REVISTA INVECOM "Estudios transdisciplinarios en comunicación y sociedad" / ISSN 2739-0063 / www.revistainvecom.org. Vol. 4, # 1, 2024. Licencia CC BY. Socio-Linguistic and Psycho-Pedagogical aspects of English Second Language Acquisition in university students. David Gortaire Díaz, Elma Romero Ramírez, Gabriela Almache Granda y Silvia Morales Morejón.

Socio-Linguistic and Psycho-Pedagogical aspects of English Second Language Acquisition in university students

Aspectos Socio-Lingüísticos y Psico-Pedagógicos de la Adquisición de Segunda Lengua en Inglés en estudiantes universitarios

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ABSTRACT

This research study focuses on characterizing A2-level university students from the University of Babahoyo in terms of their English language acquisition in speaking and pronunciation, learning styles, and main difficulties. The aim is to gain insights into the students' language proficiency, individual learning preferences, and specific challenges they face in their English language learning journey. A comprehensive analysis was conducted based on the responses of 50 students from diverse academic backgrounds and career paths. The findings reveal a range of proficiency levels, including slow, average, and advantageous learners, highlighting the need for personalized instruction. Furthermore, students demonstrated varied learning styles, with visual, auditory, and kinesthetic preferences identified. Pronunciation and intonation emerged as the primary difficulties encountered by the students. The results emphasize the significance of tailored instruction, targeted support, and engaging teaching strategies to enhance students' speaking and pronunciation skills. The

findings from this study provide valuable insights for educators, enabling them to design effective language teaching approaches that cater to students' unique needs.

Keywords: second language acquisition, learning styles, approaches.

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RESUMEN

Este estudio de investigación se enfoca en caracterizar a estudiantes universitarios de nivel A2 de la Universidad de Babahoyo en términos de su adquisición del idioma inglés en cuanto a la expresión oral y la pronunciación, los estilos de aprendizaje y las dificultades principales. El objetivo es obtener información sobre la competencia lingüística de los estudiantes, sus preferencias individuales de aprendizaje y los desafíos específicos que enfrentan en su proceso de aprendizaje del inglés. Se realizó un análisis exhaustivo basado en las respuestas de 50 estudiantes de diversas áreas académicas y trayectorias profesionales. Los hallazgos revelan una variedad de niveles de competencia, que incluyen aprendices lentos, promedio y ventajosos, resaltando la necesidad de una instrucción personalizada. Además, se identificaron diferentes estilos de aprendizaje, incluyendo preferencias visuales, auditivas y cinestésicas. La pronunciación y la entonación surgieron como las principales dificultades enfrentadas por los estudiantes. Los resultados enfatizan la importancia de la instrucción personalizada, el apoyo dirigido y estrategias de enseñanza atractivas para mejorar las habilidades de expresión oral y pronunciación de los estudiantes. Los hallazgos de este estudio proporcionan información valiosa para los educadores, permitiéndoles diseñar enfoques efectivos de enseñanza de idiomas que satisfagan las necesidades únicas de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: adquisición de segunda lengua, estilos de aprendizaje, enfoques.

INTRODUCTION

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) refers to the process through which individuals acquire proficiency in a language that is not their native tongue. The study of SLA takes various interdisciplinary perspectives, including socio-linguistics and psycho-pedagogy, which provide valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of language learning in university students. This paper aims to explore the socio-linguistic and psycho-pedagogical dimensions of SLA, highlighting recent research and theories proposed by prominent scholars in the field to characterize EFL university students.

Socio-linguistic factors play a crucial role in shaping the SLA process. As individuals engage in the acquisition of a second language within a university setting, they are exposed to a

diverse range of sociocultural contexts, which significantly influence their language learning experiences. According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978), language acquisition occurs through social interactions and interactions with the cultural artifacts of a particular community. This perspective emphasizes the significance of the socio-cultural environment, highlighting how language learners navigate and negotiate meaning within social contexts, thereby influencing their language development.

Moreover, recent research has focused on the impact of sociolinguistic variables on SLA, such as social identity, language attitudes, and language contact. Social identity theory posits that individuals' self-perception within a specific social group affects their language learning outcomes (Giles & Johnson, 1981). Furthermore, language attitudes, including perceptions and evaluations of the target language and its speakers, can shape learners' motivation and willingness to engage with the language (Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner, & Fillenbaum, 1960). Language contact, occurring when individuals are exposed to multiple languages simultaneously, also influences the acquisition process, as it can lead to language interference or facilitate language transfer (Selinker, 1972). Understanding these socio-linguistic factors is essential for designing effective language teaching strategies and creating supportive learning environments (Hummel, 2021).

In addition to socio-linguistic factors, the psycho-pedagogical aspects of SLA guide the psychological and pedagogical processes involved in acquiring a second language (Birdsong, 2018). Psychological factors, such as motivation, affective factors, and cognitive abilities, significantly influence learners' success in SLA. Gardner's socio-educational model proposes that learners' motivation and attitudes toward the language, the learning context, and the teacher influence their language learning outcomes (Gardner, 1985). Learners' self-efficacy, the belief in their own abilities to learn a second language, also plays a crucial role in their language learning experience (Bandura, 1977).

Furthermore, the cognitive processes involved in SLA, such as memory, attention, and information processing, have been extensively explored in recent research. Cognitive theories, such as the Input Processing Theory (VanPatten, 1996) and the Processability Theory (Pienemann, 1998), provide insights into how learners perceive and process input in

order to acquire linguistic structures. These theories shed light on the role of explicit and implicit learning processes and their impact on the development of learners' interlanguage—their current state of language proficiency (Khajavy et al., 2018).

Understanding the socio-linguistic and psycho-pedagogical aspects of SLA in university students has significant implications for language education. By investigating the complex interactions between sociocultural factors, psychological processes, and pedagogical practices, researchers and educators can develop evidence-based instructional approaches to enhance second language learning outcomes. By considering recent advancements in the field, this paper aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on SLA, fostering a deeper understanding of the intricate processes underlying second language acquisition in university students.

The purpose of this research project is to investigate the learning difficulties faced by university students in Ecuador in developing speaking proficiency during second language acquisition (SLA), taking into account the country's multicultural and multilingual context. The project aims to understand the socio-linguistic and psycho-pedagogical factors that contribute to these challenges and propose effective strategies to address them, thereby enhancing students' oral communication skills in their second language.

The problem to be addressed is the significant obstacles encountered by university students in Ecuador when acquiring and improving their speaking abilities in a second language. Ecuador's multicultural and multilingual environment adds complexity to the SLA process, as students navigate diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. These challenges may stem from factors such as the influence of students' native language, sociocultural dynamics, language attitudes, language contact, and the effectiveness of pedagogical approaches. By comprehensively examining these aspects, the research aims to identify the specific barriers that impede students' speaking development and provide evidence-based recommendations to overcome them.

Literature review

Second language acquisition is a complex process that involves various methods and approaches to facilitate effective learning. In this composition, we will explore theoretical issues concerning methods and procedures, discuss the selection of appropriate methods, characterize and explain their potentialities in second language acquisition, and provide illustrations of classroom practice.

Effective Methods and Approaches for Second Language Acquisition in Learners: Selection, Characterization, and Classroom Practice

Selecting appropriate methods and approaches for second language acquisition (SLA) is crucial for promoting effective language learning outcomes among university students, considering Ecuador's multicultural and multilingual context. This section will discuss the selection of methods and approaches, characterize and explain their potentialities in SLA, and provide illustrative examples of their application in the university setting and at the country level.

Method selection in SLA involves considering various factors, such as the learners' proficiency levels, goals, cultural backgrounds, and the specific language being learned (Khajavy et al., 2018). In Ecuador's diverse linguistic landscape, where Spanish is the dominant language, but various indigenous languages coexist, it is important to adopt methods that acknowledge and respect this linguistic diversity. Recent scholars have proposed several effective methods and approaches:

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): CLT emphasizes meaningful and authentic communication as the primary goal of language learning. It encourages students to engage in interactive activities, such as role-plays, discussions, and problem-solving tasks, promoting the development of speaking skills (Richards & Rodgers, 2020). CLT's focus on real-life language use aligns well with Ecuador's multicultural and multilingual context, enabling students to practice speaking in various contexts, drawing on their linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT): TBLT centers on the completion of meaningful tasks as the basis for language learning. It provides students with opportunities to engage in purposeful communication while accomplishing specific goals. Tasks can include group projects, presentations, and simulations, allowing learners to practice and develop their speaking skills within authentic contexts (Willis & Willis, 2007). TBLT is particularly effective in promoting oral proficiency as it encourages students to use language creatively and strategically.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL): CLIL integrates language learning with subject content, providing students with opportunities to develop both language skills and subject knowledge simultaneously. In Ecuador, CLIL can be implemented by incorporating local cultural topics, such as indigenous cultures or environmental issues, into language learning activities (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010). This approach fosters the development of speaking skills through engaging students in discussions, debates, and presentations related to meaningful and relevant content.

Technology-Enhanced Language Learning: With the advancements in technology, integrating digital tools and platforms in language learning has become increasingly prominent. Online communication tools, virtual language exchanges, and language learning applications can facilitate speaking practice beyond the classroom (Stockwell, 2013). Technology-enhanced language learning provides students with opportunities to interact with native speakers, access authentic materials, and engage in interactive speaking tasks, thus enhancing their oral proficiency.

When implementing these methods and approaches, it is essential to consider the specific needs and characteristics of university students in Ecuador. Teachers can adapt and contextualize these approaches by incorporating culturally relevant topics and materials, such as indigenous language resources or local literature. Furthermore, creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment that values students' linguistic and cultural diversity promotes a positive learning experience (Krupnov et al., 2019)

In the Ecuadorian university context, these methods can be applied in various ways. For example, CLT can be implemented through pair or group work activities where students engage in discussions or debates on cultural topics or current issues. TBLT can be utilized in project-based courses where students collaborate to complete real-world tasks that require oral presentations or interviews. CLIL can be incorporated in language courses designed specifically for content areas such as business, tourism, or environmental studies, where students practice speaking skills while learning subject-specific content. Technology-enhanced language learning can be integrated through online language exchange programs or the use of language learning applications that provide speaking practice opportunities (Albarracin et al., 2019).

By carefully selecting and implementing these effective methods and approaches, educators can enhance students' speaking skills in SLA, catering to Ecuador's multicultural and multilingual context. These methods promote interactive communication, authentic language use, and meaningful engagement, facilitating the development of oral proficiency among university students.

Methods and Approaches in Classroom Practice: University and Country-Level Application, Evaluation, and Consideration of Multiculturalism and Multilingualism

In classroom practice at the university and country levels, several methods and approaches are commonly used for second language acquisition (SLA), taking into account the multiculturalism and multilingualism present in Ecuador. This section will explain these methods and approaches, evaluate their application, and consider their effectiveness in addressing the linguistic diversity and cultural contexts of learners.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): CLT is widely used in university classrooms in Ecuador due to its emphasis on meaningful communication. The approach promotes interactions in the target language, fostering speaking skills through authentic tasks and communicative activities (Richards & Rodgers, 2020). CLT aligns well with the multicultural and multilingual context of Ecuador as it encourages students to draw on their

linguistic and cultural backgrounds in their language production, facilitating intercultural communication and understanding.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT): TBLT is frequently applied in university settings in Ecuador to develop students' speaking proficiency. The approach revolves around learners engaging in purposeful tasks that require real-life language use. TBLT allows students to practice speaking through collaborative projects, role-plays, and problem-solving activities (Willis & Willis, 2007). In the multicultural and multilingual context of Ecuador, TBLT provides opportunities for students to share their diverse perspectives and cultural knowledge while engaging in language learning tasks (Gortaire Díaz, 2023).

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL): CLIL is employed in university language courses to integrate language learning with subject content. It is particularly relevant in Ecuador, where indigenous languages and cultural diversity are prevalent. CLIL incorporates culturally relevant topics and materials into language instruction, facilitating both language acquisition and intercultural competence (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010). In this approach, students develop their speaking skills while exploring subject-specific content that reflects their multicultural and multilingual environment.

Technology-Enhanced Language Learning: Given the increasing availability of technology, it is commonly used in Ecuadorian university classrooms to support language learning and speaking practice. Online communication tools, virtual language exchanges, and language learning applications provide opportunities for students to engage in authentic speaking interactions beyond the classroom (Stockwell, 2013). Technology-enhanced language learning accommodates diverse linguistic backgrounds and facilitates interaction among students with different cultural perspectives.

The application of these methods and approaches in Ecuadorian university classrooms highlights their effectiveness in addressing the multiculturalism and multilingualism present in the country. By encouraging student participation, incorporating culturally relevant content, and utilizing technology for language practice, educators foster an inclusive and

supportive learning environment that acknowledges the linguistic and cultural diversity of learners (Elgort et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the evaluation of these methods should consider their impact on language learning outcomes, intercultural understanding, and student engagement (Gortaire Díaz, 2023). Research studies examining the effectiveness of CLT, TBLT, CLIL, and technology-enhanced language learning in multicultural and multilingual contexts can provide insights into their benefits and potential limitations.

Overall, the methods and approaches commonly used in classroom practice at the university and country levels in Ecuador acknowledge and embrace the multicultural and multilingual nature of the country. By considering these approaches, educators can create an inclusive learning environment that promotes language acquisition, intercultural competence, and effective speaking skills development (Banaruee et al., 2023).

METHODS

Characterizing students' learning styles, English language acquisition, and difficulties is essential as it allows for personalized and differentiated instruction, targeted support, efficient resource allocation, and enhanced student engagement. By understanding individual learning preferences and proficiency levels, teachers can tailor their teaching approaches, provide appropriate support, allocate resources effectively, and ultimately create a conducive learning environment that addresses the specific needs of each student, fostering improved language acquisition and overall academic success.

This study is predominantly descriptive, considering the A2 level students from the University of Babahoyo, we characterized students' learning styles, English language acquisition, and difficulties, focusing specifically on speaking and pronunciation. Previous registrations were used to gather information from student's feedback and classroom observations. Then, based on the level observed (A2) and the classroom curriculum, A group of 50 university students aged 19-22 years who are studying different careers was selected.

During speaking activities and assessments, students' proficiency levels in speaking and pronunciation skills were observed and assessed. This helped identify if they were slow, average, or advantageous learners in this specific aspect of language acquisition. Moreover, students are going to be characterized also by their learning styles:

- Visual Learners: Some students may prefer visual aids such as charts, diagrams, and gestures to better understand and remember spoken language patterns and pronunciation.
- Auditory Learners: Other students may benefit from listening to model pronunciations, and audio recordings, and engaging in dialogues or conversations to improve their speaking skills.
- Kinesthetic Learners: Certain students may learn best through physical engagement and movement, such as employing gestures or practicing tongue twisters, to enhance their pronunciation and speaking abilities.

Through classroom observations and student feedback, the students' main difficulties in speaking and pronunciation were identified. These may include challenges with specific sounds, intonation patterns, fluency, word stress, or rhythm.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After four weeks of analyzing the students, used as the main sample, the resulting characterization presented in this study provides valuable insights into English language acquisition, learning styles, and difficulties among A2-level university students at the University of Babahoyo. These findings have important implications for teaching and supporting these students in their English language learning process. First of all, Table 1 (Table 1: English Language Acquisition (Speaking/Pronunciation)) presents the information on the English Language Acquisition level among students.

Table 1: English Language Acquisition (Speaking/Pronunciation)

	Slow	Average	Advantageous
Frequency (n)	16	20	14
Percentage (%)	32%	40%	28%

Elaborated by the authors

The distribution of students in terms of English language acquisition in speaking and pronunciation reveals significant diversity within the group. The results indicate that 40% of students were classified as average learners, while 28% were considered advantageous learners. Surprisingly, 32% were characterized as slow learners in this area. These findings underscore the importance of personalized instruction to the needs of individual students.

The presence of a considerable percentage of slow learners highlights the necessity for targeted interventions and additional support to help them improve their speaking and pronunciation skills. Strategies such as focused pronunciation exercises, speech therapy, or one-on-one coaching may prove beneficial for this subgroup.

Average learners constitute the largest portion of the sample, indicating a middle-of-the-road proficiency level. To enhance their language skills, instructors could employ a combination of classroom activities that cater to various learning styles and incorporate opportunities for practice and feedback.

Advantageous learners, though a smaller group, demonstrate proficiency in speaking and pronunciation. They may benefit from more advanced tasks and challenges to further hone their skills. Additionally, they can serve as role models and resources for their peers, fostering a collaborative learning environment. Then, Table 2 (Table 2: Students' Learning Style) presents the Students' Learning Styles.

Table 2: Students' Learning Style

	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic
Frequency (n)	15	12	23
Percentage (%)	30%	24%	46%

Elaborated by the authors

The data on learning styles show that the majority of students in the sample exhibit kinesthetic preferences (46%). These students learn best through physical engagement and movement. Instructors can leverage this preference by incorporating activities that involve gestures, role-plays, and practical speaking exercises.

Thus, visual learners make up 30% of the sample, and they benefit from visual aids such as charts and diagrams. Instructors can enhance their learning experience by incorporating visual materials into lessons and providing visual cues during pronunciation exercises.

On the other hand, Auditory learners comprise 24% of the sample, and they excel when listening to model pronunciations and engaging in dialogues. Incorporating audio recordings and interactive discussions can cater to their learning style.

By acknowledging and accommodating these diverse learning styles, educators can create a more inclusive and effective learning environment that caters to the preferences and strengths of individual students.

These descriptive statistics offer a summary of the distribution of students' English language acquisition levels and learning styles within the given sample. This provides valuable insights into the overall characteristics of the student population, aiding in the understanding and interpretation of the data.

However, identifying the main difficulties faced by students in speaking and pronunciation is crucial for designing targeted interventions. The study highlights challenges with specific sounds, intonation patterns, fluency, word stress, and rhythm. Instructors can use this information to develop specialized exercises and drills that address these specific difficulties.

Moreover, providing regular feedback and opportunities for students to practice and refine their skills can contribute to overcoming these challenges.

Overall, this research offers valuable insights into the unique needs and characteristics of A2-level university students in their English language learning journey. It underscores the importance of personalized instruction, consideration of diverse learning styles, and targeted support to enhance students' speaking and pronunciation skills.

Finally, these findings can guide educators in tailoring their teaching approaches to better meet the needs of their students and ultimately promote successful language acquisition and proficiency. As a result, it indicates that the intervention or treatment provided to the experimental group had a significant impact on their ability to find the main idea of the text. However, there was no significant difference between the groups in terms of their performance in guessing the end of the text.

CONCLUSIONS

The characterization revealed that the students' English language acquisition in speaking and pronunciation varied across the A2 level. Some students demonstrated slow progress, while others displayed average or advantageous proficiency levels. This diversity highlights the importance of personalized instruction and targeted support to address the individual needs of each student.

The students exhibited a range of learning styles, including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic preferences. This information underscores the necessity of incorporating diverse teaching strategies and resources that cater to different learning styles. Visual learners may benefit from visual aids, auditory learners from audio materials, and kinesthetic learners from hands-on activities.

The main difficulties reported by the students were primarily related to pronunciation and intonation. Challenges included specific sounds, intonation patterns, word stress, and rhythm. Addressing these difficulties through targeted practice and providing feedback can significantly enhance their speaking skills and overall oral communication.

The characterization underscores the importance of individualized instruction to meet the unique needs of each student. By recognizing students' proficiency levels, learning styles, and specific difficulties, teachers can tailor their teaching approaches, provide targeted support, and offer appropriate resources to foster improved speaking and pronunciation skills.

By considering students' learning styles and addressing their main difficulties, teachers can create a more engaging and inclusive learning environment. Incorporating activities and materials that align with students' preferences and targeting their specific challenges can increase motivation, participation, and overall language acquisition.

Regular assessment and feedback play a crucial role in monitoring students' progress and identifying areas for improvement. By providing constructive feedback and opportunities for self-reflection, teachers can guide students toward continuous growth and development in speaking and pronunciation skills.

As a result, the characterization of the A2-level university students from the University of Babahoyo provides valuable insights into their English language acquisition in speaking and pronunciation, learning styles, and main difficulties. This information serves as a foundation for implementing personalized instruction, targeted support, and appropriate teaching strategies to foster their linguistic development and promote successful communication in English.

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