

ENGLISH COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN PUBLIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN VALLEDUPAR

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Abstract

In an increasingly globalized world, learning a foreign language has become a necessity. English language teaching is a complex process that requires an appropriate methodology to enable learners to develop the communicative competencies needed to function effectively in any context. Based on this premise, the present study aims to investigate the main difficulties faced by ninth-grade students in public educational institutions in Valledupar when communicating in English as a foreign language. The objective of this article is to support the implementation of the Jclic tool as a teaching strategy for strengthening English communicative competencies through the Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology, which makes it possible to generate concrete responses to problems identified by researchers and co-researchers on a specific topic. Using a quantitative approach, the results obtained from a survey and a diagnostic test were analyzed. Likewise, following the design and implementation of activities using Jclic, a final test was administered to validate the effectiveness of the tool in improving communicative competencies. The results indicate that the use of the Jclic tool was appropriate and effective, as students' motivation levels increased when Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) were integrated into classroom activities. Among the conclusions, the study highlights its positive social impact, evidenced by changes in students' attitudes, improvements in the pedagogical environment and interpersonal relationships, and consequently, enhanced academic performance among students in public educational institutions in Valledupar.

INTRODUCTION

Learning a foreign language is currently recognized as a key competence of the twenty-first century, closely linked to employment opportunities, global citizenship, and participation in an interconnected society. At the same time, digital technologies expand opportunities to develop not only language proficiency but also essential skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and learner autonomy. In this regard, Area and Adell (2009) argue that digital technologies have generated new ways of accessing, creating, and sharing knowledge, resulting in significant changes in teaching and learning processes.

Language teaching is no longer limited to grammar instruction; rather, it is oriented toward the development of communicative and intercultural competence, which are essential for interacting with individuals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Language learning is closely associated with the development of global competence, encompassing the knowledge and attitudes required to understand other cultures and address global challenges. In this respect, Fajardo (2011) states that intercultural competence involves the development of skills, knowledge, and attitudes that enable

individuals to interact appropriately with people from different cultural contexts. This includes not only recognizing and understanding cultural differences but also fostering values such as respect, empathy, tolerance, and openness toward different ways of thinking and behaving. From an educational perspective, strengthening this competence contributes to the formation of citizens who are capable of functioning effectively in global settings and interacting successfully within increasingly diverse and interconnected societies.

In school contexts, the purposeful use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can enhance language literacy, motivation, and active participation, transforming students into constructors of their own knowledge rather than passive recipients.

In an increasingly modern and globalized world, the Internet and television provide students with opportunities to access better prospects in the future. Consequently, educational institutions should promote bilingual education, where, in addition to core subjects, students are offered opportunities that enable them to broaden their minds and acquire new knowledge. Learning a new language helps students become aware that the world extends far beyond the four walls of the classroom and the context in which they normally operate. Likewise, it allows them to understand that other cultures exist and that current labor market demands increasingly require proficiency in a second language and the effective use of new technologies.

According to Frías (2024), Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in English language teaching comprise a set of digital tools that, when integrated with a clear pedagogical purpose, provide access to authentic resources, promote more interactive and personalized learning, and foster the development of both communicative and digital competencies, thereby enhancing learners' motivation and the effectiveness of the learning process. However, their potential depends on teacher training, curriculum design, and equitable access to technology.

Vega (2017), supports that the "Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have become integrated into the daily lives of contemporary society; therefore, it is necessary to incorporate them into education, particularly in English language learning. ICTs should not be integrated merely because they exist, but because they improve education. To achieve this, teachers must develop a set of competencies aimed at the effective application of ICTs to enhance student learning." Based on this perspective, it can be affirmed that teachers play a crucial role in the successful implementation of any classroom strategy. Likewise, the use of technological tools undoubtedly supports foreign language learning, given the strong interest that younger generations have in ICT.

Learning a foreign language is a significant challenge regardless of age. However, thanks to technological advances, the Internet offers countless websites that students can easily access to research and learn about topics of interest, while also practicing language content in more authentic and interactive situations. This contributes to improved academic performance. In this way, students develop the competencies required in contemporary society, where foreign language learning has become a fundamental requirement for meeting the demands of the modern world. In this regard, Alcalá (2022) argues that the information society of the twenty-first century requires key competencies, among which digital competence stands out due to its close relationship with lifelong and autonomous learning, particularly in the acquisition of second and foreign languages. Therefore, communicative competence in foreign languages, especially English, is recognized as a key factor for internationalization and for meeting the demands of today's globalized society.

According to Roldán (2016), "when a person perceives new knowledge as useful for practical life, receives appropriate pedagogical instruction, and has access to a suitable learning environment and context, the likelihood of successful learning is much greater than when the content is perceived as uninteresting or when the teaching methods are ineffective or insufficient." Based on this premise, the use of a teaching tool such as Jclis is proposed, where pedagogical and technological elements are harmoniously integrated. Through the creation of various interactive activities, students are

encouraged to use new technologies for learning English. As a result, learners are exposed to a more authentic second-language learning experience and are better prepared to develop fully in a multicultural world, where learning a second language has evolved from being a trend into a necessity.

METHODOLOGY

According to the nature of its variables, this study adopts a quasi-experimental design. As stated by Sampieri et al. (2014), a quasi-experimental study “deliberately manipulates at least one independent variable to observe its effect on one or more dependent variables, although the groups are not randomly assigned.”

Based on the author's definition and the objectives of the present research, one or more variables are intended to be manipulated. Through the administration of a diagnostic test (pre-test) and a final test (post-test), two groups with similar characteristics will be selected. One group will serve as the experimental group, while the other will function as the control group. This design will allow comparisons to be established and analyzed from the beginning to the end of the research process.

RESULTS

This section of the project presents the analysis of the information collected during the diagnostic phase, which made it possible to determine the students' level of development of communicative competencies in the English subject prior to the implementation of activities using the Jcllc instructional tool.

To achieve this, a pre-test, a survey, and an observation checklist were used as data collection instruments. These instruments were intended to assess both attitudinal and academic aspects throughout the development of the project. Based on the results obtained, a series of activities was designed to carry out an ICT-mediated intervention aimed at minimizing the difficulties experienced by students.

After the administration of the diagnostic test (pre-test), the collected data were analyzed in order to examine the perceptions of the 95 students who comprised both the experimental and control groups regarding communicative competencies, the use of technological resources, and their importance in the teaching-learning process of the foreign language. A total of 15 questions were administered, covering the information necessary to establish a comparative analysis between the two groups.

Question 1. Do you consider the use of technological resources important in English language classes?



Figure 1. Importance of ICTs

Source: Author own elaboration.

Among the students in the experimental group, 53% (25 students) strongly agreed that the use of

technological resources is important in English language classes; 38% (18 students) agreed with the use of such resources, while 11% disagreed that these resources are important for classroom instruction.

Among the students in the control group, 54% (26 students) strongly agreed that the use of technological resources is important in English language classes; 31% (15 students) agreed with the use of these resources, while 15% (7 students) disagreed that such resources are important in the classroom.

Question 2. Do you find it easy to use technological resources such as computers, tablets, or mobile phones?



Figure 2. ICT Skills and Proficiency

Source: Author own elaboration.

Among the students in the experimental group, 87% (41 students) reported having the necessary skills to use technological resources such as computers, tablets, and mobile phones, whereas the remaining 13% (6 students) indicated that they do not possess sufficient skills to effectively use some technological resources.

Similarly, among the students in the control group, 90% (43 students) stated that they have the necessary skills to use technological resources such as computers, tablets, and mobile phones, while the remaining 10% (5 students) reported lacking sufficient skills to use certain technological resources. This finding is positive, as it suggests that the implementation of the planned activities will be facilitated by students' familiarity with technology.

Question 3. Are technological resources used during English language classes to strengthen the

development of communicative competencies?

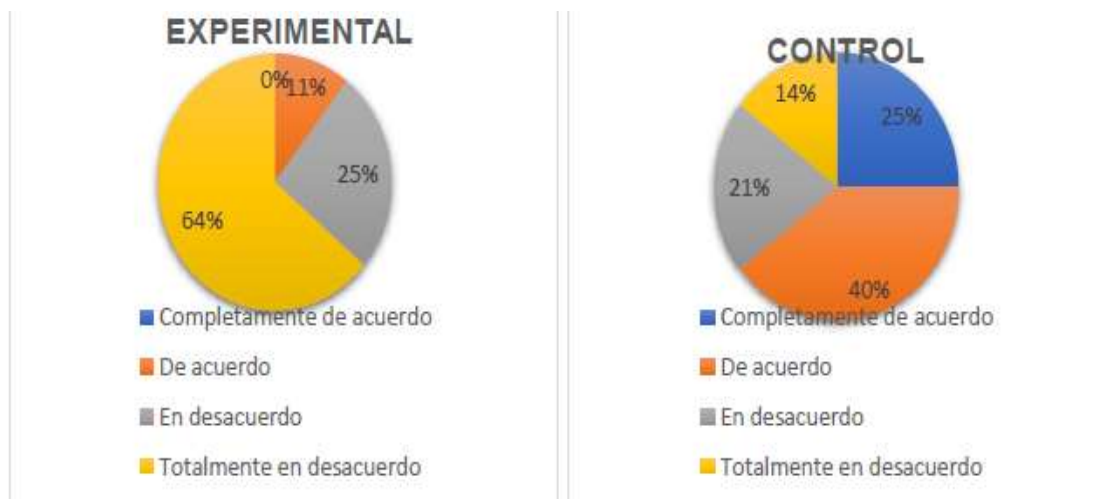


Figure 3. Use of ICTs in English Language Classes

Source: Author own elaboration.

In response to this question, 42 students (90%) in the experimental group stated that technological resources were not used in English classes to strengthen communicative competencies. In contrast, 10% (5 students) reported that technological resources were indeed used during class.

On the other hand, 31 students (65%) in the control group indicated that technological resources were used in English classes to enhance communicative competencies, whereas 35% (17 students) stated that such resources were not used. This discrepancy between the two groups can be attributed to the fact that, at the beginning of the school year, the control group had access to a permanently installed multimedia projector (video beam) in the classroom, which was later removed.

Question 4. Does the use of technological resources help improve communicative competencies in English language classes?

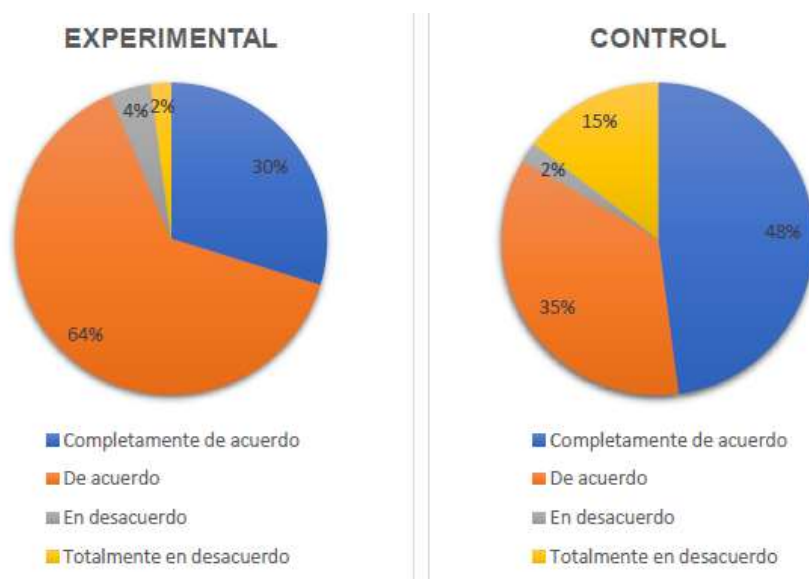


Figure 4. ICTs and Communicative Competencies.

Source: Author own elaboration.

In response to this question, 14 students (30%) in the experimental group strongly agreed that the use

of technological resources in the classroom helps strengthen communicative competencies. A further 64% (30 students) agreed with this statement, while 6% (3 students) stated that the use of technological resources has no impact on the development of communicative competencies.

Similarly, 23 students (48%) in the control group strongly agreed that the use of technological resources contributes to the development of communicative competencies. In addition, 35% (17 students) agreed with this statement, 2% (1 student) disagreed, and the remaining 15% (7 students) strongly disagreed that such resources are useful in the classroom.

Question 5. Are you satisfied with the way the English teaching-learning process is carried out?

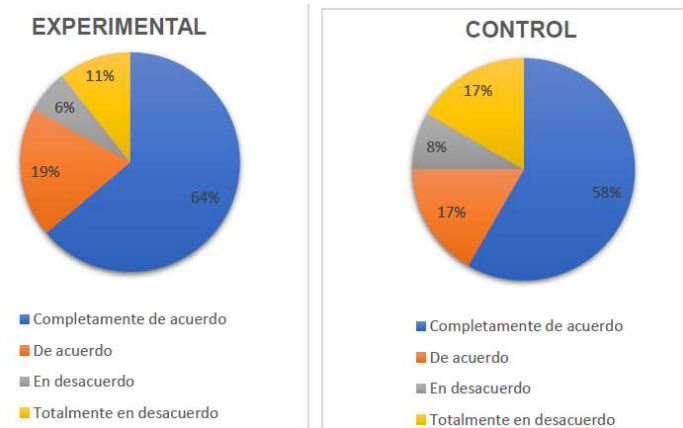


Figure 5. Satisfaction with English Language Classes

Source: Author own elaboration.

With regard to this question, 30 students (64%) in the experimental group reported being highly satisfied with the way the foreign language teaching process is conducted. Additionally, 19% (9 students) indicated that they were satisfied. Meanwhile, 8 students (17%) stated that they were dissatisfied with the way the subject is taught.

Similarly, 36 students (75%) in the control group reported being satisfied with the way the foreign language teaching process is carried out. In contrast, the remaining 12 students (25%) indicated that they were dissatisfied with the way the subject is taught.

Question 6. Do you consider learning a second language important for your future life?

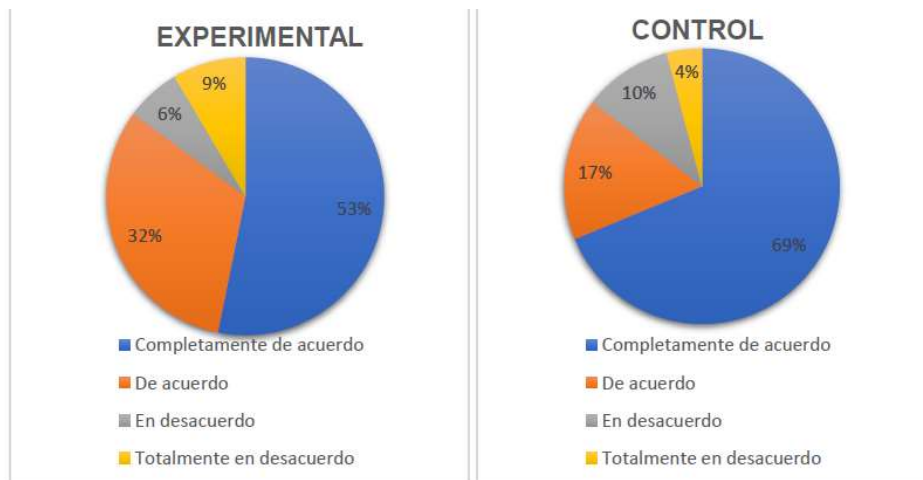


Figure 6. Importance of English in Everyday Life

Source: Author own elaboration.

The results for this question in the experimental group showed that 53% (25 students) strongly agreed that learning a foreign language is important for functioning effectively in society. Additionally, 32% agreed with the importance of learning English, while 14% (7 students) believed that learning a foreign language would not provide any benefits for their future lives.

Similarly, the results for the control group indicated that 69% (33 students) strongly agreed that learning a foreign language is important for participating successfully in society. Furthermore, 17% (8 students) agreed with the importance of English, while 14% (7 students) considered that learning a foreign language would not bring any benefits to their future lives.

These findings suggest that, for the majority of students, learning a foreign language is important for their personal and professional futures. However, a minority of students perceive it as unimportant, largely due to the context in which they live, where learning English is of little or no interest to them.

Question 7. Do you find it easy to communicate with your classmates and teachers using the foreign language?



Figure 7. Ease of Communicating in English

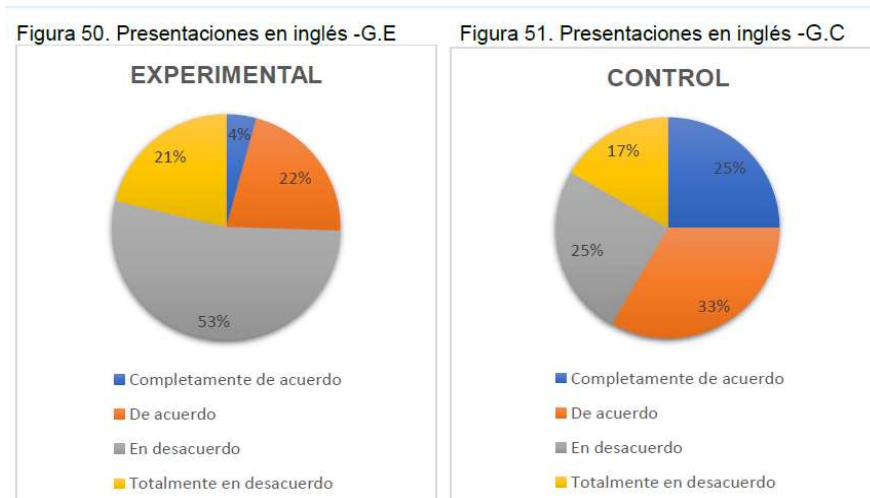
Source: Author own elaboration.

The results for this question in the experimental group revealed that 17% (8 students) found it easy to communicate in English with their classmates and teacher. In contrast, 83% (39 students) reported difficulties communicating in English.

Regarding the control group, the results showed that 35% (17 students) found it easy to communicate in English with their classmates and teacher, whereas 65% (31 students) experienced difficulties when communicating in English with their peers and teacher.

These findings indicate that a significant proportion of students in both groups face challenges in oral communication in English, highlighting the need to strengthen their communicative competence through appropriate pedagogical strategies.

Question 8. Are you able to give presentations on everyday topics using the foreign language?

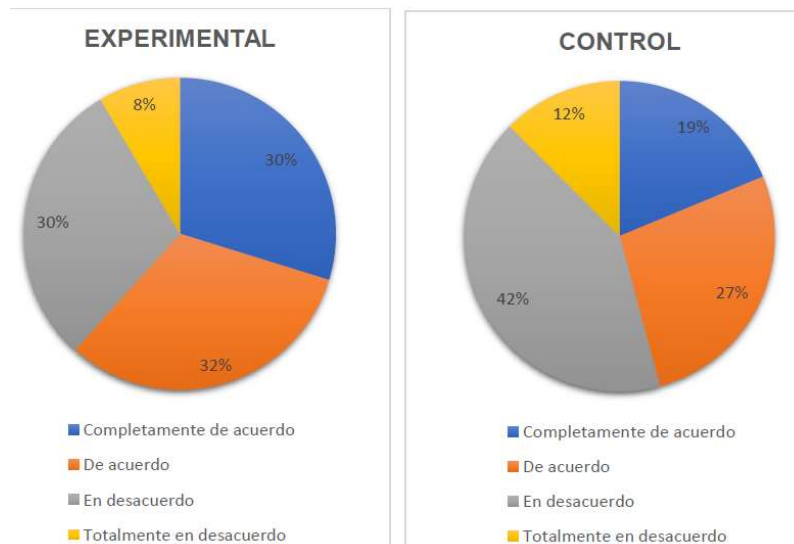
**Figure 8. Presentations in English***Source:* Author own elaboration.

The results for this question in the experimental group showed that 4% (2 students) strongly agreed that they were capable of delivering a presentation in English. In addition, 21% (10 students) agreed that they were able to do so. However, 74% (35 students) reported that they were not capable of giving a presentation in English.

With regard to the control group, the results revealed that 25% (12 students) strongly agreed that they were capable of delivering a presentation in English. Furthermore, 33% (16 students) agreed that they could do so, whereas 42% (20 students) stated that they were not capable of giving a presentation in English.

These findings indicate that a considerable proportion of students in both groups lack confidence and proficiency in presenting information orally in English, which underscores the need for instructional strategies aimed at strengthening their communicative competence.

Question 9. Do you use the Internet to learn English and improve your academic performance?

**Figure 9. Use of the Internet for Learning***Source:* Author own elaboration.

The results for this question in the experimental group showed that 62% (29 out of 47 surveyed students) use the Internet to learn English and improve their academic performance. In contrast, 38% (18 students) do not use the Internet to search for English-language materials that could help enhance their academic achievement.

Similarly, the results for the control group indicated that 46% (22 out of 48 surveyed students) use the Internet to learn English and improve their academic performance. On the other hand, 54% (26 students) do not access the Internet to search for English-language resources aimed at improving their academic performance.

These findings suggest that although a considerable number of students use the Internet as a learning resource, a significant proportion still do not take advantage of the educational opportunities that online English-language materials can provide.

Question 10. Do you feel motivated by your teacher to participate during English language classes?

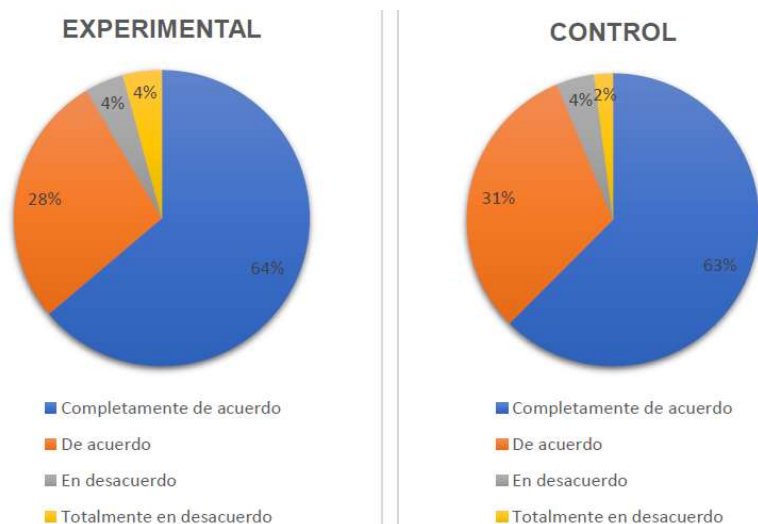


Figure 10. Motivation in English Language Classes

Source: Author own elaboration.

In response to this question, 30 students in the experimental group (64%) reported feeling highly motivated by their teacher to participate during English language classes. Additionally, 28% (13 students) stated that they felt motivated, while the remaining 8% (4 students) indicated that they did not feel motivated during class activities.

Similarly, in the control group, 30 students (approximately 63%) reported feeling highly motivated by their teacher to participate during classroom activities. Furthermore, 31% (15 students) stated that they felt motivated, whereas the remaining 6% (3 students) indicated that they did not feel motivated during English language classes.

These results suggest that the majority of students in both groups perceive their teachers as a positive source of motivation, which may contribute to greater participation and engagement in the English language learning process.

THEORETICAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

When the experimental group was asked through a survey (post-test) whether they considered the use of technological resources to be a key factor in the development of the activities implemented through the Jclic technological tool, the results revealed that 85% of the students strongly agreed that its use facilitates the acquisition of communicative competencies in English language learning.

Consequently, the lessons were planned taking into account the students' context, age, and interests.

Furthermore, they were designed to be carried out in a dynamic environment that encouraged teacher–student, student–teacher, and student–student interaction, allowing learning to be collaboratively constructed. Likewise, the activities were developed in accordance with the curricular guidelines established in the Institutional Educational Project (PEI), which adopts constructivism as its pedagogical model. Under this approach, the teaching process is perceived as dynamic, interactive, and participatory.

It can be concluded that 89% of the ninth-grade students in the experimental group at Bello Horizonte Educational Institution in Valledupar believe that the Jclíc tool should continue to be used in English language classes. This finding indicates that the activities designed and implemented throughout this research had a positive effect on both student motivation and academic performance.

Furthermore, 83% of the students participating in this study considered that the use of technological resources contributed to improving communicative competencies in English classes. Based on this result, it can be established that ICTs constitute a fundamental tool for foreign language learning, as they facilitate the development of oral communication skills while making lessons more engaging and meaningful, particularly considering that children and young people are increasingly immersed in digital environments. Likewise, alongside the development of technological competencies, today's students face the need to learn a second language, as it has become an essential intercultural communication tool.

Undoubtedly, the implementation of ICTs and innovative teaching strategies is becoming increasingly important. Therefore, teachers must embrace the challenge of integrating diverse technological resources into their educational practices in order to improve educational quality. It is precisely this need, together with students' interest in technological tools, that motivated the identification of the research problem and the search for solutions aimed at strengthening communicative competencies and, consequently, improving the academic performance of the target population. To achieve this, an observation checklist was implemented to monitor students' progress, identify weaknesses, and make immediate adjustments to improve educational processes.

Regarding the technological tool, Jclíc was selected because it is an interactive educational resource that allows students to engage in a variety of activities such as word searches, sentence ordering, matching exercises, gap-filling tasks, among others. In this way, students' interest in ICTs is leveraged, and through continuous motivation, meaningful learning is achieved. This means that students are able to find relevance in what they learn and apply it within their own contexts. Moreover, the study demonstrated that the use of technological tools generates positive changes in students' attitudes, enhances attention during learning activities, and ultimately leads to improved academic performance.

It should also be noted that this research involved both a control group and an experimental group. The control group received no intervention; therefore, the technological tool under study was not applied. In contrast, the experimental group participated in activities using the technological tool, allowing comparisons to be made and the results obtained by both groups to be analyzed at the end of the study. Evidently, the experimental group demonstrated better performance in terms of the development of communicative competencies.

Finally, it was established that the activities designed and the implementation of a pedagogical strategy based on ICTs had a positive impact on students. This is reflected in the results obtained from the final test (post-test), in which students reported feeling motivated and recommended the continued use of technological tools in English language classes. As a result, the possibility of involving all English teachers within the institution is being considered so that the entire educational community may benefit from and participate in this initiative. In addition, the publication of an article presenting this research and its findings in a specialized academic journal is being contemplated.

The findings of this study are consistent with the theoretical perspectives of the authors who support

this research, as they highlight the significant role of digital technologies in foreign language teaching and learning. According to Area and Adell (2009), ICTs have transformed educational processes by providing new ways of accessing, constructing, and sharing knowledge, thereby promoting more participatory and interactive learning environments. Similarly, Alcalá (2022) argues that the knowledge society requires the simultaneous development of digital and communicative competencies, particularly in English, due to its importance for internationalization and participation in global contexts. In this regard, the implementation of tools such as Jclic supports the principles of constructivist learning by promoting active student participation, immediate feedback, and continuous interaction with learning content.

Likewise, Frías (2024) states that technological tools, when integrated with a clear pedagogical purpose, facilitate access to authentic resources, increase learner motivation, and strengthen communicative competencies. Therefore, the results obtained in this study not only demonstrate improvements in students' academic performance but also provide theoretical support for the integration of ICTs as a fundamental component of English language teaching processes in school settings.

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