

INNOVATIVE DIGITAL TOOLS IN THE TEACHING OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract

In the current era in a globalized world, the educational needs of students are different from those raised several years ago. Traditionalism and the old strategies applied by many teachers, generates difficulties for students to learn, even more so since it is a language that is foreign to their mother tongue. Under this context, the present study aimed to analyze the use of different innovative digital tools to strengthen the teaching and learning of the English language. A quali-quantitative approach was used with a correlational descriptive scope, methods such as analysis and synthesis were used to synthesize the essential theoretical elements that support the results shown. In addition, the deductive-inductive method was used for the general analysis, reaching logical conclusions. To obtain the information, the survey of teachers and students of the Picoazá Educational Unit, of the Portoviejo canton was used as a technique and thus observe the behavior on the implementation of digital tools in the local context, obtaining as a result the little application of these, by teachers in their classes because of their ignorance of these. It was concluded to fulfill the purpose of improving the level of English and the way in which students learn today, it is relevant to include these tools using an adequate methodology focused on current needs.

Introduction

Education is one of the most important processes that human beings go through, it is that activity that over time has allowed and allows to obtain knowledge that serves to improve their condition of life, and in the current era, it enables the transmission of competences

seeking to improve them from generation to generation (Monzón, 2015). This process of transmission of knowledge has made society develop and evolve.

This activity must be closely linked with the strategies used by teachers so that the instruction itself is of quality favoring students, who are considered the main actors in education. An adequate implementation of didactics allows integrating knowledge and motivating them to develop their own knowledge in search of achieving meaningful learning (Abreu, Gallegos, Jácome & Martínez, 2017).

The constant search to develop strategies to face the current challenges that education and current students demand, generate a space for reflection allowing the separation of traditional teaching and teaching focused on student learning, giving rise to the use of new academic content and this in turn to the use of current technological resources that help develop innovation.

This improvement proposal is intended to find the appropriate strategies to change the way of seeing the perception of a situation, to give it a different nuance and achieve new processes, creating a different way of learning, modifying the multiple elements that make up the learning of according to the environment where it is located (Ríos & Ruiz, 2020).

When talking about innovation, it is difficult to separate this terminology from Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), in the current era they emerge as a necessary complement in the performance of educational tasks. At the international level, several countries considered benchmarks in educational development, among which is South Korea, are implementing educational policies focused on the combination of technological and scientific development, applying these strategies from the school, in addition to training teachers for the appropriate introduction and execution in the development of the classes (Ocegueda, Miramontes, Moctezuma & Mugaray, 2017).

This Asian giant of education has carried out educational projects related to technology such as the so-called Educational Broadcasting System (EBS), Edunet: National Center for Online Teaching / Learning and Cyber Learning Home System (CHLS) with the purpose of generating new ways of learning according to the current needs that students require today, applying them to different academic areas and e-learning training spaces (González, 2011).

Finland is another exponent in education and in the implementation of technological tools as a strategy to improve teaching-learning, developing mechanisms to train young people capable of generating their own knowledge, awakening interest in study. In this country, education centers must have strategic plans where ICT is integrated to carry out their classes, motivating students and teachers to prepare for an adequate use of the tools that this involves (Castañón & Aguilar, 2017).

In Latin America, the country that has achieved the best results in terms of educational proposal and innovation is Chile, which obtained the highest standards in this region in the PISA tests (Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 2019). Despite being on the rise in the improvement of educational policy, there are still serious deficiencies regarding innovation and the characteristics that it contains, there is still ignorance and confusion when dealing with these issues (Pascual & Navío, 2018).

In Ecuador, attempts have been made to apply new educational policies such as the one implemented in 2016 with the so-called Ten-Year Plan, various ways have been sought to launch joint work with international organizations to establish a pedagogical model with a view to 2030. This model Educational will be focused on developing Computational Thinking and Digital Citizenship curricularly, active methodologies and innovations at a methodological level (Ministry of Education, 2021).

From the proposal presented by the Ministry of Education of Ecuador, encouraging results are expected, however, at present these are not favorable considering the low performance obtained by students in the English subject (Fabre, Calero & Albán, 2016). Some authors relate the poor academic results in the matter to the few opportunities to practice and the lack of motivation for acquiring a new language (Carabajo, González & Paccha, 2020).

Motivation plays an important role for adequate cognitive development, the absence of this generates disinterest, which, added to the poor preparation of teachers or the poor use of teaching resources, produces unsatisfactory results (Cobeña & Moya, 2019). Through motivation, students' interest can be awakened and the idea they perceive can change, believing that having English classes is difficult and unnecessary.

To achieve this purpose of motivating students, in a world of digital natives, the use of these tools is essential in the daily work of teachers who through their use have a wide variety of possibilities to implement in their language classes, assuming a challenge to improve the levels of efficiency in this language (Martínez, 2020).

The research aims to analyze the use of various innovative digital tools that will help facilitate teaching and improve the interest of students to acquire a second language, allowing educators to have facilities for its use.

Materials and methods

The research was carried out under the qualitative-quantitative approach and the correlational method, which allowed making comparisons between the information obtained, the organization of data and the interpretation of the results. Analysis and synthesis methods were used to know the fundamental elements and support the results obtained, in addition, the deductive-inductive method was implemented to carry out a general analysis reaching particular or specific logical conclusions (Andrade, Alejo & Armendariz, 2018). The documentary research allowed the bibliographic review of different reliable scientific sources to determine the importance of innovative didactic tools in education and in the acquisition of a new language. The instrument used was a survey directed to teachers and students in a virtual way through Google forms, obtaining the sample using the Larry and Murray equation (Larry & Murray, 2009).

Analysis and discussion of results

The acquisition of a language gives opportunities, provides spaces and access to a better lifestyle. English is one of the most widely spoken languages worldwide, becoming a universal language and an educational reference in different institutions worldwide, allowing students to access new national or international educational environments and better job offers.

Learning a language represents having sufficient mastery to be able to apply it in communicational contexts in its various forms, it is related to being able to express oneself, to understand and to be understood making use of the skills developed during the preparation period, developing adequately in real situations (Beltran, 2017).

In Ecuador, the teaching of English as a second language is contemplated in the 2016 curriculum, a model that is designed considering the reality of the student at the national level. From this conception, it is planned to start its application with children who are in the second grade of schooling and culminate with college students in the third year of high school (Ministry of Education, 2021).

Throughout their study cycle, from the second year of basic preparation and teaching of English to the end of their college period, students must reach level B1 according to the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) which is a body that determines the international standard of linguistic competence (Ortega & Fernández, 2017). The Ministry of Education of Ecuador is governed by these international standards, applying them in the different stages of studies as shown in figure 1.

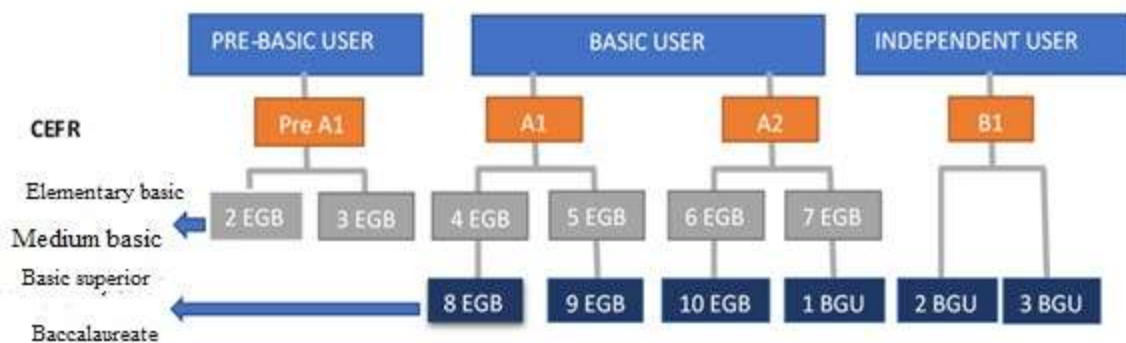


Figure 1. Levels of proficiency in the English language Source: (Ministry of Education, 2021).

Where:

Pre A1 → Initial

A1 → Basic level

A2 → Second level of basic user B1

→ Middle level

EGB → Basic General Education

BGU → Unified General Baccalaureate.

Figure 1 shows the standards by which the Ministry of Education of Ecuador is governed, to measure the levels of knowledge and command of the English language. Second year students of basic general education begin with the teaching of this second language, at the end of the seventh year they should have linguistic skills at level A2. In upper basic, from the eighth year, students retake and reinforce knowledge considering skills for level A1

until completing their study cycle in third year of high school, who should be independent users reaching level B1 according to the CEFR.

Ecuador does not see significant progress in improving English language proficiency. In a study carried out in 2015 by the Education First English Proficiency Index, the country obtained quite low results in the proficiency of this language, ranking at the bottom of the list, remaining as one of the states with the lowest results in the test carried out. (Leaders, 2015).

In 2020 the test given by the same body was repeated, the country does not show improvement results, these were still the lowest globally, out of a total of 100 countries evaluated, it ranks number 93, again presenting deficiencies, reached only an A1 level considering the standards of the Common European Framework (Education First, 2020).

Education in Finland becomes a benchmark for the significant change that a country can have in the way it teaches and also learns. An example of a combination of knowledge and the use of digital tools is the platform called Seppo, which is developed to achieve online learning through educational video games (Patiño, 2018). Gamification becomes a motivating axis for the creation of didactic content for young people, allowing in them the formation of dynamic spaces for individual and group interaction.

The Ecuadorian educational system, over the years, has sought various ways to improve education and therefore change the unsatisfactory results achieved so far in this language. This has gone through different processes, undoubtedly showing that English has become one of the main aspects to consider in educational improvement (Fabre, Calero & Albán, 2016). Education, especially the preparation of students in the subject of English, needs urgent changes in the way we teach and learn in the digital age.

Achieving meaningful learning and reaching the expected levels in the English subject requires a chain of changes ranging from the curricula, to observing the methodologies used by teachers and the necessary didactics, using the necessary technological resources to create or use content. focused on awakening the interest of students, who should feel motivated and not forced to learn but to acquire a second language. Currently there are a large number of technological resources that facilitate teaching and help the cognitive development of students.

Digital tools in education

Digital tools are the different virtual resources with which the human being has for the improvement, development, and production in an optimal way, it also becomes opportune since it improves the lifestyle of those who practice them. These are all those computer programs that can be used in various technological media such as computers, tablets, cell phones or in different electronic devices (Vargas-Murillo, 2021).

In the educational field, digital tools help the development of school activities, being able to be used to communicate, thus shortening time and space; They also allow them to interact with other members of their environment, to prepare autonomously or collaboratively by developing the necessary skills for their training, being themselves the axis of their own knowledge (Navarrete, Bolívar, San Andrés & Hernández, 2020).

In this context, there are several studies applying these digital resources in different educational settings, as well as to enhance knowledge in different areas of knowledge, for example in the teaching of mathematics through digital platforms (Valliant, Rodríguez,

&Bentancor, 2020), in social sciences through WebQuests (Ortega & Gómez, 2017), the importance of implementing novel tools in physical education is also shown (Navarrete, Bolívar, San Andrés, & Hernández, 2020), among others.

Digital tools focused on the English language

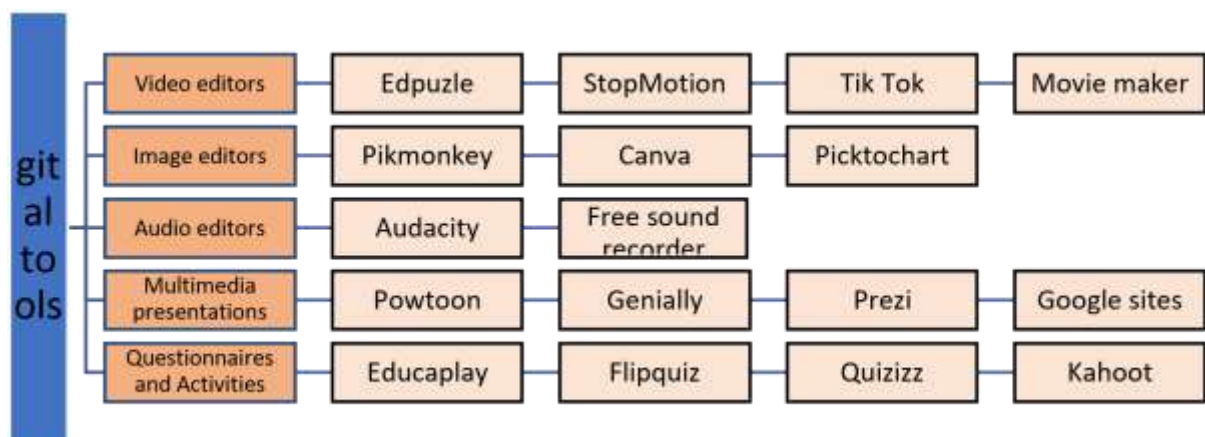
In the foreign language area, applying digital resources greatly helps the student to achieve a better command of the language, allows practicing online or outside of it through applications, improving the necessary skills that are required to obtain command of the second language through the interaction provided by technological means (Díaz & Jansson, 2011).

Currently there are many virtual tools aimed at helping teachers and students in educational work and facilitating the acquisition of a second language. In this context, the tools focused on improving each of the linguistic skills can be classified with preprepared content ready to be used according to the levels or needs that they require.

Within this group, tools aimed at improving can be cited:

1. **Grammar and vocabulary**, and these include: BBC Learning English, The Englishman mansion, Bon's Tips.
2. Focused on the development of **Writing**: Spell Up, write source, Listen, and write.
3. tools to strengthen **Reading**:Starfall. Mistake, Time for kids, Go comic.
4. tools focused on improving **listening**: Listen a minute, Lyrics Training, RD lessons,
- 5 **Speaking**: Learn English Sila, Focus, Cake. In addition, online java games such as those developed by ESI Games (Martínez, 2020) can be used.

Teachers must be able to create their own digital content, this will help to carry out innovative play activities focused on a specific task and a selected target group, depending on the difficulty or level of the learner or the needs of the teacher. Some of these tools are shown in figure 2.



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Figure 2. Digital tools for content editing Source:

Adapted from (Gamero, 2020).

This figure shows different digital tools that are used regularly for the elaboration and edition of educational resources according to the requirements of the students. This classification is based on the type of edition that the teacher or students can access in the preparation of the material to be needed.

Using virtual didactic material from the pedagogical sense lies in creating environments where creativity is fostered and fostered in young people, awakening the desire to know and being able to collect necessary information that will transform into knowledge becoming an active entity in their human formation (Moreno, 2016).

A final classification made for this study is aimed at demonstrating the most used digital tools during the last four years as shown in table 1.

Table 1. Most used digital tools

Year	Genially	Kahoot	Quizizz	Padlet	Google Sites
2017	465	2110	122	1070	13300
2018	541	3790	275	1690	15700
2019	534	5390	603	1980	17900
2020	1080	7280	1540	3410	17300

Source: Results obtained from Google Scholar

In table 1 you can see the most used digital resources as elements to motivate and improve school environments in the last four years. Being Google Sites the tool that more academic documents focused on education were found as a search result in Google Scholar.

Google Sites is an application in which you can create a personalized website in a simple way, this tool allows you to share various information by integrating videos, presentations, files stored in the cloud, text, as well as the reception of activities. In the educational part, with the use of this platform, the teacher can build lasting knowledge in their students and plan recreational activities to be solved either individually or in groups (Dávila&Gutiérrez, 2019).

Kahoot, is another new tool used by benefits offered to teachers and students. This digital instrument allows you to change the traditional way of learning and teaching. Users of this can create fun activities such as surveys, discussions, and questionnaires, adapted to the topics of the classes that teachers require, turning them into a game where knowledge is measured, they interact in real time establishing active dynamics in the classes (Rodríguez -Fernández, 2017).

Padlet, for its part, is a virtual application in which collaborative walls can be formed, students and teachers share knowledge and opinions in real time, and it does not require great skills in technology to be able to get the best out of studying (Méndez &Concheiro, 2018).

Quizizz, is another virtual playful platform whose benefits are focused on answering online questionnaires interactively, these are created by users with whom planned educational content can be shared, in addition to formatively evaluating, allowing to verify the progress of students according to the results achieved (Maraza, Cuadros, Fernandez, Alay &Chillitupa, 2019).

Genially, is a novel alternative with which you can create educational content, with this tool you can make presentations, organize timelines, infographics with non-static elements, in addition to creating gamified classes in a simple way (Tutillo, García, Castro &Erazo , 2020).

In order to check how educational actors, manifest themselves and to corroborate the difficulties they go through in the influence of learning in the English language and the use of digital tools, a survey was applied to 9 teachers who work in the foreign language area. and from a population of 200 students from a Fiscal Educational Unit of the city of Portoviejo, 132 students were surveyed applying equation 1 (Larry & Murray, 2009).

$$n = \frac{N \cdot Z^2 \cdot \sigma^2}{(Z \cdot e)^2 + N \cdot Z^2 \cdot \sigma^2}$$

(1) e Where: n →is the size of the population sample to obtain N →is the size of the total population

σ →represents the standard deviation of the population (0.5)

Z→Confidence level (1.96)

e →Error sample (0.5)

To verify the use of digital tools and the importance that teachers give to it and how students receive it, it was considered to analyze the influence of these resources and their use before and during virtuality due to the pandemic a local level.

As a result of the survey applied to English teachers of a Fiscal Educational Unit of the city of Portoviejo, Table 2 shows the use of digital tools by educators before the pandemic.

Table 2. Use of digital tools by teachers before the pandemic

Option	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Always	1	11.1
Sometimes	5	55.6
Almost never	1	11.1
Never	2	22.2
Total	9	100.00

This table shows the percentage of knowledge and use of digital tools before virtuality by teachers, it is evidenced that 55.6% of teachers on several occasions used digital tools in the realization of their classes, 22.2% never used them and 11.1 almost never implemented them in the development of their school activities.

From the above it is observed that a large percentage of educators did not use digital and recreational resources in their planning to improve the levels of confidence in students that allow them to acquire a second language in a significant way.

Despite the technological age and the digital revolution, today there are a large number of teachers who resist change, using traditional resources such as using only physical books for the development of their classes. These educational practices do not match the way in which digital learning is done today due to the skills developed in the technological world (Aguilera, 2020).

The changes both in educational policy and in the effort of international organizations to penetrate technology in a pedagogical way in different countries are notable, for their part teachers are gradually integrating themselves into this challenge, and there are still teachers who resort to internships. traditional (Cabezas & Casillas, 2019).

The implementation of ICT in young people is growing as they seek new ways of acquiring knowledge, teachers for their part try to obtain the necessary skills to be able to face the needs of students who, despite difficulties, have managed to get new knowledge.

The virtuality due to the Covid-19 pandemic caused educational institutions and their members to be forced to use technological resources to develop their classes. In this context, students were asked about the implementation of digital resources used by teachers as shown in table 3.

Table 3. Use of digital tools during virtuality

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Always	9	6.8
Rarely	34	25.8
Regularly	24	18.2
Almost never	18	13.6
Never	47	35.6%

The table shows the result of the survey used for students, which, despite being in the virtuality, this shows that the largest number of students 35.6% consider that teachers do not apply these tools in their work with the aim of improving the teaching of the English language, 25.8% consider that teachers seldom use them and only 9% of those surveyed say that they do.

The importance of applying virtual playful strategies in the field of education is reflected in the performance of students, these improve the perception of what can be shown with the help of sounds, images and other elements favoring the creation of playful environments that develop the motivation in schoolchildren (Soto & Torres, 2016).

Educational changes in the 21st century, the use of digitization, bring new experiences and challenges for teachers, who according to a study carried out through the TALIS educational survey in 2018 indicates that they are aware of the need for a change in the strategy and resource for teaching (OECD, 2019). Learners need to develop skills that allow them to function successfully in the new lifestyle, this demands an urgent change in the way of thinking and teaching on the part of the teacher.

Observing the degree of participation that students have in regular English classes is necessary to understand the difficulties that educational actors go through in teaching and learning a second language. The level of student participation in classes can be observed in table 4.

Table 4. Student participation in English classes

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
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Always	10	7.6
Almost always	2	1.5
Sometimes	85	64.4
Almost never	11	8.3
Never	24	18.2

The results of table 4 indicate that in 64.4% the students sometimes have a participation in the classes, 18.2 percent never interact with the teacher and only 7.6% do so, which shows the low interaction between students and teachers.

Cognitive development and learning depend to a great extent on the participation that students have during teaching. Sharing opinions, ideas allow them to be active actors of their own knowledge, learning from each other, clearing doubts and being forgers of their own knowledge, this makes them protagonists, active entities in solving problems and issues that are of interest to them. (Pérez & Ochoa, 2017).

Added to the above mentioned is the complexity of acquiring the language as there is no adequate environment to interact in contexts where the mother tongue is not English, limiting practice in classrooms as the only setting for practice. The little participation and the reduced space time for interaction can be improved with digital tools and with an adequate methodological strategy that motivate the student body (Ricoy & Alvarez, 2016).

In this era of the technological and digital revolution, young people today are considered as digital natives because they are immersed in activities that mostly require an electronic device powered by digital applications. In education, this need to resort to a different way of acquiring knowledge by implementing technology is intrinsic in high school students as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Importance of using digital tools in class.

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very important	62	47
Important	51	38.6
Not very important	16	12.1
Not important	3	2.3

As can be seen in table 5, 47% of the students consider it very important the application and use of digital tools in the teaching of the English language, 38.6% consider it important and 2.3% consider it irrelevant or unnecessary for teachers to include virtual activities in the planning and application of educational practices.

The use of ICT has become an essential instrument in educational work, through an adequate insertion of these, participation can be improved, and consequently active students can be obtained, distancing the teacher from traditionalism allowing students to seek their own information to form their new knowledge (Verdezoto & Chávez, 2018).

Over time, the old strategies used by educators become obsolete, education is influenced by technological advances, modifying the way of teaching and in turn using digital tools, changing the relationship between teacher and student, giving way to innovation in search of autonomous learning and meaningful learning (Vital, 2021).

The implementation of these tools in the educational field, has generated that the students acquire knowledge at their own pace of learning since the planned use of these allows them to interact individually or collaboratively in different spaces and times, in addition to including appropriate applications to the digital reality of young people generates emotion and motivation, thus avoiding boredom (San Andrés, Pazmiño, Mero & Pinargote, 2019).

Students require more teachers to prepare and use innovative and digital didactics to motivate them to participate and improve their performance in the foreign language, teachers for their part, 100% of respondents, say that they recognize that the use of digital resources is necessary and important to change the approach of education based on the current way of learning, showing themselves predisposed to look for alternatives that lead to the achievement of this proposal.

Conclusions

The proper implementation of digital tools in the era of the technological revolution benefit teachers and students in achieving better results, strengthening the teaching of a second language. To achieve this improvement, digital resources must be put into practice with proper planning, with strategies and methodologies according to the needs of learners.

The foreign language teachers of the investigated educational institution have few skills in the use of digital resources in the development of their planning which generates a disadvantage considering that the students are digital natives and require strategies focused on their way of learning.

Students and teachers see the incursion of ICT as favorable aspects for learning English. These have a wide variety of digital educational resources for their use, focused on each of the skills developed in language learning, motivating learners to acquire a language naturally.

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