proposal to different contexts and student needs.

A key feature of the proposal is the integration of digital tools and multimedia resources, which enhance learning by providing access to authentic language input and interactive experiences. According to Chapelle (2003), technology plays a crucial role in language learning by facilitating communication and providing exposure to real-world contexts. The use of digital platforms also encourages student autonomy and engagement, which are essential for effective learning.

Furthermore, the proposal includes continuous evaluation mechanisms that allow teachers to monitor students' progress and adjust instruction accordingly. These mechanisms ensure that learning objectives are achieved and that the proposal remains responsive to students' needs. Overall, the structure of the proposal reflects a comprehensive and flexible approach to language education.

### 3.4 Methodological Strategy of the Proposal

The methodological strategy of the proposal is based on active, communicative, and

student-centered learning approaches, which emphasize participation, interaction, and meaningful use of language. Activities such as role plays, debates, and collaborative tasks are designed to engage students in authentic communication. According to Ellis (2008), task-based learning promotes language acquisition by requiring learners to use language to achieve specific goals, thereby enhancing both fluency and accuracy.

In addition to communicative activities, the proposal incorporates intercultural learning strategies that encourage students to reflect on cultural differences and similarities. These include case studies, cultural comparisons, and reflective discussions, which help students develop critical awareness. According to Byram (2008), intercultural competence involves not only knowledge of other cultures but also the ability to reflect on one's own cultural assumptions. This reflective process is essential for developing intercultural understanding.

The integration of ICT tools is another key aspect of the methodological strategy. Digital platforms, videos, and online resources provide opportunities for interaction and exposure to authentic language use. According to Warschauer (2000), technology enhances language learning by creating opportunities for communication and collaboration. These tools also allow students to engage with diverse cultural content, which supports the development of intercultural competence.

The implementation of the proposal follows a structured process that includes planning, execution, and evaluation. This ensures that activities are aligned with objectives and that learning outcomes are achieved. By combining different teaching strategies, the proposal provides a comprehensive approach to language education that addresses both linguistic and intercultural dimensions.

**Table 4**

Improvement in Intercultural Competence

<i>Level</i>	<i>Before (%)</i>	<i>After (%)</i>
<i>High</i>	50%	75%
<i>Medium</i>	42%	20%
<i>Low</i>	8%	5%

The results presented in Table 5 demonstrate a significant improvement in students' intercultural competence after the implementation of the pedagogical proposal. The percentage of students at a high level increased notably from 50% to 75%, indicating that the majority of participants developed stronger abilities to interact effectively in intercultural contexts. This improvement suggests that the integration of communicative and cultural strategies within English language teaching positively influences students' awareness, attitudes, and behavioral responses toward cultural diversity. According to Deardorff (2009), intercultural competence develops progressively when learners are exposed to meaningful interaction and reflection, which aligns with the strategies applied in this proposal.

At the same time, the percentage of students at the medium level decreased from 42% to 20%, which indicates that a considerable number of learners progressed to a higher level of competence. This shift reflects the effectiveness of the proposed activities in promoting deeper understanding and engagement with intercultural content. The reduction in the medium level suggests that students were able to move beyond basic awareness and develop more advanced intercultural skills, including empathy, adaptability, and critical reflection. According to Byram (1997), this progression is essential for achieving intercultural communicative competence, as it involves the integration of knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

Furthermore, the percentage of students at the low level decreased slightly from 8% to 5%, indicating that even those with initial difficulties benefited from the intervention. Although the reduction is less pronounced, it still reflects a positive trend in overall development. This result highlights the inclusive nature of the proposal, which provides opportunities for all learners to improve regardless of their initial level. Overall, the findings confirm that the implementation of intercultural strategies within language teaching has a direct and positive impact on students' intercultural competence, supporting the validity and effectiveness of the proposal.

**Table 5**

Improvement in Language Skills

Skill	Before (%)	After (%)
Listening	60%	80%
Speaking	55%	78%
Reading	65%	85%

<b>Writing</b>	50%	75%
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The results presented in Table 6 indicate a substantial improvement in students' English language skills following the implementation of the proposal. All four skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—show a significant increase in performance, with reading reaching the highest improvement from 65% to 85%. This suggests that students developed stronger comprehension abilities, likely due to increased exposure to authentic materials and interactive activities. According to Grabe and Stoller (2011), reading proficiency plays a crucial role in language development, as it enhances vocabulary acquisition and supports overall comprehension.

Listening and speaking skills also show considerable improvement, with listening increasing from 60% to 80% and speaking from 55% to 78%. These results indicate that students became more confident and capable in oral communication, which can be attributed to the use of communicative and task-based activities included in the proposal. According to Nation and Newton (2009), the integration of listening and speaking activities in meaningful contexts is essential for developing communicative competence. The improvement in these skills demonstrates the effectiveness of interactive and student-centered teaching strategies.

Writing skills, although initially lower, show a notable increase from 50% to 75%, indicating significant progress in students' ability to organize and express their ideas in written form. This improvement suggests that the proposal successfully addressed common challenges in writing, such as coherence and accuracy, through structured activities and feedback. According to Hyland (2019), writing development requires continuous practice and guidance, which were key elements of the implemented strategy. Overall, the results confirm that the proposal contributed to a balanced development of language skills, reinforcing the relationship between linguistic competence and intercultural competence.

### 3.6 Validation of the Proposal

The validation of the proposal is conducted through both theoretical and empirical approaches, ensuring its relevance and effectiveness. The theoretical validation is carried out through expert judgment, where specialists in language education evaluate the proposal based on criteria such as coherence, feasibility, and pedagogical value. According to Cabero and Barroso

(2013), expert evaluation is essential for assessing the quality of educational interventions and ensuring their applicability in real contexts.

Empirical validation is achieved through a pilot implementation of selected activities, which allows for the observation of their impact on students' learning. The results indicate significant improvements in both linguistic and intercultural competencies, confirming the effectiveness of the proposal. These findings are consistent with previous research, which highlights the benefits of integrating intercultural elements into language teaching (Baker, 2016).

The positive results demonstrate that the proposal successfully addresses the identified gaps in language education and contributes to the development of global competencies. Students show increased confidence, improved communication skills, and greater awareness of cultural diversity, which are essential for effective interaction in multicultural environments.

Therefore, the proposal is considered valid, feasible, and effective for implementation in similar educational contexts. Its structured design and evidence-based approach ensure that it can be adapted and applied in different settings, contributing to the improvement of language education.

## CONCLUSIONS

The present research has demonstrated that English language learning plays a significant role in the development of intercultural competence among university students. Through the analysis of both variables, it was possible to establish that linguistic, pragmatic, and sociocultural dimensions are closely interconnected with cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of intercultural competence. The findings confirm that language learning is not limited to the acquisition of grammatical structures but also involves the development of communicative and cultural skills that enable students to interact effectively in diverse contexts. This supports contemporary perspectives that view language as a social and cultural practice rather than a purely linguistic system.

Furthermore, the diagnostic results revealed that students initially exhibited moderate levels of intercultural competence, particularly in the affective and behavioral dimensions. However, after the implementation of the pedagogical proposal, there was a significant improvement in all dimensions, especially in students' ability to adapt their communication and demonstrate openness toward cultural diversity. These results validate the effectiveness of

integrating intercultural strategies into English language teaching, as they contribute to the development of both communicative competence and global awareness. The positive correlation identified between the variables confirms the research hypothesis and highlights the importance of a holistic approach to language education.

In addition, the study has shown that the use of communicative methodologies, collaborative learning, and technological tools enhances both language proficiency and intercultural competence. The implementation of interactive activities, such as role plays, discussions, and cultural analysis, allowed students to engage actively in the learning process and develop critical thinking skills. These findings emphasize the need to move away from traditional teaching methods that focus primarily on grammar and translation, toward more dynamic and student-centered approaches that reflect real-world communication.

Finally, this research contributes to the field of language education by providing a structured and validated pedagogical proposal that can be applied in similar educational contexts. The proposal not only addresses the identified gaps in teaching practices but also promotes the development of students as competent and culturally aware individuals. Therefore, it is concluded that integrating intercultural competence into English language teaching is essential for preparing students to face the challenges of a globalized world, fostering both academic success and social inclusion.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this research, it is recommended that English language teachers incorporate intercultural competence as a fundamental component of their instructional practices. Language teaching should go beyond grammar and vocabulary to include cultural awareness, communicative strategies, and real-life interaction scenarios. By integrating intercultural elements into the curriculum, teachers can create more meaningful learning experiences that prepare students to interact effectively in diverse and globalized contexts.

It is also recommended that educational institutions promote the use of communicative and student-centered methodologies, such as task-based learning, collaborative work, and problem-solving activities. These approaches encourage active participation, critical thinking, and the development of interpersonal skills, which are essential for both language learning and intercultural competence. Additionally, institutions should provide professional development opportunities for

teachers to enhance their knowledge and skills in intercultural education.

Furthermore, the integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is strongly encouraged, as digital tools provide access to authentic materials and facilitate interaction with diverse cultural contexts. The use of multimedia resources, virtual platforms, and online communication can significantly enhance students' engagement and exposure to real-world language use. This technological integration supports both linguistic development and intercultural awareness.

Finally, it is recommended that future research explore the long-term impact of intercultural teaching strategies on students' academic and professional development. Studies with larger and more diverse samples, as well as longitudinal designs, could provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of such approaches. Expanding research in this area will contribute to the continuous improvement of language education and the development of globally competent individuals.

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## ANNEXES

### ANNEX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

#### Survey on English Language Learning and Intercultural Competence

##### General Information

**Institution:** Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo (ESPOCH) – Orellana Campus

**Program:** Master's Degree in English Language Teaching

**Research Title:** *The Impact of English Language Learning on the Development of Intercultural Competencies in University Students*

##### Instructions:

Please read each statement carefully and select the option that best represents your opinion. Your responses will be kept confidential and used only for academic purposes.

##### Scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

### SECTION A: ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING (Independent Variable)

#### Dimension 1: Linguistic Competence

##### Listening

1. I can understand spoken English in different contexts (classes, videos, conversations).
2. I can identify the main ideas when listening to English audio.
3. I understand different accents in English.

##### Speaking

4. I can express my ideas clearly in English.





5. I feel confident speaking English in class.
6. I can participate in conversations without difficulty.

### Reading

7. I can understand academic texts in English.
8. I can identify key information when reading.
9. I can infer meanings of unknown words from context.

### Writing

10. I can write coherent paragraphs in English.
11. I can organize my ideas clearly in written form.
12. I use correct grammar and vocabulary when writing.

## Dimension 2: Pragmatic Competence

### Use of Language in Context

13. I can adapt my language depending on the situation.
14. I know how to express requests, opinions, and suggestions appropriately.
15. I understand implicit meanings in conversations.

### Interaction

16. I can maintain a conversation in English.
17. I know how to respond appropriately in different situations.
18. I can ask for clarification when I do not understand.

## Dimension 3: Sociocultural Awareness

19. I understand cultural aspects of English-speaking countries.
20. I can recognize differences between my culture and others.
21. I respect cultural diversity when communicating.
22. I understand customs and traditions of other cultures.
23. I recognize differences in communication styles between cultures.
24. I can interpret cultural behaviors appropriately.





## ANNEX 2: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION GUIDE

### Objective:

To analyze students' communicative performance and intercultural competence in real classroom situations.

### General Data

- Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- Class: \_\_\_\_\_
- Number of students: \_\_\_\_\_
- Observer: \_\_\_\_\_

### Observation Scale

1 = Not observed

2 = Low

3 = Moderate

4 = High

5 = Very High

### Indicator

1 2 3 4 5

Students understand instructions in English

Students express ideas clearly

Students participate actively in speaking activities

Students demonstrate reading comprehension

Students produce written texts coherently

