

Communicative competencies in English through digital storytelling and interactive platforms in Ecuadorian educational contexts

Competencias comunicativas en inglés mediante narrativas digitales y plataformas interactivas en contextos educativos ecuatorianos

ABSTRACT

En el contexto educativo ecuatoriano, la adquisición de competencias comunicativas en inglés representa un desafío, especialmente en educación básica y bachillerato. Las demandas del currículo nacional y las transformaciones tecnológicas actuales requieren estrategias metodológicas innovadoras. Este estudio, basado en una revisión documental y experiencias pedagógicas en instituciones del país, analiza cómo las narrativas digitales y plataformas interactivas fortalecen habilidades como la expresión oral, comprensión auditiva, producción escrita y lectura crítica en inglés. Se destaca el uso de herramientas como Lyrics Training, myON, Kahoot y proyectos multimedia vinculados al enfoque CLIL, los cuales favorecen el aprendizaje significativo, estimulan la creatividad y promueven la autonomía. También se observan mejoras en la interacción oral, pronunciación y uso contextual del vocabulario. No obstante, persisten retos como la brecha digital, la limitada formación docente en TIC aplicadas a idiomas y la escasa disponibilidad de recursos tecnológicos en algunas escuelas públicas. A pesar de ello, se concluye que las narrativas digitales constituyen una vía efectiva para promover una enseñanza del inglés más inclusiva y contextualizada. Esta propuesta se fundamenta en principios del constructivismo, conectivismo y enfoque por competencias, contribuyendo a formar estudiantes autónomos y críticos en un entorno digital multilingüe.

KEYWORDS: competencia comunicativa, narrativa digital, plataformas interactivas, enseñanza del inglés, educación ecuatoriana.

RESUMEN

In the Ecuadorian educational context, acquiring communicative competencies in English remains a challenge, particularly in basic and secondary education. The demands of the national curriculum and current technological transformations require innovative methodological strategies. This study, based on a literature review and pedagogical experiences in local institutions, analyzes how digital narratives and interactive platforms strengthen skills such as oral expression, listening comprehension, writing production, and critical reading in English. Tools such as Lyrics Training, myON, Kahoot, and multimedia projects linked to the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) approach are highlighted, as they foster meaningful learning, stimulate creativity, and promote learner autonomy. Improvements in oral interaction, pronunciation, and contextual vocabulary use are also observed. However, challenges persist, including the digital divide, limited teacher training in ICT applied to language teaching, and scarce technological resources in some public schools. Despite these limitations, the study concludes that digital narratives represent an effective pathway to promote a more inclusive and contextualized English education. This methodological proposal is grounded in the principles of constructivism, connectivism, and the competency-based approach, contributing to the formation of autonomous, critical students in a multilingual digital environment.

PALABRAS CLAVE: communicative competence, digital storytelling, interactive platforms, English language teaching, Ecuadorian education.

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INTRODUCTION

The contemporary landscape of English language education in Ecuador is marked by the convergence of global linguistic demands and local pedagogical realities. Within this context, the need to foster communicative competence in English as a foreign language has become an essential priority across all educational levels, particularly in basic and secondary education. Communicative competence, as defined by Hymes and further elaborated by Canale and Swain, encompasses not only grammatical accuracy but also sociolinguistic appropriateness, strategic interaction, and discourse coherence. Despite its theoretical adoption in curricular policies, its effective development in Ecuadorian classrooms continues to encounter methodological, infrastructural, and contextual limitations. Traditional approaches often privilege rote memorization and isolated grammar drills over meaningful, situated language use, thereby limiting students' capacity to engage authentically with the language in real-life contexts.

In response to these challenges, technological advancements and digital pedagogies have opened new avenues for rethinking language instruction. Digital storytelling and interactive platforms have emerged as powerful tools that align with the principles of communicative language teaching, offering multimodal environments that promote active participation, narrative construction, and language use embedded in meaningful social practices. These tools, when strategically integrated into pedagogical planning, can support learners in developing their receptive and productive language skills through immersive, engaging, and culturally relevant experiences. In particular, platforms that incorporate multimedia input, user interaction, and gamification elements can stimulate learners' motivation, facilitate exposure to authentic language, and enable scaffolded practice in a low-anxiety environment—conditions that are especially valuable in contexts where English is not used beyond the classroom.

Research and case studies conducted in Ecuadorian educational settings suggest that digital storytelling allows students to express themselves creatively, construct personal and community-based narratives, and connect language learning with their own identities and experiences. At the same time, interactive platforms such as *Lyrics Training*, *Kahoot*, *Quizizz*, and *Storybird* offer structured, yet flexible, language tasks that promote vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, and oral fluency. These resources also align with the principles of the national curriculum, which emphasizes the development of communicative, intercultural, and technological competencies as part of a holistic educational vision. However, while the pedagogical potential of these digital tools is increasingly recognized, their implementation remains uneven across Ecuadorian schools, particularly due to gaps in digital

infrastructure, disparities in teacher training, and varied institutional support for innovation.

The purpose of this study is to critically examine how digital storytelling and interactive platforms contribute to the enhancement of communicative competencies in English among Ecuadorian students, and to identify both the enablers and constraints that influence their integration into teaching practices. The inquiry draws from theoretical perspectives on communicative language teaching, constructivist learning, and digital literacy, as well as empirical evidence from Ecuadorian classrooms that have experimented with these methodologies. By situating the discussion within the broader sociocultural and educational context of Ecuador, the study seeks to offer a nuanced understanding of how these tools can be leveraged not as isolated technological add-ons, but as central components of a transformative pedagogical approach that aligns with the demands of a globalized, multilingual world.

While communicative language teaching (CLT) has been widely promoted in theory and policy across Latin American educational systems, including Ecuador, its practical implementation remains fraught with challenges that often reduce its potential to mere scripted activities and controlled dialogues. In this scenario, the introduction of digital storytelling as a methodological tool offers an alternative that not only aligns with CLT principles but expands them by incorporating emotional, cultural, and cognitive dimensions of language use. Digital storytelling allows students to construct multimodal texts that combine written language, audio, images, and video, thereby enriching their expressive resources and engaging multiple literacies simultaneously. Within English language instruction, this method supports authentic communicative tasks, such as narrating personal experiences, expressing opinions, describing events, and presenting arguments—practices that are essential for meaningful communicative development but often underrepresented in traditional textbooks and classroom routines.

The relevance of digital storytelling lies not only in its capacity to foster linguistic output, but also in its power to contextualize language within narratives that resonate with students' lives. In Ecuadorian classrooms, particularly in marginalized or rural communities, students often struggle to find personal or cultural relevance in standard English learning materials. Digital storytelling, however, invites learners to bring their own voices into the classroom, to represent their realities and identities in English, and to appropriate the language for self-expression and social dialogue. This process contributes not only to language acquisition but also to the development of intercultural competence and critical awareness, as students reflect on the content and form of their messages, negotiate meaning, and consider their audiences. It also aligns with the goals of inclusive and equitable education, by validating diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds as legitimate foundations for language learning.

Digital storytelling enables task-based learning environments in which students take on roles as content creators, problem solvers, and collaborators. This redefinition of classroom dynamics is particularly powerful in contexts where teacher-centered instruction predominates, offering a shift toward learner autonomy and agency. Moreover, the process of planning, drafting, editing, and publishing a digital story mirrors authentic communicative processes, integrating receptive and productive skills in ways that are natural and purposeful. Teachers who have adopted this methodology in Ecuador report increased student motivation, improved fluency and accuracy, and deeper engagement with the learning objectives. Nonetheless, the effective use of digital storytelling requires more than access to technology; it demands pedagogical intentionality, technical proficiency, and a willingness to embrace a dialogic, student-centered model of instruction that can challenge traditional hierarchies and assumptions about language learning. It is within this complex interplay of opportunity and constraint that the potential of digital storytelling must be understood. Far from being a panacea, it represents a strategic pedagogical choice that, when supported by adequate training, infrastructure, and curricular flexibility, can significantly enhance the development of communicative competencies in English. As this study argues, fostering such competencies through storytelling is not only a matter of improving language proficiency, but also of cultivating learners' capacity to think critically, to connect with others, and to participate meaningfully in the social world through a second language.

Beyond digital storytelling, the integration of interactive platforms into English language education has emerged as a parallel and complementary strategy for enhancing communicative competence. These platforms—ranging from game-based tools like *Kahoot!* and *Quizizz* to content-driven resources such as *myON*, *Duolingo*, and *Lyrics Training*—offer learners opportunities to engage with language through dynamic, multimodal, and often gamified experiences. In contrast to traditional instruction that typically emphasizes controlled production and fixed-response activities, these tools allow for greater interactivity, immediacy of feedback, and personalization of the learning experience. Particularly within the Ecuadorian educational landscape, where student motivation and digital engagement have been areas of concern, such platforms offer renewed pedagogical possibilities that align with the communicative, technological, and affective dimensions of second language acquisition.

One of the key advantages of interactive platforms is their capacity to simulate real-time language use, thus bridging the gap between classroom learning and authentic communication. Through listening tasks, vocabulary challenges, interactive quizzes, and collaborative games, learners are encouraged to respond quickly, to process language in context, and to navigate linguistic input under conditions that mirror everyday interactions. These features are essential for developing automaticity and confidence in English

communication. Moreover, many of these tools incorporate visual and auditory scaffolds that support diverse learning styles and levels of proficiency, which is especially beneficial in heterogeneous classrooms where linguistic needs and competencies vary widely. In this regard, interactive platforms not only facilitate skill acquisition but also promote inclusion and differentiated instruction, enabling learners to advance at their own pace while engaging in shared classroom activities.

Ecuadorian educational experiences with such platforms, although still emerging, have shown promising outcomes in terms of vocabulary retention, listening comprehension, and oral fluency. Teachers who have adopted these technologies report increased student engagement, better classroom participation, and a greater willingness among students to speak and interact in English. These outcomes suggest that interactive tools can reduce language anxiety, foster a sense of play and exploration, and create a more communicative classroom climate. Furthermore, these tools enable teachers to collect data on student performance in real time, which can be used to inform instruction, provide timely feedback, and personalize learning trajectories. This data-driven approach is aligned with contemporary principles of formative assessment and competency-based education, both of which are increasingly emphasized in national and regional policy frameworks. The successful integration of interactive platforms is contingent upon several contextual factors, including access to digital infrastructure, administrative support, and teacher preparedness. While urban schools may be relatively equipped to implement these tools, rural and under-resourced institutions often face significant barriers, such as limited internet connectivity, outdated hardware, and inadequate training. In such cases, well-intentioned innovations risk becoming exclusionary rather than empowering. Therefore, the adoption of interactive platforms must be accompanied by systemic efforts to address infrastructural inequities and to provide sustained professional development for educators. Only through such measures can these tools be leveraged not merely as technological novelties, but as integral components of a transformative communicative approach to English language education.

The integration of digital storytelling and interactive platforms into English language instruction must ultimately be framed within a broader pedagogical vision—one that transcends tool adoption and repositions language education as a space of cultural negotiation, identity construction, and critical engagement. This vision recognizes that communicative competence is not limited to linguistic accuracy or fluency alone, but encompasses the capacity to participate meaningfully in diverse social contexts, to interpret and produce multimodal texts, and to navigate intercultural interactions with empathy and awareness. In this light, the use of digital tools is not simply about improving test scores or classroom performance, but about cultivating learners who can use language as a resource for expression, agency, and

connection in a globalized, technologically mediated world. Within the Ecuadorian context, this pedagogical transformation holds particular relevance. As the country continues to navigate educational reform, digital equity, and linguistic policy challenges, there is an urgent need to develop frameworks that support innovation without exacerbating existing disparities. The national curriculum’s emphasis on communicative and intercultural competencies provides a foundational basis for such efforts, but its successful realization depends on the capacity of schools, teachers, and communities to adapt methodologies to their local realities. In this regard, digital storytelling and interactive platforms offer flexible, scalable, and context-sensitive strategies that can be tailored to urban and rural schools alike, provided they are accompanied by appropriate infrastructural investments and teacher support systems.

This study seeks to contribute to that vision by critically examining the pedagogical affordances and limitations of these tools, drawing on both theoretical constructs and empirical findings from Ecuadorian classrooms. It proposes that the development of communicative competence in English should not be pursued through isolated interventions or decontextualized materials, but through integrated projects that align language use with meaningful tasks, real audiences, and learner agency. The convergence of narrative, technology, and interaction creates conditions in which language acquisition is no longer a passive reception of rules, but an active, purposeful, and transformative experience.

Table 1. Key Dimensions in the Integration of Digital Storytelling and Interactive Platforms in English Language Education

Analytical Dimension	Summary of Core Insights
Educational Context in Ecuador	Persistent gaps between communicative language teaching ideals and classroom practices; traditional methods dominate despite curricular reforms.
Digital Storytelling as Pedagogy	Empowers learners to create multimodal narratives, fosters authenticity, intercultural awareness, and learner agency; aligns with constructivist and inclusive aims.
Use of Interactive Platforms	Enhances engagement, feedback, and differentiated learning; supports skill integration through gamification and real-time interaction.
Pedagogical and Infrastructural Barriers	Unequal digital access, limited teacher training, and fragmented implementation restrict scalability, especially in rural schools.
Transformative Vision of Language Education	Calls for reimagining English instruction as a critical, identity-forming, and socially connected practice through digital and interactive means.

By articulating a framework that bridges digital pedagogy and communicative language teaching, this study aims to inform educational practice, influence policy, and empower educators and learners alike. It calls for a reimagining of English language education in Ecuador—one that is inclusive, future-oriented, and rooted in the lived experiences of students. In doing so, it positions communicative competence not only as a curricular goal, but as a vital capacity for social participation, intercultural dialogue, and personal expression in the twenty-first century.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a qualitative documentary research design grounded in interpretive analysis and aimed at understanding the pedagogical applications and implications of digital storytelling and interactive platforms in fostering communicative competencies in English within Ecuadorian educational contexts. The methodological approach prioritized depth of interpretation over generalization, seeking to uncover patterns, tensions, and opportunities in the intersection between language pedagogy and educational technology, particularly in underexplored or context-specific settings. A comprehensive documentary review was conducted, drawing from national curriculum frameworks, peer-reviewed academic articles, educational project reports, postgraduate theses, and official guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education of Ecuador. These documents were selected based on their relevance to the research questions, recency (most published within the last ten years), and direct engagement with either English language instruction or digital pedagogical innovation in Ecuador.

The corpus was organized into two thematic categories: (1) theoretical and conceptual literature on communicative language teaching, digital literacy, and technology-mediated language learning; and (2) empirical and policy-oriented documents addressing the use of digital storytelling, interactive platforms, and ICT tools in Ecuadorian schools. Key sources included national documents such as the “Curricular Guidelines for English as a Foreign Language” and ministerial instructives on the use of virtual learning environments, as well as studies documenting the implementation of tools like Kahoot, Lyrics Training, Storybird, and CLIL-based projects in rural and urban school systems. The documentary analysis was complemented by case descriptions from postgraduate research in teacher training programs, offering practical insight into classroom realities, student engagement, and teacher perceptions.

The data analysis process followed a thematic coding strategy using qualitative content analysis. Texts were read and re-read to identify recurring pedagogical patterns, innovations, challenges, and recommendations. Codes were organized around key categories including: (a) communicative competence development; (b) digital storytelling as a pedagogical approach; (c) functionality and accessibility of interactive platforms; (d) teacher agency and training; and

(e) infrastructural and contextual constraints. These codes were then cross-analyzed to identify convergences and divergences between theory, policy, and practice. Particular attention was paid to the alignment or disjuncture between national educational objectives and the lived experiences of teachers and students working with digital tools in English classrooms.

In order to ground the analysis in the Ecuadorian sociocultural context, the study adopted a critical-reflective lens informed by postmethod pedagogy and sociocultural theory. These frameworks enabled the researcher to consider the implications of technological integration not only in terms of linguistic outcomes, but also in relation to power dynamics, identity formation, and educational equity. This orientation also shaped the interpretation of limitations and opportunities in the data, positioning them within broader structural issues such as digital access, urban-rural disparities, and the professionalization of language educators. The methodology thus sought to move beyond surface-level evaluations of tools, toward a more holistic understanding of how digital storytelling and interactive platforms can serve as agents of pedagogical transformation—or perpetuate existing inequalities—depending on how they are implemented and supported.

While the research is primarily documentary in nature, it is underpinned by empirical considerations that emerge from the situated experiences described in the selected texts. These cases serve to illustrate how the principles of communicative competence, digital pedagogy, and learner-centered education manifest—or fail to manifest—in Ecuadorian classrooms. The qualitative nature of this inquiry does not aim to establish causal relationships or statistical generalizations, but rather to offer grounded insights that can inform future educational practice, teacher training, and policy development. In this regard, the Materials and Methods section reflects the study's commitment to contextual depth, methodological rigor, and critical engagement with the intersections of language, technology, and education.

ANALYSIS OF RESULT

The analysis of the selected documents and case studies reveals a growing but uneven trajectory in the implementation of digital storytelling and interactive platforms as pedagogical strategies for developing communicative competence in English within Ecuadorian classrooms. Across the reviewed literature, there is consensus that these tools offer significant potential to reshape the learning environment, stimulate learner engagement, and promote the use of English for authentic communicative purposes. However, the extent to which this potential is realized varies considerably depending on institutional resources, teacher preparedness, curricular flexibility, and the degree of pedagogical intentionality guiding the integration of technology into the language classroom.

One of the most recurrent findings is the transformative effect that digital storytelling has on students' motivation and expressive capacities. Projects in which learners were tasked

with creating personal narratives, whether through video, illustrated slideshows, or voice recordings, led to heightened levels of participation, creativity, and investment in the learning process. The narratives explored in these studies were frequently situated in the students' own lives—family, community, traditions, dreams—and this personalization allowed learners to find meaning in the foreign language, anchoring abstract vocabulary and grammatical structures in lived experience. In these contexts, English ceased to be a distant, school-bound subject and became a medium for self-expression and identity negotiation. Teachers reported that even students with lower levels of proficiency demonstrated noticeable improvements in fluency, vocabulary usage, and confidence when engaged in storytelling tasks that were emotionally and culturally relevant.

At the same time, interactive platforms played a crucial role in scaffolding linguistic input and practice. Tools like *Lyrics Training*, *Kahoot*, and *Storybird* provided structured opportunities for students to engage with authentic language in multimodal formats. These platforms were especially effective in supporting receptive skills—listening and reading—as they allowed learners to work at their own pace, repeat exposure to language chunks, and receive immediate feedback. The gamified nature of these tools introduced elements of competition and play, which contributed to a more dynamic classroom atmosphere and enhanced motivation. In some studies, teachers reported that students who were typically reticent in traditional instruction settings became more participatory and willing to take risks in these technology-enhanced environments. This shift in learner behavior is significant for communicative language teaching, as risk-taking and experimentation are essential conditions for second language development.

The analysis also highlights significant constraints that hinder the full pedagogical integration of these tools. Foremost among these is the disparity in access to digital infrastructure, particularly between urban and rural schools. In many low-resource settings, the availability of reliable internet, functioning hardware, and updated software remains a persistent challenge. Even in schools with some technological capacity, frequent connectivity issues, limited bandwidth, or obsolete equipment often disrupt or curtail digital activities. These limitations have direct implications for equity and inclusion, as they disproportionately affect students who are already at risk of educational marginalization. Furthermore, they pose logistical burdens on teachers, who must constantly adapt their lesson plans and strategies in response to technological unpredictability.

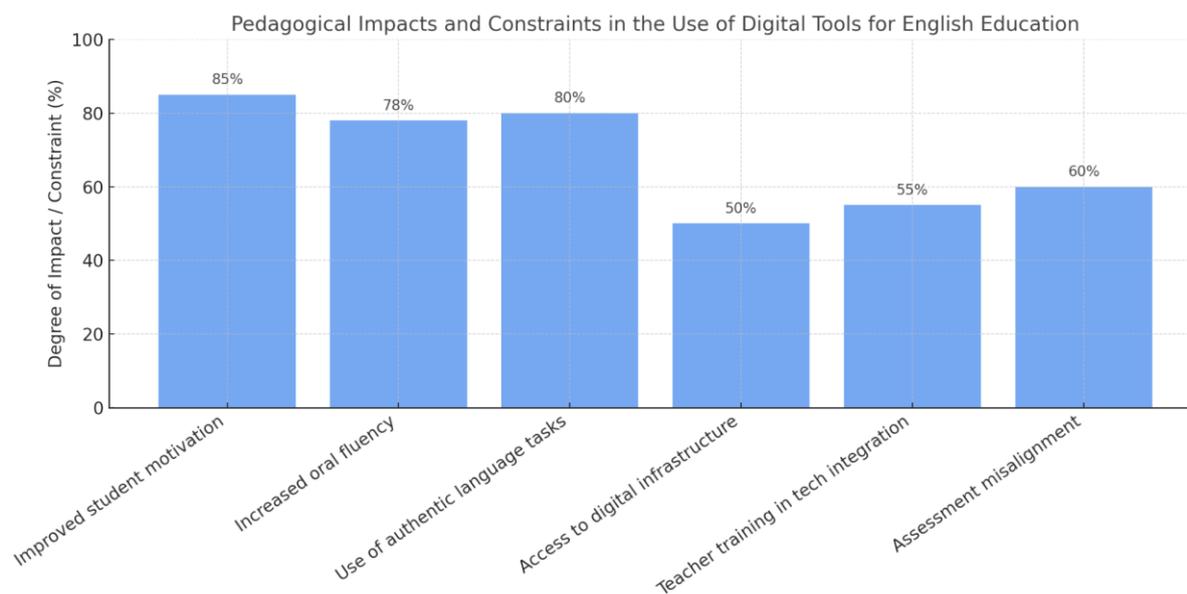
Another recurrent issue is the lack of sustained professional development for teachers in the use of educational technologies, particularly within the domain of language instruction. While many educators express interest in incorporating digital storytelling or interactive

platforms, they often lack the training to do so effectively. Workshops or training sessions, where available, tend to be sporadic, generic, or overly technical, failing to provide clear pedagogical frameworks for integrating these tools in ways that support communicative competence. As a result, teachers may revert to superficial uses of technology—such as assigning fill-in-the-blank quizzes on a platform—rather than designing rich, task-based learning experiences that engage students meaningfully in the target language. This points to the need for context-specific training programs that align technological tools with the goals of the English curriculum and support educators in adopting reflective, student-centered approaches.

A further challenge lies in the assessment of communicative competence within technology-mediated environments. Traditional evaluation practices in many Ecuadorian schools remain rooted in discrete-point testing and summative assessments focused on grammar accuracy or vocabulary recall. These methods are ill-suited to capture the complex, interactive, and process-oriented nature of language use as facilitated by digital storytelling or interactive platforms. Consequently, there is often a misalignment between the instructional innovation that occurs during the learning process and the evaluative instruments used to measure student outcomes. Some teachers attempt to bridge this gap by incorporating performance-based assessments, rubrics, or portfolios, but such practices remain isolated and under-supported at the institutional level. Without systemic changes in assessment culture and policy, the transformative potential of these tools may be significantly diminished.

Despite these limitations, the documents analyzed present a compelling case for the pedagogical efficacy of digital storytelling and interactive platforms when integrated with clear instructional objectives, appropriate scaffolding, and an inclusive understanding of learners' needs and contexts. The most successful implementations were those that treated technology not as an end in itself but as a medium for communication, connection, and creation. In such cases, students engaged in tasks that mirrored real-life communicative acts: narrating stories, exchanging opinions, presenting information, and responding to peers. These experiences not only enhanced their linguistic competence but also contributed to their socio-emotional development, critical thinking, and digital literacy—all of which are essential competencies for the 21st-century learner.

Graphic 1. Pedagogical Impacts and Constraints in the Use of Digital Tools for English Education



Taken together, the findings suggest that while structural and professional barriers persist, the use of digital storytelling and interactive platforms in Ecuadorian English education has the potential to redefine what it means to learn—and teach—a foreign language. This redefinition requires systemic support, pedagogical vision, and a commitment to equity, but its benefits are both pedagogically sound and socially transformative. The next section will explore these implications further, offering grounded conclusions and future directions based on the evidence reviewed.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the pedagogical implications of integrating digital storytelling and interactive platforms in the development of communicative competencies in English within Ecuadorian educational settings. The findings reveal that these tools, when employed with pedagogical clarity and contextual sensitivity, have the potential to transform English language learning into a dynamic, meaningful, and learner-centered experience. Digital storytelling fosters creative expression, personal engagement, and narrative competence, allowing students to internalize language through the articulation of their own voices and cultural realities. Meanwhile, interactive platforms provide accessible, motivating, and feedback-rich environments that support the development of both receptive and productive skills in authentic communicative contexts.

Despite their promise, the implementation of these tools is neither universal nor uncomplicated. Structural inequalities in access to digital infrastructure and persistent gaps in teacher training present significant obstacles to widespread adoption. Moreover, traditional

assessment practices and rigid curricular expectations often inhibit the kind of flexible, student-centered instruction required by communicative pedagogies. These challenges suggest that technological integration, in and of itself, is insufficient to achieve communicative goals unless it is embedded within a broader framework of educational transformation that includes equitable resource distribution, sustained professional development, and curricular reform aligned with competency-based education.

The results also point to the importance of contextualization. The most effective uses of digital storytelling and interactive platforms occurred in classrooms where educators adapted their methodologies to the linguistic, cultural, and technological realities of their students. These educators viewed technology not as a distraction or novelty, but as a means of connecting learners to their own experiences, communities, and futures through English. Their work highlights the pedagogical power of aligning digital tools with students' identities and aspirations, and the value of fostering a language classroom that is inclusive, participatory, and critically engaged.

The development of communicative competence in English should not be conceived as an isolated curricular objective, but as a transversal and transformative process that empowers learners to participate meaningfully in a multilingual, multicultural, and digitally interconnected world. The integration of digital storytelling and interactive platforms represents a strategic and adaptable means of advancing this vision—provided it is supported by systemic commitment, informed pedagogical choices, and a clear orientation toward equity, relevance, and learner agency. As Ecuador continues to reimagine its educational future, these tools and methodologies offer not only new techniques for language instruction but also new possibilities for educational justice and innovation.

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CONFLICTO DE INTERÉS:

Los autores declaran que no existen conflicto de interés posibles.

FINANCIAMIENTO

No existió asistencia de financiamiento de parte de pares externos al presente artículo.

NOTA:

El artículo no es producto de una publicación anterior