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TEMA

**“SYSTEM OF ACTIVITIES BASED ON PBL PROJECTS TO ENHANCE
COMMUNICATION AND CULTURAL AWARENESS IN AN A1 CLASSROOM”**

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DEDICATORY

I dedicate this research work to my mother who provided everything she could to give education access to their children. Likewise, I dedicate this work to my family, my wife and my children, who are the strongest motivation and who have sacrificed holidays, play time, among others to finish with success my project. To my wife, who has been my support and my strength to continue to the end of this research. Moreover, I dedicate it to my older brother and to my sister-in-law, who supported me to be enrolled in this mastery program.

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Emilio Rafael Villanueva Sabando

RESUMEN

El presente estudio analiza los retos que enfrentan los estudiantes de Sexto grado en una escuela pública en Charapotó, Manabí, Ecuador, debido a la reducción de horas de enseñanza de inglés, ausencias prolongadas de docentes, y materiales ineficientes. Este estudio se centra en la implementación de ABP en aulas de nivel A1, para mejorar la comunicación y la conciencia cultural mediante un sistema de actividades, mitigando los problemas mencionados.

Para la obtención de información, se emplearon técnicas cualitativas como la entrevista y cuantitativas como el test inicial, final, y la guía de observación, obteniendo mediante el test de inicio a 25 estudiantes que el 44% alcanzó poco más de la mitad del máximo puntaje, mientras que el 64% presentó notas por debajo de los 4 puntos respecto al conocimiento en temas como presentarse en inglés, permisos, resolución de problemas, y expresión de valores, como la identidad, sensibilidad cultural, mostrando una brecha en su conocimiento justificando este estudio.

Palabras clave: Enseñanza del Inglés, adquisición de la segunda lengua, ABP, comunicación, conciencia cultural.

ABSTRACT

This research analyzes sixth graders' challenges faced in a public school in Charapotó, Manabí, Ecuador, due to reduced English teaching, extended teachers' absences, and inappropriate teaching materials. This study is focused on PBL projects' implementation in A1 classrooms to enhance communication and cultural awareness through a system of activities, mitigating the said problems.

Data collection utilized qualitative techniques like interviews and quantitative ones, for instance, pre-test, post-test, and observation checklist, obtaining through the pre-test addressed to 25 students that the 44% reached roughly over half of the highest score, whereas the 64% scored under 4 points on topics like self-introduction, permissions, problem-solving, and values expression, such as identity, cultural awareness, showing a knowledge gap, justifying this study.

Keywords: English teaching, second language acquisition, PBL projects, communication, cultural awareness.

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INTRODUCTION

The present research paper analyzes the challenges that students of Sixth grade of E.G.B. in Unidad Educativa Fiscal “Gonzalo S. Córdova de Las Cañitas de Charapotó face (sociocultural, economic and academic) emphasizing academic ones, the same emerge due to the reduction of English teaching hours in public schools, the absence of English teachers for long periods, and the lack of appropriate materials to teach English, which hinder second language acquisition.

This study is focused on implementing PBL projects in A1 classrooms, to enhance communication and cultural awareness through the application of a system of activities, mitigating the problem already mentioned.

In words of Lucero (2023), English Foreign Language Teaching is an endless challenge since [public schools] are habitually deprived of significant learning. Most students do not reach the necessary skills due to the existing limitations in the educational system, as well as in each school or grade. Hossain (2016) and Puma (2017) sustain that the absence of well-prepared English teachers and educational materials, the school location, the accessibility of technology, and the reduction of teaching hours are issues that hinder language skills performance, affecting the quality of language acquisition. Then, learners lack motivation to study English as Shahnaz and Saleha stood in 2021. When students are motivated, they get significant learning by life and for life, making the teaching-learning process a marvelous adventure.

That is to say, the material and tools utilized to teach learners must be appropriate, not only in terms of quality, but also in terms of CEFR level and complexity, making learning significant as being applied day to day, assuring cultural awareness implementation in the classroom. This is why, Project-Based Learning (PBL) is the best option when applying English language skills in real-life situations, enhancing their motivation and engagement as established by Mariscal et al. in 2023.

English is the *lingua franca* of the globalized world in which we live. Understanding the importance of teaching it in the most efficient ways is critical for successful learning. Around the world, public schools deal with several trials in the teaching-learning process of English as Izquierdo et al (2021) sustain. In addition, Torres and McCandless (2021) argue that the application of strategies has created challenges for English teachers not only in the international arena but also in Latin America. Teachers in public schools in Ecuador also face troubles, for

instance, the reduction of teaching hours and the lack of textbooks from the government. Unfortunately, English teachers in rural areas, for example, do not possess the adequate resources to help students communicate successfully, nor the training to use and apply them in the cultural context learners perform in their daily lives. The execution of this research is significant because it exposes the necessity of PBL projects to foster communication and cultural awareness in students, by applying values in the classroom.

Additionally, the performance of this work is of worth for the master candidate, to acquire knowledge and experience related to the PBL projects' management, as well as to fulfill a requirement to obtain a master's degree in English Pedagogy as a foreign language.

It is known that students in sixth grade of E.G.B. do not have textbooks, nor material to complement their English learning, save the modules that the Ministerio de Educación provided during the Covid-19 lockdown, the same that do not match the level students have in English. In addition, due to the absence of English teachers in the previous years, pupils know only a little of English, which is exacerbated because of the reduction of teaching hours. All the here exposed makes necessary that the material the teacher uses fits with the necessities and level of learners, therefore, they are presented with the following questions:

- What is the impact of the system of activities based on PBL projects in Communication and Cultural Awareness in an A1 classroom?
- What are the elements that will incorporate the system of activities in PBL projects.
- What are the implications of the system of activities based on PBL projects when enhancing Communication and cultural awareness in an A1 classroom?

Provided that the proposal of the present research work is the facilitation of a guide based on PBL projects to enhance communication and cultural awareness of children in Sixth Grade, it is framed within the areas of Pedagogy and Didactics, being these also university's research lines. In addition, the proposal incorporates the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR) and cultural tenets into learning, which contributes to best procedures in English Language Teaching (ELT), adjusting itself with the University's research lines.

This research object is the application of a system of activities based on PBL projects in Sixth grade of E.G.B. in U.E.F. Gonzalo S. Córdova, to rise consciousness in the necessity of an effective communication and the respect of culture. It comprehends the implementation of PBL projects in the classroom to enhance speaking skills at A1 level.

The General Objective of this work is: To propose a system of activities based on PBL projects to enhance Communication and Cultural awareness in an A1 classroom.

And the specific objectives are:

- To analyze the system of activities' impact in students' Communication and Cultural Awareness.
- To design the elements that will incorporate the system of activities in PBL projects.
- To determine the implications of PBL projects in students' Communication and Cultural Awareness.

As conceptual categories and variables it is established that:

As independent variable: PBL is a pedagogical approach and a student-centered teaching method according to Mariscal et al. (2023) and, accordingly, its implementation and teaching in the classroom is of great worth for the success in educating holistically to the raising generation. As Dependent Variable: Communication and Cultural Awareness are the first and second domain of Ecuadorian in-service English Teacher Standards, as well as core trends in CEFR.

The current investigation's purpose is to facilitate an instructional guide based on PBL projects to enhance communication and cultural awareness through values' application, examining the pros, cons and success. It is action research, where both theoretical and empirical methods will be analyzed and put into practice to fulfill the research objectives.

Mixed-methods approach distinguishing between qualitative and quantitative research methodologies.

- Analysis and Synthesis: Scrutinize ideas, notions and associate components as a set to comprehend limitations in communication and cultural awareness and elaborate an instructional guide based on PBL projects.
- Inductive-Deductive Method: Considering disadvantages, taking broad views, and put them into practice, to facilitate the elaboration of the instructional guide.

Empirical Methods

- Documentary Analysis: Study files, for example: research papers, journals, curriculum standards, and policies addressed by the Ministerio de Educación, to better identify the context, resources and boost English language learning in elementary school.
- Start test & Exit test: Aimed to primary school students, to study how pupils begin the school year and analyze their progress and improvement during the application of the

activities based on PBL projects to measure their progression with the use of the proposed guide.

- Interview: To be addressed to two students of Sixth grade, to know their opinions about the implementation of the system of activities in classes and to analyze the benefits of the proposed activities in their own learning.
- Observation Guide: Utilizing this tool is significant for investigation, since it allows to gather fruitful information aligned with communicative language teaching assets, contributing to the aim of enhancing communication and cultural awareness by implementing PBL projects in the classroom.

The beneficiaries of the proposed instructional guide are Sixth Grade students of Educación General Básica at Unidad Educativa Fiscal “Gonzalo S. Córdova” situated in las Cañitas de Charapotó, a rural zone in Charapotó, a poor area, where they face socioeconomical troubles. Learners show low academic performance in speaking, due to the poor knowledge, product of the long terms without English teachers, socioeconomical difficulties, the reduction of English teaching time from 5 hours to 3 hours and the lack of appropriate resources to teach English (textbooks). Some of them have no access to technology (at home) and poor contact with it at school.

Despite these challenges, most pupils have demonstrated willingness to learn and capabilities to produce words, short phrases and songs in English. By means of the instructional guide based on PBL projects, they will be empowered through significant activities to enhance communication and cultural awareness, fostering motivation, fluency and self-confidence while speaking English.

The research context of this study is addressed to students in both, morning and afternoon sessions, from a rural site situated at las Cañitas de Charapotó, Cantón Sucre, Province of Manabí, who struggle with socioeconomical challenges, the same that undermine their success in English language learning.

As a matter of fact, the instructional guide based on PBL projects will contribute significantly at school, especially to students from sixth year of E.G.B. by fostering their communication and cultural awareness, employing a system of activities that facilitate consciousness in their own learning responsibility, enhancing learning. Additionally, it will facilitate teaching, investing teachers with simple but powerful resources to work all the year and

to focus on what is worth the most when teaching a language: successful interaction through effective (not perfect) communication, so it will contribute context to further research projects related to the topic. Moreover, being a methodological guide, it provides useful techniques and activities that will allow a successful experimental study of both variables and population to be addressed.

The proposal is also important taking into consideration the following perspectives: Professional, methodological, and social need

Professional: In the professional field, the proposal will be presented as an innovative and flexible resource for teachers, who can utilize it in companionship of their own materials, to help students to become the agents that build their own learning.

Methodological: Under this perspective, the instructional guide will represent a set of assets to achieve success by integrating the curriculum in more simple and dynamic ways.

Social need: No man is an island, therefore, through the application of this resource in the students' daily lives, it will be possible to connect instructional content with cultural context, needs, and expectations of learners.

As conclusions, it can be established the following:

- Both, students and teachers at the Unidad Educativa Fiscal “Gonzalo S. Córdova” do not possess the appropriate materials to better learn and teach English and culture efficiently.
- The necessity to implement the proposal is undoubtedly urgent, provided that both learners and educators need to follow a set of guidelines to make the teaching-learning process enjoyable, significant and useful for day-to-day life.
- The elaboration of the instructional guide will benefit today and future generations with the necessary knowledge and tools to be as good as to get connected to the globalized world where they live.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

This literature review discusses the relationship between communication, cultural awareness, and the PBL approach in young learners in terms of effectiveness, challenges, and best practices. It synthesizes the existing research and theoretical frameworks to provide insights into how educators can use PBL projects to enhance both communication skills and cultural awareness among learners. The first chapter presents the theoretical background that describes the key variables—communication, cultural awareness, and PBL projects interconnecting them. It draws from appropriate literature, selecting only the information that is pertinent to support the methodology and findings.

1.1. Communication Cultural Awareness

1.1.1. Communication Effectiveness in Multicultural Settings

To stress the importance of communication in classrooms, as well as the necessity to develop cultural awareness among students, the Ecuadorian In-Service English Teacher Standards document is organized into five educational domains that fit with those stated by the General Curriculum of Education. These domains focused on English language teaching and learning, as stated by the English Teacher Standards in the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education (2014) which sustain that the first domain, “Language,” includes specific domains for language structure and communication, language acquisition, and development and language fluency as mentioned by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education (2014). Learning a language is vital for human interaction. Likewise, there is not any purpose in teaching a language if it does not result in social interaction through effective communication. Vygotsky (1962) emphasizes that communication is the vehicle that empowers people to judge their everyday proceedings through the social conducts shared with others. Moreover, as Verenikina mentioned (2003) since social context evokes interactions with people around us, Vygotsky sustained that social interactions are decisive for correct performance in the early years.

Table 1*Communication*

Domain 1. Language: Teachers know, understand, and use the major theories and research related to the structure and acquisition of language to help English language learners' (students') develop language and literacy and achieve in the content areas.	
General Standards	Specific Standards
1.a Structure of English and Communication Teachers demonstrate understanding of language as a system.	1.a.1 Understand the components of language (phonology, morphology, syntax, pragmatics and semantics) as an integrative system.
	1.a.2 Use knowledge of these interrelated aspects of language to help students develop oral, reading, and writing skills in English
	1.a.3 Demonstrate knowledge of rhetorical, and discourse structures as applied to English learning.
1.b. Language Acquisition and Development Teachers understand and apply theories and research in language acquisition and development to support their students' English language and literacy learning and content-area achievement.	1.b.1. Demonstrate understanding of current and historical theories and research in language acquisition as applied to students.
	1.b.2 Understand theories and research that explain how L1 literacy development differs from L2 literacy development.
	1.b.3.a. Recognize the importance of students' L1 and / or languages varieties, if they are not Spanish, e.g. quichua and other native languages (and that they are learning Spanish as a second language) to build on these skills as a foundation for learning English.
	1.b.3.b. Recognize the importance of students' L1 and language varieties (when they are Spanish) to build on these skills as a foundation for learning English.
	1.b.4. Comprehend and apply knowledge of socio-cultural, psychological, and political variables to facilitate the process of learning English.
	1.b.5. Understand and apply knowledge of the role of individual learning styles in the process of learning English.

Note. Adapted from the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education (2014)

As Coello and Tobar (2022) sustain, when dealing with daily conversation in a different language than the one of the mother tongue, educators must engage pupils in meaningful interaction. This means that teachers not only share grammar rules with students. Besides, learners must deal with idiomatic expressions, collocations, phrasal verbs, and other complexities of a second language. As Loveday (2017) affirms, professors are to incorporate pragmatic language and its objectives. However, many teachers opt for the “status quo,” that is to say, they focus on simple, poor speaking content because it is easiest to monitor the tasks and require of them a lesser effort. It is mandatory that educators look to enhance students' communication in classrooms.

As an endeavor to encourage English teaching and learning to communicate with each other the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) constitutes an innovative and motivating resource for both teachers and students. This framework represents the learner as a doer actively acting in the learning process and the interaction taking place in whatever environment to communicate effectively, according to the Council of Europe (2020). The new approach that international institutions in the educational field, among others, have is to mediate in the learning process of learners of a foreign language through successful interactions between them. The same institution emphasizes the importance of being mediators during teaching, to promote comprehension and fruitful interactions among individuals who might be identified as individually, sociocultural, sociolinguistic or intellectually different to some extent. Educators have also the duty to elicit a good rapport between learners, despite their differences.

It is interesting to note what the same Council of Europe establishes about how communication is enhanced through the creation of a trustful, impartial, environment that works as a cultural mediator. This space goes beyond backgrounds and cultural barriers, which engage learners in successful interactions. Guo and Chueachainat (2024) also sustain that successful interactions comprehend a strong connection and awareness on diverse cultures. This is true since humans as sociable beings are to act more freely and naturally when there is a respectful environment to do so. The importance of respect towards others' culture is core to communicate effectively crossing cultural boundaries and overcoming cultural mishaps.

1.1.2. Intercultural Competence

Provided that Ecuador is a pluricultural country, several Ecuadorian students who are learning English may have indigenous roots, being Spanish and English their second and third language respectively, the second domain is about "Culture". Ecuadorian English teachers need to have knowledge of other cultures and know how culture may affect students' acquisition of English in Ecuador as the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education (2014) establishes. Intercultural Competence or Cultural awareness is an important transversal axe that teachers must include when teaching English to learners because language is part of culture and, to engage students during the teaching-learning process, there must be a connection between them (specifically between their inner motivation) and the content provided at class, as well as a respect and an expression of their uniqueness. As expressed by Bennett (2017) the ability to own a more

complete feeling of uniqueness is known as intercultural sensibility. This emotional response is the basis to promote each other's effective communication. To do so, Susila and Risvan (2022) establish that effective communication comprehends meaningful interactions, good rapport beyond cultural boundaries, and stress control. All the elements mentioned are vital to be presented in classrooms to succeed while teaching, learning, and communicating each other's ideas.

Table 2

Culture

Domain 2. Culture Teachers know, understand, and use major concepts, principles, theories, and research related to the nature and role of culture and cultural groups to construct supportive learning environments for students.	
General Standards	Specific Standards
2. Culture as It Affects Student Learning Teachers know, understand, and use major theories and research related to the nature and role of culture in their instruction.	2.a. Understand and apply knowledge about cultural values and beliefs in the context of teaching and learning
	2.b. Understand and apply knowledge about the effects of racism, stereotyping, and discrimination to teaching and learning.
	2.c. Understand and apply knowledge about cultural conflicts
	2.d. Understand and apply knowledge about communication between home and school to enhance English teaching.
	2.e. Understand and apply concepts about the interrelationship between language and culture
	2.f. Use a range of resources, including the Internet, when possible, to learn about Ecuadorian cultures and also the cultures of English speaking and non-English speaking countries and apply that learning to instruction
	2.g. Understand and apply concepts of cultural competency, particularly knowledge about how an individual's cultural identity affects their learning and academic progress and how levels of cultural identity will vary widely among students.

Note. Adapted from Ecuadorian Ministry of Education (2014)

Richards and Renandya (2002) support the necessity to constitute communication as the main goal of teaching resources, and classroom activities have long been a central statement of communicative methodology. An emphasis on real-world content and the understanding and communication of information through language is crucial to English as a Second Language (ESL) learning and teaching based on the Communicative Language Teaching approach (CLT).

By embarking on the journey of EFL acquisition, students can access to great opportunities to practice English in real context, using it to acquire more knowledge of their own identity, and

the one of people around the world likewise. By means of activities that foster cultural sensibility, pupils become conscious of their own culture by understanding how they consider other cultures from their own perspective, and how their culture is perceived by others. To achieve the mentioned, it is necessary to communicate with a practical comprehension of the real world, so, students will perform a deeper insight of reality as well as cultural awareness, as explained by Coello and Tobar (2022).

Nowadays, most teachers of EFL aim to encourage their students to communicate effectively in the target language. It means using it as much as they can during class time and at home when possible. A core part of teaching a language is to raise cultural awareness in pupils through significant content-based activities in academic settings, the same can be applied in their daily lives because it is real, practical and accurate for the context in which learners are developing day to day. As mentioned by Coello and Tobar (2022) students achieve cultural awareness by participating in activities that help them to contemplate other learners' culture from their own perspective. Such a point of view surpasses what pupils traditionally learned in class, an approach to a more realistic and authentic communication and cultural literacy.

1.1.3. Cultural Sensitivity and Awareness

According to Marczak (2013) talking about cultural sensitivity and awareness refers to the capability to deal with each other's differences, interact effectively with strangers from all the socioeconomic groups, solve cultural conflicts, and utilize ICT to release the cultural mysteries of society. Today in our increasingly globalized world intercultural awareness is more important than ever. This is true since it allows us to break both language and cultural barriers that undermine the appropriate performance of individuals in the globalized world where successful interactions take place. The mentioned was clearly established in simple words of Cakir (2006) who said that interacting with people abroad unavoidably comprises communicating interculturally as well, surpassing prejudices and stereotypes. Understanding this fact is core to succeeding in the complex interactions that take place in classrooms and beyond.

Recent studies have highlighted the critical role of cultural awareness in effective communication. According to Chen and Starosta (2000) cultural awareness involves recognizing and respecting cultural differences, which is essential for successful intercultural interactions.

Despite the cultural barriers that might exist in the heterogeneous groups, it is necessary to reduce the tension taking place in instructional settings. Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005)

emphasize that when communicating people not only exchange knowledge. In fact, a process integrating multiple cultural insights takes place. The above-mentioned features are crucial to support the investigation hereby exposed since it has as a purpose the implementation of a system of activities to enhance communication and cultural awareness. Studies addressed by Chen and Starosta (2000) suggest that developing cultural awareness is crucial for improving communication skills in multicultural environments. Being Ecuador a pluricultural country and that language is part of culture, the expressed assures the importance to consider the cultural component in classes.

The implementation of non-traditional teaching methods with students facilitates students' creativity through the elaboration of original work. According to Kaplan (2019) it enhances a sense of ownership, and at the same time, respect for others' ideas, the tolerance of others' culture and backgrounds. Being the establishment of successful communication, as well as the promotion of cultural awareness endeavors that educators must take in their roles as guides of students, it is noted the necessity to apply these principles in the classroom. Additionally, Proaño et al. (2021) assure that proceeding in those ways produces a fulfilling feeling, which affirms success in acquiring a second language likewise. The said serves to assure the transcendence of good practices developed in classrooms by teachers, which lead to transforming the educational environment into real and successful sites of learning, learning that will be with students during all their life, the same produces real satisfaction in educators for the work performed.

1.2. Project-Based Learning (PBL)

To introduce this topic, it is worth mentioning that the University of Wisconsin-Madison (2021) considers that the training materials are components employed in educational settings for teaching a subject. These can include talks, reading texts, published or online textbooks, media components, among others. In a changing world, for Badillo (2020) the need to develop adequate and updated instructional programs that bridge the gap between what students know and the daily life skills they need, makes schools to be in high pressure. In both private and public institutions there is an increasing demand for better services and better access to them. The lack of methodological materials to enhance students learning process in the English area for instance, is a tough and very common problem around the world. In Ecuador, this issue has become more visible within the last eight years when English teaching hours have been reduced and wholistic textbooks provided by the government stopped to be produced. The mentioned challenges have

undermined significantly students' good performance in English, situating Ecuador in the last position in the region's ranking of English Proficiency by skills, according to the English First English Proficiency Index (2023).

In words of Rojas (2022) the instructional constituents can encourage or discourage students, then an educator ought to recognize what kind of resources to use, to help students to be engaged in class and gain knowledge. Most students do not reach the necessary skills due to the limitations in the educational system, as well as in the access of meaningful materials to learn English. Many of the public education challenges are out of control of trainers; however, the educational community sees that the quality of education has decreased. Besides, the implementation of inaccurate curricula and the lack of quality time spent by students on demanding academic materials, have worsened the problem as stood by Kirst (1981). There is a tendency in public schools worldwide and in our country in which the scarcity of different resources (academic, logistic, among others) can significantly affect the academic performance of learners.

The need of well-instructed English teachers, training materials, physical location, accessibility of technological equipment, and a restricted number of teaching hours are issues that obstruct the performance of language skills and hinder the quality of language teaching and learning, as observed by Hossain (2016) and Puma (2017). Even though the limitations cited by Hossain and Puma can be presented in both private and public schools, it is more common in public institutions. Izquierdo et al. (2021) emphasize that the educational public sector is the one that faces the biggest challenges regarding the quality of teaching and learning of English. This is true, provided that many countries (especially developing ones) deal with economic downturns in the educational field, which hinder the efficiency of the resources to teach English. In rural areas, for instance the poor quality of English education is in detriment, altering negatively the development of students and impairs the chances of achievement in a potentially competitive world.

Issues that inhibit the improvement of English language in rural areas are the lack of well-trained educators, appropriate training materials in availability, deplorable facilities, limited or null access to technology to empower and dynamize the teaching-learning process, which make uninspired students. Shahnaz and Saleha (2021) mention that the difficulties mentioned above make rural schools of lower quality than urban schools. Due to pupils' demotivation, there are many who drop out of school, preferring to leave school to start working, due to the great

necessity to contribute to the scarce income obtained by their parents or because. All the issues mentioned make rural education a real challenge for both teachers and learners.

Cronquist and Fiszbein (2017) mention that to warrant effective learning, it is mandatory that schoolbooks and multimedia are accessible and suitable for the application of the target language in classrooms. In Ecuador for example, the English modules provided by the Ministry of Education do not have enough concordance with the social and cultural context students live, overall, with the English level of students. Additionally, English as a foreign Language teaching (EFL) in Ecuador faces another big challenge regarding the timing of English classes, because of the reduction in teaching time hours of English. The said may be proved since these modules were improvised because of the pressure to make online teaching material available during the COVID 19 pandemic, causing learning difficulties, mismatching between the English level of students and the one the modules were prepared, and a poor connection between the identity and cultural contexts students perform their daily lives; the resulted product of the remarked above, is the low academic achievement in students. These aspects previously discussed made this research study necessary.

Academic performance challenges are permanent trials occurring in public schools in both global and local settings. These limitations must see with pupils' emotional performance, social context, learning problems, family relationships, lack of rapport with their teachers, their peers, as well as the scarcity of available educational aids to promote their learning process, as mentioned by Rojas (2022). Troubles found in public education, as well as in students' mindsets have been the object of extensive studies and the reason of the creation and the origin of new theories, methodologies, methods and strategies in Education. New approaches and different techniques have also emerged in the English as a foreign language teaching-learning to face the challenges mentioned. The Ecuadorian Ministry of Education (2019) motivates the usage of innovative approaches, strategies, and methods for teaching inclusive (projects, expositions, work groups, pair groups, among others); this is so as an effort to surpass the boundaries existing in current education.

The employment of task-based approaches and methods such as Project-Based Learning (PBL) projects are considered for many, for instance Heick (2021) as a learning process itself which involves designing, developing and completing a project. The conception of creating a project can be challenging to some extent but also is an invitation to leave the traditional "status

quo” in which many teachers stay. Besides, Yamada (2021) appeals for implementing dynamic teaching-learning strategies, such as PBL projects. The mentioned type of learning is also an approach and a teaching method that has become popular in many countries and educational institutions. Project-Based Learning projects appears as the best option when applying English language skills in real-world situations, promoting their enthusiasm and commitment as said by Mariscal et al. (2023). The main goal of this approach is making students live in real situations in the classrooms, making learning fun and fruitful, since it is oriented to their needs.

1.2.1. Collaboration and Teamwork

To introduce PBL projects, it is trustworthy to remark that for many researchers John Dewey is the creator of Project-Based Learning, while others claim that William Kilpatrick was his pupil, according to Ghosheh et al. (2021). Dewey (1897) affirmed that learning occurred throughout life, when and while pupils interact and collaborate each other's to complete real chores. This affirmation coming from the father of PBL is core to comprehend the realistic nature of this approach. For Ghosheh et al. (2021) the focus of PBL is to acquire knowledge by performing something specific in the class, investigating, solving problems, working in groups, collaborating and taking different roles, which enable students with the necessary life skills and comprehension of the tasks and their purposes. The mentioned assures that Dewey and even his pupils Kilpatrick knew the real purpose of education: to understand that education does not prepare students for life, but is life itself, and they looked for manners to change the misconceptions about it.

1.2.2. Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving

According to Mariscal et al. (2023), PBL is a learner-centered teaching method that utilizes real-world problems as a guide to comprehend and to motivate students to work cooperatively to come up with solutions using abilities such as researching, critical thinking, interaction, problem solving, decision making and creativity. Being the capabilities mentioned 21st-Century skills; it is noted that PBL endows pupils with the necessary aptitudes to be competitive enough in the globalized world they live in. As a learner-centered approach, PBL aims to broaden abilities that are proper of each individual and those fomented in group working, as well as those that are transferable, as highlighted by Ghosheh et al. (2021); Brooks and Kerschen (2022). Based on the premise exposed by the previous authors, it is clear the efficacy of PBL in enhancing different learners' abilities, which makes the execution of this approach and teaching method feasible in

classrooms. Guo et al. (2020) acknowledge that PBL is a cooperative teaching approach based on inquisition, investigation, and analysis. Learners integrate, apply, and build their own knowledge the same time they work collaboratively to come up with solutions to complex issues while they adapt the learned through reflecting on their findings. In other words, through the application of PBL projects in classrooms, it is possible to see a real engagement in pupils' own learning. Provided that many students at elementary school are willing to learn (even though they present serious difficulties when they try to speak, write, read or listen into English) it facilitates the execution of PBL projects in the classrooms.

1.2.3. Authenticity and Relevance

Since the execution of PBL projects in the teaching-learning process have demonstrated great efficacy because of its alignment with real-world issues and the application of knowledge and skills, it is worthwhile recounting their many benefits in the classroom and to highlight its characteristics: (a) The PBL approach has been recognized in many nations by their educators, academics, and statesmen, which is affirmed by Novak and Krajcik (2020). Being Ecuador one of the said countries, the implementation of this teaching method in classroom is relevant and feasible. (b) The same authors acknowledge that a key benefit of PBL is the possibility to engage learners in asking teachings, the same is a scientific practice, as well as other exercises of that type, participating in significant investigation as if they were scholars, building in that way their own knowledge. As Novak and Krajcik (2020) state, students become more experienced on scientific practices as they collaborate with each other's during project planning and its execution, enhancing by means of these their cognitive capabilities and comprehending the seen topic, by elaborating investigation questions and strategies.

This is true due to the scientific nature of PBL, the same pursues as a main goal, the resolution of problems by students' interaction between themselves and between the problems exposed and the possible solutions. This is possible thanks to the possibility to connect with learners' interests, goals, or experiences lived in their daily lives. In similar words and based on what Miller and Krajcik (2019) affirm, an important feature of PBL is that it is oriented to respond to a core interrogation, the same orients the project execution, the same has the potential to produce a tangible, meaningful outcome or product. (c) PBL is focus on the fulfillment of learning goals, since it facilitates greater academic performance than the one facilitated by

traditional teaching, according to Cheng and Yang (2019). The same authors add that to obtain better outcomes it is necessary to execute PBL for a minimum of two times per week.

Following with the benefits of PBL, we also note that: (d) Project-Based Learning can support EFL students with the possibility to apply their language skills in real-world settings, encouraging and engaging them. (e) It is also important because they bring about the conditions to develop learners' critical thinking and critical thinking skills while working collaboratively with others; at the same time, EFL learners can develop their language skills while gaining valuable experience working with others in a real-world context. Several researchers have also established PBL as a teaching method that encourages teaching and learning through collaboration, for instance Viro et al., (2020). They recall the collaborative and motivating nature of this approach, the same enhances a feel of fellowship at school, associating theory with practice and providing flexibility in teaching. This teaching method constitutes itself as a sponsor of modern practices, oriented to the student and thought to assist educators in their roles as guides of students in the process of teaching-learning.

(f) In line with the exposed by Morrison et al., (2020) PBL contributes to build good rapport between teachers and students. This is true since within the planning, organization and execution of PBL projects, the teacher must be closer to the students' needs, requirements and doubts, and at the same time, pupils approach their teachers with questions, answers and concerns about the tasks required under the exigences of PBL format. (g) PBL is a teaching method looking for enhancing different skills in learners and it is not focused on content, which is in parallel with the said by Novak and Krajcik (2020) who emphasized the latest changes adopted for many countries regarding their educational curricula more focused on skills than on content. Many systems of education around the world look for helping their students to obtain better academic results through the strengthening of language skills, which is feasible within the execution of the activities proper of PBL projects. Aghayani (2024) reflects in the fact that PBL projects improve and boost Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking in pupils, the four macroskills to acquire and master a language. A core indicator that determines PBL's success while learning and acquiring English, is its efficacy to invest learners with the capability to go beyond their limits and expand their knowledge and abilities within the putting-into-practice of the macro skills in the classroom.

(h) Pan et al. (2020) emphasize the fact that pupils and educators' stage different performances such as those of developers, winners, leaders, and coordinators to bridge the gap between the tergiversation and the width of PBL projects while applying them at class. Even though there is an overwhelming range of activities that students perform once the implementation of PBL projects in classrooms, it is through taking different roles that it becomes less tiring to monitor such activities for teachers. (i) Apart from the different performances students develop while working in PBL, there are different tools that are employed during PBL execution, for example technological tools. Even though technology can be useful during PBL presentation and performance, in the words of Chen and Yang (2019), it is not vital for PBL development. In fact, as a student-center method, whatever tool included while carrying out PBL, takes a secondary role due to the nature of it.

(j) Nagarajan and Overton (2019) sustain that an exceptional characteristic of PBL is the potential for producing a final and meaningful product, the same may be presented to members of the community or class. This fact is significant since it shows how useful this method and approach is in educational settings, not only to work collaboratively, but to generate positive outcomes that may be translated into tangible and meaningful products. The mentioned are representations of the students' project materialized ideas that reflect the obtained knowledge, which allows others to give feedback and facilitates students' reflection and knowledge's broadening, as said by Aksela M. and Haatainen O. (2019). In addition, several studies, for instance, the one conducted by the Buck Institute for Education (2019), reveal that PBL promotes student learning and may be more efficacious than traditional training. It is worth mentioning that, since teachers must be innovative and searchers of better teaching practices, they ought to promote engaging in pupils during the teaching-learning process.

It is noteworthy to mention a quality that makes this approach authentic: its characteristic that allows students to set their own learning goals and not only teachers, which highlights the student-centered feature of it, due to it also focuses on the learners' interests, as emphasized by Markula A. and Aksela M. (2022). The exposed by the said shows an especial connection between pupils' interests, goals and even experiences with PBL projects' characteristics, which makes the implementation of the current proposal more feasible. The research results exposed by the mentioned authors sustain that students learned independence, decision-making, critical thinking, collaborative skills, among others. In the words of Mariscal et al. (2023) learners

confessed feeling more autonomous, developing speaking abilities, and feeling more involved in activities where they could decide by themselves instead of receiving instructions in a passive way. The assertion conveys the premise that good pupils' learning results come as consequence of study interest, as Barattucci et al. (2021) noted. When students are motivated, they get significant learning by life and for life, making the teaching-learning process a marvelous adventure. Success in education is produced not through "perfect" teaching or teacher, but through engaging and interesting situations planted by the exercise of education.

Prolific learning results are fruits of academic interest and language acquisition experience, as expressed by Lo et al. (2022). Therefore, it is mandatory for teachers to realize if their practices are fruitful to convey the love for learning in students. Markula and Aksela (2022), Morrison et al. (2020), and Tsybulsky and Muchnik-Rozanov (2019) consider that not only teachers, but pre-service training teachers must learn about PBL, its key characteristics and its implementation. Being learning motivation a direct factor affecting learners' intellectual and personal development, according to Zhang et al. (2022) likewise learning experience acts as a connection between academic motivation and learning success., which are visible features in PBL learning. In the words of Morrison et al. (2020) twenty-first century skills must be the object of PBL's implementation due to the student-centered nature of it as well as the capacity to create through it solid and special ties between educators and learners.

To sum on the said, and, by exploring all the benefits of PBL projects, it is established that are necessary and important tools to enhance good students learning outcomes. The mentioned before serves to empower pupils with the capacity to overcome their learning and language barriers, and to help them to be prepared to face the difficulties that living in a globalized world represents. Thus, it is important that educators consider the practical issues and collaborative interaction as constants while mastering PBL. All the mentioned need to be aligned with teachers' endeavor to implement the key features of PBL in their classroom projects.

Chapter 2: Methodology for Investigation and Diagnosis

The description of the identified needs, strengths, and weaknesses of the participants leads to the elaboration and the application of the system of activities based on PBL projects. The researcher affirms that mediation empowers Sixth grade students' communication and cultural awareness and establishes the foundation for meaningful and effective teaching-learning practices by making a parallel between the proposal with the diagnostic findings explained in this chapter.

2.1. Research Approach

The current research project aims to describe the implications of a system of activities based on Project Based Learning (PBL) projects to enhance Communication and Cultural Awareness in 6th graders at Unidad Educativa Fiscal "Gonzalo S. Córdova". The mixed methods approach was implemented in this investigation. In the words of Creswell and Plano (2011), a mixed method is a research paradigm that has its own philosophical conventions and methods of investigation. As a methodology, it includes theoretical expectations to provide instructions for collecting and analyzing data from multiple sources in a single study. The mixed method employed, which comprises both qualitative and quantitative data, covers the proposal's expectations, to recognize what comes to pass, why it passes, and in what manner the investigator fulfills the objectives. Likewise, this investigation implements a non-probabilistic design to determine a cause-effect relation between both independent and dependent variables, meanwhile it is of a quasi-experimental nature.

Qualitative research is called exploratory and is used to discover patterns in ideas and views, whereas quantitative research is used to measure the issue through producing numerical data or data that can be translated into usable statistics. Thus, qualitative studies typically have what, how, and why questions to address research questions that involve the collection of qualitative data rather than quantitative data. Free-form text answers to a questionnaire and a recorded interview are examples of such data. The collected information is the product of more in-depth methods and problems to be acquired. Qualitative research uses participant observation, in-depth interviews, document analysis, and focus groups to gather and analyze data (Yilmaz, 2013).

Qualitative and quantitative research is executed to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data respectively. As stated by Yilmaz (2013) qualitative research is exploratory

research and comprehends qualitative data by exploring information and used to notice patterns in points of view, meanwhile quantitative one is measured to comprehend the issue by obtaining numerical data to be used in statistics. Quantitative research is related to investigations that focus on how and why phenomena vary and gives answers in numerical data. Qualitative data are collected by one hand, through documentary analysis such as study files, for example: research papers, journals, curriculum standards, and policies addressed by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, to better identify the context, resources and boost English language learning in elementary school; interviews will be addressed to sixth graders students, as well as an observation checklist. On the other hand, a pre-test and a post-test will be given to obtain quantitative data and to check the progress of students along this investigation.

2.2. Research Method

The Project titled “System of activities based on PBL projects to enhance Communication and Cultural Awareness in A1 classrooms” is action research, where both theoretical and empirical methods are analyzed and put into practice to fulfill the research objectives. Likewise, it is a mixed investigation since it conceives quantitative and qualitative data for the research object’s achievement.

This research requires the application of a non-probabilistic design to launch a cause-and-effect relationship between the independent variable “PBL projects and the dependent variable “Communication and Cultural Awareness”. Due to the quasi-experimental characteristic of this study, the chosen population is a disparate one because it was not randomly selected. Students of sixth grade of EGB are the only group tested through the implementation of a system of activities based on PBL approach. This approach lets the investigator find theories and data about the success of the research and the implementation of PBL projects.

The focus on qualitative approach will be utilized to better understand the PBL method founded on previous knowledge that have demonstrated its accuracy during the last years; as Bhandari (2020) affirms, this approach can be also utilized to create new ideas. This method constitutes a field-based, cross-sectional approach that integrates interviews to two students, the same is based on the Needs Analysis Matrix, to comprehend the wants and needs of learners.

Literature review from different researchers has also been required as well as observation, a pre-test, and a post-test, which will offer insightful ideas on PBL projects that will be adapted to students within their English courses. The quantitative one will be focused on assessing

students' performance during the application of the investigation, to acquire the most accurate results for the system of activities' application. This procedure pursues the analysis of numerical data that will provide the results of a pretest, an interview, and a posttest applied to the students of the sample, finding in that way the existing trends among students, as Bhandari (2020) indicates.

2.3. Variables

Table 3*Matrix Operationalization of Independent Variable*

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION	DIMENSIONS	INDICATORS	SCALES
Project-Based Learning (PBL) Projects	Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a learner-centered approach that supports insightful learning by exploring real-world problems actively, according to Peterson (2012).	Authenticity and Relevance	Alignment with real-world issues, challenges, or industries to applicate knowledge and skills	Always Sometimes Rarely Never
			Connection to learners' interests, goals, or experiences	
			Potential for producing tangible, meaningful outcomes or products	
		Collaboration and Teamwork	Teamwork and collaboration in project planning and execution	
			Distribution of roles and responsibilities among team members	
			Ability to resolve conflicts and work through challenges collaboratively	
		Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving	Opportunities for inquiry, investigation, and analysis	
			Use of evidence-based reasoning and decision-making	
			Capacity to adapt and iterate solutions based on feedback and reflection	

Note. Elaborated by Emilio Villanueva Sabando

Table 4*Matrix Operationalization of Dependent Variable*

DEPENDENT VARIABLE	CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION	DIMENSIONS	INDICATORS	SCALES
Communication And Cultural Awareness	The first makes reference to the capacity to express feelings, emotions, ideas, etc., to others. The second has to see with the intuition to understand their own culture and others' cultures and be capable to interact in harmony with the differences. In the words of Akdere et al. (2021) and Toscu and Erten (2020), they imply the knowledge of how to deal with the individual's understanding of standards of their own culture and others, to be successful while interacting with people who do not share the same cultural background, and to build bridges in conditions of cultural diversity.	Intercultural Competence	Knowledge of cultural norms, values, and customs	Always Sometimes Rarely Never
			Respect for cultural diversity	
			Ability to navigate cultural differences and conflicts constructively	
		Cultural Sensitivity and Awareness	Respect for cultural diversity, perspectives and inclusion	
			Openness/tolerance to learning about different cultures	
			Ability to recognize and challenge stereotypes and prejudices	
		Communication Effectiveness in Multicultural Settings	Ability to communicate clearly and effectively across cultural boundaries	
			Skill in resolving communication barriers and conflicts arising from cultural differences	
			Success in building rapport and achieving common goals despite cultural diversity	

Note. Elaborated by Emilio Villanueva Sabando

2.4. Instruments

In this part the data collection tools used in the research are defined. Instruments were consciously chosen to work in parallel with the research objectives and to collect significant data on the usefulness of PBL projects to enhance Communication and Cultural awareness between Sixth grade learners in Las Cañitas de Charapotó.

2.4.1. Observation checklist

The observation checklist consists of a series of items that facilitates the investigator to determine students' strengths and weakness in the fields to be tested, to measure learners' effective communication and cultural awareness before the implementation of a system of activities based on PBL projects. Utilizing this tool is significant for the investigation, since it allows to gather fruitful information aligned with communicative language teaching assets, contributing to the aim of enhancing communication and cultural awareness in the classroom.

2.4.2. Pre and Post-Test Assessments

The pre and post-test assessments are performance-based speaking and writing tasks addressed in a controlled environment. In the words of Bacon (2022) these tests comprise measuring contestants' knowledge previously and posterior the application of any study. Both evaluations comprehend questions that assess effective communication and cultural awareness of students in the academic setting. During the pre-test, as well as in the post-test, students are invited to respond in both oral and written format, emphasizing the fact that in the post-test pupils are expected to respond more accurately than in the pre-test. The pre and post-test are focused on learners' capability to write correctly and fluency when speaking. These assessments aimed to assess the success achieved by pupils in their communication and cultural awareness after the implementation of PBL projects.

2.4.3. Interviews

Interviews are the widest technique employed in qualitative research, commonly fused with observation. Interviews invest contestants with the context to express their emotions, thoughts, wants, prejudices and mindsets about the problem they observe and experience in any institutional setting, as Dunwoodie et al. (2022) express. The students interview consists of a set of six questions addressed to two students of Sixth grade to know students' insights and opinions about the system of activities based on PBL projects, as well as to report their experiences with the same. The interview includes questions regarding the changes that students have suffered in the way they communicate with the members of the class, as well as the acquisition and put-into practice of knowledge and values during

the same, their perceptions about the system of activities and the suggestions that they may have after the implementation of the system of activities in class.

2.5. Validation of Instruments

According to Sudaryono et al. (2019) validation of instruments is related to the goals or decisions set in a study, focused on the results given by the instruments employed in research, the same are structured according to rubrics to fulfill the said results. It is mandatory that the tools employed in the investigation be significantly outlined to cover the needs of the study and that they comprehend the design of appropriate guidelines to conduct the corresponding actions successfully.

Validating or validation of instruments comprehends inferring the data obtained during the application of the assessment tools and the corresponding triangulation of data during the analysis results, as established by Lamprianou and Athanasou (2009).

The instruments designed in this thesis were an observation checklist, a pre-test and a post-test and an interview addressed to two students of the selected sample, the tools are to be validated by an expert through the Validation Dossier through experts' judgements, where the academic evaluated each item to verify its pertinence, relevance, and accuracy. In addition, the expert provided ideas to make the instruments clearer, more appropriate, and effective.

2.6. Population, Sample, and Sampling Selected

The population at Unidad Educativa Fiscal "Gonzalo S. Córdova" in Las Cañitas de Charapotó has 991 students. Nevertheless, the choice sample for this investigation is of 25 students. In the words of Shukla (2020), sample is a representative section of a population to be studied, a subdivision of a population that is representative and contains all the elements of the entire population. The sampling utilized in this investigation is a convenient one. The non-probabilistic sampling employed, was choice according to the next reflections: a. The sixth graders in this group belong to an A1 English level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). b. The ages in the group oscillate between 9 to 11 years. c. Pupils are willing to participate in this study. d. Learners' parents have signed a permission to allow their children to participate in this study.

Table 5*Sample Population*

Participants	Sample Population	Percentage
Women	10	40%
Men	15	60 %
Total	25	100%

Note. Elaborated by Emilio Villanueva Sabando

2.7. Data Analysis and the Ethical Considerations

The current study is designed under the expected ethical considerations that an academic work is required to be, to assure the integrity of all the contestants and that of the investigation.

The principal of the institution granted permission to work on this proposal with the sixth grade that comprised 36 students (25 will be taken into account as the sample). Parents allowed their children to participate in this research due to the benefits it brings for them. A written permission was granted, allowing the researcher to take and publish pictures and videos during the proposal implementation. Anonymity was respected within all the stages of the investigation to honor the confidence that care givers brought to the researcher. Before the intervention, both students and parents were apprised that their participation was voluntary and that pupils are free to quit the study anytime if considered. Moreover, they were informed that their personal data would not be exposed, which will be found in the Appendixes section.

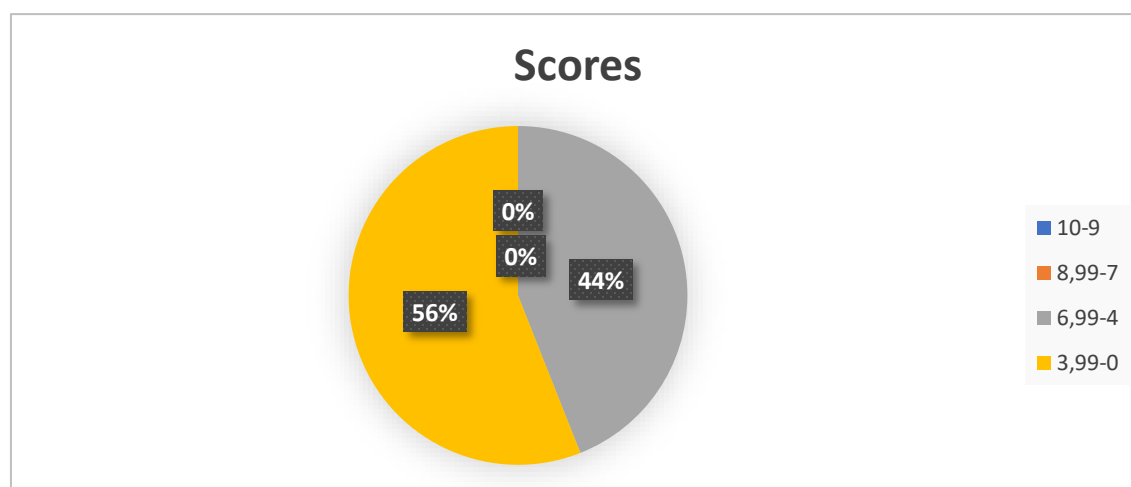
2.8. Findings: Initial Diagnose

From the observation checklist it was inferred that students did not demonstrate a complete comprehension of the topics that were covered during the first class of the academic year. Notwithstanding, they asked questions about, and tried to answer to the same, showing willingness to learn despite the language barriers. Even though they manifest interest in the topics they see in class, there is not a complete engagement between companions, manifesting some disagreement with the lack of knowledge of those students with more difficulties. It is also visible that they use proper names to address to their peers, however they need to reinforce respect to others by listening to their comments and question even if they are out of context, as well as listening to instructions carefully while do not make distracting noises or movements when their classmates or the teacher intervene during classes. Nevertheless, they admit their errors and are to receive feedback from teachers, which makes the application of the proposal and the values that the same has implicit in it more feasible. Once the pretest

was addressed to students, the lack of knowledge regarding the components of the proposal was visible for the observer, giving the mentioned test the following results:

Figure 1

Results of the Pre-test



Note: Elaborated by Emilio Villanueva Sabando

From the obtained data, it was visible that more than half of the class performed the lowest scale in the evaluation scoring 3,99 to 0. The questions included in both the pre-test and post-test offered an insight of students' performance before and after the application of the proposal, as well as a relationship between the variables of this study:

Introducing oneself: the researcher looked for establishing that identity starts by knowing oneself and be able to transmit this knowledge to others in the classroom, while the students recognize that the place where they live is part of what they are. In the permissions' question, the object was to teach students that deal with a necessity that they can cover it by applying some values, for instance respect through the employment of the corresponding phrases to obtain the requested.

In the first, second, and fourth questions there is a stretch relationship with the dependent variable: communication and cultural awareness since they evoke the capability of individuals to communicate, in this case their names, ages, addresses, and their needs, as well as to describe the place where they live, which is unavoidably linked to culture and identity. In the third question, learners were expected to share their opinions about the most representative cultural items in Ecuador and how to explain their choices to a foreigner. This is important since language is part of culture and no one can learn a language without learning about the culture it comes from. Finally, questions 5 and 6 are more linked to the independent variable: Project-Based Learning (PBL) projects, if they put the learners

into situations where they need to use some features of PBL to solve them, for instance critical thinking and problem solving, values application, among others.

Regarding the results of the pre-test, students struggled mainly with the first and second question related to communication skills when introducing themselves and asking for permissions in the class. Pupils showed better results when were asked the fifth question, a multiple-choice one containing the problem-solving component, in which they were expected to choose the most appropriate topics to deal with the language barrier in an anglophone country. Finally, they were more successful in the sixth and last item, a multiple-choice question too, in the same was required for them to choose the values that the characters of the story exercised towards their peer.

Table 6

Results of the Observation checklist

Category	Response		
	Yes	No	N/A
Comprehension			
The student demonstrates comprehension of the topic by following the directions given by the teacher.		X	
Ask and answer questions about the activity performed in class.	X		
Reviews or mentions prior class material or activities	X		
Appears well prepared for class		X	
Effectively uses the system of activities and communication tools to facilitate its own learning		X	
Facial expressions indicate the pupil is willing to learn	X		
Body language manifests a solid engagement with the class		X	
The learner shows a strong interest about the topic	X		
Demonstrates enthusiasm while performing the activities.			
Knows and uses companions' names	X		
Responds respectfully to peers' lack of knowledge or understanding.		X	
Treats class members equitably		X	
Listens carefully to others' comments and questions		X	
Demonstrates an in-depth knowledge of the subject matter		X	
Responds confidently to student inquiries		X	
Speaks about course content with confidence and authority.		X	

Is able to admit error and/or insufficient knowledge		X	
Listen intently to others.		X	
Does not make distracting noises or movements		X	
Listen carefully to instructions		X	
Communicates a sense of enthusiasm and excitement		X	

Note: Elaborated by Emilio Villanueva Sabando

The table above shows that students struggle in some evaluated aspects such as comprehension of the topic, following directions, being well-prepared and utilizing communication tools effectively. Additionally, they present difficulties in building rapport with peers, lacking respectful and attentive interaction among them, mainly regarding active listening. In contrast, pupils demonstrate some level of understanding when asking and answering questions and checking material previously, but overall, they manifest willingness to learn through body language and facial expressions, the same motivates the implementation of the proposed system of activities.

Chapter 3: Presentation and Validation of the Proposal

3.1 Validation of the Proposal

Project-Based Learning (PBL) projects' proposal followed the necessary procedure to validate communication and cultural awareness' enhancement, from a theoretical perspective:

3.1.1 Empirical Validation

To make feasible the current proposal, students were exposed to different situations to help them to experience PBL projects in class: First, they were invited to introduce themselves through an exposition in front of the class, highlighting the importance that each of them have in family and society. They were also asked to share with the teacher what is the most representative cultural item of our culture and they represent it through a picture and a brief explanation. In addition, they were invited to share their feelings and the actions they must take in common situations where children of their age deal with bullying in class, the same is perpetrated by their own peers. Learners were also committed to think about authentic problems that their community face and hypothetical ones, in which they were asked about how they could contribute to a resolution through a specific topic learned in class. After implementing this proposal, some minor corrections were made for instance, the inclusion of blended learning in class.

3.2 Theoretical Foundation

The current proposal is focused on a system of activities based on Project-Based Learning projects (PBL projects) to promote communication and cultural awareness in A1 classrooms. This methodology was born from William Kilpatrick' studies in 1918, one of the precursors of PBL. In the words of Guerrero et al., (2021) it is an active learning approach that comprehends the creation of a project that looks for responses to specific problems through engaging activities that foment the desire of learning in students. It is worth to mention that while students work together to find answers or solutions to a set of problems, they participate collaboratively by applying scientific practices such as asking questions, setting goals, searching for specific information, solving problems, among others. And indeed, they also take different roles during the projects to boost the necessary life skills they will need to come up with a solution and lately, to apply these abilities in real-life contexts while communicating and interacting with their fellows.

Communication and Cultural awareness is the first section or thread of the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum, as well as the first and second domain in the Ecuadorian in-service English Teacher Standards, as stated by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education (2016). The first makes reference to the capacity to express feelings, emotions, ideas, etc., to others. The second has to see with

the intuition to understand their own culture and others' cultures and be capable to interact in harmony with the differences. In the words of Akdere et al. (2021) and Toscu and Erten (2020), they imply the knowledge of how to deal with the individual's understanding of standards of their own culture and others, to be successful while interacting with people who do not share the same cultural background, and to build bridges in conditions of cultural diversity. The connection of PBL with successful communication, as well as the flexibility of this method to be applied in different cultural settings makes of it an ideal resource to promote cultural awareness in classrooms, this is why many countries in the world implement it in their educational curricula.

According to Andrade et al. (2020) the procedure in which PBL projects are performed is characterized by positive communication, planning, designing, and completing stages, all of them relying over the principles of the constructivism. The completion of objectives through research techniques is core for the obtention of a final product. This outcome must be tangible, significant, and appropriate for the purpose of the project. By resulting in a significant product, pupils feel more engaged in the development of the project, arising curiosity and interest along the process. The mention makes PBL projects a powerful tool to motivate learners and help educators to create learning environments.

Project-Based Learning projects (PBL) is a student-centered approach and also a method that boost learning across appealing, realistic activities that challenge learners to apply knowledge, critical thinking and problem-solving skills to resolve problematics given in a classroom. This method and approach is a branch of Communicative and Language Teaching (CLT) approach the same goes beyond than any outdated project, which aim is to engage students, during the process of teaching-learning process. as exposed by Guido, M. and Melvin, M. (2022). The insights about problem solving and projects performance to deal with is core in the constitution of this method. The assessment of learning is based on projects development, in which learners are to be evaluated according to their capacity to express ideas, opinions and act critically to come up with possible solutions to the challenge stated. In addition, in words of Mariscal et. al (2023) the collaborative nature of PBL projects invests pupils to build new knowledge instead of only share information.

The system of activities based on PBL projects consists of six units. Each unit comprehends two lessons that include meaningful projects in line with the dimensions and indicators of both dependent variable: communication and cultural awareness and independent variable: PBL projects. Likewise, these activities are aligned with the descriptors mentioned in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) learning, teaching, and assessment-Companion volume, as noted by the Council of Europe (2020). The proposal object is to apply the said system of activities in Sixth

graders students in U.E.F. Gonzalo S. Córdova to raise awareness in the need of an effective communication and the respect of others' culture, enhancing in that way speaking skills at A1 level.

3.3 Characteristics of the Proposal

The mentioned system of activities seeks to enhance A1 students' communication skills and cultural awareness by implementing Project-Based Learning (PBL) projects. This proposal is flexible, since it can be applied just after the obtention of the results which form part of chapter 2. It is creative because it enhances pupils and teachers' imagination through the execution of projects; it is also innovative, with both academic and axiological contents, the same are synergistically integrated to be implemented during any part of the academic period through projects. And it is reflexive provided that it takes into consideration the critical analysis students carry out regarding values application in real life, promoting positive experiences they will be able to reply in their surroundings.

They learned to think creatively and critically to propose solutions to the given problems, to be empathic with other's regarding their cultures and opinions and to promote harmony and collaboration despite cultural differences, recognizing and avoiding stereotypes and prejudices.

This research intervention proposed:

A Goals' achievement approach: Centered on the completion and resolution of problems set along the program, it also looks for the production of a tangible, significant outcome or product, which makes the proposal more significant for learners and instructors.

Student-centered paradigm: Provided that PBL is not focused on skills but on content, seeks to broaden individual and group working skills, which helps learners to feel more independent, empowered to speak in class, and more engaged in activities. That is to say, they learn actively and not passively.

Real-world content: Allow students to face real situations in the classroom by setting projects to look for solutions to specific problems that happen or might happen in real life. This aim produces teachings that can be useful for learners' whole lives.

3.4 Objectives of the Proposal

3.4.1 General Objective

The general objective of this proposal is to enhance Communication and cultural awareness in an A1 classroom by implementing a system of activities based on PBL projects at Unidad Educativa Fiscal "Gonzalo S. Córdova in Las Cañitas de Charapotó.

3.4.2 Specific Objectives

- To design the elements that will incorporate the system of activities in PBL projects.

- To enhance the application of values such as empathy, respect, inclusivity within the execution of PBL projects, fostering students' communication and cultural awareness.
- To determine the implications of PBL projects in students' Communication and Cultural Awareness.

3.5 Structure and Dynamics of the Components of the Proposal

The System of activities based on PBL projects has been technically elaborated to promote communication and cultural awareness in A1 Learners. It is structured with six punctual units each of them dotted with two authentic and relevant lessons, including meaningful projects aligned with the objectives of this proposal, integrating collaboration, teamwork, problem-solving, critical thinking, cultural sensitivity, effective communication, among others. The proposal objective is to apply the said system of activities in Sixth graders students in U.E.F. Gonzalo S. Córdova to raise awareness in the need of an effective communication and the respect of others' culture, enhancing in that way speaking skills at A1 level (Appendix n° 9)

Duration:

The current study has been applied during 10 months-40 weeks within a three-hour classes period per week (120 academic hours). The data gained in this time supplied the expected evidence to make feasible the implementation of the proposal. The official results were achieved by April 10 with the completion of the objectives set and the success of Sixth graders who are able to talk about themselves, their family, and friends.

Phases:

Phase 1: Planning. - The classroom and curriculum are adequated by the teacher-investigator to promote the system of activities based on Project-Based Learning (PBL) projects. It comprehends the selection of meaningful topics that enhance communication and cultural awareness, integrating values such as empathy, respect, and inclusivity into each activity, taking into consideration learners' interests and language level. The necessary elements, materials and resources (digital tools, printed materials, cultural content, etc.) to incorporate the system of activities are obtained.

Phase 2: Presentation. -The teacher introduces PBL to students, its concept, the goals of the proposal, and how this will help them to boost their speaking skills in English, while they become more cultural sensitive and apply values during classroom interaction with others. Students are assigned into groups to propitiate cooperative learning, while they are assigned realistic and significant tasks and problems to solve. The activities proposed are utilized to enhance rapport among them as well as to develop critical thinking in a respectful, inclusive interaction along the project.

Phase 3: Implementation of Proposal. - The activities designed propitiate the adequate environment to practice the four macro skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) with a focus in speaking and listening skills. In addition, learners become aware at several cultures, traditions, and global problems. Learners work collaboratively performing PBL tasks through the system of activities. The educator facilitates, guides students to investigate, debate, plan, create, and present. Throughout debates, interviews, role-plays, and storytelling, interaction is promoted taking into consideration cultural content. Values such as empathy and inclusion are rooted in task designing and group interactions.

Phase 4: Performance, and Feedback. - When projects are completed, pupils deliver their final work to class employing English as the main language. They have the opportunity to practice real-life communication, strengthen confidence, and share their cultural perceptions with constructive peer and teacher feedback.

Phase 5: Assessment. - The teacher assesses the effectiveness of the activities by testing pupils' speaking skills, cultural competence, and teamwork abilities. The usage of rubrics, self-assessment, and peer feedback tools is necessary to evaluate these aspects and others that need revision. Based on these observations, the teacher identifies areas of success and aspects that need adjustment, assuring continuous improvement and sustainability of the proposal in English classes.

Content:

The system of activities based on PBL projects comprehends 6 units with 2 lessons each one, as detailed below:

Unit 1: Introducing yourself and your family

Lesson 1: Hello! What's your name?

Lesson 2: My family and me

Values: Politeness, kindness, identity

Objective: Learners are going to greet, ask for general information of their companions, and answer by introducing themselves and a member of their family.

Project 1: Students will introduce themselves in front of the class and will ask a companion to do the same.

Project 2: Students will introduce a member of their families in front of the class using visual aids.

Unit 2: Permissions and commands

Lesson 1: May I...?

Lesson 2: Classroom commands

Values: Politeness, respect

Objective: Students will be able to recognize, and express common permissions required in class when need.

Project 1: Students will design themselves asking for permissions they usually require in classroom for drinking water, going to the restroom, and coming into class. Then, they will act the permissions out in front of the class.

Project 2: In pairs, students will prepare a matching game where they will associate pictures of commands with their corresponding words.

Unit 3: Likes, dislikes, and Cultural awareness

Lesson 1: Cultural icons in Ecuador

Lesson 2: I like...

Values: Social competence, cultural awareness

Objective: By the end of the unit students will be able to express their opinions, their likes and dislikes regarding cultural icons in Ecuador, and support their choices.

Project 1: Students will draw the most representative cultural icon in Ecuador (according to their opinion) and will show to the class.

Project 2: Pupils will imagine that they are in front of a foreigner, and they will talk about the cultural icon they select and give reasons about their choice.

Unit 4: The place where I live

Lesson 1: Adjectives

Lesson 2: Parts of the house

Values: Identity, social competence

Objective: Learners will be able to describe their houses regarding their age, size, color, materials, among other qualities and will recognize parts of a house with its corresponding stuff.

Project 1: Children will design a house labeling its corresponding rooms, furniture, and other household items.

Project 2: Pupils will describe the house they draw regarding its age, size, color, materials, among others features.

Unit 5: Dealing with a foreign language daily

Lesson 1: Topics you must know when abroad

Lesson 2: How to survive abroad without dying in the process

Values: Social competence

Objective: Students will be able to apply key language when facing a common, daily situation abroad.

Project: Students will perform a role-play imagining they are in a U.S.A. airport looking for the restroom and then for the corresponding boarding gate to go to the destination.

Unit 6: Embracing differences

Lesson 1: Importance of identity

Lesson 2: Empathy is power

Values: Empathy, kindness, friendship, respect

Objective: At the end of the unit, learners will be able to recognize, show, and highlight implicit and explicit values such as tolerance, cultural awareness, respect, empathy, among others in group discussions, role-plays, and more.

Project: Students will perform a role-play where they will welcome a student from indigenous roots, the same suffers bullying because of her clothing, traditions, etc.

3.6 Description of the methodological and technological requirements

To implement the system of activities based on PBL projects it is necessary to integrate good teaching practices and technology. Despite the limited and restrictive access of technical equipment, the researcher will provide them while classes take place with the selected group., which facilitates the correct execution and sustainability of the proposal.

3.6.1 Methodological Requirements

To implement PBL method in class, it is necessary to create a collaborative, engaging environment where learners become involved in real-world activities, promoting cooperation while they strengthen speaking skills.

Project-Based Learning (PBL): Projects, which are the base of this approach, have as nucleus genuine interaction, problem solving, critical analysis, teamwork, among others, boosting communication and cultural awareness, producing significant outcomes, for instance games, presentations, stories, problems resolution, group activities, etc.

Cross-cultural Communication Strategies: Instructors incorporate intercultural competence to help learners to discover, explore, and applicate empathy, effective communication in multicultural, global contexts.

Question-Driven Learning Method: Learners are lead to inquiring, investigating, and cooperating on projects to amalgamate language abilities with cultural sensibility, embracing independent learning.

Supportive Teaching: Instructors help pupils to cultivate social skills, problem-solving abilities, and reflective practices. Besides, educators become aware about cross-cultural pedagogy, preparing in this way a proper teaching-learning environment.

Cooperative Learning: To promote language development, group understanding, and cross-cultural awareness, teamwork, team assessment, and reflection practices are integrated, to fulfill tasks and enhancing effective interaction.

3.6.2 Technological Requirements

In addition to methodological requirements, technological arrangements are needed for best carrying out the proposal.

Internet: To extend the reach of the proposal, it is useful to have internet connection, which allows access to interactive tools, updated content, and multicultural platforms.

Presentation tools: To contribute to the creation and exposition of cultural projects and presentation, accessibility to platforms such as Canva, Prezi, among others is crucial to develop attractive project outcomes.

Classroom Technology Facilities: Technological devices such as laptops, projector, speakers, facilitate and dynamize project development and presentations.

To sum up, both methodological and technological requirements constitute an important part of the success of the proposal implementation, empowering communicative and social skills in learners, while they become global citizens.

3.7 Description of the budget or financial analysis

It is noteworthy to establish that the proposed system of activities based on PBL projects is to be implemented with the current assets that the institution and the researcher count at the moment. Nevertheless, an investment in technology infrastructure, as well as in providing teachers with a printed version of the system of activities, is core to contribute to further investigation and better outcomes.

3.7.1 Financing

The system of activities has as purpose to facilitate teaching and learning. It provides a simple but efficient resource for educators to teach both English and culture. Since no language can be taught efficiently without culture concern, this constitutes a useful tool to facilitate the role of teachers. For students, the system becomes a more engaging and didactic way to learn English in a cooperative way. For the reasons here exposed, it is necessary to provide educators with this fruitful resource while they perform their English classes.

3.7.2 Cost Efficiency

Despite the system of activities based on PBL projects is a simple document, it is a powerful tool to facilitate English teaching due to its easiness to be understood and applied in classrooms, involving

learners in real-world activities that make learning interesting and engaging. Its cost is affordable for teachers, which makes it accessible to a low cost, but with great benefits.

3.7.3 Long-term viability and flexibility

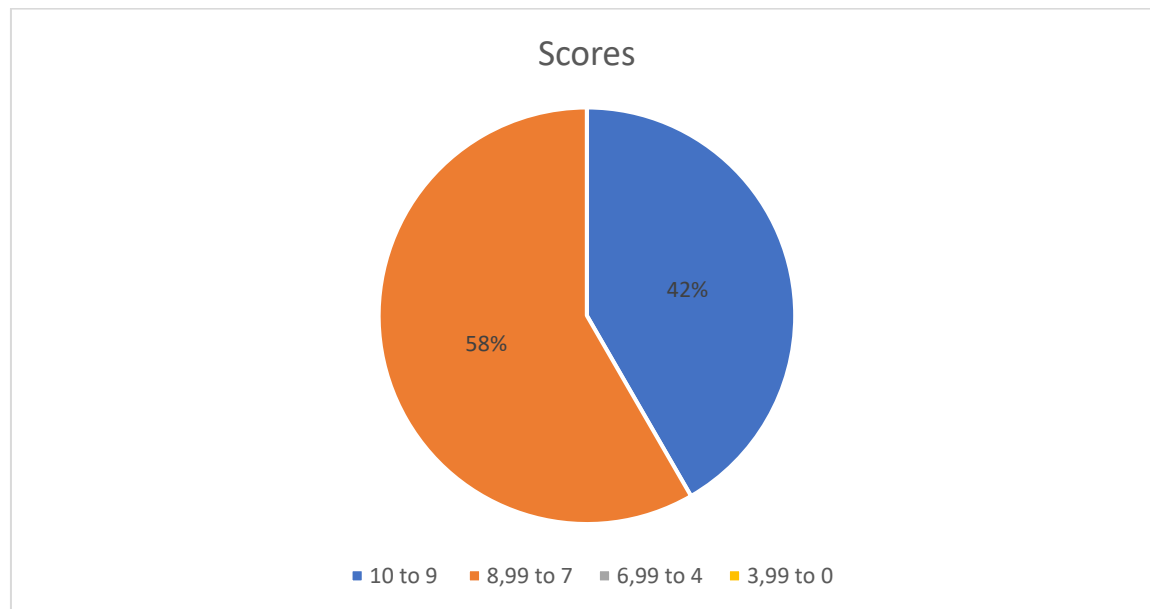
This research study seeks to support sustainability of the proposal by encouraging English teachers to utilize the same in their classes, whether as a main resource or as a secondary one, to enhance students speaking and social skills (See appendix n° 9).

3.8 Analysis and Discussion of the Results Obtained from the Implementation of the Proposal

The results of the implementation of this proposal were obtained through data collection. A post-test was addressed to the twenty-five Sixth-grade students, whom were considered as the sample in this investigation to measure their potential improvement. In addition, the researcher interviewed two students to obtain more information related to students' insights on the study. The outcomes demonstrated the justification to intervene the said course to obtain the improvements that the researcher proposed through the application of the system of activities mentioned.

Figure 2

3.8.1 Post-test results



Note: Elaborated by Emilio Villanueva Sabando

To obtain data, a test working as an exit test was taken by the students who were considered in advance the sample of the population. In comparison with the pretest results, the same students demonstrated a significant improvement in their responses with a 58% of them scoring between 7 to

8.99/10 and a 42% obtained scores among 9 up to 10/10, assuring the success of the proposal application. By analyzing each question separately, the researcher found the following results:

In the first question: Introducing oneself: students succeed at identify themselves correctly, showing that they can introduce themselves correctly. In the second question, learners demonstrated that they could manifest their needs appropriately, applying values, for instance respect through the employment of the corresponding phrases to obtain the permissions requested.

In the third question, learners shared their insights about the most representative cultural items in Ecuador, and they stood the reasons of their choices, confirming the positive impact the system of activities had during the researcher intervention. In the fourth question, pupils achieved to answer correctly the question, recognizing that the place where they live is part of their identities which is strongly tied to culture and identity.

To finish, in questions 5 and 6, they successfully identified both the more appropriated topics and the accurate values implicit in the story. These questions were thought to put learners into situations where they need to use some features of PBL to answer them, for example critical thinking, problem solving, values application, etc.

3.8.2 Interview Results

Concerning results from questioning the two sixth-graders of the sample during the interview execution, it was found that: Regarding question 1 about changes in their communication skills and cultural awareness, learners expressed to have strengthened their writing and pronunciation skills and subskills respectively, as well as to have achieved a higher respect for others' cultures (cross-cultural sensibility).

From question 2 and 3 concerning behavior and values acquired respectively during the time the proposal was executed, interviewed students affirmed to have succeeded in fostering values such as respect, tolerance, empathy, teamwork, responsibility, resolution of problems, and adaptability. The two students agreed that by applying the system of activities mentioned they are more willing to work collaboratively in teams, propitiating active participation in the classroom.

In question 4, the interviewer asked pupils about the activities that helped them the most to achieved greater empathy and awareness towards others; they agreed that the mentioned proposal improved their social relationship with their classmates and their effective communication skills as well. By answering question 5, learners stressed the foremost feature of these interviews: the opportunity interviewed students to express their ideas about how to improve the current system of activities, by answering that a major inclusion of speaking activities such as singing and poetry must be included to improve the proposal.

3.9 Limitations in the study

A serious limitation in the study was that classes were interrupted during the months of January and February 2025 due to the intervention done by the Ministry of Education and the Prefectura of Manabí with the purpose of renewing the infrastructure of the buildings at school. This interruption led to virtual modality. Another limitation was the persistent winter season, which impeded the correct implementation of the current proposal.

Conclusions

After reflecting on the literature utilized in this study and comparing the results obtained with the objective set which led this study, the researcher concluded the following:

About the first specific objective which comprehended the impact that the system of activities had in students' communication and cultural awareness, it was clearly established that implementing PBL projects through significant activities leads to better outcomes in the way learners communicate and perceive others' culture.

Regarding the second objective of the investigation that is focused on designing the elements that would incorporate the system of activities based on PBL projects, it is worth mentioning that the situations lived in classrooms, in hand with the day-to-day problems, brought the context and the ideas to obtain the components that conform this proposal, such as the instillment of values implicit and explicit in the different lessons of this proposal, the meaningful activities that conduct to enhance speaking skills, and the cultural domain that must guide the teaching-learning process, making English learning more integrated and inclusive.

Concerning the third research objective, the implications of PBL projects in students' communication and cultural awareness was demonstrated by the results obtained through the post-test and the interview, which showed improvement in pupils' answers to the same, as well as a major engagement while participating in class, all of them are core results to confirm the success of this proposal.

In conclusion, the success of the outcomes above exposed depends to great extent to incorporate new teaching methods in classroom, such as PBL projects, which facilitates both teachers' actions and students' engagement in classes.

Recommendations

It is worth mentioning that to obtain better results while applying research instruments, a periodical monitoring and assessment is needed to better understand what pupils need and how to incorporate those findings in the current intervention.

Provided that English textbooks are not still supplied by the government, adaptations are to be made in the system of activities to include all the academic levels, according to their interests and English comprehension.

To guarantee better results, it is necessary the corresponding adequation of a space where learners have access to technology, laboratories, among other facilities to boost their opportunities of learning and applying what they have learned in the process of the implementation of the proposal.

During school open houses, English teachers can take advantage of the access of bigger audience to demonstrate the effectiveness of the system of activities based on PBL projects, as a way to motivate its implementation not only in English classes, but in another subjects such as Mathematics, Science, Physics, Chemistry, Literature, among others.

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Appendix 2. Research Plan

UNIVERSIDAD BOLIVARIANA DEL ECUADOR ANEXO II

"PLAN DE INVESTIGACIÓN PARA LA TESIS, QUE DEBERÁ SER REVISADO Y APROBADO POR LA COMISIÓN DE TITULACIÓN DE CADA PROGRAMA AL CONCLUIR EL TALLER I"

RESEARCH TOPIC: "System of activities based on PBL projects to enhance Communication and Cultural awareness in an A1 classroom"

AUTHOR 1: Emilio Rafael Villanueva Sabando

AUTHOR 2: Martha Amelia Castillo Noriega

RESEARCH CONTEXT:

The present research paper analyzes the challenges that students of Sixth grade of E.G.B. in Unidad Educativa Fiscal "Gonzalo S. Córdova de Las Cañitas de Charapotó face (sociocultural, economic and academic) emphasizing academic ones, the same emerge due to the reduction of English teaching hours in public schools, the absence of English teachers for long periods, and the lack of appropriate materials to teach English, which hinder second language acquisition.

This study is focused on implementing PBL projects in A1 classrooms, to enhance communication and cultural awareness through the application of a system of activities, mitigating the problem already mentioned.

1. Brief analysis and description of the situation that justifies the presentation of this proposal.

In the words of Lucero et al. (2023), the detriment of insightful learning in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching is an endless challenge in rural schools. Most students do not reach the necessary skills due to the existing limitations in the educational system, as well as in each school or grade. Hossain (2016) and Puma (2017) sustain that some issues that hinder second language acquisition and affect the quality of English teaching are the absence of well-prepared English trainers and training materials, the school location, the accessibility of

technology, and the reduction of teaching hours. This result in student's lack of engagement to study EFL as stood by Shahnaz and Saleha (2021). When students are motivated, they get significant learning by life and for life, making the teaching-learning process a marvelous adventure.

That is to say, the material and tools utilized to teach learners must be appropriate, not only in terms of quality, but also in terms of CEFR level and complexity, making learning significant as being applied day to day, assuring cultural awareness implementation in the classroom. This is why, Project-Based Learning (PBL) is the best option when applying English language skills in real-life situations, enhancing their motivation and engagement as established by Mariscal et al. in 2023.

2. Statement of the problem to be investigated.

It is known that students in sixth grade of E.G.B. do not have textbooks, nor material to complement their English learning, save the modules that the Ministerio de Educación provided during the Covid-19 lockdown, the same that do not match the level students have in English. In addition, due to the absence of English teachers in the previous years, pupils know only a little of English, which is exacerbated because of the reduction of teaching hours. All the here exposed, makes it necessary that the material the teacher uses fits with the necessities and level of learners, therefore, they are presented the following questions:

- What is the impact of the system of activities based on PBL projects in Communication and Cultural Awareness in an A1 classroom?
- What are the elements that will incorporate the system of activities in PBL projects.
- What are the implications of the system of activities based on PBL projects when enhancing Communication and cultural awareness in an A1 classroom?

3. Justification of the research

English is the *lingua franca* of the globalized world in which we live. Understanding the importance of teaching it in the most efficient ways is critical for successful learning. Around the world, public schools deal with several trials in the teaching-learning process of English as Izquierdo et al (2021) sustain. In addition, Torres and McCandless (2021) argue that application of strategies has created challenges for English teachers not only in the international arena but also in Latin America. Teachers in public schools in Ecuador also face troubles, for instance, the reduction of teaching hours and the lack of textbooks from the government. Unfortunately, English teachers in rural areas, for example, do not possess the adequate resources to help students communicate successfully, nor the training to use and apply them in the cultural context learners perform in their daily lives. The execution of this research is significant because it exposes the necessity of PBL projects to foster communication and cultural awareness in students, by employing a system of activities in the classroom.

Additionally, the performance of this work is of worth for the master candidate, in order to acquire knowledge and experience related to the PBL projects' management, as well as to fulfill a requirement to obtain a Master's Degree in English Pedagogy as a foreign language.

4. Description of the relationship between the proposal and the research lines of the university.

Provided that the proposal of the present research work is the facilitation of a guide based on PBL projects to enhance communication and cultural awareness of children in Sixth Grade, it is framed within the areas of Pedagogy and Didactics, being these also university's research lines. In addition, the proposal incorporates the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR) and cultural tenets into learning, which contributes to best procedures in English Language Teaching (ELT), adjusting itself with the University's research lines.

5. Object of the research

This research object is the application of a system of activities in Sixth grade of E.G.B. in U.E.F. Gonzalo S. Córdova, to rise consciousness in the need of an effective communication and the respect of culture. It comprehends the implementation of PBL projects in order to enhance speaking skills at A1 level.

6. General objective

To propose a system of activities based on PBL projects to enhance Communication and cultural awareness in an A1 classroom.

7. Specific objectives

- To analyze the system of activities' impact in students' Communication and Cultural Awareness.
- To design the elements that will incorporate the system of activities in PBL projects.
- To determine the implications of PBL projects in students' Communication and Cultural Awareness.

8. Description of the variables of the study

8.1. Independent Variable: PBL projects. – PBL is a pedagogical approach and a student-centered teaching method according to Mariseal et al. (2023) and, accordingly, its implementation and teaching in the classroom is of great worth for the success in educating holistically to the raising generation.

8.2. Dependent Variable: Communication and Cultural Awareness. - Communication and Cultural Awareness are the first and second domains of Ecuadorian in-service English Teacher Standards, as well as core trends in CEFR.

9. Description of the research approaches, methods, data collection

The current investigation's purpose is to facilitate an instructional guide based on PBL projects to foster communication and cultural awareness through a system of activities' application, examining the pros, cons and its success. It is action research, where both **theoretical** and **empirical** methods will be analyzed and put into practice to fulfill the research objectives.

Mixed-methods approach distinguishing between qualitative and quantitative research methodologies.

- **Analysis and Synthesis:** Scrutinize ideas, notions and associate components as a set to comprehend limitations in communication and cultural awareness and elaborate an instructional guide based on PBL projects.
- **Inductive-Deductive Method:** Considering disadvantages, taking broad views, and put them into practice, to facilitate the elaboration of the instructional guide.

Empirical Methods

- **Documentary Analysis:** Study files, for example: research papers, journals, curriculum standards, and policies addressed by the Ministerio de Educación, to better identify the context, resources and boost English language learning in elementary school.
- **Start test & Exit test:** Aimed to primary school students, to study how pupils begin the school year and how they finish it (and improve during the application of the activities based on PBL projects) to measure their progression with the use of the proposed guide.
- **Interview:** To be addressed to three students of Sixth grade, to know their opinions about the implementation of the system of activities in classes and to analyze the benefits of the proposed activities in their own learning.
- **Observation Checklist:** Utilizing this tool is significant for investigation, since it allows to gather fruitful information aligned with communicative language teaching assets, contributing to the aim of enhancing communication and cultural awareness by implementing values in the classroom.

10. Description of the beneficiaries and their main characteristics.

The beneficiaries of the proposed instructional guide are Sixth Grade students in Educación General Básica at Unidad Educativa Fiscal “Gonzalo S. Córdova” situated in las Cañitas de Charapotó, a rural, low-income area in the Province of Manabí, where they face socioeconomical troubles. Learners show low academic performance in speaking, due to the poor knowledge, product of the long terms without English teachers, socioeconomical difficulties, long absence of English teachers and the lack of appropriate resources to teach English (textbooks). Some of them have no access to technology (at home) and poor contact with it at school. In spite of these challenges, most pupils have demonstrated willingness to learn and capabilities to produce words, short phrases and songs in English. By means of the instructional guide based on PBL.

projects, they will be empowered through significant activities' performance to enhance communication and cultural awareness, fostering motivation, fluency and self-confidence while speaking English.

11. Description of the research context

The research context of this study is addressed to students from a rural site situated at las Cañitas de Charapotó, Cantón Sucre, Province of Manabí, who struggle for living with socioeconomical challenges, the same that undermine their success in English language learning.

12. Description of the practical contributions of the proposal

As a matter of fact, the instructional guide based on PBL project, will contribute significantly at school, especially to students from sixth year of E.G.B. by fostering their communication and cultural awareness, employing a system of activities that facilitates consciousness in their own learning responsibility, enhancing learning. Additionally, it will facilitate teaching, investing teachers with simple but powerful resources to work all the year and to focus on what worth the most when teaching a language: successful interaction through effective (not perfect) communication.

13. Importance of the proposal from the following perspectives: Professional, methodological, and social need

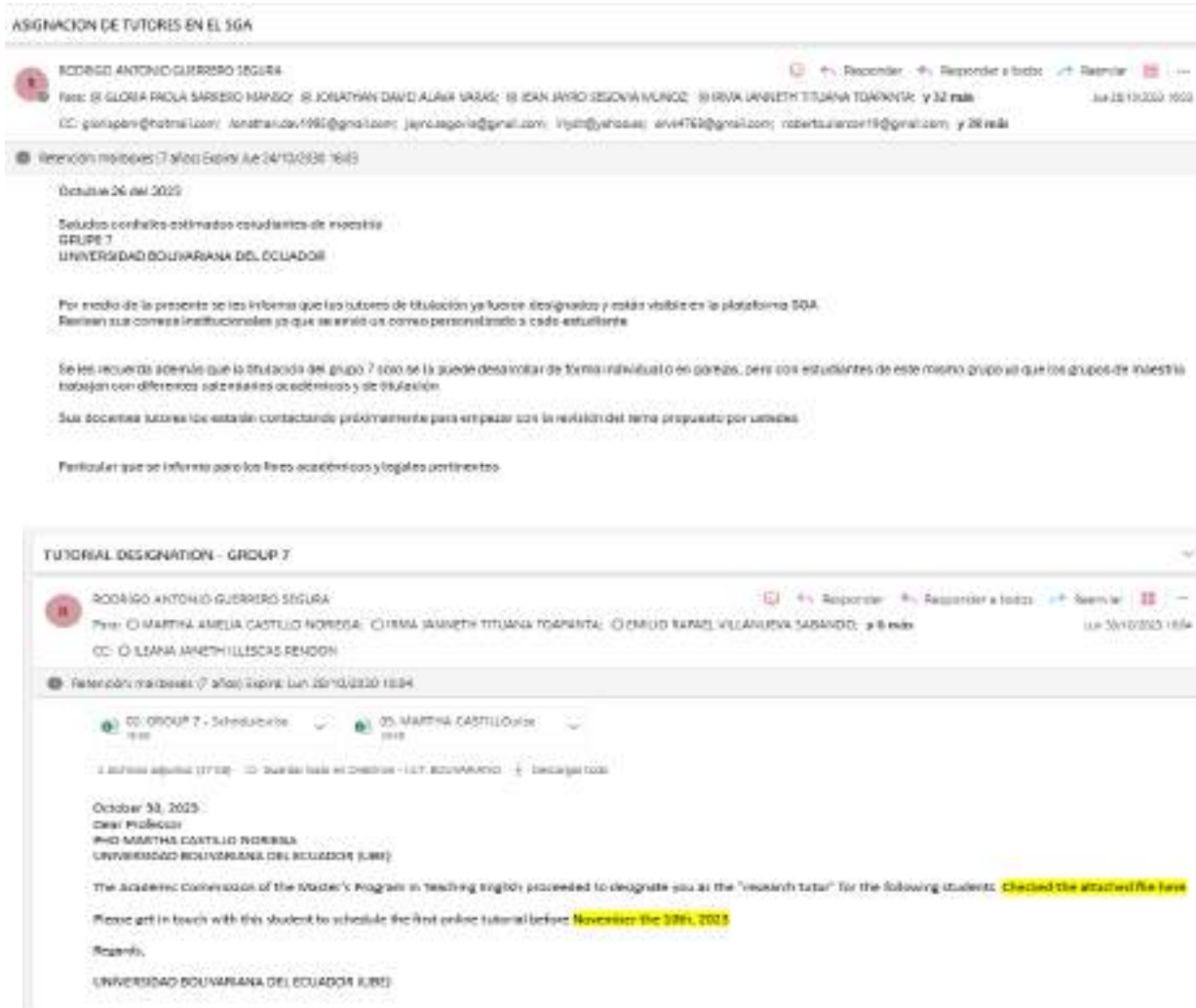
Professional: In the professional field, the proposal will be presented as an innovative and flexible resource for teachers, who can utilize it in companionship of their own materials, to help students to become the agents that build their own learning.

Methodological: Under this perspective, the instructional guide will represent a set of assets to achieve success by integrating the curriculum in more simple and dynamic ways.

Social need: No man is an island, therefore, through the application of this resource in the students' daily lives, it will be possible to connect instructional content with cultural context, needs, and expectations of learners.

Appendix 3: Designation of research tutor

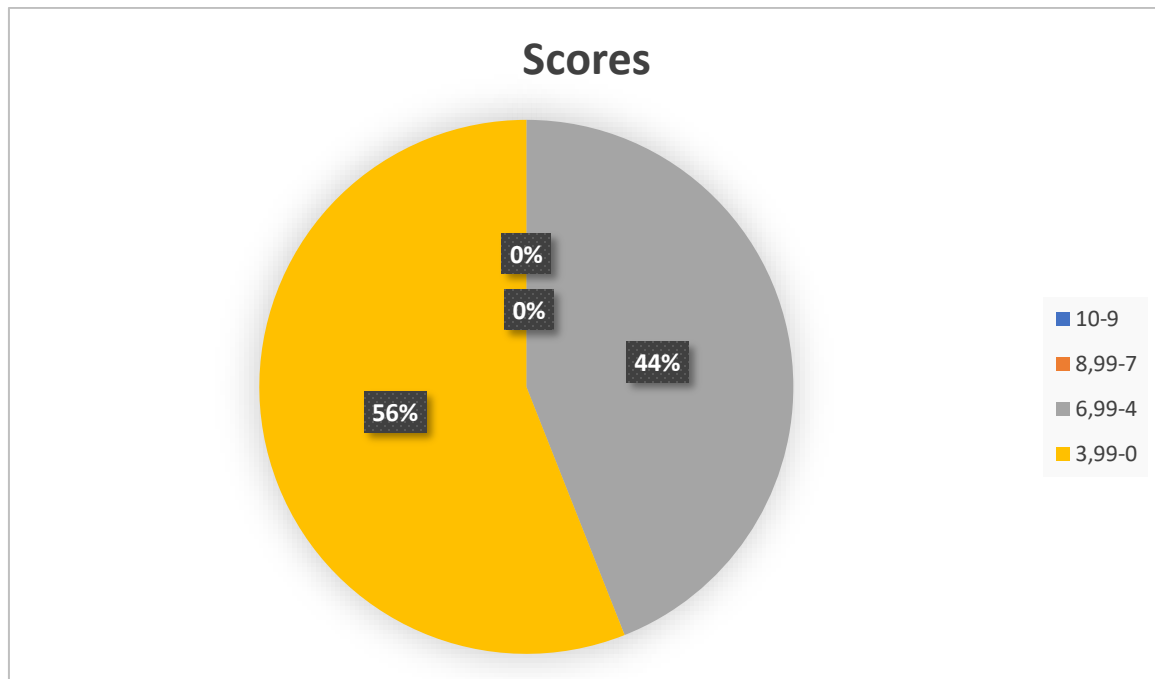
Description: The following email was received to inform the Tutor designation, and the documents signed accepting the tutor designation.



NO	TUTOR DESIGNADO	APELLIDOS Y NOMBRES DE LOS CANDIDATOS CON LETRAS MAYUSCULAS	CECULA DE IDENTIFICACION	TITULO DE SU PROPUESTA -GRUPO 7
1	PRO MARTHA CASTILLO	TITIANA TOVARANTA IRMA JANETH	1803081196	Inclusive teaching methodology to develop the english learning as a second language in students with special needs
1	PRO MARTHA CASTILLO	VILLALUEVA SABANDO EMILIO RAFAEL	1012544702	'Creation of a guidelines to boost inter-learning of English & Cultural awareness in A1.2 learners'
3	PRO MARTHA CASTILLO	ALARCÓN RODAS ROBERTO DAVID	0811301126	Strategies to introduce Ecuadorian Montubian Culture through Task-Based Language Teaching and Learning for A1 learners
4	PRO MARTHA CASTILLO	PEREZ CUJQUI MIRON LEONARDO	1718271840	Use of Skimming as a reading skill in A2 high school students

Appendix 6: Diagnostic Data

Figure 3



Note: Elaborated by Emilio Villanueva Sabando

Appendix 8: Lesson plans for the proposal

Unit 1: Introducing yourself and your family

Lesson 1: Hello! What's your name?

Lesson 2: My family and me

Values: Politeness, kindness, identity

Objective: Learners are going to greet, ask for general information of their companions, and answer by introducing themselves and a member of their family.

Project 1: Students will introduce themselves in front of the class and will ask a companion to do the same.

Project 2: Students will introduce a member of their families in front of the class using visual aids.

Unit 2: Permissions and commands

Lesson 1: May I...?

Lesson 2: Classroom commands

Values: Politeness, respect

Objective: Students will be able to recognize and express common permissions required in class when need.

Project 1: Students will design themselves asking for permissions they usually require in classroom for drinking water, going to the restroom, and coming into class. Then, they will act the permissions out in front of the class.

Project 2: In pairs, students will prepare a matching game where they will associate pictures of commands with their corresponding words.

Unit 3: Likes, dislikes, and Cultural awareness

Lesson 1: Cultural icons in Ecuador

Lesson 2: I like...

Values: Social competence, cultural awareness

Objective: By the end of the unit students will be able to express their opinions, their likes and dislikes regarding cultural icons in Ecuador, and support their choices.

Project 1: Students will draw the most representative cultural icon in Ecuador (according to their opinion) and will show to the class.

Project 2: Pupils will imagine that they are in front of a foreigner, and they will talk about the cultural icon they select and give reasons about their choice.

Unit 4: The place where I live

Lesson 1: Adjectives

Lesson 2: Parts of the house

Values: Identity, social competence

Objective: Learners will be able to describe their houses regarding their age, size, color, materials, among other qualities and will recognize parts of a house with its corresponding stuff.

Project 1: Children will design a house labeling its corresponding rooms, furniture, and other household items.

Project 2: Pupils will describe the house they draw regarding its age, size, color, materials, among others features.

Unit 5: Dealing with a foreign language daily

Lesson 1: Topics you must know when abroad

Lesson 2: How to survive abroad without dying in the process

Values: Social competence

Objective: Students will be able to apply key language when facing a common, daily situation abroad.

Project: Students will perform a role-play imagining they are in a U.S.A. airport looking for the restroom and then for the corresponding boarding gate to go to the final destination.

Unit 6: Embracing differences

Lesson 1: Importance of identity

Lesson 2: Empathy is power

Values: Empathy, kindness, friendship, respect

Objective: At the end of the unit, learners will be able to recognize, show, and highlight implicit and explicit values such as tolerance, cultural awareness, respect, empathy, among others in group discussions, role-plays, and more.

Project: Students will perform a role-play where they will welcome a student from indigenous roots, the same suffers bullying because of her clothing, traditions, etc.

Appendix 9: Proposal

Unit 1: Introducing yourself and your family

Lesson 1: Hello! What's your name?

Lesson 2: My family and me

Values: Politeness, kindness, identity

Objective: Learners are going to greet, ask for general information of their companions, and answer by introducing themselves and a member of their family.

Project 1: Students will introduce themselves in front of the class and will ask a companion to do the same.

Project 2: Students will introduce a member of their families in front of the class using visual aids.

Meet My Family! Project

1. My Speaking Checklist

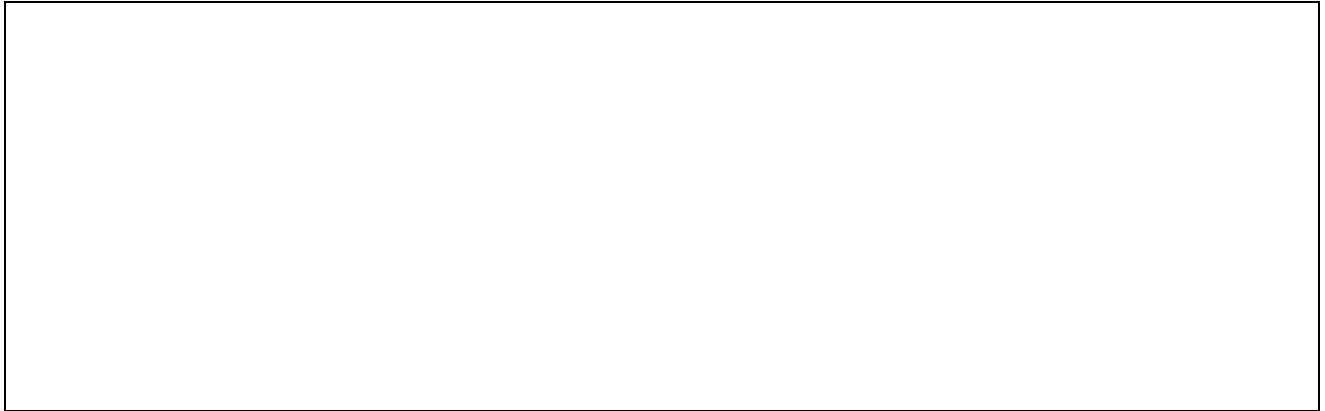
Check your speaking! Color a star or add a smiley when you do it.

What I Did	Yes!	Almost	Not Yet
I said 'Hello' and 'Goodbye' politely			
I said my name clearly			
I introduced one family member			
I asked my friend: 'What's your name?'			
I listened and waited my turn			
I smiled and used kind words			

Teacher/Peer Comments:

2. My Family Poster Template

[Draw or paste a photo of a family member below]



(Your family photo or drawing here)

Hello! My name is: _____

This is my: _____

His/Her name is: _____

He/She is: _____ years old.

Say: "Nice to meet you!"

Unit 2: Permissions and commands Lesson 1: May I...?

Lesson 2: Classroom commands

Values: Politeness, respect

Objective: Students will be able to recognize, and express common permissions required in class when need.

Project 1: Students will design themselves asking for permissions they usually require in classroom for drinking water, going to the restroom, and coming into class. Then, they will act the permissions out in front of the class.

Project 2: In pair, students will prepare a matching game where they will associate pictures of commands with their corresponding words.

Visual Layout: Classroom Permissions & Commands Guide	
Useful Expressions	 -May I go to the restroom?  -May I come in?  -May I drink water, please?  -Stand up  -Sit down please.  -Be quiet, please  -Open your book, please.  -Listen carefully.
Values We Practice	- Be polite when asking. - Listen to your teacher and classmates. - Take turns and wait. - Speak kindly to others.
Project Instructions	Project 1 - Students will design themselves asking for permissions they usually require in classroom for drinking water, going to the restroom, and coming into class. Then, they will act the permissions out in front of the class.
	Project 2 -In pairs, students will prepare a matching game where they will associate pictures of commands with their corresponding words.

Unit 3: Likes, dislikes, and Cultural awareness

Lesson 1: Cultural icons in Ecuador

Lesson 2: I like...

Values: Social competence, cultural awareness

Objective: By the end of the unit students will be able to express their opinions, their likes and dislikes regarding cultural icons in Ecuador, and support their choices. Project 1: Students will draw the most representative cultural icon in Ecuador (according to their opinion) and will show to the class.

Project 2: Pupils will imagine that they are in front of a foreigner, and they will talk about the cultural icon they select and give reasons about their choice.

Likes, dislikes, and Cultural awareness

Students will be able to express their opinions.
their likes and dislikes regarding cultural icons
in Ecuador, and support their choices.

Useful Expressions



- I think...
- I like...
- I love...
- I don't like...
- I hate...

Cultural Icons



- Food
- Music
- Panama hats
- Clay poots
- Clothing, etc

Project Instructions



Project 1: Students will draw the most representative cultural icon in Ecuador (according to their opinion) and will show to the class.

Project 2: Pupils will imagine that they are in front of a foreigner, and they will talk about the cultural icon they select and give reasons about their choice.

Unit 4: The place where I live

Lesson 1: Adjectives

Lesson 2: Parts of the house

Values: Identity, social competence

Objective: Learners will be able to describe their houses regarding their age, size, color, materials, among other qualities and will recognize parts of a house with its corresponding stuff.

Project 1: Children will design a house labeling its corresponding rooms, furniture, and other household items.

Project 2: Pupils will describe the house they draw regarding its age, size, color, materials, among others features.

Project Diagram: Describing a House

This fun project helps A1 level children use new words and speak English! They will describe houses using colors, size, age, and materials, and learn parts of the house with what's inside.

Project Objective

Students will describe a house in terms of its age, size, color, and materials. They will also identify parts of the house and what is usually found in each room (like beds, tables, etc.).

Project Diagram

1. Vocabulary Review	Learn adjectives like big, small, red, wooden and house parts like kitchen, bedroom.
2. Group Work	Work in teams to plan and design your house together.
3. House Creation	Draw or build your house using paper, cardboard, or boxes with rooms and labels.
4. Description Practice	Each child chooses a room and practices describing it using new words.
5. Presentation	Show your house to the class and describe it! Talk about its age, size, color, and materials.
6. Cultural Sharing	Look at houses from different cultures and compare them with yours.

Roleplay:

Lost at the

Airport – Simple Dialogue Characters:

- a Student 1 (Anna)
 - b Student 2 (Leo)
 - c Student 3 (Sofia)
 - d Airport Worker 1
 - e Airport Worker 2
-

Anna: Excuse me.

Airport Worker 1: Yes?

Leo: We are lost.

Sofia: Where is the exit?

Airport Worker 1: Go straight. Then turn right.

Anna: Thank you!

Leo: Where is the baggage?

Airport Worker 1: Go downstairs. It is there.

Sofia: Thank you very much!

All Students: Bye!

(They walk and stop at another worker.)

Anna: Hello!

Airport Worker 2: Hello! Can I help you?

Leo: Yes. Where is the taxi?

Airport Worker 2: Go outside. It is across from the door.

Sofia: OK! Thank you!

Airport Worker 2: You're welcome! Have a good day!

Unit 6: Embracing differences

Lesson 1: Importance of identity

Lesson 2: Empathy is power

Values: Empathy, kindness, friendship, respect

Objective: At the end of the unit, learners will be able to recognize, show, and highlight implicit and explicit values such as tolerance, cultural awareness, respect, empathy, among others in group discussions, role-plays, and more.

Project: Students will perform a role-play where they will welcome a student from indigenous roots, the same suffers bullying because of her clothing, traditions, etc.

Role-Play: "Welcome, Ana!" Characters:

Ana – A new indigenous student

Emma – A friendly classmate

Luis – A student who makes fun of Ana

Teacher – Guides the discussion

Scene 1: Ana Arrives...

(Ana enters the classroom. She wears traditional clothing.)

Teacher: "Class, this is Ana. She is new. Say hello!"

Ana: "Hello! I am happy to be here."

Emma: "Hi, Ana! Welcome to our class!"

Luis: *(laughs)* "Look at her clothes! So different!"

Ana: *(looks sad, speaks softly)* "This is my tradition."

Scene 2: Showing Respect

(Emma notices Ana is sad. She talks to Luis.)

Emma: "Luis, that is not nice. We must respect others."

Teacher: "Yes, Emma is right. Ana's clothes are special."

Luis: "Oh... I did not know. I am sorry, Ana."

Ana: *(smiles a little)* "It is okay."

Emma: "Ana, tell us about your clothes!"

Ana: "They are part of my culture. My family wears them."

(Luis listens and starts to understand.)

Scene 3: Embracing Differences

Teacher: "We are all different. But we are all special!"

Luis: "I see now. We should be kind to everyone."

Emma: *"Yes! Our differences make us unique."*

Ana: *(smiles) "Thank you for listening to me!" (Classmates agree and invite Ana to join their group.)*

Reflection Questions for Discussion:

After the role-play, students answer:

1. *Was Ana happy or sad at first? Why?*
2. *Why is respect important?*
3. *How can we be kind to new students?*
4. *What did Luis learn?*

Appendix 10: Instruments content validation dossier through experts' judgements